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Constrained Bodies: Representing Slavery and Disability in American Literature and Culture

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Doctor of Philosophy

English

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M.A., Brigham Young University, 2008

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An abstract of

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Abstract

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"Constrained Bodies: Representing Slavery and Disability in American Literature and Culture" argues that the recurrence of both physical and mental disability as racial characteristics in colonial through nineteenth-century American and African American literature speaks to a mutually constitutive relationship between race and disability. I claim that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American and African American authors demonstrate the role of slavery in the entanglement of the concepts of race and disability. This dissertation establishes how associations of race and disability were created under the system of slavery, how slavery depended upon the construction of people of African descent as a dependent and disabled population, and the role that literature played in forging and contesting these links.

Drawing on archival work from the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, slave ship letters, and National Archives of the United Kingdom, I claim that the slave ship produced the very associations of race and disability that paternal ideology and the plantations system used to justify slavery. Reclaiming the literary and cultural history of disability in the literary and documentary record of African American slave experience I also read Phillis Wheatley's poetry against claims of black mental incapacity in Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) and examine her poetry in light of philosophical constructions of black mental disability in eighteenth-century America. My dissertation analyzes how people of African descent pushed back against stereotypes of dependence, incapacity, and mental inability–and thereby challenged the institutions built to reinforce them. I claim that specific disabilities were read as manifestations of racial difference, which, in turn, became naturalized in the body of the mixed-race subject. Race scientists argued, for example, that black blood mixed with white created an inherently infertile, mentally ill, and sickly population. I also interrogate the relationship between race and disability during the Reconstruction era in Albion Tourgée's *Bricks Without Straw* (1880) and argue that Tourgée's characterization of Reconstruction-era black characters systematically challenges the deeply associated and mutually reinforced constructions of race and disability in literary plots of the antebellum era, which questioned the capacity of black Americans to participate fully in American government.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Figuring Disability and Race in American Literature and Culture

On September 22nd, 1852, the attorneys responsible for dispensing the late Luther McGowan's estate held a slave auction. Thirty-six slaves in all, totaling an estimated $30,000, sat for two days at the Savannah fair grounds in order that they might "be inspected by prospective buyers."[1] Of the thirty-six slaves, seven had visible disabilities that significantly reduced their monetary value. Lizzie, 30, and Booster, 43, were ambiguously described as "unsound" in the auction bill and sold for $300 and $600 respectively. Abel, 41 had poor eyesight; Flementina, 39, although a good cook, had a "stiff knee"; Theopolis, 39, "gets fits"; Tom, 40, had a "lame leg"; and Honey, 14, a "prime girl" is simply labeled as "hearing poor."[2] What this slave auction bill reveals is how consistently disability figured as part of the slave experience, but more importantly it speaks volumes about what we do not yet fully understand about race and disability and their conjoined representation in early America—an absence that eerily haunts the literary and historical archives of the period. For instance, was Honey's "poor hearing" a means of evading the suggestive glances of her master as it was for Harriet Jacobs, or was her deafness the result of scarlet fever and poor medical care as it was for 'Lizabeth, Jim's deaf daughter in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*? Were Theopolis's "fits" the result of abuse at the hand of an overseer as was the case of Harriet Tubman or was he simply born with an intellectual or neurological impairment? More generally, what does the prevalence of disability among the enslaved tell us about the entanglement of the concepts of race and disability in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America? How were associations of race and disability created under the system of slavery? How did slavery depend

upon the construction of people of African descent as a dependent and disabled population, and what role does literature play in forging and contesting these links?

"Constrained Bodies: Representing Slavery and Disability in American Literature and Culture" endeavors to answer these questions by identifying how eighteenth- and nineteenth-century racial thinking entwined with the language and experience of disability in these crucial periods' literatures. In the following pages I argue that New World slavery situated "disability" as a legible manifestation of race central to slave ideology. Through readings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary and archival sources relating to American slavery I argue that the recurrence of both physical and mental disability as racial characteristics in colonial through nineteenth-century American and African American literature speaks to a mutually constitutive relationship between race and disability.

Authors such as Phillis Wheatley, Thomas Jefferson, Lydia Maria Child, William Wells Brown, Harriet E. Wilson, Frederick Douglass, Herman Melville, Mark Twain and Albion Tourgée demonstrate the role of slavery in the conflation of race and disability in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America. My dissertation analyzes works by these authors and demonstrates how associations of race and disability were created under the system of slavery, and how slavery depended upon the construction of people of African descent as a dependent and disabled population. I show that an assumption of blackness as disability reinforced central tenets of proslavery thought, even as representations of disabled slaves circulated to challenge the notion of the plantation as a site of paternal care. Much recent scholarship explores representations of black disabled bodies in American fiction via cultural and social constructions that shape perceptions of gender, sexuality, and race.[3] Douglas Baynton, for example, notes that disability is at the very heart of systems of racial and

gendered hierarchies.[4] Yet, how U.S. slave ideology constructed racial stereotypes based upon assumptions of disability in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has generally been overlooked.[5] Despite this gap in scholarship the figure of the disabled black body is essential to the cultural project of American self-making, in part because it serves as the counter-image of the ablebodied, ableminded and privileged white male norm.

Take, for example, the often-overlooked scene in Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* in which Tom Driscoll returns home to Dawson's Landing, Missouri. Twain describes Tom as dressed in a particular "Eastern Fashion" that sets everyone in town on edge. So distressed by Tom's extravagance, his fellow youth enlist a "deformed negro bellringer" to follow Tom through town "tricked out in a flamboyant curtain-calico exaggeration of [Tom's] finery . . . imitating his fancy eastern graces as well as he could."[6] The scene offers a unique opportunity to interrogate the conventions of representation established by the institution of slavery. Why would Twain enlist a "deformed" slave to mock the ablebodied Tom, for example? To what extent does the "deformed negro" serve as a cultural meme that replicates entrenched assumptions about blackness and disability? Understanding that the meanings attributed to the disabled black body reside not in the alleged inherent flaw of blackness, but in the social relationships exposed by the juxtaposition of a "deformed negro" and an ablebodied white man can help us answer these questions. One group is legitimated by possessing valued physical characteristics and maintains its power by imposing the role of corporeal inferiority on the other. Representations of disabled slaves in American fiction simultaneously support white masculine normative identity and shape the corporeal difference that excludes those whose bodies behave or look different.

Of course, racial taxonomies differed dramatically in the eighteenth century from those of the nineteenth. Corporeal variety was simply a fact of life in the eighteenth century, which allowed for a more nuanced comprehension of disability in the eighteenth century. One essential difference was the nineteenth-century abolition of the slave trade from Africa – a trade which produced debility on a very wide scale. Traveling to the New World was not physically easy, and bodily variations due to disease, accident, or birth were common. Deformity due to disease, accident, or birth was rarely labeled a deficiency so long as it did not impede labor. In the nineteenth century notions of disability changed. What were mere categorical definitions on behalf of medical science to construct and reinforce the "normal." This dissertation attends to how divergent notions of human variety in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries allowed disability to become a categorical assumption of race via the institution of slavery.

Equally important, and central to the claims of this project, is an analysis of how authors pushed back against associations of race and disability, thereby challenging the institutions built to reinforce them. The "deformed negro" in Twain's sketch, for example, does not necessarily operate solely as the disenfranchised and stigmatized other whose social role is to free the privileged, idealized figure of the American self-made man from the liabilities of embodiment. In many ways, Twain is in fact using the disabled slave to mock the very assumed capabilities and ablebodiedness of the white American male. The "deformed negro" is described by Twain as an "exaggeration" in which he "imitate[s]" the "fancy Eastern graces" of Tom "as well as he could."[7] If disability is a representation, a cultural interpretation of physical difference, and a comparison of bodies that structure social relationships and institutions, then the "deformed negro['s]" imitation of Tom can be read as a mockery

of the very institution of slavery and the presumably ablebodied men who govern it. The sociopolitical meanings that accompany Tom's ablebodied gait and his white, privileged appearance are open for debate when mocked by the likes of a "deformed negro." Focusing on the peripheral figure of the disabled slave allows us to witness the construction of the ablebodiedness of the white American male and question the role of slavery in perpetuating culture-bound and physically justified difference; the disabled slave allows us to examine the specific social anxieties that drove questions about American citizenship and American belonging during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

My purpose here is to examine literary representations of the slave experience and expand our understanding of the role of disability in representations of slavery. More simply, I intend to introduce disability as a vital characteristic in American literature as well as of the dynamics of the slave experience and the ideologies that justified and perpetuated slavery.. Such an analysis furthers our understanding of the discursive practices by which race acquired cultural meanings associated with intellectual and physical disability, and, in turn, reinforced a hierarchy of corporeal and mental traits that determined access to privilege, power, and status. One of the chief aims of my dissertation is to investigate these hierarchies and their dependence upon race and embodiment. Such an analysis depends upon an understanding of the physical sites in which "disability" and "race" were produced. Corporeal and intellectual abnormalities in the nineteenth century were often "corrected" or addressed in institutional spaces. The slave system, I contend, drew on these institutional practices, and vice versa. The narratives of deviance from whiteness and "ability" that circulate in the institution are my primary focus: how one body is represented as able, normal, and legitimate while another is deemed deviant,

deformed, and illicit; how these meanings become attached to race; and how those attachments were put to use in the ideology of slavery.

Whereas disabled slaves often figure as minor characters in American fiction, this dissertation places the disabled slave at the narrative center of both the story of slavery and the production of the ideal ablebodied, self-actualizing, American self. Similar to Toni Morrison's claim that the American self does not exist without the comparative shadow of the African American, one purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate that disability, and specifically associations of race and disability, is equally central to the figuration of American identity.[8] A quick look at Frederick Douglass's slave narrative demonstrates my point. One of the unnoticed marginal figures in Douglass's narrative is his disabled cousin, Henny. Douglass only mentions Henny briefly, but examining how disability operates in the text can help us visualize Douglass's awareness of the importance of black disability in legitimating both white masculine ablebodiedness and the slave system. Douglass tells us that Henny fell into the fire as a child and "burned herself horribly."[9] (99). Reduced to carrying heavy burdens because her burned hands prevented her from other labors, Master Thomas "seemed desirous to get the poor girl out of existence."[10] Finding her useless, he "set her adrift, to care of herself."[11] Douglass's response to Thomas's justification for banishing Henny helps us understand why black disability is central to American identity:

> Here was a recently converted man, holding, with tight grasp, the well-framed, and able-bodied slaves left him by old master—the persons, who, in freedom, could have taken care of themselves; yet, turning loose the only cripple among them, virtually to starve and die.[12]

The rhetorical effect of representing disability derives from social relations between people who assume what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson calls the "normate" position and those who are assigned the disabled position.[13] To be sure, we can read Henny as an uncomplicated figure whose bodily configuration operates as a spectacle, eliciting responses from Douglass or producing rhetorical effects on the reader that depend on the cultural resonance of a burned slave woman. Alternately, we can understand Douglass's description as a literary convention that enlists the experience of a disabled slave into a wider cultural commentary. The rhetorical effect of Douglass's statement suggests that disability derives from social relations between people who assume a privileged ablebodied position and those who are assigned the disabled position. Henny's banishment brings this dichotomy clearly into view as Douglass realizes the hypocrisy of a system that "holds slaves for their own good"—the perception that they cannot care for themselves—yet keeps those who are "well-framed" and "able-bodied" enslaved while those who do perhaps need assistance are "set adrift."[14] What Douglass's narrative tells us is that highly stigmatized characteristics such as disability and race are fabricated in much the same way. That is, representations of disability and race are often the result of mixed responses that visible disability and racial otherness elicit from readers who consider themselves non-disabled and non-black. Although blackness is constructed as a set of disabilities, Douglass's narration of Henny's experience also tells us that certain kinds of impairment make one unfit for servitude. In essence, disability reveals the very lie of paternalism: although she is cast as inherently "disabled" and in need of care because of her blackness, Henny's burned hands make her unfit for the very institution designed to house and feed her. Examining the literary dimensions in which a disabled position is routinely assigned to people of African descent, and how authors

demonstrated that the systems of race and disability sometimes clashed with each other in ways that destabilized the paternal logic of slavery, yields important information about how race was conceived and constructed in the early American period.

Disability and Blackness in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth- Century America

Rather than declare a uniform paternalism an ideology at the root of misrepresentations of black bodies, I am concerned with the changing and unstable associations of disability that are attached to race in literary representations of slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These two centuries mark the most prolific transatlantic debates about the black body that shaped the ways US leaders discussed racial identity and organized institutions designed to care for and exploit people of African descent. What began in the late seventeenth century as theories of environmentalism and natural history quickly shaped social, political, legal, and economic policies towards blacks that evolved into what we now recognize as scientific racism in the mid-nineteenth century. These ways of thinking rarely invoke comparisons or applications to critical disability studies. Incongruous though they may seem, pairing theories of race from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with critical disability studies provides a much richer understanding of the multifaceted rhetorics early Americans used in their depictions of racial identity.

Consider the example of Thomas Fuller, the "Virginia Calculator." Fuller was a native of Africa who at the age of fourteen was sold into slavery in Virginia, where he found himself the property of a planter residing outside of Alexandria. He could neither read nor write, but became quite a spectacle through his ability to perform

difficult calculations. Famed physician Dr. Benjamin Rush in a letter addressed to a gentleman residing in Manchester, Eng., says that hearing of the phenomenal mathematical powers of "Negro Tom," he, in company with other gentlemen passing through Virginia, sent for him. One of the gentlemen asked him how many seconds a man of seventy years, some odd months, weeks, and days, had lived. Fuller replied with an answer in a minute and a half. The gentleman took a pen, and after some figuring told Tom he must be mistaken, as the number was too great. "'Top, massa!" exclaimed Tom, "you hab left out de leap-years!" As it turns out, Fuller was correct.[15] Rush and others assumed that Fuller had simply learned mathematics on the African coast; there had to be a logical reason or fluke for Fuller's genius. The supporting evidence for Rush's conjecture reveals more about the assumed intellectual incapacities of blacks than previously thought. Thomas Clarkson describes the purchase of African slaves in a 1788 letter to fellow abolitionists to prove this point:

> It is astonishing with what facility the African brokers reckon up the exchange of European goods for slaves. One of these brokers has ten slaves to sell, and for each of these he demands ten different articles. He reduces them immediately by the head to bars, coppers, ounces… and immediately strikes the balance. The European, on the other hand, takes his pen, and with great deliberation, and with all the advantage of arithmetic and letters, begin to estimate also. He is so unfortunate, as to make a mistake: but he no sooner errs, than he is detected by this man of inferior capacity, whom he can neither deceive in the name or quality of his goods, nor in the balance of his account.[16]

Americans of African descent such as Thomas Fuller, Benjamin Banneker, and Phillis Wheatley who challenged the prevailing assumptions of black intellectual incapacity

served more as fabulous anomalies than as legitimate objects of scientific inquiry. There was something so uncanny about intelligent African Americans, that intellectuals such as Fuller, Banneker and Wheatley were repeatedly examined not only for proof, but also for a *reason* for their intelligence.

The idea of blacks becoming as intelligent as whites assumed they themselves were was an intriguing one. Americans of the late eighteenth century were fascinated with what Joanne Pope Melish calls "systematic transformation[s] that could be explained and reliably replicated."[17] The possibility of blacks becoming the intellectual equivalents of whites was not as frightening a possibility for most British colonials in the seventeen hundreds as it was for nineteenth-century Americans. Examples abound in colonial newspapers, for example, of bodily transformations that came with existence in the New World. The phenomenon of people of color who seemed to be turning white became a matter of intellectual concern and public interest. Philadelphia Physician Charles Caldwell reflected on the public's fascination with people of African descent who seemed to be becoming white before their very eyes. He noted that Henry Moss, a young slave with vitiligo who was examined and exhibited by Benjamin Rush, was "almost as familiar to the readers of newspapers and other periodicals . . . as was that of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, or James Madison."[18] It would appear that the very questions awakened by the possible mutability of blackness became a point of particular concern to those invested in the perpetuity of slavery, however.

Although Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon did not include Henry Moss in his 1777 *Histoire Naturelle*, he did include Maria Sabine, a slave woman born in New Spain in 1736. She too developed white patches on her skin. According to John Wood Sweet, Sabine's case lead to Buffon's famous analysis "that this

remarkable birth might be due to the degenerate effects of the American climate on African bodies," and, moreover, "that if there were cases of blacks becoming white, it was only logical to assume that there were whites becoming black."[19] Buffon stopped short of specifically applying his theory of degeneration to Europeans who relocated to the New World. But Abbé Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, an especially fervent adherent to Buffon's propositions, extended the theory and made the explicit claim.[20]

Jefferson may have been particularly keen on refuting this claim given the racializing effects of disability in the late eighteenth century. Two of his siblings experienced what one might call an intellectual degeneration. Jefferson's sister, Elizabeth, was mentally disabled enough to require constant supervision into adulthood, and his brother Rudolph has been labeled "retarded" by more than one biographer.[21] In this context, Buffon's claims about the New World as degenerative perhaps help explain both Jefferson's impassioned response to Buffon and his claims that blacks are inherently disabled in *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Jefferson argued for the nurturing quality of the American environment, but also advanced his "suspicion" that "the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstance, are inferior to the whites in the endowments of body and mind."[22] The American environment, then, was salubrious, but people of African descent were inherently "inferior"—he assured himself—to whites intellectually and physically because they arrived in America that way.

To be sure, Jefferson's proto-polygeneticist proclivities lay outside mainstream thinking at the close of the eighteenth century, but to assume that they were not influential would be incorrect. Samuel Stanhope Smith's environmentalist and monogenetic racial thinking about the possible mutation of black to white and white to black contradicted Jefferson's thinking. Ralph Bauer puts it best when he

explains that "Jefferson's patriotic defense of . . . European American character and culture is thus predicated on a particular rhetorical shift in which the eighteenth-century discourse about cultural creolization and degeneration is displaced by a modern discourse of 'race.'"[23] If the American environment did not have a degenerative influence on human culture, as Jefferson claims, but African American creoles were obviously (to Jefferson) inferior, "it must be that Africans had arrived in the New World already as a distinct "race," whose inferiority must be seen as essential and independent of environmental and geographical factors." [24] I explore the applicability of Jefferson's personal/intellectual history with disability to his disparaging assessment of Phillis Wheatley's poetry in more detail in chapter two of this dissertation.

While the concept of degeneration was not necessarily always racialized, Buffon, Carl Lineaus, Blumenbach and other natural historians understood the term to be racial in its eighteenth-century sense. As historian Kariann Yokata explains, "aware of this close identification with the 'colored' people among them, white Americans imagined a need for distinction between the white, civilized American and the 'savage' Americans."[25] As contradictory as it was to mainstream environmentalist thought, Jefferson's theory of blackness as "inferior . . . of body and mind" became a way for Americans to rely on the link between American whiteness and the materiality of "civilization."[26] Samuel Stanhope Smith argued, for example, that Americans kept from degenerating not because of a favorable New World climate but rather because, as Yokota puts it, of "their advanced degree of civilization."[27] Manners, language and civilization overcame the potential degenerative effects of New World life. What this suggests is that despite environmentalist claims of black mutability, becoming white was simply not enough to overcome black bodily and

mental inferiority. As David Hume explains, Africans simply lacked the materiality of civilization that manifested intelligence: "There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white. . . . No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences."[28] In this sense, Jefferson's racial arguments are meant to maintain the generative possibilities of life in America without falling back on the environmentalist theories of Samuel Stanhope Smith and Benjamin Rush that alluded to blacks becoming equal to white in mind and body. Likewise, Jefferson's theory only excluded blacks from the salubrious effects of living in America: living in America might actually benefit your constitution and mind, but only if you are white.

Whereas throughout the eighteenth century, natural philosophers such as Carl Von Linné, Buffon, and Blumenbach categorized and subdivided the human species into different varieties and then debated the causes of those varieties, the nineteenth century marked the beginning of hierarchical and taxonomical meanings placed on human variety. Rather than attributing surface distinctions among blacks to external forces that acted upon bodies, the science of race began to characterize race as a fixed difference lodged within the body. As Andrew Curran notes specifically in reference to Africans, Buffon's degeneration theory ultimately encouraged more, as opposed to less speculation regarding the corporeal specificities of the African 'variety.'"[29] Environmentalism emerged as a new form of pseudo science that connected nonwhite races to people with disabilities, both of whom were depicted as intellectually and even physically underdeveloped. As a consequence, the concept of disability intertwined with the concept of race, both of which were discussed in terms of evolutionary progress. Dr. John Langdon called Down's syndrome Mongolism, for example, because he believed the condition the result of a biological reversal by whites to the Mongol racial type.[30] Teachers of the deaf routinely racialized the non-

hearing by trying to make deaf children more like "normal" people and less like savages by forbidding the use of sign language.[31] Recent work on nineteenth-century freak shows by Rachel Adams highlights how disability and race intersected with an ideology of evolutionary hierarchy.[32] James W. Trent argues, too, that the display of "defectives" alongside "primitives" signaled a similar and interconnected classification scheme for both people with disabilities and racial others.[33]

Disability arguments were also prominent in the justification of slavery. The most common disability argument for enslavement was simply that people of African descent lacked sufficient intelligence to participate in or even compete on an equal basis in social, political, and economic spheres with white Americans. This alleged deficit in blacks was sometimes attributed to physical causes, too. Highly respected southern physician Samuel Cartwright explained black intellectual incapacity in much the same way Thomas Jefferson did eighty years earlier:

> It is the defective hematosis, or atmospherization of the blood, conjoined with a deficiency of cerebral matter in the cranium, and an excess of nervous matter distributed to the organs of sensation and assimilation, that is the true cause of that debasement of mind, which has rendered the people of Africa unable to take care of themselves.[34]

Simply put, people of African descent lack the corporeal ability to properly bring oxygen to their brains, resulting in a comparative intellectual deficiency to whites. Diseases of blacks were commonly attributed to "inferior organisms and constitutional weaknesses," which were claimed to be among "the most pronounced race characteristics of the American negro."[35]

Associations of race and disability were both prolific and contradictory. The allegedly superior intelligence of "mulattos"—a topic I will take up in chapter three—

compared to "pure" blacks was offered as evidence for the advancement of whites, but those who argued against miscegenation claimed to the contrary that the products of race-mixing were themselves less intelligent and less healthy than members of either race in its "pure" form. Medical doctor John Van Evrie of New York framed blackness and its mixing squarely within a disability context: "disease and disorganization" in the "abnormal," "blotched, deformed" offspring of this "monstrous" act "could no more exist beyond a given period than any other physical degeneration."[36] Others claimed greater "corporeal vigor" for "mixed offspring" but deterioration in "moral and intellectual endowments," while still others saw greater intelligence among mulattoes, but "frailty," "less stamina," and "inherent physical weakness."[37]

An additional association of blackness and disability in the nineteenth century was that people of African descent were prone to become disabled under the condition of freedom. Evidence for these claims came from a growing demand for scientific justification for the continued enslavement of African bodies in the wake of abolition pressure from the North and across the Atlantic. A New York medical journal reported, for example, that deafness was three times more common and blindness twice as common among free blacks in the North compared to slaves in the South. Such statistics were used to buttress a crumbling ideology of slavery that rested on the paternal beneficence of the master/slave relationship. John C. Calhoun, senator from South Carolina and one of the most influential spokesmen for the slave states, thought it a powerful argument in defense of slavery that the "number of deaf and dumb, blind, idiots, and insane of the negroes in the states that have changed the ancient relation between the races" was seven times higher than in the slave states.[38]

Along these same lines of thought Dr. Samuel Cartwright described two types of mental illness to which African Americans were especially subject. The first, *Drapetomania,* a condition that caused slaves to run away—"as much a disease of the mind as any other species of mental alienation"—was common among slaves whose masters had "made themselves too familiar with them, treating them as equals."[39] As I will describe in more detail in chapter one, the need to submit to a master was built into the very bodies of slaves, in whom "we see '*genu flexit'* written in the physical structure of his knees, being more flexed or bent, than any other kind of man."[40] The second intellectual ailment likely to plague only enslaved African Americans—*Dysaesthesia Aethiopica*—was a unique ailment differing "from every other species of mental disease, as it is accompanied with physical signs or lesions of the body."[41] It manifested as a lack of firm governance and was therefore more common among freed blacks than among slaves.

While these arguments were often contradictory and illogical, disability was still central to them. If freedom for African Americans magnified the impairments hidden beneath the surface of African bodies and minds, and slavery kept these deficiencies in check, then the institutions of slavery could be regarded as salubrious and beneficent asylums for the racially disabled. The Reigning argument for the perpetuation of slavery in the nineteenth century was that it mediated the very disabilities inherent to blackness. Contending these claims, for whatever reason, was remarkably difficult. Writing in 1844 in the *New York Journal of Medicine*, Samuel Forry tried. He noted that the supposedly higher rates of insanity among free blacks compared to slaves had been "seized upon by journals devoted to the peculiar institutions of the Southern States, as a powerful argument."[42] Forry retorted, first, that the census did not allow a reliable comparison of deafness, blindness, idiocy, and

insanity in free and enslaved blacks, and second, that even were it the case that free blacks in the North suffered more disability than slaves, slavery and freedom might not be the determinants. Instead, perhaps "the whole constitution of the black is adapted to a tropical region," and their mental and physical health was therefore bound to suffer in the northern climate.[43] Left unchallenged, of course, is the argument that a people might be enslaved to protect them from their own inherent disabilities.

Race and disability were similarly associated after emancipation as before. Dr. Van Evrie wrote after the Civil War, for example, that the education of African Americans came "at the expense of the body, shortening the existence" and resulted in bodies "dwarfed or destroyed" by unnatural exertion.[44] This concept is explored in more detail in chapter four, but Evrie adds that "an 'educated negro,' like a 'free negro,' is a social monstrosity, even more unnatural and repulsive than the latter."[45] He argued further that since they belonged to a race inferior in nature, all blacks were necessarily inferior to all whites. It occasionally happened that a particular white person might not be superior to all black people because of a condition that "deforms or blights individuals; they may be idiotic, insane, or otherwise incapable."[46] But these general exceptions to the rule were "the result of human vices, crimes, or ignorance."[47] Only disability might lower a white person in the scale of life to the level of a being of a marked race. J. F. Miller, writing in the *North Carolina Medical Journal,* thought it important to inquire whether "the effect of freedom upon the mental and physical health of the negroes of the South" had been "damaging or otherwise."[48] His conclusion was that there were "more congenital defects" and a dramatic increase in mental illness and tuberculosis among free blacks.[49] Apparently, freedom, for which the African American's weak disabled mind and constitution were

ill suited, had brought to the former slave "a beautiful harvest of mental and physical degeneration and he is now becoming a martyr to an heredity thus established."[50]

Critical Race and Disability Studies

Associations of race and disability have historically proved remarkably detrimental to people of African descent in this country. Nirmalla Erevelles and Andre Minear point out, however, that an alliance between critical race studies and disability studies is important in understanding how devalued social characteristics, such as blackness and corporeal and intellectual difference, mutually compound each other.[51] Stepping away from, but not entirely eschewing poststrucuturalist arguments that represent social categories as social constructions, Erevelles and Minear call for an "intercategorical framework" that focuses on "neglected points of intersection of multiple master categories."[52] Such a framework is constructive in examining representations of race and disability within the context of slavery because it allows us to consider the social institution of slavery's role in conflating race with disability without ignoring the racist implications of assigning disability as an inherent representation of race. As Nira Yuval-Davis describes it:

> The point of intersectional analysis is not to find "several identities under one" . . . This would reinscribe the fragmented, additive model of oppression and essentialize specific social identities. Instead the point is to analyse the differential ways by which social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other and how they relate to political and subjective constructions of identities.[53]

Taking intersectionality as a point of departure, what concerns me here are how both race and disability are situated as social divisions reinforced and

constructed by each other through the system of slavery. A few contemporary comparative points demonstrate the importance of examining how race and disability have become enmeshed in this country: African American children constitute seventeen percent of total school enrollment, but thirty three percent of those are labeled "mentally retarded"[54]; States with a history of legal school segregation account for five of the seven states with the highest overrepresentation of African American labeled mentally retarded: Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, and Alabama[55]; African Americans have a five times higher amputation rate than white Americans[56]; young men of color and people with intellectual disabilities are the two groups most likely to be shot and killed by the police in this country[57]; and African American women are three times as likely to be diagnosed with intellectual maladies such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and depression than are white women.[58]

Rather than pointing out that associations between race and disability continue to exist, I am concerned with examining the role of slavery in creating specific linkages that continue to wound. To begin with, I examine the literature of the American eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the understanding that race and disability are socially constructed categories that derive their meaning from their subject positions in relation to whiteness and ability. Slavery apologists routinely justified slavery and its paternal ideology using biological difference as the base of their argument to make claims for inherent black disability. The assumed biological differences between white and black justify enslavement via disability constructions. Beginning with a comparison between the "flowing hair" and "more elegant symmetry . . . of the whites" Thomas Jefferson, one of the most highly visible and vocal Americans to associate blackness and disability, quickly transitions into the

"other physical distinctions proving a difference of race" that reveal an inherent deficiency.[59] "[A] difference in the structure of the pulmonary apparatus," Jefferson explains, "may have disabled [blacks] from extricating, in the act of inspiration, so much of that fluid from the outer air, or obliged them in expiration, to part with more of it."[60] An apparently different lung structure from whites has disabled blacks from "inspiration," which can be read as both respiration and intellectual capacity given Jefferson's subsequent line that blacks "participate more of sensation than reflection."[61]

Jefferson's claims also suggest that race and disability are relational concepts. As Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* demonstrates, the comparative physiognomy of blacks to whites was central to eighteenth and nineteenth conflations of race and disability. The privileges that white men enjoy as the disembodied representatives of ideal American manhood, then, depend upon not only the subordination of people of color, as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson rightly points out, but also on the repeated framing and juxtaposition of black and white bodies.[62] A comparative look at P.T. Barnum's nineteenth-century freak show exhibits and Johann Friederich Blumenbach's eighteenth-century comparative physiognomy of the "Negro, European, and Oran Outan" demonstrates the importance of race in what Lennard Davis call the "construction of the normal world" based upon the "radical repression of disability."[63] (22).

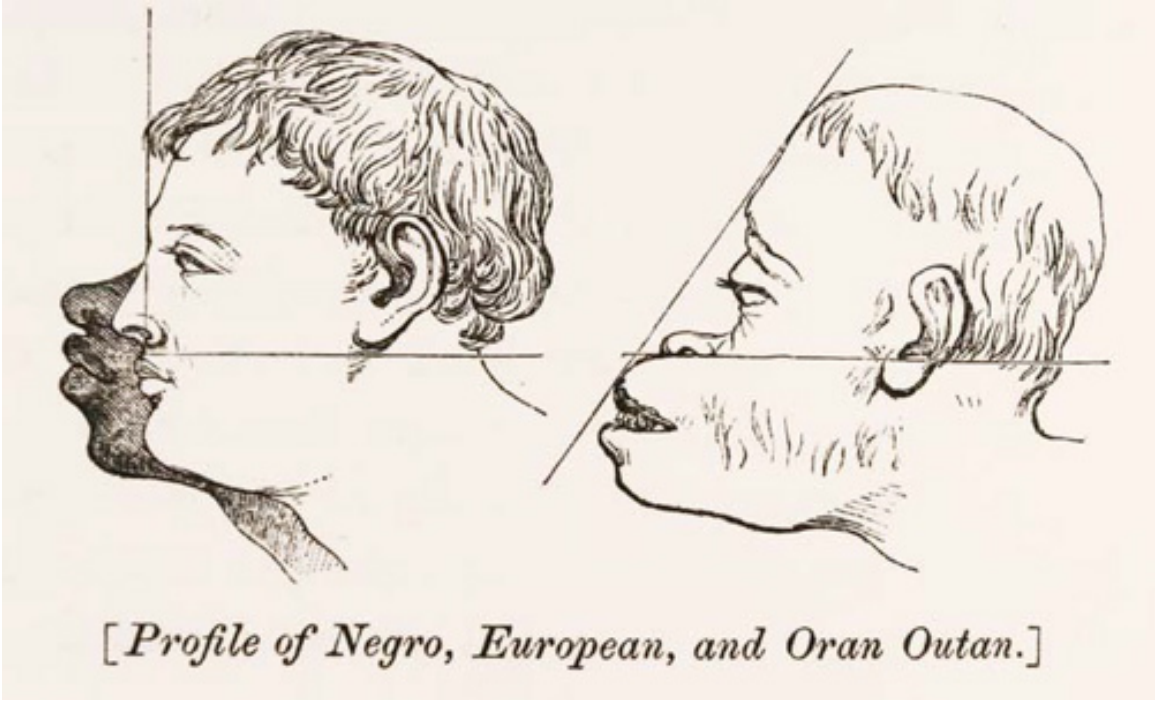

Figure 1: Taken from *On The Natural Variety of Mankind* (1775)

The elongated jaw, prominent, yet flat nose, full lips and hidden forehead of the African male are juxtaposed with the angular (not coincidentally a "right" angle) construction of the white male whose forehead small nose, lips, and eyes do not compete with the extended jaw. The added image of the "Oran Outan" is meant to signify the relative distance of the white male from his animal ancestry while simultaneously implying its genetic similarities with the African male. This difference is measurable—there is a 45 degree difference in comparative forehead angle—implying scientific accuracy and legitimacy to the comparison. The viewer is invited to draw his or her own conclusions about the relationality between the African male and Orangutan, while simultaneously feeling comforted by his or her angular and "right" physiognomy and all the assumptions of intelligence and self-actualization that accompany such expectations.

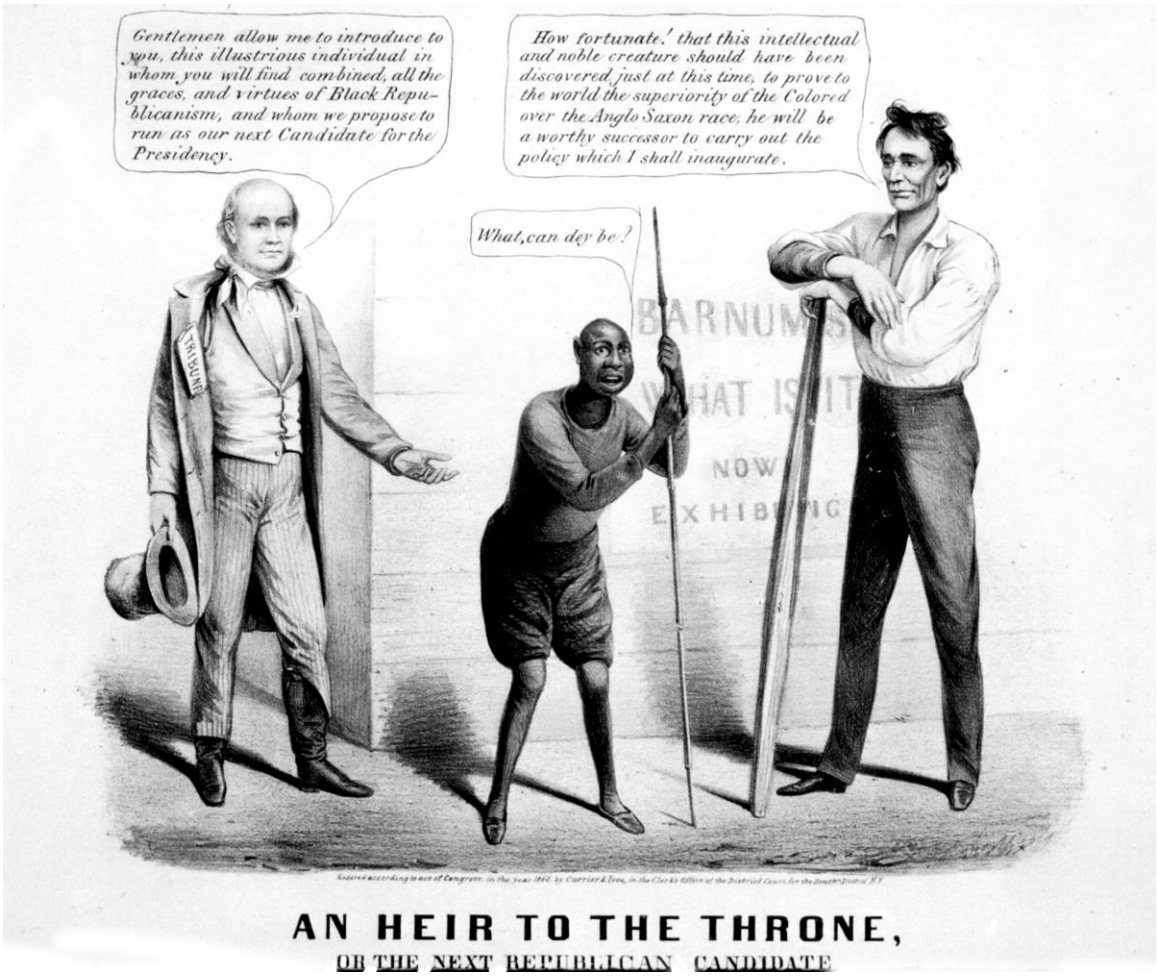

Figure 2:

In the above image we see a more concrete association of race and disability in the figure of Walter "Zip" Johnson, a young African American man who appears to have experienced a mental disorder call "microcephally." Barnum's exhibition of Johnson fits within the aesthetic conventions of not only the racially inflected carnival and museum characters that he exploited, but also the assumed and comparative intellectual degradation of black and white Americans. Viewers of Johnson reinforced relational constructions that served to situate whites and blacks as inherently different from each other. Here, Johnson represents all blacks as intellectually and physically disabled, not by the condition of slavery, but by their deficient comparative blackness. The image serves as a warning to "the graces and virtues of Black Republicanism,"

which are embodied in the comparatively intellectually and corporeally disabled black body. Johnson, who serves as representative of the "intellectual and noble creature" that is the freedman is clearly meant to be ironic, but the irony suggests that associations of race and disability were not only remarkably pervasive, but readily understood as legitimate by the white public. In both Blumenbach's representation and the political cartoon of Johnson, the assumed deficient nature of blacks implies a particular intellectual incapacity that further served to reinforce a system of slavery designed to care for those deemed incapable of self-actualization. In both images, blacks are situated in relation to whites in order to "demarcate the borders of the generic," as Garland-Thomson suggests, and to "give form to the normal . . .that underlie[s] political, social and economic arrangements."[64]

I follow the work of disability historians here who recognize that "disability has never been a monolithic grouping" but has rather described "people with a variety of conditions, despite considerable differences in etiology, [who] confront a common set of stigmatizing social values and debilitating socially constructed hazards."[65] I also define disability rather broadly to include a range of physical and mental differences that are stigmatized within society. These various impairments did not begin to coalesce under the modern signifier of disability until the early nineteenth century, yet I use the term repeatedly to refer to blindness, deafness, physical impairments, congenital differences, and vaguely delineated modifiers such as "Invalid" and "idiot." I also rely on the term disability to define long-term unmediated illnesses that would have jeopardized participation in local economies. The social model of disability, in which disability is located not primarily in the individual but in the "set of social, historical, economic, and cultural processes that regulate and control the way we think about and through the body," allows us to

consider how physical and mental variation serves to reveal cultural anxieties about bodies not understood as "ordinary or "normal."[66] This profoundly influential concept in disability studies separates impairment, as physical or mental difference that affects function, from disability, the social consequences and effects of that difference. In this study, I keep the social model of disability squarely in mind as I examine the social, historical, economic, and cultural processes that regulated the control of black bodies *as* disabled while remaining critically aware of the inescapable connection such claims have with the social and material disempowerment that accompanied slavery.

Similarly, I follow the work of critical race theorists in examining race as a social construction that nevertheless has material consequences. As Ian Haney López explains,

> The absence of any physical basis to race does not entail the conclusion that race is wholly hallucination. Race has its genesis and maintains its vigorous strength in the realm of social beliefs. Nevertheless, race is not an inescapable physical fact. Rather, it is a social construction that, however perilously, remains subject to contestation at the hands of individuals and communities alike.[67]

Building on the alliances between critical race studies and disability studies made possible through poststructuralist thought, disability scholars such as Douglas Baynton, Jennifer James and Cynthia Wu have argued that disability is, in fact, constitutive of most social hierarchy, particularly race.[68] This dissertation illustrates the ways that scientific work from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries works in conjunction with literary texts and aesthetic discourses about race and disability: namely, that they existed in a productive, sometimes problematic, and always active intertextual conversation. As this dissertation strives to demonstrate, associations of

race and disability were produced in a dialectical movement between scientific/socio-historical and literary discourse. My dissertation starts with what we have already learned about both critical race and disability studies to help us tune our ears to what the literature is saying about representations of race as disability. In this respect, my project joins other studies thinking about race and disability concomitantly. These studies examine how disability functioned as a trope of true physical difference that allowed whites to identify blacks as disabled.[69]

As important as this work is, the particular structures that "underlie political, social and economic arrangements" that justified "fantasies of identification" are equally important. Longmore and Umansky refer to this type of engagement with disability studies as filling in the "historiological gaps" about American attitudes toward human bodies.[70] David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder coin the term "cultural locations of disability" to evoke some of the institutions that helped define American attitudes towards bodies.[71] As sites of violence, restriction, confinement, and absence of liberty for people with disabilities, such cultural locations, they argue, are spaces where people with disabilities find themselves deposited against their will.[72] We can make similar claims about the institution of slavery. To salvage the danger that deviance posed generally, designations of disability were routinely assigned to various populations, particularly people of African descent. Cultural locations of slavery—the slave ship, the plantation, and the auction block— follow a similar rubric of disenfranchisement and are oppressive sites of complicity that draw from social understandings about disability to limit the freedom and mobility of people of African descent. These sites of enslavement form the foundation of a project to care for a population constructed as incapable of caring for itself, a particularly damaging construction fraught with disability implications. The *modus operandi* of the

institution of slavery is to classify and pathologize racial difference and then manage racial others through various institutional locations. While often parading under the humanist guise of help or sympathy for the dependent, slavery accomplished its debilitating effects through associations of race with disability, the statistical calculation of slave bodies and minds, and involuntary participation in a system that shored up white normativity.

Paternalism, or the interventionist and authoritarian control and "protection" of a group of people regarded as dependent on others for care, is a term used readily to describe the American system of slavery. As Eugene Genovese describes it, paternalism was a "relationship of superordination and subordination," which allowed slaveholders to think of themselves as benevolent and to justify their appropriation of their slaves' labor.[73] But paternalism also allowed slave owners to "mark" their slaves as dependent. In order to discipline enslaved people and morally justify a system of exploitation, the "subordinate" group required an assignation of neediness that reinforced the superordinate group's idealized self-description as neutral and legitimate. As I will demonstrate in chapter one, these assignations began on the slave ship and required a process of stigmatization highly contingent upon assumptions of black disability. Labeling slaves as inherently disabled became part of a communal acculturation process that created a shared, socially maintained and determined conception of the American individual as male, white, and ablebodied. This acculturation made black bodies markable in ways that categorized their physical differences and imposed meanings on their corporeal "deviance." The particular stigmata of disability assigned to the black body, and even the black mind, are inculcated by the social practice of paternalism.

Eva Kittay notes that we are all dependent upon each other; a fact that allows us to break down binaries between those who are dependent and those who are not. What Kittay calls "derived dependencies" accompany forms of economic dependency such as slavery, which, in turn, generate a "debilitating psychological, political and social dependency as well."[74] Paternalism, however, prevented slaveholders from resituating the "problem" of black dependence. By constructing a system of enslavement based upon the alleged dependency of blacks, for example, slaveholders could construct a variety of justifications for its continuation, many of which, it turns out, rested upon clear assumptions that blackness was a manifestation of various disabilities. What dependency theory helps us understand with regard to representations of black bodies as inherently disabled is that the problem we confront is not disability or race per se, as many slaveholders believed, but rather, the inequalities, negative attitudes, misrepresentations, and institutional practices that result from the process of stigmatization. Such abstract value systems that structure the supposed dependence of people of African descent and the alleged independence of whites is easily transformed into the slave ideology that deems whites superior in bodily composition and intellectual capability. I explore the particular ways in which American authors black and white push back against these constructions in chapters two and four.

Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Literary Representations of the Disabled Black Body

The contradictory and paradoxical tensions between the lived reality of slaves and their assumed disabilities often manifests in literary form. For instance, as Phillis

Wheatley's poems demonstrate, even if whites accepted the notion that education could remediate the degenerative effects of race, many of them nevertheless denied people of African descent the same political, social, and economic opportunities whites enjoyed. In addition, as Olaudah Equiano makes clear, a belief in an environmentalist explanation for the development of racial difference did not compel many whites to see past cultural assumptions of inherited black disability and treat blacks legally or economically the same as whites. American literature records and responds to this differential treatment and provides an experimental space (much like the scientific work on race from the nineteenth century) where ideas about race and disability were explored. While not necessarily producing what one might consider scientific "facts," American literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries helped create the thinking around associations of race and disability. These ideas about race and disability structured American literature, too, and help constitute (both in concert with and in challenge to) the broad configuration of blacks as intellectually and physically inferior to whites. This dissertation attempts, then, to analyze how assumptions of disability in Americans of African descent inform literary texts and the cultural work these texts do in constructing race in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

"Constrained Bodies: Representing Slavery and Disability in American Literature and Culture" thus develops multiple lines of inquiry in American literature via two distinct fields: critical race theory and critical disability studies. The work of Christopher Bell, Carrie Sandahl, Anna Mallow, and Nirmala Erevelles & Andrea Minear have all demonstrated that the concept of race is important to our knowledge about disability studies. Further, focusing on American literature, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Benjamin Reiss, and Ellen Samuels have illustrated the ways that

nineteenth-century US literatures establish the "white nation" at the exclusion of African Americans via associations of disability. Thanks to the groundbreaking work of these scholars, disability studies has increased attention to disability dynamics of representations of race in American literature. Adding to that scholarship but differing from it significantly, this study shows that disability, as a profoundly race-based concept, has deep roots in the slave system; therefore, it focuses on how the specifically eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideas about slavery as a system of paternal care for a dependent and needy population can be read through a disability studies lens and inform our own understanding of racial representation in the period's literature. Thus, contributing a new and important dimension to American literary scholarship as well as critical race and disability studies, this dissertation interprets eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature's racial and disability epistemologies, the lenses through which American authors of the period both knew and wrote about race and its representation in their own world.

On the one hand, "Constrained Bodies" argues strongly that the notions regarding the formation of racial categories in eighteenth century differed dramatically from those of the nineteenth, primarily because disability was understood in remarkably different ways during these two periods. Traveling to the New World in the eighteenth century was not physically easy, and bodily variations due to disease, accident, or birth were common and included in the definition of able-bodied. The primary definition of disability up until the late eighteenth century was an inability to perform labor.[75] In the nineteenth century notions of disability changed. What were mere categorical definitions on behalf of medical science to construct and reinforce the "normal."

Furthermore, this dissertation attends to how divergent notions of human variety allowed disability to become a categorical assumption of racial theory via the institution of slavery. If race was simply a manifestation of human mutability based on environment and climate, as many eighteenth-century natural historians assumed, why did slavery persist? Although Samuel Stanhope Smith and Benjamin Rush tried to harness aspects of environmentalist thinking in order to argue against slavery, people of African descent were legally, culturally, and politically regarded as 3/5 of a white person before disability became systematically categorized as a correctable deficiency that required institutional and state support. Slavery was, in a sense, the first asylum. This study illustrates and analyzes the ways that scientific and cultural understandings of race developed in tandem with disability.

As an institution, slavery was key to the conflation of race and disability in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chapter one of this dissertation begins on the West African coast to make this claim clear. Through readings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary and archival sources relating to American slavery I begin by opening a window onto the understudied associations of race and disability on the transatlantic slave ship. My central claim in this chapter is that these ships systematically produced disabilities, which were in turn used as evidence of the need for white paternalism. Simply put, the slave ship produced the very associations of race and disability that paternal ideology and the plantations system used to justify slavery. I draw on archival work from the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, letters between the Cape Coast Castle and the Royal African Company, and National Archives of the United Kingdom, to assess the prevalence and role of disability aboard the slave ship. I read Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* and Frederick Douglass's "The Heroic Slave" against this rich body of historical evidence that

suggests that disability was central to the construction of race on the West African coast and aboard transatlantic slavers. I situate Madison Washington's intransigence and overt black masculinity within a context of assumed black dependence established on the slave ship. Whereas Douglass eschews references to disability in his project of black uplift and self-making, the chapter argues that Melville explores the implications of associating blackness so closely with mental disability, a connotation that legitimated social violence even as it obscured its source. Such a study is important in understanding the genealogical origins for associating race and disability in the United States. Finally, the chapter addresses the enduring problem of race and disability aboard the transatlantic slave ship: namely, the necessity to define African slaves as at once racially degraded and constitutionally dependent, yet (potentially) excellent physical specimens lacking individual will and capable of being controlled and managed.

Chapter two steps back to examine the origins of the conflation of race and mental disability that Melville exploits to such powerful effect. In this chapter I read Phillis Wheatley's poetry against claims of black mental incapacity in Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785). That familiar Wheatley/Jefferson battle, I argue, casts light on the philosophical constructions of black mental disability in eighteenth-century America. A close examination of the Enlightenment philosophy that shaped the American experiment suggests that the history of intellectual disability is also the story of race. Licia Carlson, for example, notes that "idiocy" was a distinction between those fit and unfit to participate in American governance that "relied on racial stereotypes and perceptions of inferiority."[76] Allison C. Carey also points out that "ideologies of mental . . . inferiority were used to justify slavery."[77] C.F. Goodey notes, too, that even before the emergence of modern political philosophy, people of

African descent were represented in ways that implied mental incapacity. "Ethiopians" were believed to exhibit violent changes of mood and thought, or "rashness of counsel"; they were prone to hasty judgments, and possessed "unquiet and turbulent" minds.[78] Such claims suggest that intellectual disability has long served as an important marker for race.

The chapter argues that in order to maintain this claim, Thomas Jefferson constructs separate naturalized mental capabilities between whites and blacks: whites comprehend the natural world through reason rather than religion and emotion-based epistemologies, which he denigrates and associates with blacks, most notably Wheatley. My readings of Wheatley's poems push back against Jefferson's claims that blacks lack the capacity for rational thought by suggesting that Wheatley draws from a tradition of American poets, beginning with Edward Taylor, who see no distinction between rational thought and religious testimonial poetry. The chapter demonstrates the centrality of assumptions about race and mental disability in the Jefferson/Wheatley debate, and suggests ways in which the histories of mental incapacity and race can be brought together. In chapter two, I examine the philosophical constructions of black mental disability in eighteenth-century America by reading Phillis Wheatley's poetry against claims of black mental incapacity in Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785).

Chapter three moves my larger discussion of associations of race and disability into nineteenth- century debates beginning with the mixed-race subject. The tragic mulatta figure is often represented as sickly, infertile, and inclined to mental illness. In this chapter I explore these overtones of disability in constructions of the tragic mulatta figure in antebellum fiction. I argue that specific disabilities were read as manifestations of racial difference, which, in turn, became naturalized in the body of

the mixed-race subject. Race scientists argued, for example, that black blood mixed with white created an inherently infertile, mentally ill, and sickly population. The specter of infertility and claims of the inevitable dying out of mixed-race women, I claim, allowed white masters to continue to rape female slaves with impunity. Moreover, associations of mental illness and sickliness with the mixed-race subject developed as a result of legal needs to situate the mulatta figure in society at a time when legal developments mirrored medical trends. The chapter explores how authors such as Lydia Maria Child, William Wells Brown, and Harriet E. Wilson resist such constructions of the disabled mixed-race female subject by repudiating claims of infertility and offering environmental rather than racial explanations for the alleged infertility, mental disability, and sickly physiology of the mixed race subject.

My final chapter examines how we might begin to explain the disconnect between white perceptions of blacks as a dependent population and African American awareness of their own latent capacities in mid-nineteenth-century American fiction. Historically, associations of disability with race have been remarkably detrimental to African Americans. Building on these developments, I interrogate the relationship between race and disability during the Reconstruction era in Albion Tourgée's *Bricks Without Straw* (1880). As a number of scholars have shown, caricatured black characters abound in white nineteenth-century American fiction, positioning exaggerated racial physiognomies as evidence of their inability to participate in American civil discourse. This chapter argues that Tourgée's characterization of Reconstruction-era black characters systematically challenges deeply associated and mutually reinforced constructions of race and disability in literary plots of the antebellum era. As I have demonstrated, such constructions allowed Americans to question the capacity of black Americans to participate in American government

fully. Whereas American authors in the mid-nineteenth century often relied on sentimental and romantic depictions to highlight the horrors and inconsistencies of slavery, Tourgée participates in a more representational mode of fiction that relied less on stereotypes than it did on the realities of black capabilities. The chapter suggests also that Tourgée's characters represent a previously unstudied exploration of representations of both race and disability in the Reconstruction novel.

The dissertation concludes with a coda that points toward more expansive possibilities at the intersection of work in critical race and disability studies. I anticipate expanding my study to include questions of how representations of race and disability in American and African American literature might inform important moments in American history and culture. The world-famous minstrel performer T.D. Rice claimed, for example, that his inspiration for his minstrel shows stemmed from seeing a disabled slave child dance while on a visit to Kentucky. How might disability studies transform our basic assumptions about minstrelsy and its representation in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901)? Allegations of inherent black disability were fundamental in arguments against the development of black regiments during the American Civil War, yet little critical work to date addresses responses to these claims by African American authors in the context of disability studies. I anticipate expanding my current chapters to address these questions and articulate changing perceptions of race and disability in American literature and culture. How might Lydia Maria Child's representation of the tragic mulatta figure, for example, inform the development of eugenic arguments that lead to anti-miscegenation laws in the early twentieth century?

In sum, "Constrained Bodies: Representing Slavery and Disability in American Literature and Culture," endeavors to identify how eighteenth- and

nineteenth-century racial thinking entwined with the language and experience of disability in these crucial periods' literatures. I argue that New World slavery situated "disability" as a legible manifestation of race central to slave ideology. I demonstrate through readings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary and archival sources relating to American slavery that the recurrence of both physical and mental disability as racial characteristics in colonial through nineteenth-century American and African American literature speaks to a mutually constitutive relationship between race and disability. My dissertation analyzes works by Phillis Wheatley, Thomas Jefferson, Lydia Maria Child, William Wells Brown, Harriet E. Wilson, Frederick Douglass, Herman Melville, Mark Twain and Albion Tourgée and demonstrates how associations of race and disability were created under the system of slavery, and how slavery depended upon the construction of people of African descent as a dependent and disabled population. I show that an assumption of blackness as disability reinforced central tenets of proslavery thought, even as representations of disabled slaves circulated to challenge the notion of the plantation as a site of paternal care. Equally important, and central to the claims of this project, is an analysis of how authors pushed back against associations of race and disability, thereby challenging the institutions built to reinforce them.

My purpose here is to examine literary representations of the slave experience and expand our understanding of the role of disability in representations of slavery, and introduce disability as an important and vital characteristic in American literature and into the dynamics of the slave experience as well as the specific ideologies that justified and perpetuated slavery. One of the chief aims of this dissertation is to investigate the assumptions that support associations of race and disability by focusing on how disability operated in eighteenth and nineteenth-century American

culture and how discourses of disability and race coalesce via slavery at specific sites of representation such as the slave ship and the auction block. Such an analysis furthers our understanding of the discursive practices by which race acquired cultural meanings associated with intellectual and physical disability, and, in turn, reinforced a hierarchy of corporeal and mental traits that determined access to privilege, power, and status.

CHAPTER ONE

Disability and the Middle Passage: Ambiguous Impairment and the Production of Dependence on the Slave Ship

Introduction

By the late 1780s, slave ships had crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the thousands, delivering millions of native African captives to New World plantations as the ideal labor power to animate a new capitalist world economy.[79] Suddenly, between 1788 and 89, a growing abolitionist polity, who realized that what happened on these ships was morally indefensible, demanded that they be called home; slave ship violence needed to be known in the home ports of London, Liverpool, Bristol, New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. Opponents of the slave trade thus began an intensive campaign to expose the realities of the slave ship to an increasingly literate and metropolitan public, and bring the very technology of slavery under both political control and public scrutiny.

Abolitionist Thomas Clarkson was central to this endeavor. A young and somewhat naïve middle-class, Cambridge-educated minster, Clarkson came face-to-face with the capacity of the slave ship to leave almost anyone who stepped on its decks seriously ill, disabled or dead. After writing a Master's Thesis on slavery at Cambridge, Clarkson became dedicated to the cause of abolition, but realized that in order to educate the public and contribute to the already rumored Parliamentary hearings on the slave trade he needed hard evidence of its horrors. He traveled first to Bristol; but when merchants and ship captains learned of his intentions, they shunned him. Tradesmen forbade anyone in their employ to speak to Clarkson, and when they passed him on the street they crossed to the other side. He noted in his diary that none of the credible "respectable" witnesses he needed to agitate for abolition would speak

to him. "[O]bliged to give up all hope of getting any evidence from this quarter," he was forced to turn to the only others who had concrete experience and knowledge of the slave trade: common sailors.[80]

Clarkson soon met his first informant, John Dean, a black sailor whose mutilated back provided gruesome evidence of his torture while working aboard a slave ship.[81] Dean's description of his experience shocked Clarkson, and a macabre portrait of the life of a slave ship sailor emerged as Clarkson met seamen who were lame, blind, ulcerated, and fevered. Sailors flocked to him, desperate to provide evidence that slave ships were not the ideal training ground for young sailors, as everyone believed.[82]

Clarkson realized that disease and disability were not easily distinguishable categories aboard the slave ship. Many diseases customary to both crew and cargo left untreated during the long voyage across the Atlantic led to debilitating and permanent impairments. Through the Society of Merchant Venturers, Clarkson learned of the disabilities sailors developed at the hand of untreated disease. John Fielding, a sailor aboard the *Black Joke* lost the toes on his left foot to "high scurvy." Another sailor, Benjamin Williams, contracted ulcers in his limbs, which led to the amputation of his right leg; and John Smith and Cornelius Calahan "were seized with a Distemper in their Eyes then raging amongst the Slaves which . . . deprived them of their sight."[83]

There was a cruel irony in the emergence of the sailor as an object of sympathy within the growing abolitionist movement. Sailors perpetrated many of the horrors of the slave trade. Although he could have just as easily gathered the stories of the slaves trapped below the decks of slave ships in Liverpool, Bristol and London at the time, Clarkson took a calculated risk. By emphasizing the dismal lot of slave ship sailors, Clarkson and his fellow abolitionists wagered that the British government and British

public would more likely respond to the testimony of disabled sailors than the unfamiliar voices of impaired slaves. Clarkson's instincts were right, but only at the expense of the "injur'd Africans" whose stories of disablement, Clarkson believed, had little rhetorical effect in British courts.[84]

Asking disabled sailors to testify to the terrors of the slave trade did, however, indirectly draw attention to the condition of the slaves themselves. The Liverpool writer "Dicky Sam" described the violent reality of the slave ship this way: "the captain bullies the men, the men torture the slaves, the slaves' hearts are breaking with despair."[85] The statement inadvertently expresses an important truth regarding the prevalence of violence aboard slavers. Sailors, who went blind from contact with slaves suffering from ophthalmia or lost limbs due to disease, malnutrition or exposure took out their plight on the even more abject and powerless captives under their supervision and control. Moreover, sailors received better medical care at the hand of slave ship surgeons than slaves.[86] If blind, amputated and mentally impaired sailors testified before Parliament of what the slave ship had done to them, the natural question Thomas Clarkson hoped the British public would ask was, what did the slave ship then do to the enslaved?

To attend this question I address the enduring problem of race and disability aboard the transatlantic slave ship: namely, the necessity to define African slaves aboard slave ships as at once racially degraded and constitutionally dependent, yet excellent physical specimens lacking individual will and capable of being controlled and managed. In response to this problem this chapter makes two central claims about the relationship between disability and the slave ship. First, I explore the historical archive that positions disability, corporeal integrity, and illness as central to the economic operation of the transatlantic slave ship. I argue that beginning with the

slave ship, disability was fundamental to constructions of racial dependence and the ideological development of race-based slavery. Moreover, in direct contrast to the disabled slaves deposited in the New World, I will suggest that the comparative healthiness, alleged happiness, and capacity to reproduce of second-generation slaves served as an argument in favor of the natural beneficence of slave holding. Delivering exceedingly damaged human beings to the New World, as representative of an ideal workforce facilitated this particular perspective because diseased Africans made the argument for the tractability and dependence of slaves easier to make.

Second, I position the slave ship as a site of representational power that creates black disability and frames its representation. Two nineteenth-century American literary representations of the slave ship—Frederick Douglass's "The Heroic Slave" (1852) and Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* (1855) offer a counter-discourse to the historical archive I sent forward in the opening sections of this paper and present an unusual opportunity to explore how impairment became central to the ideological development of racial dependence aboard the slave ship. Where Douglass eschews references to disability in his project of black uplift and self-making, Melville sees racialized and disabled characters as embodying the answers to crucial questions about racial encounter, corporeal difference, social violence and authority.

Scholars have for years explored the human element of slavery by analyzing the dynamics of the master/slave relationship and the role of dependence in slave ideology. Eugene Genovese labels the "organic relationship" between white master and black slave, "paternalism."[87] Orlando Patterson is more candid; he argues that the "unequal relations" between white and black in Antebellum America is a form of "parasitism."[88] Simply put, the slaveholder camouflaged his dependence by defining the slave as dependent. Both approaches recognize the conceptualization of

dependence as central to race-based slavery; yet they elide the significance of disability in these constructions.

Beginning with the slave ship, disability was central to constructions of racial dependence and the ideological development of race-based slavery. Alexander Bryson, director general of the Navy Medical Service claimed that dysentery, fever, small-pox, ophthalmia, and diarrhea were the diseases from which slaves suffered most severely on board slave ships.[89] Disease left untreated quickly developed into permanent disabilities. Slaves who showed signs of leprosy or elephantiasis were thrown overboard or left to die in auction houses where they could not be sold.[90] Those who survived the smallpox were often left disfigured, permanently reducing their selling price. Fevers led to deafness and ophthalmia left almost all infected partially or completely blind. The voyage itself often inflicted physical disabilities unrelated to disease, too. Famous slave ship surgeon Alexander Falconbridge writes that the slaves on his ship had nothing to lie upon but the bare planks, which after being chained and unable to move for 70-90 days rubbed the skin, sinew, and muscle right off the bone of the slaves' shoulders and hips.[91] The simple fact was that slave ships frequently arrived in the New World with emaciated, deaf, blind, and physically disabled slaves.

Slave ship captains knew that too much confinement would lead to depression, disease and disability among the enslaved, but they also knew that their job was what Orlando Patterson calls the "psychological facet of influence," or the capacity to persuade another person to change the way he perceives his circumstances.[92] As important as a visibly healthy physique was to New World planters, the malleability of a slave was imperative. White planters demanded a specific product that the slave ship was designed to produce: an ablebodied, yet docile and dependent labor force.

But more often than not, the slave ship factory and the transatlantic economic engine it supported produced permanently disabled slaves, which served only to add validity to a system that deemed Africans as dependent subjects. Slaves who survived the middle passage and accepted, consciously or not, that they were dependent upon whites for food, water, medicine and shelter sold well. Disease aboard the slave ship meant the ever-present possibility of disability or death of African cargo, but it also ensured compliance and dependence among the enslaved.

According to Eva Kittay, people with disabilities are assumed to be the proper objects of paternalistic care.[93] Like so many racialized discussions of the African body, the claims of black disability and dependence emerged out of European perceptions of those they enslaved on the West African coast.[94] In consequence, this view justified slavery as a necessary condition for the health and well-being of individuals with perceptively dependent bodies. Similarly, the disabled slaves disembarking from slave ships in the New World shaped constructions of black dependence. Diseased and disabled slaves simply proved that Africans were ill-equipped for full participation in public life because they could not ensure the preservation of their health independently.

The protagonist of Douglass's The Heroic Slave" refuses to be labeled dependent, and he rejects historical and cultural constructions of blacks as disabled subjects of paternalistic concern. In demanding the means by which to become independent Madison Washington counters the narrative of the inevitable dependence of people of African descent upon whites. Washington's intelligence and physical perfection serve as a rebuttal to theories of race that frame blackness as emblematic of incapacity, stupidity, barbarity, and dependence—an ideology which, I argue, was

born on the slave ship. Few nineteenth-century Americans challenged this construction more effectively than Frederick Douglass.

Although there is little critical work on Frederick Douglass and impairment, his entire corpus centers on challenging the very ontological assumptions of disability that theories of race and slavery rested upon. According to Robert Levine, Douglass directly confronts perceived black dependence and black incapacity by presenting himself in his work as a sort of "Benjamin Franklin" and "master of self-reliance."[95] Douglass's exemplification of Franklinian forms of uplift, self-making and possessive individualism in "The Heroic Slave" remains crucial to the limning of his identity as an ablebodied intelligent masculine black man. To be sure, Madison Washington repudiates any indication that his blackness is somehow emblematic of incapacity and dependence when he successfully instigates a slave ship rebellion.

Where Douglass eschews the conflation of race and disability by highlighting black masculinity, Herman Melville acknowledges his attraction to racial constructions and examines their sources and influence. Melville gets inside the head of scientific racism when he reverses the role of master and slave in *Benito Cereno* (1855). According to Samuel Otter, Melville criticizes his period's obsession with defining, ranking, and separating human types that came to justify the enslavement of Africans and participates in contemporary debates about racial identity and character without choosing sides.[96] *Benito Cereno* openly explores the supposition that the source of black dependence is race based and internal to people of African descent. The disabled Captain Cereno and the seemingly infantile Babo reverse positions as master and slave, stretching theories of race-based dependence and disability to their limit. Similar to Thomas Clarkson, Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville understood that in order to begin exploring and challenging the very real ontological

assumptions of theories of race and disability, they needed to begin with the source of such assumptions: the slave ship.

The Slave-Ship & Disability

The archives of the Atlantic slave trade make for a dark and harrowing history. Unlike the literary representations of both the captives and the voyagers aboard seventeenth and eighteenth-century slavers, however, the slave trade archive reveals pages of statistics for our own interpretive calculus of the devastation inflicted on its human cargo. At its simplest the slave trade archive describes the enforced flow of humanity between Africa and the Americas. Twelve million Africans were loaded on to slave ships, but beneath the dispassionate tables and numbers that make up slave ship ledgers the suffering of millions of individuals remain muted. Of the twelve million Africans loaded on to ships, ten and a half million survived to landfall in the Americas. There were nearly 27,000 known slave voyages across the Atlantic, of which 12,000 were British or British Colonial expeditions, mainly North American.[97]

The majority of those African captives were male, although the gender ratio on slave ships changed to accommodate a commercial ideal of two males for every female aged between twelve and twenty-five. It is tempting to elide the significance of the Atlantic slave trade in our own historical memory. We tend to think of transatlantic migrations to the Americas as largely European, for example. But until about 1820 the African was the typical migrant across the Atlantic.[98] Before the 1820s, some two and a half million Europeans migrated to the Americas, but in the same period almost eight and a half million Africans were transported in slave ships. Of the total number of Africans landed in the Americas fewer than ten percent were

taken to North America. The great majorities were shipped to Brazil and to the Caribbean for one basic reason: they were destined to work in the sugar fields; it was sugar that pulled the majority of the Africans across the Atlantic.[99]

On board the slave ship, captured Africans were packed below decks, normally divided by gender, with the young often sharing the women's quarters. They were more crowded than any other comparable maritime travellers (including troops). Death rates on slave ships were on average thirty-two percent, although this rate fluctuated and eventually decreased as the technology of the slave ship (its speed and ability to hold food and water) improved. Mortality levels declined to about twenty percent by the nineteenth century, but never went below five percent. Most slave deaths on board were from gastrointestinal disorders, mainly the "bloody flux." Inevitably, untold numbers of survivors stumbled ashore in the Americas suffering from the same condition: weakened, disabled, traumatized, and visually suffering (Slave ship crewmembers often "bunged up"—stuffed their anuses with hemp—in order to pass them off as fit).[100]

Slaves were shackled below, normally in small groups. They fed from communal supplies, and shuffled, in chains, to the "necessary tubs" to urinate and defecate; but when sick, they relieved themselves where they lay, their feces soiling and contaminating themselves and their fellow prisoners. When weather and security allowed the crew to bring Africans on deck for exercise, they did so in small groups; sailors always feared that Africans might resort to violence or simply end their torments by leaping overboard. When Parliament began scrutinizing the slave trade in the late 1780s, the litany of maritime horror stories from men who had served in the slave ships proved a telling factor in turning opinion against the trade—disability, both that of the crew and the captives played an important role in these discussions.[101]

Africans were prepared for sale by ships' crews, keen to present their cargo in the best commercial light—that is, as fit and well as they could manage. This generally involved a period of cleaning, resting, assessing and feeding on board, in an attempt to make good the wear and tear of the Atlantic crossing. For many Africans, little could be done to restore them to health (and salability). On the shore, the patterns of physical inspection were similar wherever the slave ships made landfall, repeating the Africans' humiliations in their initial encounters with slave traders in the African coast. Slaves were scrutinized and probed, handled, and inspected in the most intimate, medical-like manner, to seek out their strengths and imperfections. After the Atlantic crossing, there were plenty of flaws to look for. In warehouses, in barracoons, on board ship, or in auction pens and markets, potential purchasers, agents, planters and merchants inspected Africans, all keen to acquire healthy—and therefore profitable—slaves.[102]

There is perhaps nothing more revealing of the importance of disability as a stigmatized and racializing embodiment than the existence and fate of "refuse slaves," those incapacitated or perceived to be so and rendered commercially worthless by sickness, physical deformity, madness, or their refusal to play the part of slave. Even among those who were sold, a substantial proportion carried to their American homes the ailments and frailties acquired in the protracted period of enslavement and transportation.[103] Slave ship captains often marked in their homeward invoice books their frustrations at not being able to sell what they repeatedly called their "refuse slaves" in the New World. Typically refuse slaves were those deemed too sick to work and unlikely to survive; dysentery, smallpox, the bloody flux and dropsy being the most common ailments among the enslaved aboard slave ships.[104]

Humphrey Morice, captain of the eighteenth-century slaver, *Katherine,* wrote in his ship log of the various refuse slaves whom he knew would never make it to the New World, or would be unsalable once they arrived. Morice describes a man and woman who jumped overboard as "mad"; a few days later another woman died of "palsey and lost the use of her limbs." A man expired "sullen and melancholy," another "Sullen (and a foole)." Others died suddenly, with a fever and "swelling and Pains in his limbs." Others with lethargy and flux, with dropsy, and consumption."[105]
One wouldn't think so, but Morice was considered an engaged merchant and ship owner who demanded that his slaves be treated well. He put surgeons and limes on his vessels well before others chose to do so, and instructed his captains to buy slaves between the ages of twelve and twenty-five, two males to a female, "Good and Healthy, and not blind, Lame or Blemished." Morice knew what types of slaves were marketable and which he was most likely to be able to sell in the New World. He noted that captains were to avoid "Dwarfish slaves," those with "Ugly faces, Yellowish skins," and "films in the eyes." He instructed captains to avoid taking on slaves with "missing fingers or toes, navels sticking out" or "bandy legged, lunatic, lethargic," or "idiot slaves"[106]

Most captains never came close to achieving these goals, since the most marketable slave was also the hardest to catch. In fact, slaver captains often found themselves stopping along the West African coast for weeks trying to collect enough saleable human cargo before making the voyage to the New World. James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw's narrative describes the fate of a slave on the African coast considered unsalable by European slaver captains. Leading him aboard a French brig, the merchant who deceivingly took Gronniosaw away from his family and deposited him on the Gold Coast is told that Gronniosaw is "too small" and would not be

purchased. A few days later, A Dutch captain, also deeming Gronniosaw "so little that no person would buy" him, only agrees to take the young slave after they determine that "if they could not sell [him], they would throw [him] overboard."[107] (11). Already considered a "refuse slave" and likely unsalable across the Atlantic, Gronniosaw's life has little value within the Atlantic slave trade.

Without Gronniosaw's ingratiation to the Dutch captain, he would likely have joined the 1.8 million African slaves who either died or were deemed unsalable due to disability or illness and tossed into the Atlantic between 1700 and 1808.[108] For slave ship captains and their investors, human "wastage" was simply part of the business, and something to be calculated into all the planning. Aboard the slave ship, slaves were compelled to exercise ("dance"), maintain their health through a varied and protracted method of selective feeding, discipline and punishment. The goal was to transform in two months (the average length of a transatlantic voyage) African human beings into commodities for the international labor market. The slave ship served simultaneously as a war machine, mobile prison and factory that "produced" slaves within itself, doubling their economic value as they moved from a market on the eastern Atlantic to one on the West, helping to create a labor power that animated a growing world economy in the eighteenth century.[109] As a site of black confinement, the slave ship also produced race, transforming "black Africans" into "negro slaves," and altering those who survived into an ideal factory-produced labor power. As both Gronniosaw and Olaudah Equiano—the only two surviving slave narratives that describe the middle passage in detail—show, the commodification and production of both race and an ideal labor power aboard the slave ship depended on a certain ideology of black disability.[110]

Turning people into slaves required more than the exchange of money and market transactions. The slave ship as both a factory and a prison facilitated the possibility of economic exchange by producing a commodity, whose most commercially relevant feature was his/her exchangeability. Slave ships transformed independent beings into human commodities through a system of violence. The process began at the littoral, or the border where the African landscape disappeared into the sea. At the littoral captives discovered that they had passed the point of no return. As captives witnessed the disappearance of their homelands into the horizon, they learned that the specific system in which they were now situated put them up against nearly impossible odds of escape.

Aboard the slavers the methods by which traders turned people into property that could move easily, smoothly through the vast system of slavery took the form of both physical and social violence. Along the coast, captives felt the enclosure of prison walls and the weight of iron shackles holding them incarcerated in shore-based trade forts or aboard ships that functioned as floating warehouses as more captives were accumulated. The practices that underwrote African commodification also reflected a rationalized science of human deprivation that devastated the slaves physically. Through the trial and error of experiment and observation, European traders determined what constituted a slave hold that was "too crowded," or shackles that caused too much discomfort, as was determined to be the case at Cape Coast Castle in the first decade of the eighteenth century, when the chief agent there shared the observation: "double Irons are too painful for ye slaves."[111] Within the calculus of human commodification those who died or became disabled due to overcrowding or excessively inhumane treatment were reduced to statistics cited to preserve the marketability of human beings commodified as salable goods.

As a specific site of violence and commodification, the slave ship—and its accompanying technology—was designed to render captives in the distorted guise of human commodities to market and represent them as the ideal labor product: agentless, dependent, and docile yet ablebodied laborers. Turning people into ideal commodities entailed more than the completion of a market transaction. Slave ships routinely carried manacles for the wrists and shackles for the ankles of captives. The "cat" was used to move people around the decks, to "stow" them belowdecks, and to punish them for any and all infractions from refusing to eat to attempted insurrections. Designed to inflict as much pain as possible without permanently disabling captives, the nine-knotted tails were constructed to lacerate the flesh and maximize the pain of the person being flogged. Captains used thumbscrews to torture rebellious captives and the *speculum oris* to force open throats and pour gruel into those who refused to eat.[112]

Most of the slaves who arrived alive in the Americas appeared swollen with dropsy when they were put up for sale. Others bore the painful evidence of unhealed maladies suffered on the long journey. When the ironically named *Welcome* arrived in Barbados in 1681, the cargo earned the description "very ordinary Negroes" adding that most of the cargo was old, blind, or burst.[113] For many slave owners, witness to slave ship cargo, to be black was already to be sick, lazy and in need of care. To be an ordinary Negro was to be old, blind, or burst; to be black and to be enslaved was to have something wrong with you from the start.

The evidence of almost constant illness and pervasive disability is noted in English captains Edwyn Stede and Stephen Cascoigne's invoice books from the slave ship, *Coaster*. They write of their frustration at not being able to sell their remaining slaves in Barbados: "Some good men among them, " the agents reported, "and as wee

conceive many of the men are much the worse for being soe Loaded with Irons as they have been all the voyage the Captaine saying they are very unruly and once designed to Rise and Cutt him and his People off"[114] The Captains' lament addresses the quandary of commercial success in the slave trade, which hinged on convincingly representing the exceedingly damaged human beings delivered to the Americas as the ideal embodiment of labor power that their customers were looking to buy: ablebodied and strong, yet equally important, docile, tractable and "likely." Representing sick and disabled slaves as healthy and strong often required persuasive marketing on behalf of slave ship captains, but it also made the argument for the manageability of their slaves easier to make. Although "lusty," Captain Stede and Cascoigne's slaves were not "likely," meaning that they had arrived healthy across the Atlantic, but refused to play their prescribed role in the colonial economy; they were deemed by the planter class in Barbados to be too dangerous to bring into the heart of the plantation.

Mental disabilities also figured into the financial and security considerations of buyers and sellers. Slave ship records suggest that those slaves who through their loud, aggressive, and angry behavior placed themselves on the margins of the marketplace were pathologized as mad. [115] Moreover, slave ship traumas produced mental disability just as disease and maltreatment produced physical impairments. Among the Africans brought to Jamaica aboard the *Providence* in January 1681, one woman revealed herself to be "betweene mad & Foole, soe that noe body would give anything for her or accept of her for nothing, being dangerous to be Kept in Port Royall or any plantation where fyre may doe hurt."[116] Similarly, at the conclusion of proceeding to disperse the cargo delivered aboard the *Diligence* in October 1676, a "mad woman" remained unsold; and when the sale of captives arriving aboard the

Marygold came to a close in June 1677, "Two Mad Negroes Remained unsold."[117] Other "mad slaves" remained unsold because they killed white sailors or remained unmanageable, and in the case of one nameless African "cut another Negroe mans Throate & stabd him in the Brest & when he had soe done hanged himself in the Place."[118]

Removal of slaves from the market by reason of madness can be read as a form of resistance by playacting slaves, but the representation of the unmanageable and rebellious slave as "mad," also frames the un-salability of refuse slaves within their refusal to mentally accept their prescribed role as enslaved labor, and brings to the foreground the hidden and often dismissed place of disability aboard the slave ship. Although physically capable, the aforementioned "mad" slaves were deemed unmanageable because they refused to accept their prescribed role as the physically able, yet docile and tractable ideal labor force needed in the New World.

The transatlantic slave ship is a site of representational power because it served as the locus through which a violent commodification process shaped the image of the African-American body as prone to disease, dependent and child-like, while simultaneously marketing African slaves as the promised product needed to animate a world economy. As an imperialist tool and a mobile site of black enslavement and black embodiment, the slave ship serves as an ideal representational site for exploring this particular construction of black disability. Through the process of moving Africans from the coast to the Americas slave ships created a disabled and perceptively needy labor force upon which white planters could construct a narrative of dependence and paternalism. Worn down by disease, inadequate diet, regimental exercise, constant surveillance, and physical, mental, verbal, and sexual abuse,

African slaves appeared sub-human—diseased, disoriented, frightened, insane—upon arrival to the Americas.

Embodied as racially different, diseased and disabled, whites easily constructed their own accounts of blacks thriving both physically and mentally under the condition of slavery. The slave ship was central to these accounts because without it no quantifiable difference between American-born Africans and the sick and disabled slaves whom planters brought back with them from American ports every summer could be made. "Salt-water negroes," as they were called, were distinctive from those who had grown up in American bondage. Writing of Barbados in the first decade of the eighteenth century, John Oldmixon observed that there was "a great deal of difference" between persons who came from Barbados from Africa and their descendants born in the Americas. "Those that are born in Barbadoes are much more useful Men," he explains, "than those that are brought from Guinea."[119] The view that "salt-water negroes" were not as useful as those already born into slavery reinforces constructions of African bodies as dependent and testifies to their physiological and psychological compatibility with a system of oppression. The comparative healthiness, alleged happiness, and capacity to reproduce of second-generation slaves served as an argument in favor of the natural beneficence of slave holding. Because the black body is read as deficient, sickly and agentless those already within the system of slavery are considered thriving examples of the merits of the oppressive system. The denigration of salt-water slaves as less useful and displaced was a view shared by American-born slaves, too. Not only did slave owners favor "the Creolian Negroes"; so too did slaves born in the New World "value themselves much on being born in Barbadoes."[120] Edward Long noted the same in eighteenth-century Jamaica.

"Native-born slaves," he observed, held "the Africans in the utmost contempt, stiling them, 'salt-water Negroes,' and 'Guiney birds.'"[121]

The reason for this distinction is directly related to slave ship sickness and disability. A French slave ship captain describes the important process of the "breaking in of fresh negroes" on Louisiana plantations in 1807 in terms of slave health:

> Negroes bought from the importers and carried home by purchasers are ordinarily treated differently from the old ones. They are gradually accustomed to work. They are made to bathe often, to take walks from time to time, and especially to dance: they are distributed in small numbers among old slaves in order to dispose them better to acquire their habits. These attentions are not usually due to sentiments of humanity. Interest requires them. It happens too often that poor masters, who have no other slaves, or are too greedy, require hard labor of these fresh negroes, exhaust them quickly, lose them by sickness and more often by grief.[122]

Newly arrived Africans suffered tremendously from the journey, but recognizing that they were both mentally and physically damaged after two months at sea with little food, illness and abuse, "good" masters realized that in order for their investments to become profitable, they needed to keep them alive and healthy.

Viewed already as dependent, damaged and incapable of caring for themselves, each newly arrived slave who recovered from illness on the plantation and learned to work within the slave system served for slave owners as another example of the system's logic and sensibility. So important was the success of "seasoning" to the ideology of slave health that plantation manuals included specific guidelines for the recuperation of salt-water slaves. Much of these guidelines

suggested that newly arrived slaves required minimal labor and sufficient food in order to meet their owners' expectations of ideal slave labor.[123] But doctors in the Caribbean islands did not understand the idea of black health as a state of optimal physical, mental and social well-being. In fact, physicians used the term "healthy" to mean the absence of visible illness.[124] Accordingly, the word "healthy" seems to have been an expression of an overall assessment of the physical state of the enslaved founded on the premise that all Africans were inherently diseased. As speculative geographer and voyager, George Best, put it, blackness "proceeded of some natural infection of the first inhabitants of that country."[125] On the basis that African blackness was the result of a permanent impairment, a "natural infection," white physicians who attended newly arrived slaves understood blackness as a diseased state in and of itself. Likewise, planters' primary concern was whether the enslaved were capable of doing his or her job, since African health was itself oxymoronic.

With the advent of the antislavery movement, the salubrious nature of slave labor took on rhetorical importance in the defense of slavery. Suddenly, proving not only that slaves were healthy when working on the plantation but also that they depended upon whites for their health became important. "Negroes as a race can neither do as much work nor continue at it as long as whites," claims one contributor of *De Bows Review*, adding that they are "thriftless, thoughtless people, and have to be restricted in many points essential to their constitutions and health. Left to themselves they will over eat, unseasonably eat, walk half the night, sleep on the ground, out of doors, anywhere."[126] Without white supervision, Africans, it seems would have reverted back to their natural sickly state.

One anonymous contributor to Debow's in his article, "The Middle Passage," argues exclusively for the need to care for people of African descent because of their

dependent state: "They are weak and dependent, and command that regard and assistance which superiority and strength render to weakness and dependence."[127] Speaking of the salubrious effects of plantation labors, Edward Long argued that "the effects they produce on debilitated Negroes, and on brute animals, whom they restore to health and vigour, rendering the most emaciated plump and lively, are extremely remarkable."[128] When imported Africans recovered from the middle passage and became productive laborers, incapacity and disease reinforced already ingrained conflations of race, dependency and disability established on the slave ship.

The success of "seasoning" or introducing slaves to their new environment and status was central to this logic. If debilitated and diseased slaves managed to become healthy, productive workers after laboring on the plantation, then the enslavement, transportation and enforced labor of millions of Africans could be read as benevolence. As planter William Beckford puts it, [l]et a purchaser of new Negroes be ever so successful in seasoning them, he does not think that he will be able with the most unremitting attention, and even with a superfluity of food, to preserve and domesticate, in three years . . ." you will turn out "a really industrious and efficient slave."[129] The formula for an "industrious" and "efficient" slave, despite his or her debilitated and perhaps irredeemable status, Beckford tells us, is domestication, preservation and food. Every new slave that survived and thrived confirmed that African health depended upon white supervision.

In reality, slaves died regularly during the six months to three years planters seasoned new slaves. On the Codrington plantations in Barbados between 1741 and 1746, forty-three percent of all imported slaves died within three years of their arrival to the island.[130] Moving imported Africans from the pestilential disease environments of slave ships to those of disease-ridden New World ports was highly destructive of

life. Ironically, planters took little responsibility for the death of their slaves, blaming instead the cause on their own Africanness. Two doctors in Jamaica attributed the high mortality rate among recently imported slaves to the many "disorders" they brought with them from Africa and "the bad habit of body of these People."[131] Unfortunately, the demand for unskilled labor was at times so great that little preparation was made for the reception of new slaves. Planters were torn between the need to immediately augment their labor force by the purchase of new slaves and the need to extend the life and improve the quality of their investment in human capital by assigning light tasks and measures of health care known as "seasoning." They were tempted to resort to the former expedient because they were commonly supplied with slaves at the time they were wanted and in the numbers needed. Moreover, enough new slaves survived and became productive to maintain their system.

Ironically, the ideology of slavery held that Africans brought to the Americas as labor subjects were by definition already disabled. Investors in the Royal African Company, slavery apologist and slave owners all positioned the alleged inherent mental and physical inferiority of the African subject, and their supposed deficient and repellent bodies to justify enslavement. Slaveholders argued repeatedly that the minds and bodies of those they enslaved were impaired to such an extent that slavery served as a beneficial and humane system owed to Africans as dependent subjects. Despite the fact that disability permeated the ideology of slavery, the practice of enslavement and the transportation of slaves often required a reversal of the very ideals that legitimized slavery; that is, captured slaves couldn't be "too" disabled, because the physically impaired proved a bad return on investment.[132]

With the need to keep investors happy by importing only relatively ablebodied slaves, yet also maintain the ideology of slavery as a paternalistic institution for a

dependent and incapable population; mental disability began to justify the continued importation and enslavement of Africans. As the transient site in which ablebodied slaves were shaped into dependent, agentless and needy laborers, the slave ship served as the most important cultural site for the justification of slavery and the conflation of blackness with disability in the eighteenth century. In a sense, the slave ship produced the conditions that were assumed to be a natural justification for race-based slavery.

The vision of an agentless, incapable, dependent and pliable workforce drove the market for African slaves inflected by years of pseudo-scientific conflations of race and degeneracy. In 1618, influential Parisian anatomist Jean Piolan blistered the skin of an African man with a chemical agent in order to identitfy the actual layer of skin where dark pigmentation is found.[133] Some sixty years later, Dutch anatomist Antoni Van Leeuwenhoek began a long history of interpreting the meaning of blackness through his examinations of black skin under a miscroscope. He concluded that blackness came from what he identified as "black scales," thereby reducing blackness to a sub-human status.[134] By the 1730s, and at the height of the European slave trade, an increasing number of naturalists, anatomists, and religious writers began debating the questions of the origin and meaning of blackness more intensely and from a variety of perspectives.

In 1733, the *Journal de Trevoux*, Jesuit priest Auguste Malfert advanced the heretical position that blackness indicated that humans with different morphologies and pigmentations had different origins.[135] Three years later, Monsieur de J*** published a widely read theory in the same religious journal positing the deleterious effects of climate on the African's color.[136] Interest in the origin of blackness reached its high point in 1739 when the Academie royale des sciences de Bordeaux focused

Europe's attention on human blackness as a deleterious condition by offering a prize for the best essay addressing the following question: "What is the physical cause of negro color, of the quality of their hair, and of the degeneration of the one and of the other?"[137]

The question propagated volumes of specious arguments regarding the specificity of African bodies and prompted a new generation of European anatomists to seek out, measure, and track human blackness. According to Andrew Curran, much of this research turned to the brain.[138] At the Berlin Royal Academy of sciences Johann Friedrich Meckel asserted that African brains had a comparatively darker hue. Meckel's findings were quickly accepted in both France and Germany and in 1765, his work further advanced the distinction between white and black brains. He posited the existence of an elemental fluid that he dubbed *oethiops* (ethiops), which supposedly originated in the African's darkened brain and flowed through the nerves and into the skin; African blackness was rooted in the deficiency of his own brain.[139] Many anatomists and naturalists simply assumed that these new anatomical discoveries justified the long-standing prejudice that the negro had a comparatively limited cognitive potential. Most notoriously, the Gottingen savant Samuel Thomas Soemmering proclaimed triumphantly in 1784 that science had found a demonstrable link between the African's brutal stupidity and the supposedly coarse "strings" linking his brain to the rest of his body.[140]

Anatomy, especially as influential thinkers practiced it, produced the most authoritative statements regarding the particularities of the black African body during the eighteenth century.[141] Rife with mechanistic metaphors and persuasive rhetorical arguments that claimed to explain the placement and form of and relationship among human body parts, eighteenth-century anatomy was compelling, and not only for

scientific readers. Ostensibly legitimate and scientific research, which positioned the African subject as ideal for manual labor, drove many of the rational arguments for the increased capitalizing of the Atlantic slave trade; Africans were designed to labor because their perceived mental incapacity prevented them from participating in the Enlightenment ideals Europe celebrated throughout the eighteenth century.[142] Lauded in its day as a technological wonder and evidence of white colonial power, the slave ship served as proof of white intellectual capacity and white managerial competence. If whites were capable of designing and building a ship this advanced, and if they could capture Africans and transport them to the Americas, what better proof than the slave ship existed to justify the absolute supremacy of whites over blacks?[143] Perceived mental incapacity contributed to the construction of Africans as agentless humans, capable of being formed and shaped to an ideal laboring commodity. Only by imagining that the disabled black brain made Africans dependent upon whites could European and American investors justify the continued enslavement of millions of Africans.

Few white nineteenth-century Americans contested the notion that people of African descent depended—much as they believed children did—upon white managerial competence and support to live. Delivering exceedingly damaged human beings to the New World, as representative of an ideal workforce facilitated this particular perspective because diseased Africans made the argument for the tractability and dependence of slaves easier to make. It became very convenient to argue that blacks were inherently sickly and dependent upon whites when planters encountered the typically damaged human beings they purchased aboard slave ships slowly regain health when assigned specific labors within plantation economies. As an institution, American slavery built, supported, and maintained specific sites where

these particular attitudes toward the African body and the African mind were defined. As part of the institution of slavery the slave ship served as the first site in which Africans were commodified, producing slaves allegedly designed for specific labors, allocated by a particular construction of the African body as diseased and dependent, in need of a recuperative slave system.

The Able Body and Black Masculinity in "The Heroic Slave"

In 1853, Douglass took up the subject of slave ship rebellion in his only piece of fiction, "The Heroic Slave." The novella challenges the construction of the African as diseased and dependent aboard the very site of confinement that had for centuries shaped New World views on race. Few American authors were as successful as Douglass in refuting claims that people of African descent were perpetually stunted in their human development. But the task of presenting an African character his readers would and could identify with, as a person was a difficult one. Representing black humanity, intelligence and physical strength within the slave ship—the very factory that produced the ideal labor subject—required eliminating diseased, broken and infantilized characteristics of African bodies slave traders utilized as proof of black dependence. In "The Heroic Slave," Douglass offers a way to think about how attitudes towards blacks can be changed by eliding the historical evidence of slave ship disability and disease.

This is not to say that Douglass's representation is inaccurate. Douglass takes as his source the actual *Creole* slave ship rebellion of 1841, which was not a transatlantic slaver and likely did not experience the disease, disability and death almost guaranteed during the middle passage. By refuting constructions of black dependency and disability aboard a slave ship, however, Douglass writes as if the

slave ship cannot and did not wholly shape Africans. Moreover he positions masculinity as the method by which attitudes about blacks change, particularly those that stressed the infantilization of people of African descent. In "The Heroic Slave" a fully moral, ablebodied, independent and intelligent black man disembarks from a slave ship, simultaneously establishing the humanity of the slave and repudiating its ideology.

The story fictionalizes the struggles of the historical Madison Washington, a Virginia slave who, in Douglass's account, escaped to Canada only to return and free his wife. Washington is enslaved in the attempt and is sent to New Orleans aboard the slave ship *Creole* to be sold, where he leads a successful rebellion. Douglass knew very little about the historical Madison Washington aside from his role as leader of the mutiny, but by fictionalizing the life of the historical Madison Washington from newspaper records of the actual *Creole* rebellion of 1841, Douglass writes a powerful account of slave ship rebellion and exposes the fallacies of slave ship dependence through the assertion of black masculinity and black intelligence.

"The Heroic Slave" opens with the narrator establishing the ablebodied manliness of his protagonist. The yet unnamed hero is "one of the truest, manliest, and bravest" men in Virginia. He possesses "an arm as strong" as those who "led the armies of the American colonies through the great war for freedom."[144] He is a hero worthy of the praise of America's Founding Fathers, but owing to his chattel status, he remains invisible, only brought into view by the transcendent power of nature: "Like a guiding star on a stormy night, he is seen through the parted clouds and the howling tempests; or, like the gray peak of a menacing rock on a perilous coast, he is seen by the quivering flash of angry lightening; and he again disappears covered with

mystery."[145] Douglass's hero is both masculine and ablebodied, but one can only witness his capacity outside of specific sites of black enslavement.

The white Mr. Listwell, the novella's other main character, only becomes aware of the heroic slave in relation to the landscape in which he finds him. Instead of following the peals of church bells one Sunday afternoon, Listwell chooses to go into the neighboring forest where he overhears Washington talking to himself among the "tall pines," vowing to be free. Listwell, who has "long desired to sound the mysterious depths of the thoughts and feelings of a slave," shares with Washington's own transcendental moment in the forest.[146] Only away from the plantation, or the slave ship, within a space of privacy and freedom, Listwell is able to see Washington as a human being and a man, no different from himself. Although he is at first afraid to find a black man alone in the forest declaring his freedom, Listwell is overcome by his ignorance of blacks: Listwell's "soul, vibrated through his entire frame," when he realized that the slave is not a "thing" but a "man."[147] As someone who has the capacity to "listen well," and in so doing perceive blacks as humans and equals, John Stauffer argues, Listwell is Douglass's ideal white man.[148]

But the actual site at which this occurs—the forest, and away from the plantation or even aboard the slave ship—speaks for the interpretive power of specific sites of black enslavement and disability; that is, the story underlines the importance of cultural locations such as the slave ship in reading race. Listwell is at first afraid of Washington because he breaks from specific, corporeal and intellectual norms of the enslaved. Behind the tree where he hides, Listwell sees an enslaved man speaking openly about freedom and his love for his wife; he is not participating in slave labor, but thinking and feeling as a human being. And Listwell observes his body as he speaks, admiring its symmetry and strength. With Washington, Douglass

problematizes Emerson's injunction in "Nature" to "go into solitude" and "retire as much from his chamber as from society" within a logic of slavery.[149] How is the slave to leave society or even the chamber when he is enslaved and confined to specific sites of enslavement that make him invisible to society? Listwell can only see Washington as a man because he is removed from the systems that enslave him: "For at that moment [Washington] was free, at least in spirit. The future gleamed brightly before him, and his fetters lay broken at his feet."[150]

In nature, as Emerson posits, "when the mind is open to . . . influence" Listwell can integrate all parts; he becomes the transparent eyeball that sees his own whiteness as nothingness, and instead sees "all" that Washington is as a human being.[151] His unmediated perception allows him to see the evils of slavery and the humanity of the black subject: "Here is indeed a man . . . of rare endowments," Listwell exclaims, "pouring out his thoughts and feelings to the lonely woods; to him the distant church bells have no graceful music.[152] He shuns the church, the altar, and the great congregation of Christian worshippers, and wanders away to the gloomy forest, to utter in the vacant air complaints and griefs, which the religion of his times and his country "can neither console nor relieve."[153] Douglass is clearly aware that specific sites of black enslavement and proslavery ideology, such as the church are preclusive to objective and productive exchanges between the two races. Emerson suggests that in nature, and through the transparent eyeball, "[t]he name of the nearest friend sounds foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances, master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty. In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape . . . man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature."[154] Only in the forest, away from the ideological underpinnings of Emerson's

village and street, can whites observe the inherent humanity in the African subject. Removed from the labors and social roles assigned to slavery, Listwell can witness Washington's humanness and see his body not as a tool for labor, but as a symbol of masculinity and intelligence equal to that of whites.

Although Listwell can see the humanity of Washington now that they are both in the "wilderness,"—the master slave relationship has broken down under the power of nature, and both are away from the streets where arguably Listwell would have passed Washington as a slave without second thought—"uncontained and immortal beauty" are central to Emerson's logic of transcendence. It is only after Listwell witnesses the "manly form," "tall, symmetrical, round and strong" body of Washington, for example, and only after he sees his "Herculean strength," "eyes lit with emotion," and "intelligent and brave" countenance that Listwell can appreciate his humanity.[155]

The scene can be read as a moment of secret and homoerotic pleasure for Listwell as he admires the physical and masculine beauty of Washington from behind a tree. We can also read the scene as one that positions the male African body as inherently capable and masculine, and therefore a reflection of black humanity. Listwell is fascinated with Washington's body, but he is even more impressed with his mind because he witnesses for the first time the articulation of black self-reliance and independence. Within the perceived isolation of the forest Washington is free to express his mind in a rational and sentimental fashion that suits the sensibilities of a white Ohioan. After both admiring his able body and becoming aware of his able mind Listwell declares, "From this hour I am an abolitionist. I have seen and heard enough, and I shall go to my home . . . resolved to atone for my past indifference to

this ill-starred race, by making such exertions as I shall be able to do, for the speedy emancipation of every slave in the land."[156]

In the process of positioning black masculinity as a sign of black humanity in the transcendent exchange between Listwell and Washington, however, the possibility of disabled black bodies being perceived as human is sacrificed. In the name of bridging differences between the races, anything but a masculine, independent and able black body is stigmatized. If black masculinity is the sign of humanity, are disabled black people or even women not human? Although Douglass imbibes the transcendant possibilities of nature posited by Emerson—Listwell is only capable of seeing Washington's humanity in the forest and away from socially constructed perceptions of blackness—Douglass's invocation of masculinity as a shared human trait between Listwell and Washington is remarkably prejudicial and reductive when one considers the relationship Emerson explicates between masculinity and self-reliance and white perceptions of black dependency in the nineteenth century.

In "Self-Reliance" Emerson writes, "and now we are men," "not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing Chaos and the dark."[157] Emerson could not have found a better way to describe Madison Washington and his messianic goal to free the slaves aboard the *Creole.* Blackness as a social category that justified social marginalization and custodial care in the form of paternalism and its incumbent sites of enslavement is precisely what Douglass is challenging in "The Heroic Slave." But positioning black humanity in the form of ablebodiedness represented in the form of the strong and intelligent Madison Washington, reinforces the very logic that justified slavery to begin with. To argue, as Douglass does, however, that Washington's ablebodiedness speaks for black capacity

and therefore the self-reliance of the race, does little to challenge uncontested nineteenth-century constructions of disability that argued that abnormal bodies and minds lacked the capacity to manage and care for themselves and were therefore dependent upon others—the very argument made by slavery apologists.

Douglass was keenly aware of the American ideal that positions liberal individualism within a masculine rubric of self-government, self-determination, autonomy, and progress. By framing Washington as a black masculine ablebodied male, he positions the African subject as capable and self-determining and refutes allegations of the black body as dependent upon whites, and agentless through the symbolic and identifiable characteristics of ablebodied independence. Washington represents in name and body the ideal American self. His blackness belies any constructions of dependence because he can think and act freely. He has control over his body and can lead others, including whites: "I confess," declares Listwell at the end of the novella, "I felt myself in the presence of a superior man; one who, had he been a white man, I would have followed willingly and gladly in any honorable enterprise."[158]

Because self-determination requires an able body to secure a place in the fiercely competitive American marketplace, Douglass must celebrate his ablebodiedness in order to dispel assumptions about his incapacity and dependency already assigned him by his blackness. In many ways, Douglass participates in the very tendency to conform that Tocqueville notes in 1835: "all American minds had been fashioned on the same model because they so closely follow the same path."[159] The mass culture that enforced conformity and punished difference bore heavily on both disabled people and slaves. Although Touqueville is speaking about conforming minds here, it was mental consensus about the African body that Douglass is directly

challenging. Because democracy simultaneously implies sameness of condition and the potential for uniqueness, Douglass must frame Washington in a way that proves identifiable to a white audience that has denied people of African descent political and social relevance because of their perceived inability to govern themselves. Washington must appear not only capable of caring for himself, but also caring for others and willing to fight—as his namesake suggests—for others.

Frederick Douglass was among the few African American men to write openly in support of slave rebellion in terms echoing the American Revolution. David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829) quoted directly from the Declaration of Independence; as does William Wells Brown's *Clotel* in drawing upon statements associated with the discourse of national identity; and Henry Highland Garnet's 1843 "An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America" depends heavily on revolutionary war rhetoric: "the heroes of the American Revolution were never put upon harder fare."[160] Garnet also challenged the wide-spread condemnation of Nat Turner's rebellion by including him in his history of rebel leaders along with Denmark Vesey and Washington Madison. Garnet's speech was so controversial that white abolitionists universally condemned it, largely because like Walker, Garnet idealized black as the ability to defend one's female family members by force: "you tamely submit . . . while [your wives] are defiled before your very eyes. In the name of God we ask, are you men?"[161]

Many scholars view masculinity as central to claims for not only humanity, but for citizenship within the American public sphere in the writing of Henry Highland Garnet, David Walker and Frederick Douglass.[162] These scholars are not wrong. However, in literary and rhetorical claims for black emancipation ablebodiedness is an implicit component of black masculinity in these writers' work.

In his narrative Douglass describes being "revived within a sense of [his] own manhood" once he defeats Covey. In *Life and Times* he describes the same scene by suggesting the disparity between masculinity and helplessness: "unable to rise," "helpless" and "sick and emancipated" after being beaten by Covey, Douglass staggers to captain Auld's home to beg reprieve. After being denied and whipped again, Douglass holds Covey with a "firm hand."[163] In a striking reversal, Covey finds himself "bending over with pain" while Douglass "was a man now," "changed," and "possessed of the dignity of humanity."[164] Douglass concludes by stating, "Human nature is so constituted, that it cannot honor a helpless man, though it can pity him, and even this it cannot do long if signs of power do not arise."[165] "Power," for Douglass is corporeal and quantifiable; it is a measure of self-respect and self-confidence manifest in physical resistance. To be helpless, is to lack the ability to resist and therefore is emasculating. The central idea that emerges from Douglass's work here is a reversal of the slave ship scenario. Slavery was not restorative as many white Americans wanted to believe. Rather, liberation and freedom not only depended upon ablebodiedness, but produced it, too.

Douglass was not the first or the last African American writer to recruit disability as the true mark of physical inadequacy in his antiracist efforts to neutralize blackness. Frantz Fanon's trenchant study of racism, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1991) aims to counter blackness as representative of inherent disability by citing a conversation between his brother and a disabled veteran: "Get used to your color the way I got used to my stump. We are both casualties."[166] The comparison between disability and blackness infuriates Fanon, who "refuse[s] to accept this amputation," and embeds the disparity between his blackness and "the humility of the cripple" in a vocabulary of masculinity: "my chest has the power to expand to infinity," adding

that he is "master."[167] While Fanon avows "the Negro is not" deserving of subordination because he can prove that he is able through accepted signs of masculinity when given the chance, he suggests that "the cripple" is because such manifestations are impossible for the disabled. As an expression of femininity, disability, Fanon contends, cannot be imputed to the African man.

As critical disabilities scholar Tobin Siebers suggests, the ideology of ability is more than simply a preference for ablebodiedness; it is the "baseline by which humanness is determined, setting the measure of the body and mind that gives or denies human status to individual persons"[168] Certainly aware that representations of slave embodiment too often border on the sadistic and pornographic, Douglass is not necessarily denigrating disability in his framing of black able-bodied (or even hyper-able) masculinity as representative of black humanity.[169] Yet his zeal for promoting images of black masculine independence leads him implicitly to associate states of physical dependency with the incapacity for freedom. Douglass's exploitation of masculinity to articulate his desire to be free leads him to realize that he is neither dependent on whites, nor subordinate to them. His awareness of his blackness as no longer emblematic of disability actually makes him feel capable of removing himself from the very institutions that taught him to disparage himself.

The predominant cultural logic of masculine white supremacy and its sociopolitical accompaniment, black dependency, is precisely the construction of blackness that Douglass challenges in "The Heroic Slave." Unlike William Wells Brown, whose protagonist similarly reincarnates the spirit of America's Founding Fathers but is "as white as most white persons," Douglass makes a point of Madison Washington's blackness and contests racialist assumptions that place the spirit of liberty and masculinity in white rather than black blood.[170] In "Slavery: The

Slumbering Volcano," which includes the longest version of Washington's story, Douglass describes Washington as "a black man, with woolly head, high cheek bones, protruding lip, distended nostril, and retreating forehead."[171] Douglass, keenly aware of the implications of physiognomy and phrenological interpretations regarding race, dependency and intelligence, still describes Washington using the most stereotypically black features. But in utilizing the most hackneyed of black features to describe black masculinity and independence, Douglass contests the very stigmas that most closely align race with inherent servitude. In making sure that readers identify Washington not as a virtual white man, but as one of clearly African heritage, Douglass emphasizes than the racial character of his features cannot be associated with dependency, but rather the ablebodied masculinity he represents. Washington's intelligence and ability rest unmistakably on his blackness.

Douglass is astute enough to know that how people come to understand the world and the humanity of the people who populate it is an essential aspect of pro-slavery arguments. In print as well as in person, he had to be careful not to cast people of African descent as anything but human. His understanding of this point can be seen in his speech, "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered" (1854). Douglass starts his speech by referring to an article in the *Richmond Examiner* that asks the question: "Is the negro a man?" The writer of the article concludes that the abuses heaped upon blacks are not wrongs because they are not men. After repudiating the "scientific moonshine that would connect men with monkeys" Douglass notes that an English boot maker refused to believe that he was formerly a plantation slave because in his experience "work people in low condition, had, for the most part, flat feet." (Cambridge Doug 129) Because Douglass stood before the man well dressed, healthy and articulate, the cobbler refused to believe he had ever been a slave. The experience

proves Douglass's point that physiological appearance was central to debates about the humanity of blacks.

The glaring gap between white perceptions of black dependency and lack of agency and Washington's consistent intelligence, decisiveness, and ablebodiedness leaves whites staring at Washington in much the same way the British cobbler stared at Douglass. These exchanges are also similar to the manner in which Rosemarie Garland-Thomson suggests we stare at the disabled.[172] Staring attempts to make the unknown known, so when Washington speaks with authority and conviction and his body conforms to his decisive mind whites such as Listwell and the crew of the *Creole* stare because they expect blacks to have certain kinds of bodies and behaviors. As Garland-Thomson puts it, "stares flare up when we glimpse people who look or act in ways that contradict our expectations."[173] In much the same way that Africanized bodies displayed as freaks in the nineteenth century helped white—and more especially immigrant—Americans see who they were by staring at who they thought they were not; and as Listwell stares at Washington's able body and "sound[s] the mysterious depths of the thoughts and feelings of a slave," the extraordinary Washington excites Listwell visually to the point that be cannot "quit the place."[174] "[R]esolved to hear more, Listwell stares because he must render Washington's ablemind and ablebody legible. Encumbered by constructions of blackness that blind Listwell to the humanity of the black subject, Washington's keen mind and strong body seem at first incomprehensible.[175]

Staring at the incomprehensible ability of a sentient black body occurs more forcefully aboard the slave ship when Listwell is replaced with another white character in the final chapter of Douglass's novella. Tom Grant, a white, low-bred sailor from Virginia recounts the story of the *Creole* rebellion in a Richmond coffee

house two months later. Grant has been transformed by his interactions with Washington, who saves his life twice during the slave ship revolt. During the mutiny, the captain and the slaves' owner are killed, and Grant is "knocked senseless."[176] When Grant recovers and sees Washington commanding the brig, he calls him a "murderous villain."[177] Washington responds by justifying the killings, linking his actions to American ideals: "God is my witness that liberty, not malice, is the motive for this night's work. I have done no more to those dead men yonder, than they would have done to me in like circumstances. We have struck for our freedom . . . . We have done that which you applaud your fathers for doing, and if we are murderers, so were they."[178]

Similar to Listwell's response at the beginning of the novella, Grant is stunned by Washington's eloquence: "By heaven, it disarmed me. I forgot his blackness in the dignity of his manner, and the eloquence of his speech. Washington's "blackness"—including his stereotypical black features—becomes irrelevant to Grant when the eloquence with which Washington speaks challenges Grant's perceptions of race. As a black man and a slave, Washington fits specific constructions of dependency and ignorance that Grant, as a slave ship crew member, is hired to both believe and perpetuate. As Russ Castronovo points out, "in order to imagine freedom for slaves, whites have to be rendered unconscious of the black body"; that is, Washington must become disembodied just as Grant is in order for him to see Washington as fully human.[179] (184). Douglass wants Washington to be perceived as masculine *and* black. His stereotypical black features must no longer serve as negative markers for who he is to whites in order for Grant to appreciate that Washington is just as human as he is. This can only occur when Washington breaks from the constructed paradigm of the slave as ignorant and dependent, the very stigma slave ships create.

The experience causes Grant to question everything he believed about slaves themselves. One crewmember challenges Grant arguing that had the slaves been managed better, the rebellion would never have occurred:

> that whole affair on board the Creole was miserably and disgracefully managed. Those black rascals got the upper hand of ye altogether; and in my opinion, the whole disaster was the result of ignorance of the real character of darkies in general. With half a dozen resolute men . . . I could have had the rascals in irons in ten minutes, not because I'm so strong, but I know how to manage 'em.[180]

The concept of managing slaves in the nineteenth century was rooted directly in the perceived inabilities and abilities of specific races.[181] White masters believed that slaves were perpetually hindered in their development, and were only useful for specific types of labor. Many believed that physical labor was actually health-promoting and that blacks were "designed" to work in fields where they were believed to be immune to the effects of heat and tropical diseases that whites fell victim to.[182] Many slave owners claimed that adult African Americans retained a freakish childish physiognomy and prefaced their manuals and articles on black management by noting, "as is the case with infants." Other apologists claimed that adult slaves were susceptible to white "childhood" illnesses. These infantile characteristics of black bodies testified to their physiological compatibility with being managed. Because black skin was as "sensitive . . . as that of children, and like them, [slaves] feared the rod," blacks held in bondage were thus "confined, by unalterable psychological laws, to love those in authority over them."[183]

Like so many other racialized discussions of the African-American body's disabilities, the claim of infantilization emerged out of traditional European

exchanges between the African and the white aboard the slave ship.[184] Europeans and Americans imagined Africans as stuck in time, technologically backward and incapable of caring for themselves. Diseased and disabled slaves placed before Europeans for purchased further cemented this construction. Sickly and dependent slaves appeared as a justification for race-based slavery and the necessary condition for the health and well being of individuals whose abnormal and disabled bodies precluded the capacity to preserve of their own health independently.

But Washington forces in his white observers a decoupling of blackness and childlike dependency. Grant's perception of slaves as dependent and childlike becomes unhinged aboard the *Creole* because of his disembodied exchange with a man who could only be perceived as self-possessed, able-bodied and able-minded. Washington clearly does not need to be managed nor can he be managed. The popular proslavery aphorism that "you could never depend on white men . . . and you couldn't drive them anyway; they wouldn't stand it" is rebutted by Washington's clear articulation of his ability to do just what he likes, and Grant begins to believe this: "I deny that the negro is, naturally, a coward, or that your theory of managing slaves will stand the test of salt water."[185] Grant learns that contemporary beliefs about black dependency are fallacious. He has seen it first hand. But as a crewmember of a slaver, we question where he and the fellow slaver crewmembers he is speaking to developed their general belief of black incapacity. Grant's experience changes his view of black dependency and inability. Moreover, he situates the cause of these views of race squarely within specific sites of black enslavement. "It is quite easy to talk of flogging niggers here on land," he states, "where you have the sympathy of the community, and the whole physical force of the government . . . in such circumstances, it's easy to talk of flogging negroes and of negro cowardice."[186] Whereas whipping slaves on

land serves as a form of maintaining order on the plantation, whipping on the slave ship actually creates the slave, something Grant realizes he cannot do to Madison Washington.

Washington breaks this construction, but as in the case with Listwell, the possibility of black freedom only occurs when whites are forced to see past the stigma of blackness. Only when Listwell sees Washington speaking as a free man away from the plantation is he able to see him as a human being. And only when Grant has been rendered unconscious and awakes to see Washington in a position of leadership, steering the slave ship can he see him as fully human and not a "negro coward" incapable of caring for himself and therefore justifiably enslaved.

As one of the few texts that fictionalizes the interaction between slave ship crewmember and slave cargo, "The Heroic Slave" offers a unique perspective on the cultural and historical importance of the slave ship as a site of constructed disability and white misrecognition of that construction. Douglass challenges this construction by positioning the African male as masculine within the white cultural imagination in recognizable and uncontested forms: the able body and the intelligent mind. The racist ideology of slavery held that Africans brought to the Americas were already disabled due to their physiologically different bodies. The slave ship broke down African bodies into commodified labor units that facilitated constructions of enslaved Africans as dependent, and agentless beings in need of the restorative system of slavery.

Douglass's black masculinity and intelligence aboard the slave ship positions the African male body as not only capable physically, but equally so cognitively, further debunking an ableist and racist system of paternalistic enslavement. In Washington, Douglass depicts a model of black manhood that expresses the humanity

of people of African descent by offering a counter narrative combatting the construction of the slave ship as the site of black disabled embodiment. Washington stands as a more fully human, moral and intelligent black man, who positions manly behavior as another way to think about how attitudes towards blacks are shaped within institutions that both create and reinforce black dependency.

Madness and The Production of Dependence in Benito Cereno

Through the process of moving Africans from the coast to the Americas, slave ships created a disabled and perceptively needy labor force upon which white planters could construct a narrative of dependence and paternalism. Worn down by disease, inadequate diet, regimental exercise, constant surveillance, and physical, mental, verbal, and sexual abuse, African slaves appeared sub-human—diseased, disoriented, frightened, insane—upon arrival to the Americas. Embodied as both racially different and disabled, whites easily constructed their own account of blacks thriving both physically and mentally under the condition of slavery. Of course, slaves who refused this ascription were pathologized as mad or insane—the pathologization of black intransigence beginning on the slave ship and reaching its nadir with Samuel Cartwright and the scientific racism of George Fitzhugh and Josiah Nott.

The representation of the unmanageable and rebellious slave as "mad," frames the un-salability of refuse slaves within their refusal to accept their prescribed role as enslaved labor. Although physically capable, "mad" slaves were deemed unmanageable because they refused to accept their prescribed role as the physically able, yet docile and tractable ideal labor force needed to animate a world economy. Frederick Douglass frames intransigence within the inherent black masculinity of the enslaved African man, denying rhetorics of dependence that associated African slaves

with dependency. Herman Melville, in contrast, explores the implications of associating blackness so closely with mental disability.[187]

Melville's source for his story on slave ship rebellion is a memoir by a Massachusetts merchant sea captain named Amaso Delano, whose ship, the *Perseverance*, had been anchored off the island of Santa Maria in February, 1805 when it encountered a Spanish slave ship in distress. Delano devotes one chapter of his published account, which Melville developed into an extended retelling that took its title from the name (Benito Sereno, as Delano spells it in his memoir). Delano rather matter-of-factly describes the events that Melville turns into a work that has been recognized by scholars as one of his finest achievements.[188] Although both Douglass and Melville write literary representations of slave ship rebellions in which the logic of the slave ship breaks down, Melville's fictional assessment of what "may have happened" aboard the slaver is based upon a more detailed and extended encounter. Melville chooses the seemingly indifferent historical account—an account that serves as an example of Africans as human beings with agency—of Captain Delano to produce his own radical inquiry into issues of race and disability aboard the very technological and cultural site that conflated the two: the slave ship.

Historical records from eighteenth-century slave ships describe death, disease, and black dependence on whites, but Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* tells a very different story. Similar to Melville's other works, and as Harold Bloom points out, images of illness fill the pages of *Benito Cereno*.[189]Although death and disease flood the novella, it is the master-slave relationship, questions of dependency, mental disability and sites of cultural production and oppression where these two issues converge aboard the slave ship that Melville is most interested in interrogating in *Benito Cereno*.

In 1855, when the conflation of racial blackness with physical abnormality to justify black slavery had reached its nadir in proslavery writing and the country was focused inward on Missouri planters carrying their slaves into Kansas under the protection of Congress, Melville looked to the past and to the memoir of Massachusetts merchant Amasa Delano to expose and challenge cultural expectations of inherent black disability and dependence. For Melville, the slave ship is a site of representational power. It serves as the first location through which the violent commodification process, which shaped the image of the African body as diseased, dependent and child-like, is created; but by the same logic it is a site in which that image can be openly challenged, reversed, and debated.

On the slave ship the logic of commodification reached its nadir. It was here on the ocean crossing, that the practices of commodification most effectively muted the agency of the African subject and produced the desired object: an African body alienated, dependent and viable for exploitation in the American marketplace. The commodification process aboard the slave ship produced a narrative of dependence among slave ship captains and the teenage boys who often worked as sailors aboard slavers. The slave ship, too, produced race, since for many blacks and whites, the slave ship became the place where both met for the first time. As a site of profound displacement for enslaved Africans, and a place of violent racial construction, the slave ship produced episodes of madness, suicide, and refusal to eat, which whites read as proof of inherent black dependence upon whites to feed, clothe, and provide medical care.

Unlike abolitionists of the eighteenth century who published images of slave ships, Melville spends very little time actually describing the slave ship itself, choosing instead to portray the degree of slaveholder dependence on the slave—the

inverse of what the slave ship was designed to produce. The historical revolt recounted by Delano is related to master class dependence on African capacity for specific race-based labors. Having both forms of dependence in mind when creating the novella made it easier for Melville to depict a master-slave relationship that resonates with Hegel's notion of the master's dependence on the slave.[190] In fact, his capacity to interrogate antebellum ethnology enabled him to sweep away spiritual and intellectual fabrications that blinded other Americans when attempting to determine who, in that relationship was dependent on whom.

The story begins with American captain, Amasa Delano and his crew on the *Bachelor's Delight* as the Spanish slaver, the San Dominick, approaches it. Upon boarding the *San Dominick*, white sailors and African slaves immediately greet Delano begging for supplies. An inquisitive yet naive Delano examines the bizarre social atmosphere aboard the slave ship and encounters the ship's mentally and visibly physically disabled Spanish captain, Don Benito Cereno. Cereno is constantly attended to by his personal slave, Babo, whom Cereno keeps in close company even when Delano suggests that Babo leave the two in private to discuss matters that are clearly being avoided. Delano, although suspicious, believes Cereno's assertion that he and his crew have recently gone through a debilitating series of troubles, having been at sea now for an unsettlingly long time. Cereno tells of these tribulations, including a fever that seems only to have killed whites aboard the ship. Delano's suspicions increase, until a battle erupts when Cereno throws himself into Delano's whaleboat followed by a dagger-wielding Babo. Delano then recounts what happened aboard the *San Dominick*: that, led by the diminutive slave, Babo, the Africans overthrew and killed much of the white crew. Delano concludes his story with the

trial and execution of Babo, whose head is placed on a pole in the middle of a Peruvian plaza for all to see.

Following in the tradition of much earlier writers such as Aphra Behn, Henry Neville, and Thomas Southerne, who narrate the compelling story of a defiant black African whose intelligence and comportment put European stereotypes to shame, Melville places the ambiguity of alleged black ignorance and mental dependence at the center of the master-slave relationship in *Benito Cereno*.[191] By the mid-nineteenth century, American rhetoric from both the North and the South hotly contested arguments regarding the natural dependency of people of African descent; apologists continued to describe slavery as a benign paternalism toward a childlike race, while opponents of slavery declared that years of white cruelty would soon incite black reprisal. Melville takes up these opposing claims and positions the slave ship as a central site where the cultural and political arguments that positioned Africans as dependent upon whites could be debated.

Melville offers numerous examples of Babo holding up the unstable Benito: Don Benito "fell heavily against his supporter"; but the servant was more alert, who, with one hand sustaining his master . . . ."; "his vital energy failed, so that to better support him, the servant placing his master's hand on his naked shoulder, and gently holding it there, formed himself into a sort of crutch"; "His servant sustained him and drawing a cordial from his pocket placed it to his lips"; "As he mentioned this name, his air was heart-broken; his knees shook; his servant supported him"; "As he saw his meager form in the act of recovering itself from reclining in the servant's arms, into which the agitated invalid had fallen"; "Presently master and man came forth; Don Benito leaning on his servant"; "And so, still presenting himself as a crutch, [Babo] walking between the two captains"[192]

Scholars note that Cereno is indeed, physically shaken, even disabled and indisputably weaker than his African counterpart.[193] These scholars are not incorrect, and Benito's disabilities—as unclear as they are—are central to Melville's aesthetic, but the reversal of racial stereotypes is equally important in the aforementioned passages if we are to understand how Melville repositions the master-slave relationship in his novella. Babo, for example, is described by the omniscient narrator as "more alert" than Cereno.[194] Babo's alertness is hard to read, however. As a slave his alertness is at first read by Delano as a sign of his acquiescence and ideal servitude. Later, when his alertness is revealed as an intensely devious form of intelligence, it is interpreted as dangerous, as it is with the mulatto Francisco. Babo knows exactly what Cereno is thinking, too, constructing the slave ideal—anticipating your master's needs—as a frightening thing indeed.[195]

Of course, Babo is not the independent masculine rebel that Madison Washington is. He is neither strong, nor capable of single-handedly subordinating all the whites aboard the *San Dominick*. His physical body and the part he plays before Delano aboard the *San Dominick* echo constructions of black acquiescence. This is never clearer than during the shaving scene:

> Setting down his basin, the negro searched among the razors, as for the sharpest, and having found it, gave it an additional edge by expertly strapping it on the smooth, oily skin of his open palm; he then made a gesture as if to begin, but midway stood suspended for an instant, one hand elevating the razor, the other professionally dabbling among the bubbling suds on the Spaniard's neck.[196]

Melville develops this scene into a meditation on the ironies of black dependence. Naturally, Delano views the scene as another example of the submissive and simple

African pleasing his master—even using his own skin to sharpen the blade. When Babo drags the blade across his palm, Delano hears the sound of a black man abasing himself. What Cereno hears is Babo warning him not to expose their mutual lie. The delicate balance between master and slave, the dependent and the depended-upon is never more apparent than in this scene. According to Orlando Patterson, within a parasitic slave society "the dominator, in the process of dominating and making another individual dependent, also makes himself (the dominator) dependent."[197] As dominator, Cereno is dependent upon Babo for almost everything, but conversely, Babo is dominator during the slave rebellion and depends upon Cereno not to raise suspicions in front of Delano. Of course, in order for the new dominator (Babo) to succeed in this endeavor, he must continue to play the part of dominated, while simultaneously controlling Cereno against his will.

The precise choreography of this dance of dependence aboard the slave ship is mind-boggling. Melville is exposing the complexities of dependence aboard the slave ship when both Babo and Cereno camouflage a dependent relationship by representing it as the opposite of what it really is. For Delano, Cereno's whiteness should clearly indicate his capacity and right as master of the enslaved aboard the *San Dominick*. However, Babo must rely on Cereno's compliance and Delano's self-deception if he is to succeed in his rebellion. Whereas a white master assumes the inherent dependence and physical and mental degradation of the African in order to support slave ideology, the reverse occurs on the *San Dominick*. Babo must ensure that Cereno is dependent upon him. He plays the part perfectly. Sickly, infantilized and too afraid to reveal to Delano what is actually happening, Cereno embodies the very construction of an African slave. Of course, as Babo takes on the role of dominator, he inevitable becomes dependent upon Cereno, too. It is not coincidental

that his perverse dialectic between black and white disability and dependence occurs in the novella on a slave ship, the very apparatus that constructed the African slave subject as inherently disabled.

In *Benito Cereno* we are not entirely clear of what Orlando Patterson calls "the relation of domination," or the parasitic exchange of dependence between the master and the slave because Melville exposes the fluidity of the master/slave relationship.[198]Delano cannot understand what he thinks he sees aboard the *San Dominick* because a world in which blacks are in charge and whites are subjugated is entirely impossible for him to comprehend. Not only does the novella reveal the moral depth of Melville's fiction, *Benito Cereno* exposes the striking reach and resonance of how race, dependence, and disability are constructed on the slave ship.

Melville's interrogation of dependence and the master-slave relationship also challenges Cereno's construction as alleged racial superior. Melville points out that Cereno's knees are weak—"his knees shook," while "his servant [Babo] supported him."[199] Scientists of race eager to employ the rhetorical power of physiognomy to perpetuate slavery made specific somatic arguments about the black body and its physiology as emblematic of African dependence.[200] Samuel Cartwright so intertwined racial anatomy and disease with their social and political contexts that he located the cure for his drapetomania—a supposed mental illness among slaves that caused them to run away—in the biblical label for the African as "submissive knee bender."[201] The biblical term echoed the "physical structure of [the African's] knees, they being more flexed or bent, than any other kind of man."[202] Melville may have been referring to Cartwright's essay on drapetomania in *Benito Cereno* given that Cartwright warns whites that they ignore his advice about the knees of slaves to their peril; "trying to raise [the Negro] to a level with himself" or "abus[ing] the power

which God has given him over his fellow man" had created the disease. Whites who kept blacks with bent knees, in "the position of submission," would discover that "the negro is spell-bound and can not run away."[203] Cartwright warned those who would keep their slaves from falling victim to the disease and running away to watch them carefully. If there were some who were "inclined to raise their heads to a level with their master or overseer, humanity and their own good require that they should be punished till they fall into that submissive state which was intended them," that of "submissive knee bender."[204]

Cereno bends his knees in this scenario, and Babo escapes, raising his head to "a level with [his] master." The knees and the head are connected for Melville as they are for Cartwright. Bended knees represent a lowered head and submission, whereas unbent and stable knees reveal a lack of submission and potentially rebellious thought; they represent independence. Cereno's knees are weak, and he must rely on Babo as a "crutch," representing not only his physical debility, but also his lack of mental acumen, his deficient mental will to control the slaves aboard his ship. Babo's alertness, stable knees and raised head lead to his symbolic punishment at the end of the novella; his head is placed on a pike to serve as a warning to other rebellious slaves. Melville's brilliant reimagining of Cereno's dependence on Babo, then, reinforces Cartwright's position at the same instant that it ridicules it. Oscillating between racist ideologies and exposing the self-deluding arguments of slavery apologists, Melville illustrates his awareness of the intellectual arguments that both argued for and against slavery, and the role of both mental and physical disability within each.

The master-slave relationship is at the center of Melville's metaphysics of both race relations and disability in *Benito Cereno*. In a conversation between Delano

and Cereno aboard the *San Dominick* about the different constitutions of the black and white races and the social and economic places of each, for example, Delano reflects on Babo's fastidious attention to Cereno's needs: "There is something in the negro, which, in a peculiar way, fits him for avocations about one's person. Most negroes are natural valets . . . . There is, too, a smooth tact about them in this employment, with a marvelous, noiseless, gliding briskness, not ungraceful in its ways, singularly pleasing to behold, and still more so to be the manipulated subject of."[205] By "the manipulated subject" Delano reiterates a particular vision of ideal black servitude, the servant whose ostensible acquiescence and disposition to be handled and controlled is rooted in his/her blackness. In theorizing black corporeality and black labor aboard a slave ship, Delano conceives the slave ship as a particular socio-material space in which black embodiment is a central concern. Moreover, Don Benito's dependence on Babo does not initially reflect badly on Cereno. That he has "mastered" Babo to the extent that Babo anticipates Cereno's needs represents the success of proslavery ideology; in fact, for Delano, Cereno's dependence on Babo becomes a sign of Babo's dependency upon Cereno. Since Melville leaves little ambiguity about who is actually dependent upon whom, and little ambiguity in Delano's appreciation of this ideal scenario, Melville forces us to question the ideological construction of blackness as a sign of mental dependence upon whites. In fact, Melville becomes one of the first white authors to posit what black authors had been contesting for years: by looking objectively at slave economics, it's quite easy to see slavery as a matter of white dependency, rather than black.

Oscillating between racialist constructions of blackness and his own interrogation of their meaning, Melville again questions constructions of black disability through his observations of the master-slave relationship. When Delano

notes that Babo is an "Uncommonly intelligent fellow" he articulates the perceived limits of black perspicacity; the black intellectual ideal is the capacity to anticipate one's master's needs.[206] Any more than that would be perceived as rascality or high-mindedness. Yet Melville notes that Delano "bethinks" that Cereno and Babo represent an ideal, which jeopardizes the Western sociopolitical premise that white men alone must and can think for themselves:.[207] That Delano "bethinks" that Cereno and Babo's relationship is ideal is to suggest that he does not so much think his thoughts as they think him; he is not thinking for himself. Delano is indeed bethought by the prevailing view among antebellum Americans that blacks are by nature "childlike, affectionate, docile, and patient," yet this particular ideology becomes harder to justify as Delano interacts more with slaves aboard the *San Dominick*, especially Atufal.[208]

Melville's representation of Atufal's exceeding physical superiority in contrast to all the whites aboard the *San Dominick* captures the enduring problem of the physically able, yet mentally incapable black slave. Despite our understanding as readers that Atufal can and likely has already broken from the chains that represent his bondage, both Cereno and Delano still base their treatment of the massive African upon a specific ascription of racial inferiority. The Negro is capable of being driven, manipulated, persuaded, and fooled, slavery apologists contended. Dating back to the first expeditions of slave ships to Africa, the proof of the African's childish brain exists in the very fact that he has been enslaved. As one slave owner argues: "You could never drive [a white man]; they wouldn't stand it"; adds a contributor to *DeBows*.[209] But, of course, you can. Cereno readily admits that Atufal could never be scourged and Cereno is, in fact, under the control of the slaves on his own slave ship.[210] And as the hundreds of recorded slave ship rebellions suggest, Africans would

not stand being driven, either. Moreover, Cereno is not even controlled by a large, African man—as Frederick Douglass's "The Heroic Slave" implies, slave ship rebellion depended on hyperable physiological constructions of the black male body—but a bare-headed, small slave whose self deprecation only highlights his keen intelligence and Cereno's disability.[211]

But Melville would not have us assume that Babo is the only intelligent bondsperson aboard the *San Dominick*, nor would he have use buy into the prevailing assumption—as do Delano and the Peruvian court that cannot understand how the rebellion even occurred—that the only way for slaves to execute an insurrection would be through pure physical strength and not cunning intellect. Atufal's defiance is in fact an example of his intelligence since, for many slave owners, rascality was nothing more than a symptom of a slave too smart for his own good.[212] Atufal has allegedly remained mute for sixty days, refusing to ask pardon, despite his obedience in every other aspect. Atufal's performance before Delano suggests he is aware of the role he must play in order for the rebellion to be successful. Moreover, and perhaps even more disturbing to Melville's readers, is the fact that Babo's character confirms the hidden suspicion that black disability is nothing more than a performance, that performing servility and dependence, as Babo does, is likely the surest sign of superior black intelligence.

This suspicion is confirmed in the mixed-race subject, especially. Delano seizes upon an idealized neoclassical depiction of masculine beauty in his observation of the mulatto Francesco to marry with his representative perspective on black natural servility and his fear of black intelligence: "Captain Delano observed with interest that while the complexion of the mulatto was hybrid, his physiognomy was European; classically so."[213] Delano's authoritative-sounding statements of how well suited

blacks are to personal service are rooted in their physiognomy. He expresses concern over Francesco's black skin, yet white physical characteristics: "When a mulatto has a regular European face, look out for him; he is a devil," adding that, "if a little of our blood mixed with the African's, should, far from improving the latter's quality, have the sad effect of pouring vitriolic acid into black broth; improving the hue, perhaps, but not the wholesomeness." "Wholesomeness" here represents a specific racialized labor ascription and willingness to be managed.[214] Francesco's white appearance threatens his natural slave state.

Central to the dyadic embodiment of slaves as both able and disabled and "manipulated subjects" are the specific racial assignments of managing and being managed. The assumption that the group of enslaved individuals being managed belonged to an inferior race, physically capable of work and at once mentally incapable of managing shaped the very ways that production was organized in the antebellum South. Writing in the *Southern Cultivator* in 1860, an overseer named "Hurricane" writes of this doubled discourse regarding African slaves. Although supremely capable of performing physical labors well beyond that of white men, he states, "the African Negro is physically a man, mentally a child—treat him as such."[215] Such infantilizing of blackness in contrast to white managerial ability and paternal superiority had material roots in who controlled whom on the slave ship. Babo's allegiance to Cereno, for example, represents the ideal "beauty of that relationship" between "master and man" as a spectacle of fidelity and confidence between white master and black slave that at least temporarily assuages Delano's apprehension aboard the Spanish slaver.

The key to exposing the slave ship as an important site of black disablement is turning Delano's representative ideology of ablebodied management on its head.

Delano is victim to the same racialist blindess as Cereno. He witnesses a white man in chains behind a closed door, sees a black boy hit a white one, witnesses general disarray aboard the ship—and yet as much as Babo and his cohort attempt to perform their role of slaves in order to avoid suspicion, Delano cannot help but feel uneasy at the strange way Cereno runs his ship. He concludes that Cereno's mismanagement is due to his obvious disabled condition. Melville's text represents Cereno and his white shipmates as sickly in terms historically reserved for human cargo, for example: Cereno's mind is "unstrung," and "half-lunatic." He suffers from "mental distress," and is severely depressed, all terms reserved by slaver doctors for refuse slaves diagnosed as "mad" because they refused to accept their forced role as slaves.[216] Cereno's crew is also considered "invalid," suffering from a "malignant fever," "scurvy," and "pulmonary complaint."[217] Cereno is absolutely dependent on Babo, too, who is not only able-bodied, but also able-minded. But by suggesting that his constitutional "debility" and unstrung mind "impair the captain's authority over them," Delano reinforces the importance of American antebellum culture's dichotomy between bodies and minds imagined as "normal" and "abnormal."[218] The white body as constitutionally disembodied must represent ideal health and normality given its role as manager and master over the constructed subservience of racial servitude. Melville would have us believe at least momentarily that the reason the slaves appear unmanaged is directly related to Cereno's illnesses. It is no wonder everything is in disarray aboard the *San Dominick*, for its captain is disabled.

But Melville doesn't leave the discussion there. Delano is a representational type of the antebellum American who imbibes the proslavery arguments of one master who posits that, "there never was an insurrection . . . which was not instigated by white men," suggesting that naturally the only way for a slave rebellion to actually

occur would depend on the inability of a white master, and in the case of Cereno, his disability.[219] As Bertram Wyatt-Brown has suggested, prevailing configurations of southern white masculinity very much depended upon representing the self as an ablebodied and ableminded manager of African slaves.[220] Perhaps subscribing to this notion, Delano only finds it natural that the slaves aboard the *San Dominick* are rebellious because only when white men are disabled or "invalid" are black men capable of fooling or overcoming them: "Keeping wholly by his cabin," Delano notes with seeming authority, "the sick man, under the good nursing of his servant, would probably, by the end of the passage, be in a measure restored to health, and with that he should also be restored to authority."[221]

Melville wants us to examine our own frustration at Delano's inability to read the signs. Hierarchies of corporeal normality allows us to understand why the slaves are able to overcome Cereno—only when a white man is disabled could slaves successfully pull off an insurrection—but current critical explorations of *Benito Cereno* that express surprise at Delano's ignorance at the expense of Cereno's further reinforce constructions of disability as inherent deficiency.[222] The fact that Delano is fooled by Babo suggests that Melville not only ridicules the racialist discourse of the mid-nineteenth century he began in his short piece, "The Gees," but also challenges the confidence we place in the assumed intelligence and capacity of the ablebodied and ableminded.[223] Blindness or unquestioning acceptance of constructions of abled, disabled and racialized bodies is what Melville would have us question here.

As part of the institution of slavery the slave ship maintained an important place in the capacity to represent the African slave as childlike, dependent and intellectually deficient, but the representational power of the slave ship made the inverse equally possible: because slaver captains were instructed to buy slaves between the ages of 12

and 25, two males to a female, and good and healthy and not blind, lame or blemished, many ablebodied, African men in their prime found themselves confined within a mobile institution that attempted to represent them as docile, childlike, and incapable of intellectual capacity. Although many Africans arrived in the New World diseased and dying, a fact that was employed rhetorically to justify racial incapacity and therefore benevolent paternalism, many resisted the construction of black incapacity and disability through revolt aboard the slave ship. Yet it was on the slave ship that the logic of commodification reached its nadir. It was here on the ocean crossing, that the social process of marketing human beings as articles for trade most effectively muted the agency of the African subject and produced the desired object: an African body alienated, dependent and viable for exploitation in the American marketplace.

The commodification process aboard the slave ship produced a narrative of dependence among slave ship captains that Melville stretches to its breaking point. When the slave ship as a place where madness, suicide, and refusal to eat became symptoms of the trauma of enslavement is reversed in *Benito Cereno,* Melville exposes the lie that blacks thrive under white management. Although broken, diseased and disabled African bodies were necessary to argue effectively that under white management and through the plantation system, specific labors actually made blacks healthy, Melville posits that blacks, ultimately responsible for caring for whites, have the mental capacity to care for and govern themselves. One cannot imagine a more alarming position for white nineteenth-century Americans than the suggestion that white men—far from being the sole representatives of the well-regulated, self-governing, self-determining liberal individual—are actually dependent on a black labor force that comprehends and might manipulate their dependency. "[T]he black,"

Melville tells us at the end of his novella, "whose brain . . . led the revolt, not body" denies the ideological scaffolding that structured the black body as physically able while simultaneously impairing his mind to the limited capacity of a child.[224] Indeed, nothing challenges the power of the slave ship to normalize traditional master-slave relationships through the disablement of the African mind and body than the reminder of Babo's rebellion. With his body burned and his head fixed to a pole as a sign of his sin, Babo, in his "voiceless end" diminishes the importance of the hyperable black body in favor of the hyperable black mind.[225]

CHAPTER TWO

Phillis Wheatley and the Construction of Black Intellectual Disability in Eighteenth-Century America

What does Phillis Wheatley's career as the first American and female poet of African descent have to tell us about the history of disability in the eighteenth century? The answer to this question may lie in the commencement debate between two Harvard students regarding "The Legality of Enslaving of Africans," published the same year as Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773).[226] The debate touched upon the very claims of black mental incapacity that came to prominence as American colonists debated the prospects of independence from England and contested who might qualify to participate as full citizens in the "new republic." Both students agreed that blacks were "brethren" to the whites, but the proslavery speaker declaimed that the "real character" of the Africans appeared to be a compound of "a child, an ideot," and "a madman."[227] His opponent was at considerable pains to refute the charge of hopeless African mental incapacity and to deprecate recent attempts to prove blacks as inherently intellectually disabled.

The apparent ease with which the Harvard students accept the claim that African mentality is equivalent to that of "a child," "an ideot," and "a madman" requires further examination. To begin with, it suggests that constructions of race in the eighteenth century were closely aligned with assumptions of intellectual disability. The "debate over the innate intelligence . . . of the African[s]," and the emergence of a new American republic at the time Wheatley wrote also suggests that her poetry may have been as much about proving that the "capacities of Negroes" were "equal to those of white people" as it was about religious devotion and slavery.[228] It was Thomas Jefferson, after all, who first drew attention to both the importance of religion in assessing Wheatley's poetry *and* claims of black intellectual incapacity. He states,

"religion indeed has produced a Phyllis Whately [sic]; but it could not produce a poet," and adds that people of African descent were "much inferior" to whites "in the faculties of reason."[229] Jefferson's claim that religion produced Wheatley's poetry, not her "extraordinary genius" and that blacks were in general inferior intellectually to whites suggests that the larger social and political context in which Wheatley writes has more to do with the complex ways in which race and religion intertwined with intellectual disability in the eighteenth century than previously thought.[230] In what follows, I suggest that disability is the missing issue in Wheatley studies and that a disability consciousness of Wheatley's religious poetry can clarify the scene of judgment so central to her career.

A close examination of the Enlightenment philosophy that shaped the American experiment suggests that the history of intellectual disability is also the story of race. Licia Carlson, for example, notes that "idiocy" was a distinction between those fit and unfit to participate in American governance that "relied on racial stereotypes and perceptions of inferiority."[231] Allison C. Carey also points out that "ideologies of mental . . . inferiority were used to justify slavery."[232] C.F. Goodey notes, too, that even before the emergence of modern political philosophy, people of African descent were represented in ways that implied mental incapacity. "Ethiopians" were believed to exhibit violent changes of mood and thought, or "rashness of counsel"; they were prone to hasty judgments, and possessed "unquiet and turbulent" minds.[233] Such claims suggest that intellectual disability has long served as an important marker for race.

Peppered throughout eighteenth-century enlightenment political theory are anecdotes regarding Africans and their alleged intellectual impairments. David Hume's argument that "the negroes" are "naturally inferior to whites" rests upon his

observation that blacks have never produced any "symptoms of ingenuity," for example.[234] His claim that "no ingenius [sic] manufactures" and "no arts, no sciences" exist among them are echoed thirty years later by Immanuel Kant, whose most important contribution to American political theory was his argument that we needed an "autonomous" system of ethics that capitalized on our ability to think logically about our intentions and actions.[235] To avoid being slaves to our culture, beliefs (e.g. religion), emotion, or other seemingly subjective sources of morality, Kant argued that we need a more objective approach to understanding our world—one upon which all "reasonable" people would agree. Kant, moreover, excluded people of African descent from such epistemologies. He claimed that no African ever "presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality," and that the difference between blacks and whites "appears to be as great in regard to mental capacity as in color."[236] The incapacity of black minds was as obvious as the difference in their black skin, which squarely placed black minds in the realm of the denigrated category of the subjective, emotional, and religious mind that lacked the capacity to reason. In his assessment of Father Labat's exchange with one of his African slaves Kant notes, "this fellow was *quite black* from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid."[237] The premise behind Kant's claim is remarkably similar to the logic of Jefferson's repudiation of Wheatley's poetry: racial blackness belies the possibility of intelligence.

At the same time that race became associated with intellectual disability, reason also developed as an important prerequisite for political participation. Descartes, for example, equated human existence with rational thought, which eventually surpassed every other part of human experience. What Descartes calls "*Ingenium,*" or "pure intellect, imagination, memory, or sense-perception," and the "forming of new ideas"

separated man from beast.[238] As C.F. Goodey describes it, Descartes' claims contributed to later views of people with intellectual disabilities as more embodied, and thus animalistic.[239] Such claims gesture to the connections between emerging Enlightenment political thought and the conflation of racial blackness with intellectual disability. Two political theorists who influenced Jefferson's American social contract, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, also relied on rationality as evidence of humanity. Social contract theory, for example, required that individuals associate with each other, specifically through the most prominent manifestation of rational thought, writing. In *Frontiers of Justice*, Martha Nussbaum suggests that social contract theory presents a problem of applying justice to people with disabilities precisely because it prioritizes specific manifestations of rational thought. "When we discuss mental disability," she states, "we will see that the equation of citizen status with rationality is a hurdle that even the best contemporary theories cannot surmount, without losing their formative link to the social contract tradition."[240] D. Christopher Gabbard concurs, noting that Locke's "theories undergird the subject of classical liberalism, whom he describes as independent, self-sufficient, entrepreneurial, property owning, and capable of engaging equally with other subjects." He adds that "[b]y virtue of [the citizen's] humanity, he is entitled to political claims for justice."[241] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has written extensively on the associations of black non-humanity with illiteracy and its accompanying claims of mental incapacity.[242] Philosophers have also widely assumed that in order to be involved in social contracts (such as the Constitution), people must have a certain level of intelligence. In John Rawls' version of social contract theory, *A Theory of Justice*, for example, he notes that those in the position to participate in social governance are always considered of

"normal" intelligence.[243] Ascription of mental incapacity thus leads in the classical liberal tradition to exclusion from participating in the social contract.

If allegations of intellectual incapacity precluded blacks from participating in America's burgeoning republic, the question still remains how individuals like Thomas Jefferson and the Harvard debaters could justify characterizations of the black mind as mad, idiotic, and child-like given the overwhelming evidence of the intellectual power of Wheatley's poems?[244] The question is one that Wheatley seems to ask implicitly in the first poem she ever wrote, aptly, to the very young men who debated whether slavery was justifiable given the obvious intellectual disabilities among people of African descent. Wheatley wrote "To the University of Cambridge, in New England," in 1767, but did not publish the poem until 1773 as part of *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*. "To the University" is essentially a commencement address reminding the very students who declaimed that the "real character" of the Africans appeared to be a compound of "a child, an ideot," and "a madman" to appreciate their access to both religious and secular education. But the poem also reveals Wheatley's subtle use of religious verse to make rational claims regarding black mental capacity:

> WHILE an intrinsic ardor prompts to write,
> The muses promise to assist my pen;
> 'Twas not long since I left my native shore
> The land of errors, and *Egyptian* gloom:
> Father of mercy, 'twas thy gracious hand
> Brought me in safety from those dark abodes.

Students, to you ‘tis giv’n to scan the heights
Above, to traverse the ethereal space,
And mark the systems of revolving worlds.
Still more, ye sons of science ye receive
The blissful news by messengers from heav’n (1-11)

Improve your privilege while they stay,
Ye pupils, and each hour redeem, that bears
Or good or bad report of you to heav’n.
Let sin, that baneful evil to the soul,
By you be shunn’d, nor once remit your guard;
Suppress the deadly serpent in its egg.
Ye blooming plants of human race divine,
An *Ethiop* tells you ‘tis your greatest foe;
Its transient sweetness turns to endless pain,
And in immense perdition sinks the soul. (21-30)[245]

From a position of moral superiority gained through her experience as an “*Ethiop*” Wheatley warns her implicitly complacent students—“Ye pupils”—to “Improve your privileges while they stay” (28, 22, 21). The “privileges” she refers to are not explicit in the poem—nor is why they appear so transient to Wheatley—but a disability reading of the poem in light of the Harvard debate sheds more light on the “intrinsic ardor” that compels Wheatley to instruct her audience.

Beginning in the Enlightenment era, interest in idiocy was often articulated in respect to race. In John Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), he

lumps children, idiots, and savages together because, in his estimation, their "notions are few and narrow."[246] "Madmen put wrong ideas together," Locke adds, "and so make wrong propositions, but argue and reason right from them; but idiots make very few or no propositions, and reason scarce at all."[247] Idiocy in the eighteenth century seems to be described as a specific "lack" of reasoning capacity as opposed to madness, which was perceived as an "error" in judgment. Children, who depend upon "sense" and "frequent and strong impressions," are similar to savages, who likewise lack "maxims" and "principles of knowledge."[248] Licia Carlson notes that "the complex relationship between idiocy, madness, and the child-like brain continue to play a role in the discourse surrounding the classification of intellectual disability.[249] The discourse among the aforementioned Harvard students suggests that idiocy and madness were part of racial classification, too. Georges Canguilhem addresses the long lineage of this association, arguing that conceptions of the child's mind were also interwoven with theories of race and intellectual disability.[250] As the Harvard students note, the African mind is like that of a child, suggesting delayed or unformed intelligence.

Rationality may have been the exclusive realm of the white, male, adult mind in the eighteenth century, but Wheatley's poetry suggests that she not only vehemently disagreed with this claim, but that she actively counter-argued it in her poetry. Under the guise of religious verse, she maintains that she is just as capable of intellectual thought as her white male audience, and even takes on the role of teacher to instruct them that their construction of the black mind is patently false. She begins by first establishing her moral authority over her audience. In describing that she left "The land of errors, and *Egyptian* gloom" Wheatley refers to her spiritual condition in Africa and associates her and her fellow Africans with God's chosen people, the

Israelites, before their exodus from Egypt (3). One of the most significant changes between the manuscript and print form of this poem include this line. What originally read as "The sable land of error's darkest night," changing "error's darkest night" to read "*Egyptian* gloom" implicates those who would justify the enslavement of Africans to "improve [their] privileges" (i.e. Christianize them) (3-4,21).

It is clear that Wheatley would likely have agreed that her enslavement served some positive purpose, but we should not confuse accommodation with appropriation. From a position of moral superiority gained through her experience as an "*Ethiop*," Wheatley warns her implicitly complacent students—"Ye pupils"—to, ironically, "Improve your privileges while they stay" (28, 22, 21). The "privileges" of which she speaks are perhaps the associations of mental capacity that her white audience benefits from simply because they are white and male. When Wheatley calls her audience "ye sons of science," and notes that it is they to whom it is "giv'n to scan the heights / Above, to traverse the ethereal space, And mark the systems of revolving worlds" (7-9), she shows her awareness of claims that black brains are excluded from this empyrean perspective. Such claims, as the Harvard debate suggests, rested on assumptions of mental disability that precluded blacks from participating in a variety of intellectual discourses.

But Wheatley's ambiguity in lines seven through nine also allow her to claim that her religious affinity gives her access to the very same knowledge and more. "[S]can[ning] the heights," "travers[ing] the ethereal space," and "mark[ing] the systems of revolving worlds," can, after all, be read as manifestations of faith in God's creation. She confirms this in the following line: "Still more," she notes, "The blissful news" of which the "sons of science" have access "ye receive by messengers from heav'n" (10-11). The scientific knowledge of which her audience has access

may be denied her because of constructions of black mental incapacity and her gender, but it is only through "messengers from heav'n" that this knowledge comes, anyway. This places Wheatley in a unique position. Not only is she morally superior because she has access to God, but intellectually so, too because she knows from where all knowledge flows. Moreover, Wheatley's moral and intellectual superiority is magnified by the implication that she is, in fact, one of these "messengers from Heav'n" who bestows knowledge.

Indeed, Wheatley turns the tables on these white sons of the elite class, focusing her gaze on them, refusing to allow them to ignore their privilege. Because the speaker of the poems is addressing young men at an institution of higher learning, the premise is that she must be of either equal or even greater intelligence, and perhaps even superior in experience. This position is actually enhanced by Wheatley's negation of the physical self. The "unbodied mind" she alludes to in these poems (and a phrase that appears in her poem 'To His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor on the Death of the His Lady, March 24, 1773") Samuel Johnson uses in his dictionary as one definition of "intelligency" and "intellectual." It appears in other works from the period as well, including the Thomas Tickell poem, "To the Earl of Warwick, on the Death of Mr. Addison" (1721).[251]

The message she has come to deliver is manifested in the last stanza of the poem, and speaks to her subtle critique of slavery using both religious and reason-based epistemologies. As I mentioned earlier, Wheatley's substitution of "*Egyptian* gloom" to refer to her spiritual condition in Africa associates her and her fellow Africans with God's chosen people; but it also makes sin synonymous with slavery (3). When Wheatley encourages her "pupils" to "Improve your privileges while they stay" she is suggesting that these privileges are more transient than they may be

aware. She encourages her "pupils" to repudiate sin and "Suppress the deadly serpent in its egg." (21). The serpent in the poem represents Satan, and "its egg" is the latency of the sin that her audience has not yet committed. This particular point in Wheatley's poem is important because it again demonstrates her position as instructor to her male student audience.

The sin of which she speaks is slavery. Wheatley calls on her students, her "blooming plants," to "Suppress the deadly serpent in its egg," their "greatest foe" (26-28). Published in 1773, the poem speaks to those Harvard young men that would eventually shape the direction of the nation, but have, perhaps, not yet fully embraced the ideology of slavery to the extent of their parents. The image of white male Harvard students debating whether blacks are the equivalent of "ideot[s]" and "madm[e]n" while Wheatley calls them to "improve your privileges while they stay" is rather sardonic (1).[252] Many of these Harvard students enjoyed the opportunities to be educated precisely because their families depended upon slaves. When Wheatley declares that "Its transient sweetness turns to endless pain / And an immense perdition sinks the soul," "Its" refers to both sin and slavery (29-30). The Sweetness of the sugar slaves produced and the sweetness of its profits are as transient as the sweetness of sin. If sin is the equivalent of slavery in her poem, which I argue it is, she is being remarkably blunt to her Harvard student audience. She is essentially telling them not to fall prey to sin and embrace slavery at a time when its place in a democratic republic was open to debate. The sin of slavery is both their "greatest foe" and her own (28). One can imagine why Jefferson responds so dismissively to Wheatley's poetry. The audacity of a teenage, enslaved, self-educated, female, formerly pagan woman of African descent assuming a voice that calls out the "privileges" of those

who are reputedly her superiors in age, status, mental ability, authority, race and gender and claim that they are spoiling their privilege on "sin," is remarkable (21, 17).

Whereas Jefferson would highlight black embodiment and the intellectual implications of African ethnicity in the eighteenth century, Wheatley poetry "pursue[s] th' unbodied mind" and emphasizes the capacity of her intellect over any evidence that might suggest her racialized body revealed mental incapacity.[253] Wheatley lived and wrote in an interesting moment in both the history of the body and the mind, one that was informed by a variety of philosophical, theological, scientific and social movements. The influence of Enlightenment philosophical thought, for example, was felt throughout the eighteenth century, especially in questions about natural law, free will, autonomy, and theories of race. The latter part of the century also saw an increased interest in scientific theories that were intended to explain racial difference, along with the emergence of pseudo-sciences, such as phrenology, which would be used toward the same end. These movements provided a useful set of ideas and discourses for a young, black, female slave who inclined toward the public realm and authorship.

As an African American slave, perhaps Wheatley would have had her own reasons for minimizing the body she inhabited, one that was black female, and often sick, and for refocusing the readers of her poems on the content and capacity of the mind inside of the body. The convergence of several strains of thought at the end of the eighteenth century provided her with a vocabulary and rubric that would have made this possible. Although there are no specific references to Enlightenment philosophy in Wheatley's poems or letters, these ideas permeated the eighteenth century, influencing contemporary thinkers as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Thomas Paine, and Benjamin Franklin, informing the rhetoric of revolution and

religious revivalism that Wheatley use in her poetry.[254]Dualism provided Wheatley with a methodology for minimizing the reality of her physical self while privileging the mind. Once the supremacy of the mind over the body has been established, the speaker in a Wheatley poem often returns to the matter of race, but usually in order to make the case for its irrelevance, that the same God has made all of us and all in God's image and likeness. Wheatley builds on these strains, enlisting several strategies in her poems to shift the attention of the reader away from the fact of her physical self in order to challenge specific constructions of black intellectual incapacity. These strategies are also reflected in her letters and in the portrait used as the frontispiece to her only published book of poetry. They include repeated emphasis on the mind as opposed to the physical self.

There is evidence to suggest that Wheatley's writing was both informed by and a response to ideas about the relationship between black bodies and intellect prevalent during the period. These attitudes toward race and the ways they are manifested in the late eighteenth century have been addressed by a variety of critics. According to Lindeman and Tartar, for example, in early America, "[r]ace became a 'natural' category based on the visual evidence of African and Indian bodied marked as 'black' and 'red,'" and, in the process, the body became what Robyn Wiegman calls the "origins of race truth."[255] The result was so-called scientific theories, such as "polygenesis," which maintained that "phenotypic variance was due to the separate origins of races."[256] John Sweet also observes that attitudes lining race and capability in the late eighteenth century "were part of a much broader set of intellectual concerns that involved the nature of human reproduction, the inheritance of physical and mental traits, the potential of education to shape character, and the extent to which physical bodies manifest inner qualities of mind."[257] Richard H. Popkin points out

that racists in the period believed skin color was just one of "a fundamental, unchangeable set of defects that made blacks inferior to whites. The Human body, they maintained, limited or determined what mental development was possible. The body fixed the space the brain could occupy, and presumably brain size related to mental capacity."[258] The body itself determined the limits of intellectual development that were possible for the person of African descent. It was against such limits that Wheatley struggled and to which her repeated references to intellectual ability in the poems attest.

In "To Maecenas," for example, Wheatley introduces a number of rhetorical moves that will appear repeatedly in her verse; it is also one of the few poems that make direct reference to her physical or "mortal" self in addition to her intellectual self. The poem begins with an address to Maecenas (the wealthy and influential patron of Virgil and Horace), but immediately in the third line Wheatley posits an emotional connection (emotions being aligned with the body) between poets and this particular patron ("What felt those poets but you feel the same") (3) that suggests a similar bond between Wheatley and her patroness.[259] In the next line, Wheatley immediately turns to matters of the "soul" and "genius," and a similar dyadic between the body and the mind continues throughout the poem. The poet (Homer) can make the gods (spirits) otherwise appear "in mortal form" (8), while the "deep-felt horror" that "thrills through all [her] veins" (14) and the tears that flow from her eyes in the second stanza are replaced by her claim that, with the influence of the muses, "the same beauties should my mind adorn / And the same ardors in my soul should burn" (25-26).

Wheatley's emphasis on claims of black intellectual capacity is captured fully in the final two lines of the stanza, where she despairs, "but here I sit, and mourn a

grov'ling mind / That fain would mount, and ride upon the wind" (29-30). Even in her description of Terence, her model of an African artist, Wheatley compares her own "less happy" state in which she "cannot raise the song" (35) to "The happier *Terence*" who "all the choir inspir'd" (37). To be sure, Wheatley is addressing her own insecurity about her capacity as a new African American poet to communicate with the Muses in a manner equal to Terence; but she is also making important arguments about black capacity in general. That she mourns a "grov'ling mind" (34) suggests awareness of her ability to write neo-classical poetry en par with her white contemporaries. Read this way, the speaker's claim that she "cannot raise a song" (35) is less about her own inability as it is about permission to participate in an otherwise white male-gendered profession. Given Wheatley's own mock trial in which Boston's literati debated her capacity to produce poetry only a year earlier, her plea to Maecenas (The Countess of Huntingdon), for example, to "defend [her] lays" speaks also to the conflict of Wheatley awareness of her ability as a black poet and social constructions of black mental incapacity that claimed that she "cannot raise the song" (35). In the figure of Terence Wheatley poses the question of black intellectual capacity to produce poetry. Terence is the "happier" of the two poets of African descent not because he is more able, but rather because the same associations of intellectual ability that required the Countess of Huntingdon to "defend [wheatley's] lays" (55), do not apply to Terence and thus allow his poems to "ride upon the wind" (30). Likewise, we can read the word "die" in "The fault'ring music dies upon my tongue" (36) as another of Wheatley's elaborate double entendres. Wheatley exposes the misplaced assumption that the "diabolic die" of the African subject is emblematic of an inherited intellectual incapacity. The only "fault'ring music" she "cannot raise" is due to her constructed incapacity to do so, and denied her because of her skin color.

The "grov'ling mind" of which she speaks is the mind eager and capable of artistic expression and poetic "lays" (55), yet repudiated repeatedly and in constant need to be "defend[ed]" (55).

In this sense, "To Maecenas" sets the stage for a number of tropes that reappear throughout Wheatley's volume of poetry and letters; the most common of these is the speaker's desire to move beyond the limited constructions of the black body and emphasize the intellectual capacity of people of African descent. According to Janet Lindman and Michele Tarter, Enlightenment philosophy influenced New World concepts of the somatic by privileging a radical understanding of human society and identity. By privileging the mind over the body, Europeans and white Americans fabricated a hierarchical system that separated embodiment from reason. At the same time, they argued that only those who could control their physical and emotional passions could achieve self-mastery, an assumption that excluded both people with disabilities and racialized others. Drawing from these influences the Founding Fathers justified the creation of political and social discourses that were at once democratic and exclusive and based on "natural" capacities. "Natural" capacities, of course, being the term Thomas Jefferson uses repeatedly in his *Notes* to refer to the physical differences between blacks and whites that belie intellectual variances, too.[260] Late eighteenth-century Europeans and white Americans celebrated "human" experience as the pinnacle of creation, while simultaneously limiting which bodies could have access to or be representative of power and capacity in a transatlantic world. Wheatley seems to have adapted for her uses the very privileging of mind and separation of embodiment from reason to stake a claim for her own capacity and the intellectual abilities of people of African descent.

The fourteen elegies that constitute a large portion of Wheatley's book may also be read as an insistence on the essential unimportance of the body over the mind. In Wheatley's dirges, for example, the speaker often places emphasis on the soul or the self that lives on after death. Such prominence of the ethereal over the somatic reflects both the tradition of the elegy and Christian theology and a move to draw attention to the capacity and importance of the mind over the distracting associations of the black body within the safe context of devotional verse. Wheatley's use of this methodology is completely fitting in this context; however, as John Shields points out, "Wheatley's elegies generally concentrate more on exhortation of the living than on portraiture of the deceased."[261] Her tone verges on outright admonishment at times, as she charges the subject of the elegy—the living relative(s) left behind—not to wish for the deceased's return, while she simultaneously celebrates the now bodiless state of the departed. A look at just a few of the elegies bears this out, and reflects a commitment to demonstrate the capacity of "th' unbodied mind" ("To His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor" 42).

In "On the Death of a Young Lady of Five Years of Age," the poet speaker addresses the parents of the child, describing her flight from "dark abodes" to "fair ethereal light" (1) where she "feels the iron hand of pain no more" (6).[262] It is a place where she is "No more distress'd in our dark vale below" (10) and is "Freed from a world of sin, and snares of pain" (25). The poet is moved to ask the grieving parents, "Why would you wish your daughter back again?" (27). Instead, she charges them to "check the rising tumult of the soul" (28) and look forward to that day when they will again see their daughter in heaven. Following the reference to the "snares and Pain of life on earth, Wheatley's suggestion that God appears in all, the speaker included, can be read as an allusion to her own state as a slave, regardless of how well she may have

been treated. Life on earth is associated in the elegies with being bound, fettered, and confined. As we have seen in "To the University CAMBRIDGE," and I will discuss further in "On IMAGINATION," "intrinsic ardor prompts [Wheatley] to write" ("University" 1) about the "silken fetters" that "all the sense bind" ("Imagination" 11). Feelings of confinement in Wheatley's poetry are the result of the "soft captivity" that "involved the mind" ("Imagination" 12), or more simply, existence as a slave is life in the "dark vale" ("On the Death of a Young Lady" 10) in which the possibility of intellectual capability is repudiated because of the stigma of the black body.

References to the body in Wheatley's poems are few and far between, but the mind is remarkably present. When corporeal references do appear they are consistently negative, focusing on the body in pain or as the source of temptation. In "To a Lady on the Death of her Husband" the poet refers to the husband's body as "the cold shell of his great soul" (25).[263] In the same sense, death is described as a state wherein "heavy fetters" keep one's "sense bound in never waking sleep" (13-14) and lead to a world "more refin'd" / And better suited to th' immortal mind" (33-34). The world in which the body becomes irrelevant is a place for "th' immortal mind" (34) and the "heav'n ascended mind" ("To a Clergyman" 10); a place where the mind is "free from scornful pride" ("To the Honourable T.H. Esq." 11) and where one can "pursue th'unbodied mind" (To His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor" 42). "To a Lady on the Death of Three Relations" is a poem that contains several references to the mind over the stigmatizing effects of the body.[264] At the moment of death, it is the mind that rises to heaven. Furthermore, the poet suggests that the mind can overcome grief, and that the latter is inconsequential if the mind has but the will to move beyond it: "Weep not for them, who wish thine happy mind / To rise with them, and leave the

world behind" (17-18), and again a few lines later, "Ascend the sacred mount, in the thought arise" (27).

Although neither the negative images of the physical state nor allusions to the preeminence of the mind appear in every one of Wheatley's poems, they occur often enough to suggest an ongoing preoccupation with the relationship between slavery's confinement of the body, and its implications on constructions of black intellect. As Jeffrey Hammond writes in *The American Puritan Elegy; A Literary and Cultural Study,* "All elegies honored the dead, but the manner in which they do so revealed the living for who they were and where they stood."[265] While Wheatley's elegies insist on the pleasures of a bodiless/incorporeal existence, there is more to her position than a belief in the afterlife and salvation. In fact, references to God or being with God are rare. Given her lifelong ill health, it should not, perhaps, be surprising that Wheatley would champion an existence where she was not only no longer ill, but also no longer enslaved. Mary Balkun cites Wheatley's letters as evidence that she shifted readers' attention to otherworldly things as a strategy for dealing with her own physical limitations.[266] In an April 21, 1772, letter to John Thornton, for example, Wheatley writes, "It has pleased God to lay me on a bed of Sickness, and I knew not but my deathbed, but he has been graciously pleas'd to restore me in a great measure."[267] Several of her references to illness come in letters to Obour Tanner, such as the one written on July 19, 1772: "While my outward man languishes under weakness and pa[in], may the inward be refresh'd and Strengthened more abundantly by him who declar'd from heaven that his strength was made perfect in weakness!"[268] While Balkun's theory is intriguing, it fails to account for the fact that Wheatley often takes on the persona of white intellectuals in her poetry to both highlight the power of the mind—and by association the capacity of the black mind—and diminishes the fact of

her own black body. The question, then, is to what end does Wheatley diminish the body and highlight the capacity of her mind?

Opponents of slavery frequently cited the literary quality of Wheatley's poetry as evidence of the inherent mental ability of blacks not only to care for themselves, but also to thrive in the new American republic. George Gregory, for example saw Wheatley's poetry as an instance of "genius contending against every disadvantage, resulting from want of encouragement, and of early cultivation."[269] Thomas Clarkson said of Wheatley, "if the authoress *was designed for slavery,* . . . the greater part of the inhabitants of Britain must lose their claim to freedom."[270] John Gabriel Stedman, author of *Narrative of Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* recognized Wheatley's legitimate claims of black mental ability:

That those people are neither divested of a good ear, nor political genius, has been frequently proved, when they have the advantage of a good education. Amongst others, *Phillis Wheatley,* who was a slave at *Boston* in New-England, learned the Latin language, and wrote thirty-eight pieces of poetry on different subjects, which were published in 1773.[271]

The notion that blacks possessed "political genius" was precisely the idea Jefferson most needed to expunge in order to successfully develop his republic. When Jefferson claims that black poetry stems not from "imagination," but from religion, he is perpetuating a myth of black mental incapacity that Wheatley directly contradicts.[272] In her poem "On Imagination," for example, Wheatley echoes antislavery arguments that suggest that freedom is all blacks need to prove their mental capacity.[273] Wheatley rebels against slavery through her variant poetic forms, demonstrating

mastery of a difficult structure popular in the period, even as she works against its prevailing meter. The heroic couplet becomes thematically significant in her claims, too. One of the strictest poetic forms, its two rhyming lines of iambic pentameter force the poet to conform to rigid poetic rules. Wheatley employs these rules to overturn the regular structure in her poetic substitutions and imagery. Imagination symbolically allows her to break the regular iambic pentameter with punctuated spondaic substitutions, working against the couplet's constraints, but more subtly allows her to break from the chains of bondage, too. Readers of "On Imagination" are expected to note the contrast between the "silken fetters" of poetic form and the "iron bands" of chattel slavery (11, 25).

For Wheatley, emancipation existed only through the poetic faculties of the imagination; her race and gender precluded social and political freedom. Wheatley nevertheless challenges her captivity, masking her protest against social inequality and slavery as a binding institution that could confine the body, but not the mind, in her religious verse. As she proves in "On Imagination," slavery could not fetter the mind: imagination is "the leader of the mental train," just as it is the leader of the "angelic train," and slavery is the "captivity" that "involves the mind" (34, 12) Given that "On Imagination" was one of the works most cited and quoted by the earliest reviewers of Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral,* it is not surprising that Jefferson would so directly attack Wheatley's imagination in his assessment of the mental capacity of educated blacks.[274]

These attacks did not go unnoticed. Gilbert Imlay responded almost immediately to Jefferson's attack on Wheatley in his *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* (1793): "I will transcribe part of her poem on Imagination, and leave you to judge whether it is poetical or not. It will afford you an

opportunity, if you have never met with it, of estimating her genius."[275] We do not know with certainty that Jefferson read "On Imagination," but we do know that he was not a particularly good judge of poetry. By his own admission twenty years after the publication of *Notes on The State of Virginia* he wrote, "Of all men living I am the last who should undertake to decide as to the merits of poetry. In earlier life I was fond of it, and easily pleased."[276]Phillis Wheatley thus poses a significant problem for Thomas Jefferson. What do we do with a black woman who fits all the requirements for participation in the American republic, and who seems to have excelled in a mode in which he confessed his own inadequacy? The answer is remarkably simple: attribute the proof of her intelligence to the influence of religion, thereby eschewing the possibility of intellect and reinforcing assumptions of her dependency as a slave.

Although "To the University" and "Imagination" suggests that Wheatley's poetic career was devoted to refuting the framing of black intellect, other poems by Wheatley suggest that she rejected the notion that secularly defined rationalism was the sole criterion for participating in civil discourse. As "reason" emerged as a separate and distinct epistemological tool in the eighteenth century, religious enthusiasm began to be associated with intellectual disability and lose its credibility as a legitimate apparatus for apprehending the natural world. What John Locke calls the "wrong and unnatural combinations of ideas" that "blinds . . . understandings, and makes [the religious] not see the falsehood of what they embrace for real truth," turned religion into an obstacle to rational thought.[277] "A strong and firm persuasion of any proposition relating to religion," Locke informs us, "can be no evidence or ground of assurance at all, nor can by any means be taken for knowledge."[278] What had formally been an exalted method for knowledge acquisition—religion—had been unseated by the promise of rational thought. This is not to say that Locke was an

atheist. It is more accurate to say that Locke sets up a clear bifurcation between what he calls "intellectual habits and defects," and associates rational thought with "normal" intelligence and religious enthusiasm—meaning a feeling of direct apprehension of divine truths—as evidence of a defective mind. "[I]n religion," Locke tells us, "men, accustomed to the thoughts of revelation, make a greater allowance to it, though indeed it be a more dangerous madness; but men are apt to think in religion they may, and ought, to quit their reason."[279] To believers in progress, rationality, balance, order, and moderation, outbursts of religious enthusiasm were alarming, and evidence of a disturbed mind. Religion was certainly not the antithesis of reason, but unconditional faith in religion as a valid epistemological tool was, according to Locke, evidence of "madness."

An important result of Locke's bifurcation of religious and rational thought by the eighteenth century was an unprecedentedly clear-cut separation of what we call intelligence and the capacity for religious experience, a separation of considerable relevance to changing assessments of black intelligence. By maintaining that Wheatley's creativity was rooted in her evangelism, Jefferson implies that what may have looked like signs of mental capacity were mere echoes of an absorbed religious influence. Jefferson essentially contained Wheatley's authority to a group of Anglo-American evangelicals—Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon—who, in Jefferson's view, represented a minority voice in the construction of the new nation. As Emory Elliott explains, Wheatley was doubly afflicted by Jefferson's criticism since her main claims to originality were both her race and piety, and religion in general was greatly diminished as a force in the New Republic.[280] By relegating her work to the religious, Jefferson could claim that Wheatley's poetry lacked intellectual capital at a time when political leaders such as he attempted to demarcate the

boundaries of citizenship through manifestations of rational thought and intellectual ability. Yet Wheatley reversed the terms. In two of her unpublished poems, "An Address to an Atheist" and "An Address to the Deist—1767—," Wheatley speaks back against secular, scientific views of intellectual disability (and race-as-disability) and employs a religious tradition to frame a different sense of both reason and human value.

"An Address to an Atheist" and "An Address to the Deist—1767—" exist in various manuscript versions and enable us to follow her repudiation of claims of black mental incapacity through representations of both reason and religion in her craft. "An Address to the Atheist, by P. Wheatley at the Age of 14 Years—1767—" is a revision of an earlier draft entitled "Atheism." "An Address" represents Wheatley's successful attempt to consider two of the most serious of eighteenth-century subjects: the place of religion and blacks in the new republic. Her argument in "An Address" is important because it reveals her familiarity with orthodox Congregationalist theology and its diminishing authority in a social world that valued rational political thought. It also shows her awareness of white claims of black mental inability:

> If there's no God from whom did all things Spring
> He made the *greatest* and *minutest* Thing.
> Angelic ranks no less his power display
> Than the least mite scarce visible to Day
> With vast astonishment my soul is struck
> Have reason'g powers thy darken'd breast forsook? (7-12)[281]

Wheatley relies upon a syllogistic argument to assert not only the presence of God, but also to stake a subtle claim for black participation in the American republic. Reason becomes the method for faith, and for Wheatley both faith and reason qualify one for political participation. God has created both the "*greatest*" and the "*minutest*" things, she states, and it is through the comparison of these two figures that Wheatley shows that reason and religion mutually support each other, that white and black are together entitled to American citizenship. Both "Angelic ranks" (typically represented as white, sentient beings) and the "least mite" (black insects incapable of rational thought) are created by God. Wheatley notes that white sentient beings "no less his power display," than the "least mite" who is "scarce visible to Day." Speaking to the social invisibility of blacks in America, Wheatley hopes to equate both black and white by suggesting that God created both. The poem continues, "Thy unbelief disturbs the peaceful Mind," suggesting that the mind is just as important as the heart in accessing God, and that claims that blacks are mentally inferior make no logical sense (32).

In her letter to Samson Occom, she states that she wishes to "convince [white colonists] of the strange Absurdity of their Conduct" noting that their "Words and Actions," their calls for freedom from England, "are so diametrically opposite" to their support of slavery (153). Opposites are important for Wheatley in this poem because she is trying to break down bifurcations that justify slavery: black/white, religion/reason, mental incapacity/mental capacity. When Wheatley asks "Have reason'g powers thy darken'd breast forsook," she is bridging the divides that exist in her community; she is positioning reason as a religious tool, and she is challenging the "words" that called for white liberty, yet also perpetuated black slavery (12).

The dark breast represents both the unbelieving heart of some in her white audience and the body of the black slave. In the case of the unbeliever, reason has failed to penetrate the heart sufficiently to manifest God's presence. But the dark breast also represents an unholy acceptance of slave ideology as a result of reason. Rational justifications for slavery such as claims that blacks lack the mental capacity to care for themselves suggests that reason can darken the heart of even the most virtuous white Christian. But given the audacity of such a claim Wheatley's phrase is ambiguous. We are not entirely sure what is being forsaken here. Is reason forsaking the unbelieving heart, or does the darken'd breast simply not have access to "reason'g powers"? Although it is unclear in the poem—perhaps intentionally—whether reason is the cause for atheism or the most successful defense against it, Wheatley's poem does suggest that the mind is a tool for building faith, not questioning it, and that purely secular rationality may have detrimental effects on the human soul. Significantly, this ambiguity suggests that constructions of black mental incapacity could be nullified by claiming reason as well as moral authority in one's access to God; if whites and blacks can develop a "darkn'd breast" because "reason'g powers" have been forsaken, then the believer maintains the "peaceful," the intact and able "mind" through his or her belief (32).

Less ambiguous in this regard are two versions of another of Wheatley's unpublished poems, "Deism" and "An Address to the Deist—1767—." Eighteenth century deists believed in a discrete and rational God who was bound by the same laws of nature that applied to the world He had created. Deists were likewise dubious of the supernatural origin of the Bible and questioned biblical accounts of miraculous events, as well as postbiblical doctrines such as the fourth century invention of the Trinity. To be sure, Wheatley's poems on atheism and deism are testaments to her

faith, but her religious position is also one of "mental pow'rs" and resistance.[282] In the following poem she claims that religious faith does not jeopardize one's capacity to reason, and is, in fact, proof of one's ability to participate in civil governance:

Whereby he doth insnare thy foolish mind
God, the Eternal Orders this to be
Sees thy vain arg'ments to divide the three
Cans't thou not see the Consequence in store?
Begin th' Almighty monarch to adore
Attend to Reason whispering in thine ear
Seek the Eternal while he is so near. (12-18)[283]

Wheatley is clearly aware of reason-based arguments against religious belief, but again, she claims that it is through understanding the workings and capacities of the mind that one accesses God. Her poetic persona calls on her audience to attend to reason in order to realize that God exists. The consequences of unbelief are meant to motivate the unbeliever to rely on reason, yet not fall victim to a "foolish mind" (12). The poem calls for a reassessment of the power of reason in accessing religious truth, too. God is, after all, whispering in the reader's ear, not the heart. Such appropriations of reason as a faith-based epistemology serve as a counter argument to notions that religious poetry is mere imitation. The "foolish mind" is the one that relies solely on the brain and ignores God's attention to both the mind and the moral sense in communicating His existence (12). If reason and the moral sense are one and the same, as Wheatley, or at least the persona in her poem seems to suggest, then claims that Wheatley's poems are mere imitation because they are religious, thereby

exposing her incapacity for reason, become moot. If Wheatley can successfully associate her religious affinity with reason, then her poems are not mere religious imitations, but reason-based claims for equal partnership in the new republic.

Wheatley begins her poem, "An Address to the Deist—1767—" rather provocatively. She asks, "Must Ethiopians be employ'd for you?" reversing claims of black dependence, and suggesting that Wheatley's status as a slave demonstrates her capacity not only to labor, but to instruct, too (1). As I have demonstrated, dependency, race, and intellectual disability have a long and tangled history. Although the question with which Wheatley opens "An Address to the Deist"—"Must Ethiopians be employ'd for you?"—initially challenges her enslaved and dependent status, the following line—"Much I rejoice if any good I do"—appears to reassure her readers that she accepts her socially and legally inferior position (1-2). But she does so by implying that what pleases her is her moral and mental superiority to her readership, which enables her to be their instructor. Moreover, Wheatley differentiates herself from her readers in "An Address to the Deist" through the use of first person "I" and the second person "you" to teach her ultimate lesson that Ethiopians lack the "foolish mind" of those who place reason above religion. She does this, of course, while still making claims to the capacity for reason. It is she, after all who attends "Reasoning whisper[s]" in her ear (17).

Her instruction in the poem is not merely moral, either. Like authors before her, most notably Alexander Pope (whose works she studied closely), Wheatley transforms a perceived defect—her racial status—into a legitimate claim to speak to a public that deems her inferior. Pope used his status as a politically disenfranchised Roman Catholic as well as his appearance—he was mocked as a hunch-backed dwarf—to place himself rhetorically at the margin of society. As Helen Deutsch

notes, Pope's use of form and deformity enabled him to speak as a disinterested observer and critic of a society he was in but not a part of.[284] Like Pope, Wheatley, too, presents herself as a stranger, removed politically and uses her precise poetic form to counter argue claims regarding black mental incapacity. Her poetry overcomes the "irreconcilable dissimilitude," of both her race and gender.[285]

Wheatley's most interesting example of counter arguing the "irrencilable dissimiltude[s]" that her race and gender created is in one of her most anthologized poems, "On Being Brought from Africa to America." The poem articulates the cultural critiques, corporeal constructions, and subtle protest that make up the crux of disability studies. Like the disabled person, Wheatley stands outside of the mainstream while also painfully aware of her place in it, and she uses "On Being Brought" to directly challenge the normative presumptions of a colonial society that used whiteness as evidence of intellectual capacity and blackness as evidence of intellectual disability and justification for slavery:

> 'TWAS mercy brought me from my *pagan* land,
> Taught my benighted soul to understand
> That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:
> Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
> Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
> "Their colour is a diabolic die."
> Remember, *Christians, Negros*, black as *Cain,*
> May be refin'd and join th' angelic train. (1-8)[286]

The poem begins with the Christian assumption that "'Twas [a] mercy [that] brought me from my *Pagan* land, / [and] Taught my benighted soul to understand" (1-2). The "merciful" enslavement of Africans for the benefit of their own souls is loaded with disability implications, and repeated throughout American literary history. Believing that blacks were incapable of caring for themselves, many Americans argued that enslavement offered a merciful alternative to the hopeless pagan state of the native African. From a disability perspective, however, "mercy" in the poem can be read as a counter argument for black mental incapacity because it highlights the limits of white ability. Disability studies recognizes the importance of subjective interpretations of social actors in a social world, a focus taken up by Erving Goffman, whose work remains important to disability researchers. Goffman's concepts allow us to view disabled people as subject to stigmatization, which places them at the mercy of attributions of other groups.[287] Similarly, Eva Kittay notes that "dependents" experience inequality based upon perceived incapacity and are systematically "at the mercy of the moral fiber of those who have the greater power."[288] Likewise, race is constructed in the eighteenth century using similar constructions of dependency and mental incapacity through which enslavement, or being "at the mercy of those who have the greater power," is represented as a merciful alternative to the spiritual ignorance of the continental African. In her role as a previously "benighted soul," however, Wheatley critiques the notion that she needed to be "saved" because of her previous ignorance of Christ, thereby repudiating claims that blacks need the merciful help of whites to survive, spiritually or otherwise. This reading is buttressed by the next line in the poem: "I redemption neither sought nor knew" (4). The "redemption" of which she speaks is both a testament to her faith and recognition of her rare educated status as a slave woman (4). What Wheatley's

"benighted soul . . . understand[s]" is two fold. First, she understands that her black skin causes others to perceive her as a dependent and mentally incapable individual; and second, that Christianity has both saved her soul and abused it.

Cotton Mather's description of slavery sheds light on this particular reading of Wheatley. In a manner remarkably similar to Wheatley's representations in the poem, Mather notes that Christianizing the African allowed "the most *Bruitish* of Creatures upon Earth . . . to be disposed, in some Degree, like the *Angels* of Heaven."[289] On the surface of the poem, Wheatley perceives her capture in Africa as leading to a fortunate fall; however, the "mercy" of which the persona speaks applies to both the persona and the white reader of the poem. "[M]ercy" (1) is granted to her readers, too, who must choose between being among the "Some [who] view our sable race with scornful eye" and those who embrace the fact that "*Negros,* black as *Cain,* / May be refin'd, and join th'angelic train" (5, 7-8).[290]

Here the meaning of refinement is central to Wheatley's claim that blacks are just as capable intellectually as whites, and not dependent upon the "mercy" of whites. Most Wheatley scholars assume that she refers to a spiritual refinement in the poem. Tom McCulley notes that Wheatley may be arguing that the "conditions of continental Africans could be improved by the same Christianity that allowed European Americans and African Americans to gain spiritual freedom."[291] Eric Hairston argues that Wheatley's use of "refinement" is an admonishment to the people of America to "heed Whitefield's words."[292] To be sure, the refinement of which Wheatley speaks in the poem is spiritual, at least on the surface. Yet the word "refined" also meant subtlety of mind and judgment in the eighteenth century, suggesting another understated critique of assumed black intellectual disability under the guise of religious devotion.[293]

In light of Wheatley's use of the word "refin'd" in the poem and what John C. Shields, Sondra O'Neale and others[294] have labeled Wheatley's "subversive use of language," how we read the penultimate line of the poem, "Remember, *Christians, Negros,* black as *Cain,* / May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train" changes (7-8). Wheatley certainly means to suggest that all may be refined through religious devotion, not just people of African descent, but as Shields notes, "we should not be surprised to discover a bit of conflict regarding Wheatley's commitment to Christianity in the text."[295] He adds that Wheatley's use of the word "*Pagan*" in the phrase "my *Pagan* land" (1) actually derives from the Latin, "paganus," a small, rural village, and not a Christian heathen.[296] Given Wheatley's unquestioned knowledge of classical Latin, we can assume with confidence that she was aware of this meaning. If Wheatley is simply identifying her land as a rural village rather than a home for heathens, such a possibility exposes the reality of additional subversive meanings in the poem.

A subversive reading of the aforementioned line in which Wheatley lumps "*Christians, Negros,* black as *Cain*" (7) together positions both whites and blacks as equally in need of spiritual refinement before God. The line also suggests that both races could benefit from becoming more "refin'd" (8), or developing better judgment and subtlety of mind (7). Consider that the initial stanza of the poem explains that having arrived in the wonderful land of Christ, Wheatley was taught about the Godliness of the "*Saviour*" (3) and his wonderful promise of redemption. But what had all the wonderful promissory claims actually "brought" (1) Wheatley? The second stanza states emphatically that many of the "wonderful" Christian types who have extended the "mercy" (1) of Christianity have simply labeled her and other blacks as

bearers of a "diabolic die" (6), and all the associations of mental incapacity this color holds.

Accordingly, both "*Christian*" and "*Negro*" can be read to suggest that each may potentially be "black as *Cain*" in their mental incapacity, i.e., their lack of judgment. Indeed, in the Old Testament Cain's blackness is attributed directly to his poor judgment—a kind of imputation of mental disability—and more importantly to his inability to be "his brother's keeper."[297] One can certainly be "his brother's keeper" by introducing Christianity, but that assumption becomes antithetical in Wheatley's assessment when slavery is justified in the name of faith. Poor mental judgment, as Allison Carey notes, precludes one from American political participation,[298] but as Wheatley contends in the poem, constructions of black mental incapacity are not exclusive to the "*Negro*" (7). When Wheatley speaks of "be[coming] refin'd" she is actually staking a claim for black mental ability and suggesting that mental incapacity is not exclusive to people of African descent. Poor judgment is not rooted in the color of one's skin, as the poem insinuates, because enslaving Africans under guise of religious devotion suggests it abounds among whites, too (8).

Raised and educated by the proper Susannah Wheatley, Phillis Wheatley was indoctrinated into ways of thinking and behaving that embraced the "refined." In *The Refinement of America,* Richard L. Bushman traces the interest if gentility in American from 1690, when the first evidence of it emerged as a form of intelligence.[299] Some of the important aspects of refined behavior had decidedly ableist and racial assumptions. Control of one's emotions and control of one's body, for example, were assumed attributes of the non-disabled and white gentry. One way to understand Wheatley's measured response to slavery is to read it as a performance

of gentility and therefore evidence of intellectual capacity. In the wake of claims by Jefferson and others that people of African descent "appear to participate more of sensation than reflection," are "wild and extravagant," and "escape incessantly from every restraint of reason and taste," Wheatley's emphasis on self-control was at the heart of ideas about race and intellectual ability in the late eighteenth century.

While refinement in this period was about intellect and the capacity to control one's mind, it was also about the body, both its presentation and its behavior, with the ultimate goal being that "there were to be no reminders of the existence of the base parts of the body. . . . In company, the body was to presented and conceived as immaculate, devoid of every form of filth and baseness.[300] Indeed, only those who could "control their physical and emotional passions" were capable of refinement. This construction precludes both people of African descent and people with disabilities in the late eighteenth century. Jefferson's representations of people of African descent in *Notes*, for example focuses almost exclusively on corporeal elements such as sweat, hair, and internal bodily functions that white "refined" audiences would have interpreted as grotesque, a term Leonard Cassuto aptly uses to describe New World attempts to dehumanize people of African descent. Jefferson's focus on the corporeal characteristics of blacks and his dismissal of their intellectual capabilities demonstrates a move towards a period of human biopolitics in the late eighteenth century in which people of African descent are routinely associated with intellectual disability. Wheatley's poetry can thus be read as a rebuttal to claims of "nature's mistreatment" of people of African descent.

The treatment and comprehension of colonial Americans regarded as intellectually disabled was not considerably different from people of African descent. As Gerald Grob explains, "the fate of the insane was not appreciably different from

that of other dependent groups."[301] Disability historian Kim Neilsen also claims that although European colonists paid little attention to physical disabilities as long as those individuals could labor, cognitive and mental disabilities were often more directly stigmatized because the assumption was the people with intellectual disabilities required immediate care and supervision.[302] She notes that unlike Physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities attracted substantial policy and legislative attention by early Americans for fear that intellectual disability might disrupt social order, capitalist networks and government.[303] Given the intimate connection between social order, capital, governmental control and the system of slavery, it is not surprising that racial difference easily became categorized as a manifestation of intellectual incapacity. The desired body for New World labor, black or white was young and able, but allowances could be made for physical disabilities that did not hinder labor production. Intellectual disability, however, appears to have been represented as a deeper form of incapacity that required oversight and paternal care. Intelligence signified independence, but being black and intelligent posed particular problems of Phillis Wheatley. How does one overcome the stigma of intellectual disability that the black body draws from the gaze of the white colonial American?

"To cultivate in ev'ry noble mind, / Habitual grace, and sentiments refin'd," as Whealtey notes in "To the Rev. Dr. Thomas Amory," she turns to another kind of "text" to emphasize her physical gentility and thereby her mental refinement. The portrait done of Wheatley by Scipio Moorhead, the African American painter and poet was specified by the Countess of Huntingdon for inclusion as the frontispiece in Wheatley's volume of poetry. If one of Wheatley's intentions in her poetry is to avert the gaze of the reader from her blackness to her intellect, then the inclusion of this portrait in collection may shed light on late eighteenth-century associations of race

and intellectual disability and Wheatley's overall project of challenging said constructions with representations of herself.

The portrait has been described and discussed by a number of critics.[304] It shows the young Wheatley sitting at a table, pen in hand, dressed neatly, with just her hand at her chin and her eyes raised upward. The oval framing of the picture contains the words "Phillis Wheatley, Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley, of Boston." Barbara E. Lacey considers this portrait, in conjunction with other images, in "Visual Images of Blacks in Early American Imprints," describing Wheatley's appearance as "inwardly directed, reading her thoughts . . . presented to English readers as a woman

of refinement, a poet, and a servant—an improbably, thought-provoking combination of roles."[305] Lacey also points out that portraits usually were undertaken after sitter and artist had determined how the individual wished to be represented in respect to expression, pose, and accompanying goods.[306] When analyzed through both a critical race and disability studies lens, Wheatley's frontispiece can reveal important elements of black self-construction. If Wheatley did indeed have a say in how she was portrayed in the painting, it would provide additional evidence of her interest in refinement and her concomitant interest in regulating assumptions of black intellectual incapacity associated with the black body.

Compare for example, contemporaneous representations of both ablebodied and disabled people of African descent from the period:

Charlestown, July 24th, 1769.

TO BE SOLD,

On THURSDAY the third Day of AUGUST next,

A CARGO

OF

NINETY-FOUR

PRIME, HEALTHY

NEGROES,

CONSISTING OF

Thirty-nine MEN, Fifteen BOYS,
Twenty-four WOMEN, and
Sixteen GIRLS.

JUST ARRIVED,

In the Brigantine DEMBIA, *Francis Bare*, Master, from SIERRA-LEON, by

DAVID & JOHN DEAS.

A Description of Prince, a black Boy, without Arms, belonging to Mrs. Alexander of Elkton, Cecil County, Maryland.

Out of the left shoulder projects a finger, fig. A. from which depends a piece of flesh, fig. B obviously designed by nature for another finger, as just above the junction may be seen the palm of the hand, C. The finger is perfectly formed, but longer and larger than is proportionate to his size. When he raises and extends it, which he can do at pleasure, it would seem, from the complex motion of the shoulder as if the embryo arm was enclosed under the skin, & moved with it. On the other shoulder, if a shoulder it may be called, when there is neither arm nor scapula, there is a small mark, fig. D, resembling a wen.

His back, although originally as strait as that of any other child, is now much distorted, the spine rising in a curve towards the left shoulder. His distortions daily increase.

Prince is now four years old, and is as lively and active a boy as any of that age. The want of hands he supplies in a surprising degree, by the dexterity with which he uses his feet. With them he conveys his food to his mouth; he feeds with a spoon held between his feet; pencils thrown on the ground, he will pick with his toes, and carry them with safety and ease wherever he pleases; with his toes, when offended, he will seize a stick or a stone and attack his adversary. And what is very remarkable, he can

The above broadside for a slave auction in Charleston, in the 1760s are ideological pictures that provide important information for potential bidders. They provide a sense of power for the viewer who gazes upon the black bodies as exotic subjects to be studied at a distance. So examined they seem desirable and worthy of being conquered, possessed, and controlled because they are not represented in any recognizable way for their viewers as "civilized." Instead of a thoughtful pose or the accouterments of intellectual activity and literacy that accompany Wheatley's image, the muscular and capable body and black skin of the recently arrived slave—a false advertisement at best—are foregrounded. The broadside advertises slaves arriving

from Sierra Leon and displays a woodcut of a half-clad woman wearing bracelets and a bandana with a small figure by her side, probably representing a mother and child. The small figure may be included to signal the fertility purchasable with a female slave. The other figure is a muscular black man with crudely rendered features dressed in a feathered skirt and holding a spear in his left hand. The silhouetted image of the man is graphically labeled, too, with the spear and feather skirt of a native African. Compared to Wheatley's portrait form the same period, whose body is modestly dressed and clearly designed to draw attention to her intellectual capabilities, the slave auction broadsides focus on the somatic capacity of the recently imported African slave. It is perhaps too obvious to point out that John Wheatley would have likely looked at a similar auction advertisement only eighteen years earlier on his way to Boston Harbor to purchase a young Phillis Wheatley.

In the following image the stark form of a black child born without arms accompanies a detailed description of his physical appearance. Although the writer wants to "describe accurately" the various "defects and distortions" his body represents, the image reveals the interpretive power that comes from controlling one's own representation. Unlike the image of Phillis Wheatley commissioned by one sympathetic to her situation as an intelligent African American female slave, Prince cannot control how he is represented in the above image. The image, intended as a kind of anatomical diagram, presents the child in three-quarter view, which is similar to how Wheatley is represented. But in this instance the truncation exaggerates the child's unusual physique while Wheatley's image merely demonstrates her seated position at a desk with an open book in deep thought. The textual description is more sympathetic, providing informative detail about the boy's dexterity at play. Yet, the author reinforces the associations of mental incapacity with the black body by

focusing on the physical anomalies of the young slave and by focusing on the physiological difference of the child in relation to labor. Briefly dressed in comparison to Wheatley and without social context the image takes for granted the appropriate condition of blacks. The physical disability of the child only enhances the spectacle of a disabled slave by inviting the reader to witness his curved spine and missing limbs and speculate as to his place within the slave economy.

Posture and the way the body was visually represented would have been important in signaling control of one's self and one's body. As Bushman explains, "To achieve artistic control of one's physical being, a primary rule was to remain erect, to keep the line from the base of the spine through the neck to the back of the head as straight as possible. While sitting for portraits, people turned their heads and even inclined them but without allowing their chins to fall" (64). This is certainly an apt description of Wheatley in her portrait, but such regulation of the body implied an inherent control of the mind. If Wheatley's book is the "body of work" standing in for her actual body, and evidence of her intellectual capacity, the image is one designed to align her more closely with her readers. It is the working of her mind that has placed her in this privileged and refined position, but this position (as with Frederick Douglass in the nineteenth century) led her to understand fully her condition and its limitations. It is her poems, then, that best speak to Wheatley's idealized project. "On Reflection" is a fitting poem to end a discussion of Wheatley's attempts to privilege what she thought rather than what she looked like.

"On Reflection" celebrates Wheatley's intellectual ability and refinement and works against racist notions of circumscription. Yet the poem is also a double-edged sword because it suggests the torments of being educated and black and alludes to the evils of slavery. The poem opens with a two-word statement—"*Mneme* begin" (1)

(*Mneme* is "memory")—that can be read as a request for the workings of memory to commence, but also as an invocation in the strictest sense: for memory to speak through the poet. While the second line contains a reference to her race—asking the Muses to inspire "Your Vent'rous Afric"—Wheatley refers to her project in the poem as a "great design" (2). As opposed to other poems, where she seems to wonder whether her poetic skills are up to the task at hand, in this case Wheately is merely asking for assistance as she "thy glories sing" (4) and celebrates "Mneme" (memory). There is a feeling of confidence exhibited in this poem that is startling, especially in contrast to Jefferson's claims that the "griefs" of people of African descent "are transient," "less felt, and sooner forgotten" than remembered (265). In the second stanza, Wheatley becomes "The high-raptur'd poet" (14) whom memory aids "Through the unbounded regions of the mind" (15), a direct contradiction to Jefferson's and other's constructions of black intellectual incapacity. These allusions, while not unusual in Wheatley's work, in this poem signal the start of a series of statements that are highly suggestive given her enslaved status. Having asserted herself as favored by the Muses, and in particular by Mneme (memory), Wheatley describes a force of intelligence and recollection "Diffusing light celestial and refin'd" (16) and highlighting the "actions done / By ev'ry tribe beneath the rolling sun" (17-18).

She begins the third stanza by asserting that memory is "enthron'd within the human breast" (19), not just the white one, and then proceeds to a warning about those who ignore the workings of memory:

> But how is *Mneme* dreaded by the race
> Who scorn her warnings and despise her grace?
> By her unveil'd each horrid crime appears,

Her awful hand a cup of wormwood bears.

Days, years misspent, O what a hell of woe!

Hers the worst torture that our souls can know.

(25-30)

The language here—and it is powerful and stark—invokes the evils of slavery and its impact on the enslavers. More importantly, is the suggestion that the slaves will remember their mistreatment—a fact on which Jefferson equivocates in his *Notes* and uses to argue for the perpetuation of slavery—regardless of the slaves' assumed intellectual incapacity.[307] In the final stanza of the poem, Wheatley returns again to the retribution awaiting those who dare "the vengeance of the skies" (43) and act without acknowledging the pain memory (in this case "Recollection") will eventually bring: "He howls in languish, and repents too late" (46). It is also in this final stanza that the melding of the poet and Mneme is complete and that punishment for the sin of slavery is meted out:

But O! what peace, what joys are her t'impart

To ev'ry holy, ev'ry upright heart!

Thrice blest the man, who in her sacred shrine,

Feels himself shelter'd from the wrath divine!

(47-50)

It is difficult to determine whether the wrath described here will be that of Mneme or God, but the implication seems clear: those who sin will be punished, and that punishment will begin on earth. It is interesting to note also that it will also be a punishment of the mind, not the body

Such a reading confirms Sondra O'Neale's claim that "within [the] constraints" of "proper classical and evangelical content" Wheatley "found the Biblical myth,

language and symbol to be the most conducive vehicles for making subtle, yet effective statements against slavery."[308] O'Neale is correct in this assessment, but as my disability readings of a few of Wheatley's poems demonstrates, Wheatley's work is remarkably specific in her criticism not just of slavery, but of the "social, political and religious culture of the eighteenth century" that justified it, namely the association of intellectual disability that accompanied constructions of race in the eighteenth century.[309] As I have attempted to demonstrate, the overwhelming acceptance of people of African descent in the eighteenth century as intellectually disabled to the extent that they were constructed as dependent and incapable of caring for themselves is vitally important in understanding the political and aesthetic goals of Wheatley's poetry. Wheatley's poetry suggests that the combined interest in black mental capacity and calls for independence from England share an ontological root: the claim that both white colonists and blacks were dependent populations. Just as American colonists demanded their independence from Great Britain, so too did blacks seek to prove their capacity for independence as well. But as Allison Carey notes, constructions of mental disability and dependency are hard to eliminate. She argues that intellectual disability challenged the popular images and legal boundaries of American citizenship and rights. While the ideal citizen exudes "intelligence, independence, and the ability to contribute to the national well-being," Carey notes, "difficulties performing tasks such as learning, processing information, communicating" and " caring for one's own basic needs . . . impede the self-determination that is foundational to the exercise of rights."[310] Intellectual and cultural productions such as Wheatley's poetry—considered impossible for blacks under the enlightenment theory that shaped the American founding—implicitly claimed for blacks a place at the American political table. Wheatley's poetry, then, is

as much a commentary on slavery as it is a counter argument to theories of black mental incapacity that reinforced the logic of slavery.

Yet, as I have noted, Wheatley must also be careful about making claims about the inherent abilities of people of African descent. Although writing at a time when the possibility of black freedom seemed plausible, Wheatley was a slave up until the publication of *Poems on Various Subjects.* Religious verse offered Wheatley the vehicle through which she participated in civil discourse, but overt claims about racial equality would surely have neither pleased her owners—despite their affection for her—nor would they have led to the publication of her verse, her clearest path to emancipation. A disability reading of Wheatley's poetry suggests that she does not just demonstrate her rationality; she also subtly attempts to shift the grounds by which rationality is understood. The effect of her poetry, as Jefferson well knew, was that eighteenth-century Americans began to recognize that people of African descent were just as mentally capable as whites.

CHAPTER THREE

Disability and Literary Representations of the "Tragic Mulatta"

Shortly after arriving in England in 1851, American abolitionist Henry Wright approached William and Ellen Craft and made the audacious suggestion that they be showcased in the Great Exhibition. "[A]n American slave-auction block must be there with William and Ellen Craft on the block, Henry Clay as auctioneer, and the American flag floating over it."[311] Ignoring the possibility that the Crafts might not want to participate in such a spectacle, Wright continued: "if they cannot be admitted into the fair, with other specimens of American ingenuity and skill, they must be exhibited in some place outside, but near it, so that they can be seen and examined with convenience."[312] Unsurprisingly, the Crafts resisted Wright's call to re-enact a slave auction, the specter of which they had only recently escaped; but British and American abolitionists alike seemed particularly eager for the opportunity to "examine with convenience" a near-white ex-slave who dressed in drag to escape slavery. For the likes of Henry Wright the spectacle such a production would have created seemed too good to pass up. William Farmer wrote to William Lloyd Garrison five days later regarding Wright's suggestion: "[The Craft's] friends resolved that they should be exhibited under the world's huge glass case, in order that the world might form its opinion of the alleged mental inferiority of the African race, and their fitness or unfitness for freedom."[313] How Ellen Craft was to demonstrate the intelligence of people of African decent on a mock auction block is unclear. Even more uncertain is Wright's goal. He seems remarkably ambivalent about whether white audiences would overcome their own stereotypes of the "alleged mental inferiority of the African race" should the Crafts have been displayed. Why did

Wright assume that exposing Ellen Craft at the Great Exhibition in such a way might leave some viewers confident of her "unfitness for freedom"?

Disability studies offers us some surprising answers to this question. Although seemingly anachronistic in an analysis of tragic mulatta figures such as Ellen Craft, disability theory nevertheless offers insights into the construction of the mixed-race subject and the narratives that Wright attempted to exploit. To be sure, Wright's statements suggest the impossibility of mixed-race subjects from escaping their constructed narratives in medical, scientific, legal, travel, and popular literature of the early nineteenth century, but disability studies offers methods for understanding how these narratives attached associations of disability to the mixed-race body. As one 1869 legal brief puts it, "the offspring of [black and white] unnatural connections are generally sickly . . . and inferior in physical development and strength to the full-blood of either race."[314] Claims such as this not only suggest that that nineteenth-century culture provided visual and literary registers for conflating race and disability, but also that the mulatto figure brought those sometimes submerged associations to the surface.

Borrowing explicitly from critical race studies, disability theory begins with the notion that disabilities are social constructs. Moreover, much work in disability studies explores the relational concepts of disability and race.[315] Unfortunately, many critical race scholars have yet to turn to disability studies as a tool in understanding racial constructions. To be sure, associations of race with disability have often been rooted in what Simi Linton calls the "medical language of symptoms and diagnostic categories."[316] Scholars of the mixed-race subject such as Werner Sollors, and Robyn Wiegman accurately note the role of medical language and diagnosis in the construction of the mulatto/a figure. These claims suggest that core issues in disability

studies speak to constructions of the mixed race subject. What Wiegman calls "economies of visibility," reveal a "physiological optics" similar to medical assessments of the disabled body.[317] Likewise, Sollors notes the prevalence with which race scientists construct the mixed-race subject using a medical language of impairment.[318] These claims suggest that arguments for the racial otherness of the near-white slave depended heavily on associations of the mixed-race body with disability.

In what follows, my reading of tragic mulatta figures in Lydia Maria Child's "The Quadroons" (1842) and "Slavery's Pleasant Homes," William Wells Brown's *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853) and Harriet Wilsons *Our Nig* (1859) suggest that disability plays a significant role in the construction of the tragic mulatta in the early nineteenth century. My central claim is that race scientists associated specific disabilities with the mixed race subject—sickliness, mental illness, and infertility—as a way to prevent sympathy-generating abolitionist fiction from effectively breaking down racial barriers between whites and near-white slaves. As the American slave population became more and more white, mixed blood began to denote specific impairments and became central to the debate over slavery as sentimental writers took up the legal and medical limits of the mixed-race subject in the cause for abolition. Assigning specific hidden/invisible disabilities to the mixed-race subject allowed advocates of slavery to construct naturalized racial differences between white and black where no manifest impairment existed, frustrating the work of abolitionist writers. Moreover, I will argue that in contradiction to proslavery scientists and writers, northern sentimental authors routinely position the alleged disability of the mulatta figure outside the mixed-race body. Sentimental authors accepted the idea of disability among the mixed-race subject, but attributed its causes

to social/environments factors rather than "blood." This distinction is important because it suggests that mixed-race disability is in fact real, but it is socially constructed rather than biological. For Lydia Maria Child, for example, mental illness and sickliness are indeed qualities associated with the tragic mulatta, but they are constructions that take shape in the slave market, the auction block and through the gaze of disembodied whites, not the onus of mixed blood as race scientists claimed. As I will show, a disability studies reading of representations of the tragic mulatta figure suggests that abolitionist writers counteract a heavily racialized medico-social discourse that reinforced claims of mixed-race disability, but not by rejecting the premise. Instead, their argument is with causation: they place the onus of specific disabilities assigned to the mixed-race subject—infertility, madness, sickliness—on the built environments that reinforced associations of race and disability, rather than on the hereditary metaphor of mixed blood.[319]

Disability and the Tragic Mulatta

No nineteenth-century writer was more responsible for popularizing the trope of the tragic mulatta than Lydia Maria Child. Whether in short stories such as "The Quadroons" and "Slavery's Pleasant Home," literary magazines or *A Romance of the Republic* (1867), Child is famous for garnering support for abolitionists through her use of the educated, moral, and beautiful near-white slave. Yet Child has been criticized for succumbing to sentimental tropes that according to Jean Fagan Yellin allowed "white readers to identify with the victim by gender while distancing themselves by race and . . . avoid confronting a racial ideology that denies the full humanity of nonwhite women."[320] Although critics suggest that Child's mulatta narratives encouraged gender identification while disavowing trans-racial empathy, I

question claims that Child's work invokes the very racialist rhetoric readers expect her to have opposed, particularly, "romantic racialism" and understandings of race as essential.[321] If, as some critics have argued, Child's romantic racialisms create barriers between her white readers and the sentimental characters she creates, how could such stories possibly have achieved their rhetorical aims?[322] Indeed, it seems that implementing the very constructions of the mixed race subject—which racial scientists constructed to perpetuate and justify slave ideology—might actually allow readers to see the plight of the slave differently.

The very racial logic embodied in racial admixture, for example, is actively used in Child's "tragic mulatta" stories to suggest that race was as much social as it was biological. By the early nineteenth century examinations of race in American culture tended to follow narratives in which "race became increasingly defined as an inherent corporeal difference."[323] But as a focus on skin and morphology gave way to a focus on "blood" and its fractional admixture as traceable through both genealogy and how that blood would "tell" on the body's surface, "the emergence of the human science . . . [and] comparative anatomy['s]," Robin Wiegman tells us, "broke with the assurance of the visible to craft interior space" and "open[ed] the body to the possibilities of subterranean and invisible truths and meanings . . . [so that] race was situated as potentially more than skin deep."[324] More simply, as a growing population of white-to-the-eye slaves made racial classification more difficult, smaller biological signs such as eye and nail bed color revealed larger, hidden racial assumptions.

As miscegenation continued and distinguishing between White and Black became more difficult, associating the mixed-race subject with disability became a viable option for delineating the biological distinction between White and near white. This process allowed pro-slavery advocates to eliminate the possibility of white

identification with tragic mulatta characters. Whereas black bodies clearly marked the divide between slave and non-slave, mixed-race bodies represented a frightening possibility: the erosion of white political, economic, and social power from a disappearing color line. As critical race theorist Ian Haney Lopez notes, "[r]aces are constructed relationally against one another" such that the privileges that Whites enjoy are linked to the subordination of people of color.[325] Utilizing the trope of the tragic mulatta for abolitionist purposes required that the mixed-race subject function as a proxy who could bring distant suffering and horrors nearer through the familiarity of white skin. As Saidiya Hartman explains, "it is the white or near-white body that makes the captive's suffering visible and discernible."[326] It is true that this particular "racist optics" allowed the white skin of the tragic mulatta to register sensibility of suffering and a measure of identification between white abolitionists and the enslaved, but such claims overlook the inability for ablebodied whites to identify with the visible and discernible suffering of the white or near-white disabled body.[327]

Indeed, claims that Child's tragic mulatta figures "profit . . . by training attention on the white body" become moot when we consider that the disabled body—the sickly, infertile and mentally deficient body of the tragic mulatta—"repulses as much as it attracts."[328] The "sensation" that the near-white female slave creates among the crowd as she ascends the auction block, so common in representations of the tragic mulatta, is a direct response to the sympathy-generating contrast of her whiteness in an otherwise black socio-commercial space. Yet such spectacles simply mimic the one-way relationship of the freak show and allowed Whites to focus on the corporeal difference between white and black through the metaphor of disability, thereby eliminating the social relationship Child and other abolitionist writers worked hard to have readers share with the object.[329] Rachel Adams notes, the freak show

assumes an "opposition between the whiteness (normality) of the audience and the [physiological] deviance of the racial freak."[330] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson adds that bodies that oppose "cultural categories" function as "magnets to which culture secures its anxieties, questions, and needs at any given moment."[331] Anxieties over a whitening black population that abjured cultural categories pushed race scientists and advocates of slavery to construct a narrative that maintained racial prejudice where "race" had disappeared. Constructing the mulatto/a figure as inherently disabled and turning to assumptions of mixed-race impairment became the systematic method for maintaining racial prejudice without the onus of color. Nineteenth-century race scientists understood that without the "monstrous body," as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson describes representations of disabled bodies, "the taxonomies of bodily value that underlie political, social and economic arrangements would collapse."[332] Similarly, disability theorist Lennard Davis points out that "our construction of the normal world is based on a radical repression of disability."[333] As the "abnormal" black body became more "normal" through its admixture with white blood, race scientists needed to fall back on constructions of the mixed-race subject as inherently disabled in order to maintain their construction of their "normal" world.

In 1845 southern race scientist and medical doctor Josiah Nott wrote to James Henry Hammond, a vigorously proslavery South Carolina planter and political leader, about this very point. He writes that his scientific work was specifically designed to confound abolitionist claims that blacks were just as mentally and physically capable as whites. "Abolition," he wrote, "is one of those unfortunate questions which presents one face to the philosopher and another to the mass—reason or religion can decide it—the results of emancipation. I hope that *the grounds I have taken* may do something after a while."[334] The "grounds" Nott uses to challenge claims of black

ability date back to the late eighteenth century and are rooted in assumptions of mixed-race disability. They begin with the hypothesis of mulatto sterility in Edward Long's *The History of Jamaica* (1774). Long observes that "the White and the Negroe are two distinct species" and that mulattoes are supposedly "of the mule-kind" and "not so capable of producing from one another as from a commerce with a distinct White or Black."[335] Long's use of the word "commerce" is jarring, but given the sexual appeal of near-white slaves sold at auction, and the uncontested representations of mixed-raced women in commercial terms, his nominalization of the tragic mulatta this way is hardly surprising. Such labels also include the alleged infertility of the mixed-race subject:

> The mulattoes are, in general well-shaped, and the women well-featured. . . . Some few of them have intermarried here with those of their own complexion; but such matches have generally been defective and barren . . .[I]t seems extraordinary, that two mulattos, having intercourse together, should be unable to continue their species, the women either proving barren, or their offspring, if they have any, not attaining to maturity.[336]

Long's observations reveal the extent to which ideological desire overwhelms possible empirical counter evidence, but also connects the alleged infertility of the mixed-race subject to her sickliness. Mulattos seemed not only doomed to be barren, but those born to them are likewise "defective" and unlikely to attain "maturity."[337]

Swiss-born Harvard Professor Louis Agassiz seemed particularly keen to recast his own genocidal ideas about mulattoes back on their own inherited disabilities. Agassiz believed that the existence of half-breeds was "likely to be only transient" and recommended that "all legislation with reference to them . . .be regulated with this view & so ordained as to accelerate their disappearance from the

Northern States."[338] Clearly an antecedent to eugenic thought, Agassiz viewed the "sickly physique" and "impaired fecundity" of people of mixed race as proof of their "unnatural" progeny; since mulattos were bound to die, Agassiz seems to have thought that legislation that quickened this inevitability particularly productive. Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, the addressee of Agassiz's letters on this issue, was also among the Commissioners on the Freedman who addressed queries to Congress "as to the capacity and condition of the mulatto, his offspring, and their tendency to bodily and mental decay."[339] Howe concluded that "Mulattoism" had impaired "the purity of the national blood taken as a whole," and that given the mulattoes' susceptibility to disease and relative infertility, "without the continuance of mulatto breeding, in the South . . .mulattoes would soon diminish . . . [and] Mulattoism would fade out from the blood of the Northern States."[340] In the nineteenth century the belief that mulattoes were "feeble" mentally, physically, and reproductively, had so much political, scientific, and general intellectual support it represented the dominant opinion of the era and was considered a "well known" phenomenon:

It is a well-known fact in the Southern United States . . . that the mulatto and his progeny are more feeble than either of the parent stock, and much more predisposed to certain diseases, as consumption and scrofulous affections . . . A race of hybrids cannot perpetuate themselves; they die out under the law of hybridity and reversion . . . . Nature avenges the unnatural crime by excision.[341]

The mulatto's "inferior vitality" was taken for granted and further legitimated constructions of inherited black disability.[342] The classification of racial others into somatic criteria that Howe and Agassiz represent are what Ellen Samuels calls "fantasies of identification."[343] According to Samuels, the "truth of self" became less apparent during the nineteenth century as racial admixture lead to whitening of the

black population. Naturalized racial differences such as hair, nose shape, cranial size, even nail bed and iris color became ”bio-markers,” discernible but not immediately visible signs used to identify troubling cases of black and white. But Long, Howe and Agassiz’s reliance on invisible or nearly invisible disability to construct the mixed-race subject suggests that white supremacy depended upon a logic rooted in the body that implicitly drew on disability’s symbolic power. Just as education “dwarfed or destroyed” the “free negro” and made him a “social monstrosity,” disability—infertility, sickliness, and mental illness—attached itself to the mulatto/a figure as a means of sustaining social hierarchies. As Haney Lopez notes, “biological race is an illusion,” but “social race,” however, “has its genesis and maintains its vigorous strength in the realm of social beliefs.”[344] Fantasizing that mixed-race bodies are identifiably disabled, to adopt Samuels’s term, allowed race to stay visible, therefore maintaining the onus of race in the realm of social beliefs. Similarly, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson notes that disability in the social realm is a “product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do.”[345] White African bodies threatened the cultural rules under which Whites enslaved blacks. Aligning mixed-race status with disability simply reinforced the stigma of race in another, easily discernible social category that justified exclusion from economic, social, and political American life.

Before we address how Child repudiates medical constructions of the disabled mulatta in her fiction, it is important to understand where such claims are coming from. No nineteenth-century writer, scientist or politician was quite as adamant about the specific inherited disabilities of the mulatta figure as was Dr. Josiah Nott. In 1843 he published “The Mulatto a Hybrid—Probable Extermination of the Two Races if the Whites and Blacks are Allowed to Intermarry,” in *The American Journal of Medical Sciences*. The essay is a remarkably chilling summary of his conclusions

regarding the relative health of the mulattoes. It is important, however, in assessing claims that abolitionist writers such as Child participated in the same romantic racialisms they were attempting to overcome. In the article, Nott draws from a number of anonymous sources he calls "philanthopists" and articulates six biological conclusions regarding people of mixed African and Caucasian blood:

> 1st. "[M]ulattoes are intermediate in intelligence between whites and blacks."
>
> 2nd. They are "less capable of endurance and are shorter lived than the whites or blacks."
>
> 3rd. "[M]ulatto women are particularly delicate—are subject to many chronic diseases, and especially derangement."
>
> 4th. "[T]he women are bad breaders and bad nurses—many of them do not conceive at all—most are subject to abortions [miscarriages], and a large portion of their children die at an early age.
>
> 5th. The "two sexes when they intermarry are less prolific, than when crossed on one of the parent stocks."
>
> 6th. The above facts apply with more force to the "Terceroons and Quarteroons than to Mulattoes."[346]

Nott seems particularly preoccupied with reproduction and the female mixed-race subject in his article. Mixed-race women are bad breeders, for example, but the fertility of mixed-race men goes largely unspecified. Mulatta women are more "delicate," a slave-market term Walter Johnson associates with "sickly" or "puny" light-skinned slave women.[347] According to Nott's conclusions, mixed-race women are more likely than white women to suffer from two important medical maladies: infertility and mental illness.

We can read Nott's fixation on the female mixed-race subject in a variety of ways that help us understand the important role of disability in the construction of people of mixed race. His emphasis on mulattas over mulattos is indicative of the important gender power dynamics of the antebellum era that scholars such as Marie Jenkins Schwartz, Sharla Fett and Rachel Dudley argue allowed white male physicians unlimited access to sexual knowledge of female slaves.[348] Nott's anxiety over the alleged infertility, rampant illness, and mental degeneracy of the mulatta figure can also be traced to what Joan Burbick calls "healing the republic."[349] Burbick argues that health anxieties emerging out of the possibilities of a democratic republic fixated on, among other things, motherhood, and the role of ideal American maternity—an ideal that privileged the patriotic, fertile American mother. More simply, the infertile mulatta figure served as the dialectical flip side of the figure of the patriotic mother.[350] Black female infertility was certainly stigmatized, perhaps more so than white female infertility. Valued both for their productive and reproductive labor, female slaves were central to the growth of the African slave population after the close of the American slave trade in 1807. One way we can read Nott's claims is to assume that infertility assuaged slave owners by suggesting that people of mixed descent would eventually die out; we can also claim that it also allowed white masters to continue to rape their female slaves with impunity. The idea of reproductive disability as a distraction to allow for sexual exploitation of mixed-race women is organized around the notion that mulatta disability is simply a natural effect of aberrant racial mixing. This approach places the stigma of infertility outside the realm of White control and therefore White culpability. Claims, for example, that mixed-race subjects could not proliferate must have been an appealing notion for men

who participated in the sexual exploitation of their slaves with the expectation that the proof of their abuse would never materialize.

The Tragic Mulatta, Infertility and Mental Illness

Critics of Lydia Maria Child have suggested that her work invokes the very racialist rhetoric we might come to expect her to have opposed, particularly "romantic racialisms" that represent the tragic mulatta as inclined to mental illness, infertile, and sickly.[351] I question these claims and argue that the very racial logic embodied in racial admixture is actively used in Child's "tragic mulatta" stories to suggest that associations of race with disability in the mixed-race subject were as much social as they were biological. Disability studies' emphasis on the social relationships and built environments that buttress embodied versions of normative identity can help us understand how Child challenges race scientists who legitimated slavery. Whereas race scientists would have us believe that the meanings attributed to the mulatta's white or near-white body reside in her inherent aberrant mixed-raced body, Child's renderings of the tragic mulatta figure expose the social relationships in which Whites are legitimated by possessing valued physical characteristics and by systematically constructing a narrative of corporeal difference that would define a population that began increasingly to look like them.

Child's first representation of the "tragic mulatta" figure appears in "The Quadroons," an 1842 story published in the *Liberty Bell*. The short story narrates the union of Edward, a wealthy white planter, and Rosalie, a beautiful, educated quadroon. After the birth of Xarifa, their marriage, which "gave no legal hold on [Edward's] constancy" ends when he legally marries Charlotte, the white daughter of

a wealthy Georgia politician.[352] Betrayed and grief-stricken, Rosalie dies. Edward takes to drink and dies soon thereafter. The orphaned Xarifa finds herself on the public auction stand is so and is sold to a lascivious master who thwarts her escape by murdering her white lover. Xarifa gives herself over to despair, madness, and, finally dies.

The two key elements of the story—the absence of legal marriage between the races and the failure of the white lover to manumit his children—are conventional elements of the tragic mulatta narrative. The repetition of these elements in the likes of Child, William Wells Brown, Harriet E. Wilson and Harriet Beecher Stowe challenges existing laws proscribing miscegenation and anticipate arguments for the complete amalgamation of the American population by Charles Chesnutt fifty years later. Child has received sharp criticism for exploiting the figure of the passive, ill-fated mulatta slave, whose tragic nature is commensurate with how closely she approximates white feminine ideals.[353] Carolyn Karcher offers one such assessment: "Far from encouraging the development of alternative cultural ideals, the archetype of the 'tragic quadroon,' whose tinge of black blood barred her from marrying the white gentleman she loved, implicitly condemned Blacks to pursue the hopelessly elusive goal of becoming white."[354] Distinguishing between the legacy of the mulatta figure in literary history and the precise sociobiological conditions of the mixed-race subject to which Child is responding is important here because, as Nott, Howe, and Agassiz demonstrate above, whites truly feared the uncontrolled whitening of the American black population. To be sure, Child's textual strategy regarding the tragic mulatta figure was at once politically engaged and highly contrived. But in a climate of intense racialism, Child was less concerned with prompting blacks to pursue a particular form of whiteness than she was with attributing the particular disabilities

constructed around the mixed-race subject to the social institutions that supported slavery rather than within the mixed blood of the mulatta figure.

Child begins, for example, by immediately challenging the very notion that the mulatta figure is an unnatural hybrid, likely to die out on its own. The story opens upon a beautifully mixed garden "wreathed with Clematis, Passion Flower," "Magnificent Magnolias" and "Pride of India."[355] The hybrid yet fecund garden is teeming with life and its flowers emit a powerful perfume, which speaks of their fertility. According to Eve Allegra Raimon such floral metaphors reflect Child's fascination with Swedenborg's doctrine of "correspondences," in which spiritual truths are revealed in the harmonies of nature. The flowers, gothic arch and cross under which Rolasie and Edward confess their love is strategically rendered to please her antebellum audience, drawing them into a position of identification with the mixed-race heroine. In this way, readers are likewise seduced by the familiar tropes of sentimental fiction and adopt a sympathetic posture towards Rosalie and Xarifa.

Child stretches the floral metaphor almost to its limit. Although mixed and exotic, these flowers "had not learned to *imitate* the lavish beauty and harmonious disorder of nature, but lived together in loving unity, and spoke in according tones."[356] Refusing to accept the popular notion that blacks "ape" white behavior, Child's floral metaphor suggests that Edward and Rosalie's union is natural, freestanding, and biologically productive/fitting. The particular organic behavior of the mixed flowers is not mimetic, for example, but rather "harmonious" and indicates that the seemingly unnatural fusion of exotic flowers does not produce sterile and sickly offspring at all.[357] In fact, the oxymoronic "harmonious disorder" of nature speaks of the possibility of unity and order, not imitated, but natural, inherent, and prolific.[358] Using the very same metaphors of nature employed by Nott, Morton, and

Gliddon, Child suggests that the union of black and white is not unnatural at all, and, in fact is just as productive as any union between white and white, and black and black. More explicitly, in "Slavery's Pleasant Homes," Rosa, raped and carrying the child of her master is clearly able to have children. She miscarries however, but not due to her inherent mixed-race status as Nott would have us believe. As Child describes it, "one severe flogging succeeded another, till the tenderly-nurtured slave fainted under the cruel infliction . . . . Maternal pains came on prematurely, and she died a few hours later."[359] The general infertility of the mulatta is further debunked by the fact that Charlotte and Edward remain childless in "The Quadroons," yet Rosalie bears Edward's child.

Xarifa, the offspring of Edward and Rosalie, is conventionally whiter than her mother and more beautiful. "The iris of [Xarifa's] large dark eye," however does still retain the "melting, mezzotinto outline, which remains the last vestige of African ancestry."[360] On the surface, including specific biological markers of race seems to confirm and even endorse the reader's most racist assumptions. But in order to accomplish this end, readers must be completely convinced that the outer edge of her irises influence her behavior more so than the social environment in which she finds herself. The tint of the mulatta's eye is merely a cultural interpretation of the physical transformation from visible to surreptitious blackness; as such, it is an indication of her latent disability. Such comparisons, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson explains, structure social relationships and become the "attribution of corporeal deviance" (6). The iris, along with other naturalized racial differences such as nail bed color serve to reinforce cultural rules about what the black body could do or be when said blackness became hidden.

How Xarifa's eye color is to be read may be ambiguous for readers of Child's story, however. She is described as "docile," but true to form, her "dark eyes flashed fire" at the "rude gaze of the young men" or when "some contemptuous epithet met her ear."[361] One could easily argue that such manifestations of race hide a deeper, hideous mental instability inherent in the mixed-race subject. One needs look no further than Thomas R. Gray's description of the "dark, bewildered, and overwrought mind" of Nat Turner (whom he believed to be of mixed race because of Turner's light skin) to see such claims throughout representations of mixed-race slaves "endeavouring to grapple with things beyond [their] reach."[362] But Child suggests that Xarifa's ready awareness of her sexual vulnerability is not rooted in her "luscious and fascinating appearance." Rather, "she felt these incidents with inexpressible pain" and looked "with anguish" at the "dangerous position which the tyranny of society had awarded her."[363] Although Xarifa gets angry when men look at her as a sexual object, her anger is not rooted in her race. Her moral character, not her intelligence is jeopardized by her mixed blood. Instead, the "tyranny of society" is what causes her to respond angrily to her interlocutors, not her racial inheritance, and certainly not the color of her eyes.[364]

When Rosalie discovers that Edward has chosen to marry Charlotte in order to advance his political career, the question of the mental stability of the mixed race subject comes to the fore. Rosalie's head "grew dizzy" from the announcement, but her "pure mind" manages to overcome any racial affinity for derangement.[365] It is true that Rosalie does commit suicide: "Wild were the thoughts that pressed around her aching heart," Child tells us, "which had almost driven her to suicide the night of [Edward's] last farewell."[366] As Child describes the scene, the cause of Rosalie's "maddened . . . brain" is not an inevitable breakdown of her physical brain, and

therefore not the result of her mixed race.[367] Her "wild thoughts" stem from her "aching heart," not her "delicate" sanity.[368] Child makes very clear that the scene "*almost* maddened her poor brain," placing the act of her suicide outside of her alleged mental instability.[369] Child's suggestion that Rosalie "almost" became "maddened" by Edward's marriage is very different from Nott's claim that mixed race women were likely to go mad due to their inherited black blood.[370]

This particular anatomization of the rhetorical work of the narrative conveys a sense of Child's careful approach to the project of ideological persuasion. In 1839, she described her rhetorical style as one that attacks "bigotry" with "a troop of horse shod with felt; that is, I try to *enter* the wedge of general principles, letting inferences unfold themselves very gradually."[371] Child's prose challenges racial constructions, but it does so through acts of sentimental seduction that might at first appear as "romantic racialism[s]."[372] For Child, fiction "should be written with a view to bring the moral emotions into activity," thus when Rosalie commits suicide, we are asked to look beyond race as an explanation.[373] The reader is meant to share in Rosalie's feelings of betrayal, not to conclude that she went mad because she was part black.

Of course, Child thrives off the ambiguity of both sentimental constructions of the tragic mulatta and emerging scientific methods that delineated and circumscribed her within specific disabling categories. As soon as Rosalie dies, and in a moment of authorial intrusion, Child includes the following poem: "[Xarifa] from her mother learnt the trick of grief, / And sighed among her playthings."[374] The language is ambivalent about whether the alleged mental instability of the tragic mulatta was indeed inherited biologically, or learned socially. In one sense, grief is "taught," but from the perspective of Josiah Nott, it is clear evidence of his claim that "mulatta women . . . are subject to many chronic diseases and especially derangement."[375]

Tobin Siebers argues that when associations with disability pathologize minority identities, the effect is never metaphorical (6). The pathologization of the tragic mulatta by disability is therefore referential, and Xarifa's potential for derangement summons historical and representational structures that would use disability to signify human inferiority.

While Child believed that mulatta mothers and their quadroon daughters were victims of a racist system that reinforced their subordinate status through a rhetoric of inherited black disability, such writers as Gustave de Beaumont and many free men of mixed race depicted quadroons as greedy social climbers. In *Marie; or, Slavery in the United States* (1835), the novel inspired by Beaumont's travel through America with Tocqueville, the women who participate in *placage* desire a better social status. Explaining why the quadroons chose white men over free mulattos whom they could marry legally, Beaumont says, "She might, according to law, have married a mulatto, but such an alliance would not raise her out of her class. Also, a mulatto has no power to protect her; in marrying a man of color she perpetuates her degradation; she raises herself by prostituting herself to the white man."[376] In Beaumont's estimation, the mulatta mother is a merchant, aware of the market value of her refined, fair-skinned daughter. When Child asks the reader after Rosalie's death, "What would be the destiny of this fascinating young creature, so radiant with life and beauty?" she suggests that the transference of grief between mixed-race mother and daughter has less to do with inherited mental illness than with awareness of the perilous social terrain her daughter must navigate alone.[377]

Child's representation of Xarifa's sale on the auction block is uncharacteristically realistic for an author invested in sentimental aesthetics. Although still in keeping with the tenets of sentimentalism, Child's realism is important in

helping readers understand that mixed-race madness is environmental, not biological: "There she stood, trembling, blushing, and weeping; obliged to listen to the grossest language, and shrinking from the rude hands that examined the graceful proportions of her beautiful frame."[378] Walter Johnson's compelling history of the New Orleans slave market suggests that Child's representation of Xarifa's experience was remarkably similar to that of most near-white teenage women sold at auction. As slave dealer Maurice Barnett put it: "whenever a purchaser at auction or private sale wishes to have the Negro examined they are always allowed to do so."[379] These examinations also reinforced constructions of black disability. Closer examinations meant finding defects, acquiring racial knowledge and cementing racial ideologies ontologically based on disability. Defect by defect, buyers could run down slaves' bodies until they could afford them.

"[R]ude hands" is also an accurate term for what took place atop the auction block and in the slave pens where slaves were examined more carefully to assess constructions of their alleged disabilities.[380] Through Xarifa, Child wants to expose the slave market for what it is, a site where slave holders not only reinforced their views of black disability, but also act on their own forbidden desires. James Redpath describes the "inner room" at Dickinson, Hill & Co. where a female slave was examined: "She was 'warranted sound and healthy,' with the exception of a female complaint, to which mothers are occasionally subject, the name and nature of which was unblushingly stated. She was taken into the inner room, after the bidding commenced, and there indecently '*examined*' in the presence of a dozen or fifteen brutal men."[381] Redpath goes on to detail the "brutal remarks and licentious looks" that accompanied her return to the auction stand.[382] The buyer had expressed a

concern about the woman's capacity for reproduction; this claim also clearly served as public cover for interest in her naked, near-white body.

Child does not say so explicitly, but the "rude hands" that grope Xarifa's body during her auction suggest that she is to be sold as a "fancy girl," a mixed-race child, teenager, or woman sold for sex in the slave market.[383] Xarifa attempts to put an end to her dehumanizing process by yelling, "Stop that!"[384] The passage is similar to an auction scene from Van Buren Denslow's *Owned and Disowned: or the Chattel Child; a Tale of Southern Life* (1860), where the transgressive power of the mulatta heroine is manifest when she speaks out on the auction block. "Hands off, low man!" she declares when the auctioneer encourages the spectators to touch her.[385] "Walk up an'look at her," he says. "Don't be afeared genmen, if she is shy. Feel of her, gentlemen."[386] Whereas many authors deployed the tragic mulatta trope to place the mixed-race woman on a pedestal, rendering her as silent and immobile as Power's *The Greek Slave*, Child's Xarifa and Denslow's Julia talk back; they push away the very hands used to assess their value, detect their disabilities, and eroticize their bodies.

For a mulatta to take a stand against the men who use her as a sexual object was also construed as a sign of possible mental illnesss. In a similar scene, Maria, of Charles Kingsley's *Two Years Ago* (1857) is whipped for "speaking as a woman should speak," but Xarifa suffers no such consequence.[387] Julia's betrothed rescues her from the auction block before her body and virtue can be scarred by the slave market. Child's story represents the more realistic ending to this story. While Xarifa is sold for five thousand dollars, her white lover is unaware that she has been sold to pay her dead father's debts. George learns of Xarifa's sale but is shot by her new master while attempting to free her. The final two paragraphs of Child's short story reveal

Xarifa's precipitous descent in to mental illness. Witnessing George's death causes her to fall "senseless" to the ground.[388] Her "confused consciousness" leads to an "intense melancholy."[389] At this point her new master refuses to wait for her to acquiesce and rapes her. She becomes a "raving maniac."[390] Child describes the events this way: "That pure temple was desecrated; that loving heart was broken; and that beautiful head fractured against the wall in the frenzy of despair."[391] Child is not clear whether Xarifa's head is fractured after or during her rape, but what is certain is that Xarifa's madness is the result of the rape and not her inherited affinity towards mental illness.

In her work on antebellum "projects of resistance" such as Child's tragic mulatta stories, Maggie Sale suggests the need to "rematerialize the context in which [the writer's sentimental] strategies were originally produced and articulated."[392] I agree. In this chapter I have suggested that disability studies offers methods for reassessing how we read Child's literary representations of the tragic mulatta by examining the social constructions of mixed-race disability in her work. Indeed, to assume that Child is simply echoing the disabling discourse of the likes of Josiah Nott overlooks the strategies that Child may have implemented in order to more effectively challenge the constructions of racial difference that were rooted in assumptions of African disability. Whereas Nott suggests that the mixed-race subject has individual defects rooted in his/her body through racial admixture—a defect that prevents the mulatto/a from being fully human—Child argues that the infertility, mental illness, and sickliness of the tragic mulatta are the product of social injustice and built environments. My claim has been that the construction of the mixed-race subject as disabled is the cultural interpretation of physical transformations of a whitening black population. Disability is inscribed on the body of the mixed-race subject in order to

maintain cultural dichotomies and hierarchies of embodiment between white and black. As an abolitionist, Child repudiates claims that the elimination of mixed-race subjects due to their alleged infertility and sickliness is the solution to racial strife. The "defective" person, she argues, is the product of social ills, not the producer of them. Significant changes to the social environment, she argues, are the solution. Her fiction responds to Nott's claims legitimating the ideology of racial separation across the United States. Yet Child also addresses a readership for whom the evidence of interracial intermixture became increasingly inescapable. As Joel Williamson puts it, "the fact that slavery was getting whiter, that in reality many slaves were more white than black, was a fact with which the proslavery argument could not cope. Either it could ignore the problem, which it did explicitly, or it could brusquely dismiss it by applying the one-drop rule to persons in slavery, which it did implicitly."[393] Nott's essay was merely an attempt to maintain the status quo and establish an additional ontological scaffolding that constructed the mixed-race subject—particularly the mulatta, the subject through which African slaves became more and more white—as inherently disabled. Child's representations of the tragic mulatta are a powerful response to these constructions. They also offer generative future discussions of the role of disability studies in assessing representations of race in American culture.

Cross-Dressing and the Androgenous Mixed-Race Subject

In 1853 William Wells Brown published the first novel written in English by a black American author. *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* follows the never verified stories that circulated in Thomas Jefferson's time and put into verse by Thomas Moore that he had fathered mulatto children with one of his slaves.[394] Brown

casts Thomas Jefferson in the role of white patriarch unable to recognize his slave mistress (called Currer, but modeled after the historical Sally Hemings). Brown's goal is to point out the paradox that the author of the Declaration of Independence—and key American author of racial classifications based on disability—may have sired illegitimate slave children.

Currer and her two near-white daughters Clotel and Althesa are put up for auction in the first chapter. Commentators of the novel have noted the pastiche style of the text with its mix of anachronistic stories, newspaper articles, medical histories, and tangential anecdotes.[395] More explicitly, scholars have also attempted to understand the incestuous pattern of copying and rewording original work of fellow abolitionists in sentimental abolitionist fiction.[396] The genre was a particularly cohesive and constitutive one. Brown, for example, went so far as to reproduce entire sections of Child's "The Quadroons" in order to perpetuate the political power of the tragic mulatta figure. Brown explicitly mentions his indebtedness to "Mrs. Child . . . for part of a short story," but incorporated large stretches of it, verbatim, into chapters four ("The Quadroon's Home"—a play on Child's "The Quadroons" and "Slavery's Pleasant Homes"), eight, and fifteen.[397] Brown essentially only changes the setting of his novel from Georgia to Virginia and the character's names so that Rosalie becomes Clotel, Edward becomes Horatio Green, their daughter is named Maria rather than Xarifa, and Charlotte becomes Gertrude.

There do exist important ideological differences in the novel, however. Clotel does not enjoy the private—albeit illegal—marriage ceremony of Rosalie. Instead she is purchased on the auction block and luckily her purchaser and lover is not outbid. She does not die of depression, either, but does commit suicide rather than return to the slave market from where she escapes. Perhaps most important in terms of the

ideological effect of the two abolitionist works, Child's Charlotte is just as much a victim as Rosalie and Xarifa. But Brown's Gertrude turns her jealousy into a truly sadistic treatment of her husband's mulatta daughter. This difference implicates the white female in racial violence repeated in Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig*.

These particular differences are minor in comparison to the overwhelming commonality in abolitionist literature of the "tagic mulatta" vein. Even Harriet Beecher Stowe, who relies heavily on Richard Hildreth's *The Slave* to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin* pilfers directly from Lydia Maria Child. In her chapter "The Quadroon's Story" Stowe describes the mulatta, Cassy. Her description of Cassy's eye, "her most remarkable feature" utilizes the same biocultural trope of the mezzotinto eye in Child's description of Xarifa.[398] It might be easy to read these passing plagiarisms as evidence of a flailing abolitionist effort to engender commitment to black political and civic equality. Indeed, the repetition of similar representations of the tragic mulatta seems suspect. It is important to remember however that the construction of the mulatta as infertile, sickly, and inclined to mental illness was immediately recognizable to not only a sympathetic northern audience, but a southern audience who likewise perpetuated the myth of biological racial inferiority in its own literature. The cultural work of abolitionist authors such as Lydia Maria Child, William Wells Brown and Harriet Beecher Stowe, who drew from each others' work in their representations of the tragic mulatta was to challenge what passed as "scientific knowledge" of a particular race at the time.

I want to turn my attention now to a particularly unique aspect of William Wells Brown's abolitionist writing that sheds light on his own methods for challenging constructions of black disability in the tragic mulatta: the frequency of scenes of cross-dressing in his novel. Although historians and literary critics have grappled with

the ways in which social identities associated with race and gender can be manipulated, the presence of disability in narratives of slave cross-dressing has yet to be explored.[399]The relationship between gender manipulation and cross-dressing may not be readily apparent. Indeed, issues of disability and trans access, for example, are rarely raised concurrently. As Dean Spade explains, the reason for this is quite simple: transgender access often depends upon an uneasy reliance on medical institutions, which necessitates a contradictory politics. Turning to state disability laws for relief from gender discrimination often requires identifying as having gender identity disorder, or GID.[400] Disability theory, however, can help us read cross-dressing in the literature of former slaves as a form of resistance. Cross-dressing, for example, challenges in a highly subversive way the pervasive idea that identity is fixed; that black is black and white is white, that whites are able and that blacks are not. The message of cross-dressing in *Clotel* is not about publicly announcing the viability of transgender identity—most African American writers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries repudiated disability and other forms of difference in an effort to establish their humanity in the eyes of whites. Rather, cross-dressing is about publicly disnormalizing racial constructions that appeared indisputable. By adamantly refusing the fixed nature of gender, Brown is openly debating the compulsory ability of white and dis-ability of blacks.

In chapter 19, "Escape of Clotel," William, another slave of Clotel's new owner, Mr. French, takes pity on her and offers to give her the money he has earned as a mechanic to aid in her escape to England. William notes that Clotel is "much fairer than many of the white women of the South, and can easily pass for a free white lady."[401] Clotel accepts William's offer, but only on the condition that he accompany her and escape as well. Having previously had her hair cut short by a jealous mistress,

Clotel proposes a plan to pass as a disabled man, telling William: "I will assume the disguise of a gentleman and you that of a servant, and we will take passage on a steamboat and go to Cincinnati, and thence to Canada."[402] Calling herself Mr. Johnson, Clotel and William successfully arrive in Cincinnati. An extended version of the escape is then detailed in an account "given by a correspondent of one of the Southern newspapers, who happened to be a passenger in the same steamer in which the slaves escaped."[403]

It is noteworthy that Brown makes no reference to William and Ellen Craft in his appropriation of their narrative. There is little doubt that their escape, in which Ellen disguises herself as a disabled slaveholding gentleman while her husband, William, posed as her bondsman, served as the model for the cross-dressing scene in *Clotel.* Though *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom: The Escape of William and Ellen Craft* is not published until 1860, seven years after Brown's *Clotel*, Brown toured the antislavery circuit with the Crafts in England and likely heard their story.

The time the Browns and the Crafts spent in England may have been even more instrumental in shaping the roll of cross-dressing in their own narratives than previously thought. We can perhaps examine cross-dressing in *Clotel* through Judith Butler's concept of the constitutive outside, for example: "the excluded and illegible domain that haunts the former domain as the spectre of the impossibility, the very limit of intelligibility."[404] Butler adds that "a domain of unthinkable, abject, unlivable bodies" shape our perception of what is perceived as normal. Just as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson suggests that "extraordinary bodies" "demarcate the borders of the generic," Clotel's cross-dressing is unthinkable and therefore sensational because it breaks the delicate balance between what is perceived as normal and what is not. If a white female slave can pass as a man—the epitome of the well-regulated, self-

governing, self-determining liberal individual—political, social and economic arrangements that situate people of African descent and women as inherently incapable of performing the same role in society as men collapses.

The sensational display of racial and gender ambiguity in P.T. Barnum's shows only added the appeal of witnessing transgressive taxonomies unheard of in England. The "What is It?" exhibit; William Cammell—the "negro undergoing a wonderful change" due to his vitiligo; and Jospehine Clofullia, the bearded lady, only heightened the sensation of hearing an African American man speak as a white man in the case of Frederick Douglass, or a near-white woman of African descent who passed as a disabled man in Ellen Craft. British lecture halls in small towns and major industrial centers such as Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds filled with spectators who came to see African American abolitionists describe in detail how they escaped the horrors of slavery.[405] A blend of entertainment and empirical inquiry, the lectures allowed audiences to see the fugitive slaves display their bodies along with instruments of torture while narrating their unique flights to freedom. The possibility of seeing a near-white slave sold for sex in the American marketplace became so appealing that Europeans travelled to New Orleans to witness such transactions take place in the slave market.

In *Society in America* (1837) Harriet Martineau describes a gentleman from New Hampshire who buys a plantation in Louisiana and takes a quadroon as his mistress. "Well-principled, amiable, well-educated," this woman lives with her Northern "husband" for twenty years.[406] She warns him of her slave ancestry, yet he neglects to secure free papers for her and their three daughters. When he and his wife die, the daughters, who Martineau says have "no perceptible mulatto tinge" and are "to all appearances perfectly white," are reclaimed as property to pay off their father's

debts.[407] Martineau describes how the creditors saw the sisters as "first-rate articles' too valuable to be relinquished" to the uncle who wants to take them back to New Hampshire, where they would pass into white society.[408] Alluding to how the sisters were sold as "fancy girl" slaves or concubines, Martineau adds, "they were sold . . . at high prices, for the vilest of purposes: and where each is gone, no one knows."[409] Such stories were so popular they inspired their own European genre of tragic mulatta literature.

Often overlooked, however, is the appeal to Europeans of travel narratives that described the spectacle of racial and gender ambiguity in New Orleans quadroon balls. Labeled by Tocqueville as "a sort of bazaar," the balls were transgressive places where appearances could be deceiving.[410] In his vivid description of a quadroon ball, John H. B. Latrobe reports that "the handsomest person male or female at the ball was a Spanish gentleman who dressed as a woman, and was not discovered, although he wore no mask, until many of his own sex had been introduced to him, some of his acquaintances among the number, and proceeded to make love to him as a female."[411] As it was a masquerade ball, many of the men wore costumes, some more exotic than others. Among those who might have been men dressed as women, Latrobe notes that there was a "conspicuous . . . fellow in flesh coloured clothes fitting tight to the skin, and with ornaments of a Peruvian Indian as we sometimes see them in pictures."[412] In Latrobe's narrative the quadroon ballroom is a space that blurred gender and race distinctions, a space people could safely renegotiate there racial and gender categorizations, where men could be women, where white men could masquerade as "natives," and where raced women "bore no mark of [their] descent."[413]

Such blurring of gender and racial lines caused tremendous consternation for medical authorities of the period because of the implications of disability that

accompanied both race and gender norms. If black women can pass as white men, for example, the race- and gender-based hierarchies that separated black and white, male and female grounded in their intellectual and physical capabilities become moot. Louis Agassiz spoke of the "natural" weakness of the hybrid offspring in terms of "effeminacy" as opposed to the "manliness" of pure races, for example.[414] He wrote to Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe of his disapproval of any policies following the Civil War that might transform the United States from a "manly population descended from cognate nations" into "the effeminate progeny of mixed races, half indian, half negro, sprinkled with white blood."[415] He alludes to the fearful example of Mexico where Spaniards could no longer be rescued "from their degradation" and concludes with an expression of horror at the prospect of a similar development north of the border: "In whatever proportion the amalgamation may take place, I shudder from the consequences."[416] The biologist considered amalgamation simply perverse and "unnatural." One can immediately see the nascent eugenic implications of Agassiz's fears, but less obvious is the potential that mixed race pairing has on established biological gender norms. His analogy between race and gender, masculinity and effeminacy summons images of "unnatural" half-bloods that resemble some contemporaneous negative representations of homosexuals and the transgendered.[417] His tone also evokes the sense of incest-toned sterility:

Viewed from a high moral point of view the production of halfbreeds is as much as sin against nature, as incest in a civilized community is a sin against purity of character. . . . It is unnatural, as shown by [the mulatto's] very constitution, their sickly physique and their impaired fecundity.[418]

Ellen Craft's narrative can help us understand Agassiz's fears of a transgendered population that is the product of interracial sex à la *Clotel*. Evoking

Ellen Craft's narrative and the spectacle of cross-dressing, Brown's Clotel is also a "Spanish gentleman" who passed not only as white, but as a man, too.[419] In the first instance of Clotel's cross-dressing, we get very few details. She wears a "neat suit of black" and "a white silk handkerchief" to cover her smooth chin.[420] The second time Clotel cross dresses the description is far more elaborate. Brown tells us that "in addition to the fine suit of black cloth, a splendid pair of dark false whiskers covered the sides of her face, while the curling moustache found its place upon her upper lip."[421] Clotel is also no longer an "invalid"; rather, she is abebodied and proves this through her outward masculinity.[422] "[H]e" participates actively in "his" second appearance as a man when conversation turns to the subject of temperance on board the stagecoach to Virginia.[423] The debate is an important one given the frequency with which the white fathers of the tragic mulatta die from alcohol consumption. Clotel passes so successfully as a white aristocratic gentleman that she attracts the flirtatious attentions of young women aboard the stagecoach. In a passage of rhetorical ambiguity en par with the scene of gender play, the possibility that "Mr. Johnson" returns such advances is left open: "Clotel and [the young ladies] had not only given their opinions as regarded the merits of the discussion, but that sly glance of the eye, which is ever given when the young of both sexes meet, had been freely at work. The American ladies are rather partial to foreigners, and Clotel had the appearance of a fine Italian."[424]

The passage achieves two important goals regarding constructions of the tragic mulatta. The first is that Brown reverses the onus of sexual profligacy from the mixed-race female to the pure white female. These young slave-owning women look at Clotel in much the same way as the young slave-owning men in Child's "The Quadroons" look at Xarifa. Both are looking at the mulatta as a sexual figure, but

masked as a white man, Brown makes the young women just as capable of pursuing someone of mixed race as a young white man. More importantly for this discussion, the second effect of the scene is that it conveys the inescapable sense that gender roles may be as mutable and suspect as prevailing categories of racial classification. As Marjorie Garber has argued, "the most extraordinary cultural work done by the transvestite in the context of American 'race relations' is to foreground the impossibility of taxonomy, the fatal limitation of classification as segregation" and " the inevitability of 'miscegenation' as misnomer."[425] Brown plays with something as seemingly concrete as gender to expose the impossibility of racial taxonomies; if something as ostensibly distinctive as gender can be so easily manipulated, then surely race, too, cannot be so easily rooted in fixed biological categories. To make this point particularly poignant for his readers, Brown notes that John C. Calhoun, avid poygenist who saw blacks and whites as distinct and distinguishable races, stays at the same hotel as Clotel during her escape as a man.

Brown returns to the theme of cross-dressing yet again in his chapter devoted to the escape of Clotel's daughter, Mary. In "The Escape," Mary's lover, George, is introduced. George is a servant in the same house as Mary who can also "boast that his father was an American statesman."[426] George is arrested for participating in the Nat Turner rebellion, but Mary offers to "exchange clothes" with him during a prison visit thereby "attempt[ing] his escape in disguise."[427] The narrator remarks, "as George was of small stature and both were white, there was no difficulty in his passing out without detection."[428] Eventually, George makes his way to Canada—presumably dressed as a woman—then makes his way to England. For Brown Cross-dressing not only offers an effective vehicle for attaining freedom; it also exposes the lie of fixed racial lines.

In these scenarios one cultural boundary gets crossed in conjunction with another in what Paul Whitaker calls "passing as straight and white."[429] This is the case In Brown's novel when both Clotel and George challenge not only the color line but also the distinction between men and women. Although these scenes seem to constitute a significant departure from Child's originating narrative, Brown's concern with countering prevailing codes of gender definition can be read as a reaction to similarly constructed and seemingly firm racial definitions. The tragic mulatta's very existence in the nineteenth century depended upon specific biocultural ascriptions of disability. Their alleged infertility, sickliness, and mental illness were so ingrained in the American consciousness, Brown turns to gender, an equally immutable definition in the nineteenth century, to question the very scientific knowledge that constructed blackness as an emblem of potential disability.

As I have attempted to indicate, Josiah Nott, Samuel Gridley Howe, and Louis Agassiz constructed a medical discourse around the mulatta figure that attempted to understand her hybrid nature through a disability narrative. Within the aforementioned scientific discourse, white and black constituted two separate species, immediately constructing the mulatta as cross-species monstrous hybrid. Moreover, William Wells Brown and specific British travel narratives also articulated the anxiety of the mulatta's hybrid nature through the sexual vulnerability and androgynous possibilities of the mixed-race subject. Legal suppression of the mulatta figure existed in almost every American state where miscegenation became illegal, drawing explicitly on this legacy of mixed-race disability. In 1869, for example, the Georgia Supreme Court made the following statement regarding interracial sex in *Scott v. Georgia*:

The amalgamation of the races is not only unnatural, but is always productive of deplorable results. Our daily observation shows us, that the offspring of these unnatural connections are generally sickly and effeminate, and that they are inferior in physical development and strength, to the full-blood of either race. . . .They are productive of evil, and evil only, without any corresponding good."[430]

The mulatta's body comes to represent the immorality of her parents union, manifested in its infertile, effeminate, and sickly state. Through juridico-medical discourse she represents the perverse hybridity of black and white, male and female, animal and human. Consider the words of supremacist Henry Hughes, who attempted in his 1852 "Treatise on Sociology: Theoretical and Practical" to derive the following "laws" regarding "hybrids": "Hybridism is heinous. Impurity of races is against the law of nature. Mulattoes are monsters. The law of nature is the law of God. The same law, which forbids consanguineous amalgamation, forbids ethnical amalgamation. Both are incestuous. Amalgamation is incest."[431] Samuel Sullivan Cox's 1864 congressional speech presents the same construction of the mulatta hybrid as a moral monster. "The physiologist will tell . . . that the mulatto does not live; he does not recreate his kind; he is a monster. Such hybrid races by a law of Providence scarcely survive beyond one generation."[432] Aside from the legal limitations and medical discourse assigned to the "monster," Foucault suggests that pity is an important social response to hybridity. It is hard to pity Clotel in the same way one might pity Rosalie and Xarifa. As Eve Allegra Raimon notes, it is Clotel who engineers her own escape to freedom and Mary who helps George escape.[433] They both exercise a level of agency absent in the tragic mulatta figures of Lydia Maria Child's sentimental fiction.

Our Nig and the Sickly Northern Mulatta Figure

From her first appearance in Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig,* the Northern mulatta, Frado, is firmly rooted in the piteous "tragic" tradition of the mixed-race character. Frado's place in the novel has been read primarily through examinations of her relationship to labor.[434] Such readings are productive in understanding the relationship between labor, independence, and citizenship among African American workers in the North as slavery raged on in the South. The text foregrounds both Frado and her mother's independence and preference for poverty-stricken self sufficiency over condescending charity. "Disdaining to ask favor or friendship froma sneering world," Frado's mother, Mag vows to "die neglected and forgotten before she would be dependent on anyone."[435]

What has been ignored from recent scholarship on Wilson's novel to this point is the relationship between disability, race, and dependence in *Our Nig.* Wilson represents Frado, for example, as disabled in much the same way that whites constructed people of mixed race. She is frail and sickly and must rely at certain point in the novel on the help of others. Frado is a pitiable figure, and in many ways she openly supports many constructions of mixed-race disability. Understanding the relationship between disability an dependence however can inform how we read Frado's mixed-race status. As Martha Albertson Fineman notes, "we venerate the autonomous, independent and self-sufficient individual as our ideal" while signaling dependency in an "accusatory, simplistic and divisive manner."[436] Yet despite this cultural ideal, as Eva Kittay poignantly claims, we are all "temporarily abled" and that dependency is simply part of the "human condition."[437] More importantly, she notes, too, that "cultural dimensions as well as physiological constraints" determine how we construct dependency.[438] Such claims suggest that Wilson's representations of her

mixed-race protagonist as sickly and in need of care are not emblematic of the true nature of the mixed race subject, but rather a result of the "cultural dimensions" that shape how we perceive dependency. What I again hope to convey in what follows is that similar to Child, Wilson is working within specific frameworks of racial disability and dependency to place the onus of the disabled status of the mixed-race subject squarely on racial constructions and the social/cultural environment and not inherited disability from African blood. In the case of Frado, Wilson is challenging the notion that people of African and mixed descent are inherently dependent upon whites and that freedom leads to illness and insanity among those "tainted" with black blood.

The novel unfolds in the New Hampshire town of Groffsford where the six-year-old mulatta protagonist, Frado (Alfrado), is abandoned after her black father dies and her white mother leaves town. Before she abandons her, Frado's mother places her into indentured servitude with the Bellmont family where Mrs. Bellmont and her daughter, Mary, cruelly abuse her. Frado endures this harsh abuse for twelve years until she earns her freedom at age eighteen. Physically disabled after years of severe abuse, Frado departs the Bellmont household and tries desperately to earn a living on her own. She eventually marries a fugitive slave named Tom, who lectures for the Abolitionist Movement. Soon after their son George is born, Frado is once again abandoned and again must find a way to support herself. The novel ends with the author speaking in her own voice as she appeals for support from her readers, not through donations but through the purchase of her novel.

By the 1840s allegations based upon rudimentary and fabricated statistical data suggested the inherent dependency of blacks on the slave system could be traced to the number of insane and diseased free blacks in the North. The sixth census of the

United States, released in 1841, enumerated for the first time the mentally diseased and defective—or "insane and idiots," as they were then officially described—and contained a startling revelation that their prevalence among free people of African descent was about eleven times higher than among slaves. According to the census the ratio of insane or "idiotic" among free blacks in the South stood at 1 to every 1,558.[439] In the northern states, the ratio was 1 to every 144.5.[440] Not coincidentally, the frequency of mental illness among free blacks decreased from Maine to Louisiana with virtual mathematical precision. In Maine, for example, every 14th black was either a "lunatic" or an "idiot"; in New Hampshire every 28th; in Massachusetts every 43rd; in Connecticut every 184th; in New York every 257th; and in New Jersey every 297th.[441] These ratios are presented in sharp contrast with the South, where the proportion ranged from 1 in 1,229 in Virginia and 1 in 2,477 in South Carolina to 1 in 4,4310 in Louisiana.[442]

Such statistics not only offered obvious moral lessons but also gave official credence to popular "scientific" ideas about the physiological and mental suitability of blacks for slavery. One northern observer, in a letter to a New York business journal, explained that the prevalence of insanity among local blacks resulted from "the rigors of a northern winter, which have no influence on the temperament of the whites" and "which affect the cerebral organs of the African race." Slavery, he added, apparently helped to lessen such occurrences among southern blacks.[443] The *Southern Literary Messenger,* however, dismissed the climatic explanation and attributed the sectional disparity to "moral causes" resulting from the condition of people with black blood in the two sections of the country.[444] He concluded that they fared worse in those areas where slavery had been abolished. On the basis of the 1841 census, the journal

warned its readers of the catastrophic dangers of emancipating millions of slaves who would only become ill and go mad as a result:

Let us . . . suppose a half of a million of free negroes suddenly turned loose in Virginia, whose propensity it is, constantly to grow more vicious in a state of freedom . . . . Where should we find Penitentiaries for the thousands of felons? Where, lunatic asylums for the tens of thousands of maniacs? Would it be possible to live in a country where maniacs and felons met the traveller at every cross-road?[445]

These spurious statistics were used to counter both foreign and domestic criticism of southern slavery. Seizing upon the census for political profit, southern congressmen contrasted "the happy, well-fed, healthy, and moral condition of the southern slaves, with the condition of the miserable victims and degraded free blacks of the North."[446] Such must be the case, a man from Mississippi declared, for "illness, idiocy and lunacy . . . in the lower classes, had been shown by medical men to be invariably caused by vice and misery."[447] In 1844 the British government expressed to Secretary of State Abel Upshur a desire to see slavery abolished in Texas and the throughout the world. John C. Calhoun, Upshur's successor and a firm defender of slavery, took the opportunity to use the latest statistics to lecture the British foreign secretary on the relative merits of slavery and demerits of free blacks. The recent census, Calhoun wrote, demonstrated that "in all instances in which the States have changed the former relation between the two races, the condition of the African, instead of being improved, has become worse. They have invariably "sunk into vice and pauperism, accompanied by the bodily and mental inflictions incident thereto—physical weakness, deafness, blindness, insanity, and idiocy—to a degree without example."[448] In the slaveholding states, on the other hand, blacks had shown marked improvements "in number, comfort, intelligence, and morals."[449] Experience and

recent statistical evidence, they claimed, demonstrated that the confinement of blacks secured the peace, safety and progress of both races, while the relation remanded by Great Britain would either leave the "inferior" race completely disabled or reduce it to "vice and wretchedness."[450]

Calhoun's "unquestionable sources" did not go unchallenged. Dr. Edward Jarvis, a Massachusetts-born physician and specialist in mental disorders and one of the founders of the American Statistical Association thoroughly refuted the census findings.[451] Free blacks likewise vigorously denied the alleged mental illness constructed around their race and freedom. "Freedom has not made us mad," an African American leader wrote to the *New York Tribune,* "it has strengthened our minds by throwing us upon our own resources, and has bound us to American institutions with a tenacity which nothing but death can overcome."[452] Reinforcing this sentiment, a group of prominent New York freedmen petitioned congress to re-examine the recent census and make appropriate revisions. By 1849, when *Our Nig* was published, Northern abolitionists were embroiled in a heated controversy over the parallels between the wage system and slavery. As David Roediger points out, much of this debate and the changes abolitionists proposed regarding emancipation revolved around the capacity for blacks to even work outside of the slave system: "But these changes did not lead to any fundamental challenge to the logic of *herenvolk* republicanism, which identified blackness with dependency and servility."[453]

As part of her abolitionist agenda Harriet Wilson needed to contend with scientific and statistical arguments that depicted free blacks as physically and mentally disabled by their emancipation. But unlike her contemporaries who describe the plight of tragic mulatta in the South, Wilson must also contend with her own desire to explicate the true extent of northern racism without jeopardizing her

emancipatory goals. As Henry Luis Gates, Jr. points out, one of the most compelling passages in the novel includes what Wilson says she is not willing to say about her experiences with racism in the North: "I do not pretend to divulge every transaction in my own life, which the unprejudiced would declare unfavorable in comparison with treatment of legal bondmen; I have purposely omitted what would most provoke shame in our good anti-slavery friends at home."[454] Indeed, Wilson suggests that her reticence to articulate the extent of white "Northern racism" is due in part to her belief that "if depicted, could well result in an adverse reaction against Northern whites and could thereby do harm to the antislavery movement."[455]

The "transactions" of which Wilson speaks and insists on not "divulging" seem especially important to explore given the antagonism between emergent northern capitalist and southern slave-based economic systems at the heart of the dispute over slavery at the time. As the *Southern Literary Journal* expressed earlier, one of the anxieties of freeing blacks was the need to construct poorhouse, penitentiaries and asylums to accommodate their eventual immorality, madness and freedom-induced disability. Speaking of the "transactions" she wants to keep secret, Wilson tells us directly about her forced reliance upon the public poor houses and relief systems in the appendix to her novel. We learn that before the birth of her son, the protagonist, Frado, is reduced to seeking aid from "the institution, prepared for the *homeless*."[456] We also learn from the appendix that Frado stayed in the institution until she gives birth to her son, George. Despite such explicit references to the poorhouse, pauperism, economic need and dependency, Wilson's autobiographical novel offers very little in the form of actual relief from these systems in the novel, yet she explicitly cites specific physical and mental ailments that cause her to turn to northern

antebellum systems of poor relief. Why would she hide these particular aspects of her northern experience, yet not deny that they occurred?

In many ways, her narrative as a free woman of African descent in the North provides overwhelming support for the 1840 census and Calhoun's claims of racial degeneracy: she is considered black, she is free, she is disabled, and she spends time in and out of northern institutions. Proslavery advocates, to be sure, often claimed that Northerners treated their black servants worse than slaves, calculating that there was little economic advantage in keeping them healthy or remediating disabilities incurred through hard labor, since they could easily replace them with other workers.[457] *Our Nig* seems to support this claim, at least superficially. Mrs. Bellmont must "beat the money out of" Frado since she "can't get her worth any other way."[458] Southerners also claimed that the master-slave relationship fostered intimate filial ties and deep personal affection between slave and master, while northerners had no such intimacies with people of African descent.[459] The narrator of *Our Nig* at one point exclaims that antislavery northerners were as deeply racist as their southern counterparts. Those who "didn't want slaves at the South," she states, didn't want "niggers in their own homes, North" either: "Faugh! To lodge one; to eat with one; to admit one through the front door; to sit next one; aweful!"[460]

The vehemence with which Wilson denounces Northern racism, racial taxonomies and hypocrisy suggest that her text might serve as an inverted slave narrative, implying that living within the institution of slavery might in some way be preferable to being free and black in the North. But given the "adverse reaction against Northern whites" and "harm to the antislavery movement" explicit mention of the specific "transactions" between her and the Goffsman, New Hampshire poorhouse she sought support from would create, Harriet!!! Wilson must carefully navigate

between representations of Frado that reinforce racial stereotypes and more subtle challenges to perceived black disability.[461] Her reluctance to offer explicit details of Frado's dependence upon the very institutions advocates of slavery argued proved inherent black disability suggests that she wishes to place the onus of her growing impairments on her treatment as a woman of African descent rather than the conflict between her race and environment.

Such a reading of Wilson's text would miss the important rhetorical purpose of disability and tragic mulatta tropes in the novel. Wilson's point is that social institutions and physical and mental abuse at the hands of whites exacerbate racial constructions of the mixed-race subject: the disabled mulatta figure is not evidence of the debilitating effects of amalgamation; rather, it is proof that racism, and the social environment upon which it depends—even in the North—reinforces constructions of inherent mulatta impairment. The novel offers no support for southern apologists or their proslavery motives when describing Frado's debilitated state. Instead *Our Nig* confronts two related, and equally important problems: first, black corporeal difference upon which the ideology of paternalism and slavery rests; and second, the relationship between corporeal difference, racism and disability. *Our Nig* offers, then, a Northern counter narrative, in which a "tragic" mulatta, regardless of how disabled she becomes by the racism that condones her treatment and beatings, resists its psychological consequences and gains a voice in the process.

According to advocates of slavery bondspeople who escaped and stayed up North were likely to fall into vile and immoral living without the guidance of slaveholders, and would eventually become mental and physical disabled. According to Timothy Dodge, the evangelical reform movements that flourished from 1820 until the Civil War produced a new attitude of "moral fundamentalism" that shaped the

administration of poor relief: "reformers saw poverty as caused by the weakness of an individual's character or body. It was a curable condition. The solution was to build up a pauper's character rather than to just relieve his need."[462] Reformers constructed the almshouse in order to meet the moral uplift required to alleviate the poor, a process particularly difficult for people of African descent given the supposedly innate connection between freedom and insanity that was said to plague them. Immorality, it would appear, was not curable when written upon your skin.

As a mulatta and the daughter of a white mother and black father, Frado's moral condition is particularly fraught. Wilson describes her mother's interracial union as one loaded with contagion: "Mag's new home was contaminated by the publicity of her fall; she had a feeling of degradation oppressing her."[463] Mag's precipitous fall from white middle class femininity to the "contaminated" wife of a free black man leads to the conventional mind-altering melancholy or "feeling of degradation" common in the tragic mulatta narrative. Where Wilson's text challenges this construction, however, is in who is culpable in producing this particular psychological effect. The "publicity" of her fall, Wilson suggests, leads to Mag's "feeing of degradation," signifying that the psychological effect created by her fall is social not biological. To be sure, Wilson cannot fit Mag into the tragic mulatta narrative completely because she is not "tainted" with black blood. Instead, she magnifies the wider sense of social responsibility for Mag's reduced circumstances; it is the fault of the community for refusing to help her because she married a black man. Moreover, by "ask[ing] no favors of familiar faces" and "d[yng] neglected and forgotten before she would be dependent on any" Mag sets the stage for the stigmatizing effect of asking for assistance from the community that Frado wants to avoid in order to not threaten the fragility of the abolitionist movement.[464]

Though we know little of what Harriet Wilson actually knew of her mother's past, we do know that the writer had ample experience with the consequences of homelessness. In a letter responding to *Our Nig*, Lydia Maria Child shifts the construction of disability away from racial stereotypes to the almshouses themselves: "How to find a home for such outcasts as poor Mag is a very difficult problem. Public institutions are generally anything but healing . . . and it is rare to find a family all the members of which are disposed to help them forget the past."[465] Child clearly demonstrates her understanding of Wilson's aim in *Our Nig*: to draw vital connections between the economic privation and its ensuing psychical and physical strain and the racial prejudice that causes Frado to become disabled to begin with. The disabled state of Frado cannot be meaningfully severed from the punitive consequences of being black, poor, and disabled in the North.

Instead of writing about the Groffstown asylum where she lived for a while, Harriet Wilson turns to the home of the Bellmonts to repudiate accusations that her disabled status is the result of her mixed race and her freedom. When she is first left at the Bellmont's home, Mag assures them that she will return, but she never does. Mary, the spiteful daughter of Mrs. Bellmont immediately suggests that she be sent to the "County House."[466] The practice of indenturing a free black girl to a white family was not uncommon. As James Oliver points out, "the local social and economic conditions made it almost impossible for [free blacks] to find skilled jobs."[467] Leaving Frado at the Bellmont's may have been the only practical solution to feeding Frado given the extra economic burden free blacks faced in the North.

Even as Wilson exposes the abuse and subsequent disability Frado experiences at the hand of the Bellmont's, she juxtaposes Frado's racially-induced disability with the "invalid" status of the eldest daughter: "Jane, an invalid daughter, the eldest of

those at home, was reclining on a sofa apparently uninterested" in the arrival of Frado.[468] Jane's disability is never explained, suggesting that it, like Frado's inherited blackness, is something Jane is born with. But unlike Frado, Jane's disabled status is constructed as attractive: "Although an invalid, she was not excluded from society. Was it strange *she* should seem a desirable companion, a treasure as a wife?"[469] Jane does marry, and Frado's whiteness is sexualized in the novel at the very moment Jane is introduced: "'Keep her,' said Jack. 'She's real handsome and bright, and not very black, either.'"[470] But Frado's whiteness makes her a sexually-imperiled figure, not an attractive spouse. Moreoever, her adulterated whiteness is stigmatizing in a way that Jane's invalidism is not; Where Jane's disability is proof of her femininity, Frado's is merely evidence of her polluted bloodline.

Wilson wants to make very clear in her novel that Frado's disability is not the result of her mixed-race status, but rather the effect of abuse at the hand of the Bellmont family. The most striking effect of Wilson's writing is the extent to which Frado is physically abused, and the lasting effect of this abuse on her mental and physical state. To be sure, her abuse is directly related to her mixed-race status. Mrs. Bellmont, who "was in doubt about the utility of attempting to educate people of color" because they were "incapable of elevation" leaves Frado with "frequent blows on her head."[471] At one point Mary and her mother "commence beating her inhumanly; then propping her mouth open with a piece of wood, shut her up in the dark room, with out any supper." In another instance Mrs. Bellmont " kicked [Frado] so forcibly as to throw her upon the floor. Before she could rise, [Mary] foiled the attempt, and then followed kick after kick in quick succession and power."[472] The narrator describes a number of physical and mental abuses the child experiences at the hand of the Bellmont's including more instances of the Bellmont's favorite pastime:

"snatching a towel, stuff[ing] the mouth of the sufferer, and beat[ing] her cruelly."[473] After years of abuse, Wilson explains that Frado "was becoming seriously ill."[474] "She was at last so much reduced as to be unable to stand erect for any great length of time."[475]

At eighteen Frado is free from the Bellmont's, but as Frado describes her experience, " [t]he past . . . had been one of suffering . . . which had left her lame."[476] Frado's "failing health" which "was a cloud no kindly human hand could dissipate" leaves her with one of two choices. She can stay with the Bellmont's—"she felt sure they owed her shelter and attention, when disabled, and she resolved to feel patient, and remain till she could help herself"—or she can turn to the public poor house for help.[477] When Mrs Bellmont refuses to have her, the "invalid mulatto" turns to public support and because "the public must pay the expense" she stays with two white women who "asked the favor of filling [their] coffers by caring for the sick."[478] In a bizarre turn of events, Frado's mixed-race status is used to argue that she is in fact not disabled at all, and merely living off public assistance. "Mrs. Hoggs had reported her to the physician and town officers as an imposter. That she was, in truth, able to get up and go to work."[479] Their reasoning for Frado's alleged fake disability is similar to Mrs. Bellmont's justification for beating Frado repeatedly: "[Y]ou know these niggers are just like black snakes; you *can't* kill them. If she wasn't tough she would have been killed long ago."[480]

It seems bizarre that southerners would utilize the infusion of black blood to argue that people of African descent in the north would likely become sick or mad, and that northerners would likewise argue for the robustness of the black body, but in both scenarios, Frado's illness and disability is read as fabricated. The physician is called to verify whether or not Frado actually needs to be on public assistance. He

pronounces her "a very sick girl" and encourages Mrs. Hoogs and Mrs. Moore to "keep her and care for her."[481] What is particularly important here is that although the "authorities were informed of Frado's helplessness, and pledged assistance," Frado makes it very clear by the end of the novel that her "old resolution" to "take care of herself" and "cast off the unpleasant charities of the public" is her goal.[482] The "tragic" aspect of Frado's existence is that she desperately wants to support herself, but after years of abuse at the hands of the Bellmont's she cannot. The novel ends with Frado "still an invalid . . . ask[ing] . . . sympathy [of the] gentle reader."[483]

Above all, it is violence that looms over the figure of the tragic mulatta. Whether sexual violence in the case of Rosalie, Xarfia and Clotel or physical violence in the case of Frado, violence pervades the tragic mulatta narrative. Unlike abolitionist slave narratives, however, where violence against the mixed-race female is intimated with sexual abuse, Frado's narrative displays a sadistic punishment at the hands of Northern white women. Moreoever, *Our Nig's* realistic depiction of domestic labor uncovers the possibility of disability among free blacks not through frigid environment or blood amalgamation, but through overwork and abuse, a remarkably similar position to abolitionist claims for the disabled state of Southern slaves. Indeed, *Our Nig* offers a chilling portrait of the life in the antebellum North for free blacks. It reminds readers of racisms privations and paces the onus of mulatta disability squarely on the shoulders of racism.

Unlike the sentimental work of Lydia Maria Child and William Wells Brown, Wilson's excoriating depiction of northern racism and the plight of the tragic mulatta prevent the text from fitting neatly into the pattern of white sentimental novels. Certainly, Wilson's ending does not match the sugar-coated finale for Stowe's mulatto couple, Eliza and George, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Nor can the book conform

to conventional patterns of social integration. Frado always remains a vulnerable figure, her precarious status the consequence of her disabled state. But this is Harriet E. Wilson's key message in *Our Nig*, that we read on the mixed-race body, stigmatizing ascriptions. Wilson spends her novel challenging the piteous state of the tragic mulatta. Frado is not inherently disabled, but made so by a deep-rooted racism that justified physical and mental abuse. She is not inherently dependent upon a welfare system because she is inclined to disability (or to malingering), but because she becomes disabled; and she is not completely dependent upon others because of her race; but, rather, eager to earn her living as a writer. Herein lies the ultimate claim that Wilson makes. It is she, the disabled "tragic mulatta," who challenges mixed-race constructions. Her alleged mental illness is challenged by the materialism of her novel, and her alleged physical incapacity is repudiated by her willingness to work to support herself.[484]

CHAPTER FOUR

Albion Tourgée and the Politics of Disability and Race in Reconstruction-era Literature

In "The Literary Quality of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'" (1896), Albion Tourgée asserts that Harriet Beecher Stowe's "literary marvel" wrought its magic by painting "a slavery which the free man could understand and appreciate."[485] Curious to learn what the emancipated slaves themselves thought of Stowe's book that had so "vividly . . . impressed [his] young mind," Tourgée questioned many about it. Nearly all found her sketches of blacks and master-slave relationships untrue to life.[486] Yet far from branding the "non-realistic" mode of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a defect, Tourgée identified it as the secret of the influence the novel had exerted. An "absolutely 'realistic' . . . delineation of the master and the slave" would not only have failed to move readers, he argued, but would have gone over the heads of the majority, "who did not, and do not yet comprehend" the nature of slavery nor the people subject to it.[487] Tourgée recognized that a realistic representation of African slaves would not have the same rhetorical effect on antebellum readers as black caricatures and would have prevented John P. Jewett from ever publishing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in *National Era* in 1852. Oddly, Tourgée felt that the stigmas associated with slavery, the lack of "responsibility, autonomy, will, and self possession" that constructed blacks as "dependent" are precisely what made Stowe's famous novel so effective.[488] How do we explain the disconnect between white perceptions of blacks as a dependent population and African American awareness of their own latent capacities in mid-nineteenth-century American fiction? And how should we understand the role played by Northern readers who reinforce and counter act these assumptions?

Disability studies offers us some surprising answers to these questions. Historically, associations of disability with race have been remarkably detrimental to African Americans. Prominent southern physician Samuel Cartwright, for example, justified slavery by maintaining that people of African descent were intellectually inferior to whites and invented diseases of the mind—*Drapeotemania* and *Dysaethesia Aethiopica*—to lend scientific credibility to his claims.[489] Colonial and slave ideologies conceived of people of African descent as fundamentally degenerate and sought to bring "aberrant" bodies and minds under control via slavery and Jim Crow. Yet, as scholars such as Nirmala Erevelles and Andrea Minear note, critical race and disability studies offer insightful methods for assessing constructions of race because both race and disability depend upon social constructs that derive meaning from the social, historical, cultural, and political structures that frame social life.[490] Disability studies also helps us understand why blacks were denied citizenship. Allison Carey argues, for example, that "race" has "intertwined in complex ways with intellectual disability" in the United States, to the extent that people of African descent have been barred from citizenship because they were "assumed to have lower levels of intelligence than whites."[491] Critical disability studies also aids us in comprehending the relationship between corporeal difference and representation. Ellen Samuels posits, for example, that the "deep, durable, and indelible" differences between the races depend upon what she calls "fantasies of identification," which naturalize racial difference through associations with disability.[492]

Building on these developments, I interrogate the relationship between race and disability during the Reconstruction era in Albion Tourgée's *Bricks Without Straw* (1880). As a number of scholars have shown, caricatured black characters abound in white nineteenth-century American fiction, positioning exaggerated racial

physiognomies as evidence of their inability to participate in American civil discourse.[493] This essay argues that Tourgée's characterization of Reconstruction-era black characters systematically challenges the deeply associated and mutually reinforced constructions of race and disability in literary plots of the antebellum era, which questioned the capacity of black Americans to participate in American government fully. Moreover, Tourgée's characters represent a previously unstudied exploration of representations of both race and disability in the Reconstruction novel.

Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Representation of Dependence

The most remarkable achievement of Albion Tourgee's novel of Reconstruction, *Bricks Without Straw* is its revolutionary approach to depicting African Americans. Tourgee openly defies racial stereotyping ubiquitous in the writings of his predecessors and contemporaries, who either embraced these conventions uncritically or resorted to covert strategies for undermining them. The conflation of racial blackness with physical and mental abnormalities in abolition literature, for example, demonstrates that in order to challenge slavery as a system of economic and social oppression Stowe and other writers of the sentimental tradition employed alleged black dependency and ignorance rhetorically to justify emancipation. As a sentimentalist writer, however, Stowe's recognition of the ideological power of bodily representations and ideals in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* do little more than reinforce the thoroughly embodied ideology and cultural formations that framed blacks as needy.

A scene from Stowe's seminal text illustrates how the sentimental novel uses disabled characters to promote emancipation without challenging the scientific racism

that constructed blacks as comparatively disabled to whites. Two of Stowe's villains, the slave traders Haley and Marks, exchange stories ostensibly proving the illogic and ineptitude of two female slaves. Marks offers the example of "a tight, likely wench" he bought once who was "considerable smart" as well but whose "young un" was "mis'able sickly; it had a crooked back." To his amazement the woman suffered miserably when he gave the child away to someone who would take it off his hands.[494] Haley follows with a similar tale about a slave mother whose "stone blind" child he "nicely swapped off for a keg o' whiskey." To Haley's astonishment, the mother defended the child "jest like a tiger," finally "pitchin[ing] head first, young un and all, into the river."[495]

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson reads this episode as evidence of Stowe's use of disabled figures to portray the clash between egalitarian concerns with the equal value of all people and economic productivity.[496] To be physically disabled is to be of no material value to the larger slave economy. To be a disabled slave child taken from one's mother or tossed over a bridge for Stowe represents an injustice motivated by maternal feeling, however, without challenging the invocation of disability as a related category to racial otherness that mutually constitutes the liberal American self embodied in Stowe's readership. An examination of Stowe's other black characters as minstrelized racial types, although sympathetic and capable of "touch[ing] the universal heart," fixes racial difference in physiology and perpetuates constructions of the black mind as infantilized and therefore incapable of securing a place in the fiercely competitive and dynamic socioeconomic realm.

Uncle Tom's Cabin confirms the polarization of black and white corporeal and mental difference in this often-quoted description of both Eva and Topsy:

There stood the two children, representatives of the two extremes of society: The fair, high-bred child, with her golden head, her deep eyes, her spiritual, noble brow, and prince-like movements; and her black, keen, subtle, cringing, yet acute neighbor. They stood the representatives of their races. The Saxon, born of ages of cultivation, command, education, physical and moral eminence; the Afric, born of ages of oppression, submission, ignorance toil, and vice![497]

Beginning with Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's scholarship, the work of representation has been important in depictions of people with disabilities in literature. Similarly, African American literary scholars have for years explored the representation of race in literary contexts as essentialized manifestations of white supremacy.[498] Stowe's work is no exception here, but in the passage cited above, Stowe casts the difference between Eva and Topsy as biologically embedded: the "two children," as "representative of their races," are the respective products of "ages of . . . command" and "physical . . . eminence" and "ages of . . . submission" and "ignorance." Eva owes her noble brow to generations that were "high-bred," while Topsy's body results from generations of "vice."[499] Stowe's description of two comparatively different races intersects mid-nineteenth century America's vision of physical normality with visions of race in profound ways. Eva's intelligence and virtue are embedded in her whiteness in a manner that Topsy cannot even learn to emulate, for example, because of her inherent degenerative status as racial other. Stowe even uses the romanticized term repeated in pseudo-scientific work on race, "Afric," to describe Topsy.[500] Coincidentally, "Afric" resonates phonetically as "a freak," at the exact moment of literal enfreakment between Eva and Topsy: when Stowe blatantly taxonomizes the differences between black and white, Topsy and Eva through the juxtaposition of racial types for the reader to witness.

Where "vice" and "ignorance" defines Topsy, it is ultimately Stowe's comparison between the two children that is so demoralizing. Eva is "high-bred," remaking Eva into a pseudo-eugenics ideal of white womanhood, removed from the incapacity attached to racial otherness. Stowe posits that there is "hope" for Topsy through her Christianization. "Topsy is different from what she used to be" and is "quite unlike" her former self, Stowe tells us.[501] Indeed, she "could become an angel," but as Robin Berstein has noted, Topsy is so "loaded with contradictions and internal schisms" it is difficult to remember her as representative of proof of black potential to progress.[502] Stowe realizes that as much as Ophelia educates Topsy and Eva loves her, even claiming that she could be an angel "just as much as if you were white," Topsy's blackness cannot be bred out of her.[503] The only hope for Topsy's true redemption rests in her death, since only as an angel can she really be white, and therefore fully human. Inherent in Stowe's claim that Eva is "high-bred" is proof that the hardening and ignorance that accompanies slavery cannot be fully overcome through Christian sympathy. Topsy may become refined and overcome the effects of slavery, but for Stowe's readers, she will never be truly human. Eva's representative whiteness and Topsy's constructed blackness denote the inherent hopelessness of Stowe's Eugenicist comparisons of these two children. Stowe constructs Eva as inherently capable and configures Topsy as a sentimentalized figure designed to agitate for emancipation. The inherent violence of Stowe's comparative representation of Topsy rests in the signified independence and full humanity of Eva through her exertion of mental power over her body, while representing Topsy as a mere minstrelized figure whose mental acumen and therefore ability for full participatory citizenship is tenuous at best. Stowe's representation of Topsy as "Afric" serves only to maximize the minstrel

aspects that she had already embedded in Topsy as a comparative foil to Eva's redemptive and ideal whiteness.

"The Negro's View of the Destiny of His Race"

By the mid-1880s American culture had embraced the sentimental reconciliationist literature of the "Lost Cause." Published especially in literary magazines of the period, Negro dialect stories forged a widely popular literature of reunion. In turn, the ideological character of the Civil War and the reality of emancipation faded from American literature. The realities and consequences of the Civil War, and more especially the needed continuation of Reconstruction policies, were exchanged for literary sentimentalism that plied readers with reconciliation themes and intersectional marriages. No writer captured with more insight the meaning and significance of this writing on American perceptions of people of African descent than Albion Tourgée.

Tourgée allowed that the South's sins had given American a more intriguing, and authentically tragic history, but he worried about the effect on racial uplift of beguiling and romanticized fiction that "glorified [the South] by disaster."[504] In the interest of reconciliation, questions of "right" and "wrong" in the war and its aftermath were all but banished from political discourse during and after Reconstruction. The South, Tourgée observed, was "a civilization full of wonderful contrasts . . . horrible beyond the power of imagination to conceive in its injustice, cruelty, and barbarous debasement of a subject race," yet "exquisitely charming in its assumption of the pastoral purity."[505] It even believed, Tourgée noted, that "the slave loved his chains and was all the better physically . . . for wearing them."[506]

In *Bricks Without Straw* Tourgée laid out an elaborate critique of how African Americans were represented in the literature of the Lost Cause. "The Negro," he wrote, "has of late developed a capacity as a stock character of fiction which no one ever dreamed that he possessed in the good old days when he was a merchantable commodity."[507] Blacks were represented in one of two ways, he observed. Either they were the "devoted slave who serves and sacrifices for his master and mistress," or the "poor 'nigger' to whom liberty has brought only misfortune."[508] Indeed, the faithful slave, and his cousin the unfortunate freedman, were the sine qua non of the literature of reconciliation.

Tourgée was at least one white writer who resisted the charms of such twisted visions of the past and pointed to the dire consequences of these representations for blacks and worked hard to understand African American experience. One of many articles he wrote that prompted contemporary African American literature critic Anna Julia Cooper to remark that Tourgée excelled at "presenting truth from the colored American's standpoint," reveals his awareness of ingrained assumptions of disability associated with race.[509] The "essential and incurable inferiority of the colored race," Tourgée notes, is so intensely dependent upon the assumed "inherent superiority" of the "white race" that blacks are believed "inapt in the conduct of affairs."[510] "Doubtful of the African's capacity for equal development," Tourgée notes that in forgoing the realistic representations of the freedman, whites will continue to assume that "there should be any inherent impulse in the race itself, which might yet make it an active element in shaping its own ultimate destiny."[511]

The notion that people with disabilities and people of African descent were incapable of caring for themselves was common knowledge in the nineteenth century. Emerson writes in 1847 that "we are men . . ." and not "minors and invalids in a

protected corner, not cowards fleeing from a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the dark."[512] Scholars of disability have long used Emerson's words to examine people with disabilities as, what Robert Murphy calls "subverters of an American Ideal" and "betrayers of the American dream," but what Emerson's brief but exemplary invocation of the disabled figure tells about associations of race and impairment is that people of African descent have been betrayed and subverted from the American dream because of their assumed incapacities.[513]

Consider that Emerson goes to great lengths to stress the importance of trusting oneself in self-mastery, becoming solvent in our natures, being unique, and never imitating. People of African descent were not included in the American experiment (despite the ironic fact that their labor made it's achievement possible for millions of whites) because they were believed to be inherently incapable of these self-actualizing acts. "I suppose no man can violate his nature" Emerson notes in "Self-Reliance," "All the sallies of his will are rounded in by the law of his being."[514] Desperate attempts the articulate the "law of [blacks'] being" and prove the beneficence and natural order of African slavery rested upon assumptions of black disability. If invalids, according to Emerson, are cowards, like children, and must be confined to a protective corner and guided by redeemers and benefactors because the "Almighty" has ordered so, then "Advancing on the Chaos and the Dark" of invalidism can take on new racial meaning when we consider that the above served as justifications for enslavement.[515]

The irony of the justification for African slavery that Tourgée attempts to expose in *Bricks Without Straw* is the assumption that because of their blackness, people of African descent are inherently incapable of performing the same self-

actualization as whites. Arguing that the modern subject emerged in the Neoclassical age, as discourse and institutions solidified to reproduce new social relations of dominance and subordination, Michel Foucault asserts in *Discipline and Punish* that feudal society transformed in a "disciplinary regime" that systematically controlled the body as a concern for it efficient operation and its ultimate utility increased.[516] According to Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, this concept of "docile bodies" yields the rigid taxonomies central to nineteenth century scientific racism's project of distributing human characteristics in discrete and hierarchical relations to one another.[517] As Emerson's earlier comment implies, the invalid, confined to a "protective corner" represent the architectural and medical practices that segregated, assisted, and punished those perceived as economically unproductive people. Many slave owners shaped their own identities around the assumption that whites guided, redeemed, and in the name of God, served as benefactors to people of African descent trapped within the "chaos and dark" of their blackness. Part of what Tourgée demonstrates in *Bricks* is that African Americans were not economically unproductive nor in need of paternal guidance—their labor was vital to the American economy—but that they were constructed as the ostensible failure of self-mastery as a condition of their blackness, a manifestation of economic incompetence within a growing capitalist nation that easily aligns itself with assumptions of disability. Concern with culling out the "sick poor" from the economically useful gave rise to a dominant ideology of health and well-being as a civic duty and political objective. Being black meant a specific incapacity for political participation because blackness was associated with disability. Because the principle of self-determination required a compliant body and mind to secure a place in a competitive socioeconomic space, people of African descent, who were deemed incapable of full health and full

rationality, became victims to the "politics of Health," which rationalized containment through "curing," i.e., enslavement as a form of paternal care.[518] This discourse, which classified the healthy body as white and able, and pathologized people with disabilities and racial others, focused on disciplining all bodies in the name of improvement. Disability, and its application to various bodies and ethnicities were used, then, to measure, classify, and regulate recently freed bodies.

Desperate to demonstrate that people of African descent were just as capable of caring for themselves and cognitively sound enough to participate in civil governance, late nineteenth-century African American authors frequently avoided making even minor associations of disability in their fiction in order to severe any lingering implications. But even during Reconstruction African American authors were not as active as Tourgée in repudiating associations of disability and race as a means of racial uplift. One of the most substantial Reconstruction-era African American novels, Frances Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1892) was written well after the advent of American literary realism, yet forgoes the possibilities of using newer models of fiction to engage the Civil War, choosing to develop a project making full use of sentimentality as a discursive strategy. Although Harper rethinks the meaning of reconciliation for African Americans at the same time she rejects what reunion had come to mean in white American civic and social life, she fails to engage fully with the association of disability and race, which Tourgée contends is central to stimulating "a more active agency on the part of Afro-Americans in shaping [their] own destiny."[519] Consider, for example, that three black characters help "turn the tide" of the Civil War.[520] Aunt Linda's husband, the aging John Salters enlists late in the novel and Harry and Robert emerge as well-respected members of their regiment. These men comprise Harper's fictive representation of the 186,000 black men who served as soldiers for the North.

Tom, though, and despite his "herculean strength," is not part of Harper's ideal of ablebodied black masculinity because of his unnamed "physical defects."[521] Instead of participating in the brain and brawn of Harry and Robert's racial uplift agenda best articulated in "Robert and his Company," Tom becomes a "helper" and sets up camps, scouts, and tends to the wounded.[522]

Josh Lukin rightly notes that traditionally, African American authors have been extremely averse to race/disability analogies, which perhaps explains why so few disabled people of African descent populate black fiction.[523] The notion that "blackness is like disability" was not used historically as an expression of how black Americans suffered under slavery, but as a tool to justify it.[524] As Jennifer James points out in her study of African American war literature, white Americans systematically lumped people of African descent with "boys unable to bear arms" and "old men unfit to endure the fatigues of the [war] campaign" with blacks because the very fact of blackness was regarded as a deformity or disability.[525] "[L]unatics, idiots, and Negroes" were, without fail, represented as dependent groups because their situations implied similar mental deficiencies. James notes that for post-Civil War writers, the corporeal and mental integrity of black characters in their fiction was essential to their goals of racial uplift. "[I]t was imperative that the black body and the black mind be portrayed as uninjured . . . in order to disprove one of the main anti-black arguments that surfaced after emancipation—that slavery had made blacks 'unfit' for citizenship."[526] In practice, this meant excluding the reality of disabled slaves and freedmen from literary representations of the Civil War and eliminating portrayals of black Americans that would suggest sexuality, childishness, or disability, all of which were associated with the history of anti-black stereotypes.

Such representations of African Americans during Reconstruction, or lack thereof among African American authors, becomes increasingly complicated from a disability studies perspective when we consider the burgeoning influences of eugenics at the turn of the twentieth century. In Pauline Hopkins first novel, *Contending Forces* (1900) she writes, "our people are improving in their dress, in their looks, and in their manners."[527] Faced with fierce post-Reconstruction attacks on African Americans, many African American writers sought to demonstrate progress of the black race through assimilation into American white society. What is striking about Hopkins's statement is its assertion that black physical features ("their looks") are improving, implying that the race's progress is not only cultural but also biological. While Hopkins agreed with the majority of contemporary black writers that educational and moral progress was important to racial uplift, she also prescribed to another remedy, which Jennifer James calls a "black politics of rehabilitation."[528] James suggests that biological efforts at integration required that black bodies to prove their "sameness" with white Americans before African Americans could be fully integrated into the national community. Influenced by the eugenic belief in the "improvement of the human race through better breeding," to quote the leading U.S. eugenist Charles Davenport in 1911, Hopkins advocated that African Americans' genetic improvement was necessary for racial advancement and dependent on their marital choices.[529] In much the same way Charles Chesnutt proposed to "remove the disability of color" in his "The New American" essays, Hopkins called for the comingling of white and black racial lines.[530] She asserted that amalgamation would produce a genetically superior race and eventually lead to the amelioration of African American political and social exclusion.

Hopkins' promotion of eugenics for racial uplift, however, is problematic. Given the racial, gender, and class prejudices of contemporary eugenics, her assimilationist agenda has the unavoidable effect of reinforcing it demeaning logic. Breeding out blackness in order to uplift the race reinforces the assumption that people of African descent have inherent disabilities that whites do not. Moreover, suggesting that African Americans can become part of the American landscape simply through biological means precludes the fact that racial constructions are, like disability, a product of our social and built environments. A eugenic approach to racial uplift assumes that blackness is a racial defect that must be eliminated if people of African descent are to achieve fully human status. Such claims smack dangerously of "cureism," or the belief that the goal of people with disabilities should be focused on eliminating their disability. To assume that blacks could become more "American" by simply becoming whiter pathologizes blackness in much the same way that the ideology of ability marks the unquestionable inferiority of disability. Indeed, embracing racial uplift through an eugenic agenda makes blackness essentially a "medical matter," the remedy for which is simply curative white blood.

As one of the few, if not only, author to lay out a critique of national forgetting as well as a vigorous call for the enforcement of black civil and political rights within a solidly "realist" mode, Tourgée's fiction examines the social meanings, symbols, and stigmas attached to people of African descent during Reconstruction and asks how they relate to enforced systems of exclusion and oppression. Unlike his white contemporaries whose old-time Negro became the voice through which a transforming revolution in race relations and the remaking of the republic dissolved into fantasy, and his African American contemporaries who felt the need to separate associations of race and disability in uplift literature by avoiding it altogether,

Tourgée listened to black voices and considered distinctively black experiences within already well-established claims that blacks were inherently and perpetually disabled.

To Speak as a "White Man"

Albion Tourgée believed that if the crusade against slavery required an *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852, the challenges the country faced in 1880 required a radically different fictional vehicle for mobilizing public opinion regarding race. Whereas the politics of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* required black caricature to animate the sympathies of the private sphere, the politics of Tourgée's most significant Reconstruction-era novel, *Bricks Without Straw*, required challenging the conflation of racial blackness with impairment and dependence within the public sphere. Tourgée's Reconstruction-era literature differs from that of abolition texts in the role of disability as a political vehicle through which to navigate change.

In contrast to Stowe's sentimentalized black characters, Tourgée carefully crafted his characters in *Bricks Without Straw* to challenge embedded representations of blacks as inherently incapable of self-government and liberal individualism. The novel opens with a fictional device designed to challenge the use of black dialect rhetorically to represent black ignorance and incapacity.[531] Nimbus speaks in dialect, as do all the uneducated characters in *Bricks*, black and poor white alike. The use of uneducated dialect illustrates Tourgée's commitment to giving the disempowered—both black and white—a voice, but it also offers an instance of the role of dialect in characterization. Many scholars view the role of black dialect as a minstrel-influenced caricature that draws associations of limited intelligence in realistic fiction.[532] These

scholars are not wrong, however. In contrast to representations in the work of Mark Twain, Charles Chesnutt, Joel Chandler Harris and other white realist authors—whose black dialect stereotypes their characters as faithful slaves and mouthpieces through whom their creators lament the passing of allegedly harmonious race relations under slavery—Tourgée's dialect-speaking black characters are intelligent, self-reliant and complex freedmen who challenge the construction of black speech as emblematic of mental deficiency.

Consider the conversation between the county sheriff and the chairman of the Freedmen's Bureau:

"There'll be trouble with that nigger, yet. He's too sassy. You'll see."

How So? Asked the chairman. "I thought you said he was industrious, thrifty, and honest."

"Oh, yes," was the reply, "there ain't a nigger in the county got a better character for honesty and hard work than he, but he's too important—has go the big head, as we call it."

"I don't understand what you mean," said the chairman.

"Why he ain't respectful," said the other. "Talks as independent as if he was a white man."

"Well, he has as much right to talk independently as a white man. He is just as free," said the chairman sharply.

"Yes; but he ain't white," said the sheriff doggedly, "and our people won't stand a nigger puttin' on such airs.[533]

Nimbus speaks as a former slave, and although Tourgée is indebted to authors such as Stowe, who provides a model for characters who exemplify Christian virtue, Tourgée marks his speech as different from the self-effacing Julius of Chesnutt's short stories

or Uncle Tom's respectful tone in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Nimbus's speech represents a new independent black man capable of thinking for himself and expressing his opinions openly. Nimbus's independence is not attributed to the infusion of white blood as it is with George Harris because Nimbus is fully black. To speak "as if he was a white man" is to claim the unmixed African American's place within the larger American socio-political public sphere (115).

To speak as a "White man," yet maintain one's black dialect is also to challenge the biology of race and what black bodies are allowed to do. As critical race theorist Ian Haney López notes, "Biological race is an illusion. . . . Social race, however, is not. . . . Race has its genesis and maintains its vigorous strength in the realm of social beliefs."[534] Similarly, disability theorist Rosemarie Garland-Thomson defines disability as "the attribution of corporeal deviance—not so much a property of bodies [but rather] . . . a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do."[535] Nimbus repudiates constructions of naturalized racial difference by defiantly breaking corporeal norms of what the black body should be or do. Nimbus is seen as "putt'in on . . . airs" simply because he refuses to conform to associations of disability applied to him because of his race (115).

In addition to the use of dialect to challenge constructions of black mental disability, Tourgée's description of his black characters systematically reverses both the falsification of racist ideology and the clichés of minstrelsy. Unlike the "burnt-cork" stage Negro, Nimbus is no comic figure. "Ernest," "thoughtful," and "quiet," he does not shuffle or jump Jim Crow, but holds himself manfully erect (100). His head is not apelike, as caricatured in such proslavery texts as Josiah Nott's and George Gliddon's *Types of Mankind* (1854), but "shapely" and "well-balanced."[536] His "self-reliant character" belies claims that the Negro cannot manage or care for himself and

depends upon white supervision (100). While discrediting the stereotypes that "have come to represent the negro to the unfamiliar mind," Tourgée simultaneously draws attention to the racializing process that the white mind goes through on seeing a human being in black skin (100). Remarkably similar to the mental process of starring and witnessing a human being corporeally different articulated by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, the white reader, Tourgée implies, cannot recognize a "fine figure of a man" in "ebon hue" (100).[537] Instead, the white mind—much like the ablebodied mind—perceives the same traits differently under a different physical, racialized exterior, even resorting to a different vocabulary to register its impressions. Tourgée pointedly states, for example, that "if [Nimbus] had been white," his face would be perceived as "grave," but because he is black, the appropriate word is "heavy" (115). Similarly, the very person who "in white skin would have been considered a man of great physical power and endurance" metamorphoses into a savage brute in the white imagination once the skin color changes to black (100).

Tourgée draws upon a heavily racialized medical discourse to examine naturalized racial difference. What Ellen Samuels calls "fantasies of identification" or the fantastical solutions nineteenth-century science invented to define, identify, and understand racial differences were heavily influenced by constructions of disability.[538] At the core of the fantasy of identification, Samuels tells us, is the assumption that conflations of race and disability are fixed, legible and permanent.[539] Just as Tourgée explains that had Nimbus been white, his physical appearance would have implied a masculine presence and ablebodiedness, Samuels suggests that nineteenth-century practices of identification are mapped onto bodily characteristics, and in the case of race, disability, "the social identity most closely associated with the immutability of

the physical body," becomes inscribed on the black body to understand its corporeal difference from whiteness.[540]

"If Ever I Get to Be a Man Again"

It was Tourgée's contact with fugitive slaves and black soldiers in Union army camps during his Civil War service and his own severe disability, however, that converted him into an impassioned advocate of both racial and disability equality and allowed him to repudiate such constructions. Like many in his University of Rochester graduating class, he enlisted as soon as the Civil War broke out, driven by a desire to prove his manhood and his patriotism. The Battle of Bull Run left him paralyzed from the waist down after the wheel of an artillery wagon struck him in the back during the Union retreat. Years later in his novel *Figs and Thistles* (1879), Tourgée's vivid description of his wounded protagonist's escape from Bull Run likely match his own experience:

The fear of capture took hold of me. I could not walk. That was out of the question. But I crawled to the edge of the wood . . . and kept on—God only knows how—through the long hours of the night, crawling, clambering, hobbling, on toward Centreville—not by the way we had come, but by some sort of blind instinct, taking the right direction. It was morning when . . . somebody put me in an ambulance—they said it was the last one—and I was brought to Washington. The doctor said the night's trip did me more harm than the wound itself. [541]

Tourgée struggled immensely with his disability. Unable to walk for months he declined to marry his fiancée because he refused to saddle her with "such a husband."[542] Although it is unclear whether his spinal injury affected his sexual

functions, Tourgée became convinced that he could no longer perform his role as husband to Emma: "You know that it would be unjust and unmanly for me to permit you to share my misfortune," he told her. "If I ever get to be a man again it will be different, but . . . for your sake I am sorry you are my betrothed."[543] Tourgée's understanding of manhood and self-reliance were directly related to corporeal integrity, and he refused to believe, at least initially, that he could be a man and be dependent upon others for help. This particular construction of masculine independence, vital to Northern male self-worth and honor, led Tourgée to break off his engagement because he could not allow himself to be a "burden to [her] life."[544] He told Emma on more than one occasion that it would be "a sin of no slight magnitude" for him to "marry a woman in [his] condition."[545]

In *Patriotic Gore*, Edmund Wilson suggests that Tourgée's disability challenged Northern middle-class constructions of courage as an essential ingredient of the man of character; the man of self-possession and self-control could control his fear and his impulse to flee from danger along with his other bodily impulses.[546] Courage under fire bespoke of a morally upstanding nature, and to have been injured in retreat and now to live as a helpless dependent, unable to fulfill the duties of a husband, grated harshly against his idealized self-image. "I am completely discouraged," he wrote to his fiancée, Emma; "do not ever call me 'noble or 'glorious'; do not speak of 'fame' or 'honor' in connection with me . . . it pains me to read the words, they are so undeserving by me."[547] But Tourgée's disability was vital in helping him look past racial platitudes that also represented men of African descent as incapable of military success because of the constructions of dependence assigned to their skin. Tourgée was allowed to re-enlist, but he would always insist, long after the war, that his radicalism on race issues resulted from his "experience during the rebellion,"

suggesting that both his disability and his encounters with freedmen shaped his approach to the representation of black characters in his fiction.[548]

The opportunity to fight and work alongside black men under wartime conditions taught Tourgée to respect a race he had hitherto considered incapable of self-governance, leadership and civic participation. While performing picket duty, for example, in January 1863, Tourgée was startled by the approach of a "trembling slave, who, when he had assured himself of kindly treatment, drew from a secure concealment in his dusky bosom a paper containing a copy of [The Emancipation Proclamation] and asked—Please sir will you tell me—is this true."[549] The encounter sharpened Tourgée's awareness of how attentive and intelligent slaves actually were. On another occasion, Tourgée and a comrade attended a "meeting of the 'Cullud population' of the Brigade," as he recorded in his diary on 7 June 1863.[550] What he saw there of African Americans as political agents apparently impressed Tourgée enough to prompt him to request a transfer two weeks later to a black regiment.

The Bureau of Colored Troops advertised positions as leaders of black troops and made clear that only "intelligent white men with high morals who were willing to make a commitment to uplifting the black race" would be considered. Captain R.D. Mussey, the officer commissioned with making colored-troops assignments noted that anyone looking for higher pay and rank would not make the cut. Moreover, each candidate would have to pass a rigorous examination before a board of commissioners.[551] Given that the main advertised requirement was a willingness to uplift the black race, the requirements fit Tourgée perfectly. The unspoken necessity of an able body in order to lead black troops, however, likely prevented Tourgée from being considered. In a letter to Emma, he expressed such a fear: "if the inspecting officer should chance to notice my blind eye I fear it would throw me out. I shall run

my own risks on that however and not tell him of it myself."[552] The requested transfer never materialized; in fact, he never even received a hearing.

Although the only record of why the army did not grant Tourgée a black regiment exists in his letters to Emma, where he states the paperwork had been lost, the tone with which he writes of his disappointment reveals that he may have been turned down because of his disability. Although northerners and southerners alike believed that slaves could be "led about in gangs of an hundred or more by a single individual, even by an old man, or a cripple if he be of the white race and possessed of a strong will," few Union generals were willing to take that risk with a group of freed slaves.[553] The extreme differences in physiology and power presumed to exist between white will and the black body functioned as fundamental racial boundaries that rendered disabilities of the white body irrelevant in most cases, but despite Samuel Cartwright's reassurance that "The Nigritian has such little command over his own muscles, from the weakness of his will," those particular arguments were rendered mute when a disabled white soldier asks to lead a group of ablebodied African American Union soldiers.[554] Moreover, Confederate President Jefferson Davis made it very clear early in 1863 that any white officer commanding black troops would be tried and executed for "inciting insurrection" if captured.[555] Although this threat was taken seriously by Tourgée's regiment, the loss of honor and sense of desperation on the part of the Union army that southerners would assume where they to capture a disabled lieutenant leading a colored troop were likely enough to cause Captain Mussey to simply dismiss Tourgée's application as frivolous.

Tourgée's disability frustrated him his entire Civil War career. To his lasting mortification, his Civil War service ended in December 1863, when his commanders judged him unfit for active duty after he reinjured his back. Tourgée's dismissal from

the army due to his disability, despite his desire and insistence on his own ability to serve and be useful, shaped how he positioned freedmen in his literature as inherently capable of rebuilding the South and participating in American governance, and criticized institutions that denied blacks their rights because of their alleged inabilities and dependence on whites. Margaret Humphreys has argued that arming freedmen and slaves during the Civil War required a critical reassessment of black mental and physical ability and a reconstruction of black stereotypes given the relationship between war and masculine self-determinism.[556] Tourgee's rejection as leader of black troops, his own attempts at re-enlistment, and his final discharge from the Union army all rest on his superiors' repeated conflation of Tourgée's disability with incapacity, a struggle eager freedmen faced as they repeatedly solicited active involvement in fighting the Confederacy.

As Humphrey's shows, physicians during the Civil War were certain that the black body was not only physiologically, but biologically different from the white body. Physicians and politicians debated whether blacks were capable of fighting in the Civil War, and observations about racial variation in disease moved from viewing the black body through a racist lens to observing the black body through an ableist lens. If antebellum physicians were sure about any aspect of the black man's health it was that he was more susceptible to pulmonary diseases, flat feet, depression, and indigestion.[557] The assumption that the black soldier was inherently weaker than the white pervades Civil War physician's records and posits another reason for why Tourgée would have been denied leadership of a colored regiment.[558] Moreover, Tourgée's denied application to lead a colored troop and dismissal from the army due to his disability, despite his desire and insistence on his own ability to serve and be useful, influenced how he would interact with African Americans as the war

progressed and even shape how he positioned freedmen in his literature as inherently capable human beings. As a disabled white man, denied participation in traditionally masculine American ventures, Tourgee found his treatment as a disabled American resembled rhetorical arguments for the continued economic and social disenfranchisement of African Americans.

Indeed, Tourgée's racial views evolved as he developed closer relations with escaped slaves and his disability continued to prevent him from military advancement. His diary entry of 24 October 1863 offers a glimpse of that evolution. Describing the latest fugitive to arrive in his camp, a man who called himself William, Tourgée crossed out the word "colored" and substituted "an American citizen of African descent."[559] He immediately took William into his "pay and employ" and rechristened him "Nimbus" for his own protection.[560] Living in close quarters Tourgée and his African American servant likley carried on long conversations, through which Tourgée gleaned insights and misconceptions he would weave into his portrayals of his African American characters. Chief among these is the hero of *Bricks Without Straw*—Nimbus—whose black dialect and skin in juxtaposition to his independence and intelligence break new ground for discussions of race and disability.

"Such Things Ain't Made for Niggers to Ride on, Anyhow"

Although Nimbus bears the stigma of disability as a freedman perceived as incapable of self-governance and civic participation because of his illiteracy and black dialect, Tourgée knew and associated with physically disabled freedmen on a regular basis as a judge in North Carolina. As Mark Elliott's excellent biography of Tourgée notes,

just as Nimbus is based on a real African American whom Tourgée knew well, the prominent and physically disabled character Eliab Hill from *Bricks* is based on the physically disabled preacher Elias Hill from South Carolina.[561] The fictional Eliab, however, serves as one of Tourgée's most important literary creations because of his capacity to challenge racial and abelist types on a variety of levels.

As a mulatto, Eliab invites comparisons to literary representations of other mixed-race figures. Unlike George Harris from Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Eliab is represented by Tourgée as an individual. Tourgée does not, for example, attribute Eliab's "erect," manly carriage, "thoughtful brow," "broad and square" shoulders, and "nobility of expression" to his white body as Stowe does George Harris's.[562] Nor does he ascribe Eliab's "womanly" traits and physical weakness to the "taint" of black blood and the ill effects of miscegenation, as Rebecca Harding Davis does Dr. Broderip in *Waiting for the Verdict*.[563] Instead, Tourgée places the onus of Eliab's "suffering" and "shrunken and distorted" limbs on the "cold from . . . exposure" he experienced as a child before the Civil War, "which settled in his legs . . . producing rheumatism" so that he "could not walk or hardly stand up" (126). The institution of slavery is implicated in the development of Eliab's disability, not his race, since the "overseer knew [nothing] of it" until it was "too late to do any good." Eliab loses "all use of his legs" as a result of slave-owner neglect, not the implied physically disabling effect of his black blood (127). In a striking reversal of Stowe's description of Haley and Marks' two disabled slave children in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, however, Eliab's mother makes the argument for buying both her disabled child and herself, warranting that she will ensure that Eliab learns to support himself.[564] As a child he learned to cobble and within a month of learning the trade "was as good a shoemaker as his teacher" (128). As both a disabled man and a severe critic of the scientific racism that

argued for the inherent incapacity of blacks, Tourgée was eager to disprove both racial and ableist constructions that stigmatized the dissimilar body (black or disabled) as inherently incapable.

As a disabled character, Eliab also invites comparisons to literary representations of impaired characters from fiction of the same period. Most literary representations of disabled slaves mark the constitutionally different bondsperson as a burden since he or she cannot find a useful role within the plantation economy. Frederick Douglass's cousin Henny is sent off into the woods because her two burned hands make her a "poor gift."[565] Primus, the "club-footed nigger" from Charles Chesnutt's "The Conjurer's Revenge" is conspicuous on the plantation because of his deformed leg, but also because of his association with a donkey, i.e., a stubborn animal, incapable of doing any real work.[566] "Black Guinea," the white man in black face whose ambiguous disability is central to Melville's aesthetic in *The Confidence Man* (1857), uses his disability as a form of labor only because he professed to not be enslaved, and must therefore beg for money. "Dogs without masters fare hard," posits one spectator of the legless man, suggesting that as a disabled man, he must be cared for.[567] Even Newman, the "young slave born without arms" from Martin Delaney's *Blake* (1859) is a subject of suspicion when he offers to join the rebellion against slavery. "How could you fight?" asks Henry. "You have no arms!"[568]

The aforementioned examples also suggest, as Haney López and Cheryl Harris note, that "[r]aces are constructed relationally against one another, rather than in isolation," such that the privileges that whites enjoy are linked to the subordination of people of African descent.[569] Likewise, Lennard Davis points out that our "construction of the normal world is based on a radical repression of disability" because "without the monstrous body to demarcate the borders of the generic . . . and

without the pathological to give form to the normal, the taxonomies of bodily value that underlie political, social and economic arrangements would collapse."[570] The frequency with which race and disability are conflated in American literature and culture suggests that Tourgée's may have found in Eliab Hill an opportunity to challenge what he perceived as a fundamental obstruction to the success of Reconstruction in the South: the assumed disability of people of African descent. As a white disabled man, he understood how stigmatizing disability could be and aimed to challenge constructions of both.

Tourgée makes very clear that just as race does not signify an inability to care for oneself and participate successfully in civic governance, disability does not preclude the capacity to labor successfully. When first introducing Eliab to the reader, for example, Tourgée writes, "One comprehended at a glance that this worker and learner was also deformed" (118). Instead of describing him as a "club-footed nigger," Eliab is first a "worker" and a "learner." Moreover, Primus's club-footed disability relegates the onus of deformity from the plantation owner to race and the alleged proximity of blacks to animals. By contrast, Eliab's disability is clearly caused by neglect on the plantation, a claim aimed to blatantly challenge paternalist ideals that argued slaves were actually healthier under servitude.[571] Instead of focusing on his disability as a spectacle and proof of his inability, Tourgée describes Eliab's environment as proof of his capacity:

There was that in his surroundings which showed that he was not as other men. The individuality of weakness and suffering has left its indelible stamp upon the habitation, which he occupied. Yet so erect and self-helping in appearance was the figure of the cobbler's bench that one for a moment failed to note in what the affliction consisted" (118).

The very tools that prove Eliab's capacity to labor effectively shadow his disability. Rather than focus on the presence of prosthesis—the signifier of dependence for the ableist—Tourgée frames Eliab within the very occupation in which he flourishes.

Tourgée also offers confluences between disability and slavery in order to challenge the institutions that construct both as a sign of dependency on others. While speaking to Eliab, Nimbus begins to get angry about his treatment as a slave before the war:

"I hates de berry groun' dat a slaves wurkked on! I do, I swar!

"Now you oughtn't to say dat, Nimbus. Just think of me. Warn't you better off as a slave than I am free?"

"No, I warn't. I'd rather be hundred tiems wuss off ner you, and free, than ez strong as I am an' a slave"

"But think how much more freedom is worth to you. Here you are a voter, and I—." (120)

Nimbus then takes Eliab to get registered, but the scene captures an important exchange about which is worse, slavery or disability. Ultimately, what Tourgée suggests is that slavery and disability are remarkably similar in the ways in which they are stigmatized. The disabled figure, just as the black figure, flies in the face of the white, American ideal of a well-governed, self-determining population. Nimbus's slave speech represents his mind to whites as one incapable of thinking. Eliab's disabled body is constructed as useless and dependent in an economy that rewards ablebodied laborers. Tourgée challenges both constructions of the incapacity of blacks and the inherent dependency of the disabled through both Nimbus and Eliab Hill. The exercise of individual autonomy by Eliab and Nimbus shows the value of breaking free of systems of oppression that mark their bodies as incapable. Both characters

exercise their own self-determination by focusing on improving the lives of their own families and community. Nimbus does this through labor and demanding an equal start; and Eliab does the same through education.

As scholars of disability and American culture have pointed out, the language of US independence and democracy rested strongly on ideas of a controlled, healthy, and "able" body and mind.[572] For most American men of the nineteenth century to be masculine meant to be self-determined; it meant the ability to work in a conventional sense without becoming dependent on others. Women, slaves and the disabled were dependent, and so, the Victorian American ideology of work is central to the subject position of any enslaved person and any free person with disabilities. Because the four characteristics of liberal individualism—self-government, self-determination, autonomy, and progress—are elided by not only the slave experience, but doubly so by any disability that challenges the notion that self-determination requires able-bodiedness, Hill's desire to work and prove he can support himself becomes extremely important to him; Hill's need to work is rooted in his own understanding of what freedom meant to the emancipated slave.

In either case, both Nimbus and Eliab challenge constructions of race and disability as something to be compensated for rather than accommodated. A compensation model sees difference as evidence of dependency and limits economic and social participation. Similar to the logic of Jim Crow, according to the compensation model, being black violates the basic pre-requisite of American-ness: the capacity to govern and care for oneself independently. What Tourgée posits in *Bricks* is a logic of accommodation that bridges all difference including race, corporeal abnormality, and assumptions of dependency. The accommodation model suggests that disability and race are simply one of many differences among people

and that society should recognize this by adjusting its environments accordingly.[573] By contrast compensation models construct disability as a loss or dysfunction in need of reparation. Disability, according to this model, becomes a personal flaw in which disabled people become the able-bodied gone wrong.

Applied to representations of race, the logic of compensation connotes blackness not as physiological variation, but the violation of a primary state of putative wholeness. Non-whiteness, then, translates into a form of deviance upon which disability functions as a trope and embodiment of physical difference. Tourgée's embedded logic of accommodation suggests that blackness is simply one of many differences among Americans and that society should recognize this by adjusting its environment accordingly.

Saidiya Hartman makes a similar claim in her discussion of the paradoxes of the "dependency" model that affected both abolitionist literature and Reconstruction discourse. "By identifying slavery rather than race," she argues, "as responsible for [emancipated slaves'] degraded condition" texts such as Tourgée's "reflect[ed] a commitment . . . to equality."[574] Arguing that racial incapacity was the result of the environment in which blacks were relegated instead of naturalized racial difference suggested the possibility that people of African descent could eventually participate in American civil governance, they could improve. Indeed, the very myth of ideal American whiteness and self-actualization and black incapacity that underpin a compensation model of disability structure the history of public policy toward the black body.

Tourgée's best example of an adjusted environment that accommodates all differences is the construction of Red Wing, a self-sufficient community built by and run by both Nimbus and Eliab for freed slaves. To the growing embarrassment of

whites in the community, Red Wing thrives as a community making many of its inhabitants rich. Freedmen grow their own food, make their own clothes and build their own homes. Both the fictional Eliab, and the real Elias begin life as slaves whom most view as simple, good-natured freak[s]."[575] Yet both also teach themselves to read, become educated after the war, and threaten white power through their tremendous influence as preachers of large black communities. Eliab Hill is simply dismissed by most of the whites in the novel because of his disability. He is described as a sad little boy with few prospects by the whites that meet him, and his sole purpose is to entertain his previous owner's disabled mother (127). Similar to white perceptions of freed blacks, everyone save Nimbus fails to recognize Hill's native intelligence and his own desire to become self-reliant. In Elias Hill, Tourgée finds a way to address his firm belief in the importance of equal treatment of African Americans and the disabled.

Tourgée attempted to reshape this policy actively as a judge in North Carolina. In his fiction, however, disability serves as a vital lens through which to evaluate black progress and the failure of Reconstruction. Eliab spends hours after class with Mollie Ainslie, a white woman who has come south to help instruct America's newest citizens. "She had heard him pour forth torrents of eloquence on the Sabbath, and felt the force of a nature exceptionally rich and strong in its conceptions of religious truth and human needs," the narrator explains, "only to find him on the morrow floundering hopelessly in the mire of rudimentary science, or getting . . . an imperfect idea of some author's words, which it seemed to her he ought to have grasped at a glance" (169). Her inability to fully sympathize with him and his difficulties comes to a head when Eliab finally tries to explain them to her. Picking out a passage from one of the books as an example, Eliab says of the author: "If I knew all about his life and ways,

and the like, I could tell pretty fully of his meaning" (170). But Eliab cannot because, as he tells Mollie, "his thoughts are *your* thoughts and his life has been *your* life. You belong to the same race and class. I am cut off from this, and can only stumble slowly along the path of knowledge" (170). To slowly stumble for knowledge is both a literal and figurative representation of the disabled Eliab's quest for education and racial uplift.

Tourgée would have us understand that because of his disability and not despite it, Eliab is uniquely suited to lead his black community. Eliab leaves Mollie's tutelage because she cannot quite understand why it is so hard for many freedmen to learn material that comes easily to whites, a perception that reinforces assumptions of black intellectual incapacity for Mollie. Tourgée notes, however, that "[Mollie] would have been still more amazed if she had known that from that day Eliab Hill devoted himself to his studies with a redoubled energy, which more than made up for the loss of the teacher's aid" (170). The narrator adds that had Mollie been "less of a child she would have seen that he whom she had treated as such was, in truth, a man of rare strength" (171). Mollie's failure to properly comprehend the needs of "these people," Eliab implies, had made her instruction more of an obstacle than an asset to their education (170). Writing to Mollie years later Eliab concludes that African Americans must not only make themselves free, but must also "overcome all the prejudice which slavery created against our race in the hearts of white people" (234). Eliab's denouement implies that the future of racial uplift rests not on imported white school teachers, but on educated blacks like Eliab.

That a disabled former slave serves as the mouthpiece for racial uplift and the future of black education may encapsulate the personal conclusions Tourgée drew from his experience as a participant in Reconstruction. Anticipating Du Bois's

strategy of the "talented tenth," or the National Association of Colored Women's slogan, Lifting as we Climb," Tourgée looked to the educated African American as the best agent of cultural uplift. Eliab's disability suggests Tourgée awareness of white assumptions of black intellectual incapacity. The exercise of individual autonomy, for example, by Eliab Hill is evidence of Tourgées desire to express the realities of why Reconstruction may have failed. Only breaking free of white constructions of blackness through self education could freed African Americans exercise their own self-determination.

It might be tempting to read Eliab as a "Supercrip" character who educates himself despite all that he has to overcome, but to do so would discredit Tourgée's awareness in the novel that people of African descent and people with disabilities are not inferior to the ablebodied. Indeed, a more productive reading would suggest that Eliab's disability serves as a platform through which white perceptions of the intellectual and physical limits of blackness are exposed as erroneous. Hill is both disabled and black, yet he is capable of becoming more educated than most of the whites that want to kill him. Moreover, the accessibility Tourgée provides for Hill such as his wheelchair and ramps symbolize Tourgée's belief in the power of Reconstruction policy to redeem African Americans from the effects of slavery, and conversely the political platform of Southern democrats to disabled blacks from becoming full citizens by limiting their access to educational, economic, and political opportunities. Tourgée wants whites to see freedmen as equal to them and uses Hill's disability to suggest that through Reconstruction, racist perceptions of the inherent mental and physical impairments of blacks are false. Tourgée's central argument through Hill is that blacks are just as capable as whites at business, farming, politics, etc., provided they are offered the same tools—the same prosthetics—available to

whites. Just as a man without the use of his legs can be as mobile as someone ablebodied with the use of a wheel chair, "they wanted a 'white man's chance,'" Tourgée tells us, "[t]hat was all" (219). Eliab Hill, as a black man with physical disabilities, serves as a powerful metaphor for the crippling effects of racism.

When the Ku Klux Klan attacks Red Wing because whites begin to fear the "sassy niggers" are getting too powerful, it breaks down Nimbus's door and demands of his wife Lugena, the location of Eliab Hill (181). When she refuses to tell them, they begin raping her. The "blanched and pallid face" peeking out his window reveals Eliab's location and belies a cowardice that Tourgée describes as constitutive of Eliab's inability to walk (272). Previous to this point in the novel, Hill has been described as masculine and self-determined. He is educated, and well on his way to becoming Tourgée's ideal of black liberal individualism. Tourgée states, however, that Eliab

was not a brave man in one sense of the word. A cripple never is. Compelled to acknowledge the physical superiority of others, year after year, he comes at length to regard his own inferiority as a matter of course, and never thinks of any movement which partakes of the aggressive (272).

Tourgée knows that Eliab is not really a coward; Eliab calls out to the men who attack Lugena, thereby deflecting their violence against her towards him. He ends up saving Nimbus's wife. But Tourgée describes Hill in this manner for rhetorical purposes. By unfolding white perceptions of Eliab as cowardly and useless because of his disability, while also placing his leadership and education at the center of the conflict between Redwing and white Supremacists, Tourgée exposes the irony of dismissing a black man's ability to be successful because of his disability while simultaneously seeking him out to kill him for his success. For Tourgée, Eliab's disabled yet capable

black body symbolizes both the inherent capacity of African Americans to succeed and become part of the American economic and political system, but also why they have been excluded from it; Eliab embodies the equivocation of physical weakness as a disabled man with white perceptions of black inferiority.

The conflation of racial blackness with physical impairment suggests that in order to legitimate and maintain a system of economic and social oppression physical disabilities are employed rhetorically for their capacity to negatively signify racial blackness. Tourgée, well aware of this rhetoric, draws it out in the figure of Eliab Hill, whose disability in this moment is framed as a metaphor for racial inferiority and violence to reveal just how ridiculous white anxieties towards the black body are. But the fact that Tourgée chooses to describe Hill as "not . . . brave" in only "one sense of the word" forces us to ask if bravery has a different definition for the disabled, or even for African Americans in Tourgée's mind (272).

Scholars such as Stanley Elkins and Eugene Genovese have suggested that repeated racial violence causes individuals to look upon themselves with disdain.[576] Tobin Siebers suggests that similar self-denigration is true of the pity and contempt that often faces the disabled.[577] When Eliab speaks of "his own inferiority," however, we are not sure if he is speaking of his stigmatized race or his stigmatized legs. We do know, however, that Tourgée describes Hill at this moment as "a coward" and "not a hero" (273). Tourgée is simply echoing the racist rhetoric that views the black body as inherently disabled in order to challenge it with the moral masculinity of Eliab Hill. By drawing out constructions of black disability in this scene Tourgée is able to expose the main reason for the failure of American Reconstruction: the erroneous representation of differences in physiology and power presumed to exist between the white and black body.

Tourgée's largest challenge as a judge was changing perceptions of race advanced by people like Samuel Cartwright and John Calhoun. In one of many articles in favor of racial inequality, one slave owner argued that slaves can be "led about in gangs of an hundred or more by a single individual, even by an old man, or a cripple, if he be of white race and possessed of a strong will."[578] Cartwright adds that the Negro has "such little command over his own muscles, from the weakness of his will" any white man, ablebodied or otherwise, can control a slave.[579] In a moment eerily similar to Cartwright's observation, Tourgée describes Hill during the violence: "he had been so long the creature of another's will in the matter of locomotion that it did not occur to him to do otherwise than say: 'Do with me as thou wilt. I am bound hand and foot. I cannot fight, But I can die'" (273). Hill remembers slavery, and no doubt, realizes that being "the creature of another's will," "bound hand and foot," unable to fight, and "without responsibility, autonomy [or] will," as Saidiya Hartman describes slavery, are metaphors for the enslaved body, not the disabled.[580] But Tourgée's discussion of Eliab's disabled body using a rhetoric of enslavement, "compelled to acknowledge . . . his own [physical] inferiority," is complicit with the goal of the novel: to show that Reconstruction had indeed failed (272). Through the violence enacted on Hill's body, he is emasculated to show that had Reconstruction continued and the policies designed to protect African Americans and guarantee their rights been enforced, the metaphor of disability that pervaded white perceptions of blackness would have been overcome. Freedman such as Eliab and the others at Red Wing would have been able to continue to exercise the liberal individualism whites benefited from.

In a final symbolic gesture, Tourgée uses Eliab's wheelchair to demonstrate the ultimate demolition of Reconstruction policies and the tools it offered for black

accessibility: the mob drags Hill out of his home and throws him to the ground, but not before tripping over his wheel chair. "'What the Hell!'" one exclaims, "'What is this thing anyhow?' . . . 'Damned if it ain't the critter's go-cart. Here kick the damn thing out—smash it up! Such things ain't made for niggers to ride on, anyhow'" (275). Racial violence and violence against the disabled come together in the novel when Hill's mobility is taken away. As scholar Jim Downs suggests, mobility for the enslaved was a sign of freedom. The chance to see loved ones at night, passes to travel, and even the freedom to leave the plantation after emancipation were all symbolic of the importance of mobility to black freedom.[581] For a group of disgruntled former slave owners to break Hill's chair, which comes to symbolize his self-reliance and liberal individualism, is to enslave Hill and enslave his body once again and deny him mobility because of race and impairment. In response to the destruction of his wheelchair, Hill "groan[S] for the fate of this inseparable companion of all his independent existence" (275). For Hill the wheelchair represents freedom, and "independent existence" from slavery and from the stigma of immobility. For Tourgée, Hill's wheel chair represents the literal prosthetics that Reconstruction policies offer the politically "disabled" freedmen. The right to vote, sit on a jury, own property, and sue—tools according to white supremacists "ain't made for niggers . . . anyhow"—are not just taken away by Republican complacency after the war, but brutally dismantled by Southern states' rights as a symbolic gesture to the final failure of Reconstruction (275).

Disabled literary characters in general are usually peripheral and uncomplicated figures or exotic others whose bodies elicit responses from other characters or produce rhetorical effects—Frederick Douglass's cousin, Henny; Pip, from Melville's *Moby-Dick*, whose mind is "cracked" after being left at sea for his cowardice; Gascar,

also from Delaney's *Blake*, whose curved spine and congential low stature jeopardize his value on the plantation; and "Cripple Jack" whose freakish figure is described by Fanny Kemble as "all maimed and distorted"—are just a few examples of these "uncomplicated" figures.[582] But many characters such as Albion Tourgée's Eliab Hill, a disabled, manumitted mulatto man who teaches himself to read and cobble, and also starts a church, are both enslaved and considered disabled, yet challenge the dual subject positions in which they are placed.[583] What Tourgée's novel suggests is that analyses of the "enfreakment" of the African body in American fiction must look beyond constructions of racial difference solely.[584] A more productive approach to the study of disability in African American bondspeople is through representations of African American characters that experience the dual stigmas of race and disability. How these racialized and somatically othered bodies come in contact with "normativity," and are defined by supposedly neutral, and unproblematic norms called "ablebodiedness" and whiteness require further examination.

Moreover, when Dubois and other radicals launched the modern civil rights movement with the Niagra Movement in 1905, they prominently honored Tourgée along with William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass as three "Friends of Freedom."[585] All three men viewed American citizenship as rooted in the principle of equality before the law and as respecting the individual's worth regardless of race. While Garrison and Douglass's contributions to the traditional civil rights protest in America are well known, Tourgée's is not. While arguing the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, Tourgée asked the court, "who are white and who are colored?" anticipating the modern view that notions of corporeality are mere social customs and not biological fact. A concept both disability theorists and scholars of race agree with. Tourgée dismisses the idea that the state, or anyone for that matter, has the right to label one

citizen black, white, ablebodied, or disabled, recognizing well ahead of his contemporaries that these were arbitrary classifications.[586] Perhaps adding an evaluation of how Tourgée frames disability in his own life and in his novels might recommend another look into his important contributions to the public discourse on race and disability. Indeed, perhaps, for this reason alone a recovery of Tourgée as an important advocate of equality is apt.

CONCLUSION

Tracing Disability in American Constructions of Racial Difference

The goals of this project have been to revisit the literary and cultural history of African American slave experience with a focus on disability and to identify within American literature the particular patterns, cultural and social spaces, and connections between representations of race and disability. The endeavor has led me to a number of significant conclusions. Most important has been my discovery that New World slavery constructed "disability" as a legible manifestation of race central to slave ideology. Readings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary and archival sources relating to American slavery attest to what I have argued is an assumption of blackness as disability, which reinforced central tenets of proslavery thought, even as representations of disabled slaves circulated to challenge the notion of the plantation as a site of paternal care. This dialectic functioned to create a notion of blackness *as* disability and white rule as normalizing, a tacit construct that remained in place well after emancipation.

Moreover, my research has uncovered remarkable contradictions and double standards in how white authority figures assessed disability in African American slaves on slave ships and the auction block. That planters categorized their disabled slaves as "useless," even as they described the labors they performed, exposes a nuanced set of assumptions and expectations for slaves. Slave "soundness," for example, was a central element of discourse in the South. But assumptions about disability, as well as its associations with race and social status, were also featured prominently on both sides of the slavery debate that raged in the North and the South. Proslavery advocates claimed that Africans' "natural" mental inferiority and peculiar

physiognomy suited them to bondage under white masters in the southern climate. Abolitionists argued that the institution of slavery was inherently disabling and that freedom might confer a measure of able-bodiedness upon even the most wretched bondspeople. Ironically, both sides of this debate relied on similar assumptions about disability as dependence and weakness, and promoted a stigmatizing view of impairment. Finally, this project has also revealed the interesting ways in which African American authors pushed back against stereotypes of dependence, incapacity, and mental inability—and thereby challenged the institutions built to reinforce them.

My attempt to reconstitute a disability reading of early American and African American literature raises significant questions about constructs of disability in other aspects of American society and culture and points toward a number of intriguing possibilities as I expand this project. One potential fruitful avenue of scholarship would be an examination of disability and literary representations of minstrelsy. In Melville's *The Confidence Man*, for example, the ease with which the titular enigmatic character transforms into both a black man and a disabled man exposes important yet unexamined assumptions about the dependence and intellectual disability of African Americans represented on the minstrel stage. T.D. Rice, father of America's first popular Atlantic culture claims to have pilfered his minstrel shuffle from a disabled slave child in Kentucky. Charles Chesnutt's overlooked cake walk scene in *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901) in which Tom Delamere dresses in blackface and passes as his ex-slave, the intellectually disabled Sandy Campbell, suggest the ease with which disability is registered as a racial trait via minstrelsy. That the actual Sandy is almost lynched because he is not intellectually capable of defending himself speaks to contemporary questions of disability and violence against people of African descent. Herman Melville, perhaps the most engaged author in the

uncanny associations of race and disability I explore in this dissertation, describes webs of meanings and assumptions about slave disability that go far beyond individual physical or mental conditions. His work highlights the complex social construction of disability—and its intertwining with notions of race—in nineteenth-century American culture. A quick look at Melville's *Typee* (1846) suggests that issues of race, disability, and dependence were at the center of his texts. Take, for example, the second half of the novel in which the nameless protagonist suffers an unexplained disability during his time on the island. He is unable to walk as a result of this impairment and must rely on an islander as a type of native prosthesis to carry him around. These literary representations expose fallacies that argued for the legitimacy of slavery based upon the assumed dependence of blacks on whites. Such implications in Melville's work expose the historical examples of said claims for what they are—take Confederate Vice President Alexander H. Stevens and his dependence on his African American valet to push his wheelchair, for example— and suggest the need for additional work on race, disability, and dependency in Melville's work.

A disability studies reading of Charles W. Chesnutt's corpus will also prove remarkably useful in understanding how African American authors challenged assumptions of blackness as disability at the height of the American eugenics movement. In his "The New American Essays," for example, Chesnutt writes of "remov[ing]. . . the disability of color" through various methods of government-enforced miscegenation.[587] What sounds oddly like a eugenicist agenda of breeding out blackness, ostensibly contradicts how disability figures in much of Chesnutt's fiction. The "club-footed nigger" in "The Conjurer's Revenge," for example, examines white assumptions that blacks are more animal than human, while Viney's feigned muteness in "The Dumb Witness" examines both how disability was used as a

form of resistance on the plantation and exposes that assumed intellectual incapacity of blacks as erroneous. Such complicated and seemingly opposing perspectives on disability and race in Chesnutt's work requires further examination.

A future project that may stem from this dissertation might move the story of race and disability from the age of slavery to the age of eugenics. Indeed, the work of early twentieth-century African American authors ought to be examined through a disability studies lens in part because of the overwhelming popularity of eugenics programs that targeted both racial minorities and people with disabilities in American culture and politics. Consider that an African American character in Pauline Hopkins *Contending Forces* (1900) notes that, "our people are improving in their dress, in their looks and in their manners."[588] What is striking about this particular statement is its assertion that African Americans' physical features ("their looks") are improving, implying that the race's progress is not only cultural but also biological. While Hopkins agreed with the majority of contemporary black writers that education and moral progress were important to racial uplift, she also prescribed another remedy. Influenced by the eugenic belief in the "improvement of the human race through better breeding," to quote the leading US eugenicist Charles Davenport in 1911, Hopkins advocated that African Americans' genetic improvement was necessary for racial advancement and dependent on their marital choices.[589]

Of course, both Chesnutt's and Hopkins' promotion of eugenics for racial uplift looks highly problematic in retrospect. Given the racial, gender, and class prejudices of eugenics, her assimilationist agenda had the unavoidable effect of reinforcing its demeaning logic. The fact that radical writers such as Hopkins appropriated eugenics tenets as one of the means for racial improvement points to the desperate situation that African Americans faced in the late-nineteenth and early-

twentieth centuries. Indeed, her fiction manifests the power of coeval scientific discourses to set the framework and terms for many debates over racial and social equality. Surveying Hopkins', Chesnutt's, and other early twentieth-century African American writers while focusing on underlying eugenic agendas will enable us to study the deeply complex and intersecting constructions of race and disability at the turn of the twentieth century.

The literary representations of disability and race in American literature that I have uncovered and examined in this dissertation represent a mere fraction of the wealth of possibilities for critical examinations of both race and disability in American fiction. My hope is that this critical discussion will provide us with new interpretations of disability as a viable category of analysis for both American and African American literature and culture. More importantly, I hope that examining the experiences of race and disability as they are represented in American fiction will help us find new perspectives for seeing slavery and its cultural and institutional locations in a way that sheds new light on the role of disability in constructions of race in the American imaginary.

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[4] See Douglas Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in *The Disability Studies Reader, Fourth Edition*, ed. Lennard Davis. New York: Routledge, 2013.

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[25] Koriann Yokata. *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary American Became a Postcolonial Nation.* New York: Oxford UP, 2011. 218. Print.

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[27] Koriann Yokata. *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary American Became a Postcolonial Nation.* New York: Oxford UP, 2011. 221. Print.

[28] Hume, David. "Of National Characters" (1754). *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997. Print. 29-38.

[29] Andrew Curran. *Anatomies of Blackness: Science and Slavery in the Age of Enlightenment.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2011. 124. Print.

[30] Daniel J. Kevles. *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity.* Berkeley: U of California P, 1985. Print.

[31] R. A. R. Edwards. *Words Made Flesh: Nineteenth-Century Deaf Education and the Growth of Deaf Education.* New York: NYU Press, 2012. Print.

[32] Adams, Rachel. *Sideshow USA: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001. Print. 31.

[33] James W. Trent, Jr., "Defectives at the World's Fair: Constructing Disability in 1904." *Remedial and Special Education* 19 (1998): 201-11.

[34] Samuel A. Cartwright, "Report on the Disease and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 7 (1851): 693.

[35] Ibid.

[36] John H. Van Evrie. *White Supremacy and Negro Subordination, or Negroes a Subordinate Race.* New York: Van Evrie & Co., 1868. 154.

[37] Samuel Forry. "Vital Statistics Furnished by the Sixth Census of the United States," *New York Journal of Medicine and the Collateral Sciences* 1 (1843): 151-153.

[38] Ibid.; Richard K. Cralle, ed. *The Works of John C. Calhoun.* New York: D. Appleton, 1888. 5:337.

[39] Samuel A. Cartwright, "Report on the Disease and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 7 (1851): 693. See also Thomas S. Szasz, "The Sane Slave: A Historical Note on the Use of Medical Diagnosis as Justificatory Rhetoric." *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 25 (1971): 228-39.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Samuel Forry. "On the Relative Proportions of Centenarians, of Deaf and Dumb, of Blind, and Insane in the Races of European and African Origin," *New York Journal of Medicine and the Collateral Sciences*, 2 (1844): 313.

[43] Ibid. For more in how the conclusions in this study were routinely challenged, see Patricia Cline Cohen's *A Calculating People.*

[44] John H. Van Evrie. *White Supremacy and Negro Subordination, or Negroes a Subordinate Race.* New York: Van Evrie & Co., 1868. 121.

[45] Ibid. 181. See also Todd Carmody's "In Spite of Handicaps: The Disability History of Racial Uplift." *American Literary History* 27 (2015): 56-78.

[46] Ibid. 221.

[47] Ibid.

[48] J. F. Miller, "The Effects of Emancipation Upon the Mental and Physical Health of the Negro of the South," *North Carolina Medical Journal* 38 (1896): 290.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid. 192.

[51] See Ervelles, Nirmalla and Andrea Minear's "Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality" in *The Disability Studies Reader, 4th Edition.* New York: Routledge, 2013. 354-369. Print.

[52] Ibid. 356.

[53] Yural-Davis, Nira. "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13:3 (2006): 196.

[54] *Beyond Brown: Pursuing The Promise.* PBS, 2004. DVD.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Marla Paul. "African Americans Have Five Times Higher Amputation Rate." Northwestern University. Feinberg School of Medicine, n.d. Web. 10 Mar. 2015.

[57] Carimah Towns and Dylan Petrohilos. "Who Police Killed in 2014." Think Progress. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d. Web. 9 Mar. 2015.

[58] Deborah Belle. "Poverty and Women's Mental Health." *American Psychologist* 45.3 (1990): 385-389.

[59] See Thomas Jefferson. "Notes on the State of Virginia" (1785) *Thomas Jefferson Writings.* New York: The Library of America, 1984. Print. 265.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] See Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature.* New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1997. 16, 33, 38. Print.

[63] See Lennard Davis. *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and The Body.* New York: Verso, 1995. 22. Print.

[64] See Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature.* New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1997. 20. Print.

[65] See Paul Longmore and Lauri Umansky, eds. *The New Disability History: American Perspectives.* New York: NYU P, 2001. 4, 12. Print.

[66] See Lennard Davis. *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and The Body.* New York: Verso, 1995. 2-3. Print.

[67] See Ian Haney López, "The Social Construction of Race," 169; and Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," in *Critical Race Theory: Key Writings that Formed the Movement,* ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Pellar, and Kendall Thomas. New York: The New Press, 1995. 172. Print.

[68] See Douglas Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in *The Disability Studies Reader, Fourth Edition*, ed. Lennard Davis. New York: Routledge, 2013 for a clear synopsis of the denial of immigrants and non-whites access to American soil due to disability; Cynthia Wu's "The Siamese Twins in late Nineteenth-Century Narratives of Conflict and Reconciliation." *American Literature* 80.1 (2000): 29-55. Print.; Jennfer James, *A Freedom Bought With Blood: African American War Literature from the Civil War to World War II.* Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 2007. Print.

[69] Ellen Samuels, *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race.* New York: New York Univ. Press, 2014. Print.

[70] Paul Longmore and Lauri Umansky, eds. *The New Disability History: American Perspectives.* New York: NYU P, 2001. 5. Print.

[71] See David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder. *Cultural Locations of Disability.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006. 3. Print.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Eugene Genovese. *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made.* New York: Vintage, 1976. 4. Print.

[74] Kittay, Eva Feder. *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency.* New York: Routledge, 42. Print.

[75] See Kim Nielsen's *A Disability History of the United States.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2012, 19-25. Print.

[76] Carlson, Licia. *The Faces of Intellectual Disability: Philosophical Reflections.* Bloomington, IN: U of Indiana P, 2010. 31. Print.

[77] Carey, Allison C. *On The Margins of Citizenship: Intellectual Disability and Civil Rights in Twentieth-Century America.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple UP, 2009. 46. Print.

[78] Goodey, C.F. *A History of Intelligence and "Intellectual Disability": The Shaping of Psychology in Early Modern Europe.* Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2011. 231. Print.

[79] According to David Eltis's Transatlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD) over the almost four hundred years of the slave rade, from the late fifteenth to the late nineteenth century, 12.4 million Africans were loaded onto slave ships. Along the way, 1.8 million of them died.

[80] Clarkson, *History,* Vol. I, 367.

[81] Clarkson would become so moved by the experiences of these sailors, John Dean in particular, he produced a pamphlet about their experiences. See Clarkson, *An Essay on the Impolicy of the Slave Trade*, iii.

[82] Markus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*. New York: Penguin, 2007. Print. 20-1. Rediker claims that young men were recruited to become sailors aboard

slave ships in England's ports by convincing them that it was good training for the merchant service or the navy.

[83] Petitions of Seamen, 1765-1774 and "Accounts of money for the relief of seamen and those disabled in the Merchant Service" (1747-1787): Society of Merchant Venturers Archive, Bristol Record Office.

[84] Clarkson, *History,* Vol. I, 367.

[85] "Dicky Sam," *Liverpool and Slavery: An Historical Account of the Liverpool-African Slave Trade* (Liverpool: A. Bowker & Son, 18840, 36.

[86] *An American Health Dilemma Volume I: A Medical History of African Americans and the Problem of Race: Beginnings to 1900.* New York: Routledge, 2000. 181-82. Print.

[87] Eugene Genovese. *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. New York: Vintage Books, 1976. Print. 3-7.

[88] Orlando Patterson. *Slavery and Social Death, A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982. Print. 334.

[89] Richard B. Sheridan. *Doctors and Slaves: A Medical and Demographical History of Slavery in the British West Indies, 1680-1834.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985. Print. 116.

[90] Ibid. 22, 24.

[91] Alexander Falconbridge. *Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*. London, 1788. 28.

[92] Orlando Patterson. *Slavery and Social Death, A Comparative Study*. 2.

[93] Eva Kittay. "Dependency"

[94] See W. Michael Byrd, *An American Health Dilemma: Volume I, A Medical History of African Americans and the Problem of Race: Beginnings to 1900.* New York: Routledge, 2000. Print. 179-84. Byrd describes Africans leaving the West African coast as already suffering from a "health deficit." He suggests that the long journey of the enslaved from the African interior to the coast in addition to the pathological mixture of European and African diseases on the coast left most Africans offered up for sale to Europeans as already diseased and disabled. See section "Black Health before and during the Slave Trade: Beginnings of a Health Defecit Legacy" in Chapter Two.

[95] Robert S. Levine. "Identity in the Autobiographies," *The Cambridge Companion to Frederick Douglass*. Maurice S. Lee, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print. 34.

[96] Samuel Otter. "'Race' in *Typee* and *White-Jacket.*" *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*. Robert S. Levine, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. 15.

[97] Eltis, David. *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

[98] Eltis, David, et al. *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM,* Cambridge, 2000.

[99] --. *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

[100] Klein, Herbert. *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.

[101] Richardson, David. "The British Empire and the Atlantic Slave Trade. 1660-1807," *Oxford History of the British Empire*, Ed. P.J. Marshall. Vol. ii, *Eighteenth Century,* Oxford, 1998.

[102] Walvin, James. *A Short History of Slavery*. New York: Penguin, 2007. Print. 68-78.

[103] Hugh, Thomas. *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997. Print. 376, 378.

[104] Stephanie Smallwood offers the most comprehensive analysis of "refuse slaves" in her *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2007), 34-36, 62-64, 122-26. The most thorough study of refuse slaves and disability can be found in Kim Nielsen's *A Disability History of the United States: ReVisioning American History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012). Print. 41-47.

[105] "List of the Slaves that Dyed on Board the Katherine Galley, John Dagge Commander, " 1728. "Trading Account and Personal Papers of Humphrey Morice," vol.5; Humphry Morice to William Clinch, September 13, 1722, M7/7; Humphrey Morice to Captain William Boyle, May 11, 1724, M7/10. Humphrey Morice Papers, Bank of England Archives, London; See also James A. Rawley's "Humphrey Morice: Foremost London Slave Merchant of his Time," *London: Metropolis of the Slave Trade* (Columbia: U of Missourri P, 2003), 40-56.

[106] Basnett, Miller, and Mill to Humphrey Morice, Kingston, November 9, 1722, f. 29-30, Correspondence of Humphrey Morice, Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, Add. Ms. 48590B, BL.

[107] "James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw." *Slave Narratives*, Eds. William L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: The Library of America, 2000. Print. 11.

[108] Rediker, *Slave Ship*, 5.

[109] Ibid. 7, 20, 237.

[110] Similar to Gronniosaw's experience Olaudah Equiano describes his experience aboard a slave ship as a child. He describes being assessed as to his soundness once aboard, the food, being forced to eat, the smell of the slave ship and the merciless floggings he witnessed. See "Olaudah Equiano." *Slave Narratives*, Eds. William L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: The Library of America, 2000. Print. 73-75.

[111] Smallwood, *Saltwater*, 35.

[112] Rediker, *Slave Ship*, 154.

[113] RAC to Petley Weybourne, Whydah, 7 August 1688, T70/50, f. 69v; Invoice Books, Homeward, 22 June 1688, T70/943, ff. 42v-43. For more on "ordinary Negroes" see Stede and Gascoigne to RAC, 12 July 1680, T70/15, ff. 36v-37; Hender Molesworth and Chalres Penhallow, Jamaica, to RAC, 21 April 1684, T70/16, f. 35; Stede and Gascoigne to RAC, 21 April 1684, T70/16, ff. 80-80v; Edward Parsons, Montserrat, to RAC, 23 April 1690, T70/17, ff. 7v-8. According to the OED, "Burst" in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries meant ruptured or suffering from hernia, as in "He that is burste, or hath his bowels fallen downe into his coddes." "Burst." Def. 2b. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. Print.

[114] Edwyn Stede and Stephen Gascoigne to RAC, 12 May 1681, T70/15, f. 60v; Invoice Books, Homeward, 13 May 1681, T70/939, ff.66v-67.

[115] See Thomas Jefferson's theories on race and black mental incapacity in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785); James Henry Hammond and Alexander Stephens arguments for black inferiority in "The Mudsill Speech" and "The Cornerstone Speech" respectively. See also Samuel Cartwright's "Report on the Diseases of and Physical Particularities of the Negro Race" (1851); George Fitzhugh's *Sociology for the South* (1854) and his *Cannibals All! Or Slaves Without Masters* (1857); and Josiah Nott's *Instinct of Races* (1866) for more on scientific racism. Stephen J. Gould's *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996, pp. 62-104 offers the most concise discussion of the aforementioned slavery apologists within a larger discussion of scientific racism.

[116] See T70/937, 23 October 1676, f. 43.

[117] See T70/937, 14 June 1677, f. 80.

[118] Henry Carpenter to RAC, 28 March 1682, T70/16, f. 31.

[119] Oldmixon, John. *The British Empire in America, Containing the History of the Discovery, Settlement, Progress and Present State of all the British Colonies, on the Continent and Islands of America,* 2 vols. (London: n.p., 1708), 2:121-122.

[120] For more on the denigration of "salt-water slaves" and their distinction from other slaves see Frederic G. Cassidy's *Jamaica Talk: Three Hundred Years of the English Language in Jamaica* (London: 1961), pp. 18-156; Orlando Patterson's *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (Rutherford, N.J. Farleigh Dickinson UP, 1967), p. 146; Gerald W, Mullin's, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Oxford: oxford UP, 1972), x; Philip D. Morgan's "British Encounters with Africans and African-Americans, circa 1600-1780," in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Philip Morgan (Chapel Hill: U of NC P, for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1991), p. 199; and Michael A Gomez's *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: U of NC P, 1998), pp. 14, 168, 189, 191.

[121] Long, Edward. *The History of Jamaica*, 2 vols. (London: 1774; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1972), 2:410.

[122] Robin, *Voyages,* III, 166-70. Translation by Ulrich Phillips in *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*. Ed. Roger Commons and Ulrich Phillips et al. II, 31.

[123] See Richard Sheridan's *Doctors and Slaves* for a detailed account of slave seasoning. P. 131-134.

[124] I am drawing here from Niklas Jenseon's research in *For the Health of the Enslaved: Slaves Medicine and Power in the Danish West Indies, 1803-1845.* Copenhage, Denmark: Museum Tusculaunum Press, 2012. Print. 80. Jensen points out that there was no such thing as slave health since health was not considered the physiological norm for blacks as it was for whites.

[125] For Best's account about the "natural infection" of blackness see Winthrop Jordan's fascinating history of the evolution of white perceptions of Africans in *The*

White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974. Print. 9.

[126] By a Citizen of Mississippi. "The Negro." Debow's Review, Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources. Volume: 3, Issue: 5, May 1847, p. 238.

[127] Anonymous. "The Middle Passage." Debow's Review, Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources. Volume: 22, Issue: 6, June 1857, p. 571.

[128] Edward Long. *The History of Jamaica, or General Survey of the Ancient and Modern State of that Island with Reflections on its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government.* London: T. Lowndes, 1774. 548.

[129] William Beckford. *A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica*, 2 vols. London, 1790. 342.

[130] See Richard Sheridan's *Doctors and Slaves* for a detailed account of slave seasoning. P. 132.

[131] *Accounts and Papers (Parliamentary Papers)*, 1789, XXVI (646a), Part 3, Jamaica, Nos. 7, 8: "Report of the Lods of the Committee of Council for Trade and Plantations on the Slave Trade," evidence of Doctors Anderson and Quier.

[132] See David Galenson's *Traders, Planters, and Slaves: Market Behavior in Early English America.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986. Print. 112-13. Galenson sites an important requirement for slavers: ablebodied slaves when he notes king Whydah's request for slaves: "We . . . do desire your majestie . . . will be please to direct ye buyers never to buy a Negro to be offered to us to sale above 30 years of Ago nor lower than 4 ½ foot high . . . nor none Sickly Deformed nor defective in Body or Limb, for we want Negroes as Chareable in Carriage as ye best. And ye Diseased an

ye Aged have often been ye Distruction of ye whole Adventure, so that we must desire that our Negroes be every way perfect & fit for Service and had much Rather at proportionate prices have a boy & a Girle not under 3 ½ foot high to every Men and 5 Women than have any above 30, sickly & deformed."

[133] See Klaus, Sidney. "A History of the Science of Pigmentation." *The Pigmentary System: Physiology and Pathophysiology*, ed. James Nordlund. New York: Oxford UP, 1998.

[134] See Van Leeuwenhoek, Antoni. *The Collected Letter of Antoni Van Leeuwenhoek*. Eds. A Committee of Dutch Scientists. Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1996. Vol. 4:245.

[135] See Malfert, Auguste. "Memoire sure l'origine des negres et des Americains"

[136] See Monsieur de J***, "Explication," *Memoires pour l'Histoire des Sciences et des beaux arts* (1738).

[137] According to Andrew Curran in *The Anatomy of Blackness* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2011) the question was published in *Journal des Scavans* and a variety of other periodicals in 1739.

[138] Curran, *Anatomy*, 4.

[139] For a more comprehensive discussion of the gradual scientific denigration of Africans see Curran's Chapter, "The Natural History of Slavery" in *The Anatomy of Blackness* p. 167-215 and Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze's *Race and the Enlightenment.* Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 1997.

[140] Augstein, Hannah Franziska. "Introduction." *Race: The Origins of an Idea, 1760-1850.* Britol: Thoemmes Press, 1996.

[141] See Thomas Jefferson's theories on race and black mental incapacity in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785); James Henry Hammond and Alexander Stephens arguments for black inferiority in "The Mudsill Speech" and "The Cornerstone Speech" respectively. See also Samuel Cartwright's "Report on the Diseases of and

Physical Particularities of the Negro Race" (1851); George Fitzhugh's *Sociology for the South* (1854) and his *Cannibals All! Or Slaves Without Masters* (1857); and Josiah Nott's *Instinct of Races* (1866) for more on scientific racism. Stephen J. Gould's *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996, pp. 62-104 offers the most concise discussion of the aforementioned slavery apologists within a larger discussion of scientific racism. See also work on cariometry and phrenology and race in Stephen Jay Gould's *The Mismeasure of Man*.

[142] I am drawing here from Enlightenment ideals established by David Hume, Immanuel Kant and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach. In the second edition of his Essays, Moral and Political (1742), David Hume added the following racist note to his essay "Of National Characters": "I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. . . . Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are NEGRO slaves dispersed all over EUROPE, of which none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity, tho' low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In JAMAICA indeed they talk of one negro as a man of parts and learning; but 'tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly." Immanuel Kant offers the following racial stereotyping from his essay, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764). Recalling a story of an African man who criticized a white man about his wife, Kant concludes: "this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid." Blumenbach, is best

known for developing a racial hierarchy between the races. The negroid race, being the most degenerate in Blumenbach's estimation, is relegated to the bottom of this hierarchy. Whites find themselves at the top.

[143] I draw here from Withrope Jordan's *White Over Black; American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550-1812* Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1968. Print. 190.Wintrhope makes the argument that the technological disparities between Africans and Europeans between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries must have made African appear "stupid" and "downright irredeemable." He argues further that alleged African stupidity was "hopelessly rooted in his essential character" to the point that it became "easy enough to slip into thinking that the Negro's seemingly natural and intractable stupidity" predisposed them to enslavement.

[144] Douglass, Frederick. "The Heroic Slave." Bottom of the Hill Publishing, 2010. Print. 7.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid. 10.

[147] Ibid. 9.

[148] Stauffer, John. "interracial Friendship and the Aesthetics of Freedom." *Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville: Essays in Relation*. eds. Robert S. Levine and Samuel Otter. Chapel Hill: U of NC P, 2008. Print. 139.

[149] Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Nature." 1836. *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Brooks Atkinson. New York: The Modern Library, 2000. Print. 5.

[150] Douglass, Frederick. "The Heroic Slave." Bottom of the Hill Publishing, 2010. Print. 9.

[151] Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Nature." 1836. *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Brooks Atkinson. New York: The Modern Library, 2000. Print. 6.

[152] Douglass, Frederick. "The Heroic Slave." Bottom of the Hill Publishing, 2010. Print. 11.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Nature." 1836. *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Brooks Atkinson. New York: The Modern Library, 2000. Print. 6.

[155] Douglass, Frederick. "The Heroic Slave." Bottom of the Hill Publishing, 2010. Print. 9.

[156] Ibid. 11.

[157] Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Self-Reliance." 1847. *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Brooks Atkinson. New York: The Modern Library, 2000. Print. 133.

[158] Douglass, Frederick. "The Heroic Slave." Bottom of the Hill Publishing, 2010. Print. 52.

[159] De Toqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America.* 1835. Gerald E. Bevan, Trans. New York: Penguin, 2003. Print. 301.

[160] David Walker's *Appeal* quotes the opening of the Declaration of Independence, emphasizing that "ALL men are created EQUAL." For more on Garnet's Revolutionary War rhetoric see Peter Ripley's introduction to *The Black Abolitionist Papers. The United States 1830-1846.* Vol. 3 Chapel Hill: U of NC P, 1991. Brown quotes from the Declaration of Independence to make an explicit comparison between the plight of the enslaved and the British colonists in *Clotel; or the President's Daughter* . 1853. *Three Classic African-American Novels.* Ed. William L. Andrews. New York: Penguin, 1990. 204, 206, 241.

[161] For more on masculinity and African American abolitionists see Peter Ripley's *The Black Abolitionist Papers. The United States 1830-1846.* Vol. 3 Chapel Hill: U of NC P, 1991. 408-410.

[162] See Peter Ripley's *The Black Abolitionist Papers. The United States 1830-1846.* Vol. 3 Chapel Hill: U of NC P, 1991; and Maggie Montesinos Sale's *The Slumbering Volcano: American Slave Ship Revolts and the Production of Rebellious Masculinity.* Durham: Duke UP, 1997.

[163] Douglass, Frederick. *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. 1892. Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008. Print. 79.

[164] Ibid. 80.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks.* 1952. Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2008. Print. 119.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Siebers, Tobin. *Disability Theory*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2010. Print. 8.

[169] Russ Castronovo makes this claim in *Necro Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States*. Durham: Duke UP, 2001. Print. 185.

[170] See William Wells Brown's *Clotel; or the President's Daughter*. 1853. *Three Classic African-American Novels.* Ed. William L. Andrews. New York: Penguin, 1990. Print. 262.

[171] See Douglass's "Slavery: The Slumbering Volcano," *Liberator* 5/11/49; *North Star* 5/11/49; and *Northern Antislavery Society* 5/3/49.

[172] See Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's *Staring: How we Look.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. Print. Garland-Thomson positions staring as a mutual and productive exchange between visually different entities.

[173] Ibid. 6.

[174] See Robert Bogdan's *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddity for Amusement and Profit.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988. Print. 38. for more on how immigrants began to populate freak shows as more "respectable" citizens found other forms of entertainment.

[175] Douglass, Frederick. "The Heroic Slave." Bottom of the Hill Publishing, 2010. Print. 10-11.

[176] Ibid. 49.

[177] Ibid. 50.

[178] Ibid.

[179] Castronovo, Russ. *Necro Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States*. Durham: Duke UP, 2001. Print. 184.

[180] Douglass, Frederick. "The Heroic Slave." Bottom of the Hill Publishing, 2010. Print. 44.

[181] See David Roediger and Elizabeth D. Esch's *The Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in U.S. History.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012. 49-60. They offer an insightful analysis of "management" in the Untied States in relation to race by suggesting that perceptions of ability based on raced determined who managed whom in US labor relations.

[182] See Margaret Humphrey's *Intensely Human: The Health of the Black Soldier in the American Civil War*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2008. Print. 45-50; and Todd L. Savitt's *Medicine and Slavery: The Diseases and Health Care of Blacks in Antebellum Virginia*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2002. 17-18, 21-24, 41, 138, 240-246, 17-18, 21-24 for more on the susceptibility of slaves to certain diseases and their alleged immunity to others.

[183] Samuel Cartwright's "Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race." 1851. *The Cause of the South:Selections from De Bow's Review 1846-1867.* Eds. Paul F. Paskoff and Danile J. Wilson. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State P, 1982, 26-43.

[184] For more on how saltwater slaves were represented as infantile see John Newton's *Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade* and *Letters to a Wife*. See also RAC to Petley Weybourne, Whydah, 7 August 1688, T70/50, f. 69v; Invoice Books, Homeward, 22 June 1688, T70/943, ff. 42v-43. For more on "ordinary Negroes" see Stede and Gascoigne to RAC, 12 July 1680, T70/15, ff. 36v-37; Hender Molesworth and Chalres Penhallow, Jamaica, to RAC, 21 April 1684, T70/16, f. 35; Stede and Gascoigne to RAC, 21 April 1684, T70/16, ff. 80-80v; Edward Parsons, Montserrat, to RAC, 23 April 1690, T70/17, ff. 7v-8; and Edwyn Stede and Stephen Gascoigne to RAC, 12 May 1681, T70/15, f. 60v; Invoice Books, Homeward, 13 May 1681, T70/939, ff.66v-67.

[185] Douglass, Frederick. "The Heroic Slave." Bottom of the Hill Publishing, 2010. Print. 44.

[186] Ibid. 45.

[187] See Benjamin Reiss's "Madness and Mastery in Herman Melville's 'Benito Cereno.'" *Criticism* 38.1 (Winter 1996) 115.

[188] See Robert E. Burkholder's *Critical Essays on Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno."* New York: G.K. Hall, 1992, for an overview of this critical history.

[189] See Laurie Sterling's *Bloom's How to Write about Herman Melville*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008. Print. 234.

[190] For more on Hegelian influences on Melville and their relationship to race and slavery see Joshua Leslie and Sterling Stuckey "The Death of Benito Cereno: A Reading of Herman Melville on Slavery," *The Journal of Negro History* 67 (Winter 1982): 301n.

[191] I am referring here to seventeenth-century authors who explore the trope of the enslaved noble African. Such works include Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688) and her *Adbelazer* (1676) as well as Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines* (1696) and Thomas Southerne's tragedy *Oroonoko* (1696). For more on this trope see Derek Hughe's *Versions of Blackness: Key Texts on Slavery from the Seventheenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.

[192] See Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" (1855), *American Literature, Vol. I*. Ed. William E. Cain. New York: Penguin Academics, 2004. 1149, 1150, 1153, 1152, 1157, 1159.

[193] For criticism of Melville's *Benito Cereno* with mention of Cereno's illness and debility see Joshua Leslie and Sterling Stuckey's "The Death of Benito Cereno: A Reading of Herman Melville on Slavery," *Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 287-301.; Robert E Burkholder, ed., *Critical Essays on Herman Melville's*

"Benito Cereno" New York: Hall Publishing, 1992.; Seymour L. Gross, ed., *A "Benito Cereno" Handbook* Belmont, CA: Wadswoth Publishing, 1965.; William Gleason's "Douglass, Melville, and the Poetics of Insurrection," *Frederick Douglass & Herman Melville: Essays in Relation*. Eds., Robert S. Levine and Samuel Otter. Chapel Hill: U of NCP, 2008. Print. 110-134.

[194] Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" (1855), *American Literature, Vol. I*. Ed. William E. Cain. New York: Penguin Academics, 2004. 1149.

[195] The best example of the dangers of black "alertness" in *Benito Cereno* is also the novella's most famous scene: when Babo shaves Don Benito. Andrew Delbanco describes this scene as "a meditation on subjectivity itself," arguing that although Delbanco reads Babo's service as "the sound of a black man abasing himself" what Cereno hears is far more nefarious: "if you make one move toward candor, I will cut your throat." See Andrew Delbanco's *Melville: His World and Work*. New York: Vintage, 2005. Print. 237-238.

[196] Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" (1855), *American Literature, Vol. I*. Ed. William E. Cain. New York: Penguin Academics, 2004. 1186.

[197] See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death.* 336.

[198] Ibid. 335.

[199] Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" (1855), *American Literature, Vol. I*. Ed. William E. Cain. New York: Penguin Academics, 2004. 1153.

[200] See Samuel Cartwright's "Report on the Diseases of and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 7 (May 1851): 691-715.; Fitzhugh, George. *Sociology for the South: Or the Failure of Free Society* (Richmond, VA: A. Morris, 1854); and *Cannibals All! Or Slaves without Masters.*

Richmond, VA: A. Morris, 1857.; and Nott, Josiah. *Instincts of Races*. New Orleans: L. Graham, 1866.

[201] Samuel Cartwright's "Report on the Diseases of and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 7 (May 1851): 701.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Ibid. 702.

[204] Ibid. 698.

[205] Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" (1855), *American Literature, Vol. I*. Ed. William E. Cain. New York: Penguin Academics, 2004.1185.

[206] Ibid. 1162.

[207] Ibid. 1169.

[208] I am drawing here from George Frederickson's *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*. Middleton, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1987. Print. 102., where he mentions a nameless New York Unitarian pastor's claim that because the nature of people of African descent is "childlike, affectionate, docile, and patient," it was unchristian to oppress them.

[209] John A. Calhoun, "Management of Slaves," *DR* 18 (June 1855): 713.

[210] I am referring here to the conversation between Delano and Cereno when Atufal approaches them and refuses to apologize. Cereno states, " I could not scourge such a form." 1164.

[211] My earlier section of this chapter lays out the theoretical groundwork for this claim. See section on masculinity and disability aboard the slave ship.

[212] Samuel Cartwright defined rascality as a disease of the mind specific to African slaves and caused by idleness. Inacitvity of physical labor, according to Cartwright, led to overly carbonized blood, which in turn led to "slothfulness, torpor, and

disinclination." Free blacks, especially, and those who could not rely on a white master to tell them what to do suffered from rascality because of the mental strain of self-government. See Samuel Cartwright's "Report on the Diseases of and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 7 (May 1851).

[213] Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" (1855), *American Literature, Vol. I*. Ed. William E. Cain. New York: Penguin Academics, 2004.1190.

[214] Ibid.

[215] See Hurricane, "The Negro and His Management," *SC* 17 (September 1860): 276-277; for more on "the management of negroes" and the race-specific mental and physical attributes of managing and being managed see Agricola, "Management of Negroes," 171-174; John A. Calhoun, "Management of Slaves," *DR* 18 (June 1855): 713; Collins, "Management of Slave," *DR* 17 (October 1854): 421-423; A Small Farmer, "Management of Negroes," *DR* 11 (Obctober1851): 369-72; A. T. Goodloe, "Management of Negroes," *SC* 18 (April 1860): 130-31; Goodloe, "Management of Negroes—Again," 279-80; A.T. Goodloe, "Management of Negroes—Caution!," *SC* 18 (October 1860): 305; Guerry, "Management of Negroes—Duties of Masters," 176-77; Towns, "Management of Negroes," 87-88; Arkansas River, "Dickson's Planting—Overseers—Negores Etc.," *SC* 18 (October 1860): 304-5; Pitts, "Best Methods of Managing Negroes," 325-26; A. Tennesseean, "Management of Negroes—Bathing Feet," *SC* II (Obctober 1853): 302.

[216] Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" (1855), *American Literature, Vol. I*. Ed. William E. Cain. New York: Penguin Academics, 2004.1190.

[217] Ibid. 1169.

[218] Ibid. 1166.

[219] See Goodloe, "Management of Negroes—Caution!," *SC* 18 (October 1860): 305. Samuel Cartwright, "Dr. Cartwright on the Caucasians and the Africans," *DR* I (July 1858): 46-47 and 52 ("like the mule"); Robert Collins, "Essay on the Management of Slaves," *SC* 12 (July 1854): 205-6.

[220] See Bertram Wyatt-Brown's *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. Print. 45-50.

[221] Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" (1855), *American Literature, Vol. I*. Ed. William E. Cain. New York: Penguin Academics, 2004.1171.

[222] Almost all critical work on *Benito Cereno* points out the significance of Delano's ignorance of the slave rebellion until it's almost too late. Delbanco, for example, interprets Delano's naiveté as Melville's decision to balance his narrative with a "representative type in whom readers could see themselves: a basically decent man trying to reconcile the unwritten law of charity with the written law requiring him to defend a slaveowner's rights." No one has noticed the implications of this approach on representations of disability in American fiction, however. See Delbanco's *Melville: His World and Work*. New York: Vintage, 2005. Print. 232.

[223] Melville's short story, "The 'Gees," published in *Harper's Monthly* a year after *Benito Cereno* is an important satire that offers scholars a view of how Melville may have understood and criticized popular scientific racism of the period. This forgotten short story is actually remarkably interesting as it sketches a fictional mixed race population of Portuguese and Cape Verde islanders and the specific constructions about their abilities and capacities based on their mixed race and raced-based physiognomies. The best critical discussion of the short story is Carolyn Karcher's article in *American Quarterly*. See Karcher, Carolyn. "Melville's 'The 'Gees': A

Forgotten Satire on Scientific Racism." *American Quarterly* 27:4 (Oct., 1975), pp. 421-442.

[224] Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" (1855), *American Literature, Vol. I*. Ed. William E. Cain. New York: Penguin Academics, 2004.1218.

[225] Ibid.

[226] Parsons, Theodore and Eliphalet Pearson. *A Forensic Dispute on the Legality of Enslaving the Africans, Held at the Public Commencement in Cambridge, New England.* Boston: John Boyle, 1773.

[227] Ibid. 28-31, 35-45.

[228] See O'Neale p. 145, and Carretta p. 198.

[229] *Notes* p. 266-67.

[230] I am citing Charles Crawford's words in his assessment of Wheatley's poetry. See his *Observataions Upon Negro-Slavery* (1784).

[231] Carlson, 31.

[232] Carey, 46.

[233] Goodey, 231.

[234] Eze, 31.

[235] Keith, 66.

[236] Eze, 55.

[237] Gates, jr., 10-11.

[238] Goodey, 136, 139.

[239] Ibid. 57.

[240] Nussbaum, 54.

[241] Gabbard, D. Christopher. *Disability Terms.* Benjamin Reiss, ed. Forthcoming.

[242] See his classic of cultural criticism, *"Race," Writing, and Difference* (1985).

[243] Rawls, 83.

[244] The question is particularly important given the overwhelmingly positive response to Wheatley's poetry by noted European and American intelligentsia. George Washington, Benjamin Rush, Hannah More, Charles Crawford, Anthony Benezet, Moses Brown, Thomas Clarkson, and the Marquis de Chatellux all contributed to Wheatley's accolades.

[245] Wheatley, Phillis. "To the University of CAMBRDIGE, in NEW-ENGLAND."*Complete Writings*. *Phillis Wheatley.* Vincent Carretta, Ed. New York: Penguin, 2001. 11-12. Print.

[246] Locke, 61.

[247] Ibid. 210.

[248] Ibid. 61.

[249] Carlson, 24.

[250] Canguilhem, 33-35.

[251] Johnson, Samuel. "Intelligency." *A Dictionary of the English Language.* Philadelphia: Moses Thomas, 1818.

[252] Parsons, Theodore and Eliphalet Pearson. *A Forensic Dispute on the Legality of Enslaving the Africans, Held at the Public Commencement in Cambridge, New England.* Boston: John Boyle, 1773; and Wheatley, Phillis. "To the University of CAMBRDIGE, in NEW-ENGLAND."*Complete Writings*. *Phillis Wheatley.* Vincent Carretta, Ed. New York: Penguin, 2001. 11-12. Print.

[253] "To His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, on the Death of His Lady. March 24, 1773" (4).

[254] For more on how Wheatley utilizes the rhetoric of revolution and revivalism, see *Revolutionary Women* by Betsy Erkila.

[255] Lindeman, Janet Moore, and Michele Lise Tarter, eds. *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001. 1-9. Print. Wiegman, Robyn. *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender.* Durham: Duke UP, 1995. 3. Print.

[256] Wiegman, Robyn. *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender.* Durham: Duke UP, 1995. 3. Print.

[257] Sweet, John Wood. *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730-1830.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003. 7. Print.

[258] Popkin, Richard H. "Medicine, Racism, and Anti-Semitism: A Dimension of Enlightenment Culture." *The Language of Psyche: Mind and Body in Enlightenment Thought.* Ed. G. S. Rousseau. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990. 421. Print.

[259] Wheatley, Phillis. "To MAECENAS." *Complete Writings*. *Phillis Wheatley.* Vincent Carretta, Ed. New York: Penguin, 2001. 9-11. Print.

[260] Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on the State of Virginia.* 1785. New York: The Library of America, 1984. 264. Print.

[261] Shields, John C. "Phillis Wheatley's struggle for Freedom in Her Poetry and Prose." *The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley.* Ed. John C. Shields. New York: Oxford UP< 1988. 246. Print.

[262] Wheatley, Phillis. "On the Death of a Young Lady of Five Years of Age." *Complete Writings*. *Phillis Wheatley.* Vincent Carretta, Ed. New York: Penguin, 2001. 16-17. Print.

[263] Wheatley, Phillis. "To a Lady on the Death of her Husband." *Complete Writings*. *Phillis Wheatley.* Vincent Carretta, Ed. New York: Penguin, 2001. 18-19. Print.

[264] Wheatley, Phillis. "To a Lady on the Death of Three Relations." *Complete Writings*. *Phillis Wheatley.* Vincent Carretta, Ed. New York: Penguin, 2001. 29-30. Print.

[265] Hammond, Jeffrey. *The American Puritan Elegy; A Literary and Cultural Study.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. 19. Print.

[266] Balkun, Mary McAleer. "To 'pursue th' unbodied mind': Phillis Wheatley and Raced Body in Early America." John C. Shields, Ed. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2011. 381. Print.

[267] Wheatley, Phillis. "To John Thornton in London." *Complete Writings*. *Phillis Wheatley.* Vincent Carretta, Ed. New York: Penguin, 2001. 140-41. Print.

[268] Wheatley, Phillis. "To Miss Obour Tanner Newport." *Complete Writings*. *Phillis Wheatley.* Vincent Carretta, Ed. New York: Penguin, 2001. 153-54. Print.

[269] Gregory, George. *Essays Historical and Moral.* London, 1785. 300.

[270] Clarkson, Thomas. *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African.* London, 1785. 175.

[271] Stedman, John Gabriel. *Narrative of Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam.* London: J.Johnson, 1796. 259.

[272] Jefferson claims that people of African descent are "in imagination," "dull, tasteless, and anomalous" (266).

[273] Wheatley, Phillis. "On IMAGINATION." *Complete Writings*. *Phillis Wheatley.* Vincent Carretta, Ed. New York: Penguin, 2001. 36-37. Print.

[274] Carretta, Vincent. *Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a Genius in Bondage.* Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 2011. 106. Print.

[275] Imlay, Gilbert. *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America,* 1793. I:185-186.

[276] To John D. Burke, Washington, June 21, 1801, Paul L. Ford, ed. The *Works of Thomas Jefferson: Autobiography, Anas, writings, 1760-1770,* IX, 267.

[277] Locke, "Extracts," 534-35.

[278] Ibid.

[279] Ibid. 126.

[280] Elliott, 37-45

[281] Wheatley, Phillis. "An Address to the Athiest, by P. Wheatley at the Age of 14 Years—1767—."*Complete Writings*. *Phillis Wheatley.* Vincent Carretta, Ed. New York: Penguin, 2001. 69. Print.

[282] "Matilda." "On Reading the Poems of Phillis Wheatley, African Poetess" *New York Magazine,* 1796.

[283] Wheatley, Phillis. "An Address to the Deist—1767—."*Complete Writings*. *Phillis Wheatley.* Vincent Carretta, Ed. New York: Penguin, 2001. 72-73. Print.

[284] Deutsch, 32.

[285] I am use a term of Samuel Johnson's used to describe Alexander Pope's representational poetry. See Helen Deutsch's *Resemblance & Disgrace* p. 23.

[286] Wheatley, Phillis. "On Being Brought From Africa to America."*Complete Writings*. *Phillis Wheatley.* Vincent Carretta, Ed. New York: Penguin, 2001. 13. Print.

[287] See Erving Goffman's *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.* New York: Touchstone, 1963. Print.

[288] Kittay, 46.

[289] Mather, 60.

[290] "Father of Mercy" is from Wheatley's "To the University of CAMBRIDGE, in NEW-ENGLAND."

[291] McCulley, 284.

[292] Hairston, 88.

[293] "Refined, adj. and n." *The Oxford English Dictionary. OED Online.* Oxford UP. 18 June 2014 <http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/160886>

[294] I refer to Sondra O'Neale's "A Slaves Subtle War: Phillis Wheatley's Use of Biblical Myth and Symbol" where she very effectively argues that Wheatley uses subversive language to criticize the institution of slavery through her only available method, religious verse. John C. Shields echoes O'Neale's claim in *Phillis Wheatley's Poetics of Liberation* p. 73. James Levernier, Mukhtar Ali Isani and Philip Richards have also made similar claims.

[295] Shields, John C. *Phillis Wheatley's Poetics of Liberation.* Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 77. Print.

[296] Ibid.

[297] Genesis, 4:4-9.

[298] Carey, 46.

[299] Bushman, Richard L. *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*. New York: Vintage, 1993. 82-86, 95. Print.

[300] Ibid., 42.

[301] Grob, Gerald. *The Mad Among Us: A History of the Care of America's Mentally Ill.* New York: The Free Press, 1994. 17.

[302] Nielsen, Kim E. *A Disability History of the United States.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2012. 20. Print.

[303] Ibid.

[304] One example is Walt Nott's essay, "From 'Uncultivated Barbarian' to Poetic Genius': The Public Presence of Phillis Wheatley"

[305] Lacey, Barbara E. "Visual Images of Blacks in Early American Imprints." *The William and Mary Quarterly*. 53.1 (1996): 172. Print.

[306] Ibid.

[307] Jefferson states in *Notes* that African American "griefs are transient" and "sooner forgotten with them" (265) after he claims that they cannot be freed because of the "ten thousand recollections . . . of the injuries they have sustained" (264).

[308] O'Neale, 145.

[309] Ibid.

[310] Carey, 1.

[311] "American Slavery in the World's Fair in London." Rpt. in the *Liberator,* 28 February 1851.

[312] Ibid.

[313] "Fugitive Slaves at the Great Exhibition." Rpt. in the *Liberator,* 18 July 1851.

[314] *Scott v. Georgia*, 39 Ga. 321, 324 (1869).

[315] See Christopher Bell's *Blackness and Disability* (2011), Ellen Samuels's *Fantasies of Identification* (2014); Rachel Adams's *Sideshow USA* (2001); and Ervelles, Nirmalla and Andrea Minear's "Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality" in *The Disability Studies Reader, 4th Edition* (2013).

[316] Linton, Simi. *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. New York: New York UP, 1998. Print. 8.

[317] Wiegman, Robyn. *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender*. Durhan, NC: Duke UP, 1995. Print. 32.

[318] Sollors, Werner. *Neither Black Nor White, Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997. Print. 129-135.

[319] The term "romantic racialism" was coined be George Frederickson in 1971 in his book *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914.* The term refers to a general trend in romantic American fiction in which a dominant group projects their fantasies about an oppressed group onto said group. For Frederickson, romantic racialism was used conveniently to explain the supposed consequences of mixed race blacks, where mulattos, although black and subject to stereotype, also tried, but always failed to become part of white society through their "white" intelligence, grace, beauty, and Christian ideals.

[320] See Jean Fagan Yellin's *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 1989. Print. 71.

[321] See Carolyn Karcher's *A Lydia Maria Child Reader.* Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1997. Print. 3.

[322] See Jean Fagan Yellin's *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture.* New Haven: Yale UP, Print. 1994, 71.; and Maggie Sale's "Critiques From Within: Antebellum Projects of Resistance." *American Literature* 64:4 (1992): 696-718.

[323] See Robin Wiegman's *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender.* Durham: Duke UP, 1995. Print. 30.

[324] Ibid.

[325] Haney Lopez, Ian. F. "The Social Construction of Race." *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge.* Ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2007. 238-249. Print.; and Harris, Angela. Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory." *Critical Race Feminism*. Ed. Adrien. K. Wing. New York: New York UP, 1997. 11.

[326] See Saidiya Hartman's *Scenese of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997. Print. 20.

[327] Ibid.

[328] See Lindon Barret's "Hand-writing: Legibility and the White Body in *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom.*" *American Literature.* 69.2 (1997):315-36; and LaConn, Cindy. "'It Is More Than Lame': Female Disability, Sexuality, and the Maternal in the Nineteenth-Century Novel." David Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, eds. *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability.* Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. Print. 195.

[329] The best example of this is in William Wells Brown's *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853). New York: The Modern Library, 2000. Print. See p. 47: "The appearance of Clotel on the auction block created a deep sensation amongst the crowd. There she stood, with a complexion as white as most of those who were waiting with a wish to become her purchasers; her features we finely defined as any of her sex of pure Anglo-Saxon; her long black wavy hair done up in the neatest manner; her form tall and graceful, and her whole appearance indicating one superior to her position."

[330] Adams, Rachel. *Sideshow USA: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001. Print. 31.

[331] Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie, ed. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body.* New York: NY UP, 1996. Print. 2.

[332] Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature.* New York: Columbia UP, 1997. Print. 20.

[333] Davis, Lennard. *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and The Body.* New York: Verso, 1995. Print. 22.

[334] Letters of Josiah C. Nott to James Hammond, July 25, 1852, Hammond Papers, Library of Congress.

[335] Edward Long. *The History of Jamaica, or General Survey of the Ancient and Modern State of that Island with Reflections on its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government.* London: T. Lowndes, 1774. 335.

[336] Ibid.

[337] Ibid.

[338] Agassiz is merely repeating Broca's studies on interracial fertility, Gobineau's theory of the infertility of hybrids, and Darwin's future prediction on the extermination of "inferior" races. See *Louis Agassiz, His Life, and Correspondence.* 2 vols. Ed. Elizabeth Cabot Cary Agassiz. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1885. 599. (10 Aug. 1863).

[339] For more on this correspondence see Sidney Kaplan's "The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864." *Journal of Negro History* 34.3 (July 1949): 297n.

[340] See Samuel Gridley Howe's *The Refugees From Slavery in Canada West, Report to the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission.* Boston, 1864. 18, 26, 33. See also George Frederickson's *The Black Image in the White Mind* 160-64.

[341] Benjamin Apthorp Gould's *Investigation in the Military and Anthropological Statistics of American Soldiers.* New York: For the U.S. Sanitary Commission by Hurd and Houghton, 1869. 319.

[342] J.H. Baxter. *Statistics, Medical an Anthropological, of the Provost-Marshall-Genereal's Bureau* . . . 2 Vols. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875. 394.

[343] Samuels, Ellen. *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race.* New York: New York UP, 2014. Print. 12.

[344] Haney Lopez, Ian. F. "The Social Construction of Race." *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge.* Ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2007. 238-249. Print. 172.

[345] Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature.* New York: Columbia UP, 1997. Print. 6.

[346] Josiah C. Nott. "The Mulatto a Hybrid—Probably Extermination of The Two Races if The Whites and Blacks are Allowed to Intermarry." *The American Journal of Medical Sciences.* 6.11 (July 1843). 252-255.

[347] Johnson, Walter. *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999. Print. 152.

[348] See Schwartz's *Birthing a Slave*; Sharla Fett's *Working Cures*; and Dudley's "Toward and Understanding of the 'Medical Plantation' as a Cultural Location of Disability" in *DSQ.*

[349] See Joan Burbick's *Healing The Republic: The Language of Health and the culture of Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century America.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. Print. Burbick describes a fundamental fear within American democracy: the fear of illness, contagion and disability in a political society that allows all to participate. Among other claims, her study articulates the anxiety over race and racial mixing and what this meant for an American democratic population.

[350] Ibid. 120. See also her discussion on motherhood and the mulatta figure in *UTC* p. 209

[351] Sterling Brown charged, "The superiority wished upon the octoroon was easily attributed to the white blood coursing in their veins." *The Negro in American Fiction*

(133); Jean Fagan Yellin has charged that the tragic mulatta figure "appears to endorse the patriarchal ideology . . . in relation to women of color. *Women and Sisters* (23); Similarly, Carolyn Karcher denounced the tragic mulatta theme for perpetuating "an ideology relegating people of color . . . to subordinate status." "Rape, Murder, Revenge in 'Slavery's Pleasant Homes'" (330).

[352] Child, Lydia Maria. "The Quadroons." *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories.* New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1842. Print. 62.

[353] As Jean Fagan Yellin puts it in her *Women and Sister: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture*: Child is a prime example of a sentimental writer who allowed "white readers to identify with the victim by gender while distancing themselves by race and thus to avoid confronting a racial ideology that denie[d] the full humanity of nonwhite women" (71).

[354] Karcher, Carolyn. "Rape, Murder, Revenge in 'Slavery's Pleasant Homes': Lydia Maria Child's Antislavery Fiction and the Limits of Genre." *Women's Studies International Forum* 9.4 (1986): 323-332.

[355] Child, Lydia Maria. "The Quadroons." *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories.* New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1842. Print. 61.

[356] Ibid.

[357] Ibid.

[358] Ibid.

[359] Karcher, Carolyn, ed. "Slavery's Pleasant Homes" (1843). *A Lydia Maria Child Reader.* Durham: Duke UP, 1997. Print. 241.

[360] Child, Lydia Maria. "The Quadroons." *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories.* New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1842. Print. 63.

[361] Child, Lydia Maria. "The Quadroons." *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories.* New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1842. Print. 63.

[362] Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., ed. "The Confessions of Nat Turner." *Slave Narratives*. New York: The Library of America. 2000. Print. 246.

[363] Child, Lydia Maria. "The Quadroons." *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories.* New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1842. Print. 64.

[364] Ibid.

[365] Ibid. 65-66.

[366] Ibid. 70.

[367] Ibid. 70.

[368] Ibid. I am also reusing Walter Johnson's terms for sickly mulatta slaves on the auction block, "delicate." See *Soul by Soul* p. 152.

[369] Child, Lydia Maria. "The Quadroons." *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories.* New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1842. Print. 70.

[370] Ibid. 70.

[371] Lydia Maria Child to Theodore Dwight Weld, March 7, 1839, *Selected Letters, 1817-1880.* Eds. Milton Meltzer and Patricia G. Holland. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1982. 104-105.

[372] See Chapter 4 of George Frederickson's The *Black Image in the White Mind.*

[373] Lydia Maria Child to Lucy Larcom, March 12, 1873, *Selected Letters, 1817-1880.* Eds. Milton Meltzer and Patricia G. Holland. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1982. 511.

[374] Child, Lydia Maria. "The Quadroons." *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories.* New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1842. Print. 70.

[375] See Josiah C. Nott. "The Mulatto a Hybrid—Probably Extermination of The Two Races if The Whites and Blacks are Allowed to Intermarry." *The American Journal of Medical Sciences.* 6.11 (July 1843). 253.

[376] Beaumont, Gustave de. *Marie; or, Slavery in the United States,* trans. Barbara Chapman. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1958. 64.

[377] Child, Lydia Maria. "The Quadroons." *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories.* New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1842. Print. 70.

[378] Child, Lydia Maria. "The Quadroons." *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories.* New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1842. Print. 74.

[379] *Lemos v. Daubert,* #4198, 8 Rob. 224 (La. 1844), testimony of Maurice Barnett, University of New Orleans, Supreme Court of Louisiana Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library.

[380] Child, Lydia Maria. "The Quadroons." *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories.* New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1842. Print. 74.

[381] Redpath, James. *The Roving Editor, or Talks with Slaves in the Southern States*. New York, 1859. 246-252.

[382] Ibid.

[383] For more on "fancy girls" see Ralina L. Joseph's *Transcending Blackness: From The New Millenium Mulatta to the Exceptional Multiracial.* Durham: Duke UP, 2013. Print. 12. See also Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll* p. 429; Winthrop Jordan's *White Over Black* p. 178; and Joel Williamson's *New People.*

[384] Child, Lydia Maria. "The Quadroons." *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories.* New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1842. Print. 74.

[385] Denslow, Van Buren. *Owned and Disowned: Or, the Chattel Child; a Tale of Southern Life.* New York: H. Dayton, 1860. 287.

[386] Ibid. 288.

[387] Kingsley, Charles. *Two Years Ago,* 2 Vols. Leipzig: Bernhard Tacuchnitz, 1857. 1:125.

[388] Child, Lydia Maria. "The Quadroons." *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories.* New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1842. Print. 75.

[389] Ibid.

[390] Ibid. 76.

[391] Ibid.

[392] Sale, Maggie. "Critiques from Within; Antebellum Projects of Resistance." *American Literature* 64.4 (1992): 699.

[393] Williamson, Joel. *New People: Misegenation and Mulattos in the United States.* New York: NYUP, 1984. Print. 73.

[394] See Fawn Brodie's *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History,* 369-370.

[395] See Eve Allegra Raimon's *The "Tragic Mulatta" Revisited: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Antislavery Fiction.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2004. Print. 68. See also Vernon Loggins's *The Negro Author: His Development in America.* New York: NYUP, 1996. Print. 166, where he says that "the greatest weakness of *Clotel* is that enough material for half a dozen novels is crowded into its two hundred and forty-five pages." See also John Ernest's "African American Literature and the Abolitionist Movement, 1845 to the Civil War." *The Cambridge History of African American Literature.* Eds. Maryemma Graham and Jerry W. Ward, Jr. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011. Print. 101.

[396] See William Edward Farrison's *William Wells Brown: Author and Reformer,* 224; Jean Fagan Yellin's *Intricate Knot,* 172-173; and Kristin Herzog's *Women, Ethnics, and Exotics: Images of Power in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Fiction*, 134-135.

[397] Brown, William Wells. *Clotel: Or, The President's Daughter* (1853). New York: The Modern Library, 2000. Print. 206.

[398] Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 2010. Print. 320.

[399] Not much has been said about cross dressing in *Clotel,* but in Ellen Craft's slave narrative, Andrews, Bland, Dr Grave and McCaskill all discuss the narrative in terms of both race and gender. Ellen Samuels is the first to make connections between race, gender, and disability.

[400] David Spade, "Resisting Medicine, Re/modeling Gender," *Berkeley Women's Law Journal* 18 (2003): 15-37.

[401] Brown, William Wells. *Clotel: Or, The President's Daughter* (1853). New York: The Modern Library, 2000. Print. 139.

[402] Ibid.

[403] Ibid. 141.

[404] *Bodies the Matter*, xi.

[405] See Audrey Fisch's *American Slaves in Victorian England: Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print. 75.

[406] Harriet Martineau's *Society in America* (1837). Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print. 323.

[407] Ibid. 324.

[408] Ibid. 325.

[409] Ibid.

[410] Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Journey to America*, ed. J.P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1959. Print. 164.

[411] Latrobe, John H. B. *Southern Travels of John H. B. Latrobe 1834.* Ed. Samuel Wilson Jr. New Orleans: Historic New Orleans Collection, 1986. Print. 78.

[412] Ibid.

[413] Ibid. 77.

[414] Louis Agassiz to Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, 10 August, 1863, Houghton Library.

[415] Ibid.

[416] Ibid.

[417] Ibid.

[418] Louis Agassiz, 9 August 1863. Qtd. in Werner Sollor's *Neither White Nor Black,* 298.

[419] Brown, William Wells. *Clotel: Or, The President's Daughter* (1853). New York: The Modern Library, 2000. Print. 142.

[420] Ibid. 140.

[421] Ibid. 159.

[422] Ibid. 140.

[423] Ibid. 160.

[424] Ibid. 168.

[425] See Marjorie Garber's *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety.* New York: Routledge, 1992. Print. 274. Garber adds, too, that "transvestism" includes the "full gender-masquerade that we see in Brown's characters, and adds that "the possibility of crossing racial boundaries stirs fears of the possibility of crossing boundaries of gender, and vice versa" (275).

[426] Brown, William Wells. *Clotel: Or, The President's Daughter* (1853). New York: The Modern Library, 2000. Print. 187.

[427] Ibid. 190.

[428] Ibid.

[429] See Lise Funderburg's *Black, White, Other: Biracial Americans Talk About Race and Identity.* New York: William Morrow, 1994. Print. 218.

[430] *Scott v. Georgia*, 39 Ga. Rep. 321, 324 (1869).

[431] See Drew Gilpin Faust's *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1981. Print. 259-260.

[432] *Congressional Globe* (17 Feb. 1864), 709. Also included in this speech: "It is a well-known fact that in the Southern United States . . . that the mulatto and his progeny are more feeble than either of the parent stock, and much more predisposed to certain diseases, as consumption and scrofulous affections . . . A race of hybrids cannot perpetuate themselves; they die out under the law of hybridity and revision . . . . Nature avenges the unnatural crime by excision."

[433] Raimon, Eve Allegre=a. *The "Tragic Mulatta" Revisited: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Antislavery Fiction.* New Brunswick, Rutgers UP, 2004. Print. 83.

[434] See Gretchen Short's "Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig* and the Labor of Citizenship" *Arizona Quarterly* 57 (2001): 1-27, and Julia Stern's "Excavating Genre in *Our Nig*" *American Literature* 67 (1995): 439-66.

[435] Wilson, Harriet E. *Our Nig; Or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black.* 1859. Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Richard J. Ellis. New York: Vintage, 2011. Print. 7, 8.

[436] Fineman, Martha Albertson. *The Autonomy Myth: A Theory of Dependency.* New York: The New Press, 2004, 34. Print.

[437] Kittay, Eva Feder. *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency.* New York: Routledge, 29. Print.

[438] Ibid.

[439] *Compilation of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States, as Obtained at the Department of State, from the Returns of the Sixth Census* (Washington, D.C., 1841), pp. 4-104; Albert Deutsch, "The First U.S. Census of the Insane (1840) and Its Uses as Proslavery Propaganda," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine,* XV (1944), 169-82; William K. Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Science and the American Idea of Equality,* 1815-1860. Chicago, 1960. pp. 58-59; Edward Jarvis, "Insanity among the Coloured Population of the Free States," *American Journal of the Medical Sciences,* VII, 1844. 71-83.

[440] Ibid.

[441] Ibid.

[442] Ibid.

[443] "Reflections on the Census of 1840," *Southern Literary Messenger,* IX (1843), 342, 344, 346-7.

[444] Ibid.

[445] *Congressional Globe,* 28 Cong., 1 sess., p. 239.

[446] "Reflections on the Census of 1840," *Southern Literary Messenger,* IX (1843), 344.

[447] Ibid.

[448] John C. Calhoun to Lord Richard Pakenham, April 18 and April 27, 1844, in "Proceedings of the Senate and Documents Relative to Texas," *Senate Document,* 28 Cong., 1 sess., No. 341 (1844), pp. 50-53.

[449] Ibid.

[450] Ibid. 65-67.

[451] See William R. Leonard, "Edward Jarvis," in Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.) *Dictionary of American Biography* 22 vols. New York, 1928-58. IX, 621-22.

[452] *The Liberator,* August 18, 1843; "What Shall We Do With the Insane?" *North American Review,* LVI (1843), 172n-173n.

[453] Roediger, David. *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class.* New York: Verso, 1991. Print. 172.

[454] Wilson, Harriet E. *Our Nig; Or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black.* 1859. Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Richard J. Ellis. New York: Vintage, 2011. Print. xxxix.

[455] See Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the "Racial" Self.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987. Print. 147.

[456] Wilson, Harriet E. *Our Nig; Or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black.* 1859. Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Richard J. Ellis. New York: Vintage, 2011. Print. 135.

[457] Genovese, Eugene. *Roll, Jordan, Roll.* New York: Vintage. 1976. Print. 99.

[458] Ibid. 90.

[459] Genovese, Eugene. *Roll, Jordan, Roll.* New York: Vintage. 1976. Print. 99.

[460] Wilson, Harriet E. *Our Nig; Or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black.* 1859. Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Richard J. Ellis. New York: Vintage, 2011. Print. 129.

[461] See Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the "Racial" Self.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987. Print. 147.; Wilson, Harriet E. *Our Nig; Or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black.* 1859. Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Richard J. Ellis. New York: Vintage, 2011. Print. 135.

[462] See Timothy Dodge's "Poor Relief in Durham, Lee, and Madbury, 1732-1891." Master's thesis, University of New Hampshire, 1982. See also Joseph Benjamin Klebaner's *Public Poor Relief in America* where he argues that in addition to poor

relief, communities sponsored charitable societies to help people with alcoholism, those considered insane, free blacks, onanists, orphans, immigrants and others.

[463] Wilson, Harriet E. *Our Nig; Or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black.* 1859. Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Richard J. Ellis. New York: Vintage, 2011. Print. 7.

[464] Ibid. 8

[465] Qtd. in Gates, *Figure in Black*, 142.

[466] Wilson, Harriet E. *Our Nig; Or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black.* 1859. Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Richard J. Ellis. New York: Vintage, 2011. Print. 25.

[467] Oliver, James H. *Free People of Color: inside the African American Community.* Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993. Print. 124. See also Roediger's *Wages of Whiteness* pp. 57-60 and 147-148; and Eric Lott's *Love and Theft* pp. 64.

[468] Wilson, Harriet E. *Our Nig; Or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black.* 1859. Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Richard J. Ellis. New York: Vintage, 2011. Print. 25.

[469] Ibid. 55.

[470] Ibid. 25.

[471] Ibid. 30.

[472] Ibid. 43-44.

[473] Ibid. 82.

[474] Ibid. 94.

[475] Ibid. 81-82.

[476] Ibid. 117.

[477] Ibid. 118, 120.

[478] Ibid. 124, 122.

[479] Ibid. 123.

[480] Ibid.

[481] Ibid. 123.

[482] Ibid. 123, 124.

[483] Ibid. 130.

[484] Ibid.

[485] Albion W. Tourgee, "The Literary Quality of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,'" *Independent* 48 (20 Aug. 1896), 3-4.

[486] Ibid.

[487] Ibid, 4. For a cogent critique of realism and race see chapter three of Kenneth W. Warren, *Black and White Strangers: Race and American Literary Realism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993).

[488] See Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 132.

[489] See Samuel A. Cartwright, "Report on the Disease and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 7 (1851): 703 and 691-715.

[490] Nirmala Evelles and Andrea Minear, "Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality," in *The Disability Studies Reader,* ed. Lennard Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013), 354-368.

[491] Allison C. Carey, *On The Margins of Citizenship: Intellectual Disability and Civil Rights in Twentieth-Century America* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2009), 46.

[492] Ellen Samuels, *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2014), 11.

[493] See Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2011); Henry B. Wonham, *Playing the Races: Ethnic Caricature and American Literary Realism* (Oxford:

Oxford Univ. Press, 2004); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993).

[494] Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 2010. Print. 124.

[495] Ibid., 125

[496] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1997), 85.

[497] Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 2010. Print. 225-6.

[498] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson explores "how representation attached meanings to bodies" and unravels the "complexities of identity production within social narratives of bodily difference" (*Extraordinary* 5). Similarly, Keith Byerman and Hanna Wallinger have argued that the fiction of Thomas Nelson Page, Caroline Lee Hentz and William Gilmore Simms reinvented the South's loss in the Civil War as a tragedy in which their noble cause was overwhelmed by massive Northern aggression. This narrative allowed the South to freely pursue an agenda of white supremacy as long as it gave lip service to the principles of democracy. Within this narrative was the South's own intellectual justification for perpetuating ideas of social Darwinism and natural selection in the Post-Reconstruction-era South. See Keith Byerman and Hanna Wallinger. "The 'Fictions' of Race." *The Cambridge History of African American Literature*. Eds. Maryemma Graham and Jerry W. Ward, Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 177-206. See also Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 283-285 and David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 216-222.

[499] Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 2010. Print. 225-6.

[500] Ibid.

[501] Ibid., 260-1.

[502] See Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*. New York: New York Univ. Press, 2011. Print, 48.

[503] Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 2010. Print. 261.

[504] See Tourgée, "The South as a Field for Fiction," *Forum* 6 (December 1888), 404.

[505] Ibid.

[506] Ibid.

[507] See Tourgée, "The South as a Field for Fiction," *Forum* 6 (December 1888), 409.

[508] Ibid.

[509] Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (1892) New York: Negro University Press, 1969, 188.

[510] Tourgée, "The Negro's View of the Destiny of His Race" # 5 Albion W. Tourgée Papers, Chautauqua County Historical Society, Westfield, NY.

[511] Ibid.

[512] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1847; reprint, New York: Tudor, 1938), vol. I, p. 32.

[513] Robert Murphy, *The Body Silent*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1957, 116-117. Print.

[514] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1847; reprint, New York: Tudor, 1938), vol. I, p. 18.

[515] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1847; reprint, New York: Tudor, 1938), vol. I, p. 32.

[516] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 193, 135.

[517] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature.* New York: Columbia UP, 1997, 41. Print.

[518] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, 1972-1977, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 166.

[519] Tourgée, "The Negro's View of the Destiny of His Race" # 5 Albion W. Tourgée Papers, Chautauqua County Historical Society, Westfield, NY.

[520] Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, *Iola Leroy; Or, Shadows Uplifted.* New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 40. Print.

[521] Ibid.

[522] Ibid.

[523] Josh Lukin, "Disability and Blackness" in *The Disability Studies Reader, 4th Edition* (2013). 311. Print.

[524] Ibid.

[525] Jennifer James. *A Freedom Bought with Blood: African American War Literature from the Civil War to World War II.* Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2007. Print. 13.

[526] Ibid.

[527] Pauline Hopkins, *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South.* Oxford UP, 1988. 110. Print.

[528] Jennifer James. *A Freedom Bought with Blood: African American War Literature from the Civil War to World War II.* Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2007. Print. 233.

[529] Charles Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1911. Print. 1.

[530] "The Future American: What the Race is Likely to Become in the Process of Time," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 18 August 1900, p. 20, cols. 1-2; "The Future American: A Stream of Dark Blood in the Veins of the Southern Whites," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 25 August 1900, p. 15, cols. 1-2; "The Future American: A Complete Race-Amalgamation Likely to Occur," 1 September 1900, p. 24, cols. 3-4.

[531] See Gavin Jones, *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1999), 99. Jones argues that scholars have explored the role of language in nineteenth-century American literature as representative of a character's capacity or incapacity. He posits that the idea of a dominant language threatened by contamination and adulterated by freed slaves informs the racial aspects of black and white interaction. More directly related to my claim is Frederick Douglass's example of being asked repeatedly to change his speech to better mimic that of slaves. Many interlocutors of Douglass refused to believe that he was formerly a slave because he sounded too intelligent. See Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1892; Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008), 124.

[532] See Michael Elliott, *The Culture Concept: Writing and Difference in the Age of Realism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2002), 63. See also Henry B. Wonham, *Playing the Races* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), especially chapters 2 and 5.

[533] Albion Tourgée, *Bricks Without Straw*, ed. Carolyn Karcher (1880; Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2009), 115.

[534] Ian Haney López, "The Social Construction of Race" in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge,* ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2007), 169.

[535] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1997), 6.

[536] See images in the introduction and chapters 6 and 8 in Josiah Nott and George R. Gliddon, *Types of Mankind: or, Ethnological Researches . . .* (Philadelphia: Lippencott, Grambo & Co.), 1855.

[537] See Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. *Staring: How We Look* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 9 and 13.

[538] Samuels, *Fantasies of Identification*, 12.

[539] Ibid., 12.

[540] Ibid., 23.

[541] Albion Tourgee, *Figs and Thistles* (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1879), 274.

[542] Albion Tourgee to Emma Tourgee, April 27, 1862, #276, Albion Winegar Tourgee Papers.

[543] Albion Tourgee to Emma Tourgee, Jan. 18, 1862, #359, Albion Winegar Tourgee Papers.

[544] Albion Tourgee to Emma Tourgee, May 27, 1862, #357, Albion Winegar Tourgee Papers.

[545] Albion Tourgee to Emma Tourgee, May 14, 1862, #399, Albion Winegar Tourgee Papers.

[546] See Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1962), 529-537.

[547] Albion Tourgee to Emma Tourgee, Oct. 17, 1861, #328, Albion Winegar Tourgee Papers. Albion Tourgee to Emma Tourgee, May 14, 1862, # 399, Albion Winegar Tourgee Papers.

[548] Albion Tourgee to Emma Tourgee, Oct. 17, 1861, #328, Albion Winegar Tourgee Papers.

[549] Albion Tourgee Papers #1249 *"Emancipation—Considered as an historical event."*

[550] Albion Tourgee Papers #577, Daily Pocket Remembrancer for 1863, 7, 22, and 23 June.

[551] Mussey, qtd. in Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War lliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 38-39.

[552] Albion Tourgee to Emma Tourgee, Apr. 27, 1861, #276, Albion Winegar Tourgee Papers.

[553] Dr. Samuel Cartwright, "Dr. Cartwright on the Caucasians and the Africans," *DeBow's Review* 25 (July 1858): 47.

[554] Ibid.

[555] Jefferson Davis, *The Papers of Jefferson Davis: January-September 1863* Ed. Lynda Lasswell Crist. (1863; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 2003), 153.

[556] Margaret Humphreys, *Intensely Human: The Health of the Black Soldier in the American Civil War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2008). See especially chapter three, "Biology and Destiny."

[557] Ibid.

[558] Humphreys's *Intensely Human* offers the best collection of these claims, but see also Robert Blakely and Judith M. Harringron, eds., *Bones in the Basement: Postmortem Racism in Nineteenth Century Medical Training* (Washington, D.C.:

Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); and Anonymous Editorial, "Endurance of Black Soldiers," *Weekly Afro-Anglican*, 5 September 1863, I.

[559] Tourgee Diary, Saturday, Oct. 24, 1863, #577, Albion Tourgee Papers.

[560] Albion Tourgee Papers #577, 24 Oct. 1863.

[561] See Mark Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 153., who makes reference to the connection between Eliab and Elias Hill.

[562] See *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (1852; New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 246.

[563] In *Waiting for the Verdict* Davis represents Broderip as undersized, sickly, and effeminate, but also "brutal" in his temper. See Davis *Waiting for the Verdict,* ed. Donald Dingledine (Albany: North Carolina Univ. Press, 1995), 135-37, 140, 144-45.

[564] See *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (1852; New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 124-5.

[565] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845; New York: Penguin, 1986), 99.

[566] Charles W. Chesnutt, "The Conjurer's Revenge," in *Chesnutt: Stories, Novels, and Essays*, ed. Werner Sollors (Washington, D.C.: The Library of America, 2002), 47.

[567] Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade,* ed. Hershel Parker and Mark Niemeyer (1857; New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 18.

[568] Martin R. Delany, *Blake or the Huts of America* (1859; Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 74.

[569] See Ian Haney López, "The Social Construction of Race," 169; and Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," in *Critical Race Theory: Key Writings that Formed the Movement,* ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Pellar, and Kendall Thomas (New York: The New Press, 1995), 280.

[570] Lennard Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (New York: Verso, 1995), 22; Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. *Extraordinary Bodies,* 20.

[571] See Ronald Takaki, *A Pro-Slavery Crusade: The Agitation to Reopen the African Slave Trade* (New York: Free Press, 1971).

[572] See Douglas Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in *The Disability Studies Reader, Fourth Edition*, ed. Lennard Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013) for a clear synopsis of the denial of immigrants access to American soil due to disability; and Benjamin Reiss, *Theaters of Madness: Insane Asylums and Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2008) for an excellent exploration of the connection between the rights of citizenship and ablebodiedness/ ablemindedness in nineteenth-century America.

[573] See Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's explanation of the compensation versus the accommodation model of disability in *Extraordinary Bodies*, 49-51.

[574] See Hartman *Scenes of Subjection,*132.

[575] See James M. Martinez, *Carpetbagger, Cavalry, and the Ku Klux Klan: Exposing the Invisible Empire During Reconstruction* (New York: Rowman, 2007), 77.

[576] Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1959); and Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (New York: Vintage, 1976).

[577] Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2010), 28.

[578] Samuel Cartwright, "Negro Subserviency," *Debow Review* 25 (1858): 47.

[579] Ibid.

[580] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 132.

[581] Jim Downs, "The Continuation of Slavery: The Experience of Disabled Slaves During Emancipation," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2008): 7.

[582] See Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life,* 99; Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick, or The Whale* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1988), 465; and Delany, *Blake,* 209-10; and Fanny Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation, 1838-1839* (1838; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009), 298.

[583] The term "dual subject position" is a useful one because this essay explores the similarities between constructions of both race and disability.

[584] I draw this term from Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary*, 70. See also David Hevey, *The Creatures Time Forgot: Photography and Disability Imagery* (London: Routledge, 1992), 53.

[585] Olsen Otto, H, *Carbetbagger's Crusade: The Life of Albion Tourgée* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1965), 79.

[586] Olsen, Otto. H, *The Negro Question: From Slavery to Caste, 1863-1910.* (New York: Pitman Publishing Corporation, 1971), 183.

[587] McElrath, Joseph R., Jr., Robert C. Leitz, III, and Jesse S. Crisler, eds. *Charles W. Chesnutt Essays and Speeches.* Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1999. 69. Print.

[588] Hopkins, Pauline Elizabeth. *Contending Forces.* Boston: The Colored-Co-Operative Publishing Co., 1900. 110. Print.

[589] Davenport, Charles. *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics.* New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1911. 1. Print.