The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

STATES OF INSENSIBILITY: THE UNCOMMON SENSE OF PERCEPTUAL DISORDERS IN ANTEBELLUM LITERATURE AND MEDICINE

A Dissertation in

English

by

Eric Vallee

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2017

The dissertation of Eric Vallee was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Christopher Castiglia
Liberal Arts Research Professor of English and Women's,
Gender, and Sexuality Studies
Dissertation Adviser
Committee Chair

Carla J. Mulford
Professor of English

Hester Blum
Associate Professor of English

Jonathan Eburne
Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and English

Debra Hawhee
Professor of English and of Communication Arts and Sciences
Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of English

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

States of Insensibility examines treatments of sensory disorders from the late 1840s to the early 1860s by writers working both in medicine and fiction. Classified within several pathologies including dissociation, insensibility, and fascination, sensory disorders constituted the delusional failure to register experience recognized by others as real. Because these pathologies were understood as both epistemic and moral failures, treatment methods and representational strategies held particular significance for mid-nineteenth century approaches to embodiment and empiricism. Pathologies of the senses presented a critical challenge to the social work of sensibility, undercutting its egalitarian aims and calling attention to forms of subjugation according to race, gender, class, and disability.

Originating in eighteenth-century Scottish Common Sense philosophy, sensibility signified both a physiological principle and moral philosophy that channeled individual sensitivities to the external environment toward non-hierarchical social attachments. As it was leveraged in medical discourse of mental health and social reform during the mid-nineteenth century, however, sensibility was both proscriptive and prescriptive, inscribing boundaries for social participation not only through sympathetic attachment but according to perceptive capacity. Whose subjective experience counted as real depended upon the social and cultural politics of the time, particularly as they were indexed by normative hierarchies of embodiment. The inscription of insensibility thus represented a more fundamental disavowal of the experience of subjugated populations, not only denying their participation within communal fellow-feeling, but disclaiming the factuality of their experience.

While sensibility regulated social participation according to the perceived sensory capacities of different individuals, my argument is that sensory disorders did not function solely as negations of individual experience, but were treated by authors and medical practitioners including Nathaniel Hawthorne, Martin R. Delany, and Oliver Wendell Holmes as productive sources of what I term "uncommon sense." As I define it, "uncommon sense" signifies both a variety of sensory capacities that exceed or disrupt the normative function of sensibility as well as endeavors by authors and physicians to treat sensory disorders as alternative foundations for resituating approaches to the socially constructed environment. In focusing on mid-nineteenth century treatments of sensory disorders, *States of Insensibility* builds upon recent work recovering the complexity of antebellum materialist approaches to embodied cognition, a distributive model of agency circulated throughout the material connections among individuals and their historically situated environments. Insensibility offered a framework for negotiating how and why the experience of those excluded from the bonds of sensibility *mattered*. Hawthorne's critical engagement with the proprietary gender politics of associationism, Delany's telegraphic mode of racial sensibility, and Holmes's relational approach to adaptation and disability each sought to resituate the material conditions understood as disqualifying populations from political participation as sources for gathering together alternative representational practices and communal configurations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not be possible without the insightful and generous support of an engaging community of mentors and colleagues. First, I would like to express my profound gratitude to my advisor, Christopher Castiglia, who shaped my thinking in innumerable ways over the course of my graduate work at Penn State. His support has been both intellectually constructive and personally beneficial and this project would not exist without his probing questions, carefully written feedback, and dedication to illuminating the through-lines of my arguments. I am also deeply indebted to the superlative guidance of my committee – Carla Mulford, Hester Blum, and Jonathan Eburne – whose insight and feedback were foundational to my project. Carla Mulford consistently and generously dedicated her time to help in cultivating my approach to writing as well as indicating places for further development beyond the dissertation. Hester Blum's feedback was formative in refining the focus and defining the principle subject of my project. Jonathan Eburne challenged and encouraged me to be precise in my terms and to sustain a methodological focus oriented around the texts themselves. I'd also like to thank faculty members outside of my committee whose modeling of scholarship and teaching I deeply value including Sean Goudie, Shirley Moody-Turner, John Marsh, and James L. W. West III. More broadly, I am indebted to the support of the Pennsylvania State University English Department, which has provided financial support through the Distinguished Graduate Fellowship and for my research and conference travels.

I am also grateful to be a part of such an active and engaging community of graduate students, whose feedback and friendships have greatly benefited my critical work and sustained my morale. My life and work has been changed for the better by the collegiality of Erica Stevens, Colin Hogan, Nate Redman, Sarah Salter, Tyler Roeger, Robert Volpicelli, Matt Weber, Michelle Huang, and Ryan Marks. I would also like to thank my wonderfully supportive family. Susan Birch has been an inexpressibly loving and supportive presence in my life, always there to offer a sympathetic ear and words of advice. John Vallee has been a model of responsibility for me, even going so far as to become a member of C19 despite working in the field of medicine when I was graciously accepted to present at the 2016 conference. Jody Downes has been so considerate and always eager to unpack how each member of my family is adjusting to our respective stages of life. I am proud of and grateful for Jordan and Sydney Vallee, who have consistently amazed me with their sophisticated understanding of the world, quick wit, and persistence. Finally, I am incredibly grateful to Juliette Hawkins, who has been the absolute most loving, considerate, thoughtful, and engaging partner during my time at graduate school. I owe what is best in me to her.

Introduction

In *The Difficulties of Medical Science*, his 1841 inaugural lecture for the Institutes of Medicine and Materia Medica at Pennsylvania Medical College, Robert Montgomery Bird, having already left the medical profession to pursue a career in literature, examines "an idea more likely than any other to weaken the hold of Medicine on men's respect," namely, that "'Medicine is an *imperfect* science.'"[1] For Bird, what renders medicine an imperfect science is the profound entanglement of both doctors and patients within the limited perspective of sensory experience. While, as Bird observes, "Medicine is a science of experience," strict adherence to sensory experience is insufficient to the task of producing medical knowledge.[2] "The mere *physical* examination of [man's] frame," Bird writes, "can be carried only to a certain point."[3] In particular, the tools of scientific positivism – "mere *physical* examination" – fail, according to Bird, because the operations of physiological disorders are distributed throughout a complex network of "interior agencies, moral and physical," that exceed the comprehension of "our senses."[4]

According to Bird, medicine diverges from the physical sciences in disallowing the verification of its principles through collective appeals to common sense. Whereas "any new fact [discovered] in physics, is capable of direct and immediate verification by the whole world," in medicine, Bird writes, there is "no window of Momus to give us vistas of the *living* pathology."[5] Rather than attempting to counter this imperfection within medicine by appealing to objectivity, however, Bird positions this hermeneutic impasse as a productive source of insight, noting, "And yet, in such mysteries may be said to lie the foundations of Medical Philosophy."[6] In order for medical research to be effective, Bird emphasizes the critical importance of moving beyond the dictates of sensibility, exploring the "*million* agencies… mystic, – yet mighty engines, hidden

from common eyes, and seen, by those of philosophy, only as through a glass, *darkly*, – whereby the body works out its own wondrous revolutions, which it is so often our error to refer to the operation of our puny drugs."[7]

What makes Bird's discussion of medicine particularly striking is that the movement beyond common sense that signifies the potential of medical science – tracing the "wondrous revolutions… hidden from common eyes" of the body's "thousand interior agencies" – also represents for Bird the promise of fiction.[8] In his novel published five years prior to the inaugural lecture, *Sheppard Lee*, Bird incorporated the concerns and possibilities posed by the "imperfect science" of medicine within a fictional world, examining the intersections of sensory disorders with the gender, race, and class politics of the time. The novel traces the misadventures of the eponymous Lee as his spirit, through a process of metempsychosis, inhabits the bodies of a wide variety of identity categories. However, when Lee is returned, at last, to his own body, his transformations are revealed to be "hallucinations of mind" produced through chance encounters with print accounts of the various character types Lee imaginatively inhabits.[9] By tracing the origin of Lee's transformations to the misidentification with characters appearing in print, Bird posits a form of hypochondriac reading that extends to the novel itself. In *Sheppard Lee*, Bird takes the function of hypochondria and places it as the primary mechanism for the production of narrative. In this way, Bird structures the novel as a self-consciously fictional "Window of Momus" that orients plot according to the tracing of a "*living* pathology" through its various mutations and developments.

By placing a sensory disorder as the mechanism for producing narrative and characterological insight, *Sheppard Lee* enacts what I term "uncommon sense." The phrase "uncommon sense" is taken from the 1861 novel, *Elsie Venner,* by fellow author and physician,

Oliver Wendell Holmes. Holmes defines "uncommon sense, or the fine apprehension of privileged intelligences" as the capacity of "[men] of science" to explore "the verge of the demonstrable facts of physics and physiology… and in so doing find [themselves] behind the scenes which make up for the gazing world the show which is called Nature."[10] For Holmes, "uncommon sense" provides both an important critique of the limitations of sensibility and gestures towards a phenomenology of the production of medical knowledge. As a critique of sensibility, "uncommon sense" challenges the paradoxical universal individualism that characterizes common sense. Robert Montgomery Bird describes this stance of universal individualism as that of "some men… who endeavor, very absurdly, to restrict the objects of belief to those that admit of personal cognizance."[11] For both Holmes and Bird, common sense represents the naïve presumption that the world an individual perceives through the senses constitutes the external reality universally accessible to all. Holmes presents "uncommon sense" as a practice of defamiliarizing these assumptions regarding the human capacity of perception. As a phenomenology of the production of medical knowledge, uncommon sense designates an approach to sensory disorders that treats them not as the negation of experience but as potential sources of knowledge. In both *Elsie Venner* and *Sheppard Lee*, this approach involves experiments in nonrealist literary forms that organize narrative and experience according to alternative sensory capacities.

Uncommon Sense and Insensibility

States of Insensibility examines treatments of sensory disorders by writers working both in medicine and fiction. Classified within several pathologies including dissociation, insensibility, and fascination, sensory disorders constituted the delusional failure to register experience

recognized by others as real. Because these pathologies were understood as both epistemic and moral failures, treatment methods and representational strategies held particular significance for mid-nineteenth century approaches to embodiment and empiricism. Pathologies of the senses presented a critical challenge to the social work of sensibility, undercutting its egalitarian aims and calling attention to forms of cognitive subjugation according to race, gender, class, and disability. Further, forms of insensibility offered a significant discourse for approaching the workings of the body beyond scientific positivism.

Originating in eighteenth-century Scottish Common Sense philosophy, sensibility operated as what Sarah Knott terms a "distinctive *mode of self*," that channeled individual sensitivities to the external environment towards non-hierarchical social formations and communal identities.[12] Serving at once as a physiological principle and moral philosophy, sensibility retained and further developed its Lockean signification as acuteness of perception while also serving as the basis for communal fellow-feeling. Bodily and mental sensitivity to external impressions rendered subjectivity as an outward facing, social enterprise. This porousness of human subjectivity, what Justine S. Murison terms the "'open' body" of the citizenry, served as a key mechanism through which somatic impressions were translated into political participation and cultural production.[13] For many working in medicine and social reform, sensibility served as a key physiological principle mobilized in the interest of cultivating patriotic fellow-feeling and propelling the work of building institutions. Indeed, sensibility served as the foundation for the discipline of psychology and mental health dominant in the U.S. during the early to mid-nineteenth century.[14]

As it was leveraged in medical discourse of mental health and social reform during the mid-nineteenth century, however, sensibility was both proscriptive and prescriptive. Sensibility

participated in a process that Emily Ogden describes as "regulating [the] *senses*: in instructing [members of the early Republic] as to what sort of nervous constitution made one a reliable observer."[15] In its regulative function, sensibility demarcated boundaries for social participation not only through sympathetic attachment but according to perceptive capacity. Whose subjective experience counted as real depended upon the social and cultural politics of the time, particularly as they were indexed by race, gender, class, and disability. Insensibility thus represented a more fundamental disavowal of the experience of subjugated populations, not only denying their participation within communal fellow-feeling, but disclaiming the factuality of their experience. In so doing, the inscription of insensibility extended beyond the obstruction of democratic rights to the preclusion of experiential matters.

While sensibility regulated social participation according to the perceived sensory capacity of different individuals, my argument is that sensory disorders did not function solely as negations of individual experience, but were treated by authors and medical practitioners as constitutive sources of knowledge. Because sensory disorders marked the boundaries of sensibility, they provided an opportunity for physicians and authors to reevaluate the physiological basis and social impact of perception. I argue that writers working in medicine and literature approached sensory disorders as forms of "uncommon sense." As I define it, "uncommon sense" has two related meanings. First, I use "uncommon sense" to describe a variety of sensory capacities that exceed or disrupt the normative function of sensibility.[16] Second, "uncommon sense" describes endeavors by authors and physicians to treat sensory disorders not merely as pathological erasures of experience, but as generative sources for resituating approaches to the socially constructed environment.

In positioning sensory disorders as alternative sources of insight into the socially constructed environment, uncommon sense holds particular significance for the relationship between medicine and literature. By focusing explicitly on writers working in medicine and literature, I argue that imaginative fiction was not solely reflective of contemporary medical discourse. Instead, fiction served as a supplemental apparatus for experimenting with the principles of medical thought. The Hawthornian Romance, Martin R. Delany's visionary reorientation of the slave narrative, and Oliver Wendell Holmes's "medicated novels" all tested, reevaluated and provided alternative models to physiological discourse that contended with the cultural politics of the moment.[17] These experiments in nonrealist literary modes were not rejections of the demands of scientific positivism. Instead, they served as frameworks for tracing the development and treatment of sensory disorders as they give shape to the literary worlds surrounding them.

Antebellum Neurology and Vital Materiality

Recent scholarly work on cognition and literature, what is sometimes termed the "neuroscientific turn," has worked towards resituating sensibility within contemporary theories of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century neurology.[18] As Sarah Knott, Paul Gilmore, and Justine S. Murison have argued, focusing on historical and literary treatments of pre-Freudian neurology serves to challenge the teleological progress of scientific understandings of consciousness from naïve materialism to the sophistication of modern psychology. Rather than affirming the naïve materialism of antebellum physiology, a focus on neurology recovers the complexity and historical specificity with which subjective experience was conceptualized during this period. Physiological theories regarding blood circulation and neurology conceived a human body in

constant, dynamic interaction with the natural and social world.[19] In *States of Insensibility*, I examine three critical physiological principles that unite in presenting subjective embodiment as a form of circulation between individuals and their social environment; associationist psychology, the nervous system, and the proto-evolutionary principle of compensation. Though differing in their points of origin and applications, these three principles, as I discuss further below, coalesce in distributing individual and social agency throughout the circuited, material connections among individuals and the larger historical changes brought about by global capitalism, the anonymity of the market, and the unequal conditions of embodiment surrounding gender, race and disability.[20]

States of Insensibility builds upon this work by situating antebellum neurology within what Jane Bennett terms "vital materiality," the capacity of human and non-human matter to resist the intentions of humans and function as "quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own."[21] In *Reassembling the Social*, Bruno Latour has similarly asserted the importance of conceiving social ties beyond human agency. For Latour, non-humans "have to be actors… and not simply the hapless bearers of symbolic projection."[22] Agency and cognitive ability, then, far from being the self-contained qualities of the individual or group, are always a function of an assemblage of mediators located throughout the external environment. Bennett and Latour's work challenges the concept of agency as a self-determined function of human will, gesturing towards "a more *distributive* agency" of non-mechanistic materialism produced when objects disrupt, arrest attention, and reconfigure within new assemblages.[23]

I argue that Bennett and Latour's approach to the interactions between human and non-human "actants" holds particular significance for the materiality of antebellum approaches to

sensibility. The discourse of sensibility bridged the spiritual and the material, positing a nervous physiology that distributed volition and sensation throughout the body while also emphasizing the dynamic materiality of the mind. Robert Montgomery Bird playfully reflects on the convergence of spirits and bodies inherent in the discourse of sensibility in *Sheppard Lee* when he writes, "ordinary spirits lie in their bodies like water in sponges, diffused through every part, affected by the part's affections, changed with its changes, and so intimately united with the fleshly matrix, that the mere cutting off of a leg, as I believe, will, in some cases, leave the spirit limping for life."[24] In the passage, Bird deconstructs and recomposes human subjectivity through a series of inversions in which the properties of spirits and bodies mutually inflect one another. Whereas spirits take on the malleability of inert matter – acting as "water in sponges" – the material properties of embodiment distributed throughout the body's "fleshly matrix" act as quasi-agents animating and rearticulating spirit such that physical and spiritual alterations, figured here as an amputation, become simultaneous with one another.[25]

In *The Difficulties of Medical Science*, Bird positions this distributive bodily agency as a primary object of medical research, suggesting that vital materiality was central both to literary and scientific examinations of physiological disorders. Noting the intricate "complication of mechanism" within the "human economy," Bird writes, "A thousand – a *million* agencies unite to make the little universe or life; and no human wit… can compute the combinations of disease to which a single interruption in a single organ may give rise."[26] For Bird, medical research depends for its efficacy upon an appreciation of the abundantly distributive agency of embodiment – the "*million* agencies [that] unite to make the little universe of life" – that the process of diagnosis gestures toward without ever fully comprehending. The vital materialism of nineteenth-century physiology provided Bird along with many other writers and physicians with

an avenue to investigate the multiple human and non-human forces that animate subjective experience.

More broadly, *States of Insensibility* argues that the project of sensibility was not restricted to affect, but instead involved critical revaluations of the relationship between physiology and empiricism. As Bird's comparison of embodied cognition and physical disability suggests, these crossings were particularly salient to understandings of sensory disorders. Sensory disorders did not constitute the inverse of the vital materialism of antebellum physiology but rather the intensification of its structuring logic. Sensibility depended upon the intimate connections between the mind and body that sensory disorders enacted in exaggerated forms. Fictional and medical treatments of sensory disorders thus involved experimenting with, testing, and reevaluating the capacities and limitations of sensibility.[27] For the physicians and authors examined here, treating sensory disorders involved not only the understanding of pathological forms of ordering experience, but the reflection on the particular dispositions of sensibility necessary for producing medical knowledge.

A History of Contestation: Medical Practices in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

The historical focus of *State of Insensibility* is concentrated within a period extending from the late 1840s to the early 1860s. This period was significant for the fervency and frequency of contention within the medical field, the American School of ethnology, and the cultural understanding of disability. During these decades, the medical field in the United States struggled with both internal contestation among "regular" medical professionals and external competition with popular healers. Internally, medical professionals confronted the fragmentation of educational and licensing requirements. Despite the proliferation of medical schools, there

was little consensus regarding which of the competing systems of anatomy and treatment were most accurate or effective. The requirements for formal education in medicine were inconsistent and often outright ignored. In order to accommodate these inconsistencies, the threshold for membership to professional medical communities was repeatedly lowered and a lack of membership was not necessarily an obstacle to conducting medical practice. State requirements for licensure decreased dramatically during the Jacksonian period and the few regulations in place often went unenforced or directly opposed by popular suspicion of professionalization.[28]

In relation to the larger market, medical practitioners faced significant opposition from the popular investment in the egalitarian principle of common sense, which propelled a wide variety of competition. Among these competing forces were the widespread suspicion of rarified medical discourse, domestic and rural medicine, botanic systems for regulating hygiene, and an amalgam of various "irregular" practitioners. In cities and rural areas alike, a collection of popular healers marketed cures, provided treatments for a variety of ailments, and cultivated opposing understandings of physiological functions. Medicine in the antebellum United States was thus neither uniform nor progressing with any clear assurance of consolidation. Instead, medicine was thoroughly entangled with often opposing and at times directly contradictory influences of local and regional politics, popular championing of egalitarian common sense, and the vicissitudes of the market.[29]

The contentions of the medical discipline in the mid-nineteenth century were further complicated by antebellum racial politics, particularly slavery, as well as the popular science of the "American School" of ethnology. Antebellum medical science was thoroughly implicated in the institution of slavery, which supported medical practice and research, providing physicians financial compensation as well as an exploitative system for conducting cruel experimentation on

enslaved black Americans.[30] These exploitative practices were, in turn, collected and systematized within the regional science of "Negro Medicine," which directly contested the systems of medicine practiced in the North through debates in medical journals, protests, and mass-withdrawals from northern medical schools.[31] In his 1850 article, "The Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," Samuel A. Cartwright, a Louisiana physician who published prolifically on black physiology while treating slaves under the patronage of slave owners, argued that the "well known and established… physiological differences separating the negro from the white man" were so "striking" that "the same medical treatment which would benefit or cure a white man, would often injure or kill a negro."[32]

More broadly, the 1840s and 1850s marked a particularly prolific period in the "American School" of ethnology. Samuel George Morton's *Crania Aegyptiaca*, published in 1844 and popular in both the U.S. and Europe, attempted to systematize material distinctions in cognitive capacities between the "Caucasian" and "Negro" races according to the internal measurements of a vast collection of skulls looted from Egyptian monuments.[33] In 1854, Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon built upon Morton's work in their extensive and prominent treatise, *Types of Mankind*, which was republished in ten editions through 1870.[34] In *Types of Mankind*, Nott and Gliddon presented what they understood to be definitive proof of polygenesis, the doctrine of geographically and historically distinct human origins that served as the basis for the theory that the races constituted separate species.[35] At the same time, however, as I discuss in Chapter 2, prominent African American writers and abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, James McCune Smith and Martin Delany, challenged both the conclusions and the principles of the American School, marshalling counterevidence through statistics, ethnographic surveys, and historical documents. Redeploying the tools of scientific positivism

against scientific racism, these authors offered competing theories of physiological difference through appeals to the Africanist origins of civilization, the salutary effects of genealogical diversity, and social environmentalism.

These debates concerning biological determinism and hierarchies of comparative physiological development were structured by contemporary developments in medical approaches to disability, which both solidified as a medical category and was mobilized as the basis for intersectional classifications regarding race, gender, and sexuality. In relation to medical approaches to disability, the decades spanning the 1840s to the 1860s were marked by a mixture of anxiety and reactive, disciplinary institutionalization. Medical authority inflected the legal categorization and treatment of disability responding to the Industrial Revolution, in which the restructuring of the conditions of production placed increased pressure on the obligations of employers, the state, and the public writ large to individuals with disabilities. Responding to the increasing number of individuals with physical disabilities resulting from industrial accidents, the landmark Lemuel Shaw decision of 1842 rendered the process of suing for compensation considerably more difficult, effectively barring individuals with disabilities from the nationalist ideal of self-determined individualism.[36]

The categorization and institutionalization of disability was reflected in the national census, which first identified and counted individuals with deafness and blindness in 1830, the "idiotic" and "insane" in 1840, and individuals with physical disabilities in 1850.[37] During the Civil War, there was an exponential increase in individuals with physical disabilities resulting from the unprecedented number of amputations, prompting the U.S. government to select an official prosthetic for wounded soldiers.[38] In sum, as foundational work in disability studies has demonstrated, antebellum medical, legal and cultural representations of disability increasingly

presented the disabled body as a central figure of static, corporeal deficiency.[39] As I discuss in Chapter 3, however, the inscription of disability as deficiency in medical diagnosis was neither uniform nor totalizing. Instead, as demonstrated in the career-long work on disability by Oliver Wendell Holmes, medical discourse additionally sought to reposition disability as what I term a "spectrum" of bodily and cognitive difference that broadens the appreciation of embodied variety and vitality.

The medical field of the mid-nineteenth century was thus shot through with a series of contestations over professionalization, racial and regional politics, and debates regarding the institutional categorization and treatment of disability. In tracing the history of these contestations, I want to underscore two related points. First, during the mid-nineteenth century, the split between the "two cultures" of science and the humanities was far less pronounced. Medical professionals and non-professionals alike debated the function of physiology within the popular cultural imagination. Second, and more importantly, these debates over medical principles in which literature participated held critical significance for the parameters of political and social participation as indexed by the inscription of bodily difference. Though approached through distinct terms, these various inscriptions of bodily and identarian difference including race, enslavement, sectionalism, class, gender, and disability were also mutually formative, particularly as they coalesced around the construction and disputation of medical authority. As I discuss in the following section, in foregrounding points of contestation, *States of Insensibility* demonstrates the intersectionality of representations of sensory disorders in both its disciplinary and reparative function.

Subjection and Resistance: Interdisciplinary Critique on Science and Literature

Although nineteenth-century authors and physicians proved the concept specious, references to C. P. Snow's concept of the "two cultures" has remained remarkably tenacious as a key methodological assumption regarding interdisciplinary work. References to the "two cultures," either explicit or implicit, continue to serve as critical touchstones for scholarly work on science and literature over the past decades.[40] In this body of scholarship, the "two cultures" represents both an obstacle for interdisciplinary work and an implicit challenge to investigate potential points of convergence. These attempts to bridge the great divide have in turn sought to unsettle the fundamental assumptions regarding the privileged boundaries surrounding disciplinary knowledge. In particular, interdisciplinary scholarship has challenged historical approaches that define the scientific developments of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century as the result of an elite, centralized discourse. As the work of Susan Scott Parish, James Delbourgo, and Maurice S. Lee has illustrated, popular representations and applications of scientific principles were not merely the function of the downward spread of privileged, authoritative knowledge. Instead, a wide variety of fringe practitioners, popular healers, and middling citizens redeployed scientific principles for political and social aims specific to their local historical context.[41]

Concentrating on the polycentric qualities of scientific discourse serves to challenge the dominance of "high" scientific principles as well as to uncover significant points of resistance and political agency enacted by individuals who might otherwise remain unrecognized in top-down approaches to the history of science. At the same time, tracing trajectories of influence from popular scientific representations and applications to scientific discourse writ large elucidates the importance of popular culture in actively shaping scientific understanding. However, it is also critical to attend to the suspicions that have rendered belief in the divide

between the “two cultures” so remarkably long-enduring. During the mid-nineteenth century, as previously discussed, scientific accounts of biological and cognitive distinction were leveraged as a justification for forms of subjugation according to gender, race, and disability.[42] To bracket these concerns in the interest of supporting interdisciplinary work risks flattening the uneven power dynamic of scientific principles into a neutral tool rather than a disciplinary mechanism.

At the same time, merely critiquing interdisciplinary work as inherently ethically and politically problematic reaffirms rather than challenges the exclusion of meaningful scientific and political engagement among subjugated populations.[43] My project seeks an alternative to these methodological approaches by placing interdisciplinary skepticism as an object of historical investigation. Designating populations as insensible justified subjugation by discounting their experience as unreal: the result of inferior physiological capacity or the delusional failure of the senses. In response, concerned authors working in literature and medicine investigated the systematic production and surveillance of insensibility. Doing so meant more than demanding inclusion among the sensible. Rather, investigations of the inscription of insensibility according to gender, race, and disability involved reorienting the terms of sensibility, unsettling the privileged boundaries around the category of the human more broadly.

Accordingly, the methodological focus of *States of Insensibility* consists of points of contestation, examining the implications of scientific and medical practices within forms of subjugation as well as the redeployment of these practices in the service of resistance, both representational and pragmatic. Each chapter begins by centering on the historical treatment of a sensory disorder ascribed to a population relegated outside the egalitarian bonds of sensibility. I then turn to the responses of the members of these populations and those working with them who

repositioned these sensory disorders as productive sources of cultural and political insight. Ultimately, I argue that these reparative treatments of sensory disorders served as the basis for alternative modes of collectivity that extended beyond the proscriptive terms of sensibility. In moving from subjection to contention, my argument examines the disciplinary function of insensibility while also exploring the reparative potential of reopening insensibility to alternative epistemological and collective practices.

This focus on contention additionally structures the sequencing of the chapters to follow. Though arranged chronologically, the chapters refrain from a teleology common to histories of medical and scientific thought of increasing consolidation, professionalization, and innovation.[44] Instead, the chapters follow an arc of decentralization, moving from predominant understandings of sensibility and abstract citizenship to a series of contentions that interrogate, unsettle, and pose alternatives to this predominant understanding. To this effect, each chapter takes up a fundamental question posed by the chapter that precedes it. In Chapter 1, "A Mood of Disbelief," I trace the development of dissociation in moral philosophy and medical discourse, exploring Nathaniel Hawthorne's attempts to position dissociation rather than sensibility as the basis for limning a more collective history of social reform. Chapter 2, "Telegraphic Insensibility," examines the materialization of these collective histories of contention that Hawthorne gestures toward yet leaves at the periphery of his literary work. In particular, I explore the writings of Martin R. Delany through the lecture circuits and periodicals in which he worked towards materializing and mobilizing a collective history of racial subjection and resistance across the Black Atlantic. Finally, in Chapter 3, "A Paradise of Twisted Spines," I investigate the relationship between insensibility and disability that hovers over Hawthorne's appeals to the phantom pains of dissociation as well as Delany's resistance to the inscription of racial

insensibility. In particular, I argue that Oliver Wendell Holmes approached disability as a spectrum, resituating the mobilization of disability as a signifier of deficiency to a signifier of bodily variety and vitality. In moving from the predominant understanding of sensibility as the basis for abstract, republican citizenship to forms of resistance posed in relation to cultural and political representations of race and disability, *States of Insensibility* seeks to foreground the intersectionality of sensory disorders, particularly as this intersectionality unsettles and posits alternatives to relations across dispositional and embodied differences.

I begin in Chapter 1, "A Mood of Disbelief," by examining the physiological principle of sensibility as presented by Common Sense psychology. Though originating in the eighteenth century, Common Sense philosophy was pervasive throughout the mid-nineteenth century, constituting the predominant framework for antebellum approaches to psychology.[45] Works by prominent Common Sense philosophers were widely read, appearing in public and private libraries and often assigned as textbooks in antebellum American colleges.[46] The model of social cohesion through sensibility offered in these works was further revitalized through the massively popular discourses of social and mental reform. As such, Chapter 1 provides an entry-point for contextualizing the counter approaches to sensibility presented in relation to race and disability explored in Chapters 2 and 3.

Of particular importance to the function of sensibility within social reform projects was the Common Sense principle of association, signifying the rules governing the relation of ideas according to the principles of contiguity, comparison, and causality. In the social reform movements of the mid-nineteenth century, association was reoriented to comprise the correlation not only of ideas, but individuals. In examining the principles of association and sensibility, however, my focus in the first chapter is not solely the critique or affirmation of what Sarah

Knott refers to as the "sentimental project."[47] Rather, I focus on uncovering forms of individual and social disorder that Common Sense psychology recognized as fundamental to the operation of sensibility despite their disruptive implications. Specifically, I explore the unexamined history of dissociation, the isolation of ideas and individuals in order to explore the conceptual or social structures in which they are situated from an alternative, defamiliarizing perspective. The inverse of association, dissociation was understood as a critical function of intellectual labor and social justice even as it threatened to occasion individual alienation and social dissolution. Dissociation thus defined the structuring framework through which sensibility was channeled, serving at once as a foundation for sympathy and egalitarianism and an unsettling source of contention. A focus on dissociation, in turn, serves to reorient the terms of sensibility within Common Sense psychology by underscoring forms of dissension that extend beyond sensibility's regulatory function in ensuring social consensus.

I then examine the possibilities and limitations of dissociation in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*. Profoundly influenced by the Common Sense school of philosophy, Hawthorne grappled extensively with the entanglements of sensibility and subjection throughout his writings.[48] In *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne repositions dissociation from the periphery to the center of social engagement, exploring the implications of establishing communal formations through collectively sustained dissociations. In particular, Hawthorne explores what he terms the "mood of disbelief" as it circulates among the tenants at Blithedale and shapes the narrative form of the romance. By tracing the circulation of this collective "mood of disbelief," Hawthorne presents the associative principles of Blithedale less as a function of identifiable, utopian principles than a series of mutually maintained grievances, abstractions, and disavowals. Indeed, the oft-critiqued idealism of Blithedale appears in the romance to be

divested of the egalitarian claims of sensibility. Instead, Hawthorne presents a form of idealism of dissociation itself, which becomes a mode of self-fashioning in the relationships among Blithedale's inhabitants as well as the characteristic style of its notorious first-person narrator, Miles Coverdale. As a style or mode of self-fashioning, dissociation shifts in Hawthorne's work from merely signifying a negation of social cohesion to a structure for negotiating relationships across ideological and dispositional differences.

In his handling of dissociation, Hawthorne decouples the link between sensibility and association that was understood as fundamental to the process of social reform. Rather than presenting the process of association as the collective cultivation of a harmonious (if not homogenous) sensibility, Hawthorne conceives of an alternative associative dynamic founded on disorder, denial, and contestation. By effectively replacing sensibility with *in*sensibility, Hawthorne makes two related interventions in the principles of association. First, Hawthorne's appeals to dissociation constitute a determined negation of the coincidence of self and other that serves as the foundation of sensibility, critiquing this coincidence as at best untenable and at worst a proprietary tool for enforcing normative inequalities indexed by gender, heteronormativity, and class. Second, Hawthorne suggests an alternative orientation of association that would serve to open sites of productive disorder. Corresponding with this emphasis on disorder, I argue that *The Blithedale Romance* is most instructive during the moments in which the text diverges from the ostensible purposes dictated by its plot and the utopian project. In these formal displays of dissociation, the collective histories disavowed by the plotting of private desire and the isolation of Blithedale from the competition of the market become unmoored from and displace the anticipated ends of the romance. By enacting at the level of form the dissociation Hawthorne traces among the characters, these moments gesture in

their abstractions, deferrals, and failures toward alternative, heterotopic sites that aggregate histories of conflict and oppositional subject positions in order to sustain rather than reconcile the tensions produced by their cohabitation.

The collective histories that Hawthorne gestures towards in his treatment of insensibility materialize in the subject of Chapter 2, "Telegraphic Sensibility," Martin R. Delany. Delany's work builds upon the relationship between association and insensibility outlined by Hawthorne by indicating the entanglements of insensibility and race. Chapter 2 accordingly begins by examining the racialized politics of insensibility in relation to enslavement in particular and hierarchical categorization of physiology more broadly. Within the racial politics of the new Republic, insensibility held particular political significance for the institution of slavery. Apologies for and arguments against slavery alike targeted insensibility as a critical physiological mechanism through which to understand the effects of slavery on the bodies of slaves and slaveholders. More broadly, the "American School" of ethnology approached the predisposition to insensibility through the comparative anatomy of the nervous system. In addition to the more familiar attempts to establish racial dichotomies of cognition according to comparative measurements of the brain and skull, members of the American School also instituted racial distinctions of sensibility through the observation of and experiments on the nerves. Indeed, within the antebellum field of comparative anatomy, the nervous system was itself a racialized construct. In the American School of ethnology, it was a primary tenet that black physiology was governed by the mechanistic properties of the nerves. Prominent medical authorities working in comparative anatomy attributed to the nervous system the same insensible, perfunctory operations that characterized the subjugating labor of slavery. By reducing black physiology to the deterministic attributes of the nerves, comparative anatomists

justified the subjection of African Americans, both free and enslaved, by inscribing inequality within biological differences.

In response, African American writers like Frederick Douglass and James McCune Smith redeployed the practices of scientific positivism against the racial ideologies of comparative anatomy. In black periodicals on a variety of scientific disciplines, writers challenged the principles of ethnology not only by disproving ethnological claims, but by unsettling the reductive humanism on which comparative anatomy was founded, in which humanity was calculated and arranged within a hierarchy according to the material properties of physiology. More broadly, writers working in the black press moved beyond the boundaries of the race sciences to explore the emancipatory potential of a variety of scientific fields including electric science, technological innovations of the telegraph, and the natural sciences. In order to attend to the emancipatory potential of this redeployment of scientific positivism, I explore a largely unexamined archive of articles on the science of electricity and the telegraph distributed by the black press. In these periodicals, the scientific principles and technological applications of electricity served as a model for what I term "telegraphic sensibility," an intercommunal mode of sensibility operating through the physiological interconnections among the individual nervous system and larger, electrified networks of affiliation.

It is in relation to this vital body of black scientific discourse that I situate the works of Martin Delany. Placing Delany in conversation with this archive serves to recover the context in which his various articles and serialized novel, *Blake*, initially appeared, underscoring less frequented aspects of his work on physiology, ethnography, and the natural sciences. In addition, the survey of black periodicals I offer illustrates that Delany's emancipatory appeals to scientific positivism were not restricted to Delany as an individual, but rather formed a part of a larger

project of establishing intercommunal networks of resistance. Though more commonly known today as a political advocate for racial uplift, Delany was recognized in the periodicals, lecture circuits, and conventions in which he participated as a trained physician, ethnographer, and frequent contributor to the natural sciences. Throughout his scientific and literary work, Delany unsettled the physiological determinism exhibited by the race sciences by positing a racial politics structured by what Jane Bennett terms "vital materiality," a distributive model of agency operating through the mutually inflected responsiveness of human and non-human matter.[49] Delany anticipates Bennet's "vital materiality" by racializing its terms, positioning the distributive agency of vital matter against the reductive humanism of comparative anatomy, which at once appealed to the category of the human as the culmination of historical progress and reduced the human to a mere function of biological determinism. In addition to its theoretical significance in unsettling the conscription of black subjectivity within the boundaries of insensibility, distributive agency served for Delany as a pragmatic tool for resistance. Through his work in black periodicals, ethnographic surveys, lecture circuits, and *Blake*, Delany appealed to the infrastructures connecting what Paul Gilroy terms the "Black Atlantic" as vital sources for distributing and actuating projects of resistance. While embedded in the historical conditions of racial embodiment, Delany's telegraphic approach to sensibility sought a distributive model of racial collectivity that extended beyond essentializing racial dichotomies.

The relegation of black subjectivity to insensibility, in addition to its significance regarding the politics and representation of race, also importantly depended upon antebellum understanding of disability. Indeed, the medical and cultural discourses surrounding sensory disorders that structure *States of Insensibility* as a whole were shot through with implicit assumptions of both normative embodiment and constructions of disability. In particular,

insensibility served as what David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder term in their formative work in disability studies, "the master trope of human disqualification," the conscription of physical (and, I would add, cognitive) variety to forms of deviance arranged across hierarchies of embodiment.[50] As Mitchell and Snyder demonstrate, disability was historically mobilized as a "dual negation" attributed to "all 'deviant biologies," supporting oppressive systems surrounding race, gender, sexuality and class while simultaneously serving as "the material marker of inferiority itself."[51] In Chapter 3, "'A Paradise of Twisted Spines,'" I examine the treatment of disability in the works of Oliver Wendell Holmes in order both to unpack the implicit assumptions informing the relationship between insensibility and disability in Chapters 1 and 2 and to explore how these assumptions might be reoriented in ways that challenge appeals to disability as a static marker of bodily and cognitive deviation.

Holmes's extensive work on disability, I argue, offers a critical approach to bodily variety and human development that extends the medical and cultural significance of disability beyond the inscription of inferiority. In this way, Holmes's treatment of disability builds upon the distributive model of agency presented by Hawthorne and Delany. Specifically, Holmes posited a model of disability through what he terms the "principle of compensation," in which the vital capacities of organic and individual development adapt to ostensible debilities by cultivating compensatory augmentations in corresponding bodily capacities. In presenting disability as an adaptive process rather than a fixed state, the principle of compensation challenges the reductive hierarchies of wholeness and deficiency that, as Rosemarie Garland Thomson has demonstrated, were institutionalized within mid-nineteenth century medical, legal, and cultural discourse and codified according to nationalist ideals of self-determination.[52] In focusing on Holmes in particular, typically understood in scholarship as a foundational figure of

the objectifying medical gaze that enforced the hierarchies of embodiment discussed by Thomson, I argue that the imposition of medical diagnosis was neither uniform nor totalizing in the inscription of disability as deficiency. Rather, Holmes's approach to disability as a form of vital materiality, similar to Delany's racialized politics of distributive agency, positioned the adaptive capacities of the body as a valuable resource for reorienting sensibility around affectively charged relations across difference.

In tracing the development of Holmes's treatment of disability from the framework of the individual, as exhibited in the principle of compensation, to the relational, I begin by examining Holmes's work on prosthesis. For Holmes, prostheses extend and intensify the principle of compensation by redistributing the adaptive capacities of the individual through the incorporation of non-self matter, unsettling the normative privileging of self-enclosed forms of embodiment. Instead, prostheses served for Holmes as a model of hybridity, producing crossings not only between individuals and their prosthetic devices, but between individuals with and without disabilities. Through prostheses, Holmes posited a relational model of disability in which bodily variation is not treated as an individual difference to be compensated for or rejected. Rather, Holmes appeals to disability and prostheses as productive sources of vitality to be incorporated, producing hybridized reconfigurations of sensibility that Holmes presents as central to the progress of the republican project. Building upon Mitchell and Snyder's argument that disability serves as "the master trope of human disqualification," I argue that Holmes's approach positions disability as a "spectrum" that reopens the pivotal signification of disability to include a range of embodied sensibilities that broaden rather than restrict the appreciation of physical and cognitive variety.

Notes

[1] Robert Montgomery Bird, *The Difficulties of Medical Science: An Inaugural Lecture, Introductory to a Course of Lectures* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Medical College, 1841), 6.

[2] Ibid., 11.

[3] Ibid., 8.

[4] Ibid., 9, 18. Importantly, Bird identifies the limitations not only of "*physical* examination" but of a wide variety of practices of scientific positivism, including clinical trials, autopsies, and microscopic observations.

[5] Ibid., 15-16.

[6] Ibid., 15.

[7] Ibid., 16, 17-18.

[8] This turn from medicine to literature that I trace here is mirrored in the evolution of Bird's career. Though enthralled by the abstract science of medicine, Bird expressed dissatisfaction with the daily demands of conducting a medical practice. After practicing medicine for less than a year, Bird left the field to pursue a career in literature. Christopher Looby, introduction to *Sheppard Lee*, xxii-xxiii. Though Bird left his medical practice to pursue a career in literature, he briefly returned to the medical profession as an instructor for the short-lived Institutes of Medicine and Materia Medica at Pennsylvania Medical College.

[9] Bird, *Sheppard Lee: Written by Himself* (New York: New York Review Books Classics, 2008), 419.

[10] Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny* (New York: New American Library, 1961), 294. Notably, Holmes's description of "uncommon sense" echoes Bird's description of the "philosophic practitioner; who (while he must concede the strong *presumption*, created by so many facts,) knows… there is something – there are a great many somethings" beyond seeming facts "that require to be investigated… And this inquiry leads him at once into the consideration of the thousand interior agencies, moral and physical, and mystic, - yet mighty engines, hidden from common eyes, and seen, by those of philosophy, only as through a glass, *darkly*, - whereby the body works out its own wondrous revolutions, which it is so often our error to refer to the operation of our puny drugs." Bird, *The Difficulties of Medical Science*, 17-18.

[11] Bird, *Sheppard Lee*, 8.

[12] Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) 5.

[13] Justine S. Murison, *The Politics of Anxiety in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3.

[14] Knott, 1-22; Joseph Alkana, *The Social Self: Hawthorne, Howells, William James, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 30-40; Lori Merish, *Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity Culture, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 175-87; Taylor Stoehr, *Hawthorne's Mad Scientists: Psuedoscience and Social Science in Nineteenth-Century Life and Letters* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1978), 137-161.

[15] Emily Ogden, "*Edgar Huntly* and the Regulation of the Senses." *American Literature* 85, no. 3 (2013): 425. Knott also observes that "Sensibility was at once normative and prescriptive." Knott, 5.

[16] By describing these sensory capacities as "uncommon sense," my aim is to underscore their significance not only as pathologies but as alternative configurations of the sensorium. In this way "uncommon sense" operates in a way analogous to Rosemarie Garland Thomson's use of "extraordinary bodies," which emphasizes the social construction of disability against normative forms of embodiment. Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 5.

[17] Holmes, *Elsie Venner*, xii.

[18] Knott, 1-20. Murison, 4-7. Sari Altschuler, "From Blood Vessels to Global Networks of Exchange." *Journal of the Early Republic* 32, no. 2 (2012): 223-230. Elizabeth Barnes, *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 1-18. Ogden, 419-428. The term "neuroscientific turn," is specifically referenced in Benjamin Reiss, "Review of Justine S. Murison, *The Politics of Anxiety in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*," *Journal of American Studies*, 46 (2012): 1100.

[19] Knott, 9, Altschuler, 209-216.

[20] Knott, 5-9; Murison, 4-7; Paul Gilmore, *Aesthetic Materialism: Electricity and American Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1-17.

[21] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), viii.

[22] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 10. Peter Coviello has made a similar argument in reference to the earliness of sexuality during the antebellum period. Coviello argues that affective relations were not restricted to fellow human beings, but in fact proliferated through emotionally charged connections with inanimate, non-human objects. Relationships with objects, Coviello notes, often entailed the "unpredictable rerouting of affect" through the "multifaceted ardor for the world of things." Peter Coviello, *Tomorrow's Parties: Sex and the Untimely in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: NYU University Press, 2013), 87-88.

[23] Bennett, ix.

[24] Bird, *Sheppard Lee*, 141.

[25] For a similar reading of this passage, see Murison, 29. Where my reading of *Sheppard Lee* differs from Murison's is in the shift from understanding the novel as dramatizing the problems of interpersonal sympathy as it relates to social reform and racial consciousness to the problems of positivist observation within medicine. The shift from sympathy to epistemology helps to highlight the ways in which literature not only applied medical understanding, but experimented with and contributed to knowledge regarding physiological principles, particularly as they impacted gender, race, and class politics of the time. See also Samuel Otter, *Philadelphia Stories: America's Literature of Race and Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 100-101; Looby, xx. Also worthy of note here is Bird's essentializing and deterministic use of disability, in which amputation disables not only the body but the spirit. In this way, Bird figures disability in terms that, as I argue in Chapter 3, Oliver Wendell Holmes unsettled in his work on disability and prosthesis.

[26] Bird, *The Difficulties of Medical Science*, 16.

[27] Benjamin Rush, for instance, argued that delusions, however absurd or destructive, could not be dismissed or countered by rational explanations. Instead, Rush argued that medical practitioners needed to understand fully the constituting logic of patient's delusions in order to properly administer to them. Rush writes to this effect that "The first thing to be done by a physician, under this head, is to treat the disease in a serious manner. To consider it in any other light, is to renounce all observation in medicine. However erroneous a patient's opinion of his case may be, his disease is a *real* one. It will be necessary, therefore, for a physician to listen with attention to his tedious and uninteresting details of its symptoms and causes." For Rush, treatments of sensory disorders involved not only the understanding of the principles of a given pathology, but the adaptation of therapeutic procedures to the principles of patients' delusions. Rush thus reflected on the particular sensibilities required of physicians for the generation of medical knowledge and strategies for intervention. Benjamin Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations, upon the Diseases of the Mind* (Philadelphia: Kimber and Richardson, 1812), 105-6.

[28] Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 30-78; Murison, 3-4; Charles E. Rosenberg, *Explaining Epidemics and Other Studies in the History of Medicine* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 125-244.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Harriet A. Washington *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 26-29; Gretchen Long, *Doctoring Freedom: The Politics of African American Medical Care in Slavery and Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 11-43; Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 3-12, 15-39.

[31] Washington, 32.

[32] Samuel A. Cartwright, "The Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *Southern Medical Reports* 2 (1850): 421.

[33] Samuel George Morton, *Crania Aegyptiaca; or, Observations on Egyptian Ethnography, Derived from Anatomy, History and the Monuments* (Philadelphia: J. Pennington, 1844); Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 211-220, 224, 250-251, 262; William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America 1815-59* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 25, 30, 45, 62, 88, 90, 121, 125; Ellen Samuels, *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 1-17.

[34] Dain, 225.

[35] Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, *Types of Mankind; or, Ethnological Researches, Based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and upon the Natural, Geographical, Philological, and Biblical History* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1854); Dain, 220-226; Stanton, 161-173, 173-178; Washington, 37.

[36] Thomson, 48; Samuels, 2; David L. Braddock and Susan L. Parrish, "An Institutional History of Disability," in *Handbook of Disability Studies*, ed. Gary L. Albrecht, Katherine D. Seelman, and Michael Bury (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001), 35.

[37] Samuels, 2.

[38] Notably, more amputations were performed during the Civil War than any other war in which the United States has fought. The number of disfigurements during the Civil War has been estimated to be 130,000. Stewart Brooks, *Civil War Medicine* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1966), 74, 97. Cited in Yuan, 71. Anslew Herring Wegner, "Phantom Pain: Civil War Amputation and North Carolina's Maimed Veterans," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (July 1998): 277-298. Brian Craig Miller, *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015). On the adoption of the "Palmer Leg" as the official prosthesis to be procured by the U. S. government for its wounded soldiers, which I discuss in Chapter 3, see Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Human Wheel, its Spokes and Felloes," in *Soundings from the Atlantic* (London: Sampson Low, Son, & Marston, 1864), 310.

[39] Thomson, 8, 11, 20, 42; Samuels, 1-17; David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 19, 25, 27, 49, 125; Lennard J. Davis, "Introduction: The Need for Disability Studies," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1-6.

[40] C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 1-22.; Wai-Chee Dimock and Priscilla Wald, "Preface: Literature and Science: Cultural Forms, Conceptual Exchanges," *American Literature* 74, no. 4 (2003): 705.

[41] Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1-12, James Delbourgo, *A Most Amazing Scene of Wonders: Electricity and Enlightenment in Early America*

(Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006), 10, Maurice S. Lee, *Uncertain Chances: Science, Skepticism, and Belief in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 2012), 5-7.

[42] Many scholars have noted the complicity of biology in the justification of racial and gender subjugation. See, for instance Thrailkill, 6; Washington, 25-74; Dana D. Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 102-134; Russ Castronovo, "Within the Veil of Interdisciplinary Knowledge?: Jefferson, Du Bois, and the Negation of Politics," *New Literary History*, 31, no. 4 (2000): 781-804.

[43] Castronovo, "Within the Veil," 781-804.

[44] Examples of this argument abound. One example that is significant both in its prominence and concision is Paul Starr's gloss in concluding his discussion of medicine and egalitarianism from 1760 to 1850, "For a time in the first half of the nineteenth century, the democratic claim of accessibility and universality prevailed in medicine. But the public, through its legislatures and its own private decisions, gradually relinquished that claim as it became convinced of the growing [*legitimate*] complexity of medical science and the limits of lay competence. Every man, it became clear, could not be his own physician. The democratic interregnum of the nineteenth century was a period of transition, when the traditional forms of mystification had broken down and the modern fortress of objectivity had not yet been built." Starr, 59.

[45] The alternating use here of "philosophy" and "psychology" in reference to the Common Sense school is reflective of the interdisciplinary nature of its principles, particularly as these principles were resituated within the antebellum period. Signifying at once a moral philosophy on the principles of social cohesion and an introspective examination of subjectivity, the Common Sense school served as the foundation for the discipline of psychology and mental health dominant in the U.S. during the early to mid-nineteenth century. Alkana, 3-40; Merish, 175-87; Knott, 1-22.

[46] Merish, 48; Alkana, 32-35 Douglas Sloan, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal* (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1971), cited in Merish, 48.

[47] Knott, 2.

[48] Merish, 171; Alkana, 32-40; Stoehr, 137-161; Frank Christianson, "'Trading Places in Fancy': Hawthorne's Critique of Sympathetic Identification in *The Blithedale Romance*," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 244-262; Gale Temple, "'His Delirious Solace': Consummation, Consumption, and Reform in Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance*," *ESQ* 49, no. 193 (2003): 285-321; Lauren Berlant, "Fantasies of Utopia in *The Blithedale Romance*," *American Literary History* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 30-62; Russ Castronovo, *Necro Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 101-150; James N. Mancall, *"Thoughts Painfully Intense": Hawthorne and the Invalid Author* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Jeffrey Pusch, "'Showing like an Illusion': The Failure of Sympathy in *The Blithedale Romance*," *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*

39, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 73-93; Michael Davitt Bell, *The Development of American Romance: The Sacrifice of Relation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[49] Bennett, viii.

[50] Mitchell and Snyder, 3.

[51] Ibid. More recently, Tobin Siebers has elaborated upon Mitchell and Snyder's work, arguing that "Disability is the master trope of human disqualification, not because disability theory is superior to race, class, or sex/gender theory, but because all oppressive systems function by reducing human variation to deviancy and inferiority defined on the mental and physical plane." Tobin Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 27.

[52] Thomson, 42-43, 48, 50, 70.

CHAPTER ONE: "A Mood of Disbelief": Utopian Negation, Fantasies of Dissociation and *The Blithedale Romance*

In many ways, *The Blithedale Romance* is a failure. The project of reform that serves as one of the primary concerns of the text remains unfinished and abandoned almost from the very beginning. The insistence with which the romance presents possibilities for radical social change is only matched by the persistence of its foreclosure of those possibilities through the retrenchment of gendered and sexual power dynamics. Throughout the course of these failures, *The Blithedale Romance* relentlessly poses the question: can the egalitarian principles of sensibility serve as a foundation for communal endeavors to counteract, or even withstand, normative conventions and inequalities surrounding gender, sexuality, and class? The answer, at least on the surface of the novel, appears to be a resounding "no." Sensibility, for Hawthorne, is inherently liable to cooption by regulatory power. Far from discovering the antidote to the social conventions sustaining systemic inequality, the tenants at Blithedale instead reveal in their appeals to sensibility a particularly subtle and effective tool for normative enforcement. Criticism on *The Blithedale Romance* has largely followed these terms, revealing the operation of problematic ideological investments that both structure and dismantle the possibilities of sensibility.[53] The critique of sensibility, however, risks overlooking the ways in which the romance itself explores the sensibility of critique.

Utopian communities of the mid-nineteenth century and the popular amalgamation of movements clustered under the term "social reform" more broadly revitalized collective appeals to sensibility. Originating in the eighteenth-century Scottish Common Sense philosophy,

sensibility operated as what Sarah Knott terms a "distinctive *mode of self*," that channeled individual sensitivities to their external environment towards non-hierarchical social formations and communal identities.[54] Of particular importance to sensibility as it was used in utopian projects of social reform was the principle of association, which was understood to operate both at the level of the individual and in relation to the larger community. Regarding individual psychology, association signified the principles by which ideas are or become recognized as related according to sets of laws, including contiguity in time and space, similarity, contrast, and cause and effect.[55] In emphasizing the interrelations of ideas and perceptions, association was a formative in the socialization of the self. Indeed, in his *Abridgment of Mental Philosophy*, Thomas C. Upham describes association as a figure of sociality itself, in which "our thoughts and feelings… appear together and keep each other company."[56]

The social reform movements of the mid-nineteenth century, particularly Fourierism, seized on the social implications of the term, reorienting its significance from the association of ideas to the association of individuals. In *Social Destiny of Man*, Albert Brisbane, Fourier's American translator responsible in large part for the popularization of Fourierism in the U.S., identifies association as the sole "hope of a change for the better, … It is a mean of uniting all individual forces and intelligences, now so miserably wasted and misapplied, and directing them to great and important undertakings."[57] Whereas associationist psychology sought to reform the sensibilities of the individual, encouraging sympathy and benevolence and so bringing the individual in accord with society, the associationism of social reform operated in the opposite direction, reforming the conditions of society and industry so as to bring communities and the nation in accord with the natural sensibilities of the individual. In both instances, however,

sensibility was the primary object of social progress. In Brisbane's words, "the destiny of man is to be happy on this earth."[58]

As it was deployed in the social reform movements of the nineteenth century, however, sensibility was both proscriptive and prescriptive. Reform movements of the nineteenth century, including that of Brook Farm that Hawthorne addressed in *The Blithedale Romance*, ostensibly sought to counteract the deleterious effects of capitalist competition and democratic contention through the collective circulation of sympathy, what Adam Smith refers to as "fellow-feeling," founded on the consensual ties among individuals and the families, local communities and nations in which they live.[59] The original "Articles of Agreement" for Brook Farm reflects these ideals in proposing "to substitute a system of brotherly cooperation for one of selfish competition… and thus to impart a greater freedom, simplicity, truthfulness, refinement and moral dignity to our mode of life."[60] In seeking refuge from the "selfish competition" of the marketplace through the egalitarian principles of "brotherly cooperation," however, Brook Farm was symptomatic of a larger historical shift away from addressing the conditions of systemic inequality and towards the management of sensibility. The rhetoric of private reform endemic to sensibility emphasized the importance of habitual self-management defined according to normative ideals. This perpetual form of self-management was inherently tied to the privatization of social experience that valued abstract, internal experience over embodiment and social action.[61] Self-management thus resituated sensibility as the cyclical reproduction of almost-but-not-quite ideals of abstract citizenship. By endlessly deferring the materialization of their utopian vision, reform movements joined the structure of capitalist speculation in fashioning the future as the absent center of current production.[62] Reform movements thus replicated in their structuring logic the dynamics of the market that they sought to counter.

This chapter examines the failures of sensibility that shape the model of associationism in Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*. In treating associationism, however, I diverge from the terms of utopian idealism exhibited in the principles of projects like Brook Farm, terms that have also shaped many of the critical examinations of *The Blithedale Romance*. Instead, I approach associationism through the medical and psychological works that influenced Hawthorne as well as antebellum understandings of the physiology of sensibility more broadly. In particular, I position *The Blithedale Romance* as a particularly significant text for the exploration of a broader, largely unexamined history of medical and cultural theorization of dissociation. In the Common Sense philosophy and mental health reform discourse with which Hawthorne grappled, dissociation represented the inverse of associationism, or the principles governing the relations among ideas and individuals. Dissociation, in contrast, signified the isolation of ideas from their context in order to approach them from an alternative, defamiliarized perspective. As such, dissociation was recognized as a critical faculty for intellectual and creative labor. In addition to its function as a faculty of the mind, dissociation, like association, was recognized as an important principle for socialization. In his formative work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, for instance, Smith argued that self-reflexive dissociation from one's subjective position was fundamental for sympathetic identification. Beyond interpersonal relationships, Smith also identified dissociation as a necessary precondition for the enforcing of justice. At the same time, however, dissociation raised concerns in medical and psychological discourse regarding its disruptive potential, occasioning individual alienation and, more broadly, social disorder. Dissociation thus defined the structuring framework through which association was channeled, serving simultaneously as a foundation for the cultivation of sensibility and a disruptive source of contention.

Throughout *Blithedale*, Hawthorne explores what he describes as the "mood of disbelief," as it circulates among the tenants of the utopian community. [63] In approaching this "mood of disbelief," I contextualize Hawthorne's work within the psychological theories of dissociation by two particularly formative Common Sense philosophers for Hawthorne specifically and antebellum psychology more broadly, Adam Smith and Thomas C. Upham. I argue that Smith and Upham recognized the fundamental importance of dissociation even as they sought to relegate it to the peripheries of sociality through appeals to identifying and punishing injustice and forms of mental disorder, respectively. In their attempts to contain dissociation in order to ensure social consensus, however, Smith and Upham, I argue, also implicitly identified dissociation as a key site for contesting the status quo.

In *Blithedale*, Hawthorne repositions dissociation from the periphery to the center of communal formation, exploring the ways in which mutually maintained dissociations constitute collectivity. In relation to the utopian project, Hawthorne presents the community of Blithedale less as a coherent system founded upon identifiable principles than the result of a collectively held series of resentments, antipathies, and disavowals directed toward social conventions. These collective dissociations however, as Hawthorne shows, also extend to the utopian project itself, which is repeatedly and self-consciously revealed to be a kind of networked delusion. Indeed, the idealism of Blithedale does not appear to be located in either any particular system of labor, gender, or sexuality or the attempt to dismantle these systems through social reform. Instead, the idealism of Blithedale seems to be invested in dissociation itself, the circuited "mood of disbelief" that proliferates throughout the text. In this sense, dissociation becomes a mode of sensibility or self-fashioning that gives shape to the relationships among the tenants of Blithedale. By tracing the circulation of these antipathies, abstractions, and disavowals,

Hawthorne repositions dissociation from a mere negation to a structure of affect that delineates relationships across ideological and dispositional differences.

Through dissociation, Hawthorne restructures the relationship between association and sensibility. In the utopian projects of the 1840s and the principles of social reform more broadly, association and sensibility were understood to be fundamentally linked in a feedback loop in which collective association actuated the individual cultivation of sensibility while the networking of sensibility affirmed collective associations. In *Blithedale*, by contrast, this mutually formative feedback loop is short circuited, as association and sensibility become detached from one another. In place of an association defined by the collective adherence to a unified form of sensibility, Hawthorne offers a collectivity structured by a heterogeneous assemblage of grievances and disavowals. Because Hawthorne understood the coincidence of self and other on which sensibility depended to be at best untenable and at worst an effective tool for enforcing normative inequalities, his treatment of the community at Blithedale seeks to salvage association by dispensing with the Common Sense principle of sensibility. In other words, Hawthorne effectively shifts from sensibility to *in*sensibility as a basis for communal formations in order to reclaim association as a productive form of disorder.

Spiritual Anatomist: Hawthorne and Medicine

Throughout his life, Hawthorne grappled with contemporary developments in the field of medicine, which he experienced from the perspective of both patient and the leading medical authorities of his day. Upon the suggestion of his mother, Hawthorne considered pursuing a career in medicine, but ultimately decided against the idea, writing, “I should not like to live by the diseases and infirmities of my fellow creatures.”[64] Hawthorne’s compassion for the suffering

of patients and his aversion to the dependence of the medical profession on the "infirmities" of others was propelled by his encounters with invalidism and the myriad, often invasive allopathic and homeopathic treatments experienced by himself, his family, and his wife, Sophia Peabody.[65] Hawthorne's mixture of fascination and skepticism regarding medical practice appears throughout his literary works. Noting the pervasive preoccupation with science and medicine in Hawthorne's works, Taylor Stoehr states, "Hawthorne is the chief practitioner of science fiction in our literature, and his crazy doctors and villainous alchemists stalk through the imagination like no other."[66]

Hawthorne was well versed in medical discourse on psychology, physiology and the cultivation of mental health. Records of the Salem Athenaeum indicate that Hawthorne signed out several works on these topics, including Amariah Brigham's *Remarks on the Influences of Mental Cultivation upon Health*, Chandler Robbins's *Remarks on the Disorders of Literary Men*, George Combe's *The Constitution of Man Considered in Relation to External Objects*, Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and Thomas Brown's *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind*.[67] Hawthorne was particularly influenced by the Common Sense school, a widely popular system of thought that formalized the relationships between the individual and his or her social environment. Signifying at once a moral philosophy on the principles of social cohesion and an introspective examination of subjectivity, the Common Sense school served as the foundation for the discipline of psychology and mental health dominant in the U.S. during the early to mid-nineteenth century.[68] During his time at Bowdoin, Hawthorne worked with the prominent Common Sense philosopher Thomas C. Upham, among the first writers in the U.S. to formalize a system of abnormal psychology. As Joseph Alkana has argued, though representations of Hawthorne as a Romantic individualist have obscured his engagement with

Common Sense philosophy, this body of work is significant not only for its predominance in antebellum understanding of psychology, but for its complex handling of "the intricacies of the relationship between the individual and society," intricacies that I will return to in my examination of dissociation.[69]

Just as Hawthorne treated the principles of medical thought and practice in his literary work, the discourse of mental health reform was preoccupied with treating "literary men" like Hawthorne. For many antebellum medical authorities, the isolation and intensity of study endemic to academic work rendered literary men particularly liable to mental disorder, especially insensibility. In 1828 Hawthorne borrowed a copy of Chandler Robbins' *Remarks on the Disorders of Literary Men* from the Salem Athenaeum.[70] In the book, Robbins, a graduate of Harvard Medical School and practicing physician in Boston, catalogues the various disorders occasioned by literary study. Arguing that the studious habits of men of letters inherently predispose them to both physiological and psychological ailments. Robbins observes to this effect that "A man who is devoted to the cultivation of letters is too apt to forget that the soundness of his understanding depends much on the vigour of his bodily powers… [He] dreams far more of the success he anticipates… than of the care he ought to bestow upon *health*."[71] By neglecting bodily health in favor of "the cultivation of letters," scholars fall into "habits" that "interfere with the natural operations of life and health."[72]

For Robbins, literary study produces an imbalance between the brain and the body, noting that "the longer intense thought is continued, the more does the vital energy become accumulated in the brain, and deficient in every other part of the body."[73] This deficiency in the "vital energy" of the body, according to Robbins, results in the enervation of the sensibilities, producing "a long train of painful and dangerous disorders" that include "torpor," "melancholy,"

"anxiety," "impaired vision," and "apoplexy."[74] Throughout the text, Robbins consistently casts the habits of literary study as sources of insensibility. Noting that "No one can have failed to remark the effect produced in the student by long continued attention to a single subject," Robbins traces the process through which absorption produces insensibility, "the theme of his contemplation absorbs his whole soul; surrounding objects lose their power of affecting him; and his senses are addressed in vain… the face is flushed, the arteries of the head beat with violence, and the whole appearance indicates how completely the vital energy is concentrated in that organ, which has become the seat of so unusual an excitement."[75] In describing the deleterious effects of intensive study, Robbins presents insensibility as a troubling form of alienation from the external environment. Further, Robbins argues that the alienating effects of insensibility extend beyond the individual to impact the communities in which men of letters live, occasioning "the sorrows of society for the loss of its most beloved and most learned members."[76]

Beyond his frequent treatment of medical subjects and practices, Hawthorne's characteristic style, as critics have noted, seems itself to constitute a form of medical experimentation. Sharon Cameron, for instance, argues that Hawthorne's allegories foreground "bodily dismemberments," simultaneously reducing bodies to their non-corporeal essence and revealing "that their surfaces or icons tell tales of murder and dismemberment, of contagion and violation…of bodily harm."[77] In describing Hawthorne's writing as a form of dissection, Cameron echoes a line of critique that originated in the contemporary reviews of Hawthorne's work. In the contemporary reviews of *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne is repeatedly cast as a medical experimenter, dissecting his subjects without compassion. Referring to Hawthorne as "an anatomist of the mind," a reviewer for *The Critic* describes Hawthorne's "characteristic"

style displayed in *The Blithedale Romance* as a form of dissection, "He lays bare before us the most delicate anatomy of the living heart, and rivets our attention, even while he pains us by the process, upon the links in the chain of thought and feeling that lie hidden in the innermost cells of the human breast."[78] Regarding Hawthorne's work with a mixture of fascination ("rivet[ing] our attention") and repulsion ("he pains us by the process") the review in *The Critic* is typical of the ambivalent responses to Hawthorne's presentation of the "most delicate anatomy of the living heart." In *Literary World*, a reviewer similarly casts Hawthorne as "a delicate spiritual anatomist, with scalpel and probe in hand, demonstrating to the minutest fibre the constitution of the human heart."[79] While the sentimental language of the "living" or "human heart" used in these reviews might suggest sympathetic attachment, however, Hawthorne's capacities as a "spiritual anatomist" are consistently characterized by detached, analytic precision. As an anatomist, Hawthorne dissects without offering curative treatment, resulting in his predisposition towards morbidity. As the reviewer for *Literary World* notes, "like every-day surgeons," Hawthorne "oftener and more curiously [exhibits] disease than health."[80] Hawthorne's "phantasmagorical antics," as he defines his style in the preface to *The Blithedale Romance*, appeared to these reviewers less as a mere ethereal refining of spirit than a clinical dismemberment, presenting readers with a sustained exhibition of disease (2).

Alongside the mixture of fascination and repulsion regarding Hawthorne's clinical style, reviews of *The Blithedale Romance* consistently present the characters as morbid case-studies of mental and physical disease. Several reviews characterize the inhabitants of Blithedale as "an assemblage of abnormals," "all morbid beings" who "partake of the same infirmity" as Hawthorne's "morbid as well as weak" moral faculties.[81] In an article published in the *American Whig Review*, the author observes that "no man" can "distort nature, or idealize abortions more

cleverly than the author of *The Scarlet Letter*."[82] All of the characters in the romance, by extension, "are either dead, or have never lived," leaving the reader with "an oppressive and unwholesome chill."[83] With its clinical fascination with morbidity, abnormality, and infirmity, *The Blithedale Romance* threatens to infect its readers with its "oppressive and unwholesome chill." Confronted with the threat of infection, reviewers frequently wished to turn Hawthorne's scalpel onto the book itself. Charles Hale, for instance, in response to the "presence of a constructed fatalism," recommends that, for the book "to rest pleasantly, as a whole, in the memory, the last sixty or seventy pages, with all their melodrama… should be torn off."[84] Andrew Preston Peabody similarly argues that "the romance would be greatly improved" if the chapters on Professor Westervelt, "and ugly and repulsive excrescence," were "expunge[ed]."[85] The review for the *American Whig Review* is more categorical in its laceration, stating, "If [Hawthorne] should happen to be imbued with strange, saturnine doctrines, or be haunted by a morbid suspicion of human nature, in God's name let him not write one word," arguing that it would be "Better that all the beautiful, wild thoughts with which his brain is teeming should moulder for ever in neglect and darkness, than that one soul was overshadowed by stern uncongenial dogmas."[86] Whereas representations of Hawthorne as a detached, medical experimenter signified for reviewers the deleterious effects of dissociation, his works, and *The Blithedale Romance* in particular, occasioned readers' dissociation from the text itself.

The Disenchantment of Idealism and the Idealism of Disenchantment: Critical Consensus and *The Blithedale Romance*

Significantly, the critical focus on disavowing the deleterious forms of sympathy in *The Blithedale Romance* exhibited by the contemporary reviews has continued to inform methodologies of more recent criticism on the novel. Indeed, the critique of the romance's

"constructed fatalism" and "uncongenial dogmas" anticipates, though in heightened language, the basic terms consistently leveled against the text. Critical examinations of the novel have largely cohered in their focus on demystifying the principles of sensibility as they appear in the text, revealing the "constructed" and "uncongenial" operation of sensibility in reinforcing hierarchies of embodiment and identity. In tracing this critical consensus concerning *Blithedale*, I argue that the repeated disenchantment with the idealism of *Blithedale* demonstrates a corresponding idealism of disenchantment. Rather than replicating or moving beyond this idealism of disenchantment, I position this critical disposition as a subject for investigation in the novel. Throughout *Blithedale*, Hawthorne presents the association of the utopian community less as a function of either the idealism of communitarian principles or a systemic critique than a collective "mood of disbelief" that circulates among the tenants of Blithedale and gives shape to the formal arrangement of the romance. A critical examination of this collective "mood of disbelief" serves in turn to open the possibilities and implications of association beyond the proprietary terms of sensibility.

Criticism on *The Blithedale Romance* has in large part focused on critiquing the problematic operation of sympathy within the novel, demonstrating the ways in which appeals to sympathy reify rather than challenge inequalities structured by domesticated femininity, heteronormativity, and masculine liberal subjectivity.[87] While scholars have contextualized the failures and misapplications of sympathy through a variety of discursive frameworks including the deferrals of capitalistic desire, sentimentalism, and the generic form of the romance, these arguments have remained strikingly consistent in their methodological orientation. Repeatedly focusing on disenchantment, these arguments have applied the tools of ideological critique to uncover the myriad ways in which the ideals of homosocial and heterosocial cohesion ostensibly

figured in the utopian project are dismantled through the novel's dependencies on deep-seated normative subjection according to sexuality, gender, class, and race.

Indeed, the consistent methodological focus on the critique of idealism has itself prompted scholarly meta-commentary. In his examination of the anticipatory imaginings of sexual taxonomies in the romance, Peter Coviello pointedly asks, "Why the persistence of readings of *Blithedale* as, finally and decisively, anti-utopian?"[88] Observing the consistent treatment of *Blithdale* as "a not untypical exercise in what we might call Hawthornean conservatism," Coviello notes a series of repeated interpretive conclusions; "that philanthropy and utopian politics more generally are undertakings dangerously entangled with both fatuous self-deceit and megalomaniacal narcissism… that Brook Farm was accordingly a terrible failure; that, more abstractly, languages of mass politics and intimate politics function each as misarticulations of the sphere of the other."[89] While acknowledging the validity of such an approach, Coviello suggests that the romance might be productively understood less as an instance of "elemental duplicity" than an attempt to "[hold] in abeyance what are called 'positions' with respect to the many vectors of contemporaneous politics that pass through it – the better, perhaps, to understand how such positions,… might themselves be duplicities, masks of a sort, vehicles for other species of fear or longing."[90] Coviello's argument represents a more recent turn in criticism on *Blithedale* that explores what Coviello describes as "the misrecognitions, the obfuscations, the jarring substitutions" within the romance not merely as either symptoms of problematic politics or instances of satirical ideological critique, but rather as expressions of a particular, politically charged mode of self-identification and representation, what Jordan Stein has termed "*The Blithedale Romance*'s Queer Style."[91] Where I depart from Coviello and Stein is in focusing less on the representation of sexuality preceding the

solidification of sexual categorization than the ways in which the suspending of political and theoretical "positions" allows for communal formations founded on the mutual dissociation from rather than the collective subscription to any manifest, ideological content.

In examining the sensibility occasioned by mutual dissociation, my argument draws in part upon the methodological consensus in criticism of *Blithedale*. As I discuss further below, however, my argument repositions this collective skepticism from a critical lens to a key subject of analysis within *Blithedale*. Noting the trend in "scholarly hostility" toward *The Blithedale Romance* more broadly and its narrator, Miles Coverdale in particular, Michael Borgstrom argues that "such responses may point, not so much to the inadequacies of *Blithedale*'s narrator, as to the complexities (and even some of the ironies) of contemporary analytic discourse."[92] In particular, "the epistemological indeterminacy represented by Coverdale's narrative," Borgstrom writes, "does not mesh well with an analytic desire for stable, comprehensible forms of social knowledge… Despite a tendency in recent criticism to register a thoroughgoing skepticism over notions of 'reliability' or 'truth.'"[93] Critiquing *Blithedale* and its narrator as a failure to meet the metrics of the ideals of Blithedale, for Borgstrom, demonstrates a discomforting, yet unacknowledged, affinity between the function of the romance and the function of critique itself. In light of this affinity, Borgstrom positions *Blithedale* less as "simply a report on the socialist experiment," than "a story about interpretation, about the limits of representation to guarantee knowledge, and, more specifically, about the analytical need to make sense of a world (fictional or otherwise) that is not easily comprehensible."[94]

The shift I propose in treating the social value of dissociation from a critical lens to an object of analysis is illuminated through both the points of affinity and divergence between Borgstrom's argument and my own. Borgstrom's argument is particularly valuable in identifying

some of the underlying affinities between the role of interpretation in the romance and in contemporary critique as well as suggesting that these affinities might provide a productive entry point for critical examinations of *Blithedale* that would extend beyond demystification. My argument, however, diverges from Borgstrom's in two important ways. First, I depart from his assessment that the persistent analytic skepticism of *Blithedale* serves as a demonstration of critical adherence to "stable, comprehensible forms of social knowledge" and "identity," an adherence that does not seem to reflect the nuanced attention to ambivalence and discord within the text in scholarly work that nevertheless seek primarily to uncover the problematic politics underpinning the failure of Blithedale (or of *Blithedale*). Instead, I argue that this critical consensus reflects a collective investment, assumed rather than stated, in the cultural and political value of disenchantment as a critical mode. Motivating the repeated disenchantment of *Blithedale*'s idealism, in other words, lies a consistent idealism of disenchantment. Second, rather than reading *Blithedale* as warning of the limitations of interpretation, a point that, though valid, serves as an impasse rather than an occasion for critical examination, I argue that treating *Blithedale* as a romance about interpretation can productively reveal unexamined dimensions of the relationship between critique and sensibility in the text.

My approach to *Blithedale* draws on the mutually formative relationship between these two points regarding the idealism of disenchantment and the relationship between critique and sensibility. Rather than either repeating or disavowing the idealism of disenchantment, I reposition this critical mode as a central subject of investigation. Put another way, I argue that *Blithedale* is significant for its exploration of the idealism of disenchantment. Throughout the romance, Hawthorne examines the ways in which the mutual disenchantment can itself serve as a basis for collectivity. Of course, on its surface, the idealism of mutual disenchantment is built

into the utopian project of Blithedale itself, ostensibly intended to expose and renounce, in Coverdale's words, "the false and cruel principles, on which human society has all along been based" (19). As the self-conscious reference to the "romance" in its title suggests, however, *The Blithedale Romance* also importantly disenchants the utopian project itself. Throughout the text, Hawthorne repeatedly and pointedly references moments in which the characters, Coverdale chief among them, become arrested by the sudden "mood of disbelief," the impression that Blithedale is "an illusion, a masquerade, a pastoral, a counterfeit Arcadia," a "kind of Bedlam" or "joke" at once "ridiculous" and "impossible" (21, 101, 140). In continually unveiling Blithedale as "an illusion," Hawthorne establishes an affinity between the "false" principles of "human society" and the equally illusory nature of the utopian project itself. The idealism of Blithedale, in other words, appears through the romance to be directed less towards either social norms surrounding labor, gender, and sexuality or the projects of social reform that ostensibly challenge these conventions. Rather, the idealism of Blithedale appears in its investment in the collective "mood of disbelief" that suffuses the text.

Indeed, the collective mood of disenchantment in the text extends to the boundaries of its literary world. In relation to genre, Coverdale self-consciously calls attention to his liberal use of "romantic and legendary license," in constructing a romance "patched together by my fancy" (104, 181). Beyond these references to Coverdale's romantic self-projection, however, *The Blithedale Romance* is saturated with moments of derealization, in which the world of the novel is itself disenchanted, rendered suddenly and strangely insubstantial. As Robert Milder observes, "The backdrop for *Blithedale*'s drama of contention is an ontological void. In no romance of Hawthorne's are God, moral law, and Providential design so thoroughly absent."[95] In focusing on the collective "mood of disbelief," however, this "ontological void" is significant less as

evidence of existential doubt than the pervasiveness of the text's sensibility of disenchantment. To this effect, it is significant that Coverdale again uses the operative term, "mood" to describe the impression of disenchantment, "I had never before experienced a mood that so robbed the actual world of its solidity" (146). Coverdale ascribes this mood to the principles of the utopian project itself, writing "I was beginning to lose the sense of what kind of a world it was, among innumerable schemes of what it might or ought to be" (140). However, for Coverdale, the effects of this sensibility extend beyond Blithedale itself. Instead, Coverdale describes the impressions occasioned by his "mood of disbelief" as a kind of global cataclysm, "it was impossible, situated as we were [at Blithedale], not to imbibe the idea that everything in nature and human existence was fluid, or fast becoming so; that the crust of the earth in many places was broken, and its whole surface portentously upheaving" (140). Carrying the description of a global catastrophe to its widest scope, Coverdale concludes, "Our great globe floated in the atmosphere of infinite space like an insubstantial bubble" (140).

While registering a profound skepticism regarding social conventions and the possibility of challenging those conventions through social reform, *The Blithedale Romance* thus retains a startling commitment to the idealism of disenchantment itself, which operates at seemingly every gradation of scale from the individual to the universal. Critical efforts to demystify *Blithedale*, while important and accurate, thus also uncannily replicate the predominant "mood of disbelief" within the text. In tracing the shared orientation towards disenchantment and demystification in *Blithedale* as well as criticism on *Blithedale*, however, my argument does not seek to overlook or move beyond the important implications of the political and cultural positions within the text. In Borgstrom's words, "the stakes attached to [Coverdale's] text… are simply too high" to overlook.[96] Instead, my argument approaches the "mood of disbelief" as a critical orientation of

sensibility that gives shape to these political and cultural positions. One important distinction to make in defining this approach is Coverdale's presentation of disenchantment as a "mood," rather than an objective state of affairs. In this sense, *Blithedale* is not a "disenchantment tale" as defined by Jane Bennett, an "image" of the "world as disenchanted," as "a place of dearth and alienation."[97] Instead, *Blithedale* illustrates the self-construction of a variety of sensibilities that coalesce around a collective "mood of disbelief" that precedes and occasions disenchantment, inaugurating a process that, in Bennett's words, "ignores and then discourages affective attachment to that world."[98]

Examining the construction of this mood, in turn, reorients the operative terms with which criticism has approached *Blithedale*. Specifically, rather than treating *Blithedale* as a critique or failure of associationism, the principles of relationships among perceptions, ideas, and individuals, I approach *Blithedale* through the principle of dissociation, the severing and defamiliarization of ideas from the structures in which they are situated. In the Common Sense philosophy that Hawthorne grappled with throughout his works, dissociation was recognized as a critical faculty of the mind that undergirded the operation of sympathy and provided the foundation for higher order social functions including benevolence and intellectual labor. At the same time, however, dissociation was feared for its disruptive potential. In excess, dissociation resulted in individual isolation more narrowly and social disorder more broadly. Dissociation was thus both a foundational component of social harmony and the principle against which sympathy and communal association was defined. In order to explore this dynamic, I examine approaches to dissociation in two important Common Sense philosophers whose work was formative for Hawthorne, Adam Smith and Thomas C. Upham. I then return to *Blithedale* to

investigate Hawthorne's reorientation of dissociation as a "mood of disbelief" that inflects the romance's approach to sensibility and collectivity.

Dissociation and the Social Self in the Works of Adam Smith and Thomas C. Upham

In contemporary medicine, "dissociation" is defined as "the process whereby thoughts and ideas can be split off from consciousness and may function independently, thus (for example) allowing conflicting opinions to be held at the same time about the same object."[99] Though most commonly recognized in its connection to Dissociative Identity Disorder, the medical use of the term originated with Benjamin Rush's foundational 1812 medical treatise, *Medical Inquiries and Observations upon the Disease of the Mind*. In that work, Rush defines dissociation as "an association of unrelated perceptions, or ideas, from the inability of the mind to perform the operations of judgment and reason."[100] Distinct from delusion, or "false perceptions," dissociation for Rush instead signified the disorganization of perception, in which thoughts and sensory impressions are "collected together without order."[101] Dissociation would later become formalized as a psychological disorder characterized by the detachment from reality similar to the "mood of disbelief" that Coverdale describes in *Blithedale* during the late-nineteenth century through the work of experimental psychologists including Pierre Janet, Morton Price, and William James.[102] During the early and mid-nineteenth century, however, dissociation was theorized around a cluster of psychological dispositions including abstraction, insensibility, and nervous sympathy. While varying in terminology, these dispositions were collectively positioned by medical authorities and moral philosophers alike as the antithesis to the principles of communal fellow-feeling such as sympathy, sensibility, and association. In other words, just as the link between moral philosophy and mental health established a corresponding relationship

among the various terms of association, so too did this link establish a correlation among the various terms of dissociation. Dissociation thus represented a negative framework against which individual sensibility and social harmony were defined.

Hawthorne's approach to dissociation was profoundly influenced by the Common Sense philosophy that extended from eighteenth-century Scottish discourse to antebellum proto-psychology. As Lori Merish asserts, "No nineteenth-century American author delved more deeply into the entanglements of sympathy and seduction, love and power, outlined in Scottish discourse and American sentimental fiction."[103] Of particular importance to both Hawthorne and the educated classes of the antebellum United States were the works of Adam Smith and Thomas C. Upham. In Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and Upham's works, *Abridgment of Mental Philosophy* and *Outlines of Imperfect and Disordered Mental Action*, dissociation is defined indirectly through a cluster of related concepts registered in relation to both the individual and society. In relation to the individual, Smith presents forms of dissociation through the necessary detachment from one's subject position in the process of sympathetic identification, internalizing the perspective of an impartial spectator in order to enable self-reflection. More broadly, Smith positions dissociation as the foundation for the identification and elimination of injustice on which the higher-order operations of sympathy and benevolence depend.

While Smith recognized that the bifurcation of the self and the principle of justice were alike vulnerable to contestation, it was Upham who more fully explored the operation of dissociation within psychological disorders. For Upham, dissociation, which he examines through the term "abstraction," signifies the mental process in which ideas and perceptions are disconnected from their contextual associations in order to enable intellectual analysis. If indulged too intensely, however, abstraction led, according to Upham, to profound insensibility

and alienation. Upham accordingly represents those afflicted by excessive abstraction as losing all sense of personal identity in relation to their local communities and the larger social structures in which those communities were situated. For Smith and Upham, then, dissociation presented at once a foundation for sympathy and intellectual labor and an unsettling source of individual and social disorder. In attempting to relegate dissociation to the recognition of injustice or psychological disorder, respectively, however, Smith and Upham implicitly acknowledged dissociation as a key site of contesting the status quo.

Published in 1759, Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* was widely read throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century, distributed in libraries and frequently assigned as a textbook in American colleges.[104] Records also indicate that Hawthorne signed out a copy of the text in 1827.[105] Smith's text is best known for its theory of sympathy, what Smith refers to as "our fellow-feeling," which Smith presents as a self-organizing foundation of social order.[106] Throughout the work, however, Smith examines several dimensions of sympathy that operate less through harmonious sensibility and benevolence than forms of dissociation, mutual antipathy, insensibility, and hermeneutic impasses engendered by a series of overlapping relativistic divergences. For Smith, these forms of dissociation are not merely failures or misapplications of sympathy, but rather constitute features essential to its operation.

In tracing the series of internal and external reflections that constitute the process of sympathy, Smith repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of dissociating the individual's "fellow-feeling" for themselves and others from their subjective position. Self-dissociation, for Smith, was not only necessary to the process of imaginatively inhabiting another's position, what Smith describes as "changing places in fancy," but to the process of rendering the individual as a suitable object of sympathy.[107] Sympathy, for Smith is both asymmetrical and temporary,

"Mankind, though naturally sympathetic, never conceive, for what has befallen another, that degree of passion which naturally animates the person principally concerned. That imaginary change of situation… is but momentary."[108] Recognition of this fundamental inequality influences not only the observer, but the subject of sympathy, "The person principally concerned is sensible of this, and at the same time passionately desires a more complete sympathy."[109] In order to address this asymmetry, the subject of sympathy "must flatten, if I may be allowed to say so, the sharpness of [his passion's] natural tone, in order to reduce it to harmony and concord with the emotions of those who are about him."[110] This process of "flatten[ing]" the passions, reducing them in "degree" and varying them "in kind," involves both externally and internally directed dissociations.[111] In other words, dissociation is at once performative, modifying behaviors to be in accordance with the limited capacities of the spectator, and disciplinary, internalizing the subject position of the spectator in order to monitor and modify one's interiority.

Externally, Smith writes that "Men of the most ordinary good-breeding dissemble the pain which any little incident may give them; and those who are more thoroughly formed to society, turn, of their own accord, all such incidents into raillery."[112] Such ironic self-distancing, for Smith, signifies "good-breeding" while also figuring the disciplinary internalization of the spectator position. As the references to "dissembl[ing]" and "raillery" suggest, this internalization occasions dissociation and produces tension in the subject. Describing this process, Smith writes, "as nature teaches the spectators to assume the circumstances of the person principally concerned, so she teaches this last in some measure to assume those of the spectators" thereby "conceiving some degree of that coolness about his own fortune, with which he is sensible that they will view it."[113] Inverting the "great law of Christianity," Smith

concludes, "it is the great precept of nature to love ourselves only as we love our neighbor, or what comes to the same thing, as our neighbor is capable of loving us."[114] In this sense, the internalization of the perspective of the disinterested spectator not only inflects modes of self-presentation, but occasions a "cool[ing]" effect on the internal sensibilities of the individual.

Underpinning this prescriptive maxim, however, lies a fundamental internal division of the self. For Smith, the only metric for self-reflection is the circuiting of subjectivity through "the spectators of our own behavior,… This is the only looking-glass by which we can… scrutinize the propriety of our own conduct."[115] Recounting this process of self-reflection, Smith describes a process of internal division, "I divide myself, as it were, into two persons; and [it is evident] that I, the examiner and the judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of."[116] This internal division of the self is, in one sense, disciplinary and therefore, for Smith, fortuitous in maintaining moral order. The "I" who "scrutinize[s] the propriety of our own conduct" constitutes a "higher tribunal" that supersedes the fallible and capricious judgment of "mankind."[117] At the same time, however, Smith observes that this "higher tribunal," the "man within the breast," is also subject to internal tensions that undercut its "impartial" perspective and, by extension, unsettles its seemingly "divine extraction."[118] When there is a conflict between the judgments of the community and the individual, the "violence" of public opinion "seems to stupefy and benumb" the "judgments of the man within," which, being "confounded" and "shaken," betrays its "mortality."[119] The man within the breast, in other words, also represents a site of contestation and dissociation.

In addition to understanding sympathy as a function of dissociation, leading to internal division, Smith recognized that sympathy depended not only upon mutual approbation but mutually held antipathy, what Smith refers to as "resentment." Indeed, for Smith, mutual

resentment is more fundamental to sympathetic attachments than admiration. Specifically, because resentment is "a disagreeable passion," it "more strongly require[s] the healing consolation of sympathy."[120] Accordingly, Smith states that "we are not half so anxious that our friends should adopt our friendships, as they should enter into our resentments… They can easily avoid being friends to our friends, but can hardly avoid being enemies to those with whom we are at variance."[121] In other words, while sympathy with admiration is beneficial, sympathy with resentment is fundamental to friendship.

More importantly for the relationship between sensibility and idealism explored by Hawthorne, Smith does not restrict the necessity of mutual resentment to subjects of interpersonal animosity, but argues for its primacy in relation to systems of thought. Smith observes that "All the general subjects of science and taste, are what we and our companion regard as having no peculiar relation to either of us."[122] As a result, agreement in these matters produces "no occasion for sympathy," while disagreement is a matter of "conversation" rather than discord. [123] Accordingly, Smith observes that, "Though your judgments in matters of speculation,… are quite opposite to mine, I can easily overlook this opposition; and if I have any degree of temper, I may still find some entertainment in your conversation, even upon those subjects."[124] These productive forms of disagreement, however, depend upon a more fundamental, mutual resentment. In a passage that is worth quoting at length for its performative demonstration of the very personal resentment it describes, Smith writes:

> But if you have either no fellow-feeling for the misfortunes I have met with, or none that bears any proportion to the grief which distracts me; or if you have either no indignation at the injuries I have suffered, or none that bears any proportion to the resentment which transports me, we can no longer converse upon these subjects. We become intolerable to

> one another. I can neither support your company, nor you mine. You are confounded at my violence and passion, and I am enraged at your cold insensibility and want of feeling.[125]

Here, in a passage that, as I will return to in my examination of *Blithedale*, might serve as an exchange between Coverdale and Hollingsworth, Smith's typically detached use of the first and second person becomes startlingly intimate. At once describing and enacting resentment, Smith accosts an imagined interlocutor with a fervor that strongly attests to its primacy in interpersonal relationships. While, as Smith notes, personal positions in relation to aesthetics or philosophy "ought to be matters of great indifference," Smith's use of apostrophe suggests that they might also constitute channels of "grief" and "passion" manifest in effect yet unrecognized in apprehension.[126]

Resentment represents for Smith not only a particularly significant source of sympathy but a key physiological principle for maintaining social order, what Smith describes as "justice." In attributing resentment to the function of justice, Smith channels its oppositional contentiousness while simultaneously recognizing its potential for challenging the status quo. As in the relationship between mutual resentment and sympathy, justice in Smith's work precedes beneficence in its necessity for the individual and society more broadly. In relation to the individual, justice is compulsory while beneficence operates according to the freedom of choice, "we feel ourselves to be under a stricter obligation to act according to justice, than agreeably to friendship, charity, or generosity."[127] In relation to society more broadly, whereas beneficence is agreeable, justice is foundational. Though a society might continue to function without "mutual love and affection," it "cannot subsist" in the absence of justice.[128] Beneficence is accordingly figured in Smith's text as "the ornament which embellishes," while justice is figured as "the

main pillar that upholds the whole edifice."[129] In the absence of justice, Smith suggests, complete social dissolution would follow. Smith captures this dissolution in catastrophic language that anticipates the previously discussed imagined cataclysm presented by Coverdale while at Blithedale, "If it is removed, the great, the immense fabric of human society, that fabric which to raise and support the world, if I may say so, to have been the peculiar and darling care of Nature, must in a moment crumble into atoms."[130]

Hawthorne's approach to dissociation was additionally influenced by Thomas C. Upham. Upham was a prominent Common Sense philosopher whose system of psychology was influential in the U.S. through the decades spanning the 1830s to the 1860s. Upham's 1827 text, *Elements of Intellectual Philosophy*, was the first textbook on psychology written in the U.S. for the instruction of students. While teaching at Bowdoin College, Upham worked with Hawthorne in his studies in psychology and moral philosophy.[131] Upham's system of psychology was founded on the "mutual adaptation, between the mind and outward material things."[132] External perception, for Upham, was primary to subjective experience both in chronological sequence and in order of operation. Accordingly, Upham argued that sensory perception constituted and organized mental operations, which Upham divided into three parts or "departments," the intellect, sensibilities, and will.[133] The intellect was composed of both cognition and perception, including various forms of sensation, consciousness, memory and the imagination. Under the category of the sensibilities, Upham placed emotions, which he organized according to aesthetic categories such as beauty and sublimity, desires, and the moral sense. Finally, the will signified volition for Upham and entailed questions of freedom.

While both rationalist and mechanistic in its orientation, Upham's approach involved a complex negotiation of the role of sensory experience, both perceptive and introspective, in

mediating the relationship between the individual and their community. Because his system of psychology was founded on external, subjective experience, Upham appealed to social consensus as the only means to ascertain truth. At the same time, however, Upham recognized what Hawthorne would later explore throughout his literary works, namely, that the metric of social consensus was always open to contestation by the individual. Upham's psychology was thus structured around that which it needed to exclude in order to guarantee the healthy functioning of common sense: insensibility. For Upham, insensibility signified both a profound form of social alienation and the possible dismantling of social consensus.

Upham examined the causes and consequences of insensibility in the relationship between intellectual labor and social cohesion in his 1840 text, *Outlines of Imperfect and Disordered Mental Action*, one of the first American works to systematize abnormal psychology.[134] In that book, Upham diagnoses insensibility as a symptom of hyperactive intellectual analysis, at once severing the adhesive chain of associations within the individual and unsettling the broader social associations linking individuals to their communities. Upham explores these dissociative ruptures through what he terms "abstraction." For Upham, "abstraction" defines the intellectual and perceptual process by which "the knowledge [we have] may be separated from other knowledge, and contemplated in a new aspect."[135] By "separating the various traits or qualities" of a subject under contemplation "in their state of intellectual insulation from each other," the process of abstraction represents the inverse of association, in which, as Upham describes in his later work, *Abridgment of Mental Philosophy*, "our thoughts and feelings, under certain circumstances, appear together and keep each other company."[136] To this effect, Upham notes that, during the process of abstraction, "we find it to be the fact, that the principle of association, or whatever principle it is which keeps the other objects or parts of

objects in their state of union with it, ceases, in greater or less degree, to operate and to maintain that union."[137]

Whereas association conjures for Upham figures of sociality, in which thoughts "keep each other company" and maintain "their state of union," abstraction threatens to fracture the ties among both thoughts and individuals. It is thus in reference to abstraction's antisocial tendencies that Upham warns of the disorders produced by abstraction conducted with "too great facility and profoundness."[138] Among healthy individuals, Upham states, abstraction is "in no case a perfect [faculty]. Other objects will, from time to time, slightly obtrude themselves on the mind's notice; disturbing, though not essentially interrupting, the chain of thought."[139] For Upham, such imperfection is fortuitous, demonstrating "the intention of nature" in ensuring that, "even in profound abstraction, there should be something conservative, and that an individual, in thinking of the subject before him, should not absolutely forget what belongs to himself as a man."[140]

Like Robbins in his *Remarks on the Disorders of Literary Men*, Upham identifies scholars as particularly susceptible to the disorders of excessive abstraction, referencing Archimedes, Isaac Newton, and the Scottish mathematician and political economist Robert Hamilton as exemplary cases.[141] Among these "profound men," Upham writes, the intensity of abstraction inhibits their capacity for productive participation in the community. Upham notes to this effect, "Profound men they undoubtedly are; but it is generally much less evident that they are men of good common sense, or that they are practically useful."[142] In particular, Upham casts disorders in abstraction demonstrated by these "profound men" as troubling forms of dissociation, in which subjective experience is detached from the individual's surroundings and, by extension, from society itself. Upham accordingly cites several examples of cases in which men of acute intellect no longer register interpersonal connections or recognize distinctions of

"sex, age, and calling."[143] Abstraction thus signifies for Upham a form of social alienation that unsettles social distinctions.

For Upham, the dissociative tendencies of abstraction, if left unchecked, ultimately result in a profound insensibility, in which the individual is not only alienated from the social order, but from any coherent sense of self. Describing the insensibility occasioned by abstraction, Upham writes, "The man remains profoundly adhesive, if we may be allowed the expressions, in the mud of his own contemplations; apparently unable to get out himself, and insensible, to a most remarkable degree, to any suggestions and appliances which may come from any other source."[144] Through abstraction, the physiological process of contemplation produces an excess of materiality, "the mud of his own contemplation," that displaces sensory awareness of the external environment. Rendered "insensible" to those around him, the man laboring in abstraction is, according to Upham, "a lost man; not only lost to the externalities of common decency and propriety, but lost to himself; and ignorant, in another sense than that of the Apostle Paul, whether he is in the body or out of the body."[145] Upham's heightened rhetoric belies the conceptual weight he places on insensibility. In order to ensure social consensus as the metric of objectivity – in order, in other words, to ensure that the disregard for social ties and position exhibited by the previously mentioned case-studies were not indications that these forms were themselves arbitrary – insensibility necessarily represented the most profound form of alienation, dissociating the individual from community, identity, and even the source of experience itself, embodiment.

Hawthorne explicitly referenced the mental process of abstraction while working at Brook Farm. In a letter to Sophia Peabody dated September 22, 1841, Hawthorne recounts his frustrated attempts to write a volume of his *Grandfather's Chair* series while reacclimating

himself to Brook Farm after a trip to Salem. Expressing "doubt" whether he "shall succeed in writing another volume of Grandfather's Library, while I remain at the farm," Hawthorne explains, "I have not the sense of perfect seclusion which has always been essential to my power of producing anything… Nothing here is settled – everything is but beginning to arrange itself – and though thy husband would seem to have little to do with aught beside his own thoughts, still he cannot but partake of the of the ferment around him. My mind will not be abstracted."[146] As Upham suggests in emphasizing the role of abstraction within analysis and its association with "profound men," abstraction is, for Hawthorne, essential to the process of intellectual labor. Hawthorne also echoes Upham in ascribing an "abstracted" state of mind to isolation, the "sense of perfect seclusion which has always been essential to my power of producing anything." Hawthorne, however, inverts the relationship between the external order of society and the internal loss of self presented by Upham. Rather than presenting dissociation as the result of isolation from society, Hawthorne presents it as a function of his inseparable connection to the "ferment" of the Brook Farm community around him. Similarly, whereas Upham argues that self-dissociation results in profound insensibility, Hawthorne attributes it to the external compulsion to sensibility, "I must observe, and think, and feel, and content myself with catching glimpses of things which may be wrought out hereafter."[147]

The Phantom Pains of Dissociation and *The Blithedale Romance*

Throughout *Blithedale*, Hawthorne repositions the dissociative faculties of Common Sense philosophy from the periphery to the constitutive center of the utopian community. In their philosophical and psychological works, Smith and Upham recognized dissociation as a necessary intellectual faculty even as they sought to contain its disruptive potential, either by relegating it

to the function of justice or codifying it within abnormal mental disorders, respectively. This process of containing dissociation either through channeling or disavowing it, however, simultaneously identified dissociation as a key site of contestation, in which dissociation, abstraction, and mutual resentment might be leveraged against social consensus. In *Blithedale*, Hawthorne places critical pressure upon this dynamic, at once registering concern regarding the disruptive and inimical implications of dissociation and appealing to dissociation as a necessary form of contention. In so doing, Hawthorne not only intensifies the principles of Common Sense philosophy, but restructures their terms, placing dissociation rather than sympathy as the primary sensibility for social reorganization.

As critics have noted, Hawthorne presents the project of Blithedale, initially, in terms of the progressive potential of universal sympathy.[148] Upon his arrival at Blithedale, Coverdale states that "It was our purpose [to show] mankind the example of a life governed by other than the false and cruel principles, on which human society has all along been based" (19). Such a project, Coverdale notes, entails "divorc[ing] ourselves from Pride, [and] striving to supply its place with familiar love," laboring according to the principles of "mutual aid" rather than "selfish competition" (19). Coverdale's language here replicates the "Articles of Agreement" drawn up as the original constitution for Brook Farm, which proposes "to apply the principles of justice and love to our social organization in accordance with the laws of Divine Providence; to substitute a system of brotherly cooperation for one of selfish competition… and thus to impart a greater freedom, simplicity, truthfulness, refinement and moral dignity to our mode of life."[149]

However, before the narrative foreclosures belie both the individual failings in establishing sympathetic ties and the broader, proprietary function of sympathy itself, Coverdale posits a counter-model of the Blithedale project that does not operate according to the terms of

sympathetic identification. Instead, Coverdale suggests that the community of Blithedale depends upon a series of mutually held dissociations among Blithedale's tenets. "Our bond," Coverdale reflects, "was not affirmative, but negative. We had individually found one thing or another to quarrel with in our past life, and were pretty well agreed as to the inexpediency of lumbering along with the old system any further. As to what should be substituted, there was much less unanimity." (63). Defined as a "negative" relation to the "old system," Blithedale, as Coverdale presents it, is founded on a bond constituted less through any affirmative adherence to a communal system than a mutual recognition of dissatisfaction. Further, in relation to the "written constitution" of Blithedale, which Coverdale initially echoes in his description of Blithedale's intended purpose of replacing "selfish competition" with "familial love," Coverdale states, "We did not greatly care – at least, I never did" (93). In this sense, Blithedale offers a double "negative," opposing the conventions of the "old system" and registering profound ambivalence regarding the principles of Blithedale itself.

Hawthorne, however, also suggests that the rejected "old system" is an equally empty signifier, less a "system" than the result of a heterogeneous series of "quarrel[s]" with "one thing or another." From its outset, Blithedale, an empty signifier defined by its dissociation with another empty signifier, operates neither as a system or counter-system of social arrangement. As Borgstrom and others have observed, this liminal quality of the Blithedale project has continued to generate critical dissatisfaction, as the community and the romance occupy "seemingly incompatible ideological pairings… (socialist/capitalist, feminist/misogynist, homoerotic/heteronormative)" that "simply do not make logical sense."[150] In focusing on dissociation, my argument is directed less at resolving these conflicting ideological occupations

than in examining the self-fashioning of sensibility in the romance that allows these contradictory positions to appear as common sense.

In setting out the communitarian principles of Blithedale, Hawthorne empties any systematic or theoretic content, presenting Blithedale as neither a coherent system in itself nor a unified ideological critique, focusing instead upon a series of overlayered dissociations that are seemingly located everywhere and nowhere in particular. As the romance progresses, however, Hawthorne shifts focus from the principles that Blithedale represents or opposes to the operation of sensibility it engenders. Accordingly, Hawthorne transitions from an examination of dissociation as it disrupts the conceptual and political framework of Blithedale to explore the function of dissociation within the various conflicts and self-fashioning that give form to the interpersonal relationships among the tenants at Blithedale. In tracing the circuiting of mutual resentments, abstractions, and insensibilities among the collective at Blithedale, Hawthorne reorients dissociation from a purely negative function, occasioning disenchantment with the community and ideals of Blithedale, to a constitutive operation in structuring relations across ideological and dispositional differences.

Hawthorne explores the dynamics between dissociation and sensibility through Coverdale's voyeuristic habits of observation. Coverdale frequently justifies these habits by representing himself as the "impartial spectator" that serves as the basis for sympathy in Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.[151] Figuring his position as a "Chorus in a classic play, which seems to be set aloof from the possibility of personal concernment," Coverdale argues that "destiny… seldom chooses to arrange its scenes," without "securing the presence of at least one calm observer… [who] bestows the whole measure of its hope or fear, its exultation or sorrow, on the fortunes of others, between whom and itself this sympathy is the only bond" (97). Coverdale's

"calm observer," like Smith's "impartial spectator," serves for Coverdale as what Smith describes as the "higher tribunal" of conscience. Coverdale writes to this effect that "it is his [the calm observer's] office to give applause when due, and sometimes an inevitable tear, to detect the final fitness of incident to character, and distil in his long-brooding thought the whole morality of the performance" (97). As critics have argued, Coverdale's predilection towards surveilling his associates is, of course, anything but "impartial," demonstrating what Lauren Berlant terms Coverdale's "epistemology" of "sexuality," that privatizes personal and collective histories within a gendered hierarchy of vision.[152] In this sense, Coverdale's claims of impartiality obscure a more insidious, proprietary gaze, projecting his desire onto external objects in order to "discover" its reflection in others.

In addition to its proprietary function, however, Coverdale's gaze is also importantly dissociative, not merely projecting but bifurcating his subjectivity. Later in the narrative, Coverdale reflects on this process of bifurcation, "We convey a property in them to those with whom we associate; but to what extent can never be known, until we feel the tug, the agony, of our abortive effort to resume an exclusive sway over ourselves… Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla! These three had absorbed my life into themselves" (194-5). Notably, Coverdale presents the effects of dissociation, the "tug," of the loss of self "absorbed" in others, as a function of "associat[ion]." Hawthorne here places critical pressure on Smith's observation that association depends upon the dissociation of the self. Hawthorne, however, intensifies and renders more intimate the vulnerabilities to the "violence" of public opinion that Smith understood to be a necessary function of sympathy, presenting the symptoms of dissociation as not only temporary insensibility, but the enduring attenuation of "life."

As Coverdale's description of feeling "the tug, the agony" of dissociation suggests, Hawthorne presents the bifurcation of self endemic to dissociation as a visceral loss. Coverdale reflects on the lingering physiological effects of dissociation after leaving Blithedale and returning to his residence among the "entangled life" of the city (146). Referencing the trope of the "train of associations" common to association psychology, Coverdale writes, "The train of thoughts which, for months past, had worn a track through my mind, and to escape which was one of my chief objects in leaving Blithedale, kept treading remorselessly to and fro in their old footsteps, while slumber left me impotent to regulate them" (153).[153] In Coverdale's presentation of association, the figurative "train of thoughts" threatens to become unsettlingly literal, grinding "a track through my mind" by "treading remorselessly to and fro." In suggesting that the "train of thoughts" might exceed the capacity of the individual to "regulate" its operation, wounding the mind, Coverdale captures in strikingly visceral and mechanistic terms a key point of contention in the role of association in Common Sense philosophy. In particular, Common Sense writers, most notably Thomas Reid, registered concerns that association, in operating independent of the will or rationality, might result in solipsism.[154] As Hawthorne presents the problem in *Blithedale*, however, the implications of the arbitrary function of association seem less the concern over radical subjectivity than radical dissociation, the reduction of the self to the function of one's associations.

As the passage continues, Hawthorne casts this reduction of self as a form of mutilation. Considering the particular form of "unreasonable sadnesses" that "still lingered" after awaking from his unconscious "train of thoughts," Coverdale writes, "There was no choice, now, but to bear the pang of whatever heartstrings were snapt asunder, and that illusive torment (like the ache of a limb long ago cut off) by which a past mode of life prolongs itself into the succeeding

one" (154). Hawthorne is here referencing "phantom limb," a term coined by Silas Weir Mitchell in 1871 consisting of the continued sensations, notably pain, experienced from a previously amputated limb.[155] Figuring the dissociative bifurcation of subjectivity as an amputation, Hawthorne appeals to phantom pain to signify the present absence of individuality distributed across communal associations.[156] Through the phantom limb, Hawthorne thus suggests that insensibility might serve not merely as what Russ Castronovo describes as the "death of political life," constituting the public sphere as "a tomblike zone of unresponsive repose and invulnerable privacy" that abstracts individuals from the material conditions and conflicts of history.[157] Instead, the phantom limb figures insensibility as an insistent and enduring wound that testifies to the communal loss engendered by the dissociative tendencies of social reform. In this way, the phantom limb inscribes the conditions of historical "progress," both the dissociation from social conventions and the inequalities of sympathetic identification that occlude the promises of reform, as an aching wound on the body.

Beyond Coverdale's personal loss, Hawthorne traces the circuiting of sympathetic pain among the community of Blithedale. After Coverdale's refusal to join Hollingsworth in his philanthropic project, Coverdale reflects on the circulation of its effects beyond the calamitous couple. Coverdale writes that, despite the fact that the "outbreak with Hollingsworth" was "never definitely known to our associates," the rupture "had really an effect upon the moral atmosphere of the community" (139). In tracing the implications of Coverdale and Hollingsworth's breakup for the "moral atmosphere" of the community, Hawthorne presents dissociation as a kind of phantom pain, circulating affect while eliding disclosure.[158] Reflecting on this "dreamlike and miserable sort of change," Coverdale notes the irresolution of grappling with forms of pain that result from "no positive injury," writing, "It is a matter which you do not see, but feel, and

which, when you try to analyze it, seems to lose its very existence, and resolve itself into a sickly humor of your own" (139). For Coverdale, it is this very lack of "anything tangible" that enables such pain to endure, "Your understanding, possibly, may put faith in this denial. But your heart will not so easily rest satisfied" (139). Coverdale then proceeds to describe the continued "throb" of loss in language that replicates the "illusive torment" of the phantom limb. The heart, Coverdale states, "incessantly remonstrates," sometimes in a dull, "bass-note, which you do not separately distinguish; but, now-and-then, with a sharp cry, importunate to be heard, and resolute to claim belief. 'Things are not as they were!' – it keeps saying" (139).

This sustained "throb," in turn, extends in its effects beyond Coverdale's individual "heart" to affect the "general brain of the Community" (140). Coverdale figures this process of circulation as a kind of clairvoyant pain. Noting that, "incidental to the closeness of relationship, into which we had brought ourselves," an "unfriendly state of feeling could not occur between any two members, without the whole society being more or less commoted and made uncomfortable thereby," Coverdale figures this connection as a "species of nervous sympathy," in which, "If one of us happened to give his neighbor a box on the ear, the tingle was immediately felt, on the same side of everybody's head" (139-40). Figuring sympathy as a clairvoyant routing of pain, Hawthorne presents the communal principles of Blithedale as a collective dissociation that produces effects and affects while eliding full disclosure.[159] Just as the "train of associations" renders the individual vulnerable to bifurcation, occasioning the prolonged "pang" of loss, so too does the community of associates of Blithedale render the "collective brain" vulnerable to the violence of dissociation.

Mutual Resentment, Critique, and the Abstraction of Characteristics from Character

In addition to the circulation of dissociation through the pain of loss, Hawthorne traces forms of sympathetic attachment that operate according to the mutual recognition of resentment. As in Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Hawthorne presents mutual resentment as a foundation for sympathetic identification, superseding mutual affinity in both intensity and precedence. Hawthorne, however, moves beyond Smith in exploring the intricacies of mutual resentment in relation to its subjects and implications. For Smith, while mutual resentment produces complications by dividing sympathetic identification between the injured individual and the subject of resentment, the subject of resentment was nevertheless understood to be a single, identifiable entity. For Hawthorne, in contrast, the subject of resentment is always already multiple, diffused across a network of relationships that at once intensifies its compulsory influence and renders direct containment – and thus alleviation – impossible. Similarly, for Smith, the implications of mutual resentment are defined according to success or failure, justice or estrangement. While *Blithedale* is in many ways *about* failure, however, Hawthorne's investigation is aimed much less towards diagnosis or prescription than what the failures of and disenchantment with idealism reveal regarding the conditions of individual and national progress.

In a passage that both replicates and reorients Smith's account of the pivotal role of mutual resentment in enabling productive disagreement in "matters of speculation," Hawthorne explores the dynamic between idealism and resentment during Coverdale and Hollingsworth's discussion of Fourier. As Lauren Berlant observes, Coverdale is "so enthusiastic" about Fourierism, "that belief in its perfection becomes crucial to his belief in himself, and in the future."[160] In discussing Fourier with Hollingsworth, however, Coverdale importantly refracts

this fervent commitment to the Fourier's idealism through a mode of critique, establishing a dissociative distance that nevertheless belies his enthusiasm. Encountering Hollingsworth's increasing skepticism, Coverdale justifies his interest in Fourier as a form of critical analysis, an attempt to discern the stylistic symptoms of national character rather than a credulous commitment to the principles of the text. To this effect, after Hollingsworth betrays his disgust for Fourierism, Coverdale shifts from explaining the "points of Fourier's system" to interpreting its characteristic style, asking, "'is there not something very characteristic of his nation in Fourier's manner of putting forth his views?'" (54). In refracting his investment in Fourierism through critique, Coverdale demonstrates what Christopher Castiglia argues regarding the stance of disenchantment in contemporary critique. Inverting Theodor W. Adorno's formulation of utopia as a "determined negation of that which merely is," Castiglia argues, "The opposite is also true: critique is a determined affirmation, an inverted expression of idealism."[161] By screening his idealism through critique, however, Coverdale disavows the "expression of ideals necessary to social engagement and change."[162] In this way, Coverdale more closely approximates what Castiglia terms "critiquiness," the "*sound* of critique without the ethical positioning, the explicit statement of ideals, and the imaginative presentation of alternatives based on those ideals that critique at its best involves."[163] As a result of his continued dependence upon dissociation, Coverdale ultimately forecloses the possibilities "social engagement" of critique within the posturing of disenchantment.

Among the features of Fourier's "manner," Coverdale is particularly drawn to Fourier's statement that the perfection of the globe will result in the "great ocean" being "converted into a particular kind of lemonade, such as was fashionable at Paris in Fourier's time. He calls it *lemonade á cédre*. It is a positive fact!" (53). Hollingsworth, however, ultimately refuses to

engage with either Fourier's principles or Coverdale's critique of Fourier's style. Referring to Fourierism as an "Unpardonable Sin!," Hollingsworth condemns the system for its commitment to "vile, petty, sordid, filthy, bestial, and abominable corruptions" (53). The exchange thus terminates in a startling echo of the sentiments expressed by Smith's apostrophe describing the disintegration of conversation produced by the lack of mutual resentment, "You are confounded at my violence and passion, and I am enraged at your cold insensibility and want of feeling."

In his final effort to salvage the conversation, Coverdale further replicates Smith's formulation of sympathy by appealing to mutual resentment, attempting to perform the antipathy Hollingsworth exhibits in reference to Fourier. Demanding that Coverdale "'Take the book out of my sight!,'" Hollingsworth similarly discards Fourier, "'as for Fourier, let him make a Paradise, if he can, of Gahenna, where, as I conscientiously believe, he is floundering at this moment!'" (54). Striving to establish an accordance with Hollingsworth's hostility, Coverdale "give[s] the finishing touch to Hollingsworth's image," stating, "'And bellowing, I suppose… for the least drop of his beloved *lemonade á cédre*!'" (54). Disenchanting the idealistic imagery that attracts him to Fourier, Coverdale appeals to mutual dissociation in place of idealism as the basis of sympathy. At the same time, however, the exchange leads Coverdale to a similar disenchantment with sympathy itself. Reflecting on the significance of Hollingsworth's rejection, Coverdale notes, "I began to discern that he had come among us, actuated by no real sympathy with our feelings and our hopes, but chiefly because we were estranging ourselves from the world, with which his lonely and exclusive object had put him at odds" (55). Moving from the disenchantment of Fourier's *lemonade á cédre* to the disenchantment of Hollingsworth's sympathy, Coverdale suggests that the "hopes" of the utopian project are merely a function of mutual antipathies.

As the romance progresses, Hawthorne traces this circuiting of dissociation throughout the utopian community. In moving from Coverdale's phantom pains and critiques of idealism to more collective forms of dissociation, Hawthorne inaugurates a corresponding shift from appealing to dissociation as present absence to a productive form of disorder that disrupts the privileged boundaries around privacy that serve as the necessary precondition for social reform. As the romance progresses, Hawthorne increasingly contends with and seeks to circumvent the limitations of restricting the individual and communal dissociations to personal or sympathetic wounds that, while related to collective historical shifts and the unequal conditions of gender and heteronormativity, remain registered at the level of personal privacy. In order to supplement these limitations, Hawthorne appeals to the principle of abstraction. As in Upham's work on the concept, Hawthorne presents abstraction as the separation and fixation of the traits of a subject under examination in order to consider it from a different perspective. Again, following Upham, Hawthorne links abstraction to the defamiliarization of identity and social position. Unlike Upham, who understood this process of defamiliarization as evidence of intellectual disorder, however, Hawthorne presents abstraction as a sort of defensive strategy of self-presentation, a sensibility that allows for circulation among varying, socially indexed spaces while protecting against the compulsions of sympathetic identification. Ultimately, abstraction serves Hawthorne as a counter-approach to the logic of social reform, a means of decoupling the coincidence of subjective experience from the private notion of the self that serves as the basis for social reform. In particular, by deconstructing the principles of Coverdale's "private theatre" as he attempts to discover the hidden motivations of his associates, Hawthorne abstracts the associations of Blithedale from the proprietary function of sensibility (70).

In narrating his experience at Blithedale, Coverdale repeatedly abstracts the features of individuals, objects, and practices from their contextual associations, dissociating characteristics from character. In relation to narrative form, when introducing characters or examining objects, Coverdale creates a dissociative gap by sustaining the process of impressionistic description while withholding essential information regarding his personal experience with or identification of the object or individual. When first introducing Priscilla, for instance, Coverdale dwells for multiple pages on her appearance, "her face was of a wan, almost sickly hue, betokening habitual seclusion from the sun and free atmosphere, like a flower-shrub that had done its best to blossom in too scanty light," and the effects of her appearance in Coverdale's "fantasy" and among the tenants at Blithedale before finally revealing her identity (27-9).[164] In describing the moment of revelation, Coverdale writes, "Priscilla! Priscilla! I repeated the name to myself, three or four times; and, in that little space, this quaint and prim cognomen had so amalgamated itself with my idea of the girl, that it seemed as if no other name could have adhered to her for a moment" (29). Coverdale's observation that Priscilla's "quaint and prim cognomen" seems perfectly suited to her, however, is less remarkable than the necessity of repeating her name "three or four times" in order to "amalgamate" her identity to Coverdale's "idea of the girl." To similar effect, when Priscilla later produces a "silk purse," which signifies for Coverdale a "symbol of Priscilla's own mystery," he initially recounts having "seen just such purses," before revealing a more intimate knowledge, that "Indeed, I was the possessor of one" (35). Through the repetition of Priscilla's name and the withholding of the degree of intimacy with her "silk purse," Coverdale disarticulates the traits of Priscilla's character, which circulate lavishly, producing effects and affects among the collective of Blithedale and Coverdale in particular, and Priscilla's identity, which is withheld through a series of narrative deferrals.

In his examination of capitalistic desire in the romance, Gale Temple argues that "the market-friendly vision of ideal selfhood" at Blithedale necessitates the resistance to "self and social consummation," rendering the women in the text "always deferred and always objectified visions of [Coverdale and Hollingsworth's] own other-oriented self-fulfillment."[165] The process of abstraction both contributes to and complicates this deferral of consummation. In relation to Priscilla, the continuous abstraction of characteristics from character sustains the fetishized suspension of her "mystery" that enacts in narrative form the eroticized performance of Priscilla's ultimate revealed identity, the veiled lady. At the same time, however, just as abstraction signified for Upham the dangerous possibility of rendering the individual completely insensible to social distinctions, Coverdale's speculations regarding Priscilla conflate spirituality and criminality, resulting in an ambivalence regarding her availability to the process of rendering her, in Merish's terms, "domesticated, consenting 'sentimental property.'"[166] Coverdale vacillates between his "fantasy" that Priscilla is "some desolate kind of a creature, doomed to wander about in snow-storms" and his "conjecture" that she is "one of [Hollingsworth's] guilty patients" (27). In this sense, abstraction leads Coverdale to confront what Allan and Barbara Lefcowitz describe as "Priscilla's ontological ambivalence," between her status as "a personification of pure spirit" and an underlying, "'lurid intermixture'" of sexual implications, including the possibility that the description of Priscilla's past might contain an indirect reference to prostitution.[167] In leading to the vacillations of "Priscilla's ontological ambivalence," abstraction seems ill-suited to motivating the desire for Priscilla as a domesticated object either through Temple's formulation of deferral or Merish's formulation of "'sentimental property.'" Instead, abstraction appears more predisposed to the instillation of doubt, disenchanting the spiritualized essence of Priscilla's character.

Coverdale's stylistic abstraction of characteristics from character, however, is most salient in relation to Hollingsworth. As critics have observed, Hollingsworth exhibits a distinctly masculine, proprietary form of sympathy that enforces gendered economies of agency and possession even as it disavows the conditions of embodiment. Hollingsworth's philanthropic project, in turn, subsumes those around him within its totalizing vision of social reform, reducing individuality to instrumentality. While ostensibly directed by selfless benevolence and toward public progress, Hollingsworth's project is ultimately revealed, in the words of Zenobia, to be "'nothing but self, self self!,'" that is, propelled by Hollingsworth's self-interest more narrowly and the privatization of reform more broadly (218).[168] In relation to Hollingsworth's self-interested benevolence, abstraction acts as a countermeasure to the gravitational pull of his ironclad character, revealing the operation of his impersonal egotism and the logic of privatized desire on which his vision of social reform is founded.

It is in relation to Hollingsworth in particular that Coverdale provides the most thorough description of the process and limitations of abstraction. In a passage that anticipates the depictions of Hawthorne as a spiritual anatomist that appear in contemporary reviews of *Blithedale*, Coverdale writes, "if we take the freedom to put a friend under our microscope, we thereby insulate him from many of his true relations, magnify his peculiarities, inevitably tear him into parts, and, of course, patch him very clumsily together again" (69). Coverdale's language in describing the process wherein "we thereby insulate [a friend] from many of his true relations" directly replicates Upham's definition of abstraction as "separating the various traits or qualities [of an object] and making them, in their state of intellectual insulation from each other, the subjects of fixed and distinct examination."[169] Coverdale's characterization of dissecting character as "not, I apprehend, a healthy kind of mental operation" also echoes in more measured

terms Upham's concerns that the liberal use of abstraction leads to mental disorder. More fundamentally, however, Coverdale accentuates what Upham understood as the dissociative tendencies of this "mental operation," dismantling affective interpersonal relations in the process of disarticulating an individual's "true relations."

Reflecting on these dissociative tendencies, Coverdale writes, "What wonder, then, should we be frightened by the aspect of a monster, which, after all – though we can point to every features of his deformity in the real personage – may be said to have been created mainly in ourselves!" (69) Coverdale's statement reveals at once both the iconoclastic potential and limitations of abstraction. It is through the process of abstraction that Coverdale is enabled to defamiliarize his association with Hollingsworth's character and thereby perceive the operation and implications of his seemingly impenetrable motivations. Accordingly, immediately after describing the process of abstraction, Coverdale marshals one of his most sustained critique of the "over-ruling purpose" of "professed philanthropists" like Hollingsworth, a purpose that "does not so much impel them from without, nor even operate as a motive power within, but grows incorporate with all they think and feel, and finally converts them into little else save that one principle" (70-1). However, because this critique results in solipsism, a "monster… created mainly in ourselves," abstraction privatizes critique in a manner similar to Hollingsworth's privatization of social reform.

Indeed, Coverdale himself demonstrates a degree of awareness concerning the limitation of solipsistic critique. Reflecting on his statement regarding "the process, by which godlike benevolence has been debased into all-devouring egotism," Coverdale notes, "Of course, I am perfectly aware that the above statement is exaggerated, in the attempt to make it adequate" (71). Recognizing his subjective implication in his representation of social reform, Coverdale appeals

to the discernment of the reader, "Let the reader abate whatever he deems fit. The paragraph may remain, however, both for its truth and its exaggeration, as strongly expressive of the tendencies which were really operative in Hollingsworth, and as exemplifying the kind of error into which my mode of observation was calculated to lead me" (71). On one hand, Coverdale's referral to the judgments of the reader here, as Frank Christianson notes, represents a kind of "self-reflexive" dodge, an attempt "to foist responsibility for the limits of his narration – limits that are expressly epistemological, having to do with how the narrator apprehends his characters and how he interprets events – upon the reader."[170] Christianson argues that Coverdale's deferral to the reader reveals the limitations of the romance as a genre, which depends upon "an untenable coincidence between self and other" defined by sympathy.[171] On the other hand, however, Coverdale's deferral to the reader also extends and complicates the logic of mutual dissociation that structures the narrative as a whole. In this sense, addressing the reader signifies less the limitations of sympathy than a self-reflexive attempt to abstract the characteristics of Coverdale's narrative from Coverdale's character. In doing so, Coverdale inverts the dynamic of public revelation and private disavowal that give form and force to Hollingsworth as a character and as a figure of, in Berlant's words, the "reformer in history."[172]

Hollingsworth's approach to social reform, which reaches both backward to origins of the nationalist mythos and forward to the disciplinary instantiation of the modern subject, is a public enterprise, what Hollingsworth describes as "'a spectacle to the world,'" that seeks to move beyond the mere interpersonal relationships at Blithedale towards historical progress writ large (80).[173] This overtly public enterprise, in turn, depends upon the disciplinary disavowal of the private self-interest that motivates Hollingsworth as well as the anonymous "patients" he seeks to reform. In other words, Hollingsworth's project seeks to reconstitute the national public by

transmuting individual self-interest into institutional consciousness, thereby shielding and channeling privacy. In contrast, Coverdale accentuates rather than shields the role of his personal investment in his critique of Hollingsworth. Describing his motivation and reservations in abstracting Hollingsworth's character, Coverdale states to this effect, "as my conscience has often whispered me, I did Hollingsworth a great wrong by prying into his character… But I could not help it. Had I loved him less, I might have used him better (69-70). Similarly, Coverdale disavows any overtly public implications of his critique of "professed philanthropists" that Hollingsworth's project champions. In self-consciously and meticulously revealing the principles of his "private theatre" in the act of abstraction, however, Coverdale unsettles the protective boundaries around privacy that allow it to serve as the privileged site of social reform (70). Specifically, by establishing a narrative gap between the operations of Coverdale's "private theatre" and the "truth" of Coverdale's political position, Hawthorne dissociates the coincidence of self and privacy on which disciplinary reform depends. In this sense, Coverdale's deferral to the reader also gestures towards a more distributive subjectivity that unsettles Hollingsworth's inscription of privileged boundaries around privacy.

The dissociation of Coverdale's distributive subjectivity and the conditions of privacy culminate in Coverdale's final "confession." In a surprising transition, Coverdale begins the final chapter by stating, "it remains only to say a few words about myself. Not improbably, the reader might be willing to spare me the trouble; for I have made but a poor and dim figure in my own narrative, establishing no separate interest, and suffering my colorless life to take its hue from other lives" (245). As critics have noted, Coverdale's sudden transition to the confessional mode is profoundly ironic. Throughout the romance, Coverdale has seemingly *only* been capable of "say[ing] a few words about myself." The actual content of Coverdale's confession only

exacerbates the tensions between Coverdale's professed intent of self-revelation and the disavowal of the narrative that precedes it. Presenting his confession as the "one secret" that "will throw a gleam of light… essential to the full understanding of my story," Coverdale at last reveals, "I – I myself – was in love – with Priscilla!" (247-8). Far from providing a "full understanding" of the story, Coverdale's confession, as David Leverenz notes, "hangs like a guillotine over each rereading."[174]

There is a general consensus among scholars that Coverdale's confession ultimately represents a failure to carry out the ideals of social action and aesthetic arrangement that *The Blithedale Romance* appeals to in its narrative. Specifically, these critics argue, Coverdale's confession forecloses the more open possibilities of alternative forms of sexuality and gender by reducing the Blithedale experiment to a matter of private, heterosexual male desire.[175] Initially presenting Blithedale as a place that "seemed to authorize any individual, of either sex, to fall in love with any other, regardless of what would elsewhere be judged suitable and prudent" Coverdale's confession demolishes the erotically charged possibilities for alternative social configurations, erecting in its place a singular desire for the one character, Priscilla, who is perhaps the most "suitable and prudent" within the social conventions of Hawthorne's writing – indeed a figure of normative conventionality herself (72). The content of Coverdale's confession, then, seems radical by virtue of its excessive conventionality.

Yet, in order to treat Coverdale's confession as, to use Coviello's words, "doing something other than, for instance, *lying*," it is worth taking Coverdale's language in describing the preceding narrative seriously.[176] Reflecting that he has failed to establish any "separate interest, and suffering my colorless life to take its hue from other lives," Coverdale positions the confessional mode as a revelation less of a previously undisclosed, stable interiority than a

strategy of self-fashioning that depends on dissociation, bifurcating and distributing subjectivity among the lives of others. Coverdale captures this form of dissociation powerfully when, immediately after promising a self-revelation, he states, "But what, after all, have I to tell? Nothing, nothing, nothing!" (245). The tripled repetition of "nothing, nothing, nothing!" echoes Zenobia's earlier critique of Hollingsworth as "'nothing but self, self self!," suggesting a profound ambivalence regarding the referent Coverdale ostensibly offers in speaking of "my*self*."[177]

If Coverdale's confession suggests a violent foreclosure of the erotically charged possibilities for sociality, then, it also indicates ways in which the structure of selfhood might be troubled. The invocation of the structure of confession problematizes rather than reconciles the tensions between Coverdale's narrative and his desires that prompt it.[178] In particular, the ending inverts the structure of the confession, in which the revelation of aberrant desires and illicit actions of the self serves to unify the previously divergent subject, thereby reconciling the tension between narrative self-presentation and the deeper struggles of desire.[179] Coverdale's confession, conversely, only intensifies in its construction, "I – I myself," the divergence between "I"'s that compose Coverdale. Coverdale as the desiring subject seeking consummation through heteronormative intimacy is dissociated from Coverdale as sympathetic object.[180] If Coverdale's revelation injects heteronormative desire into the narrative as a whole, it does so in such a way that inherently destabilizes the coherence of that desire and the self who "has" it. In this sense, Coverdale's confession represents a critique that is, at least on one level, as radical as the utopian visions within the text.

What the ending reveals, then, is that *The Blithedale Romance* has itself been an elaborate fantasy. In "The Force of Fantasy," Judith Butler argues that our ordinary conceptualization of

subjectivity as it is inflected through fantasy fundamentally misunderstands the function and structure of fantasy. In Butler's estimation, a fantasy is not merely a projection of internal subjectivity that is then possessed by the subject. Rather, the fantasizing subject is perpetually dispersed throughout the structuring elements of the fantasy. On the most basic level, the "I" who "has" the fantasy is always displaced by the "I" who appears in the fantasy. Indeed, the "I" proliferates through every element of the fantasy, not only its subjects and objects but the framework that organizes and sequences these positions. Butler writes to this effect that "The 'I' both contributes to and *is* the frame, the complex of perspectives, the temporal and grammatical sequencing, the particular dramatic tempo and conclusion that constitutes the very action of the fantasy."[181] Fantasy, then, enacts the dissimulation of identity characteristic of dissociation, but does so in such a way that is always multiple and self-reflective in structure. In other words, fantasy does not solely bifurcate the subject as in dissociation, but reassembles the subject into a series of self-relations that necessarily inflect and refract subjectivity.

Coverdale's desire in *The Blithedale Romance* becomes dissociated from the objects and individuals that populate Blithedale. Instead, Coverdale takes the process of dissociation itself as an object of desire. In so doing, Coverdale appeals to fantasy as a source of plentitude in order to resituate the dissociative bifurcation of subjectivity as a proliferation of self. Coverdale's "I" has split and suffused every aspect of the narrative at the level of plot and form, of which Coverdale's voyeuristic viewing habits and constant speculation into the inner lives of those around him signify the most recognizable examples. As a phantasmal structure, however, the novel also opens space for thinking about the subject position of fantasy beyond voyeuristic speculation. Specifically, while Coverdale's fantasy often channels desire into a certain entitled, if unconscious, sense of possession of those around him through a proprietary form of self-

projection, it also proliferates desire to such an extent that singular subjectivity and the assertion of power built into heteronormativity become unrecognizable.

"A Concourse of Strange Figures": Fantasies of Dissociation and Narrative Delays

Coverdale's fantasies of dissociation structure not only his relationships with the community of Blithedale, but the formal arrangement of *Blithedale*. As in his confession, Coverdale's approach to narrative form is shaped by the relocation of fantasies of desire from those around him to the process of dissociation itself. The result is a series of narrative delays in which the focus of the text diverges radically from the assumed plot. Reorienting Coverdale's stylistic abstraction of characteristics from character discussed above, the narrative delays of *Blithedale* establish a dissociative gap between the anticipatory desires for individual and collective consummation that structure the plot and the various formal diversions that both precipitate and disrupt those desires. When measured against the ostensible aims of *Blithedale*'s plot, these formal diversions represent moments of failure, additional evidence of the romance's dependencies on the continuous deferrals endemic to the anticipatory orientation of social reform. Indeed, these diversions are consistently presented as obstructions to the stated ends of Blithedale, deflating the principles of the utopian community as well as the protective boundaries around privacy that render the desire for consummation a matter of not only personal but political importance. When measured according to the logic of dissociation I have traced here, however, these moments open a narrative space for rethinking the foreclosures of dissociation within the instillation of a "mood of disbelief." Instead of signifying disavowal, dissociation as inflected through the delay serves as a productive form of disorder, a more distributive model of subjectivity that operates with a degree of independence from Coverdale's narrative control. Ultimately, resituating dissociation

as disorder reveals that the historical entanglements belied by the romance's multidirectional renunciations might be brought together and sustained in a state of tension, contestation, and flux.

In exploring the tension between the anticipatory desires for consummation and the subjective conditions that shape these speculations, Hawthorne grapples with a dynamic that operates similarly to what Judith Butler describes in her argument regarding the relationship between fantasy and ontology. This dynamic, in turn, helps to elucidate Adorno's configuration of utopia as a "determined negation." In "The Force of Fantasy," Judith Butler argues that ontology and fantasy constitute a mutually formative dynamic at the level of structure. In contrast to the oppositional binary between fantasy and reality, Butler's focus on structure suggests that the two might be brought into conversation at the level of syntax. In describing this syntactical structure, Butler presents fantasy as the "not yet real, what is possible or futural, or what belongs to a different version of the real."[182] Butler's formulation of fantasy as the "not yet real" presents fantasy not as a mere negation of ontological claims, but rather as an anticipatory indexical structure for contesting the exclusionary parameters inscribed by these claims. For Butler, this process of contestation is not only deconstructive but constitutive, enabling the imagining of alternative versions of the real.[183] In this way, Butler's approach to fantasy dovetails with Adorno's presentation of utopia as a "determined negation," in which, "by concretizing itself as something false, it always points, at the same time to what should be."[184] As in Butler's approach to fantasy, Adorno emphasizes that the potential for utopian critique lies in its status as "something false," thereby indicating that which is not currently extant, but "what should be."

In presenting the constitutive potential of fantasy and utopia, Butler and Adorno correspond in tracing a double movement directed at once towards anticipatory ideals, "what is possible or futural" or "what should be," and the contestation of the present, the "not yet real" or the "determined negation." In tracing this double movement towards anticipation and negation, Butler and Adorno establish a temporality that functions analogously to what Giorgio Agamben describes in terms of the delay. The space of the delay, for Agamben, is the initial site of withdrawal in melancholia, in which, "an intention to mourn" paradoxically "precedes and anticipates the loss of the object"[185] Importantly, for Agamben, this withdrawal does not signify disengagement with the world, but rather a movement towards an object that is experienced through absence. In this sense, the delay initiates a withdrawal from the present in order to anticipate a state yet to come.[186] The delay, to use Agamben's words, opens a space "in which what is real loses its reality so that which is unreal can become real."[187] Resituating Agamben's formulation of the delay within the sequencing of plot, narrative delays serve as a counter and supplement to the foreclosures of narrative resolution. In so doing, narrative delays serve to illustrate how a text might reorient itself towards becoming.

Significantly, Coverdale presents his arrival and return to Blithedale that frame his experience in the community as narrative delays, building deferral into the structure of the romance. Through these delays, Hawthorne explores a tension fundamental to the anticipatory orientation of utopia between collective appeals to a futural ideal set against the dissatisfactory conditions of the present and the those same dissatisfactory conditions that both shape and disrupt these collective appeals. Coverdale permeates his entrance into Blithedale with a series of prospective and retrospective speculations regarding the collective idealism of the utopian community. This dual movement towards the future and the past is complicated by a tension

within the narrative framework, which self-consciously juxtaposes the earlier perspective of Coverdale as a character looking towards the fruition of the utopian project and later perspective of Coverdale as a "frosty bachelor" recounting the story of a long-defunct enterprise (9). The tensions between hope and loss lead Coverdale to reflect on the relationship between idealism and failure, "The better life! Possibly, it would hardly look so, now; it is enough if it looked so, then…if the vision have been worth the having, it is certain never to be consummated otherwise than by a failure" (10-11). Deferring the consummation of vision to a moment yet to come, Coverdale's statement troubles the boundaries between telos and failure that cuts both ways. When read literally, Coverdale's reflection on the meaning of failure affirms Adorno's presentation of utopia as a determined negation. Failure, in this sense, operates as the consummation of "vision" by indicating the "worth" of that which is presently absent. In the literal reading, then, failure becomes imbued with the promise of telos. When read stylistically, however, Coverdale's statement registers a profound epistemological uncertainty in distinguishing between the radical potential of determined negation and the foreclosures of dissociation. Embedding the future perfect tense within the conditional, the grammatical construction of the value of utopian negation, "have been worth the having," circumscribes its anticipatory appeal within a hermeneutic impasse. In depending upon the dissociation from the present, the stylistic maneuvers of Coverdale's vision registers skepticism regarding its anticipatory telos. In this sense, just as Coverdale imbues failure with telos, he also imbues telos with the possibility of failure.

When Coverdale arrives at Blithedale, he traces a corresponding shift from his anticipatory visions of the utopian project to the intrusions of that which Coverdale's initial vision stylistically excludes, the everyday. As Coverdale shifts to the present conditions of the

utopian project, the tension between the anticipatory appeal to determined negation and deferrals of dissociation become intensified. After speculating extensively over the providential implications of their "Pilgrim"-like "quest for a better life" more narrowly and "the reformation of the world" more broadly, the journey ultimately ends in the reification of the quotidian present (10, 12, 13). Recounting his trek and subsequent arrival, Coverdale writes to this effect, "We rode on… with still unflagging spirits, and made such good companionship with the tempest, that, at our journey's end, we professed ourselves almost loth to bid the rude blusterer good bye. But, to own the truth, I was little better than an icicle, and began to be suspicious that I had caught a fearful cold" (12). Amidst the speculations over the various "ends" of their errand into the wilderness, the end result of the journey is the revelation that Coverdale has a cold. The sudden revelation of Coverdale's physical condition, less refined spirit than "icicle," humorously deflates the deferred visions of utopian progress through the individual limitations of embodiment conditioned by the present.[188]

The tension between the deferred ends of the utopian errand and the intrusions of the present that structure Coverdale's arrival at Blithedale is both repeated and complicated during his ultimate return to the community that appears in the chapter entitled "The Masqueraders." The chapter is worth treating in-depth as the culmination of a larger shift Hawthorne traces from approaching dissociation as disavowal to a productive form of disorder. This approach to dissociation as disorder saturates the structure of the chapter, which consists of an extensive and lavish series of diversions that ultimately result in the displacement of the decisive conclusion of the romance's plot. Indeed, the chapter as a whole constitutes an elaborate delay in which Coverdale, anticipating his reunion with his associates at Blithedale, diverts his attention through

a series of affectively charged engagements with his external environment and, later, with the masqueraders of the chapter's title.

In the shift from Coverdale's diversions with the various organic and inorganic objects surrounding him to the carnivalesque performers in the masquerade, Hawthorne draws a shift between anticipation and dispossession that repeats the structuring logic of Coverdale's arrival while inverting its terms. During his arrival, Coverdale's utopian vision of collectivity become unsettled by the personal constraints of embodiment. In his subsequent return, by contrast, Coverdale's deferred desires are refracted through the phantom pains of his break with the community, occasioning visions of personal consummation rather than collective reformation. The deferrals of these personal desires, in turn, are displaced by a frenetic display of impersonal engagement and contention presented by the masquerade. "The Masqueraders" thus represents the apotheosis of a larger shift in the romance from situating dissociation as the foundation for a collective, homogeneous sensibility – a "mood of disbelief" – to a foundation for sustaining disorderly sites of variation and contestation. In this way, the masquerade places critical pressure on the various disavowals of the Blithedale community, reanimating these disclaimed histories, subject positions, and representational modes as the basis for a determined negation of the utopian project itself.

Like his initial arrival at Blithedale, Coverdale's account of his return begins with an anticipatory vision of the idealized ends of his journey. The ideals of the Blithedale community that Coverdale envisions, however, concern less the objects of the utopian project than the individuals that serve as the objects of Coverdale's desire. In place of the "reformation of the world," Coverdale instead anticipates "Hollingsworth… waiting to exchange a friendly hand-grip, and Zenobia's and Priscilla's open arms [welcoming] the wanderer's re-appearance" (204-

5). In this sense, the shift in the objects of Coverdale's anticipatory speculations from his arrival to his return indexes what Russ Castronovo has noted as the broader narrative shift in focus from the community at large to Coverdale's interior sympathies, thereby reducing "the republican consciousness associated with the public sphere to private desire."[189] For Castronovo, this narrative arc appeals to an abstracted sphere of privacy as a means to transcend the demands of public and historical contention. Throughout *Blithedale*, however, Hawthorne disenchants both the fantasies of communitarian idealism and private desire, suggesting that the transcendence of social and historical contention is equally untenable regardless of whether the privileged boundaries are inscribed around an agrarian community or around the private desires of its tenants. To this effect, just as Coverdale's providential visions of universal reform are undercut during his arrival, his sentimental visions of a harmonious reunion with Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla are unsettled through his return.

Immediately after conjuring the image of his future reconciliation with the inhabitants of Blithedale, the projected object of his journey, Coverdale diverts narrative focus to the present objects surrounding him. Indeed, it is these objects presented during his walk rather than the objects of his private desire that self-consciously intrude upon the moment of Coverdale's narrative production. Diverting from his retrospective account of Blithedale to reflect on the process of writing, Coverdale notes, "The pathway of that walk still runs along, with sunny freshness, through my memory. I know not why it should be so. But my mental eye can even now discern the September grass, bordering the pleasant roadside" (205). Coverdale then proceeds to provide an extended description of the objects distributed throughout the natural environment with meticulous detail. As Coverdale himself recognizes, his detailed treatment of these incidental objects diverges from and directly obstructs the ostensible object of his return.

Registering confusion regarding his own narrative, Coverdale observes, "But, no – I never can account for it – that, with a yearning interest to learn the upshot of all my story, and returning to Blithedale for that sole purpose, I should examine these things so like a peaceful-bosomed naturalist. Nor why, amid all my sympathies and fears, there shot, at times, a wild exhilaration through my frame!" (205). Coverdale here demonstrates a level of awareness that, in pausing to examine his surroundings "so like a peaceful-bosomed naturalist," he directly subverts the "the upshot of all my story." Like the revelation of his illness, Coverdale's deferral unsettles the anticipated purpose of *Blithedale*, dissociating his interpersonal desires for consummation and the attempt to discover the hidden motivations of his associates that constitute the primary action of the romance. In place of communal reunion and narrative resolution, Coverdale cathects his desires onto the quotidian framework of the narrative itself.

As the chapter continues, however, Coverdale reveals that these desires, though operating towards contrary purposes, are fundamentally linked. Through a series of interactions with various organic and inorganic things including plants, livestock and rocks, Coverdale proceeds to perform the kinds of contact, quarrels, and indulgences that he desires yet withholds from Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla. While occupying the space where he had observed the secret meeting between Zenobia and Westervelt, he consumes some nearby grapes with "passionate zest" (208). Longing for the validation of the labor he performed with Hollingsworth during their crisis, Coverdale contemplates laying "my breast against… the red clay, of which my frame was moulded… There was my home; and there might be my grave" (206). Registering doubt whether the tenants at Blithedale will welcome his return, Coverdale flings "some rotten fragments of an old stump" at a herd of "unsentimental cows" (209). Within all the frantic activity of the delay in "The Masqueraders," Coverdale fashions the objects around him as

sources for engaging the aggression and sensuous pleasure he withholds from the actual objects of his desire.

As a direct result of his delay, Coverdale misses the end of his own plot. At the end of the chapter, while straying "onward, quite lost in reverie, and neither [knowing] nor [caring] whither I was going," Coverdale finds himself at Eliot's pulpit (212). There, Coverdale discovers "Hollingsworth, with Priscilla at his feet, and Zenobia standing before them," an image that replicates Coverdale's anticipatory vision during his return while precluding the sentimental consummation that served as its chief effect. Seeing Coverdale, Zenobia informs him that, due to his belated appearance, he has prevented himself from witnessing the principle crisis of the plot, "'Yes, Mr. Coverdale, … You are welcome! But you come half-an-hour too late, and have missed a scene which you would have enjoyed!'" (212). Indeed, the "scene" itself, which Zenobia refers to as the "trial for her life," remains undisclosed in the narrative, limned only through its effects and Coverdale's "conjectures" (214, 216). Having begun "to long for a catastrophe" since his initial departure from Blithedale, Coverdale arrives to find "that a crisis had just come and gone… My sensations were as if I had come upon a battle-field, before the smoke was as yet cleared away" (157, 215). Further, the implications of Coverdale's deferral extend beyond the frustration of his desire for, in Zenobia's words, "'groping for human emotions in the dark corners of the heart'" (214). Rather, according to Zenobia, Coverdale's presence might have provided a crucial intervention in attenuating the totalizing effects of Hollingsworth's self-imposed authority in adjudicating matters of individual morality. Reflecting that "'it was too hard upon me,'" that "'judge, jury, and accuser, should all be comprehended in one man!,'" Zenobia expresses her "'wish to have my trial over again, with you [Coverdale] standing by, to see fair play!... Let the learned Judge Coverdale seat himself on the top of the

rock, and [Hollingsworth] and me stand at its base, side by side, pleading our cause before him! There might, at least, be two criminals, instead of one'" (214-5). In delaying his return, Coverdale thus fails to occupy his self-appointed position as an impartial spectator at the one moment in the text in which his predisposition towards witnessing and living vicariously in the lives of others is not only openly requested, but potentially vital.

In missing the decisive climax of his own plot, Coverdale's deferral, which he describes as his "spectral throng," anticipates Agamben's formulation of the "noonday demon" (206). For Agamben, the noonday demon signifies "*the perversion of a will that wants the object, but not the way that leads to it, and which simultaneously desires and bars the path to his or her own desire.*"[190] As in the noonday demon, Coverdale simultaneously desires to witness the anticipated "catastrophe" of Blithedale while blocking the path to his desire. In presenting Coverdale's "spectral throng," however, Hawthorne establishes a more intimate simultaneity between desire and the delay. Specifically, through the series of affectively charged engagements with the incidental things with which he comes into contact, Coverdale fashions the very obstacles that "*[bar] his path*" to the consummation of interpersonal intimacy as the primary objects of his desire. Coverdale's delay thus reveals that his desire for a sense of belonging among Hollingsworth, Priscilla and Zenobia was less concerned with their status as independent subjects than his own self-reflexive fantasies of which he was always the primary structuring element. In so doing, Coverdale effectively places the figures of his fantasies as secondary to the frame of fantasy itself.

As in the revelation of Coverdale's illness that concludes his arrival at Blithedale, the dissociative fantasy of "The Masqueraders" concludes with the sudden intrusion of that which Coverdale's delay displaces. If Coverdale's anticipatory visions of universal reform during his

entrance are undercut by the personal limitations of embodiment, however, these dynamics between collective and individual, spirit and body, anticipation and presence are inverted during his return. As I have argued, Coverdale's return begins with a vision of personal intimacy, a vision that is then diverted through the forms of contact with Blithedale's landscape. In the midst of these bodily diversions amidst the objects of fantasy, Coverdale is confronted with a fantastical display of the collectivity he has so lavishly sought to circumvent. While in the throes of his "spectral throng," Coverdale happens upon "a concourse of strange figures," the masqueraders of the chapter's title (209). Consistent with his disposition throughout the romance, Coverdale abstracts the characteristics of the performance from the characters that compose it, the residents of Blithedale.[191] Thus, despite noting his immediate recognition of the identities of the masqueraders, "not a voice spoke, but I knew it better than my own," Coverdale identifies the characters according to the figures represented by their costumes (209).[192] More unusual is the assumed credulity that Coverdale displays in narrating the scene. The "mood of disbelief" that suffuses the text is conspicuous in its absence here, particularly given the self-consciously performative structure of the scene. To this effect, Coverdale consistently presents his interactions with the masqueraders in literal rather than figural terms, dictated by the characteristics of the figures they have assumed rather than their individual identities. At a few points, this literal engagement threatens to become dangerously visceral, including a moment in which, "Diana, with the crescent on her head," lets loose an arrow, "[hitting] the very tree behind which [Coverdale] happened to be lurking" (209).

Coverdale's seeming credulity (if not enchantment) during the scene, however, is significant not as an indication of a stylistic inconsistency but as a gesture towards approaching collectivity and dissociation in terms other than the consensus and disavowal. Instead of

appealing to the mutual disavowal of conventionality as a basis for instituting an oppositional – yet nevertheless homogeneous – sensibility, the masquerade opens dissociation to heterogeneity, flux, and contention. This heterogeneity is built into the variety of figures represented, which differ not only individually according to types, but across vacillating categories and scales. As E. Shaskan Bumas notes, "the strength of the masquerade scene" is its collection "and interaction of figures from different cultural and historical registers," drawing together "colonial history, sacred history, and literary history."[193] Among the masqueraders, Coverdale identifies several types indexed by class and race, including "an Indian chief, with blanket, feathers and war-paint," a "Bavarian broom-girl," and "a negro of the Jim Crow order" (209). Juxtaposed against these contemporary racial stereotypes, Hawthorne presents allegorical figures that reach back to antiquity and medieval Europe, including "the goddess Diana," "foresters of the middle-ages," "Shepherds of Arcadia, and allegorical figures from the Faerie Queen" (209). The masqueraders also gesture towards the mythos of national origin and colonial history. To this effect, Coverdale observes, "Arm in arm, or otherwise huddled together, in strange discrepancy stood grim Puritans, gay Cavaliers, and Revolutionary officers" as well as "Moll Pitcher, the renowned old witch of Lynn, broomstick in hand" (209-210). Amalgamating a heterogeneous collection of figures from contemporary cultural stereotypes, Western historiography, religious histories both sacred and profane, and nationalist mythos, the masquerade presents a dizzying vision of collectivity through fluctuation. Further, by juxtaposing figures from opposing positions in historical and cultural conflicts, the masquerade evokes contestation without foreclosing these conflicts through resolution or abstraction. Instead, contention in the scene is maintained in a continuous state of suspension.

In presenting this vision of collectivity as variation, the masquerade both reflects and unsettles the utopian project of Blithedale. One of the primary ways in which the masquerade highlights instructive contrasts and affinities with Blithedale is in reference to race. The costumed appearance of racial types, including what would seem to be an act of minstrelsy, serves to underscore the comparative absence of racial difference among the inhabitants at Blithedale. This absence is particularly notable, given that *The Blithedale Romance* was published in 1852, the same year as the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Indeed, a contemporary reviewer of *The Blithedale Romance*, possibly George Eliot, introduces "the examination of Hawthorne's last production" by "brush[ing] aside the whole brood of negro tales now swarming amongst us. *Uncle Tom* has become a notoriety; and the success of the book is the great literary fact of the day."[194] Later in the review, in registering dissatisfaction regarding Hawthorne's refusal to provide a substantial examination of the principles of socialism, instead "confin[ing] himself to its picturesque phases," the writer pointedly asks, "Would he paint an ideal slave-plantation merely for the beauty of thing, without pretending to 'elicit a conclusion favourable or otherwise' to slavery? Could he forget the moral relations of this system, or drop them out of his picture, 'merely to establish a theatre a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel[?]'"[195] From the perspective of this review, the appearance of "a negro of the Jim Crow order" would seem to be an enactment, though in miniature, of precisely this cooption of racialized subjugation and the history of slavery as a mere picturesque effect, serving as an additional adornment of the carnivalesque scene.

However, this cooption seems less conspicuous than the fact that such racialized types should appear at all in a romance that repeatedly insists upon the collective dissociations with the material conditions of history.[196] The masquerade serves to underscore the operation of these

dissociations, indicating the dependency of the community upon that which it excludes, not only the history of racial subjugation represented by the figure of the "negro," but the exponential influx of European immigration to the U.S. during the 1840s represented by the "Bavarian broom-girl" as well as the history of colonization the mass killings of indigenous populations represented in the figures of the "Indian chief" and "grave Puritans." The masquerade, in this way, serves as a kind of determined negation of the utopian project of Blithedale itself. Through the overlaying of racial identities, temporalities, and both fictional and historical modes of representation, the scene inverts the subjective projection outwards that structures the chapter's first half. In place of this self-projected fantasy of homogenized sensibility, what Paul Gilmore refers to as "subjective universality," the masquerade seeks to bring within a single space a diverse array of subject positions and historical entanglements in order to sustain rather than reconcile the tensions produced by their cohabitation.[197]

The masquerade, in turn, reopens the relationship between dissociation and personality, particularly in reference to the dissociative personality of Coverdale himself. In the masquerade, dissociation as disavowal becomes unsettled by dissociation as disorder, as Coverdale notes in conveying his impression "that [the masqueraders'] separate incongruities were blended all together; and they became a kind of entanglement that went nigh to turn one's brain, with merely looking at it" (210). Echoing Upham's description of the disorders resulting from the too-liberal use of abstraction, the "incongruities" of the scene unsettle social positions and occasion a form of depersonalization that disorders Coverdale's sense of self. Coverdale's depersonalization is pointedly demonstrated during the moment in which the masqueraders, discovering Coverdale's presence, collectively chase him out of the scene. Describing this moment, Coverdale writes, "The whole fantastic rabble forthwith streamed off in pursuit of me, so that I was like a mad poet

hunted by chimaeras" (211). Of course, as his diversions among the objects of his projected fantasies suggests, Coverdale is not merely "*like* a mad poet hunted by chimaeras," he in many ways *is* a "poet hunted by chimaeras." What appears at first to be a humorous deflation of the masquerade, reducing it to a personal delusion, instead reveals by way of dissociation one of the most accurate self-assessments of Coverdale's problematic relation to fantasy and desire.

As a "poet hunted by chimaeras," Coverdale is also in this moment *like* a narrator driven out of his own plot. In driving Coverdale out of the scene, the masqueraders decenter his authorial role in transmuting the collective of Blithedale to a function of his projected fantasy, intensifying the abstraction of Coverdale from his plot demonstrated by Coverdale's previously discussed deferral to the reader. Echoing Coverdale's deferral to the reader regarding his critique of Hollingsworth, "The paragraph may remain, however, both for its truth and its exaggeration," the masqueraders, and the determined negation of Blithedale and its narrator they represent, "remain" at a degree of independence from Coverdale's projective fantasies. Whereas Coverdale's deferral to the reader in his critique of Hollingsworth appeals to a more distributive subjectivity negotiated at an interpersonal level, however, the masquerade broadens and embodies the extension of this distributive subjectivity, positioning this distributive, impersonal form of subjectivity as the foundation of a heterotopic collective.

This form of depersonalization is reflected in the inhabitants of Blithedale that participate in the performance as well, whose personal identities are wholly absent, displaced by their presentation and engagement as the figures they inhabit. In contrast to feverish "entanglement" in Coverdale's "brain" or Upham's approach to mental disorder, however, the depersonalization enacted by the masqueraders represents less a loss of self – these characters, after all, have remained unnamed from the beginning of the text – than a reorientation of interpersonal

engagement. In relation to this shift, it is significant that the masquerade scene appears as the transition between Coverdale's fantasies of dissociation during his return and Zenobia's trial that inaugurates the denouement of the romance. In contrast to the projection of fantasy onto the objects that both represent and bar the path to desire in Coverdale's return, the masqueraders self-consciously inhabit the projected fantasies of the otherwise disavowed collective histories that contest the communal project of Blithedale.[198] Similarly, contrary to the arbitration of justice through the dynamic of personal disclosure and judgment in Zenobia's trial, the masqueraders reveal the collective injustices of colonization and the national project. Further, in contrast to Zenobia's trial, these historical injustices are not invoked as personal grievances to be resolved through self-appointed claims of authority, but rather serve as an impersonal basis for sustaining a site of proliferating contestation.[199] In this sense, the masquerade signifies less a transition linking Coverdale's delay and Zenobia's trial than a displacement that belies Coverdale's fantasies as a mode of self-inflation and implicitly critiques the trial as a private appropriation of more collective forms of injustice. In other words, the masquerade constitutes a heterotopic site that both centers Blithedale (and *Blithedale*), revealing its dependencies upon multidirectional fantasies of dissociation, and unsettles Blithedale, unmooring these fantasies of dissociation from the logic of disavowal enacted by Coverdale in particular and the community at large. In so doing, the masquerade opens dissociation to the more radical potential of productive modes of communal disorder and determined negation.

Conclusion: Favorable Otherwise

In her formative examination of *Blithedale*, Lauren Berlant pauses her discussion of the text as it is to imagine an alternative version of the romance that remains unrealized. For Berlant,

Blithedale can be understood, in part, by that which it is not, a "truly collective history."[200] According to Berlant, a "truly collective history, one that would take into account the complete story of American culture," would entail writing "the history of scandal (mass killing) and [reading] a series of failures."[201] In *Blithedale*, Berlant writes, "what we get instead is a record of the obsessions of a failed (his) storyteller and a bachelor to boot (Coverdale), who writes about a failed world-historical figure (Hollingsworth), a dead 'unwedded bride' (Zenobia), and a pallid and yet self-satisfied audience (Priscilla), the single-minded reader who gets what she wants – a 'great man' whose authority she never questions."[202] Berlant thus sets up a contrast between two versions of the text, one imagined and one extant, that are both defined according to "a series of failures." The distinction that Berlant makes thus concerns less the question of failure itself than the mode in which the idealized and actual versions of the text depict failure. Whereas a "truly collective history" would present a comprehensive account of the failures that constitute American history and culture, *The Blithedale Romance* is structured by a series of personal and representational failures to provide this history.

Yet in positioning the failures of the text as a source for envisioning an alternative idealism, Berlant also suggests that these failures might be constructive, not in relation to the plot that Berlant so efficiently recounts and deflates, but in relation to the moments in which the literary form of the romance diverges from the plot. That is, through the various dissociations enacted by Coverdale as well as by the formal arrangement of the text, the romance opens onto alternative individual and social dispositions that unsettle the terms of homogenized idealism, whether presented favorable or otherwise. As I have argued in this chapter, the masquerade provides perhaps the most prominent example of these gestures toward a "more truly collective" history of failure. Aggregating a heterogeneous array of subject positions, histories of conflict

and subjugation, and cultural modes of representation, the masquerade brings the collective failures of history in productive tension with one another, seeking to sustain rather than reconcile the frenetic agitation resulting from their occupying the same space. In relation to Berlant's discussion of failure, it is also notable that the masquerade occasions a kind of failure of plot, displacing and critiquing its decisive conclusion.

While the masquerade provides the most intensified form of the use of failure as a basis for limning a more truly collective history, however, it also represents the culmination of a series of attempts throughout the romance to open dissociation to more collective histories by extending its operation beyond the instillation of a "mood of disbelief." Through the circulation of phantom pains among Coverdale and the members of Blithedale, Hawthorne suggests that the dissociations endemic to social reform inscribe enduring wounds on the collective body of the community that testify to the unequal conditions of embodiment otherwise disavowed by the prescriptions of sensibility. The fundamental limitation of the routing of phantom pain is that, in circulating affect while eliding public disclosure, phantom pains register the dissociations of historical progress and social reform as a personal loss, thereby affirming privacy as the primary site of social contention. This limitation is addressed to a degree through Coverdale's appeals to depersonalization. In detailing the principles of abstraction within his "private theatre" during his critique of the "reformer in history" figured by Hollingsworth, for instance, Coverdale unsettles the untenable coincidence of subjectivity and privacy that provides the precondition for disciplinary reform. Hawthorne, in turn, extends this unsettling tension between depersonalization and privacy beyond Coverdale's particular relationship to Hollingsworth or philanthropy by deferring interpretive authority to the reader, which he performs directly in the treatment of Hollingsworth and indirectly in Coverdale's confession. In the confession, the

bifurcation of Coverdale as a desiring subject and as a sympathetic object establishes an analogous dissociation in the form of the romance between the desired objects of consummation and the structures of fantasy that frame and disrupt these desires.

Taken together, these dissociations enacted at the level of idealism, character, privacy and form trace a movement away from the disavowals of the "mood of disbelief" and towards a kind of critical idealism. In the well-known preface to *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne defines the relationship between the literary representation of Blithedale and the factual history of Brook Farm by dissociation. Accordingly, Hawthorne disavows any correlation between the characters and the principles that animate the text and the "company of socialists" at Brook Farm, renouncing any claim to "put forward the slightest pretensions to illustrate a theory, or elicit a conclusion, favorable or otherwise, in respect to Socialism" (1). As Peter Coviello notes, "This is perhaps the least believed-in sentence Hawthorne would ever write."[203] As I have argued in this chapter, this disbelief with disavowal has not only shaped negative critical responses to the romance, but shapes the romance as well. In doing so, however, *Blithedale* does not solely affirm the value of disenchantment, an affirmation that would serve to replicate the critical "mood of disbelief" that infects the text throughout. Instead, Hawthorne traces a movement towards situating dissociation as the foundation for a critical idealism, to discover in the various phantom pains, modes of depersonalization, and narrative delays the determined negations of Blithedale itself and to position these determined negations as a source for imagining how the romance of the utopian project might be "favorable… *otherwise*."

Notes

[53] See, for instance, Lori Merish, *Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity Culture, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000) 171-190; Gale

Temple, "'His Delirious Solace': Consummation, Consumption, and Reform in Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance*," *ESQ* 49, no. 193 (2003): 285-321; Lauren Berlant, "Fantasies of Utopia in *The Blithedale Romance*," *American Literary History* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 30-62; Russ Castronovo, *Necro Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 101-150; Taylor Stoehr, *Hawthorne's Mad Scientists: Psuedoscience and Social Science in Nineteenth-Century Life and Letters* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1978); James N. Mancall, *"Thoughts Painfully Intense": Hawthorne and the Invalid Author* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Jeffrey Pusch, "'Showing like an Illusion': The Failure of Sympathy in *The Blithedale Romance*," *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 73-93; Michael Davitt Bell, *The Development of American Romance: The Sacrifice of Relation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[54] Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) 5.

[55] Joseph Alkana, *The Social Self: Hawthorne, Howells, William James, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 34, 39, 42-4, 62-3; Mike Dacey, "Associationism without Associative Links: Thomas Brown and the Associationist Project," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 54 (December 2015): 31-40; Simon Blackburn, "Association of Ideas," *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2016).

[56] Upham, *Abridgment of Mental Philosophy, Including the Three Departments of the Intellect, Sensibilities, and Will, Designed as a Text-Book for Academies and High Schools* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1863), 153.

[57] Albert Brisbane, *Social Destiny of Man: or, Association and Reorganization of Industry* (Philadelphia: C. F. Stollmeyer, 1840), 2, 26.

[58] Ibid., 4.

[59] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 6th ed. (London: A. Millar, 1790), I.I.10.

[60] John Thomas Codman, *Brook Farm: Historic and Personal Memoirs* (Boston: Arena Publishing Company, 1894), 11-12.

[61] Castronovo, 102-142; Merish, 175-87; Christopher Castiglia, *Interior States: Institutional Consciousness and the Inner Life of Democracy in the Antebellum United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 7-16.

[62] Castronovo, 102-142; Temple, 286-299; Berlant, 30-62; Steven Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995).

[63] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 101. Subsequent citations will appear in text.

[64] Arlin Turner, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); James R. Mellow, *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 45. Also worthy of note, in 1840, Hawthorne participated in a letter writing campaign for a pioneering case of temporary insanity. C. Herbert Gilliland, "Hawthorne in a Pioneering Case of Temporary Insanity." *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 99-104.

[65] Hawthorne's sister, Elizabeth, reflected that, during his youth, "Nathaniel['s]… health was then delicate and he had frequent illnesses." Many members of Hawthorne's families suffered chronic illnesses with varying degrees of debility. In 1813, five years after his father died of Yellow Fever in Surinam, Hawthorne suffered a foot injury while playing that resulted in his remaining in crutches for fourteen months. In response, Hawthorne reportedly received a homeopathic treatment in which his foot was doused with cold water poured from a window on the second story. Hawthorne would later become more intimately familiar with such treatments during his courtship of and marriage to Sophia Peabody. Sophia experienced frequent illnesses and headaches throughout her life, often being reduced to a state of invalidism. Sophia was treated with an assortment of both allopathic and homeopathic treatments, including leeches, ether, and heavy doses of mercury, arsenic, and opium. Sophia's father, Nathaniel Peabody, administered narcotics and blistering from an early age. Hawthorne's friend and member of the Transcendentalist community, Dr. Walter Channing, prescribed purging through the ingestion of arsenic, which ultimately led the Peabodys to convert to homeopathy. Elizabeth Hawthorne to James T. Fields, December 12 [1870], cited in Brenda Wineapple, *Hawthorne: A Life* (New York: Random House, 2003), 26. See also Wineapple, 25-7; and Mellow, 18.

[66] Stoehr, 9.

[67] Marion L. Kesselring, *Hawthorne's Reading 1828-1850: A Transcription and Identification of Titles Recorded in the Charge-Books of the Salem Athenaeum* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1949), 45, 48, 59, 61. In addition to these works, records indicate that Hawthorne signed out copies of Alison Archibald's *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Friend: a Series of Essays to aid in the Formation of Fixed Principles in Politics, Morals and Religion*, George Cheyne's *An Essay of Health and Long Life*, Francis Hutchinson's *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, the works of Henry Home Kames, Johann Caspar Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy*, John Ayrton Paris and J. S. M. Fonblanque's *Medical Jurisprudence*, Jacques Pernetti's *Philosophical Letters upon Physiognomies*, Dugald Stewart's *Philosophical Essays*, and James Thatcher's *American Medical Biography*. Kesselring, 43, 47, 53, 54, 55, 58, 62.

[68] Alkana, 30-40; Merish, 175-87; Knott, 1-22; Stoehr, 137-161.

[69] Alkana, 35, 32-40.

[70] Kesselring, 59. See also Mancall, 1, 7, 9, 13-15, 75. Mancall also notes that Hawthorne signed out Robbins' *Remarks on the Disorders of Literary Men*, arguing that the work is a strong indication of Hawthorne's familiarity with health reform as well as a formative source for Hawthorne's first novel, *Fanshawe*.

[71] Chandler Robbins, *Remarks on the Disorders of Literary Men, or an Inquiry into the Means of Preventing the Evils Usually Incident to Sedentary and Studious Habits* (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Co., 1825), 1.

[72] Ibid., 2.

[73] Ibid., 8.

[74] Ibid., 6, 8, 13, 15

[75] Ibid., 12-13.

[76] Ibid., 10.

[77] Sharon Cameron, *The Corporeal Self: Allegories of the Body in Melville and Hawthorne*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 2, 79.

[78] "The New Novels," *Critic*, (London), August 2, 1852, 401.

[79] "Hawthorne's Blithedale Romance,' *Literary World*, 11 (24 July 1852), 52-4, in John L. Idol Jr. and Buford Jones, eds., *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: University Press, 1994): 199.

[80] Ibid.

[81] "*The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Blithedale Romance*," *North American Review*, 76 (January 1853): 227-48 in Idol Jr. and Jones, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Contemporary Reviews*, 212-220, 218, "Contemporary Literature of America," *Westminster Review* 58 (October 1852): 592-8 in Idol Jr. and Jones, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Contemporary Reviews*, 203-208, 204, 205.

[82] "*The Blithedale Romance*," *American Whig Review*, 16 (November 1852): 417-24 in Idol Jr. and Jones, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Contemporary Reviews*, 208-212, 209.

[83] Ibid., 208.

[84] *To-Day A Boston Literary Journal*, 2, no. 29 (17 July 1852): 42 in Idol Jr. and Jones, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Contemporary Reviews*, 196-197

[85] "*The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Blithedale Romance*," *North American Review*, 76 (January 1853): 227-48 in Idol Jr. and Jones, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Contemporary Reviews*, 212-220, 219.

[86] "*The Blithedale Romance*," *American Whig Review*, 16 (November 1852): 417-24 in Idol Jr. and Jones, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Contemporary Reviews*, 208-212, 209.

[87] For critical discussions of the problematic practices of sympathetic identification in the romance, see Merish, 171-190; Temple, 285-321; Berlant, 30-62; Castronovo, 101-150; Stoehr, 137-161; Mancall, 73-88; Pusch, 73-93; Gordon Hutner, *Secrets and Sympathy: Forms of*

Disclosure in Hawthorne's Novels (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988). For an account of Hawthorne's critique of sympathy through the aesthetic response engendered by electricity and the telegraph, see Paul Gilmore, *Aesthetic Materialism: Electricity and American Romanticism*, 78-82. For Merish, sympathy serves a propriety function that belies the idealized image of Blithedale as "the site of perfected, spiritualized embodiment and reconstructed eroticism," demonstrating the ways in which masculine, sympathetic identification with feminized subjects inscribes inequality while constituting gendered, liberal subjectivity. Merish, 176. Gale Temple argues similarly that, "despite the fact that the Blithedale enterprise, much like the Brook Farm community on which it is modeled, promises new forms of equality and liberation to women," its model of social reform depends upon a "market-friendly vision of ideal selfhood" that positions women "as commodities that exist to serve the impossible realization of their own ideal selves." Temple, 286. Sympathy, in Temple's formulation, operates through the endless deferral of desire endemic to capitalism, thereby relocating the failure of egalitarian bonds from the inability of the particular residents at Blithedale to the structure of reform itself.

[88] Coviello, 149.

[89] Ibid., 145-6.

[90] Ibid., 146.

[91] Ibid., 159; Stein, 211-236.

[92] Borgstrom, 365.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 371-2.

[95] Robert Milder, *Hawthorne's Habitations: A Literary Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 140.

[96] Borgstrom, 372.

[97] Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3, 56.

[98] Ibid., 3.

[99] Elizabeth Martin, *Concise Medical Dictionary*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[100] Benjamin Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations, Upon the Diseases of the Mind*, (Philadelphia: Kimber and Richardson, 1812), 259.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Robert W. Rieber, *The Bifurcation of the Self: The History and Theory of Dissociation and Its Disorders* (New York: Springer Science+Business Media, 2006), 1-7.

[103] Merish, 171.

[104] Ibid., 48. Douglas Sloan, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal* (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1971), cited in Merish, 48.

[105] Kesselring, 61.

[106] Smith, I.I.10.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., I.I.36.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid., I.II.34.

[113] Ibid. I.I.37.

[114] Ibid., I.I.4.

[115] Ibid., III.I.5

[116] Ibid., III.I.6

[117] Ibid., III.I.39.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid., I.I.18.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid., I.I.31.

[123] Ibid., I.I.31, I.I.34.

[124] Ibid., I.I.34.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid., II.II.5.

[128] Ibid., II.II.16, II.II.17.

[129] II.II.18.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Alkana, 32-35; Turner, 36; Kesserling, 45-54; Randall Stewart, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1948), 17.

[132] Upham, *Abridgment of Mental Philosophy*, 18.

[133] Ibid., 17.

[134] Alkana, 35

[135] Thomas C. Upham, *Outlines of Imperfect and Disordered Mental Action* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1848), 142.

[136] Ibid., Upham, *Abridgment of Mental Philosophy*, 153

[137] Upham, *Outlines of Imperfect and Disordered Mental Action*, 143-4

[138] Ibid., 148.

[139] Ibid., 147.

[140] Ibid., 148.

[141] Ibid., 148-9, 150, 154-155.

[142] Ibid., 148-9.

[143] Ibid., 151. Upham is specifically citing here Walter Scott's *Romance of St. Ronan's Well*. Upham's presentation of abstraction as confusing social distinctions, however, extends beyond this particular example.

[144] Ibid., 148.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Nathaniel Hawthorne to Sophia Peabody, September 22, 1841.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Berlant, 33, 50-55; Merish, 175-190; Christianson, 244-257.

[149] Codman, 11-12.

[150] Borgstrom, 365.

[151] Smith, I.I.43.

[152] Berlant, 33; See also Castronovo, 105-8; Merish, 171-5; Temple, 286-94.

[153] For a discussion of Hawthorne's reference to the "train of associations" in "The Haunted Mind," see Alkana, 42-43. Alkana notes that the train of association was common to association psychology and argues that its defining features were "passivity" and "openness to the unknown." In examining Hawthorne's use of the "train of associations" in his short stories, Alkana argues that Hawthorne complicates this inherent passivity by defining association as a process in which the active powers of the imagination and the passive reception of ideas are brought into tension. My argument departs from Alkana's treatment in focusing less on the question of volition than the physiological effects that Hawthorne presents as symptoms of the ruptures of association.

[154] Alkana, 34, 39, 43; Terrence Martin, *The Instructed Vision: Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Origins of American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), vi-vii, 107-8. Reid, in fact, rejected associationism from his system of psychology for this reason.

[155] Peter T. Lin and Laura Jean Cataldo, "Phantom Limb." In *The Gale Encyclopedia of Neurological Disorders*, 2nd 3., edited by Brigham Narins, Vol. 2. (Detroit: Gale, 2012), 848-851.

[156] Murison also notes Hawthorne's use of phantom pain. See Murison, 89. In her examination of *The Blithedale Romance*, Murison argues that Mesmerism and domesticity were "doubly bound to each other" in unsettling the passivity of "middle-class women's bodies or the hermetically sealed domain of domesticity that was the privileged site of those bodies." In this sense, Coverdale's phantom pain belies Coverdale's desire for isolation and domestic privacy as "the corporeal expression of communal loss." My argument departs from Murison's focus on Mesmerism by contextualizing the romance through Hawthorne's engagement with the theories of dissociation in Common Sense philosophy. My argument also diverges from Murison in exploring the collective "mood of disbelief" rather than domesticity as a key principle for collectivity in the text.

[157] Castronovo, 106, 124.

[158] In circulating in its effects and affects while eliding disclosure, Hawthorne's approach to dissociation demonstrates a dynamic regarding insensibility that, as I demonstrate in the chapters that follow, would later be deployed by Martin R. Delany in relation to conspiratorial networks among the Black Atlantic and by Oliver Wendell Holmes in his approach to disability and haptics.

[159] In her treatment of this passage, Murrison argues that Coverdale is here making a joke about the mesmerist practice of inflicting pain on mediums that shifts in tone when Coverdale appeals

to phantom pain. My argument, in contrast, traces an affinity rather than a contrast between the two passages that demonstrates the interrelated dynamics between associationist psychology and associationist social reform. For other points of divergence between Murrison's argument and my own, see previous note on the phantom limb passage. See Murrison, 88-9.

[160] Berlant, 41.

[161] Christopher Castiglia, *The Practices of Hope: Literary Criticism in Disenchanted Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2017 *forthcoming*), 2. Theodor W. Adorno, "Something's Missing: A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing," in Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 12. Cited in Castiglia, 2.

[162] Ibid., 3.

[163] Ibid., 13.

[164] Coverdale performs a similar narrative move when introducing Mr. Moodie. Coverdale dwells on his features, "the pale, elderly face, with the red-tipt nose, and the patch over one eye," rendering his image a grotesque before revealing his identity, "He was a very shy personage, this Mr. Moodie." Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*, 6-7.

[165] Temple, 286.

[166] Merish, 185.

[167] Allan Lefcowitz and Barbara Lefcowitz, "Some Rents in the Veil: New Light on Priscilla and Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 21.3 (December 1966), 265, 266

[168] Berlant, 42-50; Murison, 99; Temple, 286, 296, 302; Merish 187-8; Castronovo, 112-4, 142-7; Christianson, 255-7, 261.

[169] Upham, *Outlines of Imperfect and Disordered Mental Action*, 142.

[170] Christianson, 260.

[171] Ibid. In ascribing Coverdale's deferral to the limitations of the romance as a genre, Christianson argues that Hawthorne anticipates the rise of realism. This teleological argument, however, seems less suited to the particularities of the text than the examination of the ways in which Coverdale's appeals to the reader demonstrate a continuous grappling with the multi-layered dynamics of dissociation, which appears throughout the work.

[172] Berlant, 42

[173] For a discussion of Hollingsworth's relation to the origins of the nationalist mythos, see Berlant, 41-50; Temple, 286-88. For a discussion of the ways in which Hollingsworth's project

anticipates the formation of the modern subject, see Christianson, 253-61; Temple, 295-99; and Craig White, "A Utopia of 'Spheres and Sympathies': Science and Society in *The Blithedale Romance* and at Brook Farm," *Utopian Studies* 9, no. 2 (1998): 82, 84-5, 91-2

[174] David Leverenz, *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 251.

[175] Castronovo, 106; Temple, 304; Murrison, 90-1; Merish, 187; Coviello, 164; Stein, 224; Christianson, 260; and Benjamin Scott Grossberg, "'The Tender Passion Was Very Rife Among Us': Coverdale's Queer Utopia and *The Blithedale Romance*," *Studies in American Fiction* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 23.

[176] Coviello, 146.

[177] Richard H. Millington also notes the similarity in the construction of Zenobia's critique of Hollingsworth as "'Nothing else; nothing but self, self, self!'" and Coverdale's self-reflexive statement, "But what, after all, have I to tell? Nothing, nothing, nothing!" Richard H. Millington, "American Anxiousness: Selfhood and Culture in Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*," *New England Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (December 1990), 558. Millington argues that *The Blithedale Romance* belies a profound skepticism regarding the authenticity of the self structured by middle-class culture that is evidenced in moments of anxiety and uneasiness. Where I build upon Millington's argument is in contextualizing this structure of feeling within contemporary theories of dissociation rather than depending, as Millington does, on the later psychological principle of the unconscious. Placing *Blithedale* in the context of dissociation both serves to foreground the psychological lines of thought with which Hawthorne himself grappled as well as indicating the ways in which interiority and external sensory impressions become thoroughly entangled with one another. Rather than signifying a mere retreat from collectivity into the study of character, Hawthorne's appeals to dissociation additionally indicate the ways in which the various disorders that Millington notes are also opened up to a productive tension, limning alternative social configurations that remain at the frame of the romance, as I discuss in the following section.

[178] Stein, 224; Hutner, 26.

[179] In this assertion, I join Borgstorm in arguing that Coverdale's confession is "radical" for the reason that it "reveals a deliberate, self-conscious construction of self—a construction that extends, even, to the use of a third-person chapter title for the section. Coverdale claims here to have knowledge about himself that supersedes social expectations of what he is or should be. His confession is radical, then, precisely because of its insipidness; his claim to have loved Priscilla seems an effort less to reveal important personal information than to stimulate the confusion he (or Hawthorne) knows such a claim will provoke." See Borgstorm, 381

[180] In this way, Coverdale's confession, enacts what Leo Bersani describes as self-shattering. In "Is the Rectum a Grave?" Leo Bersani interrogates the "sacrosanct value of selfhood" as a construction for asserting dominance and enacting violence. Bersani writes that valuing selfhood "accounts for human beings' extraordinary willingness to kill in order to protect the seriousness of their statements. The self is a practical convenience; promoted to the status of an ethical ideal, it is a sanction for violence." Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" *October* 43 (Winter 1987):

222. Self-shattering, for Bersani, challenges the coherence and sacredness of selfhood through the abolition of the self in sex. In proposing self-shattering as a process in which "jouissance [becomes] a mode of askesis," Bersani reorients the critique of selfhood from appeals to communitarian politics towards the structures that allow selfhood to present itself as a coherent site of authority. For this reason, Bersani is particularly valuable in understanding the similar movement within *Blithedale* from direct social reform towards performances of selfhood.

[181] Judith Butler, "The Force of Fantasy," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 2, no. 2 (1990): 109.

[182] Butler, 105.

[183] Ibid., 105-111.

[184] Adorno, 12.

[185] Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993), 20.

[186] David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, "Introduction: Mourning Remains." in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. (Berkeley: University of California, 2003), 13.

[187] Agamben, 25.

[188] In resolving his account of the journey to Blithedale with the revelation that he has a cold, Coverdale enacts here a form of what Jordan Stein refers to as the "queer style" of *Blithedale*. There is a particular parallel between the introduction of Coverdale's cold and introduction of the sherry-cobbler that Stein discusses. Consider, for instance, the analogous construction of revealing "the truth" of the end of the journey: "But, to own the truth, I was little better than an icicle, and began to be suspicious that I had caught a fearful cold" and the introduction of the sherry-cobbler, "the truth was, I had rung the bell and ordered a sherry-cobbler." Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*, 150; Stein, 217, 220.

[189] Castronovo, 106.

[190] Agamben, 6. Emphasis in original.

[191] As E. Shaskan Bumas notes, "The Masqueraders" also provides an indirect reference to the residents at Blithedale. E. Shaskan Bumas, "'The Forgotten Art of Gayety': Masquerade, Utopia, and the Complexion of Empire," *Arizona Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (December 2003): 10.

[192] Bumas and Margaret Jay Jessee also note that Coverdale presents the masqueraders as they appear outwardly rather than as Coverdale would later understand their context to be. Bumas, 12, 18-9; Margaret Jay Jessee, "Veiling Ladies and Narrative Masquerade in *The Blithedale Romance*," *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 40, no. 1 (2014): 72.

[193] Bumas, 12, 13.

[194] "Contemporary Literature of America," *Westminster Review* 58 (October 1852), 592-8 in Idol Jr. and Jones, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Contemporary Reviews*, 203.

[195] Ibid., 207.

[196] Readings of *Blithedale* as a collective disavowal of history are ubiquitous. For prominent and astute analyses of this dynamic, see Berlant, 30-32, 34-37, 42-50, 53; Temple, 286-9; 295-305; Castronovo, 103-8, 113-9, 122-30; Murrison, 74-91; Merish, 139-90. Berlant argues that "the community's historical amnesia with respect to the utopian projects that have preceded it reveals that American history has never been written or even thought. It has only been repressed, buried by new 'dirt,' new stories. America, in this view, is always distinctively post-utopian, but has never 'known' it. Berlant, 31-2. Temple, citing Berlant, argues that this historical amnesia also functions through the deferrals of consummation endemic to capitalistic desire.

[197] Gilmore, 11.

[198] Berlant presents this process of disavowing histories as a form of "historical amnesia." Berlant observes, "On this field it is possible to construct a collective 'we' that knows itself because it holds a common fantasy of a perfected future. This 'people,' according to Coverdale, sees the present moment as a hopeful fore-gleam of future luminescence. But the scene of utopian fantasy is founded on the repression of histories that would, presumably, challenge the 'fact' of our present existence: Coverdale notes that his fellow workers act as if they are the land's first tillers and, by association, the nation's first utopians. But the community's historical amnesia with respect to the utopian projects that have preceded it reveals that American history has never been written or even thought. It has only been repressed, buried by new "dirt," new stories. America, in this view, is always distinctively post-utopian, but has never "known" it. Berlant, 31-2. In noting the contrast between this form of "historical amnesia" and the heterotopic collective of the masquerade, I argue, that the various textual failures to represent these collective histories, as I discuss further below, also offer sites for determined negations of the Blithedale project itself.

[199] In this way, the masquerade anticipates Coviello's previously discussed question: "What if the novel is *precisely* as described in the preface, holding in abeyance what are called 'positions' with respect to the many vectors of contemporaneous politics that pass through it – the better, perhaps, to understand how such positions, dressed up in the guise of 'theories' or 'conclusions,' might themselves by duplicities, masks of a sort, vehicles for other species of fear or longing?" Coviello, 146. In the masquerade, which literalizes Coviello's suggestion that theoretical and political positions might serve as "masks of a sort," these "species of fear or longing" involve less the relationship to the anticipated discourse of sexual identity than the collective histories of subjugation and contention.

[200] Berlant, 49-50.

[201] Ibid., 50.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Coviello, 145.

Chapter Two: Telegraphic Sensibility: Racialized Nerves, Electrified Circuits, and the Fractal Forms of Race and Science

Towards the end of his "Western Tour" for the *North Star*, Martin R. Delany interrupts his account to reflect on the physiological responses provoked by his meetings among various free black communities in the North. Comparing the collective effects of his lectures on "the minds of the people generally" to "what electricity is to the great area of nature," Delany declares, "But a single flash is necessary to light up the whole in a brilliant flame, reflecting light in every direction."[204] For Delany, a trained physician who earned international interest through his work on ethnography and the natural sciences, the process of assembling a black print network among distant, subjugated peoples engendered a form of collectivity through the circuited, reflexive responses of the local communities among whom Delany circulated. Indeed, for Delany, this network itself functioned as a kind of collective nervous system, "the great sensitive nerve, but the touch of which arouses every fibre throughout the system."[205] In presenting the physiological effects of his meetings as electrifying circuits of interconnected nerves, Delany formulates a mode of collective organization operating through what I term "telegraphic sensibility," an intercommunal sensibility produced through the reflexive sensitivity to the local, material processes of assembling networks of affiliation.

Delany's telegraphic approach to ethnography participated in a larger tradition of black print discourse directed at unsettling the increasingly popular science of the "American School" of ethnology. Though most infamous today for drawing racial hierarchies according to the comparative measurements of the brain and skull, the American School also established

dichotomies of sensibility through the nervous system. It was a primary tenet of the American School that black physiology was governed by the mechanistic properties of the nerves, which were understood to be overly developed in the bodies of both free and enslaved African Americans. For many medical practitioners working in the field of comparative anatomy, the nervous system itself was a racialized construct. Prominent members of the medical field attributed to the nerves the same perfunctory, mechanical operations that characterized the menial labor of slavery. Black physiology, in turn, was understood to be circumscribed within the insensibility of purely mechanistic nerves. By relegating black subjectivity to the deterministic, physical properties of the nervous system, the American School justified disparities in the relative condition and treatment of African Americans by naturalizing inequality as a material property of biology.

In response, black print discourse on ethnography, technology, and the natural sciences sought to liberate scientific positivism from its racial ideologies, exploring alternative approaches to empiricism operating in the service of emancipatory rather than disciplinary ends. Recent scholarship on the race sciences has emphasized the significance of these interventions in exposing the falsity of ethnological claims and unsettling the axiomatic principles on which the science was founded. African American writers like Frederick Douglass and James McCune Smith challenged the reductive humanism of the American School, in which comparative levels of humanity were calculated according to the material properties of racial anatomy; instead, they championed a common humanity that was palpable yet irreducible to the material conditions of the body. More broadly, scientific discourse in black periodicals moved beyond comparative anatomy to explore the liberating potential of scientific fields such as the electric sciences and

the telegraph that provided practices and principles for circulating this common humanity and thereby transcending the physiological determinism of racial dichotomies.

Though better known today as a political advocate for racial uplift and progenitor of Black Nationalism, Martin Delany was recognized in the periodicals, lecture circuits, and conventions in which he participated as a trained physician, ethnographer, and active contributor to the natural sciences. Scholarship has generally assessed Delany's approach to the race sciences as compelling yet largely problematic. Part of the reason for the more skeptical critical response to Delany's ethnological work is that he approached racial distinctions through a comparatively more *materialist* and less *humanist* methodology. However, while Delany's materialism might seem to be an implicit concession to the basic tenets of scientific racism, his understanding of materiality was fundamentally opposed to its mechanistic determinism in the American School. In his scientific and fictional work, Delany unsettles the physiological determinism of the antebellum race sciences by structuring a racial politics inflected by what Jane Bennett terms "vital materiality," a distributive model of agency operating through the mutually inflected responsiveness of human and non-human matter.[206] In the context of nineteenth-century ethnography, vital materiality offers a counter-approach to the paradoxical humanism of the race science project in which the category of the human was simultaneously privileged as the apex of social progress and circumscribed within the limits of anatomical determinism. Positioned against the deterministic boundaries around the category of the human presented by comparative anatomy, vital materiality as explored in Delany's work served at once as a theoretical model and condition for collectivity. Delany worked towards actuating the inherent vitality of material circuits interconnecting communal networks in order to disseminate collective projects of resistance. In this telegraphic approach to sensibility, Delany leveraged the

process of establishing black print infrastructures against the conscription of black subjectivity within insensibility. While grounded in the historical conditions of racial embodiment, Delany's materialist approach to sensibility sought to move beyond essentializing racial dichotomies to explore the formation of racial collectivity through a distributive mode of agency.

In bringing Delany's scientific work into conversation with the racialized discourse of sensibility, I explore underexamined aspects of Delany's experimental novel of transnational slave revolt, *Blake*. In *Blake*, Delany explores the capacity of alternative ethnographic approaches to establish connections among black communities without reducing the principles of communal identification to an essential racial 'nature.' Although scholarship has tended to claim *Blake* for either nationalist or counter-nationalist politics, an examination of telegraphic sensibility decenters nationalist frameworks by focusing on the process of mobilizing transnational, intercommunal networks.[207] In order to attend to this process of mobilizing intercommunal networks of resistance, I posit an approach to racial history as a fractal form, an infinitely complex pattern in which each part repeats the form of the whole across varying scales. In place of an understanding of racial history as the enforcement and contestation of a linear boundary, the fractal form offers a model of race as a dynamic process responsive to the interlocking conditions of ethnographic practices, institutionalized systems of oppression, and communal self-definition. In arranging the responsiveness to material and ideological conditions within a form that repeats with a difference across different scales, the fractal form indexes the vital, intercommunal connections structured by material networks of exchange. In examining the fractal forms of Delany's ethnographic work, I demonstrate that counterapproaches to scientific racism participated in a tradition of vital materiality in order to establish a physiological basis for collectivity beyond comparative anatomy. More broadly, in Delany's body of work, as in the

black periodicals and lecture circuits in which he participated, scientific examinations of the physiological experience of living in an increasingly circuited, modern world provided a figure and structure for organizing collective movements of resistance. In other words, through Delany's materialist approach, we gain a more complex understanding of what it means to articulate the claim, critically relevant to our current discussions of race, that black lives *matter*.[208]

Black Insensibility: The Physiological Effects of Slavery and the Reflex Arc

As it was understood in the first half of the nineteenth century, insensibility constituted a degenerative condition in which the senses failed properly to register experiences with the external environment. At once an epistemic and moral failure, insensibility proscribed whose experience mattered in the public negotiation of political and social participation. Insensibility presented a critical challenge to the egalitarian aims of sensibility, which ostensibly provided a non-hierarchical basis for social cohesion founded on sympathetic, intersubjective relations by calling attention to forms of cognitive subjugation according to race, gender, and class.[209] Within the racial politics of the antebellum United States, insensibility held particular political significance for the institution of slavery. Apologies for and arguments against slavery alike targeted insensibility as a critical physiological mechanism through which to understand the effects of slavery on the bodies of slaves and slaveholders.

It was a primary tenet of proslavery medical discourse that black physiology was fundamentally predisposed to insensibility. Perhaps the most forceful example of the use of insensibility to justify slavery was the conceiving of African bodies as fundamentally incapable of experiencing pain.[210] The prominent gynecological surgeon, J. Marion Sims, justified his cruel

experiments on slave women by appealing to the popular claim that African American women did not experience pain as acutely as whites and were thus able to tolerate the pain of unanesthetized surgical operations with impunity.[211] More broadly, members of the American School appealed to constructions of black insensibility as evidence of deficiencies in the perceptive acumen required for citizenship. Samuel A. Cartwright, a Louisiana physician who published prolifically on black physiology while treating slaves under the patronage of slave owners, formalized this presumption under the diagnosis of "Dysaesthesia Aethiopica," (literally translated: Ethiopian Abnormal Sensation) a "disease peculiar to Negros," consisting of "so great a hebetude of the intellectual faculties, as to be like a person half asleep, that is with difficulty aroused and kept awake."[212] Like Cartwright's more infamous diagnosis, Drapetomania, the pathological desire of slaves to run away, Dysaesthesia Aethiopica appealed to racist assumptions regarding black physiology to assert the benevolence of the slave system. To this end, Cartwright claims that Dysaesthesia Aethiopica "prevails among free negroes, nearly all of whom are more or less afflicted with it, that have not got some white person to direct and take care of them."[213]

Diagnoses of black insensibility were founded upon the broader racialization of the nervous system. In contrast to the expansive cerebral system in the Caucasian race, the American School maintained that black physiology was governed by the nerves. Cartwright himself argued to this effect that the cerebral system of the African race was "[diffused]" through the "nerves… everything, from the necessity of such a conformation, [partaking] of sensuality, at the expense of intellectuality."[214] For Cartwright, who understood the "Negro's… nerves" to be "tinctured with a shade of the pervading darkness," the nervous system itself was a racialized construct.[215] Indeed, Cartwright's descriptions of the nervous system attribute the same "non-progressive" and

purely "mechanical" properties he ascribes to the "infant[ile]" predisposition of the "negro race" to insensibility, "making man like an automaton or senseless machine."[216] By relegating black subjectivity to the physical properties of insensible nerves, Cartwright, like many working in the American School, naturalized the forced labor system of plantation slavery by reading its coercive operations into black physiology.

At the same time, an alternative approach to insensibility was developing alongside the American School of ethnology through the discovery and study of the reflex arc, neurological reactions to external stimuli that bypass consciousness or volition.[217] The reflexive arc was formulated and systematized by Scottish physician and anti-slavery writer, Marshall Hall. Over the course of several years, Hall conducted extensive vivisections of animals demonstrating that the application of stimuli including electricity, pinching, and opiates to particular membranous areas produced corresponding reactive movements in remote anatomical parts even when the connection to the brain was severed. Hall's experiments led him to establish a hitherto undefined sub-system of unconscious reflex functions that, in acting solely through the spinal cord, bypassed the mediation of the brain. Hall then proceeded to demonstrate the role of this reflex function in a variety of physiological processes essential to the functioning of the body, including cardiac rhythm, ingestion, egestion, and respiration. In other words, for Hall the reflex system was responsible for mediating the connections between the external world and the internal organs.

Among the most significant of Hall's contributions was his repeated insistence that the reflex function, in operating through the spinal cord rather than the brain, was wholly devoid of sensation. Hall made a sustained effort to prove the absence of sensation, particularly pain, in his laboratory manipulations of the reflex arc. Through several experiments, Hall demonstrated that

animals whose cerebrum had been removed remained in a state of inactivity during the application of painful stimuli that would otherwise produce movements symptomatic of suffering in intact specimens. Hall's controversial argument that the reflex system was inherently insensible challenged the Cartesian duality of mind and body, positing a self-organizing physiological system that impacted and shaped subjectivity while perpetually eluding consciousness. For Hall, then, insensibility signified less an inherently degenerative social ailment than a neutral principle of physiology that could function towards either salubrious or deleterious ends.[218]

In 1853, Hall commenced a lecture tour throughout the United States, Canada, and Cuba, in which he collaborated with local physicians and performed public vivisections. Hall's work on the nervous system and the reflex arc was well-known and respected in the U.S. Several medical societies solicited lectures, elected him as an honorary member, and organized elaborate social events in his honor. Hall's tour among medical professionals, significantly, provides an index of a particularly prolific moment in the development of the American School. In New Orleans, Hall met with Samuel A. Cartwright, who demonstrated his publicized experiments on the circulatory system that Hall had publicly criticized. Josiah Nott hosted Hall in Mobile, Alabama, a matter of months before Nott, along with George Gliddon, published the landmark treatise on polygenesis, *Types of Mankind*.[219] While lecturing and performing demonstrations of the reflex arc, then, Hall was enmeshed in the contentious racial politics of the 1850s. Hall's position in relation to the American School was complex. As a physician, Hall received the acclaim and hospitality of American School practitioners like Cartwright and Nott. At the same time, however, Hall published articles disputing the principles of antebellum comparative anatomy while also conducting his own observations on the physiology of race and enslavement.

As he circulated among prominent medical professionals working in the field of comparative anatomy, Hall leveraged his training as a physician to study the physical and moral degeneration of slavery and racial prejudice. Hall toured southern plantations, observing slave auctions, field labor, and corporeal punishment. Hall collected these observations in a series of letters later published as *The Two-Fold Slavery of the United States*, which surveyed the conditions of slavery and the "*second* slavery" of racial prejudice against free and enslaved African Americans. By applying the principles of ethnography to the study of racial prejudice rather than racial distinction, Hall challenged the naturalization of physiological differences demonstrated by the American School. For Hall, the principles presented by the American School demonstrated less the natural distinctions according to race than the symptoms of social and environmental conditioning endemic to antebellum race politics (fig. 1).[220]

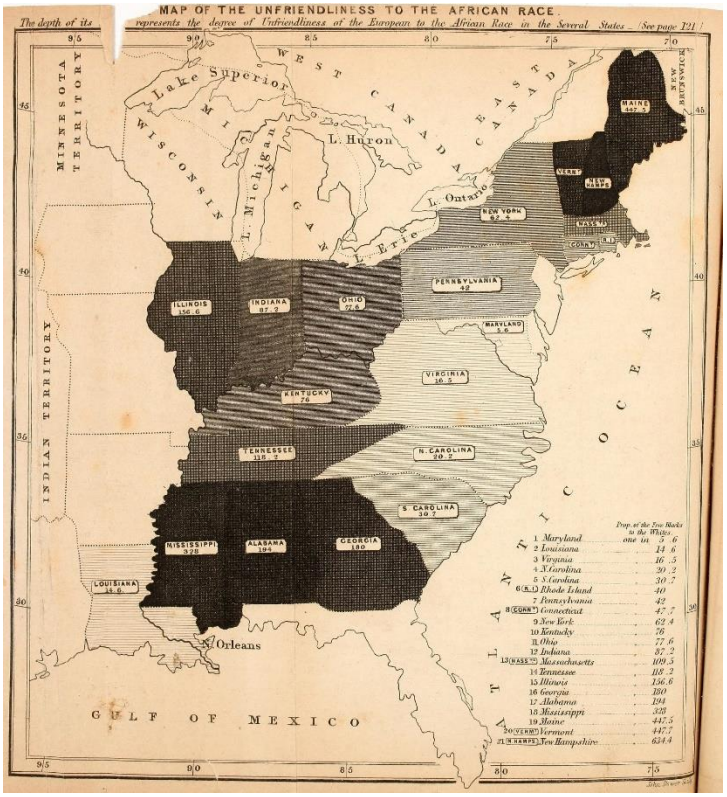

Figure 1: "Map of the Unfriendliness to the African Race." Engraving from *The Two-Fold Slavery of the United States; with a Project of Self-Emancipation*, by Marshall Hall, London: Adam Scott, Charterhouse Square, 1854, 121.

As Hall diagnosed the physiological conditioning of racial prejudice in the U.S., black abolitionists took note of Hall. Hall met with several prominent black members of the abolitionist cause, including Frederick Douglass and Dr. James McCune Smith. In *The Two-Fold Slavery*, Hall recognized McCune Smith to be "amongst the very best-informed physicians of the United States."[221] McCune Smith, however, offered a far more ambivalent evaluation of Hall's capacities as an ethnographer. He wrote a review of Hall's *Two-Fold Slavery* that Douglass published twice in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. [222] In the review, McCune Smith praises Hall's medical research in "unraveling [the] mysteries… of the nervous system" as well as Hall's project "to study our national ailment [the degradation of the slaveholder and the slave], and contrive its cure." After introducing Hall's thesis and correcting some of Hall's statistics, McCune Smith focuses on one particular "stunning picture" that he quotes from Hall, "'Even of the cruelties inflicted by slavery, I think the indignity the worst part. I once saw the paddle laid over the *glutei*. Each stroke produced a yell, and such quivering of these muscles as I never beheld before, although a physiologist.'"[223] The "stunning picture," as McCune Smith notes, was profoundly affecting for Hall, who repeated it twice in *The Two-Fold Slavery*. Hall's wife, Charlotte, in the *Memoirs of Marshall Hall*, would later report that the scene "so excited his feelings that he never alluded to it without a shudder of horror."[224] Hall's profound horror at the "indignity" of the scene was entangled with his position as "a physiologist." For Hall, who understood the reflexive surface of the skin as the sensitive entry point to the nervous system, the "indignity" of paddling lies in the reduction of the individual to the involuntary spasms of the reflex arc.

Hall's horror notwithstanding, however, McCune Smith observes that Hall's description of the application of the paddle to the slave's body uneasily resembles Hall's own laboratory

experiments on vivisected animals. McCune Smith writes to this effect: "Dr. Hall, after a quarter of a century of constant experiment, with most potent poisons, electricity and galvanism in *vivisected* animals, saw more torture inflicted by the paddle on a poor slave's back!"[225] In situating Hall's reaction to witnessing corporeal punishment in relation to Hall's medical experimentation, McCune Smith places pressure on the complicity of the medical field in the disciplinary methods of racial subjection. At the same time, however, McCune Smith identifies alongside Hall as a medical professional in recognizing that the violence inflected by the paddle on "the poor slave's back" extends far deeper than the surface of the skin, manipulating the entire reflexive system of the body. Throughout his review, McCune Smith positions Hall's work as at once revelatory of the subjection of slavery through the "scientific" manipulation of black nerves and suggests that the black print tradition and the abolitionist cause has "perceived… with keener eye than Marshall Hall" that the source of this subjection extends beyond corporeal punishment to a greater, systemic insensibility, "a deadlier lethargy to the noble impulses which had seized the public mind," infecting public opinion.[226]

Echoing and extending McCune Smith's ambivalence about the racial implications of Hall's work on the reflex arc, Martin Delany in *Blake* forcefully critiques systemic racial subjugation through the conceptual and physical manipulation of the African American body. Like Hall, Delany exposes the manipulation of the reflex arc to dissect the system of slavery more broadly. Delany, however, moves beyond Hall's analytic focus on the destructive infliction of "indignity," demonstrating the ways in which the manipulation of the reflex system by slave overseers was entangled within the disciplining of black subjectivity. The relation between Hall's diagnosis of the dehumanizing effects of slavery and Delany's critique of the disciplinary production of black insensibility is prominently displayed in *Blake* during a scene that uncannily

replicates Hall's description of witnessing the violent reflexive response of a slave subjected to paddling. Early in the novel, Major Armsted, a Mississippi slave trader, promises to ensure that the recently arrived Colonel Franks "see the sights" as a necessary education in what it means to "become a Southerner."[227] Brandishing a whip, the slave overseer brings out a young, sickly slave named Rube and declares before his audience that Rube will "'whistle, sing songs, hymns, pray, swear like a trooper, laugh, and cry, all under the same state of feelings'" (67). In describing Rube's tortured performance, Delany demonstrates a form of racial subjection through the violent manipulation of involuntary, physiological response:

> With a *peculiar* swing of the whip, bringing the lash down upon a *certain spot on the exposed skin*, the whole person being prepared for the purpose, the boy commenced to whistle almost like a thrush; another cut changed it to a song, another to a hymn, then a pitiful prayer, when he gave utterance to oaths which would make a Christian shudder, after which he laughed outright (67, emphasis added).

Delany frames Rube's reaction to the targeted lashes striking "a certain spot on the exposed skin" as a function of the violent manipulation of the reflexive system. Delany echoes Hall's observation that paddling negatively affects the individual not only physically, but psychologically. Delany, however, moves beyond Hall's focus on the "indignity" of paddling to indicate the ways in which the manipulation of black physiology produces and monitors racial subjectivity. Through the violent expressions of subjective states, Rube, whom the overseer describes as "'a queer animal,'" presents an ironic reorientation of Hall's description of his public vivisections in the United States: "I have been greatly engaged in making frogs and patients *lecture!* And I find this mode of proceeding *the* most satisfactory of all."[228] Like Hall's

frogs, Rube is made to speak through his (social) death, expressing conventional racial affects while foreclosing subjectivity within insensibility.[229]

From Discipline to Emancipation: The Fractal Form of the New History of Race and Science

In response to the conscription of black subjectivity within insensibility, black print discourse in a wide variety of scientific fields redeployed the tools and principles of scientific positivism against scientific racism. More recently, scholarship on the intersections of race and science has reexamined the significant role of these interventions both as they counter the disciplinary ideologies of the American School of ethnology and formulate alternative approaches to empirical investigation operating in the service of emancipatory projects.[230] As I demonstrate here, Delany explored the emancipatory potential of scientific experimentation through a form of vital materiality, in which sensibility is circuited among the subjects and objects of empirical investigation. Drawing lines of affiliation among the physiology of the senses and the physics of animated matter, Delany formulates a model of sensibility operating through a series of mutually formative adaptations among individuals and their environment. Placed in relation to the scientific construction of black insensibility, Delany's racialized formulation of vital materiality presents two, complementary interventions. First, by contextualizing the principles of nature as presented by ethnographic surveyors within histories of racial subjugation, Delany levels a strong critique against the racialized anthropomorphism endemic in the natural sciences. Second, Delany presents a more fundamental reorientation of ethnography by appealing to the vitality of human and nonhuman matter as a potent force for the natural rights to emancipation. Delany's distributive model of social environmentalism thus at once unsettles essentialist racial identification and serves as a physiological basis for establishing projects of resistance.

Scholarship on Delany has generally focused on his political work on abolition, emigration, and Black Nationalism.[231] Delany's political work, however, was fundamentally entwined with his scientific work. In 1850, Delany became one of the first three black students to study at Harvard Medical School until being dismissed when the Dean, Oliver Wendell Holmes, submitted to the protests of students who felt the presence of black students threatened the reputation of the school. Delany led "The Niger Valley Exploring Party" in 1859 alongside the Jamaican naturalist Robert Campbell, a scientific expedition examining Western African ethnography, culture, and ecology as part of a planned emigration project. Demonstrating his ethnological knowledge cultivated by his travels in the U.S., Western Africa, and England, Delany lectured in New York and Ohio on comparative anatomy and published several works on the subject. Indeed, it was in reference to Delany's accomplishments as "the "head of a scientific corps of colored gentlemen, 'The Niger Valley Exploring Party'" that the editors of the *Anglo-African Magazine* introduced the first chapters of *Blake* to be published.[232]

Throughout his lifelong commitment to the study of ethnology, Delany unsettled the restrictive calculation and categorization of nineteenth-century race science by resituating the practice of scientific investigation in relation to vital materiality, the capacity of human and non-human matter to both resist the intentions of humans and function as what Jane Bennett describes as "quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own."[233] In its emphasis on the distributive agency of human and non-human materials, vital materiality offers a significant counter-model to the physiological determinism of antebellum ethnology. In the infamous treatise on comparative anatomy, *Types of Mankind*, Josiah C. Nott succinctly captures this axiomatic principle of physiological determinism: "the intellectual man is inseparable from the physical man; and the nature of the one cannot be altered without a corresponding change in

the other."[234] In contrast, vital materiality posits a distributive model of humanity comprising a highly complex assemblage of lively and self-organizing materials. In *Reassembling the Social*, Bruno Latour has similarly asserted the importance of conceptualizing social ties beyond human agency. For Latour, non-humans "have to be actors… and not simply the hapless bearers of symbolic projection."[235] Agency and cognitive ability, then, far from being the self-contained quality of the individual or group, are always a function of an assemblage of mediators located throughout the external environment. Bennett and Latour's work challenges the conception of agency as a self-determined function of human will, gesturing towards "a more *distributive* agency" of non-mechanistic materialism produced when objects disrupt, arrest attention, and reconfigure within new assemblages.[236]

Anticipating the theoretical formulations of Latour and Bennett, Delany's scientific and fictional work is particularly attuned to examining the various crossings between human and non-human matter, gesturing towards a distributive agency that unsettles the restrictive humanism of antebellum ethnology. Situated within the context of antebellum race science, an examination of Delany's approach to ethnology builds upon Latour and Bennett's work by exploring the implications of vital materiality in the racialized construction of thingness and humanity. In his *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party*, an ethnographic survey based on his expedition through Western Africa, Delany places pressure on the racial anthropomorphism popular in nineteenth-century travel writing that read African fauna as monstrous and destructive. Delany explicitly targeted the work of the Scottish missionary David Livingstone, whose 1857 *Missionary Travels* recounting his expeditions throughout Africa garnered critical acclaim in Europe and the U.S. In Delany's discussion of African ants, "so much talked of, and so much dreaded," Delany at once underscores and inverts Livingstone's

racialized reading of the destructive animosity demonstrated by black driver ants against "white" termites.[237] Delany writes to this effect: "I cannot endorse the statement…. As given by Dr. Livingstone, who, calling them 'black rascals,' says 'they stand deliberately and watch for the whites, which, on coming out of their holes, they instantly seize, putting them to death."[238] Delany counters Livingstone's condemnation of the "desperate hostility" of the black driver ants by taking the racial logic of Livingstone's anthropomorphic interpretation to its conclusion. Referring to the African ants as "good-hearted negro insects," Delany speculates suggestively that "perhaps the whites were *kidnappers*, in which case they served the white *rascals* right."[239] Where Livingstone's anthropomorphic reading of the destructive violence of the "black" ants against the "whites" naturalizes African savagery, Delany's anthropomorphic identification with the "good-hearted negro insects" justifies their militancy by historicizing the ants within the Atlantic slave trade. In other words, where Livingstone essentializes racial disparities by naturalizing a history of racial subjection, Delany historicizes nature and, in doing so, imagines the possibility of resisting historical conditions.[240]

By historicizing ethnographic anthropomorphism, Delany counters the racialized logic of the natural sciences with the possibility of revolution. At the same time, however, Delany also unsettles anthropomorphism itself through appeals to vital materiality. To this end, Delany additionally justifies the beneficial role of the African driver ants by arguing for their ecological significance in the self-balancing laws of nature. Delany writes that "this creature, like its white cousin, is also an instrument in the hands of Providence as a sanitary means," namely, "to destroy the excess of animal life which in the nature of things would be brought forth, with little or no destruction without them."[241] While understanding the history of racial subjugation leads Delany to a critical stance towards the natural sciences, Delany also finds in nature a potent,

dynamic force of progress. For Delany, the lines of identification between human and nonhuman matter operate in both directions. Delany's anthropomorphic reading historicizes nature by gesturing to the possibility of a slave revolt enacted through non-human insects. At the same time, by arguing that destruction serves a salubrious ecological function, Delany appeals to the self-balancing laws of nature as a powerful source for the natural right of subjugated peoples to revolution.[242]

Delany's ethnographic work resituates the distributive vitality of matter within a process of social environmentalism comprising a series of mutually inflected adaptations among humans and their environment. In *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, Delany formulates an approach to ethnography that places critical pressure on the operative term, "condition," fostering critical self-examination regarding the legal, political, and physiological condition of African Americans living in the U.S. while also demonstrating that this "true position" is, in fact, conditioned and conditional. Delany understood the conditional nature of race history through a model of heritability in which the racial subjection of one generation produces a physiological adaptation in the subsequent generation. Delany writes to this effect that "the degradation of the slave parent has been entailed upon the child, induced by the subtle policy of the oppressor, in regular succession handed down from father to son – a system of regular submission and servitude, menialism and dependence, until it has become almost a physiological function of our system, an actual condition of our nature."[243] And yet, as Delany consistently emphasizes, these adaptations repeatedly and productively fail to produce a unified, essential nature. When asking his readers, provocatively, whether "our wives and children" will "be debased and degraded as our mothers and fathers were," Delany responds, "by the instincts of nature, no!"[244] Social environmentalism, as Delany

defines it, thus works towards dual purposes, engraining the "system of regular submission and servitude" within the "actual condition of our nature" while simultaneously presenting the possibility to transcend subjection through intergenerational revolutions.

Delany captures this dualistic function by defining "*adaptation*" as a process in which "a continuance in any [social] position, becomes what is termed 'Second Nature.'"[245] By describing the product of adaptation as "'Second Nature,'" Delany recasts environmental determinism as a process of doubling, producing a duality of natures in tension with one another. Like W. E. B. Du Bois's notion of "double-consciousness," Delany's approach to "Second Nature" unsettles essentialism by indicating the inherent "two-ness" of racial subjectivity under the conditions of living in what both Delany and Du Bois correspondingly describe as "A (Negro) Nation within a Nation."[246] Where "double-consciousness" designates the internal duality of subjective experience, however, "Second Nature" redistributes this two-ness throughout the external environment. More radically, second nature moves from the register of racial identity ("this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others… an American, a Negro") to the level of process.[247] In this way, second nature demonstrates a multiplication of double-consciousness, unsettling not only essentialist identifications, but the environmental processes that shape subjectivity.

By reorienting adaptation as a process of multiplying heterogeneous natures, Delany formulates a social environmentalism that demonstrates what John Ernest describes as the "fractal dimensions" of nineteenth-century racial history.[248] Drawing on chaos theory, Ernest argues that nineteenth-century African American writers approached race not as "a Euclidian delineation of social space – a color line, a problem in need of a solution – but rather a social terrain characterized by fractal patterns" at once "irregular and definitive."[249] In a fractal form,

each part recreates the form of the whole, creating an infinitely complex pattern that repeats with a difference across different scales (fig. 2). In his foundational work, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Paul Gilroy argues that the "diaspora multiplicity" among the black Atlantic "is a chaotic, living, disorganic formation" that assumes "a fractal form in which the relationship between similarity and difference becomes so complex that it may continually deceive the senses."[250] Ernest and Gilroy's appeals to the fractal form serve to underscore the rhizomorphic contours of racial networks by broadening and relocating temporal and spatial scopes.

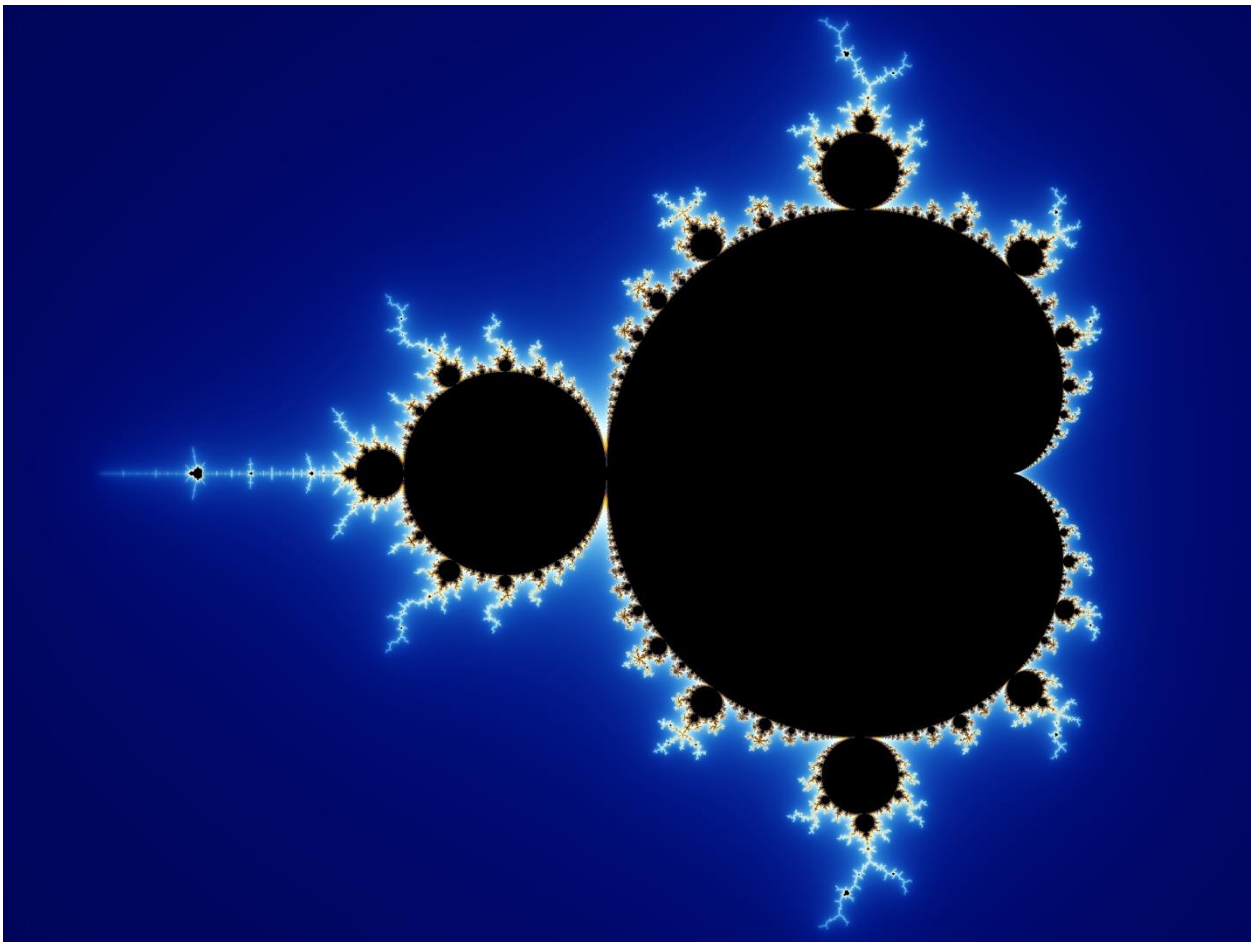

Figure 2. Wolfgang Beyer, *Mandelbrot Set*. September, 2005, Image, Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 4.0, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/21/Mandel_zoom_00_mandelbrot_set.jpg (Accessed March 3, 2016)

As I demonstrate here, the "fractal dimensions" of racial history serves as a significant figure for understanding Delany's approach to ethnography as a process of forming collectivity.

Delany initially explored the fractal forms of racial history through his formative experience with Black Freemasonry. In an 1853 speech entitled *The Origin and Objects of American Freemasonry*, Delany positions the fractal qualities of racial history as the original secret of Freemasonry. Delany himself was an active mason, helping to establish the Pittsburgh-based St. Cyprian Lodge in 1847. Prince Hall Masonry, named after the African American founder of the black Masons, offered Delany a model of counterpublic black community extending beyond the geographic, ideological, and historical boundaries of the nation. In the self-published speech, Delany defends the black, fraternal community of Prince Hall Freemasonry by tracing a covert intellectual lineage of scientific thought to its African origins. Delany argues to this effect that the original secret of Masonry "was possessed in the remotest period by the wise men of Egypt and Ethiopia."[251] Even "the Masonic Records" of the Old Testament, Delany asserts, owe their transmission to Moses, who was himself a "*fugitive slave*."[252] For Delany, then, the progress of Western, Christian civilization is not the result of the culturally dominant efforts of Anglo-Europeans as it was understood by the American School. Instead, Delany presents an Africanist presence secreted at the core of civilization.[253]

To replace Europe with Africa as the origin of civilization, however, would risk replicating the binary logic of racial difference, thereby violating Delany's claim throughout the speech that "All men, of every country, clime, color and condition, (when morally worthy,) are acceptable to the portals of Masonic jurisprudence."[254] Instead, Delany leverages the principles of scientific development in order to disassemble dichotomized distinctions, moving from racial line to fractal form. Revealing the contents of this secret tradition, Delany describes the physiological and intellectual capacities of humanity as a series of interconnected, tripartite systems that recapitulate the "trinity of systems" of God. Defining "Man, scientifically

developed" as a "moral, intellectual, and physical being – composed of an osseous, muscular, and vital structure; of solid, flexible, and liquid parts," Delany deconstructs and reassembles a heterogeneous series of components operating on several orders of the human condition simultaneously. As Delany's list of components proliferates, he draws affiliations among the principles of human nature (moral, intellectual, and physical), physiological structures (osseous, muscular, and vital), and, perhaps most radically, the properties of matter (solid, flexible, and liquid). Human and material properties inflect one another, presenting a more distributive model of subjectivity by attending to the fractal dimensions of personhood.

Delany's formulation of "Man, scientifically developed" functions less as a recognizable, common humanity than a force in the "likeness of God" that transcends physiological and physical constraints. Emphasizing that the "constituent principles" of the "mind" are themselves "incapable of analyzing or comprehending," Delany reconfigures the physiology of the mind as an electrified force, "which rises superior to its earthly tenement, with the velocity of lightning… and flies to the wide-spread expanse of eternal space."[255] Thomas Hamilton, the editor who published the initial run of *Blake* in *The Anglo-African Magazine*, similarly defines the racial history of black experience in the U.S. as a contentious force. In his introductory article published in the first issue of *The Anglo-African Magazine*, Hamilton argues alongside Delany that "The negro is something more than mere endurance; he is a force. And when the energies which now imbrute him exhaust themselves – as they inevitably must – the force which he now expends in resistance will cause him to rise: his force can hardly be measured to-day."[256] Hamilton's description of the "negro" as "a force" at once grapples with the capacities of disciplinary mechanisms to "imbrute" the drive for freedom within what Hamilton describes as

"safety-valves" while positing that this force is uncontainable, promising to exceed or rupture its systematic regulation.

In formulating a model of subjectivity that functions as an impersonal force, Delany drew on the principles of the natural sciences in order to explore the mutually inflected relationship between the physiology of the mind and the physics of animated nature. Delany wrote widely on the natural sciences. Two significant examples of this work, "Attraction of Planets" and "Comets" were published in the first two issues of *The Anglo-African Magazine* alongside the initial 1859 serialized run of *Blake*.[257] In "Comets," Delany examines the radical trajectories of these celestial bodies as a model of distributive agency among interconnected matter. Delany's description of this distributive agency, in turn, directly parallels and inflects his definition of "Man, scientifically developed." As in Delany's fractal series of interconnected systems comprising the original secret of freemasonry, a comparative reading of Delany's descriptions of the physiology of the mind and the physics of comets produces a mutually inflected, tripartite analogy. The "constituent principles of [the mind]" recapitulate the properties of comets, each of which Delany describes, respectively, as "incapable of analyzing or comprehending,… which rises superior to its earthly tenement, with the velocity of lightning,… and flies to the wide-spread expanse of eternal space," and, "beyond human conception,… which, like the nucleus termed a 'thunder bolt,' flies darting, blazing and sparkling through space."[258] In thinking *through* comets, Delany presents a fractal model of subjectivity that repeats with a difference across individual and cosmic scales.

In *Blake*, Delany situates the fractal qualities of subjectivity as the organizing principle in the formation of a fictional slave uprising. The loosely structured "plot" of the novel follows the rapid, circuitous movements of the eponymous Henry Blake through the United States, Western

Africa, and Cuba as he coordinates a conspiratorial "plot" among local, black communities. As Caleb Smith has argued, Blake serves less as a heroic figure of political resistance than a "medium" through which the unifying message of the text circulates.[259] Britt Rusert similarly argues regarding Blake's impersonal qualities that "Henry appears to readers more as a vector or force than as a character who develops within a narrative plot."[260] While productive in demonstrating the impersonal qualities of Blake's character as a circulatory force, these arguments depend upon a reading of Blake as a singular, self-contained medium, a reading that Delany's ethnographic work and the novel consistently unsettle. Instead, like Delany's "Man, scientifically developed," the force of Blake's character is inherently fractal, gesturing towards a distributive model of agency. In other words, Blake is not only a figure of the circulation along counterpublic networks, but a figure of the network itself.

While scholarship on *Blake* has regarded the text as a particularly rich exploration of antebellum racial politics along transnational circuits of exchange, its aesthetic merits as a literary work have been repeatedly dismissed as fragmented, meandering, or otherwise deficient.[261] In part, what has beguiled and sometimes frustrated criticism on *Blake's* literary form is the novel's structural absence of "plot." While the novel catalogues the process of assembling a conspiratorial "plot" in depth, the actual content of this "plot" is never disclosed to the reader and, by the end of the extant text, the much-anticipated revolt never materializes. Around the structuring absence of the "plot" on the level of both literary form and conspiratorial revolution, *Blake* presents what Eric Sundquist describes as a "political anatomy of slave culture": an itinerant empirical survey of the conditions of enslavement among distant and disparate subjugated populations.[262] Indeed, in its textual form, *Blake* more closely resembles the

assemblage of empirical and speculative observations of Delany's scientific work than the narrative conventions that often arrange the literary form of the slave narrative.

Far from a neutral process of observation, Blake's empirical investigation animates and organizes networks of affiliation among the subjects he interviews. In addition to collecting observations on the conditions of the various black Atlantic communities he visits through personal interviews, Blake's ethnographic project works towards cultivating a transnational, telegraphic sensibility. In the world of the novel, Delany's formulation of telegraphic sensibility centers on the transmission of a "secret;" the content of which is repeatedly and pointedly left undisclosed to the reader. By structuring the plot of *Blake* around a systematic lacuna regarding the nature of the "secret," Delany reorients narrative focus from its discursive content to the effects produced through the process of transmission itself. Describing the process of transmission in biological terms, Blake posits: "'All you have to do, is to find one good man or woman… and make them the organizers for their plantation, and they in like manner impart [the secret] to some other next to them, and so on. In this way it will spread like smallpox among them'" (41). Approaching the communication of the secret as a mode of viral replication, the secret appeals to a biological form of agency that is both entangled within the bodies it infects while transcending merely personal physiology. These fractal properties of the secret reconfigure the process of assembling a communal network as a pandemic outbreak. To return to the opening example, Blake's viral secret inflects (or *infects*) Delany's conceptualization of a black network as a collective nervous system, "but the touch of which arouses every fibre throughout the system."

Black Print Discourse on the Electric Sciences and the Telegraph

Delany's formulation of a telegraphic sensibility participated in a vital yet under examined body of black print discourse examining contemporary developments in the electrical sciences and the technologies of the telegraph. Black scientific discourse on electricity and the telegraph posited a model of sensibility operating through the interconnections between the individual nervous system and larger, electric networks. In the periodicals to which Delany contributed as an editor and writer, these connections between networks of individual nerves and telegraphic wires sought to cultivate anti-slavery social reform and unsettle racial dichotomies around sensibility. More broadly, electricity was treated as a material force for conceptualizing fractal vacillations across individual, national, and planetary scales. Expanding, global networks of exchange fueled reimaginings of the force of circuited, transnational sensibilities to cultivate a revolutionary overturning of national institutions supporting racial subjugation.

From the late eighteenth century through the middle of the nineteenth century, electricity served as a powerful metaphor for the politics of social reform. For many writers and political figures, the physiological effects of electric impulses materialized the shock of religious or political revelations, sympathetic attachments among collectives, and the experience of living in an increasingly modernized world. At the core of these metaphors were the captivating contradictions and ambiguities that electricity presented. Electricity challenged the Cartesian duality of mind and body, simultaneously affirming the individual, embodied experience of electrified reactions and gesturing towards a universal, spiritualized humanity. Theories of animal electricity and the nervous system circulating within both "high" scientific communities and popular performances understood electricity as the vital force animating the human body and its natural environment. Popular healers, public performances and print accounts equated the experience of social reform, including abolition, to the force of electrical shocks. Due to what

James Delbourgo describes as "its double status as a rational curiosity and wonderful experience," electrical experience served to mark the process of social reform as at once a rational, self-determined enterprise and a natural, spontaneous awakening.[263]

While recent scholarship has demonstrated the significance of electricity in transatlantic politics and aesthetics, African American periodicals on electricity in particular and the sciences more generally have largely been ignored. In the black periodicals Delany contributed to and edited, scientific accounts of the theoretical and pragmatic significance of electricity abounded.[264] Several articles in the *North Star* during the period in which Delany served as editor alongside Frederick Douglass as well as *The Anglo African Magazine* and *The Weekly Anglo African* in which *Blake* was serially published examined electricity as a scientific curiosity, technological instrument and a form of medical treatment. Taken together, these articles appeal to the scale and power of electrical circuits as a revolutionary force for establishing and actuating a counterpublic sphere.[265]

By exploring black scientific discourse on electricity and the telegraph, I join a recent body of scholarship on black print culture that has sought to reexamine the significance of black periodicals more broadly in antebellum politics and literature. Placing pressure on critical assessments of black print culture as a reactionary defense against racism and enslavement, this recent body of criticism has worked towards recovering the constitutive function of black print culture in constructing individual and collective identification and discussing the principles and activities best adapted to the progress of these collectives. A focus on black print culture additionally proposes an expansion of the category of "literature" to encompass a wide variety of genres including but not limited to speeches, magazine novels, poetry, political treatises and social commentary. This more capacious definition of "literature," in turn, emphasizes the

significant sociopolitical work of culture and literacy as a means to cultivate communal institutions around education, religion, and international affairs.[266] In examining black print articles on the electric sciences and the telegraph, I focus on a particular type of scientific literacy that was understood as a critical technology for reading not only the discursive content of scientific theories and discoveries, but the shifting scales of media circulation among increasingly global networks. In discussing science and technology, contributors to these periodicals also discussed what they understood to be the work that black print enterprises were doing.

Black print discourse on the natural wonders of electricity appealed to contemporary scientific developments as a means to conceive of vacillations across individual and global scales. In an article published during Delany's co-editorship at *The North Star* entitled "Electricity," the author observes that "the earth is the great reservoir of electricity, from which the atmosphere and clouds receive their portion of this fluid." [267] By witnessing this global process, "made manifest" through "the grand and terrific phenomena of thunder and lightning," the author asserts, "we see the magnificent scale on which the great machine works."[268] Here, encounters with electricity operate as a motive force for a planetary consciousness, in which a sense of shifting scales produces at once an experience of global connectivity and recognizes the radical alterity of this "great machine." As Gayatri Spivak argues, "planetarity" signifies a dialectical counterpart to the global. Whereas envisioning the global enacts a process of mastery through digital quantification, planetarity "is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system; and yet we inhabit it, on loan."[269] Planetarity, in turn, resituates the role of humans from "global agents" to "planetary subjects" through the recognition of the alterity of the world that we inhabit.[270]

Delany's articles on electricity published alongside *Blake* in *The Anglo African Magazine*, "The Attraction of Planets" and Comets," join the author of "Electricity" in working towards an appreciation of the radical alterity of planetarity. In "The Attraction of Planets," Delany builds upon late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century electric sciences that challenged the mechanistic worldview of Newtonian physics by positioning electricity as an animating force permeating all matter. For Delany, as with many others working in the electrical sciences, electricity bridged the physical and the spiritual by presenting a materialist approach to a lively and dynamic universe. "Electricity," Delany writes, "is universal or everywhere present," governing "the mighty economy [of] the *Mutual attraction* of matter, and *planetary motion.*"[271] While "The Attraction of Planets" subsumes this electric force within the self-balancing laws of nature, "Comets" grapples with the radical contingency of planetary motions that operate in relation to this "mighty economy" while remaining unbounded by the regulatory laws of nature.[272] In contrast to the uniform and calculable revolutions of the planets, comets, Delany writes, are "*transient* bodies, having no fixed centers – no definite time or path for revolution, but dashing on through space, visiting unknown regions."[273] As with "The Attraction of Planets," Delany attributes the radical motion of comets to the operation of "electric fire."[274] The unpredictable and irregular movements of comets affirm the continuous interplay of contingency operating within and alongside the self-balancing laws of nature. As Robert Levine observes, Delany's description of the radical movements of comets is also something of a self-portrait or character description of Blake as a "circulatory force… attempting to restore harmony and energy to bodies in need of reinvigoration."[275] This "circulatory force" participates in an economy of energy exchange while remaining fundamentally alien. Delany writes that "the purpose of comets would seem to be to distribute electricity throughout universal space, re-

supplying the continual loss that must be sustained to systems and planets by various causes, and thereby giving life, action, health and vigor to both animate and inanimate creation, to this and distant worlds, worlds to us unknown."[276] As in the structuring absence of "plot" of *Blake*, comets enact a process of transmission that remains "unknown" to scientific or institutional observation. Even at the expansive scale of the cosmos, Delany's methodological approach focuses on examining fugitive bodies operating at the boundaries of planetary frames. In "Comets," then, Delany proffers an intensification of his fractal approach in *Blake*, appealing to the unknowable operations of fugitive bodies that unsettle the boundaries of national and planetary scales.

The natural wonders of electricity, engendering the experience of traversing across vacillating scales, were frequently presented as a material counterpart to poetic expression. In "The Attraction of Planets," Delany draws this connection between electric motion and poetic expression through the material process of writing. Discussing the velocity of comets, Delany writes that "the exit of a meteoric missile, might not consume a longer time than would be required by the hand of the swiftest penman, to write the word *meteoric stone*."[277] For Delany, the process of writing presents a material connection to cosmic movements while gesturing to the failure of writing to fully capture this external sense of scale. In "Electricity," the author situates this interplay of vacillating scales within the process of aesthetic creation. Noting that "a single drop of water contains as much electricity as an ordinary flash of lightning – enough at least to destroy the life of an elephant," the author posits that "the little dew-drop, from which the poet has derived such sweet images, may suggest to us ideas of a more sublime nature." In characterizing the physical dimensions of the "little dew-drop" as "more sublime" than its poetic expression, the author joins Delany in tracing a double-movement in which aesthetic categories

express the experiential effects of electrified matter and point up a radical, dangerous force that transcends categorization. Similarly, an article published by Douglass and Delany in *The North Star* reprinting a selection from Robert Hunt's *The Poetry of Science* entitled "The Thunder Cloud and the Dew Drop" draws an extended comparison between "the creations of the romantic mind" of the poet and the force of electricity.[278] In the reprinted selection, Hunt argues that, while the "fancy" of "the poet" appeals to the phenomenon of the thunder-cloud to "[paint] a storm-king, [clothing] his demons in lightnings, and… heralded by thunders," such "wild imaginings" are no "less wonderful than the well-authenticated fact, that the dew-drop which glistens on the flower, and the tear which trembles on the eye-lid, holds locked in its transparent cells an amount of electric fire equal to that which is discharged during a storm from a thunder-cloud."[279] In both articles, the material force of electricity at once evokes the process of poetic expression and transcends personal subjectivity.[280]

In *Blake*, Delany similarly draws lines of affiliation between the experiential effects of empirical investigations of and aesthetic responses to the electrified force of natural phenomena. Placed in conversation, aesthetics and empiricism provide Delany with a framework in which to articulate a relation to planetarity that is subjective yet impersonal. During the novel's transition between Blake's itinerant survey of the conditions of slavery in the South and his quest to liberate his family and friends, the narrative pauses as Blake "[gazes] intently at the golden orbs of Heaven" (124). Delany then describes an elaborate cosmic display: "Now shoots a meteor, then seemingly shot a comet, again glistened a brilliant planet which almost startled the gazer; and while he yet stood motionless in wonder looking into the heavens, a blazing star whose scintillations dazzled the sight, and for the moment bewildered the mind, was seen apparently to vibrate in a manner never before observed by him" (124). Witnessing this display of celestial

vitality, Blake is "filled with amazement" (124). Though Blake initially interprets the unprecedented, cosmic vibrations as "having an especial bearing in his case," Delany immediately undercuts this providential reading, explaining that "the mystery finds interpretation in the fact that the emotions were located in his own brain, and not exhibited by the orbs of Heaven" (124). To read the cosmic motions as "emotions," Delany suggests, is to commit a providential form of the pathetic fallacy, misrecognizing planetary alterity as a personal intimation. In her astute analysis of this scene, Britt Rusert argues that Blake "dismisses the supernatural explanation in favor of a didactic lesson in rationalism" that, in turn, "quickly [reaches its] limits as the speculative roots of black metaphysics continually reveal themselves to be at the core of Western science."[281] In examining Delany's approach to telegraphic sensibility, however, my argument concerns less the opposition between supernatural and rational explanations than the relationship the passage draws between Blake's aesthetic response and the narrator's physiological explanation. While Blake's aesthetic response engenders a sense of vacillating across individual and cosmic scales, the narrator's physiological explanation indicates that this sense of vacillating scales remains radically other. This is not to suggest that the narrator's explanation dismisses Blake's response, but that the affinity is subjective rather than personal. If Delany offers a didactic lesson, it might be that Blake's mimetic interpretation operates in the wrong direction. What the scene reveals is not that cosmic bodies operate like sympathetic persons, but that subjectivity operates through fractal, vital movements enacted by cosmic bodies.

The politics of electric experience were intimately connected to the material conditions of circulation among expanding global markets and networks of communication. As the spread of telegraphic infrastructures during the mid-nineteenth century fueled capitalist and nationalistic

enterprises, electricity became a figure for the "civilizing" advancement of technology and the experience of living in an increasingly interconnected, global economy. Nationalist expansionism appealed to an intellectual tradition extending to the late-eighteenth century that figured the experience of revolution as an electrical revelation.[282] In black print discourse of the mid-nineteenth century, however, this nationalistic rhetoric evolved to encompass transnational connections within an increasingly expanding global network. In both material and figural terms, electricity engendered an experience of simultaneity across national borders, allowing for an experience of vicarious participation in a universal revolution. While black print discourse on the telegraph appealed to a spiritual, universal humanity that was often complicit in the eradication of (racial) embodiment, it also worked towards harnessing the radical opposition of telegraphic sensibility, deploying the international mobilization of revolutionary projects to critique the nation and call attention to the material conditions of enslavement.

Several articles in *The North Star* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper* examine the technological developments, scientific applications, and figurative significance of the telegraph.[283] In these articles, the telegraph serves as a symbol for the emancipatory potential of the written word and the "electric chain" connecting individuals in the antislavery cause. In an 1855 article in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* celebrating the success of the first fugitive slave case tried in Columbus, Ohio, the author reflects on the relationship between this evidence of abolitionary progress and the "telegraphic dispatch" through which it circulates: "This news must have been borne gladly upon the electric wing of the telegraph. How *apropos* that *such* tidings should be given to the lightnings! They send an electric thrill through every fibre of the *human* heart, and cause Liberty to lift up her desponding head."[284] The "lightnings" of the telegraph materialize the physiological experience of uniting individuals through their shared sense of

humanity. This sense of humanity is at once a gesture towards a universalizing ideal of "Liberty" and the material conditions of telegraphic networks. Significantly, however, the triumphant humanity is not presented as universal, but oppositional. The article thus draws a contradistinction between the particular, incisive force of the "lightnings" and the broader storm in which they strike: "Let the tempest speak forth words of woe against us! Let the thunders howl forth the fury of their insane wrath. So long as the *lightnings* bring gladness to our hearts" with "life giving words, words that have fire in them… let us lend a listening ear."[285] In contrast to the expansive rhetoric of the storm, which conjures the vociferous assertion of popular opinion, the relatively compressed "words" situate the telegraph as a counterpublic force.

As communication networks traversed national borders, their counterpublic force enabled anti-slavery writers to envision and participate in a telegraphic revolution aimed at unsettling national institutions that supported racial subjection. As Paul Gilmore observes, for many, the telegraph promised to end slavery by exposing hitherto undisclosed demonstrations of inhumane treatments of racialized others and fostering the recognition of a common, trans-racial humanity.[286] Douglass captures this telegraphic revolution in an article published soon after Delany left *The North Star*. In the article, Douglass writes: "Steam-navigation, railroads and electric telegraphs are bearing on their flashing wings the power of intelligence to quarters hitherto insensible to the world about them." As telegraphic sensibility circulates intelligence "hitherto insensible to the world," Douglass reflects on a revolution in "the power of international opinion." Douglass writes: "We live at a period which may be regarded as the dawn of that day when 'the pen shall supercede the sword,' and when mind shall be directed by intelligence, and not crushed and cramped by the iron hoofs of war and slavery."[287] For Douglass, the telegraph liberates intelligence from the material constraints of "the iron hoofs of

war and slavery," establishing a transnationally circuited ideal of humanity that functions as a corrective to national politics.[288]

An 1850 *North Star* article by John E. Robinson declares similarly that the "*media*… serves as the electric chain connecting being with being in God's universe."[289] Robinson, a committed spiritualist, approached the telegraph as a material expression of the spiritual connections unifying humanity. While such an approach accentuates the disembodying power of the spiritual telegraph, looking towards the egalitarian possibilities opened up by the transcendence of embodied identity, Robinson repeatedly insists on the materiality of telegraphic connections, both in the infrastructure of the telegraph and the physiological effects of this infrastructure on the senses. Robinson explicitly defends this materialist approach against the criticism that the telegraph is "repulsive and totally at variance with the dignity and refinement which we would please to accord to the disembodied spirits of our kind" as "about as devoid of calm rationality as the common estimate of manhood by the hue of the skin he wears."[290] In this complex analogy, Robinson's materialist approach at once leverages the disembodying power of spiritualism towards overcoming racial distinctions while suggesting that the particular, material properties, whether of the telegraph or, by extension, physiology, require a deeper appreciation than might first appear on the surface.

In a playful reference to the fact that the *North Star* was located in Rochester, a center of telegraphic communication, Robinson asks Douglass to "step with me from your office across to the Telegraph Station, where the unseen lightnings are heralding us the swift-winged thoughts from all points of the compass." As in the previously discussed articles on the natural wonders of electricity, Robinson presents the material effects of the telegraph as an aesthetic response. Having imaginatively stepped with Douglass to the Telegraph Station, Robinson writes: "Hark!

listen to that electric hammer, as it scores the language on the bit of paper. Do you hear the rapping? Click. Click. Click. It is odious! No, it is beautiful! 'I love to witness it' – you say… But how it raps! Yes, you will say, but this rapping is done by machinery, and therefore beautiful." Like Douglass, Robinson draws upon the telegraph to materialize an "embodied spirit" circulating through and uniting humanity. Drawing a connection between the popular practice of spirit rappings at spiritualist séances originating with the Fox sisters in Rochester and the "Click" of the electric hammer, Robinson defends the "beautiful" qualities of telegraph as the manifestation of spiritual embodiment.[291] For Robinson, the "machinery" of the telegraph, rather than undercutting the ethereality of spirits, reaffirms its disembodying power.[292]

While Douglass and Robinson's utopian appeals to the telegraph look to the possibility of a revolution of the mind and spirit through a common humanity, such an approach, as Douglass himself understood, risked replicating a racial logic that presented white, abstract personhood as the benchmark for equality. At the same time, however, anti-slavery writers looked to the telegraph as a medium for organizing and actualizing material revolutions aimed against national institutions. Several articles on organized abolitionist protests and conventions redeployed the "electric" spirit of the American Revolution against nationally sanctioned institutions supporting proslavery interests. In an article in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* on the Boston Slave Riot of 1854, the author emphasizes the "electric eloquence" of Wendell Philips and Theodore Parker in reinvigorating the "Constructive Treason" of the American Revolution, organizing a large crowd of antislavery protesters who then attacked the Boston Court House in a failed attempt to rescue Anthony Burns, an escaped slave arrested under the Fugitive Slave Act.[293] Similarly, in an 1849 article in *The North Star* discussing the antislavery convention in Buffalo, New York, the author asserts that, with the convention came "such a gathering, and such a spirit, as had never been

witnessed in our land since the Revolution; and the fact sped on the electric wires, and was borne in letters, and by the press, all over the country, and to its National centre. What followed? The Slave-Power was defeated, downcast, dependent."[294] In both articles, regional circuits of antislavery protests and conventions are presented as reviving the revolutionary project against the national institutions that claim to act on its behalf. As the "electric eloquence" of the revolutionary spirit is conducted through the "electric wires" of the telegraph, its collective force is radicalized as a counterpublic sensibility.

While regional networks reclaimed the revolutionary spirit of the national project, working from the inside out, black print discourse on the telegraph also moved beyond the nation, engaging the transnational circulation of revolutionary movements in order to engender counterpublic, telegraphic sensibilities across political and geographic borders. In an article in *The North Star* on the French Revolution of 1848, the author observes that "thanks to steam navigation and electric wires, we may almost hear the words uttered, and see the deeds done, as they transpire."[295] According to the author, the immediacy and scope of the telegraph have ushered in a revolution in revolution itself:

> A revolution now cannot be confined to the place or the people where it may commence, but flashes with lightning speed from heart to heart, from land to land, till it has traversed the globe, compelling all the members of our common brotherhood at once, to pass judgment upon its merits. The revolution of France, like a bolt of living thunder, has aroused the world from its stupor.[296]

The immediacy of the telegraph mobilizes revolutions, unsettling national borders through the transnational connections among "all the members of our common brotherhood." And yet, these

connections are presented less as a spiritualized, common humanity transcending embodiment than a contentious, electrified response intensifying internal divisions within the nation.

Indeed, just as the telegraphic mobilization of revolutions unsettles national boundaries, the author traces a corresponding unsettling of national sensibility: "there is no sympathy that can be called national, for France, and we ought to be ashamed to affect it."[297] National sympathy is impossible because the nation institutionalizes racial subjection and is therefore categorically antithetical to egalitarianism and, correspondingly, to the possibility of a unified sensibility as such. Instead, the writer states that "There are only two classes in this country who are in a position sincerely to sympathise with France in her present glorious struggle in behalf of liberty, and those are the negroes and the abolitionists…. All others stand rebuked by her noble example."[298] While national sympathy remains impossible, the author accentuates the material effects of the revolution for the contestation of slavery, writing that "simultaneously with the fall and crash of royalty in France, a terrible noise rung out from the galling chains of fettered millions in our own land… The pent-up fires of freedom still live, and though bound down by the strata of tyranny for ages, the sovereign element will burst all fetters."[299] Here, what Robinson describes as the "electric chain" of the media materializes the "galling chains of fettered millions" in slavery. Substituting national sympathy with a fractal model of race history, the author posits a telegraphic sensibility that gestures at once to the transnational circulation of revolution and the local, material conditions of enslavement.

A Dangerous Material: Telegraphic Sensibility and the Aesthetics of Conspiracy

In *Blake*, Delany draws on the telegraphic circulation of revolution examined in black scientific discourse in order to formulate a distributive model of collective resistance. Like many of the

publications on the telegraph in black periodicals, Delany appeals to telegraphic sensibility throughout the novel as a counterpublic force, establishing an electrified experience of connection among disparate, subjugated peoples while simultaneously grounding these connections in the material conditions of enslavement and racial subjection. Delany, however, goes further in radicalizing this oppositional orientation by resituating what Paul Gilmore terms the "subjective universality" of aesthetic encounters with electricity as a conspiratorial force of resistance. [300] For Delany, the relationship between electricity and conspiracy works both ways: electrified responses to the process of assembling intercommunal networks actuate conspiratorial organization while the circulation of conspiracy is rendered electrical in its physiological effects both within and outside the collective.[301] By radicalizing the oppositional orientation of telegraphic sensibility as a conspiratorial force, Delany instrumentalizes covert, intercommunal networks towards a transnational project of revolution. Yet, in materializing this electrified network, Delany intensifies the structuring ambiguities of its politics, rendering the revolutionary project palpably immanent while retaining a productive opacity regarding its design.

Delany repeatedly casts this radicalizing agency of intercommunal, conspiratorial networks within a model of social environmentalism in which ecological materials unsettle the social and political terrain of the nation. Connecting the electric shocks of telegraphic sensibility to the dynamic destruction of natural forces, *Blake* envisions a revolutionary process that both naturalizes telegraphic networks and technologizes natural environments. By opening national boundaries through the providential cataclysm Delany reads in nature, Delany mines an alternative racial historiography that compresses and reanimates the revolutionary histories of the American Revolution, Nat Turner's rebellion, and Cuban conspiracies for independence. In

Blake, national and natural cataclysms mutually inflect one another as telegraphic networks posit a sense of simultaneity across time.

Throughout *Blake*, Delany catalogues the various, covert methods of communication among distant, black communities that exceed and disrupt the surveilling capacities of the slave system. James Redpath, a radical abolitionist who owned and operated *The Weekly Anglo-African* during the newspaper's serialization of *Blake*, referred to this covert communication infrastructure, significantly, as "The Underground Telegraph." Redpath in fact attempted, unsuccessfully, to work directly with Delany a matter of weeks before the publication of *Blake* by recruiting Delany as an agent of Redpath's Haitian Emigration Bureau.[302] In a chapter of Redpath's *The Roving Editor; or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* that Douglass reprinted in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, Redpath marvels at the "secret and rapid modes of communication among the slave population of the South… in spite of strict surveillance on the plantation, and careful watching abroad."[303] Redpath observes that slaves are able to communicate rapidly across vast distances, at times exceeding the speed of the official, public transmission of information.[304] Like Delany, Redpath connects the operation of the underground telegraph to an Africanized ecology, observing that "the dense forests, swamps and morasses, which the negroes alone can tread with impunity, enable them to avoid the highways and beaten paths wherein they would be likely to meet the patrol."[305] Observing that black fugitives are "thoroughly systematizing this Underground Telegraph," Redpath presents this covert network as a powerful infrastructure for organizing "a formidable insurrection." While Redpath envisions this insurrection to be "directed by white men," he also emphasizes that the slaves themselves already "*know this fact*."[306] In a description that could describe the project of *Blake*, Redpath looks to "the appropriate hour for sounding the alarm," in which, "By its [the underground

telegraph's] operations, speedily, surely and swiftly, will the news spread southward, and reach, in the silent hours of the night, thousands of eager souls now awaiting, in trembling anxiety, for the terrible day of deliverance."[307]

In *Blake*, Delany includes a suggestive gesture to this alternative, "underground telegraph" by placing Blake aboard the aptly named steamer, the "Telegraph No. 2." Delany joins Redpath in examining the significant role of the "underground telegraph" for organizing a revolutionary movement imperceptible to the surveilling capacities of the slave institution. Traveling to Arkansas, Blake is surprised to discover that his arrival and intentions have been anticipated by the local, black community. Upon asking one of his hosts, Aunt Rachel, how they knew of his project before his appearance, Aunt Rachel reveals a secret communication system among the local enslaved peoples traveling through the "wilderness," asserting, "wite folks know nothin' 'bout it" (89). Impressed by this "good general secret understanding" capable of getting "word from each other so far apart," Blake declares: "You're ahead of all the other states" (89).[308] Throughout Blake's travels, Delany records similar instances in which distant and disparate communities "at once [enter] into the soul of his mission, seeming to have anticipated it" (84). In anticipating Blake's mission, these regional networks register what Jordan Stein refers to as the "messianic telos" of the novel, in which the anticipated redemption of the African race is rendered immanent through the providential approach to nationalism. As Stein argues, Delany's messianic telos situates nations "as attempts to redeem slavery by creating an alternative social order that transcends it."[309] Here, Delany redeploys the intercommunal connections among regional networks in order to establish an alternative social order that, fractal-like, operates at once through subnational, subaltern networks and the transnational circuitry of Blake's movements.

Delany diagnoses the physiological effects of these underground networks as an electrified, telegraphic sensibility. During one of his many covert meetings among local black communities, Delany imparts the secret of his project to a family in Richmond, Virginia. In describing the effects of this disclosure, Delany draws a material connection between Blake's project and Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion in nearby Southampton County. Delany writes: "when [Blake was] developing his scheme, the old material extinguished and left to mould and rot after the demonstration at Southampton, was immediately rekindled, never again to be suppressed until the slaves stood up the equal of the masters. Southampton – the name of Southampton to them was like an electric shock" (116). As with Douglass's mobilization of revolution through the telegraph, Delany appeals to the force of "electric shock[s]" in order to collapse spatial and temporal scales.

Presenting the revitalizing effects of these electric shocks through organic metaphors, Delany envisions this collapse of spatial and temporal scales as a transformation of the local ecology. When Blake later enters the "mystical, antiquated, and almost fabulous Dismal Swamp," he discovers a kind of living, communal archive of revolutionary history among "the old confederates of the noted Nat Turner" (112). Welcoming Blake as "the harbinger of better days," this covert collective of "Virginia and North Carolina's boldest black rebels" present themselves as the embodiment of a lineage of slave uprisings extending to the revolutionary period. The narrator observes that, among these black nationalists, "the names of Nat Turner, Denmark Veezie [sic], and General Gabriel were held by them in sacred reverence; that of Gabriel as a talisman. With delight they recounted the many exploits… some of the narrators claiming to have been patriots in the American Revolution" (113). The revolutionary lineage embodied in the maroons operates as a counter-history to the national project, demonstrating that

the movement for liberty, far from being definitively established by the Revolutionary War, remains a persistent endeavor among the disenfranchised.

Through Blake's discovery of the living archive enduring across generations in the Dismal Swamp, Delany gestures to the revolutionary potential of his ethnographic project to revitalize underground networks of resistance. At the same time, however, Delany also registers profound ambivalence concerning the viability of the maroons as a model for collective progress.[310] Andy Doolen argues to this effect that the living archive in the Dismal Swamp, while providing a counter-history to the sacred origin of the national project, also suggests that the U.S. national model is fundamentally inadequate to the task of black revolution.[311] In addition to this political critique, however, Delany dedicates extensive narrative focus to developing a materialist critique of the Dismal Swamp community. Examining Delany's ethnographic project in *Blake* in relation to vital materiality, Delany's contention against the practice of conjure concerns not only its dependence upon nationalist ideology, but its complicity within the consolidation of economic and social capital.

For Delany, the practice of conjure enacts a misappropriation of vital materiality that elucidates by contrast the distinguishing features of Delany's own materialist project in *Blake*. Delany most thoroughly develops this critique through Blake's disenchanted reading of the practice of conjure. In describing the performance of Gamby Gholar, "a noted high conjuror and compeer of Nat Turner," as he practices his "art," Delany repeatedly and incisively undercuts the supposedly magical properties of Gholar's extensive collection of "mysterious… articles" (112, 114). Delany catalogues this collection in depth, describing a heterogeneous assemblage that includes "bits of woolen yarn, onionskins, oystershells, finger and toenails, eggshells, and scales which he declared to be from very dangerous serpents" (112). However mysterious this

collection appears at first, Delany works with equally meticulous attention to disenchant the supposedly supernatural properties ascribed to the assortment of objects. Moving from object to object, Blake reveals that the serpent scales are, in fact, the scales of "innocent and harmless fish," a "mysterious and precious 'blue stone'" is nothing more than a "fragment of green bottle glass," and what Gholar terms "the 'charm bone of a treefrog'" is actually the "breast-bone of a small bird" (112-3). By revealing the quotidian nature of these supposedly supernatural objects, Delany suggests, by extension, that the equally talismanic reverence for "the names of Nat Turner, Denmark Veezie, and General Gabriel" may be more a result of nostalgic projection than a vital source for revolution.

As with the collection of miscellaneous debris, the revolutionary lineage of the Dismal Swamp acts as a kind of repository disconnected from the circuited struggle for freedom in the present. The Dismal Swamp, in this way, presents an inversion of the underground telegraph that Blake praises in Arkansas, operating through consolidation rather than circulation. If the underground telegraph demonstrates the emancipatory potential of intercommunal, materialist circuits of exchange in resisting the commodification of black bodies within localized plantations, the process of consolidation enacted by conjure demonstrates a materialist approach through a kind of commodity fetishism that misrecognizes the subjective projection of a supernatural force external to the material properties of the object as a discovery of its true, spiritual nature. Blake himself articulates a similarly Marxist critique of the practice of conjure when he later discloses to his friends that "'all it does, is to put money into the pockets of the pretended conjurer, [and] give him power over others by making them afraid of him" (136). The feigned spiritual vitality of talismanic objects, for Delany, reinforces as it veils the consolidation of social and financial capital within a hierarchical, ideological structure.

While Delany critiques the supernatural force of objects in the practice of conjure, Blake's purpose in circulating within and without the nation entails a related, though distinct, process of harnessing the transformative potential of material connections among local, black communities. In contrast to the projection of human mastery onto the objects found in the local environment that marks the commodity fetishism of conjure, Blake's enterprise enacts a kind of "pathetic fallacy in reverse," reading the properties of matter into the process of assembling a conspiratorial counterforce.[312] In particular, Delany places critical pressure on the liminal status of "things" to designate specific, material objects while simultaneously gesturing to an unidentifiable generality that Delany links to the process of circulation itself. By linking the liminal status of "thingness" to the process of assembling a counterpublic network, Delany works in *Blake* towards establishing a mode of collectivity that operates less through proscriptive political principles or hierarchical structures than a radically distributive agency. Delany understood this distributive agency of things as at once a function of and response to international circuits of capital entangled within the production of slave labor. While the system of slave labor granted individuals the status of things, Delany also suggests in *Blake* that thingness need not solely function as an oppressive objectification. Instead, Delany appeals to the unsettling properties of things that interrupt commodification and control, demonstrating forms of agency that challenge enslavement and subjugation.

In his work on the object relations of literary form, Bill Brown examines the "specific unspecificity" of things, which "hover over the threshold between the nameable and unnameable, the figurable and unfigurable, the identifiable and unidentifiable."[313] Brown places particular emphasis on the "suddenness with which things seem to assert their presence and power," acting as "occasions of contingency – the chance interruption – that disclose a physicality of things."[314]

Jane Bennett writes to similar effect in her definition of "*Thing-Power*" as "the strange ability of ordinary, manmade items to exceed their status as objects and to manifest traces of independence or aliveness, constituting the outside of our own experience."[315] In *Blake*, Delany leverages the capacity of things to act as catalysts for contingency operating against the objectifying regulation of slave labor and the racial ideologies that support it. As Delany himself emphasizes, the liminal status of things holds particular significance for the conditions of enslavement, what Harriet Beecher Stowe articulated in her original subtitle for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: "The Man that was a Thing."[316] In *Blake*, Delany also places particular emphasis on the institutional treatment of "the Negro" as "an animated thing of convenience" (109). Delany, however, does not limit his approach to the relationship between racial subjection and things to a sentimental critique of the dehumanizing effects of enslavement exemplified by Stowe. Instead, Delany radicalizes a network of things within a conspiratorial counterpublic, redeploying the distributive agency of materiality towards unsettling the objectification of black subjectivity.

Throughout *Blake*, Delany repeatedly uses the liminal word "thing" to designate a form of black agency that produces material effects while remaining fundamentally unknown within the disciplinary surveillance of black subjects. As in his appeal to telegraphic sensibility, Delany imbues things with the force of electric shocks through the recognition of the radical alterity of an unknowable, immanent counterpublic. Describing the first transmission of Blake's "secret" to his fellow slaves on Colonel Franks's plantation, Delany writes: "whilst yet upon their knees [having breathed a silent prayer], Henry imparted to them the secrets of his organization. 'O, dat's da thing!' exclaimed Andy" (40). Describing the "secrets of [Blake's] organization" as "'da thing!,'" Andy's declaration casts Blake's project within the specific unspecificity of things, tracing the material effects produced in its circulation while refusing to disclose its discursive

content to the reader. As the narrative and organization develops, Delany connects the undisclosed secret to the network itself. In discovering the existence of the underground telegraph in Arkansas, Blake echoes Andy's declaration, "Why, that's the very thing! ...You folks in Arkansas must be pretty well organized already" (89). By declaring both Blake's "secret" and the underground telegraph to be "the thing," Delany suggests that the "secret" comprises the process of assembling collective networks itself without revealing the organizing principles directing this process. The network thus takes on a kind of accretive agency, disseminating a self-replicating design that remains undefined while continuing to exert material force as "the thing."

Delany further complicates matters by drawing a comparison between the circulation of the secret organization as thing and the circulation of the consumable products of the plantation zone.[317] Overhearing Aunt Rachel's singing upon learning Blake's secret, a "patrol" of "business-men" and "lawyers" enters Aunt Rachel's hut. While initially questioning the family regarding Blake's suspicious appearance, the patrol quickly reveals that their investigation is a mere pretense for enjoying a "'frolic among the Negroes'" (93). As the scene progresses, Delany exposes the "'frolic among the Negroes'" as a fetishized desire to consume the products of black labor and domesticity. Drawing an implicit connection between the desire to consume these products and the fetishization of blackness, the patrol solicits a meal from Aunt Rachel, declaring: "'give me at any time the cooking in the Negro quarters before your great-house dainties'" (93). Delany then proceeds to catalogue a collection of consumable things in depth, placing particular emphasis on the products of the southern and Caribbean plantation zones, including "a large flask of Jamaica rum,… a plug of honey-cured tobacco," and the use of "the full-bred Cuba dog" in catching fugitive slaves (90, 93). While the patrol indulges in the

consumption of the fetishized things produced through plantation labor, however, Delany repeatedly alludes to the suprasensible presence of "the thing": the conspiratorial organization aimed at overturning the slave system. When a member of the patrol recites the biblical passage in reference to Blake, "the 'laborer is worthy of his hire,'" for instance, Aunt Rachel suggestively replies "with emphasis": "'Yes 'ndeed, seh, dat he is!'" (92).[318] Within the interplay among the patrol and the inhabitants of the hut, the "'laborer[s]'" products retain a power of materiality as things that work towards divergent purposes. For the patrol, the products of the plantation zone are substituted for fetishized commodities in which the desire to consume is bound up with racial subjection. At the same time, Delany suggests that the thingness of the products of labor might be reclaimed by the laborers themselves, animating projects of resistance circulating alongside commodities while working against racial and economic objectification.

While the operations of the covert networks in *Blake* remain unknown to the surveilling capacities of the slave institution, the material force of these networks circulates broadly, producing effects both within and outside the collective. Indeed, Anglo-Americans' fear regarding the possibility of insurrection is consistently expressed as a fear of "things." When Colonel Franks discovers that several of his slaves have escaped, the term "thing" proliferates throughout the pages of the novel, taking on a kind of fractal agency through its frenzied repetition. As Colonel Franks works, unsuccessfully, to discover the agency behind the missing slaves, he repeatedly states: "'There's something wrong about this thing, Mrs. Franks, and I'll be hanged if I don't ferret out the whole before I'm done with it!... By Monday morning, hanged if I don't know all about this thing… My dear, this thing must be probed to the bottom at once! Things are taking such a strange course, that we don't know whom to trust. I'll be hanged if I understand it!" (44, 49, 53).[319] Colonel Franks's encounters with a palpable yet unknowable

agency rendered imminent through the insistent phrase "this thing" produces a fractal proliferation of things that unsettles the conditions of the plantation itself: "things are taking such a strange course, that we don't know whom to trust."

As the persistent repetition of "things" infects Colonel Franks's speech, his capacity to conduct himself as a self-possessed, liberal subject is put in crisis, threatening the possibility of erasure, to "be hanged," through the inability to identify the impending presence of the thing. In infecting linguistic form, things function analogously to what Jordan Stein describes as the capacity of style "to perform two gestures simultaneously: style both suggests without revealing and obscures without concealing."[320] Throughout the novel, the unsettling qualities of things not only propel the diegetic project of assembling collectivity in the world of the novel, but the formal arrangement of the novel itself. In so doing, Delany works towards what Bill Brown describes as rendering "the work of art as a different mode of mimesis – not one that serves to represent a thing, but one that seeks to attain the status of a thing."[321] Namely, by repeatedly and pointedly refusing to disclose the design of the secret to the reader, Delany fashions *Blake* as a fractal form that produces the same epistemological uncertainty that Delany attributes to the things that circulate within the text. As evidenced by the critical oscillations between reading the novel as either a progressive model of transnational, black diaspora or a complicit participation in nationalist expansionism that continue today, Delany structures *Blake* as a catalyst in which the representational affordances of thingness allow for readers to think alongside the conditions of organizing collectivity without fully directing this process of organization towards an identifiable or fully coherent political agenda.

Delany situates the distributive agency of things within a form of social environmentalism wherein the ecologies of plantation zones participate in the revolutionary

project of the novel. If the circulation of products of plantation zones suggests the possibility that laborers might reclaim the thingness produced through enslavement against the slave institution, Delany's approach to social environmentalism posits the possibility of reclaiming the ecology of the plantation zone itself. As with Colonel Franks's encounters with unknowable things that unsettle the conditions surrounding him, Delany's instrumentalizing of ecological materials unsettle the political and social terrain of the nation. In so doing, Delany explores through *Blake* an approach to ecology that functions analogously to what Monique Allewaert terms the "Swamp Sublime." Allewaert argues that the ecological entanglements of tropical "plantation zones" produced "unmappable and (in the Anglo-European imagination) Africanized spaces… that compromised efforts to produce state, economic, and scientific order."[322] Plantation zones localized a series of processes wherein human and nonhuman agencies became entangled. Closely linked to marronage, these entanglements appealed to natural ecologies as direct participants in the process of revolution, unsettling the plantation system itself. As in his work on African flora and fauna in the *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party*, Delany focuses in particular on the providential cataclysms he reads in the destructive operations of nature. For Delany, the providential destruction of nature serves as both a figure for and participant in the revolutionary overturning of enslavement and the national institutions that support it.

Blake envisions a social environmentalism in which the material properties of the natural environment shape and participate in the spread of a revolutionary sensibility. In Nashville, the narrator reflects that "the introduction of [Blake's project] was like the application of fire to a drought-seasoned stubble field. The harvest was ripe and ready for the scythe, long before the reaper and time for gather came" (122-123). As in Blake's pandemic vision of underground

networks and Delany's reading of the salubrious function of destruction in west-African fauna, the organic metaphors in *Blake* find in nature a providential form of catastrophism in which the calamitous potential of the environment to thwart human interests is redistributed in the service of political and cultural activism. In so doing, *Blake* formulates an ecological deterritorilization of political geographies. Delany writes to this effect that, as a result of Blake's "seclusions" and "organizations" in Georgia, the state itself "stands like a city at the base of a burning mountain, threatened with destruction by an overflow of the first outburst of lava from above" (109). In presenting the effects of Blake's circulation, Delany describes a revolutionary overturning in which the destructive potential of the environment unsettles the political boundaries of the state.[323] Drawing a connection between Blake's "organizations" in establishing underground, telegraphic networks and an impending, volcanic eruption, Delany naturalizes networked infrastructures for organizing resistance while instrumentalizing ecological forces in the service of revolution.[324]

In the final section of the novel, which centers on Blake's attempts to organize an insurrectionary effort to overthrow Spanish rule in Cuba, Delany incorporates the deterritorialization he reads in nature into the literary form of the novel in order to examine the aesthetic dimensions of telegraphic sensibility beyond the boundaries of the nation. In moving from the U.S. to Cuba, Delany leverages transnational, telegraphic networks towards a reorientation of national historiographic and political frameworks. Like Delany's fractal deployment of literary form as a catalyst for the unsettling epistemological effects produced by things, Delany increasingly casts the circuited, electrified responses of assembling a conspiratorial counterpublic as a function of aesthetic experience. As critics have noted, a significant function of *Blake's* political and literary work is its polyvocal qualities, conjuring a

multitude of voices that contribute to the larger historiographic project of the novel while never collapsing this heterogeneous assemblage into a unified message.[325] Delany approaches this polyvocal aesthetic through the conspiratorial properties of electrified, telegraphic sensibility. Echoing the descriptions of the destructive power of electricity in black print culture as "more sublime" than its poetic expression, Delany insists on the material responses engendered through poetic expression as a means to actuate the conspiratorial counterpublic. In exploring the intersections of aesthetic expression and the embodied, circuited responses it provokes, Delany at once naturalizes telegraphic sensibility as a spontaneous revelation regarding the right to revolution presented in the providential cataclysms in nature and emphasizes the self-determined agency of poetic expression as a critical mediator for political action. The aesthetic qualities of telegraphic sensibility resituate the physiology of racial identification, moving from the consolidation of political organization through common, essentializing features or prescriptive principles to a fractal form, in which the telegraphic circuitry of aesthetic responses to the process of organizing collectivity actuates the political and cultural work of the novel.

Delany explores the aesthetics of telegraphic sensibility through the circulation of poetry authored by Blake's coleader in the Cuban conspiratorial movement, Placido. In describing the aesthetic responses elicited by Placido's poetry, Delany repeatedly casts the physiological effects as an electrified experience of connection and circulation. As Placido works "industriously disseminating the principles… designed to be put in operation," Delany reflects: "These words, though softly and fearfully spoken – as if in thunder tones – were indelibly impressed on every heart, while the sentiments of song, like a lightning flash, ran through every mind the length and breadth of the island" (238). Placido's poetic electricity fosters connections among the revolutionary assemblage in Cuba through a shared, material response. Here the invocation of

the electrical "lightning flash" works to naturalize revolutionary enthusiasm while simultaneously underscoring its constructed nature as a product of Placido's "tongue and pen" (238). As with Delany's approach to social environmentalism, the circulation of Placido's poetry electrifies the "length and breadth of the island," deploying the vitality of the social and political environment in order to reanimate the geographic boundaries of Cuba. Delany additionally casts the political and aesthetic force of Placido's poetry "whispered… privately" in conspiratorial terms, relaying "sentiments of song, enigmatically, though comprehensively" (238). The significance of electric, aesthetic expression and response throughout *Blake* lies in its double status: being immediately and spontaneously felt in its material force while eliding overt, public disclosure.

The electric effects of telegraphic sensibility, like the thingness of the covert networks in which they operate, evoke analogous material responses that transcend the collective, circulating throughout the external social environment. Delany describes both the process of organizing resistance within the counterpublic community and the recognition of the impending alterity of conspiratorial networks by those in positions of power as an electrified response. When Count Alcora, the Spanish military governor presiding over Cuba, at last discovers evidence of Blake and Placido's "bold design to wrest from Spain the Island of Cuba, and instead of a Castilian, establish a Negro government" (270), Delany describes his physiological reaction as "the shock which electrified every nerve and dormant fiber of his system; the stimulant which exciting him to frenzy, induced him to neutralize every agency in the fearfully approaching issue, as far as it could be known" (270). In describing Count Alcora's revelation regarding the immanent presence of the conspiratorial organization, Delany connects the "shock [electrifying] every

nerve and dormant fiber of his system" to the recognition of a distributive agency proliferating throughout the social environment.

The character, Placido, is a fictional analogue for the historical figure, Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés, who wrote under the penname Plácido. Plácido was executed in 1844 for allegedly performing a key role in La Escalera, the suspected or fabricated conspiracy to overthrow Spanish rule in Cuba.[326] Plácido's martyrdom in the effort to organize black communal resistance and his capacity as a poet would be familiar to Delany's readers, as several articles on the subject, some written by Delany himself, appeared in the years leading up to and including the serialization of *Blake*.[327] Delany repeatedly and self-consciously calls attention to Placido's anachronistic appearance in the novel. During a meeting between Blake and Placido, for instance, Blake declares, ironically: "'You, Placido, are the man for the times!'" (196).[328] Delany grounds the anachronistic convergence of temporalities before and after Placido's execution within the immediacy of poetic expression and aesthetic response. Upon Placido's presentation to Blake of a poem "'just finished,'" Blake responds: "'I thank God that it has been my lot to hear it, culled fresh from your fertile brain'" (196). Rendering Placido's thought in material terms, "culled fresh from [his] fertile brain," Delany conjures a counterfactual simultaneity across the intervening decade since Placido's execution that animates both the aesthetic response of Blake and revolutionary movement of *Blake*. Through this counterfactual simultaneity of Blake's revolutionary project and *Blake*'s aesthetic project, Delany materializes the claim, articulated in his political writings on the annexation of Cuba, that "the blood of the murdered Placido [sic] and his brave compatriots, *still cries aloud for justice*, and vengeance must sooner or later overtake their guilty oppressors and inquisitors of that memorable event."[329]

Conclusion: "Thus Intelligently United"

The force of electric aesthetic response as a means to foster and maintain the formation of a revolutionary counterpublic culminates in *Blake* during the "Great Gathering at Madame Cordera's," a secret gathering inaugurating the revolutionary movement in Cuba (249). This particular gathering is unique in the novel for the complete absence of discussions of policy or procedures in the planned revolt. In place of policy, Delany focuses on the experience of assemblage itself, an experience that he casts as electrical. The chapter meticulously details the arrivals of various individuals at the party, building anticipation that crescendos during the appearance of Blake and Placido. Upon their entrance, "as if by magic," the "whole company" stands and unites in song (250). Describing the collective aesthetic response to the song, Delany writes: "the effects of the reception ballad was electrical – every kind of demonstration indicating the soul's deep sympathy and heartfelt hatred to oppression, with cautious suppression, was made in silence" (251). Here, Delany articulates an electric, aesthetic response that simultaneously unifies the collective and particularizes "every kind of demonstration" of sympathy specific to the personal history of those assembled. To this end, Delany concentrates on the varieties of expressions by Abyssa, who, "bathed in tears," commences "moaning with joy in African accents, while Mendi with outstretched arms fell upon his knees in thankfulness to God for what he had witnessed" (250). Like the reflexive responses provoked during Delany's meetings with free black communities while working as coeditor for *The North Star*, the "electrical" effects of the ballad produce a telegraphic sensibility through a circuited, aesthetic response. While grounded in the materiality of the body, the process of collective identification is presented less as the product of a common, racial essence or identity than the experiential effect of a shared, reflexive response.

As with Blake's pandemic vision of collectivity, Delany presents this telegraphic sensibility as a "dangerous" reorientation of vital materiality. In a sentence that might serve as a fractal for the novel's arrangement as a whole, Delany concludes the gathering by declaring; "Thus intelligently united, a dangerous material existed in the midst of such an element as Cuba" (252). Here, at the point at which the feverishly anticipated collectivity materializes, the closest that Delany ever comes in the novel to directly naming the object of his organization, Delany describes the emergent formation not as an induction into self-possessed, liberal subjecthood, but rather the vitalization of a "dangerous" materiality. Similar to Delany's description of Georgia as a city at the base of an imminently erupting volcano, the dangerous vitality of organization resituates the political and geographic borders of "Cuba" within the defamiliarizing gesture: "such an element." In drawing a connection between the emergence of collective organization and the imminent threat of materiality, Delany presents a model of the counterpublic that redeploys the distributive agency of materiality, "intelligently united," towards the transformation of social and political environments.

While scientific approaches to black insensibility materialized racial subjection through various disciplinary technologies, black print discourse worked towards revitalizing and redistributing the process of scientific investigation towards the collective project of emancipation. Within this emancipatory project, antislavery and African American writers explored alternative approaches to empiricism that I have termed "telegraphic sensibility;" founded on the numerous and mutually formative interconnections among individual sensibilities and their social, technological, and ecological environments. In its emphasis on the reflexive sensitivity to these environmental conditions for the process of assembling intercommunal networks, telegraphic sensibility leveraged the material infrastructures of black print periodicals,

lecture circuits, and ethnographic surveys against the restrictive categorization of racial sensibility. Telegraphic sensibility, in other words, posits a model of agency that is distributive rather than constrictive, circuited through social and environmental relations. While grounded in the particular, historical conditions of racial embodiment and enslavement, these appeals to a distributive mode of agency registered at the level of praxis gesture towards a movement beyond the essentializing dichotomies of a racial line to explore the fractal forms of racial history and identification.

Notes

[204] Martin Delany, "Lancaster City, Pa., Dec. 18, 1848," *North Star* (Rochester, New York), December 15, 1848, 2-3.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), viii.

[207] Since the 1970 republication of *Blake* by Floyd J. Miller, scholarship on the novel has read Delany's racial politics as alternately transcending or complying with black nationalism. Following the work of Paul Gilroy, critical examinations of Delany's model of transnational racial uplift have argued for its importance in moving beyond racial and national boundaries. At the same time, scholarship has registered skepticism regarding this triumphant model of black diaspora, indicating the ways in which Delany's racial politics map too neatly onto the structures and ideologies of nationalist expansionism. For examples of progressive readings of Delany's transnational racial politics, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (New York: Harvard UP, 1993); John Ernest, *Resistance and Reformation in Nineteenth-Century African American Literature: Brown, Wilson, Jacobs, Delany, Douglass, and Harper* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995); Andy Doolen, "'Be Cautious of the Word 'Rebel'': Race, Revolution, and Transnational History in Martin Delany's *Blake; or, the Huts of America*," *American Literature* 81, no. 1 (March 2009): 153-179; Katy Chiles, "Within and without raced Nations: Intratextuality, Martin Delany, and *Blake; or the Huts of America*," *American Literature* 80, no. 2 (June 2008): 323-352; Britt Rusert, "Delany's Comet: Fugitive Science and the Speculative Imaginary of Emancipation," *American Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (December 2013): 799-829. For examples of readings of Delany's nationalist expansionism, see Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1993); Jordan Stein, "'A Christian Nation Calls for its Wandering Children': Life, Liberty, Liberia," *American Literary History* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 849-873; Maurice O.

Wallace, *Constructing the Black Masculine: Identity and Ideality in African American Men's Literature and Culture, 1775-1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); and James Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787 – 2005* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006). See also Robert S, Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Levine provides an excellent study of Delany's multifaceted racial politics that demonstrates the need for a less binaristic assessment of Delany's work.

[208] The connection I draw here between Delany's work and the social media movement, Black Lives Matter, is based on a series of recent controversies concerning the extent and efficacy of social media activism and the negotiation of inclusivity within the human rights campaign. While this connection may appear to be a projection of presentism, I argue that there are a number of significant lines of affiliation between what Paul Gilmore describes as the "techno-utopian" perspective of nineteenth-century treatments of the telegraph and current negotiations of the place of social media in the continued civil rights project. Early on in the movement, and continuing today, politicians and grassroots organizers alike have targeted the identity politics of Black Lives Matter. Such arguments have consistently placed primary emphasis on the term "Black," arguing that it perpetuates the racial dichotomies it seeks to unsettle, and urging for a universal, humanist approach encapsulated in the counter-phrase, "All Lives Matter." While several political figures and writers, including Barack Obama, have stood out in justification of the importance of maintaining "Black Lives Matter" as a fundamental principle of the movement, many who are skeptical of the movement continue to seek to contest it. What has remained generally uncontested, however, is the operative term "matter." In placing emphasis on the term "matter," I join those defending the position of the movement by underscoring the navigation and redeployment of material, media infrastructures towards establishing, however tentatively, a mode of determinedly non-hierarchical collectivity. This negotiation of viral media projects, as I examine below, is surprisingly similar to Blake's equally "viral" approach to organizing a conspiracy of racial revolution. Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, "About the Black Lives Matter Network," *Black Lives Matter* accessed June 29, 2017, http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/; Patrisse Khan-Cullors, "We Didn't Start a Movement. We started a Network," *Medium* February 22, 2016, https://medium.com/@patrissemariecullorsbrignac/we-didn-t-start-a-movement-we-started-a-network-90f9b5717668; Nikita Carney, "All Lives Matter, but so Does Race: Black Lives Matter and the Evolving Role of Social Media," *Humanity and Society* 40, no. 2 (May 2016), 180-199; Ashley May, "#AllLivesMatter Hashtag is Racist, Critics Say," *USA Today*, July 13, 2016, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2016/07/13/why-saying-all-lives-matter-opposite-black-lives-matter/87025190/; Carimah Townes, "Obama Explains the Problem with 'All Lives Matter," *Think Progress* October 22, 2015, https://thinkprogress.org/obama-explains-the-problem-with-all-lives-matter-780912d54888; Houston A. Baker Jr., "The Black Bottom Line: Reflections on Ferguson, Black Lives Matter, and White Male Violence in America," *American Literary History* 28, no. 4 (Winter 2016), 845-853.

[209] Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1-15.

[210] As David Morris and Emily Ogden have observed, representing African bodies as insensible to pain rationalized the use of violence to ensure obedience as a pragmatic, rather than inhumane

practice. David B. Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Los Angeles: University of California Press Berkeley, 1991), 38-40; Emily Ogden, "*Edgar Huntly* and the Regulation of the Senses." *American Literature* 85, No. 3 (September 2013): 426.

[211] Morris, 39-40. Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 65, Martin S. Pernick, *A Calculus of Suffering: Pain, Professionalism, and Anesthesia in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 156.

[212] Samuel A. Cartwright, "Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *De Bow's Review* 11, no. 3 (Sep. 1851): 333.

[213] Ibid.

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

[215] Ibid., 692.

[216] Cartwright, "Decisive Experiment – Proving that the Chief Motive Power of the Blood is Derived from Respiration, and that the Life of the Flesh is in the Blood Thereof," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 48, no. 24 (July 13, 1853): 435, 437; "Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *De Bow's Review* 11, no. 3 (Sep. 1851): 333.

[217] Ibid. As the work of J. Marion Sims and Samuel A. Cartwright demonstrates, the assumption of African American's predisposition to insensibility supported racial disparities and justified the system of slavery. At the same time, however, anti-slavery writers of both races appealed to insensibility in order to critique the institution of slavery and propel the work of abolition. Anti-slavery writers, for instance, leveraged appeals to social environmentalism to reposition the degenerative force of insensibility from racial disparities in innate physiology to the system of slavery itself. While productive in countering the biological determinism of the race sciences, such an approach necessarily entailed problematic limitations, including political quiescence in the face of overwhelming institutional pressure, the romantic racialization of noble, yet inherently passive African American suffering, and an implicit concession that, whatever potential the African race might possess for equal acuity, their inferior physiology was an objective fact. By turning to the reflex function, I examine an alternative approach to insensibility that treated it less as an inherently degenerative condition than a principle of physiology that could operate in the service of salubrious or deleterious ends.

[218] Diana E. Manuel, *Marshall Hall (1790 – 1857): Science and Medicine in Early Victorian Society* (Atlanta: Rodolpi, 1996), 232-278; Ruth Leys, *From Sympathy to Reflex: Marshall Hall and His Opponents* (New York: Garland Pub., 1990); Justine S. Murison, *The Politics of Anxiety in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 52-57.

[219] "Dr. Marshall Hall," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 49 (Nov. 16, 1853): 330-331. Charlotte Hall, *Memoirs of Marshall Hall, by his Widow* (London: Richard Bentley, 1861), 314-315. Significantly, neither Marshall nor Charlotte Hall recorded these experiments in their

accounts of their travels. Instead, as I discuss below, Hall's account of New Orleans describes a particularly affecting scene in which he witnessed the application of the paddle to a slave.

[220] Hall's reorientation of ethnography to study the perception rather than the calculation of race is perhaps most prominently figured in his "Map of the Unfriendliness to the African Race," a map illustrating "the degree of Unfriendliness of the European to the African Race in the Several States." Hall believed that racial politics, both the progressive emancipation of the North and the exploitative labor of the South were governed by differences in the relative climate, observing that the distinction between the two approaches to race could be explained through "*purely physiological*" mechanisms. In Hall's "Map of the Unfriendliness of the African Race," which was calculated according to the "*proportion of the free African to the Whites and to the Slaves*," however, Hall seems to grant more agency to the social rather than the ecological climate. This ambivalence between environmental and social explanations is illustrated in the equivocal phrasing that Hall uses to introduce the map, writing "I regard the numbers representing this proportion, as representing… the degree of *friendliness* of the people, or of the climate, to the African race. See Marshall Hall, *The Two-Fold Slavery of the United States; with a Project of Self-Emancipation* (London: Adam Scott, Charterhouse Square, 1854), 41, 121.

[221] Ibid., 109.

[222] James McCune Smith, "The Two-Fold Slavery of the United States. By Marshall Hall, M. D. F. R. S. &c. London. 1854 pp. 157," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, NY), Nov. 24, 1854, 2; In the republished version of the book review, Frederick Douglass registers a similarly ambivalent evaluation of Hall's work in his editorial note appended to the book review: "We shall make no apology to our readers for re-publishing it. We deem that it meets the case entirely, and should accompany Dr. Marshall Hall's work everywhere, as an antidote to the false theories set forth by that learned (though, on slavery, mistaken) gentleman." James McCune Smith, "The Two-Fold Slavery of the United States. By Marshall Hall, M. D. F. R. S. &c. London. 1854 pp. 157," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, NY), Feb. 16, 1855, 2.

[223] Ibid.

[224] Charlotte Hall, 315.

[225] Ibid.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Martin Delany, *Blake; or the Huts of America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 66. Subsequent citations will appear in text.

[228] Charlotte Hall, 294. Emphasis in original.

[229] In his reading of this scene, Christopher Castiglia argues that the projection of Rube's interiority as a singular "state of feelings" serves a disciplinary function by naturalizing the black body as the site of a sanctioned set of fixed identifications. And yet, as Castiglia demonstrates, the production of black interiority also engenders a doubling between the consciousness projected onto raced bodies and experiential divergences from interiority's disciplinary function.

In the process of securing racial distinction within a constructed and circumscribed consciousness, then, Rube's paroxysms unsettle the coherence of identification itself, belying the claim that race is naturally and fundamentally deterministic. Building upon Castiglia's analysis, I argue in the following section that Delany's approach to science and physiology posits a form of social environmentalism in productive tension with the disciplinary inscription of racial subjecthood. While this installation of consciousness serves a disciplinary function by turning subjectivity inwards, Delany's ethnographic work redistributes the doubling of racial subjectivity outwards through the natural and social environment. In moving from disciplinary subjection to social environmentalism, I examine an extension of double consciousness through what Delany describes as "'Second Nature.'" Where double consciousness unsettles physiological determinism through the bifurcation of an essentialist state of being, second nature posits a counterforce to environmental determinism by disarticulating the unidirectional causality of adaptation as a process. Second nature registers an intensification and reorientation of double consciousness, unsettling not only essentialist identifications, but the process by which environments shape subjectivity. Christopher Castiglia, *Interior States: Institutional Consciousness and the Inner Life of Democracy in the Antebellum United States* (Durham: Duke UP, 2008), 217-219.

[230] This body of criticism, which Britt Rusert terms the "new history of racial science," both draws upon and resituates foundational historicist examinations of the ideological deployment of science as a tool for justifying racial subjection. While formative in uncovering the ideological foundation of what has come to be termed "scientific racism," this form of ideological critique also presents significant limitations. Namely, by focusing exclusively on a top-down intellectual history of science as a disciplinary mechanism, ideological critique risks nullifying the significant interventions of African American writers, ironically replicating their treatment as objects, rather than subjects, of scientific examination. Recent studies on the race sciences including Bruce Dain's *Hideous Monster of the Mind* and Susan Scott Parrish's *American Curiosity* have placed increasing pressure on these limitations, seeking alternative historiographic approaches that read contributions by black and white writers together. Beyond claiming a more inclusive historicist approach, this body of work has sought to emphasize modes of resistance and agency that leverage scientific practices towards emancipatory rather than disciplinary ends. To this effect, Maurice Lee has argued that nineteenth-century African American political and literary work sought to counter ideological racial disparities by redeploying the sciences of chance and probability in the service of a more progressive politics. In addition, Britt Rusert has argued for a further reorientation from pragmatism to experimentation. Through a conceptual model she terms "fugitive science," Rusert explores a diverse array of African American experimental engagements with scientific practices working towards the creation of a "rich imaginative landscape" in order "to meditate on slavery and freedom, as well as the contingencies of black subjectivity and existence." Rusert, "Delany's Comet," 802, 804, Maurice S. Lee, *Uncertain Chances: Science, Skepticism, and Belief in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 2012), 91; Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002); Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Ian Frederick Finseth, *Shades of Green: Visions of Nature in the Literature of American Slavery, 1880-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009); Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830 – 1925* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000);

Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010); Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke UP, 2012); Gretchen Long, *Doctoring Freedom: The Politics of African American Medical Care in Slavery and Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Britt Rusert, "The Science of Freedom: Counter-Archives of Racial Science on the Antebellum Stage," *African American Review*, 45, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 291-308. Foundational studies of the ideological deployment of the racial sciences include Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1981); William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America 1815 – 59* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960); Washington, *Medical Apartheid*.

[231] Exceptions to this statement include Rusert, "Delany's Comet," Paul Gilroy; Robert S. Levine, ed., *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); and Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrah, Straus and Giroux, 2001).

[232] Thomas Hamilton, "Editor's Note," *The Anglo-African Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1859): 20. Menand, 7-9.

[233] Bennett, viii.

[234] Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, *Types of Mankind: or, Ethnological Researches, based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and upon their Natural, Geographical, Philological, and Biblical History* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Crambo & co., 1854), 50.

[235] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 10.

[236] Bennett, ix.

[237] Delany, *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party* (New York: Thomas Hamilton, 1861), 47.

[238] Ibid., 49.

[239] Ibid.

[240] For a discussion of the influence of Livingstone's work on Delany's *Official Report*, see Campbell, 76-77, 86-90.

[241] Delany, *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party*, 48.

[242] For further discussion of Delany's treatment of nature, see Ian Frederick Finseth, 179-186.

[243] Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (Philadelphia: published by the author, 1852), 26-7.

[244] Ibid., 109.

[245] Ibid, 207.

[246] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1903), 2. W. E. B. Du Bois, "A Negro Nation within a Nation," *Current History and Forum* 42, no. 3 (June 1935): 265. Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, 4.

[247] DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 3.

[248] John Ernest, *Chaotic Justice: Rethinking African American Literary History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 27.

[249] Ernest, *Chaotic Justice*, 38.

[250] Gilroy, 122.

[251] Delany, *Origins and Objects of Ancient Freemasonry*, in Martin R. Delany, *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*, ed. Robert Levine 54.

[252] Ibid., 64.

[253] For further discussion of Delany's negotiation, through the tradition of Prince Hall Freemasonry, of the politics of pan-African identity, see Levine, *Representative Identity*, 8-11; Rebecca Skidmore Biggio, "The Specter of Conspiracy in Martin Delany's *Blake*," *African American Review* 42, no. 3/4 (2008): 445-450.

[254] Ibid., 57.

[255] Ibid.

[256] Thomas Hamilton, "Apology" *The Anglo-African Magazine* 1, no. 1, (1859): 2.

[257] For a treatment of "The Attraction of Planets," see Rusert, "Delany's Comet," 813, 816.

[258] Delany, "Comets," *The Anglo African Magazine*, 1, no. 1, (1859): 59, 60.

[259] Caleb Smith, *The Oracle and the Curse: A Poetics of Justice from the Revolution to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2013), 202.

[260] Rusert, "Delany's Comet," 819.

[261] Levine, *Representative Identity*, 3, 191; Sundquist, 184, 220; Finseth, 183, 185; Ernest, *Resistance and Reformation*, 111. In his introduction to the 1970 republication of *Blake*, Floyd J. Miller describes the novel as "the creative offering of an activist rather than the political expressions of an artist." Floyd J. Miller, introduction to *Blake*, xiii. More recently, scholarship on the novel has sought to demonstrate that the apparent literary shortcomings of the novel also serve a productive function in calling attention to the limitations of our contemporary reading

practices and formulating alternative aesthetic modalities including the impersonal, secrecy, and the global trajectories of New World slavery. Biggio, 99-108 Britt Rusert, "Delany's Comet," 821; and Chiles, 337.

[262] Sundquist, 283.

[263] James Delbourgo, *A Most Amazing Scene of Wonders: Electricity and Enlightenment in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006), 8.

[264] See, for example, "Electricity and Hydropathy," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), March 17, 1848; "Electricity Developed, &c.," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), Aug. 10, 1849; "The Electric Telegraph," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), Nov. 23, 1849; "Lighting by Electricity," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), Nov. 17, 1848; "Velocity of Electricity," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), Nov. 3, 1848; "Cholera," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), July 20, 1849 p. 2.

[265] Though not treated here, several black print articles on popular medicine appealed to theories of animal electricity that understood an individual's health as a function of the balancing of electric charges. An article published during Delany's residence as coeditor of *The North Star* entitled "Electricity and Hydropathy," for instance, reviews a lecture delivered by "Dr. A. Means" at the Medical College of Georgia seeking "to establish the identity of the electric and vital energies" that asserts "all the processes of life… are electric and conducted by arrangements subject to strict electric conditions." "Electricity and Hydropathy," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), March 17, 1848. David Ruggles, an under recognized black abolitionist, regularly ran an advertisement in *The North Star* during Delany's co-editorship for his "Northampton Water Cure," which promised to cure ailments by restoring "*positive electrical state*" of the human body. David Ruggles, "Northampton Water Cure," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), May 26, 1848. Ruggles' hydrotherapy was well-recognized and respected in the abolition community. His clientele included William Lloyd Garrison, Sojourner Truth, William Cooper Nell, and Catherine Beecher. Ruggles' diagnostic method, which he termed "cutaneous electricity," involved touching patients' skin to feel the regularity of electrical emissions from the pores. Ruggles' water cure was, in turn, instrumental to his abolitionist work. Graham Russell Gao Hodges, *David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in New York City* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 173-9; 188-195. For additional examples of electrical interpretations of public health issues during the period of Delany's co-editorship at *The North Star*, see "Cholera," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), October 20, 1848; "Revelations of Cholera; or its Causes and Cure. By Samuel Dickson M. D.," *The North Star* (Rochester: New York), July 20, 1849. 2.

[266] Frances Smith Foster, "A Narrative of the Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African-American Print Culture," *American Literary History* 15, no. 4 (Winter 2005); Frankie Hutton, *The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993); Patricia Okker, *Social Stories: The Magazine Novel in Nineteenth-Century America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003); Todd Vogel, ed., *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001); Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein, eds., *Early African American Print Culture* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

[267] "Electricity," *The North Star*. (Rochester, New York), October 6, 1848, 4.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Gayatri Spivak, *Imperatives to Re-imagine the Planet/Imperative zur Neuerfindung des Planeten* ed. Willi Goetschel, (Vienna: Passagen, 1999) 44.

[270] Ibid., 46. For additional examples of black print articles on the electric sciences, see "Electricity Developed, &c.," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), Aug. 10, 1849; "Velocity of Electricity," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), Nov. 3, 1848; October 12, 1827, 4; "Thunder Storms and Vegetation," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), June 22, 1849, 2; "Terrific Theory," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), February 2, 1849, 3; J. D. "Cold Water for Colorphobia," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), February 11, 1848, 3; "Clippings from English Papers," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), March 30, 1849, 3.

[271] Delany, "The Attraction of the Planets," *The Anglo African Magazine*, 1, no. 1, (1859): 18.

[272] Maurice Lee has argued that the political and literary work of nineteenth-century African American writers appealed to contemporary developments in the popular science of probability in order to at once confront and mediate the role of chance and its various entanglements within racial subjugation. While Lee accentuates the non-providential, chancy nature of less-canonical African American biographical and literary work as a critical aesthetic maneuver, his emphasis on establishing an intellectual history of racial egalitarianism places primary emphasis on the management of chance through probability. Delany's scientific and literary projects, in contrast, work towards redeploying contingency itself towards emancipatory ends.

[273] Delany, "Comets," 59.

[274] Ibid.

[275] Levine, ed., *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*, 313.

[276] Delany, "Comets," 60.

[277] Delany, "The Attraction of the Planets," 19. An article entitled "Something New!" makes a similar comparison between the speed of electricity and the rapidity of penmanship, "Something New!," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York); December 22, 1854, 2.

[278] Robert Hunt, "The Thunder Cloud and the Dew Drop." *The North Star*, (Rochester, New York) February 16, 1849. 3. Robert Hunt, *The Poetry of Science; or, Studies of the Physical Phenomena of Nature* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854), Xiv.

[279] Robert Hunt, "The Thunder Cloud and the Dew Drop," *The North Star*, (Rochester, New York) February 16, 1849. 3

[280] For additional examples of black print articles comparing aesthetic experience to electricity, see "Literary Notices," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York), March 2, 1855; "Song for the Times," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), March 23, 1849; "Sermon on the

Memory of John Quincy Adams," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), April 7, 1848, 1; "Hayne and Webster," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), February 1, 1850, 3; "Constructive Treason," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York), December 29, 1854.

[281] Rusert, "Delany's Comet," 819.

[282] Delbourgo, 129-132.

[283] In addition to the articles discussed here, see "The Submarine Telegraph," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), February 23, 1849, 3; "A Novel Entertainment," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), March 16, 1849, 3; "The Cords the Hung Tawell," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), May 4, 1849, 1; "Lighting by Electricity," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), November 17, 1848; "The Free Democracy," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), August 3, 1849, 1; "Electric Telegraph Company, Glasgow," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), August 10, 1849, 3; "Electric Telegraphs No Novelty," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), February 22, 1850, 4; "The Electric Telegraph," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), November 23, 1849, 3; "Telegraph Across the Atlantic," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), March 15, 1850, 3; "The World Moves On," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), April 3, 1851; "Telegram," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York) December 4, 1857.

[284] "A Triumph for Freedom," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York) March 16, 1855. 2.

[285] Ibid.

[286] Gilmore, 120 – 142.

[287] Frederick Douglass, "The Sultan and the Czar," *The North Star*, (Rochester, New York) November 9,1849. 2. For a similar discussion of this article, see Gilmore, 122.

[288] Similarly, an 1848 article in *The North Star* discussing the French Revolutions of 1848 states "Whilst the wonderful agencies of steam and electricity are almost bringing our two countries within speaking distance, let our hearts also draw near to each other in the communion and fellowship of true neighbors and friends, feeling the bond of universal brotherhood." "Address to the Inhabitants of Carlisle, England, in P---- Meeting assembled, to their Brethren in France," *North Star*, (Rochester, New York); April 21, 1848.

[289] J. E. R. "To the Editor of the North Star," *North Star*, (Rochester, New York) April 12, 1850, 3. While the stated author of the article is only referred to by the initials, J. E. R., the author is almost certainly John E. Robinson, a prominent spiritualist in Rochester, NY. This conclusion is based on extensive contextual and linguistic evidence.

[290] Ibid.

[291] For more on the Fox sisters, see Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007)

179-189; 217-223; Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) 20-35, 121-135; Robert S. Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003) 17-22, 86, 98

[292] Several additional articles describe the sympathetic chain of being connecting humanity through electric metaphors. See "Arisen from the Dead," *Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate* (Albany, New York); December 8, 1842, 7; "A Touching Story," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York), October 5, 1855, 3; "Letter from Byrd Parker," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York), February 17, 1854, 3; "The Lord's Prayer," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York), November 30, 1855, 4.

[293] "Constructive Treason," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York) December 29, 1854, 3

[294] "The Free Democracy," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York) August 3, 1849, 1.

[295] "France," *The North Star*, (Rochester, New York) April 28, 1848, 2.

[296] Ibid.

[297] Ibid.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Ibid.

[300] Gilmore, 11. As Delbourgo explains, the revolutionary deployment of electricity was significantly entangled within the language of conspiracy from its inception in the late-eighteenth century. Delbourgo, 157-164.

[301] Biggio, 443. As Biggio demonstrates, Delany's deployment of conspiracy performs a double maneuver, establishing the work of community formation while simultaneously leveraging white fear of a unified but unknowable black community towards the novel's political and cultural ends. In focusing on the fractal qualities of Delany's racial history, I argue that Delany is less invested in the dichotomy between black community and white fear than the ways in which the conspiratorial force of electrified connections take on a kind of radicalizing agency through their telegraphed transmission. While Delany emphasizes white paranoia regarding the possibility of a slave uprising, I argue that positioning Delany's project in *Blake* as playing into and subverting white projections onto black community overstates Delany's reactionary dependence on white subjectivity as the metric for political action. Instead, conspiracy serves for Delany as a model of unspecified specificity that Delany understands to be productive in fostering collective identification without circumscribing such identifications within an overt, prescriptive politics.

[302] John McKivigan, *Forgotten Firebrand James Redpath and the Making of Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 75.

[303] "The Underground Telegraph," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester: New York) March 11, 1859, 4. Caleb Smith also notes that James Redpath's *Haitian Emigration Bureau* owned and operated the *Weekly Anglo-African* during the second publication of *Blake*. Smith, 195. For more on Redpath's Haitian Emigration Bureau and his public debates with Delany, see McKivigan, *Forgotten Firebrand*, 65, 72, 74-75.

[304] Ibid. As an example, Redpath continues to relate one of the "many extraordinary stories [that] are told by the Southrons themselves of the facility with which the negroes learn of all events that transpire in the surrounding country" in which an active magistrate, upon hearing an account of a murder, sets out at top speed to apprehend the suspect; only to discover that news of the murder communicated among the local slave populations has anticipated his arrival.

[305] Ibid.

[306] Ibid.

[307] Ibid. In several ways, Redpath's project in *The Roving Editor* mirrors the means and aims of Delany's *Blake*. In *The Roving Editor*, Redpath presents a large sample of slave testimonies collected during three tours of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, and Kansas In contrast to many travel narratives of the antebellum South then in circulation, Redpath took pains to record the testimony of slaves verbatim. Redpath presented interviews with slaves in a question and answer format that echoes the various dialogues between Blake and local slave populations that comprise the first half of *Blake*. Redpath also repeatedly justified and encouraged the use of militant practices in slave uprisings in order to effect a necessary revolution to dismantle slave power. Doing so often entailed the implementation of secrecy, misdirection, and pseudonymous publication, practices that abound throughout *Blake*. McKivigan, *Forgotten Firebrand*. See also John McKivigan, introduction to *The Roving Editor; or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* ed. John McKivigan (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996)

[308] In his reading of this scene, Caleb Smith argues similarly that Blake's aim in attending to the regional network he discovers in Arkansas is to expand and radicalize its infrastructure. See Smith, 205. Smith's argument concerning the interlocking relationships across regional and national or transnational scales dovetails with the fractal approach to ethnography I discuss here. Where Smith deploys these vacillating scales to explore Delany's approach to secularism as inflected by legal discourse and print culture, my argument focuses on Delany's social environmentalism, and ecological approach to political activism that runs counter to the liberal discourse of self-possessed subjects fostered by publics of print. For more on the contrast between ecological and print discourse approaches, see Monique Allewaert, "Swamp Sublime: Ecologies of Resistance in the American Plantation Zone." *PMLA* 123, no. 2 (March 2008): 342-3, 353 – 5.

[309] Stein, 867.

[310] Chiles, 334-346. For an extensive examination of critical receptions of Delany's approach to the Dismal Swamp maroons, as well as an important corrective for the emancipatory potential of Pan-African or black nationalist readings of *Blake*, see Doolen, 157-163,

[311] Doolen, 160.

[312] By describing Delany's project as a kind of "pathetic fallacy in reverse," I draw on a connection between Cesare Casarino's argument concerning Melville's approach to marine technologies and Monique Allewaert's ecological concept of the "swamp sublime." Both Casarino and Allewaert call attention to textual moments in which the pathetic fallacy and anthropomorphism, respectively, reach the limits of their explanatory power. In these moments, objects in the natural environment not only figure human intentions or emotions, but are understood as participating in a complex assemblage of entangled forces. The relationship between Casarino's emphasis on marine technology and Allawaert's appeal to the ecological is particularly apt for Delany, who is invested in drawing lines of affiliation among both. Cesare Casarino, *Modernity at Sea: Melville, Marx, Conrad in Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 132; Allewaert, 343.

[313] Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 2001): 3, 5.

[314] Ibid., 4.

[315] Bennett, xvi.

[316] R. Allen Harris, "'The Man that was a Thing': Criticism and Uncle Tom," *College English* 50, no. 6 (1988): 649-663.

[317] The term "plantation zones," which I discuss further below, comes from Monique Allewaert's formulation of the "Swamp Sublime." Allewaert defines the "plantation zone" as "a space that is tropical (or subtropical) … whose economy and political structures are shaped by the plantation form." Allewaert, 341.

[318] Additionally, when one of the members of the patrol asks if the newly discovered Blake is a preacher, Aunt Rachel replies: "'No, Maus Rafe, dis brotheh no preacheh; but 'e is 'logious, and come to gib us little comfit, an' bless God I feels it now; dat I does, blessed be God!'" See Delany, *Blake*, 92.

[319] See also Delany, *Blake* 54, 55, 57. Delany also applies the word "thing" to describe sentimental objects, political conditions, and the slave trade.

[320] Jordan Alexander Stein, "*The Blithedale Romance*'s Queer Style," *ESQ* 55, no. 3 (2009): 217. Stein's work on style dovetails with the aesthetics of conspiracy examined by Delany. Where Stein finds this interplay of suggesting without revealing and obscuring without concealing in queer literary arrangements, Delany finds a similar dynamic in the covert connections among African Americans and African Cubans "in the know."

[321] Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 3

[322] Allewaert, 341, 343

[323] Marshall Hall, the Scottish physician who formalized the Reflex Arc previously discussed, makes a similar argument regarding the swamp ecologies of the South, connecting the slave institution to the "dismal swamp" and thereby unsettling political and geographic boarders. Noting that "one part of our route in Virginia is designated 'the dismal swamp,'" Hall states that "the epithet might well apply to the whole of our long journey from Richmond to Montgomery. Such, too, doubtless is a great part of the interior of the five slave-States through which our course lay, in whose 'dismal' and deep and secret recesses, containing, as in an enormous prison spread over 239,574 square miles of surface, nearly two millions (1,870,134) of enslaved human beings, who can say, what deeds of darkness, of immorality and cruelty are enacted?" Hall, 148.

[324] In his discussion of the relationship between treatments of nature and abolitionism, Ian Frederick Finseth argues to similar effect that Delany appeals to organic metaphors to articulate a sense of historical inevitability regarding the overturning of the slave system. Finseth, 182-7. While my argument concerning the immanence of an emergent counterpublic functions similarly to Finseth's argument regarding historical inevitability, my approach to telegraphic sensibility and ecology seeks to emphasize the productive contingency that Delany reads in nature. I also diverge from Finseth in drawing a connection between Delany's approach to nature and technology.

[325] Doolen, 156; Biggio, 447

[326] Significantly, there is doubt as to whether La Escalera was an actual conspiracy aimed at revolution or whether the conspiracy was used as an excuse for conservative backlash against perceived revolutionary sentiments, including extensive use of executions and torture inflicted on those suspected of participation. As Sundquist, Levine and Chiles note, however, Plácido was popularly understood in the U.S. as a martyr for the revolutionary effort. There is also evidence within Delany's writings as well as the writings of *The Anglo-Aftrican Magazine* to suggest that Plácido was read as a conspiratorial leader. See Sundquist, 208; Levine, 192; Chiles, 335-336.

[327] As Delany notes in his articles, "The Annexation of Cuba" and "The Redemption of Cuba," Plácido's execution marked a pivotal moment in U. S. imperial expansion. Drawing a lineage of imperial expansion linking Plácido's execution in 1844, the "nefarious scheme of the annexation of Texas" in 1845, and the planned annexation of Cuba by the Polk administration in 1849, Delany establishes a history of hemispheric imperial expansion that spreads like "an epidemic, not only disastrous to the individual, but [which] spreads its malady with the most fearful consequences, infecting all in contiguity with it." For Delany, this living epidemic spreading southward comprised the economic interests of the institution of slavery, an "iron linked and yet unbroken chain… doubly as strong as all the other commercial interests taken in the aggregate, which binds this foreign child in embryo to a most sympathizing mother." However, as with Delany's pandemic formulation of collectivity spreading "like smallpox" in *Blake*, Delany appeals to this same "iron linked and yet unbroken chain of slavery" in order to envision the possibility of a transnational, black counterpublic. Delany states to this effect: "The cause is ours – we are the interested party, and every colored man should make common cause of it, uniting in mind, heart, sentiment, and action." Through this common cause, Delany posits a telegraphic sensibility that mobilizes revolution across geographic and temporal boundaries, drawing together and circuiting the revolutionary histories of La Escalera in Cuba, the Haitian Revolution in St. Domingo, and the anticipated revolution for emancipation in the U.S. Issuing a rallying cry

to "bondman everywhere," Delany declares that the "instance of the annexation of Cuba to these United States… should be the signal for simultaneous rebellion of all the slaves in the Southern States, and throughout the island." Placido's appearance as a living character in *Blake* anachronistically revitalizes and re-embodies this "signal," pronouncing a perpetually imminent, "simultaneous rebellion" interconnecting regional geographies and temporalities. Delany, "The Annexation of Cuba," *North Star* (Rochester, New York), April 27, 1849, 2; Delany, "The Redemption of Cuba," *North Star* (Rochester, New York), 20 July 1849, 3.

[328] Cited in Levine, *Representative Identity* 296, n56.

[329] Delany, "The Redemption of Cuba, 3. Emphasis added. The liminality between the historic Plácido and the literary project of *Blake* is intensified further by the structuring ambiguity of the authorship of Placido's poem. While presented as the spontaneous creation of Placido's "fertile mind," the poem had in fact been previously published as Delany's original work at least three times prior to the serialization of *Blake*. In "The Annexation of Cuba," which concludes with a slightly altered version of the poem, Delany introduces the poem by calling particular attention to his authorship of its "sentiments," appending its first stanza with the statement: "the author of this article, alone, is responsible for the sentiments therein contained." The result is a multilayered troubling of dichotomous oppositions which, like the opening line of the poem, "Were I a slave I would be free!" collapses distinctions between slave and free, Blake and Placido (or Delany and Plácido), 1840s Cuban resistance and the 1859-1861 serialization of *Blake*. By reanimating Placido's martyrdom, by rekindling what Delany describes as the "vital spark" of the poet's revolutionary expression, Delany overlays the hemispheric project of assembling pan-African consciousness within a fractal form comprising the revolutionary movements of 1840s Cuba, U.S. hemispheric expansion, and the martial slave uprisings that marked the turbulent conditions of the late 1850s. Delany, "The Annexation of Cuba," 2; "The Redemption of Cuba," 3. In addition, Delany concluded an 1852 letter thanking William Lloyd Garrison for his notice of Delany's *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* with the first stanza of the poem. Delany, "Letter to William Lloyd Garrison, May 14, 1852," *The Liberator* (Boston, Massachusetts), 21 May 1852; Delany, *Blake* 195, 197.

Chapter Three: "A Paradise of Twisted Spines": The Haptic Aesthetics of Disability in the Works of Oliver Wendell Holmes

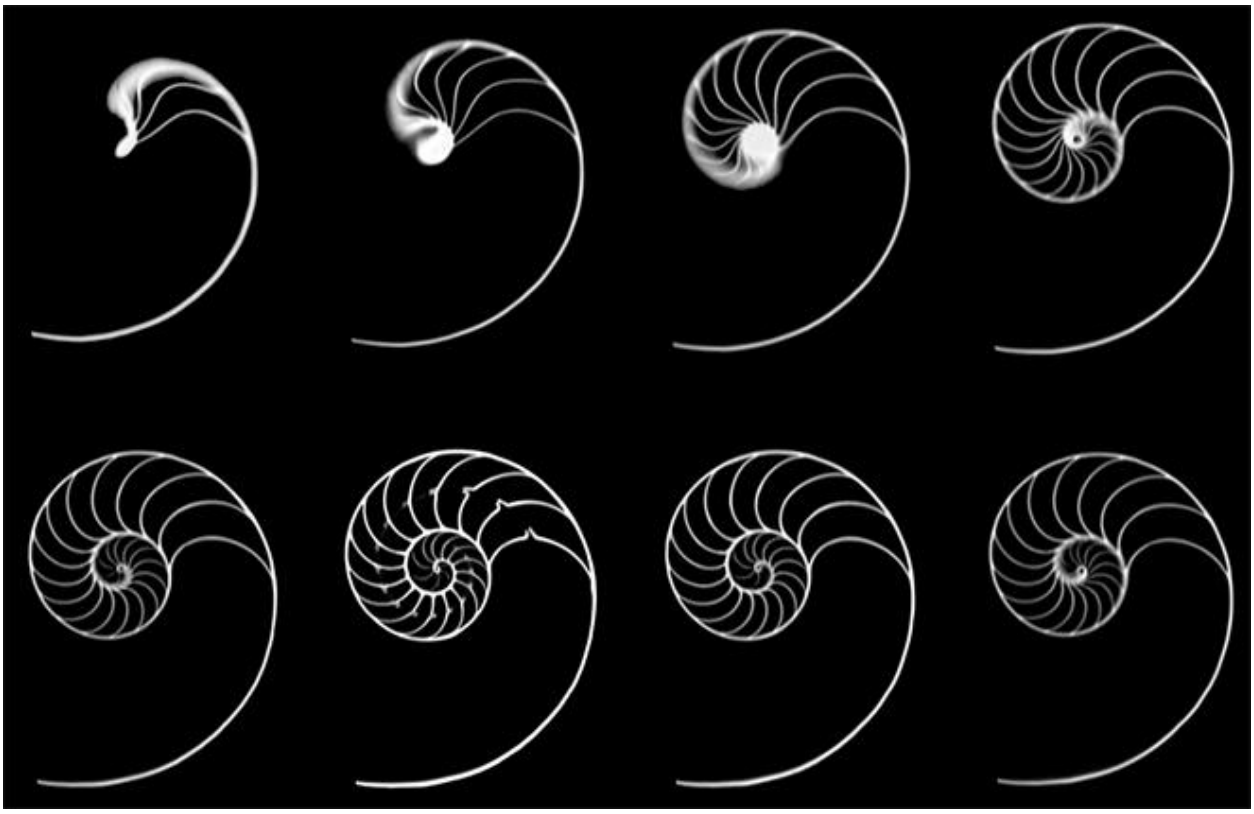

Figure 3. Florian Elias Rieser, *Nautilus Pompilius*. September, 2008, Image, Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 4.0, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d0/Nautilus_Section_cut.jpg (Accessed April 5, 2017)

> Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
> As the swift Seasons roll!
> Leave thy low-vaulted past!
> Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
> Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
> Till thou at length art free,
> Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!
>
> —Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Chambered Nautilus" in *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*

> —A very odd page indeed! Not a creature in it without a curve or a twist, and not one of them a mean figure to look at.
>
> —Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, 236.

At the end of the fourth chapter of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, Oliver Wendell Holmes concludes the discussion of "the fluent, self-determining power of human beings" by presenting one of Holmes's most revered poems, "The Chambered Nautilus." The subject of the poem, the chambered nautilus (Fig. 1), is remarkable as an encapsulation of the struggle between the dynamic, self-determination of organic growth and the physiological and environmental conditioning that Holmes offers as a model of human development. As Peter Mark Roget notes in his *Bridgewater Treatises* that Holmes cites, the shell of the chambered nautilus "presents very curious phenomena," developing along an ever-widening spiral that allows for growth while repeating its fractal form across varying scales.[330] In the poem, Holmes figures this process of development, writing in the third stanza, "year after year beheld the silent toil / That spread his lustrous coil; / Still, as the spiral grew, / He left the past year's dwelling for the new, / Stole with soft step its shining archway through, / Built up its idle door, / Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more."[331]

In building ever more "stately mansions" that serve, in turn, as the precondition for subsequent growth, "The Chambered Nautilus" is emblematic of Holmes's adaptive theory of development, advancing along the stages of "organization, education, [and] condition," each of which providing the conditions of subsequent development along a chain of self-actualization.[332] Organic development, as Holmes presents it, operates less through the transcendence of one's material conditions than the iterative expansion of increasingly complex structures mediating between the individual and the external environment. Building "each new temple, / nobler than the last," the chambered nautilus outgrows its structure only to be confronted with another, self-constructed barrier to the external world. Each newly constructed chamber, however, also

enables a higher stratum of mediation, an increasingly capacious "irised ceiling" through which the chambered nautilus responds to and navigates its external environment.[333]

While emblematic of the natural stages of development, however, the "widening spiral" of the chambered nautilus also powerfully displays what Holmes describes in his later work as "Nature's eccentric curves, belonging to her system of beauty, as the hyperbola, and parabola belong to the conic sections, though we cannot see them as symmetrical and entire figures, like the circle and ellipse."[334] For Holmes, these "eccentric curves" figure the fecund variety of nature that, I argue, Holmes approached through disability. As a figure of disability, the "eccentric curves" signify bodily forms that deviate from normative, able-embodiment, bodies with a "curve or a twist," which are treated not as reductions but proliferations of human vitality. Indeed, Holmes suggests that a reductionist approach to disability indicates a failure to comprehend the three-dimensionality of aesthetic arrangements rather than any limitation imposed by disability itself. Just as the "parabola" gestures towards the "conic" figure of which it is a part, so too do the "eccentric curves" of disability indicate formal arrangements that reach beyond the frame. Positioned at the foundation of organic development – the spiral structuring the dome of the chambered nautilus – disability for Holmes is constitutive rather than peripheral to the project of sensibility as it relates to embodiment.

This chapter examines the aesthetics of disability in the works of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Largely overlooked in scholarship, Holmes's treatment of disability, I argue, serves as a critical case study in reevaluating the relationship between medical surveillance in the construction of disability and the aesthetics of organic disorder among bodily and narrative forms. Typically understood in scholarship as a foundational figure of the disembodied gaze, Holmes, I argue, presents a complex approach to the adaptive capacities of the body that defamiliarizes social

constructions of disability. Specifically, Holmes approaches disability through his formulation of what he terms the "principle of compensation," in which ostensible debilities occasion compensatory adaptations of corresponding bodily capacities. By presenting disability as an adaptive process of ever-evolving becoming, the principle of compensation that Holmes develops over the course of his medical and literary work productively counters the corporeal ontologies of his day. As foundational work in disability studies has demonstrated, antebellum representations of disability in medical, legal and cultural discourse essentialized disability as a static embodiment of deficiency. Holmes challenges this reductionist framework in the historical treatment of embodied differences by approaching disability less as a fixed condition than an adaptive process of development. Holmes's principle of compensation supplants hierarchies of wholeness and deficiency in favor of the advancement of the vital capacities in which individuals with disabilities adapt to their socially constructed environments.

By examining Holmes, notorious for his problematic approach to professional self-fashioning defined against "abnormal" forms of embodiment indexed by race, gender, and class, my argument complicates scholarly work on disability in the nineteenth century, which has seen the medical gaze only as fixing the body within disempowering, because static, taxonomies of embodiment. This chapter demonstrates that, on the contrary, the imposition of medicalized discourse was neither uniform nor totalizing in its inscription of bodily difference as deficiency. Rather, a materialist approach animated by the contingencies and adaptations of development positions the vitality of embodiment as a valuable resource for reorienting sensibility around affectively charged relations across difference. Holmes explores these affectively charged relations through his work on prosthesis. For Holmes, prosthesis exceeds its function in alleviating a perceived bodily lack, serving instead as an extension and enhancement of bodily

capacities. By treating prosthesis as a form of enhancement, Holmes upends the normative privileging of "natural," self-enclosed forms of embodiment. For Holmes, prosthesis both extends and intensifies the adaptive capacities of the individual demonstrated through the principle of compensation. Prosthesis redistributes materially the adaptive capacities of the individual demonstrated in the "principle of compensation," incorporating non-self matter in a self-organizing process of hybridization. In proliferating the process of adaptation throughout the socially constructed environment, Holmes places critical pressure on the social construction of disability itself, indicating the ways in which disability and normate embodiment alike depend upon the material conditions of historically situated individuals. Ultimately, Holmes's examination of the hybridized crossings enabled by prosthesis demonstrates the productive potential of intersubjective crossings among those with and without disabilities, producing novel and fascinating reconfigurations that Holmes treats as central to the progress of the republican project.

Holmes explores the social and formal implications of the principle of compensation and the prosthesis throughout his literary works, almost all of which treat disability as a primary subject. Through his work on the principle of compensation and prosthesis, I argue that Holmes approaches disability as a spectrum that expands rather than constricts the scientific and cultural appreciation for bodily variety and vitality. Just as prosthesis gestures to the potential for envisioning the body as a self-organizing assemblage intertwining individuals with their socially inflected environments, the presentation of disability as a spectrum accentuates the myriad crossings and affinities among the sensibilities of individuals with and without disabilities. In this way, Holmes anticipates a central tenet of disability studies, introduced by David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, that disability serves as "the master trope of human disqualification,"

signifying the reduction of physical and cognitive variety to insufficiency and deviance. As Mitchell and Snyder demonstrate, such representations both rendered disability as a figure of inferiority and mobilized disability in support of oppressive systems constructed around a range of biological categories such as race, gender and class.[335] Holmes anticipates Mitchell and Snyder's foundational argument that disability serves as a master trope of human disqualification by exploring the intersectional operation of disability as a fulcrum for the hierarchization of physical and cognitive differences more broadly. However, Holmes also complicates this argument by extending an understanding of disability beyond the inscription of inferiority. In describing Holmes's approach to disability as a "spectrum," I argue that Holmes reopens the pivotal signification of disability to include a range of embodied sensibilities that broaden rather than restrict the appreciation of physical and cognitive variety.

By approaching disability as a spectrum, my argument builds upon recent work in disability studies on the mutually formative relationship between disability and aesthetics. As several scholars working in disability studies have demonstrated, disability has served a constitutive role in the history of aesthetic representations of the body. Disability particularly illuminates the physiological foundation of the politics of taste and disgust central to the materialist effects and implications of aesthetic response. Aesthetics, in turn, provides a significant critical framework for examining the cultural and historical treatments of disability that are related yet irreducible to the hierarchical ascription of deviance. In particular, I place Michell and Snyder's formative work on "narrative prosthesis," the use of narrative as a prosthetic correction of disability, in conversation with Ato Quayson's model of "aesthetic nervousness," the short-circuiting of representational modes produced through encounters with disability. By placing narrative prosthesis in relation to aesthetic nervousness, my argument both

attends to the normative function of Holmes's work while also exploring the reparative potential for reopening the figuration of disability within literary representation.

Bringing together the prosthetic production of narrative and the reparative potential of "aesthetic nervousness," I argue that disability serves a formative role in Holmes's approach to what he terms the "medicated novel." [336] At the level of plot, Holmes's "medicated novels" center on the medical and cultural treatment of individuals with developmental disorders by the communities in which they live as well as the perspective of Holmes's various narrator personae. Formally, Holmes's literary works, as several critics have observed, are characterized by a distinct "nervousness" that I argue operates analogously to "aesthetic nervousness" in both setting in relief and opening the affectively charged responses to representations of disability. In order to illustrate the constitutive role of disability in Holmes's writing, I explore representations of disability in two novels: *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* and *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny*.

In the largely unexamined novel, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, Holmes presents disability as an interruptive force within the talk-form, a heterogeneous, non-synthetic arrangement of conversation among a diverse array of speakers that Holmes posits as a model for American sociality. These interruptive moments of "aesthetic nervousness" unsettle the egalitarian promise of the talk-form, indicating unforeseen barriers to inclusive social representation and producing moments of suspension in which discourse threatens to break down completely. In order to alleviate this short-circuiting of conversation, the collective tenants of the boarding house breakfast table appeal to discursive prosthesis, supplementing and covering over the disquieting presence of disability through appeals to nationalist progress. These appeals, however, ultimately belie their prosthetic function, occasioning yet another form of aesthetic

nervousness. The result is a feedback loop wherein moments of aesthetic nervousness and narrative prosthesis prompt one another, placing critical pressure on both the political and formal representation of disability in the public sphere.[337] At the same time, however, Holmes examines an alternative to discursive representation through the "affordances," the limited set of potential uses inherent to the properties of particular formal arrangements, of aesthetic depictions of disability.[338] In the turn to aesthetics, Holmes shifts from a hierarchical framework of ability to a relational model of intersubjective affinities founded on the aesthetic responses engendered by bodily difference.

Holmes's relational model of the aesthetics of disability culminates in his medical romance, *Elsie Venner*. In that novel, Holmes presents the disordered sensibilities of the eponymous Elsie as a productive form of defamiliarization, enabling alternative empirical modes structured around cognitive disability. Specifically, Elsie's fascinating gaze that Holmes diagnoses as a symptom of arrested development in utero produces a synesthetic convergence between sight and touch that supersedes the optical surveillance of the clinical eye. Through Elsie's extraordinary sensibilities, Holmes thus presents an alternative to optics, or the distanced visual accounting of objects arranged in deep space, through haptics, the imagined touch of the eye as it feels along variable, textured surfaces. Often overlooked despite abundant critical examinations of the overdetermined politics of sight in the novel, haptics provides a critical framework for attending to the affectively charged entanglements among individuals marked by both disability and other "inferior" forms of physiology that extend beyond unidirectional, optical mastery. As demonstrated through the disruptions of aesthetic nervousness, the haptic touch of the eye in *Elsie Venner* short-circuits the dominant protocols of the clinical gaze, reorienting the sensibilities of the body while eliding full disclosure.

Holmes wrote widely on the subject of disability. He published multiple works on congenital deformities for the Boston Society for Medical Improvement.[339] Holmes was also among the first to recognize the crucial importance of rehabilitation in the wake of the unprecedented increase in amputations during the Civil War. Evaluating methods of rehabilitation, Holmes praised American developments in the science of prosthesis as a symbol of the larger rehabilitation of the national project, envisioning the future proliferation of prosthetic devices to be utilized by individuals with and without disabilities. [340] Holmes explored the cultural and political significance of disability extensively in his literary work as well. Almost all of Holmes's fictional works center on characters with some form of developmental disorder.[341] While criticism on what Holmes referred to as his "medicated novels" has largely read the predominance of disordered bodies in these works in reference to race, gender, and class, they are also importantly examinations of a range of physical and mental disabilities.[342]

An examination of disability significantly illuminates Holmes's position in the history of medical professionalization. Most scholarship on Holmes has positioned him as a foundational figure of Foucauldian biopower, rightfully indicating the various ways in which Holmes's approach to embodiment sought to institute the authority of the objectifying gaze of medicine.[343] For instance, in her work on mid-nineteenth century medicine, Cynthia J. Davis reads Holmes's "celebration of the clinical gaze" as "symptomatic" of the profession's "fantasy of disembodied surveillance."[344] As this work has demonstrated, Holmes's medical and fictional works participated in a systemic process wherein the social anxieties regarding differences of gender, class, and race were increasingly inscribed within a variety of essentializing, somatic disorders. Joan Burbick argues to this effect that Holmes's works demonstrate "the somatization of cultural fears," in which "the body becomes the ultimate social and moral code; everything is inscribed

on its surface."[345] This process of inscription, Burbick argues, leverages the "knowledge of scientific medicine" as "an effective means of political control."[346] Through the objective gaze of medicine, diagnosis and treatment thus became tools for reinforcing the social hierarchy of the republic while establishing the authoritative position of the medical field.

Holmes's treatment of disability is far more complex than the reductionism or biological determinism with which scholars have charged him. In particular, Holmes approaches disability through two principles that complicate critical consensus concerning Holmes's use of the objective gaze of medicine and anticipate recent work in disability studies. First, Holmes understood disability through the operation of what he terms "the great principle of compensation": the adaptive capacities of individuals and bodies in response to presumed debilities. Holmes's principle of compensation refuses the conflation of disability and deficiency, positing a dynamic approach to bodily development as a process operating through adaptation rather than reduction. Second, Holmes challenges the opposition between normative embodiment and disability through his approach to prosthesis. Anticipating Mitchell and Snyder's argument that "The prostheticized body is the rule, not the exception," Holmes presents a productively universalizing approach to prosthesis.[347] At the same time, Holmes appeals to the prostheticized body as a figure of hybridity; a model of inter-corporeal assemblage that unsettles the teleological progress of the nation and gestures towards alternative forms of affiliation across difference.

Holmes presents his approach to disability through the principle of compensation in an 1847 article entitled "Case of Malformation." In the article, Holmes describes the congenital disorder of a man named Benoni T. Bachelder, born with "only one perfect limb – the left arm – the others being abortive stumps, much like those left after amputation of the arm and thigh."[348]

Reflective of Holmes's general approach to disability, the article moves quickly from a medical description of Bachelder's debility to detail the various adaptive capacities of both the natural development of the body and Bachelder as an individual. For Holmes, disability offers "a striking illustration" of "the great principle of compensation, coextensive with our wants, privations and sufferings."[349] To this end, Holmes observes that, though Bachalder has been "cut down" by nature "to the level of some of her humblest organisms… Yet, as if conscious of injustice, she has clothed that one limb with strength and beauty, and training it by the lessons of hard necessity, has gifted it with powers which, perhaps, no other human arm possesses in such perfection."[350] For Holmes, the "principle of compensation" indicates the natural adaptivity of the body in which congenital debility is compensated for by the extraordinary development of alternative bodily capacities. Thus, Bachelder's "abortive stumps" contrast strikingly with the "strength and beauty" of his left arm, developed to a point of "perfection."

While this natural form of compensation circumvents to a degree Bachelder's agency, Holmes broadens the principle of compensation to include the adaptive capacities of Bachelder as an individual as well. Noting that, "limited as his means of locomotion appear, he is by no means condemned to inactivity," Holmes recounts in detail Bachelder's movements, discussing the way in which, "by alternative flexions and contractions of the muscles of the trunk, he can throw himself up an inch or two from the floor, or cross the room in a rapid series of hops or jumps."[351] Once again, Holmes marvels at the capacities of Bachelder's perfectly formed left arm, "his organ of prehension and locomotion… the servant of all work, who does the tasks of four for the wages of one."[352] Here, the principle of compensation operates not through the biological development of the body, but through the adaptive capacities of the individual. Holmes affirms this dual operation of compensation through somatic development and individual

capacities in his concluding remarks. Summarizing "the most interesting points in this case," Holmes closes by emphasizing "especially," "the wonderful manner in which a single organ has been educated and strengthened for the new and varied duties which have devolved upon it."[353]

Holmes's "principle of compensation" is at once a symptom of and challenge to the historical treatment of disability. By using the term "compensation," Holmes implicitly affirms a model in which, as Thomson argues, "disability is a loss to be compensated for, rather than a difference to be accommodated."[354] Historically, the compensation approach to disability developed in the antebellum United States in response to the Industrial Revolution, in which the restructuring of the conditions of production placed increased pressure on the obligations of employers, the state, and the public writ large to individuals with disabilities. As it was debated in the court system, including the landmark decision by Lemuel Shaw in 1842, and approached through charitable enterprises, the proposition of a legal or moral obligation to compensate individuals with disabilities financially effectively excluded those it sought to aid by disqualifying them from the capacity for self-determination. While ostensibly conducted in the service of amelioration, then, compensation alienated individuals with disabilities, barring their inclusion among the self-possessed individualism that stood as the ideal figure of American progress.

However, Holmes's approach to disability also importantly complicates the operation of compensation in ways that work counter to the treatment of disability as a physical marker of the incapacity for self-determination. By locating the principle of compensation within the capacities of the disabled body rather than through charitable or state-provided compensation, Holmes establishes a necessary link between the process of living with a disability and the capacity for self-determination. To this effect, it is significant that Holmes repeatedly describes Bachelder in

terms of self-possessed, liberal selfhood. Holmes frequently interrupts the report of his medical examination to note that "his voice is rather acute than deep, his temperament cheerful, and there is much propriety and affability in his intercourse with visitors."[355] Similarly, Holmes remarks, "Life has not been without its attractions for him, in spite of his physical misfortunes; luxuriant health and expansive sensibilities confer privileges from which he has not been debarred." [356]

While codified in the language of disability as a deficiency that requires external intervention, then, the principle of compensation operates more analogously to adaptation. By approaching disability as a process of adaptation, Holmes's principle of compensation complicates broader arguments in disability studies regarding the treatment of disability in the nineteenth century in two significant ways. First, as Thomson, Mitchell, Snyder, Ellen Samuels, and several others have argued, treatments of disability have historically leveraged the discourse of medicine, law, and cultural representation in order to render the disabled body static.[357] In contrast, by positing a model of disability as a dynamic, adaptive process rather than a fixed state of being, Holmes counters the larger circumscription of disability within an essentialized stasis. Second, a large portion of scholarship in disability studies has demonstrated how the progressively pervasive disciplines of statistics and medicine increasingly presented the disabled body as a central figure of corporeal deficiency.[358] In Holmes's adaptive model of disability, however, the process of biological and individual development supersedes the metrics of wholeness and deficiency. The principle that particular corporeal debilities occasion corresponding somatic developments depends upon the fundamental wholeness and self-sufficiency among individuals with disabilities. The principle of compensation, then, challenges at once the presentation of disability as the embodiment of stasis and deficiency by attending to the dynamic process through which bodies adapt to their environments.

Holmes's principle of compensation, then, presents a model both of human development and ethics founded on a spectrum of bodily capacities. Approaching disability as a spectrum usefully extends and complicates Mitchell and Snyder's argument that disability operates as "the master trope of human disqualification." For Mitchell and Snyder, disability functions as a "master trope of human disqualification" through a "dual negation," in which disability is "attributed to all 'deviant' biologies as a discrediting feature, while also serving as the material marker of inferiority itself."[359] Alongside Mitchell and Snyder, Holmes recognizes disability as an intersectional framework that serves as both an extension and intensification of the systematic oppression around bodily differences. Holmes, however, denies the delimitation of disability within the boundaries of disqualification or deficiency. In this way, Holmes anticipates more recent work in disability studies that seeks to reopen the signification of disability beyond the inscription of deficiency. To this end, Ato Quayson's recent designation of disability as "a fulcrum or pivot" usefully revises Mitchell and Snyder's work, indicating the ways in which representations of disability extend beyond "deviancy and inferiority," opening to a larger variety of significations that do not solely or necessarily reaffirm hierarchies of human variation. Quayson writes that "disability is to be read as a fulcrum or pivot out of which various discursive details emerge, gain salience, and ultimately undergo transformation within the literary-aesthetic field."[360] In building upon Quayson's work, I approach Holmes's use of disability as a spectrum in order to indicate the variety of physical, sensory, and cognitive capacities that proliferate in Holmes's work. In placing critical pressure on the seemingly endless variety of human capacities, Holmes unsettles normative perspectives of embodiment.

Holmes more fully develops his approach to disability as a spectrum through his work on prosthesis. Prosthesis provided Holmes with a framework for denaturalizing bodily capacities

across the boundaries of disability and normativity. First, prosthesis serves for Holmes as an extension and intensification of the principle of compensation. As with the extraordinary adaptations produced through the principle of compensation, Holmes's approach to prosthesis moves beyond its utility as a means of alleviating a presumed deficiency. Instead, Holmes presents prosthesis as an enhancement of bodily capacities. This focus on enhancement over utilitarian supplementation subverts normative concepts of the "natural" capacities of the body. To this end, Holmes extends prosthesis beyond artificial limb replacement to include any device that extends or enhances the faculties of the body. Expanding the definition of prosthesis allows Holmes to envision the proliferation of prosthetic devices used by individuals with and without disabilities. Moreover, while, for Holmes, the principle of compensation constitutes the adaptive process within individual and biological development, prosthesis expands this process by applying it to interactions with the socially constructed environment. The shift to the socially constructed environment has significant implications for two reasons. First, Holmes demonstrates that the categories of disabled and able-bodied are themselves socially constructed in that they are contingent upon the material and historical conditions in which individuals live. Second, Holmes champions the prostheticized body as an emblem of the national project, signifying the technological and artistic achievements made through the progress of the republic. Finally, Holmes's treatment of prosthesis gestures to the productively transgressive hybridization of individual and collective bodies. Specifically, prosthesis serves as a form of assemblage, an intertwining of bodies across difference, that complicates and revises the nationalist frame of Holmes's work.

Holmes investigates the implications of prosthesis in his article: "The Human Wheel, Its Spokes and Felloes." Throughout "The Human Wheel," Holmes affirms the argument of

Mitchell and Snyder that "The prostheticized body is the rule, not the exception."[361] Holmes grounds this affirmation in the unprecedented increase of amputations during the Civil War.[362] Reflecting on the number of amputations in 1863, Holmes notes that "It is not two years since the sight of a person who had lost one of his lower limbs was an infrequent occurrence. Now, alas! there are few of us who have not a cripple among our friends, if not in our own families."[363] As a result, Homes observes, the "mechanical art" of prosthesis is no longer restricted to "an occasional and exceptional want," developing instead into "a great and active branch of industry."[364] For Holmes, the "industry" of prosthesis at once administers to the needs of individuals and serves as a national enterprise administering to the broader needs of the republic in the wake of the Civil War. Describing the relationship between the destructive violence of the Civil War and the rehabilitation of prosthesis, Holmes writes: "War unmakes legs, and human skill must supply their places as it best may."[365] Gesturing to the reciprocal relationship between the violence of the Civil War and the rehabilitation of the body politic through prosthesis, Holmes treats prosthesis not only as a rule but as an emblem of American ingenuity advancing the project of reconstruction.

Holmes identifies the "Palmer leg" as an example par excellence of this project (fig. 2 and fig. 3). Selected by the Surgeon-General as "the leg to be procured by the Government for its crippled soldiers," the Palmer leg held institutional and national significance.[366] As a figure of American ingenuity, the Palmer leg exceeded previous artificial legs in both its apparatus and appearance. In contrast to previous prosthetics, the Palmer leg utilized "an ingenious arrangement of springs and cords in the *inside* of the limb" in order to more faithfully reproduce the capacities of the human leg.[367] Particularly innovative was the capability of the Palmer leg to replicate the flexible, yet stable articulation of the joints in the knee and foot. Perhaps as

significantly for Holmes, the Palmer leg was fashioned both internally and externally so as to "present a natural appearance."[368] The accomplishment of Palmer as a "'Surgeon-Artist'" thus provided the formal restoration of the body's wholeness and, by extension, the restoration of the American body politic.[369] Drawing a relationship between the progressive "arts" of prosthesis and the progress of the national project, Holmes declares, "It is one of the signs of our advancing American civilization, that the arts which preserve and restore the personal advantages necessary or favorable to cultivated social life should have reached such perfection among us."[370] Here, prosthesis is not only the rule, but the technological and aesthetic emblem of American nationalism.

Figure 4. "Palmer's Patent Leg & Arm." Engraving from *Saturday Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), February 14, 1863, 7.

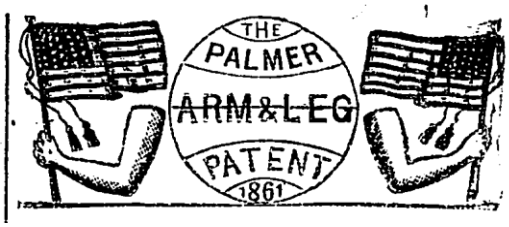

Figure 5. "The Palmer Arm & Leg." Engraving from *Saturday Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), January 13, 1866, 7.

Holmes additionally broadens the application of prosthesis beyond limb loss or congenital amputation by pairing his discussion of the Palmer leg with "the efforts of another ingenious American to render the use of our lower extremities easier by shaping their artificial coverings more in accordance with their true form than is done by the empirical cordwainer."[371] Holmes is referring to the shoe mold developed by Dr. J. C. Plumer, able to produce "a boot or shoe which is adapted to the form of the foot from the first, instead of having to be broken in by a painful series of limping excursions." Plumer's innovation was to develop a shoe mold that reproduced, in Holmes's words, the "natural foot as it appears in infancy, unspoiled as yet by social corruptions" by studying the anatomy of the foot as well as the "gradual accommodation

in which time fits [the boot or shoe] to the foot almost as if it had been moulded upon it."[372] As Holmes discusses, Plumer's invention exemplifies the productive proliferation of prosthesis in order to accommodate and navigate the disabling artificiality of constructed environments. Noting that "a large portion of mankind tread on artificial hard surfaces, especially pavements," Holmes observes "we have repeatedly found ourselves terribly lamed and shaken by our first walk on the pavement."[373] By bringing together forms of prosthesis intended for the enhancement of disabled and able-bodied individuals alike, Holmes indicates a productive proliferation of prosthesis that supersedes the boundaries of normative embodiment.

Holmes more fully develops this approach to destabilizing the dichotomies of embodiment in his examination of "*ordinary walking*."[374] While purportedly establishing a normative binary between "*ordinary walking*" and the use of prosthesis, Holmes's observations reveal a remarkable degree of variation and contingency within the process of walking that is strikingly extra-"*ordinary*."[375] Presenting a series of figures reproduced from the "instantaneous stereoscopic views of the streets and public places of Paris and of New York," Holmes is repeatedly "arrest[ed]" and "astonish[ed]" by the "*ordinary walking*" within this ostensibly quotidian scene.[376] Moving from figure to figure, Holmes registers astonishment at "the remarkable length" of a subject's "stride.. which arrests our attention," only to discover in moving to another figure that, "as this last surprised us, so the extent of this angle astonishes us in many of the figures."[377] The extraordinary nature of this seemingly ordinary process leads Holmes to conclude that "No artist would have dared to draw a walking figure in attitudes like some of these."[378] When examined closely, ordinary walking appears artificial itself.

For Holmes, who understood the body as a microcosm of the body politic, the "cruel injustice to which the feet are subjected, and the extraordinary distortions and diseases to which

they are liable in consequence" are suggestive of the inequalities within the political negotiation of whose bodies matter.[379] Drawing an analogy between the implicit hierarchy of bodies and the unequal treatment of individuals according to condition and position, Holmes writes:

> The foot's fingers are the slaves in the republic of the body. Their black leathern integument is only the mark of their servile condition. They bear the burdens, while the hands, their white masters, handle the money and wear the rings. They are crowded promiscuously in narrow prisons, while each of the hand's fingers claims its separate apartment, leading from the antechamber, in the dainty glove. As a natural consequence of all this, their faculties are cramped, they grow into ignoble shapes, they become callous by long abuse, and all their natural gifts are crushed and trodden out of them.[380]

In this complex analogy, the deleterious treatment of the feet through labor and constraint embodies the subjugation of race through enslavement. Holmes's analogy operates through the oppressive conditioning of the body, the "burdens" of forced labor and the disciplinary confinement of "narrow prisons," that Holmes connects to disability. Throughout the passage, Holmes is careful to attribute the process of deformation to oppressive social and material conditions rather than any inherent biological determinism. Significantly, Holmes's analogy also envisions a convergence of "black" and "white," oppressed and oppressor within a hybridized body.[381] As the passage continues, Holmes suggests that prosthesis serves as a method for accommodating these oppressive conditions, declaring that "Dr. Plumer is the Garrison of these oppressed members of the body corporeal. He comes to break their chains, to lift their bowed figures, to strengthen their weakness, to restore them to the dignity of digits."[382] Prosthesis here presents a model of reconciliation for restoring the body's integrity and allowing its "natural gifts" to flourish while remaining attentive to the historically unequal conditions of slavery.

Throughout "The Human Wheel," Holmes approaches prosthesis as a model for what Margrit Shildrick terms "co-corporeality," a "coming-together in difference" in which bodies become entwined with one another, producing transgressive hybridizations that challenge the normative boundaries of self-possessed subjecthood.[383] Holmes presents prosthetic rehabilitation as a form of hybridization, creating a variety of novel configurations that unsettle categorical distinctions around disability more specifically and the human more broadly. Positing a taxonomy of disability, Holmes formulates an amalgamation of categories including "*uniped*," "*nulliped*," "*ligniped*," and "*biligniped*" to signify individuals who have lost one or both limbs and those using one or two prosthetic devices, respectively. Iterating upon forms of disability and prosthesis, Holmes's terminology accentuates the proliferation of bodily difference in relation to prosthesis, decentering the referent of able-embodiment. Holmes further underscores the proliferation of difference in the process of attaching the Palmer leg, which he casts as a transformative crossing across taxonomical categories: "*nullipeds*, as presented to Mr. Palmer, *biligniped*s, as they walk forth again before the admiring world, balanced upon their two new-born members."[384] Transformed, the users of the Palmer leg present what Holmes refers to as "hybrids between the animal and vegetable world."[385] While the description of prosthetic-users as "hybrids" of "animal" and "vegetable" might suggest a grotesque violation of self-possessed personhood or a mark of deviation as inferiority, regressing along the evolutionary chain of development, Holmes pushes in the opposite direction towards a distributive model of agency and sensation. Describing the process through which the sensibilities of the body are distributed through the prosthetic limb, Holmes writes that "gradually the wooden limb seems to become, as it were, penetrated by the nerves, and the intelligence to run downwards until it reaches the last joint of the member."[386] The prosthetic here becomes a continuation or proliferation of

embodiment rather than a negation. Holmes presents this proliferation as a kind of "coming-together in difference," in which prosthesis is imbued with its own vitality, "the well-shaped, intelligent, docile limb, the half-reasoning willow of Mr. Palmer," that is coextensive with the body.[387]

The two lines of inquiry in Holmes's analysis— the prostheticized body as anemblem of national progress and the transgressive potential of prosthesis to reconfigure relations across difference— converge in the central figure of "The Human Wheel" (fig. 4). Explaining the figure, Holmes writes: "Man is a *wheel*, with two spokes, his legs, and two fragments of a tire, his feet… If he had spokes enough, he would go round and round as the boys do when they 'make a wheel' with their four limbs for its spokes."[388] The image of "man" as a "*wheel*" leads Holmes to present "the somewhat singular illustration" printed directly below the title of the article:

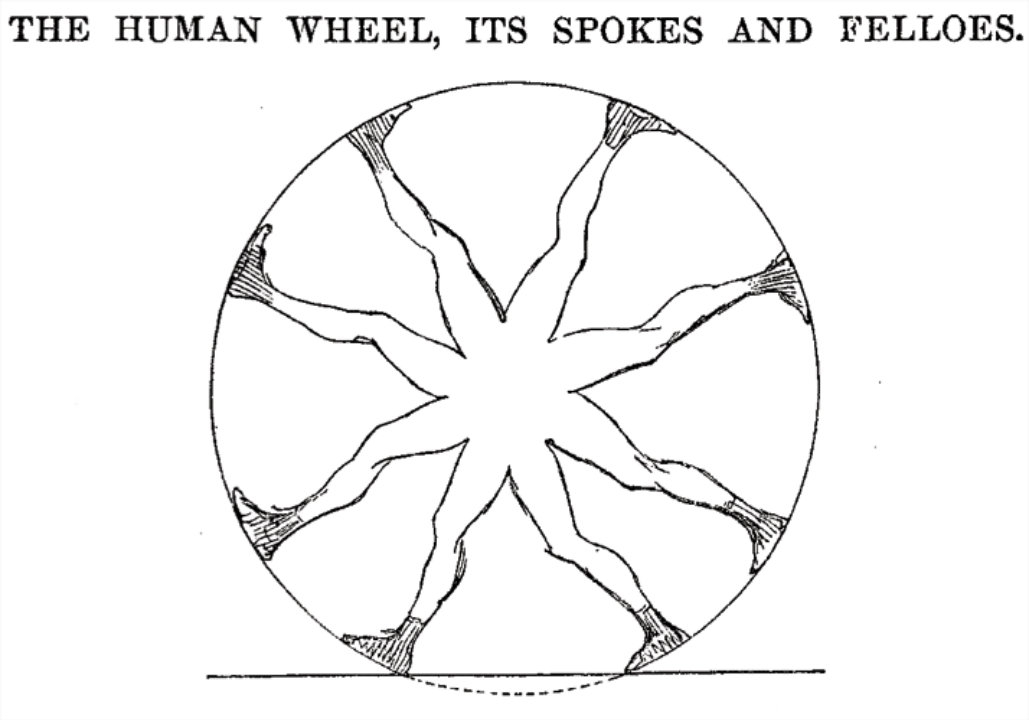

Figure 6. "The Human Wheel." Engraving from "The Human Wheel, Its Spokes and Felloes," by Oliver Wendell Holmes in *Soundings from the Atlantic* London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1864. 282.

On one level, "The Human Wheel" demonstrates of the ordinary principles of walking, illustrating the movement in which the individual "*rolls* successively on each of these fragments [of a tire, his feet] from the heel to the toe."[389] Playing upon Da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man," the image illustrates the symmetrical proportions of the body in relation to movement. In this sense, the image presents a universalizing gesture to the ideal form of the human body. At the same time, the "Human Wheel" presents a hybrid view of the body that conjures Holmes's depiction of the Civil War as "the melancholy harvest… sweeping down with Dahlgren's mowing-machine and the patent reapers of Springfield and Hartford," reaping "the limbs of our friends and countrymen."[390] In its relation to the Civil War, the hybrid combination of human and machine at once figures the "signs of our advancing American civilization" and subverts this progressive reading in connection to the loss of human life and limb.[391] Appropriately, the wheel formalizes the unsettling cyclical logic of war and prosthesis: "War unmakes legs, and human skill must supply their places as it best may."[392]

Approached from the historical treatment of disability as a "utilitarian compensation for a perceived bodily lack," Holmes's presentation of the cyclical logic of the human wheel unsettles the progressive aims of prosthesis as an extension of the mechanical destruction of the Civil War. Through the course of "The Human Wheel," however, Holmes gestures toward an alternative approach to the hybridity of prosthesis as an assemblage. The figure of "The Human Wheel," then, also importantly figures what Shildrick describes as "the multiple possibilities of co-corporeality, where bodies are not just contiguous and mutually reliant but entwined with one another."[393] In light of this approach, it is significant that the example Holmes offers of the human wheel involves the entwining of bodies: "If he had spokes enough, he would go round and round as the boys do when they 'make a wheel' with their four limbs for its spokes."[394]

Holmes similarly gestures to prosthesis as a form of "enhancement and supplement" in his suggestion that the "harmonious outlines" of the Palmer leg "would almost persuade a man with two good legs to provide himself with a third."[395]

Aesthetic Nervousness and Narrative Prosthesis in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*

Holmes explores the social and formal implications of the principle of compensation and the prostheticized body throughout his literary works, almost all of which position disability as a primary subject. Throughout these works, disability is central, providing the impetus for plot and structuring the formal arrangement of the novel. In an oft-cited passage from the preface to *Elsie Venner*, Holmes defines his formal approach to fiction as a "medicated novel."[396] Regarding this hybridized form, which combines the principles of medicine with the form of the novel, Holmes writes: "Through all the disguise of fiction a grave scientific doctrine may be detected lying beneath some of the delineations of character. He [Holmes] has used this doctrine as a part of the machinery of his story without pledging his absolute belief in it to the extent to which it is asserted or implied."[397] Criticism on Holmes has extensively explored the implications of this "grave scientific doctrine" underlying "the machinery of [Holmes's] story," examining the ways in which Holmes's use of empirical description, technical digression, and investigative plot structure serves to affirm the objective, masculine perspective of Holmes's many medical personae.[398] What has been left unexamined, however, is Holmes's consistent focus on scientific doctrines centering on disability. In this chapter, I argue that, in large part, the "machinery" of Holmes's novels constitutes the development, function, and treatment of disability.[399]

While scholarship on Holmes has yet to examine the constitutive role of disability in his fictional works, descriptions of his literary form have repeatedly gestured to a formal anxiety that

anticipates recent disability studies work on the relationship between disability and narrative forms. In fact, while Holmes's approach to the intersection of medicine and politics has generally been characterized as a conservative attempt to maintain social and professional order, his approach to the intersection of medicine and literary form has often been characterized by the same frenzied paroxysms of nervousness against which Holmes was ostensibly defining medical authority. Thus Joan Burbick notes the "dizzying speed" of the "doubled and contradictory messages" revealing "the multitude of anxieties afflicting the hegemonic class." In his analysis of Holmes's approach to the "culture of conversation," Peter Gibian similarly classifies Holmes's "distinctive vision of dialogue as a non-synthetic verbal form" as an amalgamation of "explosive interruptions and alterations between the diverse views of multiple speakers."[400] Michael A. Weinstein, in one of the most comprehensive efforts to systematize Holmes's "interconnected structures of meaning" throughout his literary works, notably grants similarly that Holmes's thought on various subjects often "proceeds in fits and starts."[401] Within this body of scholarship, Holmes's nervous literary style, proceeding with "dizzying speed," and "fits and starts" while frequently being punctuated by "explosive interruptions and alterations," is generally read as evidence of the anxieties of maintaining hegemonic order or, more simply, as evidence of Holmes's shortcomings as a writer.[402] By placing Holmes's consistent focus on disability in conversation with his anxious style, however, I argue that Holmes's approach to narrative form is more productively understood as a significant negotiation of representing disability. Disability in this view marks a break from the disinterestedness and objective gaze or medical gaze that has become a touchstone in scholarship on Holmes. To this end, I turn to recent work in disability studies that explores the significance of the "nervousness" that characterizes Holmes's fiction.

By situating the "nervousness" of Holmes's style in relation to disability, I argue that Holmes's approach to disability in his fictional works can be productively understood as exhibiting what Ato Quayson describes as "aesthetic nervousness": "what ensues and can be discerned in the suspension, collapse, or general short-circuiting of the hitherto dominant protocols of representation that may have governed the text."[403] Quayson's formulation of "aesthetic nervousness" usefully places the "short-circuiting" of representational modes evident in the "fits and starts" that characterize Holmes's style in relation to the history of literary treatments of disability. In particular, Quayson's examination of "aesthetic nervousness" expands upon Rosemarie Garland Thomson's foundational work on the "economy of visual difference," in which encounters with individuals with disabilities are arranged "into a hierarchy of value that assigns completeness to some bodies and deficiency to others."[404] As Quayson indicates, however, these affectively charged encounters also importantly involve "various elements of this complex relationship that do not disclose themselves as elements of power as such, but rather as forms of anxiety, dissonancy, and disorder."[405] For Quayson, these complex affective responses are occasioned by the recognition of the radical contingency of the human body, which in turn serves as an opportunity for the revaluation of the various interpretive frames through which embodiment and its attendant principles of "wholeness, beauty, and economic competitiveness structure persons with disability and place them at the center of a peculiar conjuncture of concepts."[406]

Quayson's exploration of "aesthetic nervousness" is emblematic of recent work in disability studies that has reexamined the mutually formative role between bodily and narrative forms. In part, criticism focusing on bodily and literary forms has sought to counterbalance the continuing investigation of the social construction of disability against normative embodiment by

examining the ways encounters with disability impact and reconstitute representational modes. As several scholars have noted, this turn to literary form does not represent an escape from either politics or embodiment into the idealized realm of aesthetics. Instead, a focus on disability places primary emphasis on the cultural and historical politics of embodiment and affect at the core of aesthetics. Disability provides a critical framework for the examination of the operations of sensibility in aesthetics that is informed by and reconstituted through the historical treatment of the extraordinary body.[407]

Of particular importance to the figure of prosthetic compensation in Holmes's work is what David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder describe in their foundational work on the intersection of narrative and disability as "narrative prosthesis." According to Mitchell and Snyder, narrative prosthesis names the attempt to alleviate the discomfort occasioned by disability "by removing the unsightly from view" and thereby "return[ing] one to an acceptable degree of difference."[408] The consequences of narrative prosthesis are twofold. First, narrative prosthesis calls attention to the prosthetic role of narrative in compensating for disability, thereby both concealing and laying bare the discomforting presence of the disabled body. Second, narrative prosthesis gestures to the dependencies of narrative on the disruptive materiality of disability in order to produce literary open-endedness, even while reinstating the historical essentialism of representations of disability as a static, totalizing condition. In addition to this normative function, however, narrative prosthesis also provides transgressive potential in revealing the narrative concealment of disability as a prosthetic construction. In productively failing to accomplish the illusion of normativity, narrative prosthesis "*flaunt[s] its imperfect supplementation as an illusion*."[409] As a result, disability operates in literature as "*the textual*

obstacle that causes the literary operation of open-endedness to close down or stumble" that works, in turn, as an "interruptive force that confronts cultural truisms."[410]

Quayson's concept of "aesthetic nervousness" expands upon this disruptive potential of disability. As Michael Bérubé has observed, Quayson's articulation of "aesthetic nervousness" provides a productive potential for both politics and literary form by allowing encounters with disability "to be transformed into something else, something potentially revelatory, something that raises questions not only with regard to the ethical core of a text but also with regard to its form and texture."[411] In the context of mid-nineteenth-century intersections of medicine and literature, I argue "narrative prosthesis" and "aesthetic nervousness" are most effective when placed in conversation. Given the thoroughly examined link between the institutional treatment of disability and Foucauldian biopower, narrative prosthesis uncovers the narrative forms in which disability is rendered what Snyder and Mitchell term "the master trope of human disqualification."[412] As Michael Bérubé states in his treatment of Mitchell and Snyder, narrative prosthesis in this way "offers a disability-studies version of the hermeneutics of suspicion." In an examination of 1860's medicine and literature and for Holmes in particular, suspicion is warranted. As I discuss below in reference to Holmes's work, moments of aesthetic nervousness often inaugurate the process of narrative prosthesis as a discursive palliative. At the same time, the failure of narrative prosthesis to accomplish its compensatory function and "*flaunt its imperfect supplementation as an illusion*" occasions its own form of aesthetic nervousness. The result is a series of formal oscillations in which the anxieties accompanying the representation of disability are at once provoked and mediated without ever foreclosing in the erasure of difference.

In relation to narrative prosthesis, aesthetic nervousness serves as a critical counterbalance by indicating that, while narrative might well be and often is complicit in furthering the circumscription of disability as a perceived bodily lack, the reinstitution of ableism is by no means inevitable or monolithic. As Michael Bérubé has observed, Quayson's articulation of "aesthetic nervousness" provides a productive potential for both politics and literary form by allowing encounters with disability "to be transformed into something else, something potentially revelatory, something that raises questions not only with regard to the ethical core of a text but also with regard to its form and texture."[413] For this reason, Quayson's emphasis on contingency is applicable not only to the variety of affectively charged responses to disability, but the corrective intervention presented by the concept of aesthetic nervousness. To extend Bérubé's gloss of narrative prosthesis as a "disability-studies version of the hermeneutics of suspicion" in reference to Quayson, I argue that a methodology animated by attending to forms of aesthetic nervousness serves as a form of what Eve Sedgewick describes as "reparative reading."[414] Somewhat counterintuitively, it is precisely in the process of breaking down or "stumbling" that literary texts oriented toward disability offer glimpses of alternative representational modes that move beyond the binary of hypervisibility and invisibility of disability. More broadly, my argument is that these alternative representational modes situate the representation of disability as an occasion to reorient sensibility as such.

In this chapter, I examine Holmes's treatment of disability in two novels: *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* and *Elsie Venner*. In *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, the representation of disability operates as a feedback loop in which moments of aesthetic nervousness and the production of narrative prosthesis reciprocally occasion one another. As Holmes presents it in the novel, disability functions as a disruptive force, short-circuiting the

conversational form that Holmes presents as a model of American sociality. The moments of aesthetic nervousness that occur in the text and the production of narrative prosthesis around them thus mark a tension in the formal and political "representation" of disability within the American public sphere. Alongside the reciprocal provocation and mediation of aesthetic nervousness and narrative prosthesis, however, Holmes presents an approach to disability that foregoes the dictates of rational discourse in favor of exploring the affordances of aesthetics in representing the extraordinary body. Set in opposition to the idealization of bodily forms, Holmes posits an aesthetics of disorder and contingency that approaches disability as a valuable resource for expanding the appreciation of bodily variety. Ultimately, by turning to aesthetics, Holmes resituates disability from a hierarchical model according to the variations among bodily capacities to a relational model that operates through the mutual aesthetic responses of and to the body.

The variegated form of *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* unfolds in a series of conversations, monologues, essays and poems on various topics including the freedom of religious expression; American national identity inflected through gender, class, and race; medical and scientific developments; and aesthetics. This heterogeneous amalgamation of discourse is loosely framed by a speculative process of emplotment concerning Little Boston, a profuse and willful conversationalist with a congenital deformity, and Iris, a young, ethereal artist whose aesthetic vision is associated with the nervous condition, catalepsy.[415] Fascinated by these two characters whose discursive and artistic acumen is associated with physical and nervous disorders, respectively, Holmes's narrator and medical persona, the Professor, repeatedly diverts his attention from the dynamic conversation to speculate regarding their personal histories, relationship, and position in relation to narrative itself.

In one of the few references to Holmes's treatment of disability, Weinstein characterizes Little Boston as "one of Holmes's most complex and problematic inventions."[416] This complexity arises in part from Holmes's use of multiple personae to characterize Little Boston over the course of the novel. Holmes refers to Little Boston through three pseudonyms: "The Sculpin," "Little Boston," and "the Little Gentleman," each of which Holmes associates with one of Little Boston's multiple disabilities. Significantly, Holmes positions each pseudonym in order to examine one of the multiple significations of disability. When initially introduced in the novel as the Sculpin, the character is presented as a diminutive, grotesque figure that signifies a reductionist approach to disability as corporeal insufficiency. Indeed, Holmes draws attention to the pseudonym, "the Sculpin," as a reference to a species of "little water-beast which pretends to consider itself a fish, and, under that pretext, hangs about the piles upon which West-Boston Bridge is built, swallowing the bait and hook intended for flounders… a diminutive bony carcass, and a surface so full of spines, ridges, ruffles, and frills, that the naturalists have not been able to count them without quarrelling about the number."[417] Presented in animalistic and mechanistic language, the Sculpin is placed within a hierarchy of embodiment in which disability constitutes the subhuman other against which the normate is rendered neutral. Codifying the Sculpin's appearance in the language of the grotesque, the Professor states "his whole appearance was so grotesque, I felt for a minute as if there was a showman behind him who would pull him down presently and put up Judy, or the hangman, or the Devil, or some other wooden personage of the famous spectacle" (2).

While Little Boston's initial identity as the Sculpin demonstrates a reductionist and hierarchical approach to disability, his final identity as the Little Gentleman signifies an alternative circumscription of disability within medicine and sentiment. As the Little Gentleman,

the character is defined primarily through an internal congenital disorder, "*ectopia cordis*," that at once inaugurates the Little Gentleman's untimely death and gestures to the internal insight of medicine and sentiment. While repeatedly presented as a verbose conversationalist and advocate for the freedom of expression throughout the novel, as the Little Gentleman, the character's discursive acumen is superseded by the medicalized testimony of the body. This shift is evident in the tension between the Little Gentleman's dying request that his body remain unviolated by the intrusive practices of anatomical research upon his death and the medical examination carried out by the Professor. Requesting to be buried in an unmarked grave, the Little Gentleman states: "I don't want to have my bones stared at, as my body has been. I don't doubt I was a *remarkable case*; but for God's sake, oh, for God's sake, don't let 'em make a show of the cage I have been shut up in and looked through the bars of for so many years!" (263). While promising to honor the Little Gentleman's request, however, the Professor's diagnosis elicits the testimony of the disordered body against which the Little Gentleman protests. Examining the Little Gentleman's body, the Professor reflects: "It is hard to draw the line between scientific curiosity and the desire for the patient's sake to learn all the details of his condition… For this is a case of *ectopia cordis*, my boy, - displacement of the heart; and it isn't every day you get a chance to overhaul such an interesting malformation," continuing on to reproduce an extensive diagnosis (258-9).

As a patient, the Little Gentleman serves primarily as an occasion for what Bryce Traister refers to as Holmes's use of "sentimental medicine." Regarding the gendered relationship between sentiment and medicine, Traister writes, "To the degree that the sentimental made available an externalized language of the body's interior being, it constituted a diagnostic language by which the illnesses of the cultural body might be clinically examined and treated by benevolent masculine authority."[418] In relation to disability, Traiston's argument indicates the

subsuming of disability within the process of medical self-fashioning. Ato Quayson has identified this trope in representations of disability as "*disability as null set and/or moral test*," in which disability "acts as some form of ethical background to the actions of other characters, or as a means of testing or enhancing their moral standing."[419] While presented in the redemptive language of sympathy, then, the treatment of the Little Gentleman enacts a foreclosure of the disabled subject in order to inaugurate the professional and sentimental development of his caretakers.

Appropriately positioned between the foreclosures of disability in the grotesque figure of otherness, the Sculpin, and the pitiable medical specimen, the Little Gentleman, Little Boston presents a model of disability that productively resists these reductive categorizations. In place of hierarchical classification, Little Boston's disability is presented as an unsettling force within the novel. In contrast to the repulsion and pity inspired by The Sculpin and the Little Gentleman, respectively, Little Boston at once fascinates and provokes affective responses among the society of boarders in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*. As a figure of fascination, Little Boston occasions speculation, narrative and, as I discuss further below, aesthetic inspiration. Through Little Boston, Holmes explores the signifying potential of disability beyond essentializing hierarchies of embodiment.

Holmes explores the signifying potential of disability beyond bodily hierarchies through the relationship between Little Boston and literary form. Unlike the reductionist readings of disability as a sign of grotesque monstrosity or the sentimental subject of medical intervention that characterize the treatment of the Sculpin and the Little Gentleman, respectively, the result of the attempt to situate Little Boston within the narrative of the novel is thus less a stable interpretation of disability than a series of interruptions, unpredicted deviations and hermeneutic

impasses that unsettle the function of narrative. These moments of aesthetic nervousness at once lay bare the prosthetic function of narrative speculation and gesture towards alternative formal arrangements. Holmes underscores the unsettling function of disability as the Professor reflects on the formal structure of the novel. Noting that, despite his "intention" to restrict the content of the novel to the "conversations between myself and the other boarders," the Professor states: "my curiosity is excited about this little boarder of ours, and my reader must not be disappointed, if I sometimes interrupt a discussion to give an account of whatever fact or traits I may discover about him" (47). Describing the Professor's compulsion to diagnose Little Boston's personal history as a "disrupt[ion]," Holmes establishes a tension between the free-flowing discourse of the conversational form and the disruptive presence of the extraordinary body. This tension is particularly significant, given Holmes's approach to the form of the conversational novel. As Peter Gibian has argued, for Holmes, conversation operated as a "social experiment, a verbal laboratory for studies of the volatile 'associations' between diverse people and diverse ideas" while also providing a "model for the larger culture in this period… the problems of American diversity and American dividedness and the possibilities for American pluralism."[420] By interrupting the flow of conversation, then, Little Boston is presented as a limit case for the negotiation of difference within the national project.

Significantly, Little Boston's initial appearance in the novel is presented as an interruption. Opening the narrative by declaring his intention "to have signalized [his] first appearance by a certain large statement… the nearest approach to a universal formula," the Professor is interrupted at the moment of articulating his conclusion by the entrance of Little Boston (referred to here as "the Sculpin"): "(NOW, THEN!) The great end of being, after all is… Hold on! – said my neighbor… - hold on! the Sculpin is go'n' to say something'" (1, 2). As the

opening chapter continues, the Professor's attempt to articulate the "great end of being" is repeatedly interrupted by Little Boston's account of his personal and family history. In an ironic inversion of the Professor's statement that "the great end of being is to harmonize man with the order of things," Little Boston's personal narrative continuously unsettles the institution of "the order of things" (4). Reflecting on the affective response engendered by Little Boston's interruption, the Professor states: "This episode broke me up, as the jockeys say, out of my square conversational trot" (10). Anticipating Quayson's definition of aesthetic nervousness as comprising moments in which "the dominant protocols of representation within the literary text are short-circuited in relation to disability," the Professor approaches Little Boston's interruptions as an occasion to reevaluate the formal arrangement of Holmes's genre of choice, the discursive essay.[421] Referencing the narrator-persona Holmes used in his first discursive essay, the eponymous "Autocrat" of *The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table*, the Professor draws a distinction in narratorial control in relation to Little Boston. As Weinstein notes, the Autocrat serves Holmes as a persona of the "final judge and dramatic hero."[422] Citing the authoritative position assumed by the Autocrat, the Professor observes of Little Boston: "I think our small boarder here is like to prove a refractory subject, if I undertake to use the scepter my friend [the Autocrat] meant to bequeath me, too magisterially" (17). Relinquishing a degree of textual control, the Professor concludes, "What shall I do with this little man? – There is only one thing to do, - and that is to let him talk when he will. The day of the 'Autocrat's' monologues is over" (18).

Holmes directly associates Little Boston's disruptive potential to disability. Having asked to see a funeral ring worn by Little Boston, the Professor describes his movements with dismay: "With pain and labor, lifting one foot over the other, as a drummer handles his sticks, he took a

few steps from his place" (9). As the Professor's discomfort crescendos, the movement of the passage halts abruptly. The Professor observes, "his motions and the deadbeat of the misshapen boots announcing to my practiced eye and ear the malformation which is called in learned language talipes varus, or inverted club-foot. Stop! stop! – I said, - let me come to you" (9). Notably, the Professor's diagnosis of Little Boston's disability is presented as a moment of aesthetic nervousness, in which the rational talk form of the novel is short-circuited. As Ato Quayson argues, the sudden revelation of disability is often used as a trope in representations of disability that serves to intensify the ethical tensions governing a given text.[423] To this end, the disruptions occasioned by the sudden identification of Little Boston's debility place critical pressure on the egalitarian conversational form that Holmes presents as a model for democratic participation. Notably, Holmes suggests that this disruption occurs less as a result of disability than social and medical attitudes towards disability. As the passage continues, the Professor notes: "The little man hobbled back, and lifted himself by the left, arm, with an ease approaching to grace which surprised me, into his high chair" (9). The "ease approaching to grace" displayed by Little Boston unsettles the Professor's medical interpretation of debility, suggesting that the "pain and labor" the Professor reads in Little Boston's movements are a product of the Professor's assumptions regarding disability rather than Little Boston's condition.

While the revelation of Little Boston's diagnosis establishes an opposition between normative embodiment and disability through an essentializing identification of Little Boston with his debility, the representation of disability is troubled throughout the novel as the boundaries inscribed by medical taxonomy continually fail to cohere. Attempting to inquire regarding the identity and history of the Sculpin, the Professor is instead initiated into a series of referential oscillations that unsettle any attempt to define a singular essence of the disabled

subject. When the Professor asks a fellow boarder, John, for "any information respecting the deformed person who sits at the other end of the table," John replies, "What! the Sculpin?" (18). As Holmes's medical persona, the Professor then attempts to alleviate the dehumanizing association with an animal, "a term which implies contempt for what should inspire only pity," by appealing to the more progressive terminology of medical diagnosis (19). Attempting to ameliorate the animalistic reference to the Sculpin through medical diagnosis, the Professor replies: "The diminutive person, with angular curvature of the spine,—I said, —and double talipes varus,—I beg your pardon,—with two club-feet" (18). Reflecting Holmes's stance regarding the benevolent tolerance of medical diagnosis, the Professor's attempt to codify the Sculpin through impairment in place of monstrosity appeals to the "objectivity" of medical discourse in order to counteract the stigma of disability.[424] The Professor's medical diagnosis, however, fails either to elicit tolerance or enforce medical authority. As the Professor attempts to situate John's repulsion within an evolutionary theory of progress that effectively demonstrates a form of social Darwinism, John's "face gradually lost its expression as I was speaking, until it became as blank of vivid significance as the countenance of a gingerbread rabbit with two currants in the place of eyes" (19). Here, appeals to scientific objectivity around disability fail to signify, indicating the limitations of the hierarchical categorization of embodiment.

Importantly, the disruptive force of disability within *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* extends beyond the physical presence of disability, haunting the free-flowing operation of rational discourse. [425] At one point in the text, as Little Boston is delivering an enthusiastic speech on the virtues of Boston, "exalting his own city at the expense of every other place," the Professor attempts to "say something to sober him down" and reestablish discursive order (86). Rather than instituting order, however, the attempt at mediation unwittingly threatens to shut

down the conversation altogether. Attempting to intervene in the regional discord fomented by Little Boston, the Professor declares, "It dwarfs the mind, I think, - said I, - to feed on any localism. The full stature of manhood is shriveled" (87). As the Professor realizes his accidental reference to disability, his visceral response exhibits the symptoms of aesthetic nervousness: "The color burst up into my cheeks. What was I saying, - I, who would not for the world have pained our unfortunate little boarder by an allusion?" (87). The Professor's anxiety unsettles his beneficent medical persona, indicating the entanglements of oppressive systems of embodiment that circumscribe both Little Boston and the Professor. Disability here operates at once as a textual and political obstacle, unsettling at once formal and democratic "representation." [426]

Holmes further demonstrates this point in a moment immediately preceding the Professor's interjection. In perhaps the most candid instance of textual prosthesis, a tenant identified as the "Marylander" anticipates the Professor's attempt to establish conversational order by placating Little Boston, stating: "Come, now,… - what's the use of these comparisons? Didn't I hear this gentleman saying, the other day, that every American owns all America?... I am an American, - and wherever I look up and see the stars and stripes overhead, that is home to me!" (86-7). As a form of textual prosthesis, the Marylander's statement that "every American owns all America" attempts to compensate for both provincialism and bodily disorder through the abstract ideal of American individualism. As the passage continues, however, the prosthetic function of abstract American subjecthood is laid bare. As the Marylander speaks, the Professor observes, he "looked up as if he heard the emblazoned folds crackling over him in the breeze" (87). In response, the tenants "all looked up involuntarily, as if we should see the national flag by so doing. The sight of the dingy ceiling and the gas-fixture depending therefrom dispelled the

illusion" (87). While the prosthetic function of national identity produces a collective turning away from the extraordinary body, the device itself is revealed as an "illusion."

Interwoven with the circular operation of aesthetic nervousness and narrative prosthesis, however, is an alternative approach to disability that appeals to the representational affordances of aesthetics. "Affordances," as explored in the work of Caroline Levine, signifies the latent assortment of applications afforded by the particular characteristics of a given formal arrangement.[427] Through this shift from rational discourse to aesthetic representation, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* anticipates recent work on the intersection of disability and aesthetics. In his work, *Disability Aesthetics*, Tobin Siebers argues that an aesthetic approach to disability productively serves as a means to "enlarge our vision of human variation and difference." In particular, the intersection of disability and aesthetics allows for the movement beyond the "stultifying perfection of the human figure," with its emphasis on the principles of "harmony, integrity, and beauty."[428] Instead, "disability aesthetics" appeals to the representational affordances of art in order to present bodily forms that "[seem] by traditional standards to be broken, and yet [are] not less beautiful, but more so, as a result."[429] Ato Quayson has argued to similar effect that disability "inaugurates and constitutes the aesthetic field as such."[430] Specifically, Quayson situates the aesthetic response elicited by encounters with disability within the sublime. As with the aesthetic response to the sublime, disability, Quayson argues, "elicits language and narrativity even while resisting or frustrating complete comprehension and representation and placing itself on the boundary between the real and the metaphysical."[431] For both Siebers and Quayson, then, the entanglement of disability and aesthetics resituates disability from a form of deviation to a transgressive aesthetic force that might productively challenge hierarchies of embodiment.

In *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, Holmes establishes an opposition between two aesthetic approaches to bodily difference. The first approach, defined by idealized regularity and the elision of difference, Holmes presents as a function of the disciplinary surveillance of the normate. Placed in the terms used by Quayson and Siebers, this first approach constitutes the category of the beautiful that Quayson implicitly critiques in favor of the sublime and the "stultifying perfection" that Siebers critiques as the antithesis of "disability aesthetics." Holmes anticipates Quayson and Siebers in critiquing this aesthetics of idealized embodiment as both ideologically problematic and artistically inferior. The second aesthetic mode, defined by the disorder and contingencies of organic development, Holmes associates with the sublimity of the extraordinary body. As with Quayson and Siebers, Holmes appeals to this second approach as a means to expand the aesthetic appreciation for bodily variety. Ultimately, what emerges in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* is the formulation of aesthetics that incorporates disability as a valuable resource for an artistic vision that supersedes the lackluster artifice of normative embodiment.

Throughout *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, Holmes presents a sustained critique of the valuation of idealized bodily forms as an effect of normative, disciplinary surveillance. Holmes mobilizes this critique through the tension between the multifaceted dimensionality of organic development and the disciplinary flattening of difference. In discussing the social niceties of polite conversation, the Professor states, "The longer I live, the more I am satisfied of two things: first, that the truest lives are those that are cut rose-diamond-fashion, with many facets answering to the many-planed aspects of the world about them; secondly, that society is always trying in some way or other to grind us down to a single flat surface" (33). While the "truest lives" operate through the organic adaptations to the "many-planed aspects of the world

about them," the internalization of social norms enacts a reductive essentialism that "grind[s]" the multifaceted dimensionality of individual character "to a single flat surface." Holmes situates this process of grinding down difference within the distinctions of class. Describing the self-policing of difference, the Professor observes that, in polite society among the cultural elite, "Every look, movement, tone, expression, subject of discourse, that may give pain to another is habitually excluded from conversational intercourse" (133). Membership among the privileged class thus necessitates the elision of any difference that may lead to conflict.

In *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, the primary figure of this idealized refinement is the aptly named "Model of All Virtues." Described as an "excellent lady whose only fault was, that Nature had written out her list of virtues on ruled paper, and forgotten to rub out the lines," the "Model of All Virtues" exemplifies the ordered principles of refinement that Holmes associates with class and discipline (316). Holmes presents the Model as the antithesis to Little Boston, demonstrating what Siebers describes as "the stultifying perfection of the human figure."[432] Holmes describes this "stultifying perfection" in the same flattening language of "grind[ing]" down difference, writing that the Model "was as unseizable, except in her totality, as a billiard-ball;… she glanced from every human contact, and 'caromed' from one relation to another, and rebounded from the stuffed cushion of temptation, with such exact and perfect angular movements" (71). Here, the idealized perfection of the Model of all Virtues results in a single, flat surface figured in the "billiard-ball." By eliminating personal vulnerability to "temptation," Holmes suggests that the "exact and perfect angular movements" of the Model simultaneously disallow the possibility of any meaningful interpersonal contact. Further, Holmes suggests that the erasure of difference results in the reduction of vitality, producing a "depressing effect on the vital powers" (71).

Significantly, Holmes presents the Model's "depressing effect on the vital powers" as a function of her perceptive acumen. Holmes writes, "Her mind was a perfect laboratory of tests and reagents; every syllable you put into breath went into her intellectual eudiometer, and all your thoughts were recorded on litmus-paper" (72). Presented in the scientific language of experimentation and calculation, the Model's surveilling capacities optically dissect the subjects of her gaze. Demonstrating the use of scientific objectivity in order to police social boundaries that scholarship has attributed to Holmes himself, the Model's surveillance enacts a disciplinary process directed both externally and internally. Externally, the Model's observations serve to identify objectionable differences against which her normative position is defined. In turn, Holmes suggests that the identification of "weakness" serves as a means of establishing order within the Model's interior "laboratory" itself.

The Model's disciplinary observation is particularly salient in relation to disability. It is significant that the most forceful critique of the Model is articulated by Little Boston himself. Reflecting both an acknowledgment of the Model's meticulous self-regulation and an antipathy occasioned by her disciplinary gaze, Little Boston appraises the Model as "an admirable woman… - an admirable woman, Sir, - and I hate her" (100). Explaining the cause of his aversion, Little Boston states, "she looks at me, Sir, stares at me, as if she wanted to get an image of me for some gallery in her brain… - her eyes kill me, - it is like being stabbed with icicles to be looked at so" (101). Little Boston's reaction to the Model's stares anticipates with surprising fidelity Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's formulation of the "economy of visual difference," in which "those bodies deemed inferior become spectacles of otherness while the unmarked are sheltered in the neutral space of normalcy."[433] The Model's surveillance of Little Boston internalizes the extraordinary body in a disciplinary gesture that renders disability as a static

"image… for some gallery in her brain" in order to naturalize the systematic valuation of embodied difference along a hierarchy of social "virtue."

In addition, through the repeated appeals to the language of scientific quantification, demonstrated in Little Boston's assertion, "I don't want a woman to weight me in a balance" and the description of the Model's interior "laboratory," the passage gestures to what Ellen Samuels has more recently termed "fantasies of identification" (101). Usefully expanding upon Thomson's work, Samuels argues that the use of scientific technologies in the mid-nineteenth century to "definitively identify bodies… through a verifiable, biological mark of identity" were never merely the result of the progress of objective scientific tools. Instead, these developments were motivated by the "power of fantasy" to "produce and naturalize its own systematic realization."[434] By describing this "systematic realization" as a function of "fantasy," Samuels illustrates the ways in which cultural assumptions regarding embodied differences precede and motivate the development of scientific tools that, in turn, reinforce these normative assumptions. By describing the Model's surveillance as a process of "weigh[ing]" the extraordinary body within an interior "laboratory," Holmes joins Samuels in revealing this process identification as fantasy, suggesting that institutional attempts to calculate disability operate according to a similar self-fulfilling prophesy.

By articulating this dynamic through the figure of Little Boston, however, Holmes also gestures to the possibility of disrupting the unidirectional operation of the "economy of visual difference." Little Boston's critique of the Model, in other words, asserts the right of the subject of the objective gaze to speak back. Holmes accentuates this disruptive possibility that individuals with disabilities might speak back in a moment of aesthetic nervousness. As Little Boston explains his antipathy to the Model he stumbles on his words, raising the specter of

disability as collectivity: “she looks at me… - and we don’t love to be looked at in this way, we that have – I hate her, - I hate her” (101). Shifting from the first-person singular to the first-person plural, Little Boston momentarily suggests the possibility of mobilizing a collective response to the disciplinary surveillance of disability.

Juxtaposed against the disciplinary cataloguing and eradication of difference that Holmes reads in the idealized, “stultifying perfection” of social and bodily forms, Holmes presents an alternative approach to sensibility defined by an attunement to organic contingency and disorder. Holmes inverts the hierarchical distinction between an idealized beauty founded on symmetry and order associated with social mobility and rarified taste and a more organic, disorderly formulation of aesthetics by drawing a distinction between “talent” and “genius” (240). According to Holmes, “talent,” like the smoothed surface of those “grind[ed] down” by social conventions, is a malleable capacity that Holmes compares to “a docile creature” that “bows its head meekly while the world slips the collar over it” (240). Holmes associates the malleability of talent, which “draws its load cheerfully,” with productive labor (240). In contrast, genius resists at once order and productivity. Holmes observes that “genius is always impatient of its harness; its wild blood makes it hard to train” (240). Notably, Holmes establishes a connection between the social valuation of talent and genius and the evolutionary chain of development. Talent, Holmes argues, “seems, at first, in one sense, higher than genius, - namely, that it is more uniformly and absolutely submitted to the will, and therefore more distinctly human in nature” (240). As a measure of the “distinctly human,” talent presents what Thomson describes as “democracy’s paradox”: the egalitarian impetus toward self-regulation in order to ensure the orderly functioning of the body politic and the promise of individual self-determination.[435]

Talent is thus presented as both productively compliant, a "docile creature," and self-determining, being "more uniformly and absolutely submitted to the will."

By casting talent as "more distinctly human in nature," Holmes seems, at first, to place the ideals of American individualism as the boundary around the category of the "human." As Holmes expands upon the category of genius, however, this boundary becomes troubled, gesturing to a fluidity of mediation between human and nonhuman matter through Holmes's formulation of "intentionality." Holmes's approach to "intentionality," as Jane Thrailkill argues, entails a reconfiguration of "intention" that "expand[ed] the concept of agency beyond the circumscribed psychological realm of human goals and aspirations."[436] Anticipating the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin and his contemporaries, "intentionality" designates the mutually formative relationship among organisms and their environments, a process that is at once "specific, yet impersonal" and "attuned to environmental conditions yet unmotivated."[437] For Thrailkill, intentionality helps to elucidate a stance adopted by Holmes that draws together the "dualistic kinship" between "'brute' sensitivity and higher feelings."[438]

Through "genius," Holmes establishes an aesthetics of intentionality that supersedes the limited scope of individual artistic intent. In contrast to the uniform, human intention that operates in talent, genius, Holmes writes, "is much more like those instincts which govern the admirable movements of the lower creatures, and therefore seems to have something of the lower or animal character" (240). By framing the "instincts… of the lower creatures" as a demonstration of the principles of "genius," Holmes postulates a form of aesthetics that upends the hierarchical dichotomy of lower and refined sensibilities, superseding intention with intentionality. Inverting the hierarchy of sensibilities through the appeal to intentionality Holmes suggestively poses: "is not even the lowest instinct more truly divine than any voluntary human

act done by the suggestion of reason? What is a bee's architecture but an *un*obstructed divine thought?" (241). Approaching the same question of intentionality from the opposing viewpoint of talent and reason, Holmes posits in contrast: "what is a builder's approximative rule but an obstructed thought of the Creator, a mutilated and imperfect copy of some absolute rule Divine Wisdom has established, transmitted through a human soul as an image through clouded glass?" (241). Dissociating intentionality from human intention, the "bee's architecture" materializes an "absolute rule" of which "any human act done by the suggestion of reason" can only be "a mutilated and imperfect copy."

Just as Holmes identifies the "stultifying perfection" of idealized beauty with the disciplining around normative embodiment, he establishes the genius of formal arrangements founded on intentionality in relation to the extraordinary body. Holmes explores the representational affordances of the extraordinary body through the development of Iris's artistic vision. Iris serves for Holmes as an emblematic figure of "genius," a principle in which the aesthetic arrangement of contingency and disorder reveal the higher-order operation of intentionality. As Holmes demonstrates through Iris, who is characterized by "the lightning zigzag ling of genius running like a glittering vein through the marble whiteness of her virgin nature!," the aesthetics of contingency and disorder establishes an affinity between artistic vision and the biological and personal development of genius (71). Iris's aesthetic vision, then, is presented as the result of the same eccentricities of development that form the extraordinary body. In discussing the origins of Iris's artistic impulses in relation to the principle of heredity, Holmes states that "Two and two do not always make four, in this matter of hereditary descent of qualities… So it was with this child. She had glanced off from her parental probabilities at an unexpected angle" (68-9). Elaborating on the "unexpected angle" of Iris's development, Holmes

continues: “Instead of taking to classical learning like her father, or sliding quietly into household duties like her mother, she broke out early in efforts that pointed in the direction of Art” (69). Through Iris, Holmes presents an aesthetic impulse that exceeds the probabilities of hereditary descent, exhibiting a fortuitous contingency at the core of the interplay of biological development.

In discussing Iris’s early art, Holmes draws a connection between the productive disorder of Iris’s artistic vision and the extraordinary body. Holmes describes illustrations of “Very extraordinary horses, but their legs looked as if they could move. Birds unknown to Audubon, yet flying, as it were, with a rush. Men with impossible legs, which did yet seem to have a vital connection with their most improbable bodies” (69). Here, the representational affordances of illustration establish an aesthetics of extraordinary embodiment. Iris’s illustrations present a variety of bodily deviations among “very extraordinary horses,” “Birds unknown to Audobon,” and “men with impossible legs” and “most improbable bodies.” In this way, Iris’s art demonstrates what Mitchell and Snyder describe as “the representational power of deformity and disability” to “disrupt and variegate the visual encounter with unblemished bodies.”[439] Holmes captures this “representational power” within the improbable vitality of the figures, whose “legs looked as if they could move” and “did yet seem to have a vital connection with their most improbable bodies.” The disorderly vitality of the figures at once intensifies the mimetic connection between the illustrations and the extraordinary body and demonstrates the aesthetic force of these representations.

The representational power of embodied differences becomes particularly prominent in Iris’s relationship with Little Boston. Despite the repeated attempts by the Professor to codify this relationship within the principles of romantic interest or maternal care, Iris’s connection to

Little Boston is primarily defined by her aesthetic appreciation of Little Boston's figure. Regarding Iris's aesthetic approach to Little Boston, Holmes writes, "this child has idealized the strange bit of humanity over which she seems to have spread her wings like a brooding dove… in one of those wild vagaries that passionate natures are so liable to, she has fairly spring upon him with her clasping nature" (173). Holmes, however, does not restrict the aesthetic appreciation of the extraordinary body to Iris's particular "vagaries." Instead, he appeals to the principle of compensation to argue for an affinity between disability and aesthetics. Like Benoni T. Bachelder in Holmes's "Case of Malformation," on which Little Boston is in part based, Little Boston possesses a left arm developed to an extraordinary degree of "perfection." If Bachelder demonstrates for Holmes the ways in which the adaptive capacities of the body enable self-determination, Little Boston illustrates the aesthetic affordances of such adaptations. Recounting an experience in a sculptor's studio, the Professor reports discovering "a remarkable cast of a left arm" (48). Upon inquiring about the identity of the model for the cast, the Professor reports that the sculptor "said it was taken direct from the arm of a deformed person, who had employed one of the Italian moulders to make a cast" (48). Reflecting on this discovery, the Professor notes that "It is not very uncommon to see the upper limbs, or one of them, running away with the whole strength, and, therefore, with the whole beauty, which we should never have noticed, if it had been divided equally between all four extremities" (100). Here, the principle of compensation yields not only the enhancement of bodily capacities, but a striking intensification of "beauty." Significantly, the shift from ability to aesthetics allows for a revaluation of disability's signifying potential. First, by situating Little Boston's arm as a piece of art, Holmes defamiliarizes disability as embodied deficiency read against the normative ideal of the body. As an art object, Little Boston's arm is idealized in a way that leads not to abstraction but rather an insistence on

the material particularity of his body. Second, the shift to aesthetics eschews a hierarchical model of bodily difference according to the faculties of the individual in favor of a relational model founded on the aesthetic responses of and to the body.

Holmes explores the implications of an aestheticized approach to disability to striking effect through Iris's sketch-book. In large part, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* is structured around the revelation that sketch-book. Throughout the novel, the Professor repeatedly speculates regarding the contents of Iris's book, which is presented as the key to both Iris's character and the ambiguous relationship between Iris and Little Boston. Speculating on the contents of Iris's book, the Professor states, "there is one book which I know she keeps to run riot in, where, if anywhere, a shrewd eye would be most likely to read her thoughts. This book I mean to see, if I can get at it honorably" (161). The Professor consistently connects this desire to read Iris's book with Little Boston. Thus, immediately after the previous passage, the Professor turns his attention to the second central mystery of the novel: Little Boston's room. "I have never yet," he states, "crossed the threshold of the Little Gentleman's chamber. How he lives, when he once gets within it, I can only guess" (161). Holmes later reinforces this connection when the professor states "there were two principal things that I had to live for… These were, to get a sight of the young girl's drawing-book, which I suspected had her heart shut up in it, and to get a look into the Little Gentleman's room" (172-3). The Professor's repeated desire to "get a look into" Iris's book and Little Boston's room enacts what Cynthia J. Davis has referred to as medicine's "fantasy of disembodied surveillance," in which the implicitly male gaze of medical practitioners is presented as a means of penetrating the hitherto inaccessible mysteries of the feminized inner workings of nature as viewed through the bodies of patients.[440] Holmes affirms this reading when the Professor describes the book as "so transparent that the heart itself could

be seen beating through it" (230). The aesthetic vision of bodily difference that Iris presents within her book, however, exceeds this gendered dichotomy of vision. In other words, Iris's book looks back, a reading that Iris suggests when she gives the key to her locked book to the Professor, stating, "This unlocks my naughty book… - you shall see it. I am not afraid of you" (225).

Rather than merely providing a look into the inner workings of Iris's true nature, the book presents an aesthetic vision that revalues the operation of nature itself, refusing idealized order in favor of a celebration of contingency and bodily variety. While looking through the book for a direct representation of "the girl's little deformed neighbor," the Professor is arrested by "A very odd page indeed!" (236). This "very odd page" presents a remarkable image of "An Eden of all the humped and crooked creatures!" (236). Holmes describes this image in depth, observing, "here are twisted serpents; and stately swans, with answering curves in their bowed necks, as if they had snake's blood under their white feathers; and grave, high-shouldered herons standing on one foot like cripples, and looking at life round them with the cold stare of monumental effigies" (236). In this "paradise of twisted spines," Iris presents an aesthetic approach to bodily variation that operates through the harmonic proliferation of bodily forms rather than the normative ideal of individual embodiment against which disability is defined as deficiency (237).[441] In this non-hierarchical, aesthetic approach to disability, bodily variation is iterative rather than essentialist, drawing lines of affinity among the "answering curves" of bodily forms. These formal affinities, in turn, gesture towards what Margrit Shildrick describes as the "multiple possibilities of co-corporeality," revealing hybridized entanglements in which the "answering curves" of the "stately swans" suggest the possibility of having "snake's blood under their white feathers."[442] As a result, the Professor's penetrating gaze leads less to a revelation of a singular, stable nature

within Iris than an expansive vision of bodily variation and hybridization that unsettles normative referents of embodiment through the proliferation of forms.

Through Iris's aesthetic creations, Holmes anticipates what Tobin Siebers observes of "modern art's love affair with misshapen and twisted bodies, stunning variety of human forms, intense representation of traumatic injury and psychological alienation, and unyielding preoccupation with wounds and tormented flesh."[443] To this end, the Professor observes that Iris's book subverts the hierarchy of social valuation of disability by "contrive[ing] to give them all beauty or dignity or melancholy grace" (236). Discussing the implications of Iris's aesthetic veneration of these eccentric figures, the Professor concludes, "I believe she is trying to idealize what we vulgarly call deformity, which she strives to look at in the light of one of Nature's eccentric curves, belonging to her system of beauty, as the hyperbola, and parabola belong to the conic sections, though we cannot see them as symmetrical and entire figures, like the circle and ellipse" (237). In appealing to a third dimension that lends order while extending beyond the frame of the page, the "eccentric curves" become less a sign of deviation than a figure gesturing towards a larger, formal "symmetrical… system of beauty" that remains present yet undisclosed.

In presenting a universal proliferation of disability and idealizing this bodily variety within a "system of beauty" that reaches beyond the frame, a balance that the Professor effectively summarizes in his assessment, "Not a creature in it without a curve or a twist, and not one of them a mean figure to look at," the "paradise of twisted spines" offers a resolution to what Holmes understood to be a fundamental tension in artistic representations of disability (236-7). Holmes discusses this tension in an 1840 article reviewing the exhibition of the paintings of Washington Allston.[444] In the review, Holmes devotes sustained attention to a particular painting by Allston entitled "The Dead Man restored to Life" (fig. 5). Holmes critiques the painting for its

depiction of "*unqualified terror*" among the reanimated Israelite and the surrounding figures, stating that the "wonderful truth" of the painting is subverted by the "terrible images of struggling death and life," producing "an effect which startles rather than attracts us."[445] Holmes explicitly codifies Allston's representation of "struggling death and life" in the terms of disability.[446] Drawing a comparison between the representation of deformity in the works of Allston and Raphael, Holmes writes that, "when Raphael once dared… to introduce the hideous forms and faces of two wretched cripples, he relieved the effect their prominence could not but produce, by the angelic graces with which Saint John is clothed as with a divinity."[447] Similarly, Holmes notes that in "The Transfiguration," Raphael counterbalanced the "convulsed epileptic in all the struggles and contortions of his terrible disease" by "dispos[ing] around him three figures whose expression is all tenderness and loveliness… to draw our eyes and thoughts away from the painful contemplation of the agonizing youth" (fig. 5).[448]

While Holmes shows a clear preference for the second approach, the contrast of Allston and Raphael raises the possibility of a third approach to representing disability that would avoid either collapsing into "overwhelming astonishment and terror" or "draw our eyes and thoughts away" from the depiction of disability in favor of alternative, "fair and graceful" figures. Holmes suggests this third approach when he observes of Allston that, "nothing but the most perfect delineation of the gentler feelings, in the most beautiful forms, could have neutralized, so to speak, the effect of their violent attitudes and expressions upon our feelings."[449] Holmes's suggestion, which could serve as a description of the "paradise of twisted spines," underscores both the limitations and possibilities of such a project. In suggesting the need for a formal arrangement that would "neutraliz[e]" the effects of depicting distorted bodies, Holmes implies that disability presents a bodily deviation that needs to be brought into an acceptable degree of

difference. In this way, Holmes in part offers an aesthetic analogue to narrative prosthesis. At the same time, however, Iris's project presents an effort to represent disability on its own terms, without either diverting attention through a normative referent or leveraging what Mitchell and Snyder describe as the prosthetic dependency of discourse on the disruptive materiality of disability.

Figure 7. Washington Allston, *Dead Man Restored to Life by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha.* 1811-13, Oil on canvas, 156 x 122 in. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, https://www.pafa.org (accessed March 8, 2017)

Holmes further entangles aesthetics with disability by presenting disability not only as an object but as an integral source of artistic vision. In turning from the object to the subject of aesthetic creation, Holmes traces an analogous movement from physical to sensory disability. Iris, the Professor reveals immediately after describing the "paradise of twisted spines" exhibits "catalepsy"; a nervous condition comprising, as the Professor explains, "transient loss of sense, will, and motion; body and limbs taking any position in which they are put, as if they belonged to a lay-figure" (237). The sudden revelation of Iris's nervous condition enacts what Ato Quayson terms in his "typology of disability representation" the use of "*disability as epiphany*," in which "the disclosure of the impairment acts much like a discursive punctuation mark, providing a vehicle for the intensification of ethical contradictions made sharply evident at that point in the text."[450] Holmes's revelation of Iris's catalepsy upon the presentation of the "paradise of twisted spines" complicates this trope by situating the revelation of disability in reference to the representation of disability itself. Here the "ethical contradictions" concerning disability evidenced through the textual oscillations between aesthetic nervousness and narrative prosthesis are set in sharp relief by an alternative aesthetic approach that situates disability as a generative site for revaluating bodily difference.

Iris's vision of "an Eden of all the humped and crooked creatures" appeals to disability as an Edenic source of fecundity, presenting disability less as an individual trait than as a foundation for collectivity. If narrative prosthesis attempts to assimilate disability by returning the body to an acceptable degree of difference, the "paradise of twisted spines" reverses this process, positing an understanding of bodily variation that might, in turn, reformulate the collectivity of the breakfast table. As demonstrated in his treatment of physical disability, Holmes approaches Iris's sensory disability through the "great principle of compensation," in

which the development of the body and mind compensates for physical and cognitive limitations by producing corresponding adaptations. Approaching aesthetics through the principle of compensation, Holmes presents Iris's catalepsy as a source of rather than a limitation on Iris's artistic vision. The Edenic fecundity of the paradise of twisted spines thus constitutes not only the subject of Iris's artistic vision, but its fundamental operative mode.

Holmes strengthens the connection between the principle of compensation as it operates within disability and Iris's artistic expression when reflecting on the composition of Iris's book. Iris, the Professor observes, "having nobody to tell her story to,…—nothing, in short, but the language of pen and pencil,—all the veinings of her nature were impressed on these pages as those of a fresh leaf are transferred to the blank sheets which inclose it" (229). Situating the principle of compensation within aesthetic creation, Holmes asserts that Iris's communicative limitations produce an intensification of artistic expression. As the Professor continues, Holmes explicitly situates Iris's artistic acumen with disability. Immediately following the previous quotation, the Professor states:

> It was the same thing which I remember seeing beautifully shown in a child of some four or five years we had one day at our boarding-house. The child was a deaf mute. But its soul had the inner sense that answers to hearing, and the shaping capacity which through natural organs realizes itself in words. Only it had to talk with its face alone; and such speaking eyes, such rapid alternations of feeling and shifting expressions of thought as flitted over its face, I have never seen in any other human countenance (229).

Comparing Iris to a "deaf mute," Holmes traces the operation of the principle of compensation through the development of an "inner sense that answers to hearing."

Holmes's identification of Iris with deafness is particularly significant in relation to contemporary developments in the historical treatment of the American Deaf community. Published in 1859, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* appeared during a period of transition in debates concerning the place of the Deaf community within the national project envisioned by the Second Great Awakening. As Sari Altschuler has argued, "in many ways, while the American Deaf community was created to bring deaf individuals into the religious and national fold, the nature of deafness revealed structural and rhetorical problems with this vibrant national movement."[451] The egalitarian aspirations of the Second Great Awakening depended upon the direct access of the individual to God, a project that helped establish a democratic, national identity. Evangelist attempts to incorporate the Deaf community within the revivalist fold, however, confronted fundamental challenges within the logic of transparency that governed at once the spontaneous conversions of individuals to Christianity as well as participation in the national enterprise. Debates surrounding deaf education were forced to confront the pivotal role of language in mediating religious experience, unsettling the rhetorical and ideological dependence upon the unmediated orality of public discourse. In this light, Holmes's assertion that the deaf child developed "the shaping capacity which through natural organs realizes itself in words" is notable for its insistence that the capacities for language and expression are not restricted to the sense of hearing, meriting the inclusion of the child alongside Little Boston and Iris within Holmes's microcosm of the nation, the "boarding-house."[452] The Professor's observation, like Iris's artistic vision, contrives to re-envision disability as generative of alternative, extraordinary forms of expression.

As Holmes places Iris's catalepsy in relation to Little Boston, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* resituates prosthesis from an elision of difference to a mode of assemblage,

exploring the possibilities of prosthesis as what Shildrick describes as "a coming-together in difference." In drawing a relation between Iris's artistic vision presented in the "paradise of twisted spines" and her catalepsy, Holmes presents "another transcendental fancy," namely, that Iris's "soul thinks itself in [Little Boston's] crooked body at times,- if it does not really get freed or half freed from her own" (237). As evidence for this "transcendental fancy," the Professor recounts one of Iris's "trances that belong to the spiritual pathology of higher natures" (238). Upon being awoken from her trance by the Professor, Iris states, "I have been in a dream… I feel as if all my strength were in this arm; - give me your hand!" (237). Upon giving Iris his hand, the Professor remarks, "Good Heaven! I believe she will crack my bones! All the nervous power in her body must have flashed through those muscles; as when a crazy lady snaps her iron window-bars, - she who could hardly glove herself when in her common health" (237-8).

Once again codified in the language of disability, associated with "a crazy lady," Iris demonstrates a prosthetic coming-together of embodiment with Little Boston that gestures to what Shildrick describes as "the multiple possibilities of co-corporeality, where bodies are not just contiguous and mutually reliant but entwined with one another."[453] Through the entanglements between Iris and Little Boston's bodily forms, Holmes extends prosthesis beyond an instrumental or discursive compensation for a bodily lack, imagining an intersubjective circulation of embodied capacities. Further, in attributing Iris's aesthetic vision to this form of co-corporeality in which her "soul thinks itself in [Little Boston's] crooked body," Holmes suggests that this intersubjective circulation across disability constitutes an alternative formal approach to the representation of disability that would forego the treatment of bodily deviations as an individual difference to be compensated for or to be rejected as unfit for membership within the national project. Instead, Holmes posits a relational model in which disability is

incorporated as a productive source of aesthetic and subjective insight. In this relational model, the entanglements of bodies with a "curve or a twist" defamiliarize individualist approaches to embodiment, gesturing towards a more distributive mode of agency routed through prosthesis.

The Haptic Aesthetics of Disability in *Elsie Venner*

In *Elsie Venner*, Holmes positions the aesthetics of disability displayed in the "paradise of twisted spines" at the constitutive center of the scientific romance, exploring the representational affordances enabled by the defamiliarizing perspective of cognitive and sensory disability.[454] Holmes's examination of disability extends beyond the reductive framework that scholarship has attributed to the novel, in which disability serves as a fulcrum for bodily deviations indexed by race, gender and class while remaining a static signifier of inferiority itself. Instead, I argue that Holmes approaches disability not as a recalcitrant embodiment of individual and social limitations, but rather as a source of plentitude, in which cognitive disability provides important insights into the empirical modes that Holmes codifies in the "medicated novel." In particular, Holmes presents Elsie's disordered sensorium resulting from her suspension in the stages of development as a productive form of opacity, producing fascinating effects and affects that are felt while eliding full disclosure to the clinical eye.

In order to explore the implications of this productive opacity, I trace an early history of haptics, forgoing depth for the closeness of a "nearsighted" phenomenology. Generally attributed to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century modernity, haptics serves as an alternative to optics, or the synoptic account of objects surveyed at a distance. Relocating this history to the mid-nineteenth century, I contextualize Holmes's approach to haptics through an examination of his work on the stereoscope, a massively popular photographic medium that produced the

illusion of three-dimensionality. Through his formative work on the medium, Holmes portrays the stunning effects of this illusory three-dimensionality less as a form of depth than an insistent tangibility that reaches beyond the frame. Holmes appeals to this imposing touch in his characterization of the aesthetic experience of the stereoscope as a vertiginous form of absorption, short-circuiting the protocols of optical surveillance. In both enhancing the sensibilities of the body and challenging the self-possessed embodiment of the viewer, the stereoscope as it appears in Holmes's work constitutes a form of prosthesis. Holmes explores the implications of this prosthetic function of haptics through Elsie Venner, herself an embodiment of the stereoscope. Capable of fascinating those around her, Elsie's haptic gaze leads to a series of prosthetic entanglements, heightening the attunement of the senses to the external environment that Holmes casts as central to aesthetic experience. Ultimately, the haptic aesthetics of disability reorients an understanding of disability as an embodied limitation to be diagnosed and tolerated to a relational model that appeals to the bodily responses as a basis for sociality.

The novel follows the efforts of Bernard Langdon, a medical student, as he attempts to "solve the mystery of Elsie Venner" under the guidance of the Professor, Holmes's medical persona who serves as the narrator in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* and *Elsie Venner*.[455] A fascinating figure in both senses of the word, Elsie exhibits a series of cognitive and sensory impairments resulting from a prenatal snakebite. In tracing Elsie's debility to the influences of snake venom in utero, Holmes draws on the proto-evolutionary theory of embryology. A formative scientific movement in the study of congenital disorders, embryology posited a model of disability founded on the arrested development in one or more of the critical stages of gestation. One of the central tenets of embryology was the principle that the gestation of the

embryo recapitulated the hierarchical progression from lower to higher order species.[456] Holmes appeals to this form of recapitulation when he describes Elsie's altered physiology as manifesting "the peculiarities belonging to beings of a lower nature" (219). Throughout the novel, Holmes presents Elsie as the embodiment of the reflexive, repetitive behaviors that govern lower-order species.[457] Subject to the cyclical influences of biological and environmental rhythms, Elsie is presented as simultaneously oversensitive and insensible, governed by the brute instincts that render her both more and less than human.

Scholarship on *Elsie Venner* has acknowledged the constitutive function of disability within the racial and gendered politics of the novel. However, by positioning disability as a fulcrum of bodily deviance, these arguments have tacitly affirmed an approach to disability that supports the social construction of gender, race and class while remaining a static, material mark of inferiority. In her work on the novel, Joan Burbick notes that "Elsie Venner, on one level, represents [an] organically impaired individual, and her moral transgressions, by implication, are not to be judged under the normal criteria of good and evil."[458] Burbick diagnoses Elsie Venner's impairment as the source for "an absolute fanciful array of associations" with nonnormative categories of embodiment.[459] Expanding upon the process undergirding this proliferation of associations, Burbick writes that "the rattlesnake poison that seeped into her system through her mother's body" opens Elsie to an equally intrusive "invasion or poisoning by a series of 'others' (Indians, gypsies, African-Americans, animals, reptiles, wilderness)."[460] Resituating the axial function of Elsie's debility from an inward invasion to an outward infection, Cynthia J. Davis argues similarly that "The ophidian Elsie seems to have this debilitating effect on other women," demonstrating the "power to produce discomfort and disease in others."[461] Reading Elsie's "diseased gaze" as a feminized appropriation of the "clinical gaze," Davis argues that Elsie's

disordered physiology represents a dangerous failure to maintain gendered divisions central to the medical perspective championed by Holmes.[462] For Davis, Elsie's debility thus functions as an axis for the negotiation of gendered economies of vision.

In approaching Elsie's debility as a fulcrum for Elsie's multiple, proliferating figurations, scholarship on the novel has largely assented to a model of disability as recalcitrant, material signifier of deficiency. In contrast to the deconstructive investigations of the ideologies of race, gender and class in the novel, disability is presented as a fundamental and indivisible manifestation of deviation rather than a socially constructed category of difference. Reflecting this approach to disability as embodied deficiency, critical examinations of disability in the novel have largely concentrated on the possibilities and limitations of Holmes's treatment of moral insanity. For Holmes, the category of moral insanity serves a benevolent function by circumscribing moral responsibility within the limits of an individual's cognitive capacities. In the second preface to the novel, Holmes diagnoses Elsie's disorder as a case of moral insanity, posing the question of whether "Elsie Venner, poisoned by the venom of a crotalus before she was born, [was] morally responsible for the 'volitional' aberrations, which translated into acts become what is known as sin, and, it may be, what is punished as crime?" (x). As Holmes explores this question through the course of the novel, he broadens the category of moral insanity to include an array of bodily and cognitive limitations that Holmes explicitly frames in terms of disability. Describing moral insanity in the language of disability, Holmes suggestively poses the question, "How long will it be before we shall learn that for every wound which betrays itself to the sight by a scar, there are a thousand unseen mutilations that cripple, each of them, some one or more of our highest faculties?" (246).

Though ostensibly presented as a benevolent gesture of tolerance testifying to the progress of medical science, moral insanity reinforces rather than challenges hierarchies of embodiment by reducing the agency of individuals to a function of their disordered cognitive and bodily capacities. In its emphasis on bodily and cognitive limitations, moral insanity circumscribes not only the moral responsibility but the social power of self-determination among those it purports to support.[463] Rather than redistributing the "cultural power" among the disenfranchised, moral insanity grants the social elite liberal authority buttressed by the objectivity of medical science. The benevolence offered is thus one of scarcity, establishing the liberal authority of both the social elite and the medical discipline through the biological reductionism of nonnormative categories of identification.

Entangled with the scarcity of moral insanity, however, Holmes also posits a model of physical and cognitive difference as a source of plentitude. Through *Elsie Venner*, Holmes explores what Thomson and others working in disability studies have termed "disability gain": an approach to disability that Michael Davidson describes as situating cognitive and bodily impairment "not as limiting or crippling," but as a means for "enabling new epistemological forms… using the defamiliarizing facts of one's condition as a critical lens onto assumed intellectual positions."[464] Holmes explores this "defamiliarizing" effects produced through the insights of alternative physical and cognitive conditions through the aesthetic experience of disability. In particular, Holmes presents disability as a productive form of opacity that reorients the sensibilities of the body while eliding full disclosure. As demonstrated in Holmes's approach to the principle of compensation, Elsie's association with disability produces a synesthetic convergence of the senses, in which the optical surveillance of bodily difference is unsettled by

opaque, yet profoundly felt influences circulating among Elsie and those with whom she comes in contact.

While Elsie's unique sensibilities are repeatedly codified in the language of disability, Holmes presents these diagnostic gestures less as a revelation of Elsie's physiological essence than as a series of hermeneutic impasses. In these attempts to diagnose Elsie, the physiological limitation is thus relocated from Elsie's particular sensibilities to the medical framework around disability more broadly. In describing Barnard's reaction to Elsie's mesmeric gaze, Holmes writes, "there was nothing of that human warmth which shows that sympathy has reached the soul beneath the mask of flesh it wears… There was in its stony apathy, it seemed to him, the pathos which we find in the blind who show no film or speck over the organs of sight; for Nature had meant her to be lovely, and left out nothing but love" (183-4).[465] As a symptom of the gendered hierarchies of sight within the novel, Barnard's use of blindness positions disability as a figure for Elsie's incapacity to meet the standards Holmes sets for femininity, an incapacity that, by extension, tellingly disqualifies Elsie from the category of the "human" itself. In his attempt to determine the source of Elsie's "stony apathy," however, Barnard simultaneously belies his inability to discern any essential qualities of Elsie's physiology beyond the exterior, "mask of flesh." Far from affirming his capacities of penetrating insight, Barnard's diagnosis reveals only a profound opacity that short-circuits the process of medical observation. Put another way, looking *through* Elsie ultimately proves ineffectual due to the effects of looking *at* Elsie. In this sense, Elsie's figuration of the "pathos of the blind" signifies not only an absence of "human warmth," but the imposing opacity of her physiognomy.

As an embodiment of the "pathos of the blind," Elsie produces effects and affects among those with whom she comes in contact that elude medical diagnosis. In exploring the circulation

of affect occasioned by Elsie's imposing opacity, Holmes recasts the hermeneutic impasse presented by Elsie's sensibilities as an extraordinary form of communication. With the shift from perception to circulation, Holmes evinces a shift from approaching Elsie as a figure of the blind to a figure of the deaf-mute. Attempting to account for Elsie's seemingly indiscernible "inner life," Holmes states that she "never shaped her inner life in words: such utterance was as much denied to her nature as common articulate speech to the deaf mute. Her only language must be in action" (342). As in the previous passage on the "pathos of the blind," the diagnosis of Elsie as an analogue to "the deaf mute" proves to be limited, revealing less the nature of her "dangerous, smouldering passions" than the opacity of "action" (342). As the novel develops, however, Holmes increasingly indicates that this form of opacity constitutes an alternative capacity for communication that exceeds the boundaries of "common articulate speech." Expressing without revealing, Elsie's form of articulation uncovers an insufficiency located not solely in Elsie herself than the limitations of "common" language.

As with Holmes's characterization of Iris's artistic vision, Holmes demonstrates that Elsie possesses "an inner sense that answers to hearing," capable of communicating without direct recourse to language. Describing Elsie's relationship with her black nurse, Sophie, Holmes observes that they "seemed to keep up a kind of silent communication with her, as if they did not require the use of speech" (432). The "silent communication" shared by Elsie and Sophie establishes an affectively charged relation across generational and racial difference that Holmes figures as a form of "love" particular to the two. This intersubjective communication constitutes a form of prosthesis in which, according to the intersectionality of disability in the racialized logic of the novel, circulates among those that deviate from normative embodiment. Holmes presents this relation across difference as a productive form of opacity. Recounting the

reflections of Helen Darley, Elsie's instructor and caretaker, as she considers Elsie's relationship with Sophie, Holmes tellingly states that Helen "perceived, or rather felt, that [Elsie] had, folded up in the depths of her being, a true womanly nature" (432). As a productive form of opacity, Elsie's form of expression is "felt" without being "perceived."

Holmes, however, also suggests that these intersubjective entanglements circulate beyond those marked by deviant forms of embodiment to include a spectrum of social positions and identities. Characterizing the relationship between Dudley Venner, Elsie's aristocratic father, and Dr. Kittredge, a prominent local physician, Holmes describes an analogous form of prosthetic entanglement through what he terms "mutually interpenetrative consciousness," which he defines as "states of mind which may be shared by two persons in presence of each other, which remain not only unworded, but *unthoughted*, if such a word may be coined for our special need" (194-5). Exceeding not only language, but consciousness, the "*unthoughted*" relation between Dudley and Dr. Kittredge establishes a circuit of communicable affect while remaining fundamentally opaque. In circulating among the social elite, this "mutually interpenetrative consciousness" also extends the opacity that Holmes associates with disability to include the widest range of social positions within the novel.

In describing the circulation of affect around Elsie as a relation to be "felt" rather than "perceived," Holmes anticipates critical work on the distinction between haptics and optics. Though scholarship on *Elsie Venner* has examined extensively the overdetermined politics of vision in the novel, the convergence between touch and sight that Holmes traces in Elsie's associations with disability establishes a form of haptic sight that unsettles the privileged boundaries around the clinical gaze. The distinction between the optical and the haptic was initially theorized by Aloïs Riegl in his work on Egyptian art. In Riegl's formulation, the optical

constitutes a distanced mode of visual experience that presents a synoptic account of objects arranged in deep space. The haptic, in contrast, signifies a non-synthetic attention to detail occasioned by the imagined touch of the eye.[466] Set against the distance viewing of optics, haptics presents a "nearsightedness" that "feels its way along or around a world conceived as an infinitely variable surface, alert to texture rather than outline."[467] In relation to Holmes's approach to disability, haptics provides a prosthetic enhancement of sight and touch that disrupts the objective ordering according to distance and depth characteristic of clinical in-sight.

Holmes explores the representational affordances of haptics through his examination and development of the stereoscope. A massively popular photographic medium in the United States and Europe during the mid to late-nineteenth century, the stereoscope produced the illusion of depth and solidity by presenting each eye with a twinned pair of images that, when viewed together, converge into a single, seemingly three-dimensional image. The stereoscope was invented by Charles Wheatstone in his scientific work on binocular vision. In 1838 Wheatstone published his findings on binocular disparity, the principle that each eye receives a separate image that diverges according to the distance between the position of each eye. Through his development of the reflective stereoscope, Wheatstone successfully demonstrated that the optical illusion of depth could be produced through the perceptive merging of two, flat geometric forms. While restricted to simple geometric line drawings viewed through an elaborate experimental device, Wheatstone's discovery coincided with the Daguerre's invention of the daguerreotype in 1839. In 1850 Sir William Brewster combined the work of Wheatstone and Daguerre, inventing the lenticular stereoscope that would become a popular form of parlor entertainment, dominating the British stereoscopic industry until 1875.[468]

The stereoscope proved to be a massively popular medium in Europe and the United States. As William C. Darrah has observed, the stereograph "was the first visual mass medium."[469] By 1858, the London Stereoscopic Company offered a trade-list of over 100,000 titles.[470] Darrah estimates that the total number of stereographs produced in the United States during this period exceeded five million.[471] The popularity and availability of the stereoscope in the United States was propelled to a significant degree by the work of Holmes himself. In 1859 Holmes invented the widely popular hand stereoscope, a device that was more economical in both its design and cost (fig. 6). Holmes's handheld stereoscope was instrumental in popularizing the medium as well as relocating the center of the industry from Europe to the United States.[472] Holmes further propelled the distribution of the hand stereoscope by deliberately refusing to patent the device, allowing for its widespread reproduction. Holmes wrote widely and enthusiastically about the stereoscope, hailing the medium as the inauguration of "a new epoch in the history of human progress" in which the forms of matter would be reproduced and redistributed among transnational networks of exchange.[473]

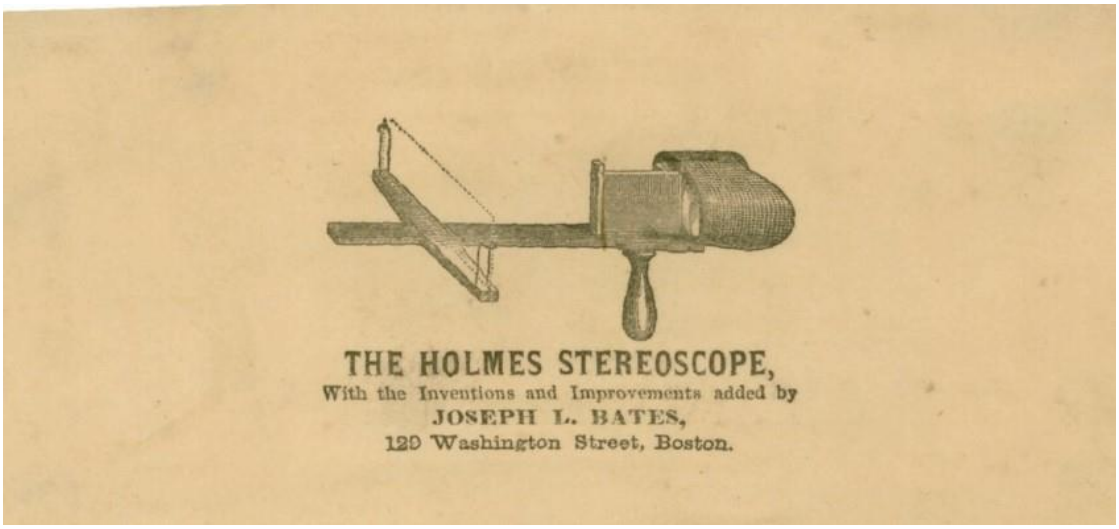

Figure 8: "The Holmes Stereoscope." Boston 1870, trade card, 2.8 x 6.3cm.

Holmes examines the haptic qualities and the global implications of the stereoscope through three articles published in *The Atlantic Monthly*: "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," "Sun-Painting and Sun-Sculpture; with a Stereoscopic Trip Across the Atlantic," and "Doings of the Sunbeam."[474] Throughout these articles, Holmes anticipates Jonathan Crary's assertion that the "desired effect of the stereoscope" exceeded the production of an illusory "likeness" in order to engender a sense of "immediate, apparent *tangibility*."[475] In describing the operating mechanism of the stereoscope, Holmes casts the binocular convergence of the eyes as a tactile grasping of the image. Noting that "the two eyes see different pictures of the same thing," Holmes observes, "By means of these two different views of an object, the mind, as it were, *feels round it* and gets an idea of its solidity. We clasp an object with our eyes, as with our arms, or with our hands, or with our thumb and finger, and then we know it to be something more than a surface."[476] Comparing the convergence of binocular vision to the "clasp" of the "thumb and finger," Holmes attributes to the stereoscope a mode of vision that "*feels*" rather than surveys at a distance. Operating as a form of prosthesis, the stereoscope extends and intensifies the sensibilities of the body, enabling the visual experience of tangibility in which images are not "perceived," but "felt."

Holmes further explores the prosthetic enhancement of haptics through his focus on the mediating border between the embodied self and the environment: the skin. Situating the haptic as "a function of the skin," Giuliana Bruno states that the haptic "constitutes the reciprocal con*tact* between us and the environment, both housing and extending communicative interface."[477] In his discussion of the stereoscope, Holmes anticipates and extends Bruno's argument on the constitutive role of the skin, presenting the process of viewing images through the stereoscope as a reciprocal interplay among the embodied surface of the viewer and the

multiple "skins" arranged throughout the visual field. For Holmes, this reciprocal interplay of surfaces gestures to the egalitarian potential of the stereoscope, bypassing distinctions in socioeconomic position through the flat ontology of mediating skins. In his article, "Sun-Painting and Sun-Sculpture," Holmes describes the egalitarian promise of the stereograph in strongly visceral terms, observing, "We are now flaying our friends and submitting to be flayed ourselves… All the world has to submit to it, - kings and queens with the rest."[478] Elaborating on this process of "flaying," Holmes writes, "we lift an impalpable scale from the surface of the Pyramids… We skim off a thin, dry cuticle from the rapids of Niagara, and lay it on our moistened paper without breaking a bubble or losing a speck of foam."[479] Here, the reality effect of the stereoscope is presented less as a function of the mimetic equivalence between the image and object than the haptic contact with the variegated, textured surfaces of objects oriented the stereoscopic field of vision. Holmes suggests that this interface among textured surfaces might supersede the clinical surveillance of interiority, prognosticating, "Men will hunt all curious, beautiful, grand objects, as they hunt the cattle in South America, for their *skins*, and leave the carcasses as of little worth."[480]

While the extraction of "skins" connotes a degree of manipulative mastery, Holmes consistently casts the aesthetic experience engendered by the stereoscope as a form of absorption, in which the viewer relinquishes self-control in coming into contact with the imposing touch of the image. In other words, while the viewer takes hold of the textured surfaces depicted through the stereoscope, stereoscopic images also take hold of the viewer, intruding upon the viewer's sense of self-possessed embodiment. Describing the imposing touch of stereoscopic images as they reach beyond the frame, Holmes observes that "the scraggy branches of a tree in the foreground run out at us as if they would scratch our eyes out." [481] Here, the

penetrative gaze feeling "into the very depths of the picture" ultimately leads less to a clinical dissection of the object than the threatened dissection of the viewer. Significantly, Holmes presents this disruptive intrusion of the image, in which the "scraggy branches" in the "foreground run out at us as if they would scratch our eyes out" in the language of disability, threatening to incapacitate the viewer in the very process of surveying the environment. Placed in the terms of aesthetic nervousness, the haptic contact with the eye short-circuits the surveying protocols of optics.

By casting the haptic touch of the stereograph as potentially "disabling," Holmes at once anticipates and extends scholarly arguments regarding the disorienting aesthetic experience of the stereoscope. Observing that the "fundamental organization of the stereoscopic image is *planar*," Jonathan Crary argues that the stereoscope "discloses a fundamentally disunified and aggregate field of disjunct elements" through its "insistent sense of 'in front of' and 'in back of' that seems to organize the image as a sequence of receding planes."[482] The result, for Crary, is a "vertiginous uncertainty" in navigating the stereoscopic image, in which there is "no unifying logic or order."[483] Holmes's observation that the textured surfaces in the foreground of the stereoscopic image threaten to scratch out the viewer's eyes recasts this vertiginous sense of "'in front of'" as a potentially disabling form of contact that disorients not only the formal arrangement of the image, but the self-possessed embodiment of the viewer. Holmes further explores the disorienting aesthetic experience of the stereoscope through the insistent complexity of detail. In the stereoscope, Holmes writes, "there is such a frightful amount of detail, that we have the same sense of infinite complexity which Nature gives us. A painter shows us masses; the stereoscopic figure spares us nothing, - all must be there, every stick, straw, scratch."[484] Describing the "amount of detail" as "frightful," Holmes casts the "infinite complexity" of the

stereoscopic image as a threatening imposition on the viewer. Unlike the multitudinous, yet unified grouping of "masses" in painting, the stereograph comprises a heterogeneous assemblage of details, "every stick, straw, scratch," which seem to exceed the boundaries of the frame, subsuming the viewer.

Holmes actualizes this form of absorption through the imagined navigation of the variable surfaces of the stereograph. Describing the experience of viewing a series of stereographs, Holmes recounts, "I creep over the vast features of Rameses, on the face of his rock-hewn Nubian temple… and then I dive into some mass of foliage with my microscope, and trace the veinings of a leaf so delicately wrought… that I can almost see its down and green aphis and suck its juices."[485] Presenting the experience of navigating these illusory spaces as a tactile grazing of textured surfaces, Holmes posits a form of absorption in which the body is not left behind but rather rendered alert to the haptic feedback among the surfaces of the image and the observer. The result is a vertiginous unsettling, in which the orientation of the viewer is subsumed within the haptic interplay of heterogeneous surfaces. Rapidly shifting directions and transitioning across varying scales, Holmes's imaginative journey presents an amalgamation of detailed surfaces without any clear or stable reference point.

For Holmes, the absorbing effects of the stereoscope occasion an aesthetic experience of clairvoyance. Synthesizing the general effect of the stereoscope as "half-magnetic," Holmes observes that the process of viewing images through the device induces "something like Mr. Braid's *hypnotism*, of which many of our readers have doubtless heard."[486] For Holmes, this "half-magnetic" experience reorients the sensibilities of the observer, enhancing the concentration of the senses on the image while disabling the awareness of external conditions. Describing this process of reorienting the sensibilities, Holmes observes that "the shutting out of

surrounding objects, and the concentration of the whole attention, which is a consequence of this, produce a dream-like exaltation of the faculties, a kind of clairvoyance, in which we seem to leave the body behind us and sail away into one strange scene after another, like disembodied spirits."[487] In absorbing the sensibilities of the viewer, the stereoscope occasions a nearsighted phenomenology, in which the perception of the external world is temporarily incapacitated in favor of the close attentiveness to the aesthetic object.

Throughout *Elsie Venner*, Holmes casts Elsie's fascinating influences as a form of the haptic absorption that Holmes explores in his work on the stereoscope. Holmes directly associates Elsie with the stereograph during a pivotal social gathering hosted by the affluent widow, Marilla Rowens, which Holmes most frequently refers to as simply "the Widow." As evidence of the Widow's refined taste, Holmes indicates the inclusion among her impeccably arranged parlor of "a stereoscope with stereographs to match" (299). Amidst the jockeying for romantic partners and professional recognition that constitutes the primary action of the scene, Elsie removes herself from the group, being "taken up in studying the stereoscopic Laocoon… representing an old man with his two sons in the embraces of two monstrous serpents" (299, 313). Beyond the serpentine imagery, Elsie's selection of the stereograph depicting the Laocoön statue demonstrates a refined taste for stereoscopic images that most acutely display the haptic qualities of the medium. Holmes establishes Elsie's refined taste for the haptic by drawing a distinction between Elsie's choice to view the stereoscopic Laocoön and the Widow's collection of images, which consists "chiefly [of] groups of picnics, weddings, etc., in which the same somewhat fatigues looking ladies of fashion and brides received the attentions of the same unpleasant-looking young men" (299). In "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," Holmes describes these artificial scenes as an inferior misapplication of the affordances of the medium.

Warning his readers to "beware of investing largely in *groups*," Holmes writes, "mostly they are detestable, — vulgar repetitions of vulgar models, shamming grace, gentility, and emotion, by the aid of costumes, attitudes, expressions and accessories worthy of a Thespian society of candle-snuffers."[488] The "shamming grace" of these "vulgar repetitions" misidentifies the affordances of the stereoscope as a mimetic representation of gentility. For Holmes, these artificially constructed scenes serve to underscore the distinction between the use of the stereoscope as an imitation with which the viewer identifies and a tactile materiality in which the viewer is absorbed. By forgoing the "shamming grace" of the Widow's collection of arranged groups in favor of feeling along the textured surface of the Laocoön, Elsie thus rejects the enchantment of false gentility in order to engage with the haptic touch of the stereoscope.[489]

Elsie's association with the stereoscope, however, extends beyond her demonstration of taste in selecting images that most prominently display its haptic qualities. Over the course of the novel, Holmes presents Elsie as an embodiment of stereoscopic aesthetics. Casting the "strange fascination in her eyes" as a form of haptic absorption, Holmes traces a fundamental link between the productive opacity of disability and the prosthetic enhancement of the senses occasioned by the stereoscope. [490] Significantly, the fascinating effects of Elsie's gaze are consistently presented as an imposing form of contact, which, like the stereoscope, produces both disabling and enabling effects among those with whom she comes in contact. Early in the novel, Holmes presents a scene in which Elsie seems to hypnotize her instructor, Helen Darley. Discovering that Elsie's "diamond eyes" are "fixed on the lady teacher," Helen responds to Elsie's gaze as a form of contact with the surface of her body, placing her "kerchief to her forehead which had grown slightly moist," and "almost shiver[ing], for she felt cold" (78). Acting upon the surface of the skin, Elsie's gaze fastens as it fascinates, provoking "some ill-

defined impulse" in Helen, "which she could not resist," propelling the instructor to leave her post at the front of the classroom and walk to Elsie's desk (78). Refusing to provide a reason for summoning Helen, Elsie instead hands her "a rare alpine flower, which was found only in one spot among the rocks of The Mountain" (78). Once again associating Elsie's fascinating gaze with the haptic touch, Holmes writes, "The girl's fingertips touched [Helen's] as she took it. How cold they were for a girl of such an organization!" (78). Holmes continues, writing, "The first thing [Helen] did" after "quitting the schoolroom… was to fling the flower into her fireplace and rake the ashes over it. The second was to wash the tips of her fingers, as if she had been another Lady Macbeth" (79). Lingering in its effects long after Elsie herself is no longer present, the haptic influences of Elsie's gaze are cast here as a form of contamination. Pointedly referring to Helen as a "poor, over-tasked, nervous creature," Holmes presents the effects of this contaminating influence as incapacitating the young teacher.

Helen's reaction to Elsie's contaminating touch positions her haptic contact as a disabling force, threatening to infect and incapacitate those around her. At the same time, however, Holmes suggests that the responses by Helen and other characters to Elsie originate from a fundamental misrecognition by the characters rather than from Elsie herself. Holmes draws this distinction through his definition of "antipathy," a physiological response characterized by "paleness, and even faintness" that, in contrast to "simple disgust" or "fear," is "produced by objects perfectly harmless and not in themselves offensive to any sense" (207).[491] For Holmes, antipathy signifies a conditioned response particular to the individual that is wholly separate from the qualities of the objects "in themselves." The distinction is particularly significant, given Elsie's frequent association with disability. By separating the qualities of Elsie as an individual from the antipathy registered in response to her presence, Holmes suggests that the

understanding of Elsie's haptic influence as a form of contamination originates less from the essential qualities of her physiological condition than the stigma surrounding disability.

While the antipathy registered in response to Elsie produces disabling effects, Holmes also presents Elsie's haptic influence as potentially enabling. Like the nearsighted phenomenology of the stereoscope, which both threatens to incapacitate the viewer and induces a form of clairvoyance, Elsie's haptic gaze both impairs and heightens the sensibilities of those around her. In redirecting and extending the body's responsiveness to haptic stimuli, Elsie's haptic gaze operates as a form of prosthesis. Holmes establishes the prosthetic function of Elsie's haptic gaze most extensively during the pivotal scene in which Bernard encounters Elsie while investigating the location of her frequent visits among the snake-infested ridges of The Mountain. Holmes saturates the scene with haptic experiences engendered by Elsie as well as the local ecology of her "sylvan haunts" (185). Comparing the movements of the trees "grating their boughs against each other" to the rubbing of "old horn-handed farmers" as they "press their dry, rustling palms together," Holmes draws an extended analogy between the sensory experience of the surrounding vegetation and the haptic feedback playing upon the surface of the skin (185). Throughout the passage, Holmes consistently figures the haptic encounters with the environment in the language of bodily contact, writing, "the little twigs are crossing and twining and separating like slender fingers that cannot be still; the stray leaf is to be flattened into its place like a truant curl; the limbs sway and twist, impatient of their constrained attitude" (186). Notably, Holmes defines this display as a mode of "nervousness, for I do not know what else to call it, of outer movement" (186).

As critics have noted, Holmes appeals to nervousness as a symptom of middle-class ambitions and anxieties in maintaining the social order under the conditions of the franticly

paced antebellum marketplace. Signifying at once membership among the social and professional elite and the debilitating effects of intellectual labor, nervousness constituted a permeable boundary between ability and disability that Holmes and other medical practitioners understood to be pivotal to the nationalist project. While scholarship on Holmes has largely read his approach to nervousness as a conservative attempt to buttress the boundaries of medical professionalism and social position, a critical examination of haptics indicates Holmes's appeals to nervous sensibility as a constitutive site of mediation, in which the permeability of nervousness is treated less as a threat to the hierarchical social order than a productive enhancement of the senses. Throughout the novel, Holmes presents nervousness as an agitated physiological state in which the senses are exceptionally responsive to external stimuli.[492] Holmes gestures towards the epistemological possibilities opened by nervousness early in the passage discussing Bernard's investigation on the Mountain, observing that "the woods are all alive to one who walks through them with his mind in an excited state, and his eyes and ears wide open" (185). Through Bernard's "excited state," which, as Bernard later reflects, "proved to him that he was getting very nervous," Holmes presents a heightened receptivity to the vitality of the surrounding environment (206).

The porous boundary between disability and ability presented by nervousness serves for Holmes as a constitutive mediating state for aesthetic experience. The liminal states of (dis)ability that Holmes presents in his scientific and fictional work, the nearsighted phenomenology of the stereoscope and the nervousness of *Elsie Venner*, converge as Bernard looks into a cavern on "Rattlesnake Ledge" (43). Presented as a voyeuristic inflection of haptics, Bernard's investigation of Rattlesnake Ledge is attributed to his desire to "come upon traces of [Elsie] which would tell secrets she would not care to have known" (188). Bernard's

investigation, however, reveals less his desired, voyeuristic knowledge of Elsie's interiority betrayed by the haptic "traces" of her presence than a threatening form of aesthetic absorption. While in the cavern, Bernard's "look" is "met by the glitter of two diamond eyes" of a rattlesnake reaching out "with a smooth, steady motion towards the light, and himself" (190). As the "two diamond eyes" reach out towards Bernard like the binocular grasp of the stereoscopic image, Bernard experiences a stereoscopic mode of aesthetic absorption. To this effect, the narrator relates that Bernard's "eyes were drawn as with magnets toward the circles of flame," replicating the hypnotic clairvoyance of the stereoscope (191). Holmes explicitly casts Bernard's haptic absorption as an aesthetic experience, writing, "his ears rung as in the overture to the swooning dream of chloroform. Nature was before man with her anaesthetics" (191). Intensifying the synesthetic touch of the eye that Holmes presents in his formulation of haptics, the "overture to the swooning dream of chloroform" proliferates through the senses of sight, touch, and hearing. In this passage, Holmes presents the impending violence as a form of (an)aesthetic absorption, drawing together the sensibilities of the body in the swoon of fascination.

Before Bernard succumbs to the impending violence, however, his "anaesthetic" absorption is broken by the timely entrance of Elsie. Recounting Elsie's intervention in Bernard's haptic swoon, Holmes writes, "but while [Bernard] looked straight into the flaming eyes, it seemed to him that they were losing their light and terror… the charm was dissolving, the numbness was passing away, he could move once more" (191). Attempting to account for the source of this renewed vitality, Bernard discovers Elsie Venner, "looking motionless into the reptile's eyes, which had shrunk and faded under the stronger enchantment of her own" (191). In deploying a "stronger enchantment," what Holmes elsewhere describes as a "counter-charm" that

"disenchant[s] the air," Elsie's gaze functions as a hybridized force that at once replicates and counteracts the "anaesthetics" of "Nature" (105). Holmes underscores the hybridity of Elsie's gaze as Bernard revisits the scene in an unconscious reverie, in which her recollects being "pursued by the glare of cold glittering eyes — whether they were in the head of a woman or of a reptile he could not always tell, the images had so run together" (202). Bernard's unconscious double vision, itself a product of anesthetic insight, blends the debilitating effects of "[Nature's] anaesthetics" and the disenchanting "counter-charm" of Elsie's gaze.

Through "anaesthetics," Holmes posits a liminal boundary between clairvoyance and debility that, like nervousness and nearsightedness, treats the crossings of ability and disability as a productive reorientation of empirical investigation. The presentation of fascination produced through haptic encounters with "Nature" and Elsie as a form of "anaesthetic" absorption is particularly significant, given Holmes's medical work on anesthesia. Holmes, in fact, coined the term "anaesthetics" to describe the effects produced by ether and chloroform. During the debates around the discovery of ether by the dentist, W. T. G. Morton, Holmes popularized the term "anaesthetics" in order to signify both "insensibility" and to present the experience of taking ether as "aesthetic."[493] In *Mechanism in Thought and Morals*, Holmes captures this aesthetic experience produced by ether: "Inhale a few whiffs of ether, and we cross over into the unknown world or death with a return-ticket… the despairing wretch finds a new heaven and a new earth, and laughs and weeps in turns in his brief ecstasy."[494] Far from signifying mere insensibility, anesthesia served for Holmes as a creative and restorative catalyst that was constitutive in producing knowledge. To this end, Holmes writes that, "when Goethe shut his eyes, and pictures a flower to himself, he says that it developed itself before him in leaves and blossoms. The result of the mental process appeared as pictured thought, but the process itself was automatic."[495]

In addition to cataloguing significant moments of artistic and scientific inspiration produced through the experience of insensibility, Holmes conducted experiments on himself through the use of ether. Holmes recounts one such experiment, in which, having "inhaled a pretty full dose of ether," he determined "to put on record, at the earliest moment of regaining consciousness, the thought I should find uppermost in my mind."[496] Describing his experience, Holmes states, "The mighty music of the triumphal march into nothingness reverberated through my brain, and filled me with a sense of infinite possibilities… The veil of eternity was lifted. The one great truth which underlies all human experience… flashed upon me in a sudden revelation."[497] Presented in an amalgamation of "mighty music," haptic "reverberat[ions]," and "flash[ing]… revelation," Holmes's experiment replicates the synthetic sensory convergences that he attributes to Bernard's encounter with Elsie in the wilderness. This convergence of bodily sensibilities is intensified as Holmes reveals the "few words" that had "flashed upon me in a sudden revelation [and] lifted my intelligence to the level of the knowledge of the cherubim."[498] Having written down these words comprising the "all-embracing truth still glimmering in my consciousness," Holmes concludes: "The words were these (children may smile; the wise will ponder): '*A strong smell of turpentine prevails throughout*.'"[499] Forcefully and humorously reasserting the body's sensibilities to the external environment, Holmes's olfactory revelation playfully leads not to abstracted transcendence but the recalcitrant materiality of embodiment. And yet, by placing his experience in relation to similar, unconscious revelations, including Goethe's *The Metamorphosis of Plants* and Giuseppe Tartini's *Devil's Trill Sonata*, Holmes suggests that his revelation signifies less a joke about the banality of ostensible insights produced through altered states than about the difficulties of translating "anaesthetic" experience into language. Holmes's revelation calls attention to the prosthetic enhancement of the senses,

heightening the interconnections between the individual and the external environment, at once enabling empirical observation and indicating the tensions inherent in communicating the results of scientific positivism.

In describing the effects produced by Elsie's fascinating influence, Holmes presents the same exaltation of the senses he attributes to anaesthetics, at once enhancing and defamiliarizing the bodily orientation in relation to the environment. Attempting to account for what occurred on The Mountain, Bernard is thrown into "a state of infinite perplexity to know why he should have needed such aid" (203). Continuing, Bernard reveals that the source of his perplexity centers on his assumptions regarding able-embodiment: "He, an active, muscular, courageous, adventurous young fellow… to stand still, staring into those two eyes, until they came up close to him, and the strange, terrible sound seemed to freeze him stiff where he stood,—what was the meaning of it?" (203). By associating his question of the nature of "the influence this girl had seemingly exerted" with the perplexity regarding how an "active, muscular, courageous, adventurous young fellow… should have needed such aid," Bernard raises concerns that extend beyond the mysteries of fascination (205). Instead, what Bernard confronts is the limitations of establishing the parameters around the self-determining, liberal subject through the category of abled-embodiment.

Given these limitations, it is significant that Holmes presents the anaesthetic effects of co-corporeality between Bernard and Elsie as a prosthetic enhancement of the body's sensibilities. Bernard notes to this effect that "His nervous system had been in a high state of exaltation at the time. He remembered how the little noises that made rings of sound in the silence of the woods, like pebbles dropped in still waters, had reached his inner consciousness" (206). Bernard's encounter with "rings of sound" recall the "circles of flame" exhibited by the

stereoscopic fascination of the serpentine gaze, orienting the "exaltation" of the "nervous system" within a haptic form of absorption. Bernard further establishes the connection between the prosthetic enhancement of the senses and aesthetics in recalling "that singular sensation in the roots of the hair, when he came on the traces of the girl's presence, reminding him of a line in a certain poem which he had read lately with a new and peculiar interest" (206). Notably, Bernard diagnoses the aesthetic dimensions of his experience, "reminding him of a line in a certain poem," as an expression of the prosthetic entanglements between Elsie's vitalizing presence and his own, nervous responsiveness.

While Elsie exemplifies a particular intensification of the haptic touch, producing both disabling and enabling effects among those with whom she comes in contact, Holmes extends the principles of the stereoscopic grasp of the eye beyond Elsie as an individual. In extending haptics beyond Elsie's particularity, Holmes posits stereoscopic vision as a model of relationality in which the blending of twinned images recapitulates the process of reconciling divergent perspectives. Describing Dudley Venner's relationship with his daughter, Elsie, Holmes presents the accommodation of non-normative sensibilities as a negotiation of stereoscopic divergence. Noting that "the woman a man loves" is "far more own daughter than the female children born to him by the common law of life," Holmes begins by drawing a distinction between Dudley's relational connection with Elsie as "his own daughter" and his formal affiliation with Elsie as a child "born to him by the common law of life" (282). As the passage continues, Holmes in turn draws a corresponding delineation between the operation of haptics in Dudley's relational connection to Elsie and the dictates of optics in Dudley's formal affiliation with Elsie. For Holmes, the optic relationship to Elsie as "the outside woman, who takes his name" is secondary to the haptic relationship to Elsie, in which her image is "passed through fifty many-layered

nerve-strainers, been churned over by ten thousand pulse-beats, and reacted upon by millions of lateral impulses which bandy it about through the mental spaces as a reflection is sent back and forward in a saloon lined with mirrors" (282). In contrast to the "outside" image of Elsie, defined by the optical surveillance at a distance, the haptic image of Elsie is constituted by an extensive tactile process, being "churned over," "reacted upon" and "band[ied] about" among myriad, "many-layered nerve strainers." Setting aside the optic image, Holmes defines relationality as the negotiation between the haptic, "altered image of the woman before him" processed by the senses and the interior, "preexisting ideal," as the mind attempts to "unite them stereoscopically into a single image" (282). In contrast to the treatment of disability as either a divergence against which normative perception is defined or a lack to be compensated for, Holmes's stereoscopic mode of relationality operates through accommodation, attentive to both points of convergence and divergence. Viewing stereoscopically inaugurates a process of overlaying divergent perspectives directed towards synthesis while remaining responsive to contrast.

Conclusion: Stereoscopic Mediation and the Dimensions of Accommodation

Throughout his work on disability, Holmes challenges the reductionist treatment of disability ascribed to the historical and medical ideologies for which Holmes himself has served as a primary figure. In his examinations of the principle of compensation and prosthesis, Holmes decenters nationalist and scientific metrics of wholeness and deficiency by presenting a counter-approach to disability as a process in which individuals with a diverse assortment of vital capacities adapt to their socially constructed environments. Holmes situates these adaptations and prosthetic enhancements as the foundation of a distributive model of sensibility, exploring the potential of intersubjective crossings among those with and without disabilities. In *The*

Professor at the Breakfast Table, Holmes supplants the idealization of normative embodiment through an aesthetics of contingency and organic variety that treats disability not as limiting but rather enabling expansive artistic creation. By celebrating the fecund variety of organic development, Holmes's aesthetic approach to disability serves to expand the appreciation of bodily difference. This emphasis on aesthetic reactions of and to disability, in turn, reorients the hierarchical construction of normativity towards a relational model of difference, in which sensibility is circuited through the prosthetic entanglements connecting bodies with an array of capacities.

In *Elsie Venner*, Holmes positions these prosthetic entanglements as the constitutive center of the novel, exploring the intersubjective communication of sensibilities that are profoundly felt while eliding optical surveillance. In order to engage with these productively opaque circuits of sensibility, Holmes posits a nearsighted phenomenology that feels its way along the external environment, alert to the aesthetic dimensions of bodily surfaces. Throughout the novel, Holmes places critical pressure on the boundaries between ability and disability by exploring the empirical implications of liminal physiological states including nearsighted phenomenology, nervousness, and anaesthetics. For Holmes, these liminal physiological states signify less a threat to self-possessed able-embodiment than a reorientation of the sensibilities, in which the synoptic protocols of perception are temporarily short-circuited in order to heighten the receptive sensitivity to the immediate objects in the external environment that Holmes presents as central to aesthetic experience. As in the treatment of aesthetics in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, Holmes appeals to this nearsighted phenomenology as the foundation for a non-hierarchical model of relationality. In particular, Holmes presents the nearsighted, binocular grasp of the stereoscope as a prosthetic lens for the negotiation of divergent perspectives among

individuals with differing physical and cognitive capacities. By overlaying paired images in order to grasp the haptic dimensionality of the aesthetic object, the stereoscope serves for Holmes as a prosthetic framework for the process of accommodating contrasting sensibilities that is attentive to both points of convergence and divergence.

Notes

[330] Peter Mark Roget, *The Bridgewater Treatises on the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, as Manifested in the Creation: Treatise V.: Animal and Vegetable Physiology, Considered with Reference to Natural Theology* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1836), 191.

[331] Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table: Every Man his own Boswell* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1858), 110.

[332] Ibid., 90.

[333] For more on "The Chambered Nautilus," see Miriam Rossiter Small, *Oliver Wendell Holmes* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962), 95-97, 139; Eleanor M. Tilton, *Amiable Autocrat: A Biography of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1947), 243; Michael A. Weinstein, *The Imaginative Prose of Oliver Wendell Holmes* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 11, 32-33.

[334] Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1894), 237. The "her" here most likely refers to Iris, an artist with a nervous condition who appears in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* and whose insightful approach to disability I examine later in the chapter. In the Edenic imagery of the passage, which focuses on both natural and artistic "creation," the referent "her" is significantly ambivalent, applicable both to Iris's aesthetic vision and the principle of creation in what is for Holmes the ever-feminized "nature."

[335] David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 3.

[336] Holmes, *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1861), xii

[337] For more on Holmes's approach to the talk-form, including the historical importance of conversation during Holmes's literary and medical career, see Peter Gibian, *Oliver Wendell Holmes and the Culture of Conversation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[338] By describing Holmes's appeals to the "affordances" of representations of disability, my argument builds on the definition offered by Caroline Levine on literary forms. Levine's use of "affordances," in turn, borrows from the principles of design theory. See Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015), 1-6.

[339] Holmes, "Report on Case of Hypertrophy of the Heart," *Boston Society for Medical Improvement*, (Boston, Massachusetts), November 14, 1842; "Case of Malformation. Read before the Boston Society for Medical Improvement, February 22, 1847," *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, 36, no. 5, (March 3, 1847): 92-96; "Paper on Giants," *Boston Society for Medical Improvement*, (Boston, Massachusetts), January 25, 1841. "Case of Congenital Fissure of the Sternum. Remarks by Holmes as a Result of an Examination of Groux Before the Boston Society for Medical Improvement, December 7, 1858," *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, 59, no. 21, (December 23, 1858): 422-426. In one of the few references to Holmes's work on disability, Eleanor M. Tilton has characterized Holmes's interest in congenital deformation as "excessive." As evidence of this "excessive" interest, Tilton cites a letter written by a family friend of Holmes recounting several visits made by a individual with dwarfism who served as the subject of Holmes's medical and literary work. Describing Holmes's response to these visits, the letter reads, "Dr. Holmes [was] perfectly crazy about him, went to see him very often and… went around the family urging them to go see him." A.I., June 28, 1843, Harriet Jackson Lee to Henry Lee, Jr., cited in Tilton, 169.

[340] Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Human Wheel, its Spokes and Felloes," in *Soundings from the Atlantic* (London: Sampson Low, Son, & Marston, 1864), 282-327.

[341] Examples of Holmes's treatment of disability in fiction abound. *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, which I discuss further below, centers on the relationship between two characters with disabilities: a man with a variety of congenital disorders and a woman with the nervous condition, catalepsy. In *Elsie Venner*, which I turn to at the end of this chapter, the plot follows the treatment of the eponymous heroine's arrested development as the result of a prenatal snakebite. In addition, Holmes's later novel, *The Guardian Angel*, centers on a character with a form of multiple personality disorder in order to explore the dynamic multiplicity of selfhood more broadly.

[342] Gibian, 4.

[343] For examples of hegemonic readings of Holmes's use of medicine, particularly in relation to gendered divisions around sight and medical professionalism, see Joan Burbick, *Healing the Republic: The Language of Health and the Culture of Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Cynthia J. Davis, *Bodily and Narrative Forms: The Influence of Medicine on American Literature, 1845-1915* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Cheryl Spinner, "The Spell and the Scalpel: Scientific Sight in Early 3D Photography," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 3, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 436-445; John Evelev, "Picturesque Reform in the New England Village Novel, 1845-1867," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 53, no. 2 (2007): 148-183. One notable exception to this argument is Jane F. Thrailkill, *Affecting Fictions: Mind, Body, and Emotion in American Literary Realism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 54-116. Thrailkill argues against the consensus in Holmes scholarship that Holmes's detached objectivity operated in the service of progressive ends. Specifically, Thrailkill identifies in Holmes's work what she terms "statistical piety": the seemingly counter-intuitive claim that statistical representation can serve as a basis for an ethical engagement with embodiment. For Thrailkill, Holmes's work challenges the opposition of "mind" and "body," "'brute sensitivity' and higher feelings" by adopting an "intentional stance" towards medicine, in which objective detachment allows for a

more robust understanding of the contingencies of medical practice. My examination Holmes's approach to disability joins Thrailkill's complication of the opposition between empirical investigation and ethical obligation. I hope to expand upon Thrailkill's argument through an examination of disability and aesthetics, broadening the defamiliarizing work of Holmes beyond recourse to statistical quantification.

[344] Davis, 14. Davis elaborates to this effect that, "While its objects of study may be reduced to specific anatomies, science itself should remain as diffuse and rootless, as omnipresent as the atmosphere." Davis, 27.

[345] Burbick, 244, 257.

[346] Ibid., 260

[347] Mitchell and Snyder, 7.

[348] Holmes, "Case of Malformation," 92.

[349] Ibid., 96.

[350] Ibid., 96.

[351] Ibid., 93.

[352] Ibid.

[353] Ibid., 95.

[354] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997),49.

[355] Holmes, "Case of Malformation, 93.

[356] Ibid.

[357] Thomson, 11, 13, 42. Mitchell and Snyder, 19, 25, 27, 49. Samuels, 1-17. See also Ato Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 108; and Nirmala Erevelles and Andrea Minear, "Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 4, no. 2 (2010): 127-145.

[358] Thomson, 8, 20; Mitchell and Snyder, 125; Lennard J. Davis, "Introduction: The Need for Disability Studies," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1-6.

[359] Ibid. More recently, Tobin Siebers has elaborated upon Mitchell and Snyder's work, arguing that "Disability is the master trope of human disqualification, not because disability theory is superior to race, class, or sex/gender theory, but because all oppressive systems function by

reducing human variation to deviancy and inferiority defined on the mental and physical plane." Tobin Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 27.

[360] Quayson, 34.

[361] Mitchell and Snyder, 7.

[362] Notably, more amputations were performed during the Civil War than any other war in which the United States has fought. The number of disfigurements during the Civil War has been estimated to be 130,000. Stewart Brooks, *Civil War Medicine* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1966), 74, 97. Cited in Yuan, 71. Anslew Herring Wegner, "Phantom Pain: Civil War Amputation and North Carolina's Maimed Veterans," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (July 1998): 277-298. Brian Craig Miller, *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

[363] Holmes, "The Human Wheel," 306. While Holmes's treatment of prosthesis is expansive, it also has some important limitations. By asserting that "there are few of us who have not a cripple among our friends, if not in our own families," Holmes both suggests the pervasive number of individuals with amputations and belies his assumption that readers of *The Atlantic* could not possibly be disabled themselves.

[364] Ibid.

[365] Ibid.

[366] Ibid., 310

[367] Ibid., 310, 312.

[368] Ibid., 312

[369] Ibid., 313

[370] Ibid., 319-320

[371] Ibid., 283-4.

[372] Ibid., 300. 302.

[373] Ibid., 301-2.

[374] Ibid., 288.

[375] Ibid., 288.

[376] Ibid. 291, 293.

[377] Ibid., 289-290, 290-291, 293.

[378] Ibid., 294

[379] Holmes, "The Human Wheel," 299.

[380] Ibid., 299-300

[381] As David D. Yuan observes in his analysis of "The Human Wheel," the Palmer leg that Holmes champions is itself "a complex hybrid, emblematic of the complex nation that produced it. The Palmer leg is organic and inorganic, rational and romantic, masculine and feminine, intelligent and half-reasoning." Yuan argues that Holmes's approach to disability, despite anticipating and even celebrating prosthesis as a symbol of modernity, ultimately forecloses these possibilities through a more conservative impulse to restore antebellum order, rendering prosthesis "invisible." This is due, in part, to Yuan's reading of Holmes's approach to prosthesis as a "demand that the prosthesis be invisible." In this visually inflected mode of the hermeneutics of suspicion, Holmes's elision of prosthesis reveals a "disturbing subtext," the anxiety to which Holmes ultimately capitulates. Such an approach is emblematic of an earlier turn in disability studies in its productively unpacking of what Mitchell and Snyder term "representation and its discontents." By turning to more recent work in disability studies on prosthesis and aesthetics, I hope to expand upon Yuan's work by attending to the transgressive potential of prosthesis to incorporate difference. David D. Yuan, "Disfigurement and Reconstruction in Oliver Wendell Holmes's 'The Human Wheel, Its Spokes and Felloes,'" in *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability* eds. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 71-88.

[382] Ibid., 300

[383] Margrit Shildrick, "'Why Should Our Bodies End at the Skin?': Embodiment, Boundaries, and Somatechnics," *Haptia* 30, no. 1, (Winter 2015): 14-15.

[384] 318. In "The Human Wheel," Holmes begins with a fairly straightforward taxonomy of disability. As "The Human Wheel" continues, however, Holmes's taxonomy of disability and prosthesis playfully proliferates, unsettling any strictly defined system of difference. Referencing the myth of Oedipus, Holmes begins by recounting that "Man, according to the Sphinx, is successively a *quadruped*, a *biped*, and a *triped*."[384] Immediately intensifying the contingencies of development and aging in relation to disability and prosthesis, Holmes notes that "circumstances may change his natural conditions. If he loses a leg, he becomes a *uniped*. If he loses both his legs, he becomes a *nulliped*."[384] Further, Holmes observes, "If art replaces the loss of one limb with a factitious substitute, he becomes a *ligniped*, or, if we wish to be very precise, a *unilligniped*; two wooden legs entitle him to be called *biligniped*."[384] Deploying the neologism, "*ligniped*," ostensibly meaning an individual with a wooden leg, Holmes's taxonomy iterates terms for disability and prosthesis that function, in part, to undercut any clear dichotomy between normative and abnormal bodies in reference to disability. Holmes, "The Human Wheel," 313.

[385] Ibid.

[386] Ibid., 314.

[387] Ibid., 320-1.

[388] Ibid., 295-6

[389] Ibid., 296.

[390] Ibid., 283.

[391] Ibid., 319-20.

[392] Ibid., 306.

[393] Shildrick, 16.

[394] Holmes, "The Human Wheel," 296.

[395] Ibid., 315

[396] Holmes, *Elsie Venner*, xii

[397] Ibid., xi.

[398] Weinstein, 12-16, 28-29, 69-73, 91-99, 112-118, 154-155. Thrailkill, 54-116. Bryce Traister, "Sentimental Medicine: Oliver Wendell Holmes and the Construction of Masculinity," *Studies in American Fiction* 27, no. 2 (Autumn 1999): 205-277. Cynthia J Davis "The Doctor is in: Medical Insight, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and *Elsie Venner*," *Nineteenth-century Contexts* 24, no. 2 (2002): 177-193.

[399] Thought scholarship has yet to examine disability in Holmes in-depth, there are several brief acknowledgments of Holmes's investment in situating disordered forms of embodiment as a structuring device in his novels. Gibian, for instance, notes that Holmes's medicated novels "combine his table-talk wit and personae with aspects of the clinical case history to follow a series of anomalous life stories (involving multiple personalities, repetition compulsions, trauma-induced mental blacks, paralyzing erotic 'antipathies,' and so on) that pose severe problems of diagnosis for the central doctor/psychologist figures in the novels, raising questions about psychological determinism and generally challenging conventional thinking about the 'normal.'

[400] Gibian, 8.

[401] Weinstein, 1, 55.

[402] One notable exception to this argument is Gibian, who argues that Holmes's erratic style is productive in "defining an interruptive, multivocal, non-synthetic talk context as the site for attempts at dialogue between speakers from divergent 'conversational communities." Gibian, 64. My argument dovetails with Gibian's approach to Holmes's erratic style as a constitutive form for negotiating across difference. Where my argument departs from Gibian's is in focusing on one particular, significant form of difference, disability, which Gibian does not address. I also depart from Gibian in examining the anxieties of Holmes's style beyond the conversational form. The instances of "aesthetic nervousness" and "narrative prosthesis" I explore here appear not only in dialogue, but in the formal arrangement of the novels as a whole.

[403] Quayson, 26.

[404] Thomson, 8, 20.

[405] Quayson, 17.

[406] Ibid., 18.

[407] For examples of disability studies work on literary form, see Mitchell and Snyder; Tobin Siebers, Ato Quayson, and Michael Bérubé, *The Secret Life of Stories: From Don Quixote to Harry Potter, How Understanding Intellectual Disability Transforms the Way We Read* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

[408] Mitchell and Snyder, 7, 8.

[409] Ibid., 8.

[410] Ibid., 48, 50.

[411] Bérubé, 41.

[412] Snyder and Mitchell, 27-8.

[413] Bérubé, 41.

[414] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You," in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 149-150.

[415] In describing the treatment of Little Boston and Iris as a "speculative process of emplotment," I am following Quayson's argument concerning aesthetic nervousness. Building upon the argument of disability studies and narrative theory that "deformations" inaugurate the plot of the novel in order, ultimately, to bring these deformations to order, Quayson asserts that "the deformation is not always necessarily revealed as inaugural or indeed placed at the starting point of the action or narrative as such. It is often revealed progressively or in fragments in the minds of the characters, or even as flashbacks that serve to reorder the salience of events within the plot." Quayson, 21. Quayson's emphasis on the fragmentary nature of the disclosures is particularly salient for Holmes and gestures towards the distinction between the mosaic and composite aesthetic forms I discuss further below. By locating this fragmented form in antebellum literature, I mean to expand Quayson's claim that this turn occurred in the early twentieth century.

[416] Weinstein, 49. Aside from noting that Little Boston is a particularly "complex and problematic invention," Weinstein does not examine Holmes's treatment of disability in depth. While Weinstein does not fully elaborate on what renders Little Boston "complex and problematic," the character description that follows this statement suggests that disability is one prominent factor: "He has two inverted club feet, a curved spine, a withered right arm, and a perfectly formed left arm, and his heart is displaced from his left to his right side. Yet he is also

an indomitable and forceful advocate of freedom of conscience and expression. As the Sculpin, he is compared to a grotesque aquatic creature with a large head and a rudimentary body; as Little Boston, he is a chauvinistic provincial declaring his native city the hub of the universe and the brains of America; and as the Little Gentleman, he is a man of honor who has made the best of his sorry inheritance." I will explore these multiple characterizations more fully below. Here, I wish to note the juxtaposition Weinstein places on Little Boston's physical disabilities and his capacity as "an indomitable and forceful advocate of freedom of conscience and expression." By suggesting that these characteristics are incongruous, Weinstein draws a connection between physical ability and discursive acumen that, though problematic in itself, gestures towards a more complex interrelationship between the two in Holmes's writing that I explore here.

[417] Oliver Wendell Holmes *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, 2. Hereafter citations will appear in text.

[418] Traister, 207-8.

[419] Quayson, 36-7.

[420] Gibian, 6, 8.

[421] Quayson, 15.

[422] Weinstein, 26.

[423] Quayson, 44, 45.

[424] As several critics have noted, Holmes's appeals to the benevolence of medicine, while ostensibly directed towards the liberal tolerance of bodily differences, ironically reinforces the uneven power relations by affirming socioeconomic hierarchies of embodiment. Burbick, 260-1; Davis; Evelev; Weinstein; and

[425] In this way, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* demonstrates what Mitchell and Snyder refer to as the "*materiality of metaphor*": the metaphorical figuration of disability as the "recalcitrant corporeal matter that cannot be deconstructed away," which, by extension, causes "*the literary operation of open-endedness to close down or stumble*." Snyder and Mitchell,48, 49, 50.

[426] Weinstein, 57. In his reading of *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, Michael A. Weinstein identifies this interruption as a central moment in which the unifying potential of American identity through free discourse fractures. Describing the reference to Little Boston's dwarfism as "an instant conversation stopper," Weinstein concludes, "The battle for a more generous, unionist definition of American identity has not been won by discourse; indeed, it has not been won at all. The Professor… has violated the norms of democratic discussion and has no words to heal the wound." While Weinstein does not address why Holmes presents the failure to establish an expansive formulation of American identity through the representation of disability, his description of the moment as "an instant conversation stopper," in which the "talk form… breaks down entirely," echoes Quayson's description of aesthetic nervousness as a "short-circuiting" of discursive and representational modes.

[427] Levine, 6-11.

[428] Siebers, 2-3, 5.

[429] Siebers, 3.

[430] Quayson, 22.

[431] Quayson, 22.

[432] Siebers, 5.

[433] Thomson, 8.

[434] Samuels, 2, 7.

[435] Thomson, 43.

[436] Thrailkill, 57.

[437] Ibid., 57-8.

[438] Ibid., 59.

[439] Mitchell and Snyder, 4, 5.

[440] Davis, 14.

[441] Mitchell and Snyder, 7.

[442] Shildrick, 16.

[443] Siebers, 4.

[444] Holmes, "Exhibition of Pictures Painted by Washington Allston at Harding's Gallery, School Street," *The North American Review* 50, no. 107 (April 1840): 358-381.

[445] Ibid. 370.

[446] Though Allston's representation of the *Dead Man Restored to Life by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha* does not explicitly reference disability, Holmes's comparison of the painting to Raphael's depictions of "cripples" and "the convulsed epileptic" establishes a connection between Allston's representation of deformity and representations of disability. More broadly, the connection I draw here between Holmes's review of Allston's painting and disability builds upon Tobin Siebers's formulation, "disability aesthetics," which Siebers extends beyond "disabled artists [or] disabled subjects" to include the larger appreciation of "misshapen and twisted bodies, stunning variety of human forms, intense representation of traumatic injury and psychological alienation, and unyielding preoccupation with wounds and tormented flesh." The extension Siebers makes between disabled artists and subjects and the more wide-ranging

depictions of deformity is central to Siebers argument. For Siebers, "disability aesthetics" is significant not as a "new terrain" for art or a mode of representation that is somehow "more realistic," but because "they return aesthetics forcefully to its originary subject matter: the body and its affective sphere." Siebers, 2-4. Siebers's emphasis on the material response of aesthetics is particularly appropriate for Holmes's approach to depictions of deformity in the works of Allston and Raphael, which similarly appeals to the material response to "misshapen and twisted bodies…wounds and tormented flesh" as a fulcrum for the connection between Allston's representation of the struggle of life and death and the depictions of disabled subjects.

[447] Ibid.

[448] Ibid.

[449] Ibid.

[450] Quayson, 44, 45.

[451] Sari Altschuler, "'He that Hath an Ear to Hear': Deaf America and the Second Great Awakening," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2011).

[452] For Holmes's approach to the boarding-house as a microcosm of the nation, see Gibian, 6.

[453] Ibid., 16.

[454] Quayson, 35; Sari Altschuler, "'Ain't One Limb Enough?': Historicizing Disability in the American Novel," *American Literature* 86, no. 2 (June 2014): 247; Bérubé, 27-9. This shift from physical to cognitive disability serves, in part, as a demonstration of the fluidity among physical and cognitive categories of debility. More significantly, the reorientation around cognitive disability serves as an intensification of the entanglement between the mind and the body that Holmes presents as instrumental to aesthetic experience.

[455] Holmes, *Elsie Venner*, 204. Hereafter citations will appear in text.

[456] Jennifer J. Baker, "Emerson, Embryology, and Culture," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 3.1 (Spring 2015): 15-29.

[457] As Jane Thrailkill notes, Holmes "literally casts [Elsie] as 'reptilian': her snake-like actions reflect the simplest of neural machinery, which produces stereotyped, indiscriminate, repetitive behavior." Thrailkill, 75.

[458] Burbick, 255.

[459] Ibid., 246.

[460] Ibid., 243, 246.

[461] Davis, 37.

[462] Ibid., 36.

[463] As Joan Burbick notes, "At best, 'moral insanity' is a liberal, political solution justifying treatment methods that deny individuals responsibility for their actions while augmenting the cultural power of the benevolent managers of the disease." Burbick, 261-2.

[464] Michael Davidson, "Cripping Consensus: Disability Studies at the Intersection," *American Literary History* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 448.

[465] In her reading of this passage, Cynthia J. Davis attributes the identification of Elsie's gaze with blindness to the feminine appropriation of the clinical gaze; an appropriation that, according to the gendered division of sight in the novel, vitiates the incisive power of medical observation. Davis writes to this effect that "Elsie's once-dangerous looks are ultimately equated with the opaque and empty stare of the blind, rendered ineffectual by his [Bernard's] own more powers of in-sight." Davis, 39. In interpreting Holmes's reference to blindness as an enfeebling gesture, rendering Elsie's "once-dangerous looks… ineffectual," Davis depends upon an understanding of disability as embodied deficiency that debilitates Elsie's perceptive capacities and, by extension, enforces a hierarchical dichotomy of sight along the distinctions of gender. While *Elsie Venner* enforces this gendered hierarchy of sight, however, Holmes's approach to disability here is more complex than the reductionist framework attributed by Davis. To this end, it is significant that Holmes's association of Elsie with blindness functions as a hermeneutic impasse that, far from affirming Bernard's "powers of in-sight," short-circuits his penetrative gaze. Rather than merely revealing "empt[iness]," the "pathos [of] the blind" exhibited by Elsie's stare gestures to an opacity that, as I discuss further below, exerts an influence that is felt without disclosing its internal operations.

[466] Abbie Garrington, *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 20; Antonia Lant, "Haptical Cinema," *October* 74 (Autumn 1995): 65; Aloïs Riegl, "Late Roman or Oriental?," in *German Essays on Art History*, ed. Gert Schiff trans. Peter Wortsman (New York: Continuum, 1988), 181, 185.

[467] David Trotter, "Stereoscopy: Modernism and the 'Haptic,'" *Critical Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (December 2004): 39.

[468] William C. Darrah's *The World of Stereographs* remains the definitive account of the history of the medium. William C. Darrah, *The World of Stereographs* (Nashville: Land Yacht Press, 1997), 1-3. See also William C. Darrah, *Stereo Views: A History of Stereographs in America and Their Collection* (Gettysburg: Times and News Publishing, 1964), 3-108; Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 118-122; Trotter, 38; Spinner, 438; and Edward W. Earle, Howard Saul Becker, Thomas Southall, and Harvey Green, *Points of View: The Stereograph in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1979), 9-108.

[469] Darrah, *The World of Stereographs*, 2.

[470] Ibid., 3-4.

[471] Ibid., 6.

[472] Ibid., 2.

[473] Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," in *Soundings from the Atlantic* (London: Sampson Low, Son, & Marston, 1864), 165.

[474] Scholarship on Holmes's writings on the stereoscope has largely overlooked "Doings of the Sunbeam." Darrah notes, incorrectly, that Holmes wrote "two essays published in *Atlantic Monthly*." Trotter and Spinner also overlook "Doings of the Sunbeam."

[475] Crary, 122-4

[476] Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," 142, emphasis in original.

[477] Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002), 6.

[478] Holmes, "Sun-Painting and Sun-Sculpture: with a Stereoscopic Trip Across the Atlantic," in *Soundings from the Atlantic* (London: Sampson Low, Son, & Marston, 1864), 167.

[479] Ibid., 167-8.

[480] Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," 162.

[481] Ibid., 148.

[482] Crary, 125.

[483] Ibid.

[484] Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," 148.

[485] Ibid., 153-4.

[486] Holmes, "Sun-Painting and Sun-Sculpture," 171-2

[487] Ibid., 171.

[488] Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," 159-160.

[489] Elsie's selection of the Laocoön is also significant within the debate on the aesthetics of pain and disfigurement, a debate that, as previously discussed, Holmes understood to be pivotal to the relationship between disability and aesthetics. In his formative work on the Laocoön, Gottfried Ephriam Lessing argues that "pain, in its disfiguring extreme, was not compatible with beauty, and must therefore be softened. Screams must be reduced to sighs not because screams would betray weakness, but because they would deform the countenance to a repulsive degree. Imagine Laocoon's mouth open, and judge."[489] In this way, the Laocoön presents what Holmes calls for in his review of Allston's painting: "nothing but the most perfect delineation of the gentler feelings, in the most beautiful forms, could have neutralized, so to speak, the effect of their violent attitudes and expressions upon our feelings." The Laocoön exhibits the visceral, haptic touch of "pain" while elevating the "violent attitudes and expressions" from the grotesque to the

beautiful. Gottfried Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon: An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry* trans. Ellen Frothingham (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1887), 13

[490] Thrailkill and Spinner also cite Elsie's viewing of the stereograph of the Laocoön as evidence of Holmes's association of Elsie with the medium. Thrailkill, 74; Spinner, 441-3. Thrailkill reads Holmes's deployment of the stereograph as an analogue for Holmes's approach to statistics, balancing the commitment to singularity and replicability through the generation of individual, three-dimensional effects in the mind's eye while also being replicable among different viewers. By examining Holmes's formulation of the haptic, my argument builds upon Thrailkill's observations regarding Holmes's use of optical distancing and ethical engagement by tracing the ways in which the touch of the eye extends and intensifies the body's sensibilities. In addition, contextualizing Elsie's examination of the stereoscope during the social gathering hosted by the Widow serves as a small corrective for Thrailkill's assertion that Elsie herself owns a stereoscope. Beyond the minor textual error, the context for Elsie's viewing indicates an important dynamic in Holmes's presentation of taste regarding the proper subjects of the stereogram that foregrounds the haptic contact with texture over the illusory ornamentation of class. Spinner reads Elsie's association with the stereograph through the lens of scholarly critique on enchantment. For Spinner, *Elsie Venner* demonstrates the problematic localizing of enchantment within the feminized body, thereby separating the inherently masculine scientific insight from its association with mystical reading practices. In my focus on disability, I hope to expand upon the critique of Holmes's problematic gender politics to explore lesser frequented, yet critically engaging concerns within Holmes's body of work. As critics have noted, Elsie represents an amalgamation of identities operating at the intersection of race, class, gender, and disability. While examinations of gendered identity in the novel continue to provide important insight on the intersection of medicine and gender, the mostly overlooked role of disability in the novel is crucial to this intersectionality of embodiment and identity.

[491] Holmes expands upon this definition in his later novel, *A Mortal Antipathy*. Holmes writes: "But in the first place, what do we mean by an antipathy? It is an aversion to some object, which may vary in degree from mere dislike to mortal horror. What the cause of this aversion is we cannot say. It acts sometimes through the senses, sometimes through the imagination, sometimes through an unknown channel. The relations which exist between the human being and all that surrounds him vary in consequence of some adjustment peculiar to each individual. The brute fact is expressed in the phrase 'One man's meat is another man's poison." Holmes, *A Mortal Antipathy: First Opening of The New Portfolio* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885), 88.

[492] For example, when Bernard reflects upon his experience encountering the rattlesnakes on the Mountain, as I discuss later, he observes that "his nervous system had been in a high state of exaltation at the time. He remembered how the little noises that made rings of sound in the silence of the woods, like pebbles dropped in still waters, had reached his inner consciousness… which proved to him that he was getting very nervous." Holmes, *Elsie Venner*, 206. Similarly, during a scene in which a local family is feverishly anticipating the arrival of their guests after an elaborate and taxing process of preparation, Holmes writes, "they sat silent awhile, waiting for the first arrival. How nervous they got! and how their senses were sharpened!" Holmes, *Elsie Venner*, 90.

[493] Tilton, 186-9.

[494] Holmes, *Mechanism in Thought and Morals: An Address Delivered Before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard University, June 29, 1870 with Notes and Afterthoughts* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1871), 13.

[495] Ibid., 43-4

[496] Ibid., 46.

[497] Ibid.

[498] Ibid.

[499] Ibid., 47.

Bibliography

"Address to the Inhabitants of Carlisle, England, in P---- Meeting assembled, to their Brethren in France." *North Star*, (Rochester, New York); April 21, 1848.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993.

Albanese, Catherine L. *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

Alkana, Joseph. *The Social Self: Hawthorne, Howells, William James, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997.

Allewaert, Monique. "Swamp Sublime: Ecologies of Resistance in the American Plantation Zone." *PMLA* 123, no. 2 (March 2008): 340-357.

Altschuler, Sari. "'Ain't One Limb Enough?': Historicizing Disability in the American Novel," *American Literature* 86, no. 2 (June 2014): 245-274.

-----. "From Blood Vessels to Global Networks of Exchange." *Journal of the Early Republic* 32, no. 2 (2012): 207-231.

-----. "'He that Hath an Ear to Hear': Deaf America and the Second Great Awakening," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2011).

"Arisen from the Dead." *Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate* (Albany, New York); December 8, 1842.

Baker Jr., Houston A. "The Black Bottom Line: Reflections on Ferguson, Black Lives Matter, and White Male Violence in America." *American Literary History* 28, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 845-853.

Baker, Jennifer J. "Emerson, Embryology, and Culture." *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 3.1 (Spring 2015): 15-39.

Barnes, Elizabeth. *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Bay, Mia. *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830 – 1925*. New York: Oxford UP, 2000.

Bell, Michael Davitt. *The Development of American Romance: The Sacrifice of Relation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Bennett, Jane. *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

-----. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Berlant, Lauren. "Fantasies of Utopia in *The Blithedale Romance*," *American Literary History* 1.1 (Spring 1989) 30-62

Bersani, Leo. "Is the Rectum a Grave?" *October* 43 (Winter 1987): 197-222.

Bérubé, Michael. *The Secret Life of Stories: From Don Quixote to Harry Potter, How Understanding Intellectual Disability Transforms the Way We Read*. New York: New York University Press, 2016.

Biggio, Rebecca Skidmore. "The Specter of Conspiracy in Martin Delany's *Blake*." *African American Review* 42.3/4 (2008): 439-454.

Bird, Robert Montgomery. *Sheppard Lee: Written by Himself*. New York: New York Review Books classics, 2008.

-----. *The Difficulties of Medical Science: An Inaugural Lecture, Introductory to a Course of Lectures*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Medical College, 1841.

Black Lives Matter. “About #BlackLivesMatter.” Accessed June 30, 2017, http://blacklivesmatter.com/.

“*The Blithedale Romance*.” *American Whig Review*, 16 (November 1852): 417-24.

Bloch, Ernst and Theodor W. Adorno. “Something’s Missing: A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing.” In *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988.

Borgstrom, Michael. “Hating Miles Coverdale,” *ESQ*, 56, no. 2 (2011): 363-390.

Braddock, David L. and Susan L. Parrish. An Institutional History of Disability.” In *Handbook of Disability Studies*, edited by Gary L. Albrecht, Katherine D. Seelman, and Michael Bury. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001.

Brisbane, Albert. *Social Destiny of Man: or, Association and Reorganization of Industry*. Philadelphia: C. F. Stollmeyer, 1840.

Brooks, Stewart. *Civil War Medicine*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1966.

Brown, Bill. *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

-----. “Thing Theory,” *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 2001): 1-22.

Bruno, Giuliana. *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film*. New York: Verso, 2002.

Buckley, Hamilton. *The Triumph of Time: A Study of the Victorian Concepts of Time, History, Progress and Decadence*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966.

Bumas, E. Shaskan. “‘The Forgotten Art of Gayety’: Masquerade, Utopia, and the Complexion of Empire.” *Arizona Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (December 2003): 1-30.

Burbick, Joan. *Healing the Republic: The Language of Health and the Culture of Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Butler, Judith. "The Force of Fantasy." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 2, no. 2 (1990): 105-125.

Cahill, Edward. *Liberty of the Imagination: Aesthetic Theory, Literary Form, and Politics in the Early United States*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

Cameron, Sharon. *The Corporeal Self: Allegories of the Body in Melville and Hawthorne*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.

Campbell, James. *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787 – 2005*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2006.

Carney, Nikita. "All Lives Matter, but so Does Race: Black Lives Matter and the Evolving Role of Social Media." *Humanity and Society* 40, no. 2 (May 2016): 180-199.

Cartwright, Samuel A. "Decisive Experiment – Proving that the Chief Motive Power of the Blood is Derived from Respiration, and that the Life of the Flesh is in the Blood Thereof." *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 48, no. 24 (July 13, 1853): 474-479.

-----. "Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race." *De Bow's Review* 11, no. 3 (Sep. 1851): 331-336.

-----. "The Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race/" *Southern Medical Reports* 2 (1850): 421-429.

Casarino, Cesare. *Modernity at Sea: Melville, Marx, Conrad in Crisis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Castiglia, Christopher. *Interior States: Institutional Consciousness and the Inner Life of Democracy in the Antebellum United States*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

-----. *The Practices of Hope: Literary Criticism in Disenchanted Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2017.

Castronovo, Russ. *Necro Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

-----. "Within the Veil of Interdisciplinary Knowledge?: Jefferson, Du Bois, and the Negation of Politics." *New Literary History* 31, no. 4 (2000): 781-804.

Chen, Mel Y. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Durham: Duke UP, 2012.

Chiles, Katy. "Within and without raced Nations: Intratextuality, Martin Delany, and *Blake; or the Huts of America*." *American Literature* 80, no. 2 (June 2008): 323-352.

"Cholera." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), July 20, 1849.

Christianson, Frank. "'Trading Places in Fancy': Hawthorne's Critique of Sympathetic Identification in *The Blithedale Romance*." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 244-262.

"Clippings from English Papers." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), March 30, 1849.

Codman, John Thomas. *Brook Farm: Historic and Personal Memoirs*. Boston: Arena Publishing Company, 1894.

Cohen, Lara Langer and Jordan Alexander Stein, eds. *Early African American Print Culture*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

"Constructive Treason," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York), December 29, 1854.

"Contemporary Literature of America." *Westminster Review* 58 (October 1852): 592-8.

"The Cords the Hung Tawell." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), May 4, 1849.

Coviello, Peter. *Tomorrow's Parties: Sex and the Untimely in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

Cox, Robert S. *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003.

Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.

D. J. "Cold Water for Colorphobia," *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), February 11, 1848

Dacey, Mike. "Associationism without Associative Links: Thomas Brown and the Associationist Project," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 54 (December 2015): 31-40

Dain, Bruce. *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002.

Darrah, William C. *Stereo Views: A History of Stereographs in America and Their Collection*. Gettysburg: Times and News Publishing, 1964.

-----. *The World of Stereographs*. Nashville: Land Yacht Press, 1997

Davidson, Michael. "Cripping Consensus: Disability Studies at the Intersection." *American Literary History* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 433-453.

Davis, Cynthia. *Bodily and Narrative Forms: The Influence of Medicine on American Literature, 1845 – 1915*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

-----. "The Doctor is in: Medical Insight, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and *Elsie Venner*." *Nineteenth-century Contexts* 24, no. 2 (2002): 177-193.

Davis, Lennard J. "Introduction: The Need for Disability Studies." In *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis, 1-6. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Delany, Martin R. "The Annexation of Cuba," *North Star* (Rochester, New York), April 27, 1849.

-----. "The Attraction of the Planets." *The Anglo African Magazine*, 1, no. 1, (1859): 17-20.

-----. *Blake: Or the Huts of America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970

-----. "Comets," *The Anglo African Magazine*, 1, no. 1, (1859): 59-60.

-----. *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*. Philadelphia: published by the author, 1852.

-----. "Lancaster City, Pa., Dec. 18, 1848." *North Star* (Rochester, New York), December 15, 1848.

-----. "Letter to William Lloyd Garrison, May 14, 1852." *The Liberator* (Boston, Massachusetts), 21 May 1852.

-----. *Origins and Objects of Ancient Freemasonry*, in Martin R. Delany, *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*, edited by Robert Levine.

-----. *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party*. New York: Thomas Hamilton, 1861.

-----."The Redemption of Cuba." *North Star* (Rochester, New York), 20 July 1849.

Delbourgo, James. *A Most Amazing Scene of Wonders: Electricity and Enlightenment in Early America*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006.

Dimock, Wai-Chee, and Priscilla Wald. "Preface: Literature and Science: Cultural Forms, Conceptual Exchanges." *American Literature* 74, no. 4 (2003): 705-714.

Doolen, Andy. "'Be Cautious of the Word 'Rebel'': Race, Revolution, and Transnational History in Martin Delany's *Blake; or, the Huts of America*." *American Literature*. 81, no. 1 (March 2009): 153-179.

Douglass, Frederick. “The Sultan and the Czar.” *The North Star*, (Rochester, New York) November 9,1849.

“Dr. Marshall Hall” *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (Boston, MA), 49, (Nov. 16, 1853): 330-331

Du Bois, W. E. B. “A Negro Nation within a Nation,” *Current History and Forum* 42, no. 3 (June 1935): 265-269.

-----. *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1903.

Earle, Edward W., Howard Saul Becker, Thomas Southall, and Harvey Green, *Points of View: The Stereograph in America: A Cultural History*. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1979.

“Electricity.” *The North Star*. (Rochester, New York), October 6, 1848.

“Electricity Developed, &c.” *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), Aug. 10, 1849.

“Electricity and Hydropathy.” *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), March 17, 1848.

“The Electric Telegraph.” *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), Nov. 23, 1849.

“Electric Telegraph Company, Glasgow.” *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), August 10, 1849.

“Electric Telegraphs No Novelty.” *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), February 22, 1850.

Eng, David L., and David Kazanjian. "Introduction: Mourning Remains." In *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, edited by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. Berkeley: University of California, 2003. 1-28.

Erevelles, Nirmala and Andrea Minear. “Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality.” *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 4, no. 2 (2010): 127-145.

Ernest, John. *Chaotic Justice: Rethinking African American Literary History*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

-----. *Resistance and Reformation in Nineteenth-Century African American Literature: Brown, Wilson, Jacobs, Delany, Douglass, and Harper*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995.

Evelev, John. "Picturesque Reform in the New England Village Novel, 1845-1867." *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 53, no. 2 (2007): 148-183.

Fabien, Ann. *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Fett, Sharla M. *Working Cures: Healing Health and Power on Southern Slave Plantations*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Finseth, Ian Frederick. *Shades of Green: Visions of Nature in the Literature of American Slavery, 1880-1860*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009.

Foster, Frances Smith. "A Narrative of the Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African-American Print Culture." *American Literary History* 15, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 714-740.

"France." *The North Star*, (Rochester, New York) April 28, 1848.

"The Free Democracy." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), August 3, 1849.

Garrington, Abbie. *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Garza, Alicia, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tomet. "About the Black Lives Matter Network." *Black Lives Matter*, accessed June 29, 2017, http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/.

Gibian, Peter. *Oliver Wendell Holmes and the Culture of Conversation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Gilliland, Herbert C. "Hawthorne in a Pioneering Case of Temporary Insanity." *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 99-104.

Gilmore, Paul. *Aesthetic Materialism: Electricity and American Romanticism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. New York: Harvard UP, 1993.

Gould, Stephen Jay. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1981.

Grossberg, Benjamin Scott. "'The Tender Passion Was Very Rife Among Us': Coverdale's Queer Utopia and *The Blithedale Romance*." *Studies in American Fiction* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 3-25.

Hall, Charlotte. *Memoirs of Marshall Hall, by his Widow* (London: Richard Bentley, 1861.

Hall, Marshall. *The Two-Fold Slavery of the United States; with a Project of Self-Emancipation*. London: Adam Scott, Charterhouse Square, 1854.

Hamilton, Thomas, "Apology" *The Anglo-African Magazine* 1, no. 1, (1859): 1-4.

-----. "Editor's Note," *The Anglo-African Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1859): 20-21.

Harris, R. Allen. "'The Man that was a Thing': Criticism and Uncle Tom," *College English* 50, no. 6 (1988): 649-663.

"Hawthorne's Blithedale Romance." *Literary World*, 11 (24 July 1852): 52-54.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *The Blithedale Romance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010

"Hayne and Webster." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), February 1, 1850.

Hodges, Graham Russell Gao. *David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in New York City*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell. *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table: Every Man his own Boswell*. Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1858.

-----. "Case of Congenital Fissure of the Sternum. Remarks by Holmes as a Result of an Examination of Groux Before the Boston Society for Medical Improvement, December 7, 1858," *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, 59, no. 21, (December 23, 1858): 422-426.

-----. "Case of Malformation. Read before the Boston Society for Medical Improvement, February 22, 1847, *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, 36, no. 5, (March 3, 1847): 92-96.

-----. *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1861.

-----. "Exhibition of Pictures Painted by Washington Allston at Harding's Gallery, School Street." *The North American Review* 50, no. 107 (April 1840): 358-381

-----. "The Human Wheel, its Spokes and Felloes." In *Soundings from the Atlantic*. 282-327. London: Sampson Low, Son, & Marston, 1864.

-----. *Mechanism in Thought and Morals: An Address Delivered Before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard University, June 29, 1870 with Notes and Afterthoughts* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1871.

-----. *A Mortal Antipathy: First Opening of The New Portfolio*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885.

-----. “Paper on Giants.” *Boston Society for Medical Improvement*, (Boston, Massachusetts), January 25, 1841.

-----. *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1894.

-----. “Report on Case of Hypertrophy of the Heart.” *Boston Society for Medical Improvement*, (Boston, Massachusetts), November 14, 1842.

-----. “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph,” in *Soundings from the Atlantic*. 124-165. London: Sampson Low, Son, & Marston, 1864.

-----. “Sun-Painting and Sun-Sculpture: with a Stereoscopic Trip Across the Atlantic,” in *Soundings from the Atlantic*. 166-227. London: Sampson Low, Son, & Marston, 1864.

“*The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Blithedale Romance*.” *North American Review*, 76 (January 1853): 227-48.

Hume, David. *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Hunt, Robert. “The Thunder Cloud and the Dew Drop.” *The North Star*, (Rochester, New York) February 16, 1849.

Hutner, Gordon. *Secrets and Sympathy: Forms of Disclosure in Hawthorne’s Novels*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988.

Hutton, Frankie. *The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993.

Idol Jr. John L. and Buford Jones, eds. *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Contemporary Reviews*. Cambridge: University Press, 1994.

Jessee, Margaret Jay. “Veiling Ladies and Narrative Masquerade in *The Blithedale Romance*.” *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 40, no. 1 (2014): 61-81.

Jost, Jacob Sider. “David Hume, History Painter.” *ELH* 81, no. 1 (2014): 143-165.

Khan-Cullors, Patrisse. “We Didn’t Start a Movement. We started a Network.” *Medium*, February 22, 2016, https://medium.com/@patrissemariecullorsbrignac/we-didn-t-start-a-movement-we-started-a-network-90f9b5717668.

Kesselring, Marion L. *Hawthorne’s Reading 1828-1850: A Transcription and Identification of Titles Recorded in the Charge-Books of the Salem Athenaeum*. New York: The New York Public Library, 1949.

Knott, Sarah. *Sensibility and the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Lant, Antonia. “Haptical Cinema.” *October* 74 (Autumn 1995): 45-73.

Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Lee, Maurice S. *Uncertain Chances: Science, Skepticism, and Belief in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012.

Lessing, Gottfried Ephraim. *Laocoon: An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry*. Translated by Ellen Frothingham. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1887.

“Letter from Byrd Parker.” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* (Rochester, New York), February 17, 1854.

Leverenz, David. *Manhood and the American Renaissance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Levine, Caroline. *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015.

Levine, Robert S. *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass and the Politics of Representative Identity*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

-----. ed. *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Leys, Ruth. *From Sympathy to Reflex: Marshall Hall and His Opponents*. New York: Garland Pub., 1990.

"Lighting by Electricity." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), Nov. 17, 1848.

"Literary Notices." *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York), March 2, 1855.

Long, Gretchen. *Doctoring Freedom: The Politics of African American Medical Care in Slavery and Emancipation*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Looby, Christopher. Introduction to *Sheppard Lee: Written by Himself*. New York: New York Review Books classics, 2008.

"The Lord's Prayer." *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York), November 30, 1855.

Mancall, James N. *"Thoughts Painfully Intense": Hawthorne and the Invalid Author*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Manuel, Diana E. *Marshall Hall (1790 – 1857): Science and Medicine in Early Victorian Society*. Atlanta: Rodolpi, 1996.

Martin, Terrance. *The Instructed Vision: Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Origins of American Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961.

May, Ashley. "#AllLivesMatter Hashtag is Racist, Critics Say." *USA Today*, July 13, 2016. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2016/07/13/why-saying-all-lives-matter-opposite-black-lives-matter/87025190/.

McGarry, Molly. *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

McKivigan, John. *Forgotten Firebrand James Redpath and the Making of Nineteenth-Century America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

-----. Introduction to *The Roving Editor; or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States*, edited by John McKivigan University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996.

Mellow, James R. *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980.

Menand, Louis. *The Metaphysical Club*. New York: Farrah, Straus and Giroux, 2001.

Merish, Lori. *Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity Culture, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

Milder, Robert. *Hawthorne's Habitations: A Literary Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Miller, Brian Craig. *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015.

Millington, Richard H. "American Anxiousness: Selfhood and Culture in Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*." *New England Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (December 1990): 558-583.

Mintz, Steven. *Moralists and Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Mitchell, David T. and Sharon L. Snyder. *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000.

Morris, David B. *The Culture of Pain*. Los Angeles: University of California Press Berkeley, 1991.

Morton, Samuel George. *Crania Aegyptiaca; or, Observations on Egyptian Ethnography, Derived from Anatomy, History and the Monuments*. Philadelphia: J. Pennington, 1844.

Murison, Justine S. *The Politics of Anxiety in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Nelson, Dana. *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.

"The New Novels." *Critic*, (London), August 2, 1852.

Nott, Josiah C. and George R. Gliddon. *Types of Mankind: or, Ethnological Researches, based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and upon their Natural, Geographical, Philological, and Biblical History*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Crambo & co., 1854.

"A Novel Entertainment." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), March 16, 1849.

Ogden, Emily. "*Edgar Huntly* and the Regulation of the Senses." *American Literature* 85, no. 3 (2013): 419-445.

Okker, Patricia. *Social Stories: The Magazine Novel in Nineteenth-Century America*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003.

Otter, Samuel. *Philadelphia Stories: America's Literature of Race and Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Parrish, Susan Scott. *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Pernick, Martin S. *A Calculus of Suffering: Pain, Professionalism, and Anesthesia in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Pusch, Jeffrey. "'Showing like an Illusion': The Failure of Sympathy in *The Blithedale Romance*." *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 73-93.

Reiss, Benjamin. "Review of Justine S. Murison, *The Politics of Anxiety in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*." *Journal of American Studies* 46 (2012): 1100-1102.

"Revelations of Cholera; or its Causes and Cure. By Samuel Dickson M. D." *The North Star* (Rochester: New York), July 20, 1849.

Rieber, Robert W. *The Bifurcation of the Self: The History and Theory of Dissociation and Its Disorders*. New York: Springer Science+Business Media, 2006.

Riegl, Aloïs. "Late Roman or Oriental?," in *German Essays on Art History*. Edited by Gert Schiff. Translated by Peter Wortsman, 173-190. New York: Continuum, 1988.

Robbins, Chandler. *Remarks on the Disorders of Literary Men, or an Inquiry into the Means of Preventing the Evils Usually Incident to Sedentary and Studious Habits*. Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Co., 1825.

Robinson, John E. "To the Editor of the North Star." *North Star*, (Rochester, New York) April 12, 1850.

Roget, Peter Mark. *The Bridgewater Treatises on the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, as Manifested in the Creation: Treatise V.: Animal and Vegetable Physiology, Considered with Reference to Natural Theology*. Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1836.

Rosenberg, Charles E. *Explaining Epidemics and Other Studies in the History of Medicine*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Ruggles, David. "Northampton Water Cure." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), May 26, 1848.

Rusert, Britt. "Delany's Comet: Fugitive Science and the Speculative Imaginary of Emancipation." *American Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (December 2013): 799-829.

-----. "The Science of Freedom: Counter-Archives of Racial Science on the Antebellum Stage." *African American Review*, 45, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 291-308.

Rush, Benjamin. *Medical Inquiries and Observations, upon the Diseases of the Mind*. Philadelphia: Kimber and Richardson, 1812.

Samuels, Ellen. *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You." In *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, 123-151. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

"Sermon on the Memory of John Quincy Adams." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), April 7, 1848.

Shildrick, Margrit."'Why Should Our Bodies End at the Skin?': Embodiment, Boundaries, and Somatechnics." *Haptia* 30, no. 1, (Winter 2015): 13-29.

Siebers, Tobin. *Disability Aesthetics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

Sloan, Douglas. *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1971.

Small, Miriam Rossiter. *Oliver Wendell Holmes*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962.

Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. 6th ed. London: A. Millar, 1790.

Smith, Caleb. *The Oracle and the Curse: A Poetics of Justice from the Revolution to the Civil War*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2013.

Smith, James McCune. "The Two-Fold Slavery of the United States. By Marshall Hall, M. D. F. R. S. &c. London. 1854 pp. 157," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, NY), Feb. 16, 1855.

Snow, C. P. *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1961.

"Something New!" *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York); December 22, 1854.

"Song for the Times." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), March 23, 1849.

Spinner, Cheryl. "The Spell and the Scalpel: Scientific Sight in Early 3D Photography." *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 3, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 436-445.

Spivak, Gayatri. *Imperatives to Re-imagine the Planet/Imperative zur Neuerfindung des Planeten*, edited by Willi Goetschel. Vienna: Passagen, 1999.

Stanton, William. *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America 1815 – 59*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960.

Starr, Paul. *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*. New York: Basic Books, 1982.

Stein, Jordan. "*The Blithedale Romance*'s Queer Style." *ESQ* 55, no. 3 (2009): 211-236.

-----. "'A Christian Nation Calls for its Wandering Children': Life, Liberty, Liberia." *American Literary History* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 849-873.

Stewart, Randall. *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1948.

Stoehr, Taylor. *Hawthorne's Mad Scientists: Psuedoscience and Social Science in Nineteenth-Century Life and Letters*. Hamden: Archon Books, 1978.

"The Submarine Telegraph." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), February 23, 1849.

Sundquist, Eric J. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1993.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Temple, Gale. "'His Delirious Solace': Consummation, Consumption, and Reform in Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance*." *ESQ* 49, no. 193 (2003): 285-321

"Terrific Theory." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), February 2, 1849.

"Telegram," *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York) December 4, 1857.

"Telegraph Across the Atlantic." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), March 15, 1850.

Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Thrailkill, Jane F. *Affecting Fictions: Mind, Body, and Emotion in American Literary Realism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

"Thunder Storms and Vegetation." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), June 22, 1849.

Tilton, Eleanor M. *Amiable Autocrat: A Biography of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes*. New York: Henry Schuman, 1947.

To-Day A Boston Literary Journal. 2, no. 29 (17 July 1852): 42.

"A Touching Story." *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York), October 5, 1855.

Townes, Carimah. "Obama Explains the Problem with 'All Lives Matter." *Think Progress*, October 22, 2015. https://thinkprogress.org/obama-explains-the-problem-with-all-lives-matter-780912d54888.

Traister, Bryce. "Sentimental Medicine: Oliver Wendell Holmes and the Construction of Masculinity." *Studies in American Fiction* 27, no. 2 (Autumn 1999): 205-277.

"A Triumph for Freedom." *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York) March 16, 1855.

Trotter, David. "Stereoscopy: Modernism and the 'Haptic.'" *Critical Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (December 2004): 38-58.

Turner, Arlin. *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

"The Underground Telegraph." *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester: New York) March 11, 1859.

Upham, Thomas. *Abridgment of Mental Philosophy, Including the Three Departments of the Intellect, Sensibilities, and Will, Designed as a Text-Book for Academies and High Schools*. New York, Harper and Brothers, 1863.

-----. *Outlines of Imperfect and Disordered Mental Action*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1848.

"Velocity of Electricity." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), Nov. 3, 1848.

Vogel, Todd, ed. *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

Wallace, Maurice O. *Constructing the Black Masculine: Identity and Ideality in African American Men's Literature and Culture, 1775-1995*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

Washington, Harriet A. *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: Doubleday, 2006.

Wegner, Anslew Herring. "Phantom Pain: Civil War Amputation and North Carolina's Maimed Veterans." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (July 1998): 277-298.

Weinstein, Cindy, and Christopher Looby. Introduction to *American Literature's Aesthetic Dimensions*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Weinstein, Michael A. *The Imaginative Prose of Oliver Wendell Holmes*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006.

White, Craig. "A Utopia of 'Spheres and Sympathies': Science and Society in *The Blithedale Romance* and at Brook Farm." *Utopian Studies* 9, no. 2 (1998): 78-102.

Wineapple, Brenda. *Hawthorne: A Life*. New York: Random House, 2003.

"The World Moves On." *The North Star* (Rochester, New York), April 3, 1851.

Yuan, David D. "Disfigurement and Reconstruction in Oliver Wendell Holmes's 'The Human Wheel, Its Spokes and Felloes,'" in *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability,* edited by David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, 71-88. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997

ERIC VALLEE

203 Burrowes Building
Department of English
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802
Eric.J.Vallee@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in English, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.
Emphasis in American Literature to 1865.
Dissertation Defended July 2017.

M.A. in English, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.
Emphasis in American Literature. May 2012.

B.A. in English and Philosophy, University of California, Irvine, Irvine, CA.
Summa Cum Laude. May 2009.

PUBLICATIONS

"'A Fatal Sympathy': Suicide and the Republic of Abjection in the Writings of Benjamin Rush and Charles Brockden Brown." *Early American Studies*, 15.2 (Spring 2017) 332 – 351.

PRESENTATIONS

"Insensibility and the Vibrant Materialism of Black Print Scientific Discourse," Unsettling, C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists, March 20, 2016

"'A Fatal Sympathy': Suicide and the Republic of Abjection in Benjamin Rush and Charles Brockden Brown," The Republics of Benjamin Rush, Dickinson College and The McNeil Center

"Between Monster and Man: Turbulence and Familicide in the Revolutionary Era," Rising Early: An Imaginary Vistas Symposium, Pennsylvania State University, November 2, 2012.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Distinguished Graduate Fellowship
Penn State English Department and the Liberal Arts Associate Dean's office

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

ENGL 262: Reading Fiction: "Rereading, Reimagining, Remixing American Fiction," 1 course: Fall, 2015.
ENGL 202D: Business Communication, 4 courses total: Fall, 2012 – Spring, 2014.
ENGL 202C: Technical Communication, 4 courses total: Spring, 2015 – Summer, 2016.
ENGL 5: Writing Tutorial, 2 courses total: Fall, 2016 – Spring, 2017.
ENGL 15: Rhetoric and Composition, 9 courses total: Fall, 2010 – Fall, 2014.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE AND ACADEMIC SERVICE

Research Assistant for Christopher Castiglia, Distinguished Professor of English and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (Spring, 2017)
Research Assistant for James L. W. West III, Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of English (Fall, 2016)
Assistant Organizer and Volunteer, "Unsettling" C19 Conference, 2016
Assistant Organizer, "Rising Early" Imaginary Vistas Symposium, 2012
Graduate-Student Representative,"Imaginary Vistas" Speaker Series, 2011 – 2013