“Objects on the Margins”:
How Things Make Persons and Worlds
in Nineteenth-Century United States Writing

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A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2020

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Abstract

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"Objects on the Margins": How Things Make Persons and Worlds in Nineteenth-Century United States Writing examines how nonhuman things make and unmake persons and worlds in mid-nineteenth-century United States writing. I am interested in how subjects constitute themselves by making objects, and I am equally interested in moments in which things that resist classification as objects dismantle, invert, or evade the received subject-object paradigm. My central contention is that nonhuman things can structure personhood and worlds, rather than merely the reverse. As a result, my reading method is to attend to material specificity and praxis rather than to ideological signification. I find texts clamoring with things that, far from being flat stage props or working-class stand-ins for more glamorous ideologies, are things that behave.

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Introduction

This is a study of how nonhuman things make and unmake persons and worlds in mid-nineteenth-century United States writing. I am interested in how subjects constitute themselves by making objects, and I am equally interested in moments in which things that resist classification as objects dismantle, invert, or evade the received subject-object paradigm. My central contention is that nonhuman things can structure personhood and worlds, rather than merely the reverse. As a result, my reading method is to attend to material specificity and praxis rather than to ideological signification. I find texts clamoring with things that, far from being flat stage props or working-class stand-ins for more glamorous ideologies, are things that behave.

I focus on allegedly trivial things, keeping alert to false teeth and dirt as much as to the words and gestures of human characters. Paying attention to things means acknowledging that "the human is not the world's sole meaning-maker, and never has been" (Cohen 7). Decentering human subjectivity is not merely a gesture of humility, though; it is a philosophically urgent practice. Theodor Adorno writes,

> If Benjamin said that history had hitherto been written from the standpoint of the victor, and needed to be written from that of the vanquished, we might add that knowledge must indeed present the fatally rectilinear succession of victory and defeat, but should also address itself to those things which were not embraced by this dynamic, which fell by the wayside—what might be called the waste products and blind spots that have escaped the dialectic. *(MM* 98)

Investigating history's "waste products" and "blind spots"—including people of color, women, children, the aged, the sick, animals, trash, toys, food, kitchen tools, compost, textiles, mimesis,

handiwork—pushes past hegemonic reading habits to open up new lines of inquiry. For instance, what might be said about a critically exhausted text such as *The Scarlet Letter* if the reading focused not on history's "victors" (the concept of Protestant sin springs to mind), but on its representation of waste products such as (literally) trash? If Enlightenment's investment is in "the autonomy of thought in relation to objects" (Adorno and Horkheimer 7), then reading practices that negate material specificity *replicate* the subject-object paradigm at the same time that they objectify texts by treating them as "cultural artifacts." Starting with the idea that there *is* no possible autonomy from so-called objects, this study has at its center the material specificity of textual things, allegedly trivial things, what Walter Benjamin calls, in his essay "Old Toys," "objects on the margins."

#

I situate my work beside studies of things in nineteenth-century texts, in particular Bill Brown's foundational works "Thing Theory" and *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature*, as well as essays in the collections *Things* and *Other Things*, both edited by Brown. In *A Sense of Things* (2003) Brown asks, "How do objects mediate relations between subjects?"; "How are things and thingness used to think about the self?"; "How are objects represented in this text? And how are they made to mean?" (18), questions that guided my own investigation. My study also sits in the vicinity of Barbara Johnson's criticism of Victorian literature in her lush *Persons and Things*, and Katharina Boehm's edited collection *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*. All of these studies inquire, what might be learned about human culture if we look beyond the Cartesian subject-object binary? In general, they take as a point of departure the essential concept of *things* in contradistinction to *objects*. Brown writes,

> As they circulate through our lives, we look *through* objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature, or culture—above all, what they disclose about *us*), but we only catch a glimpse of things. . . . The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation. ("Thing Theory" 4)

Apprehending things, in other words, also means apprehending the contours of human subjectivity. And yet, as instructive as these texts are from a theoretical and methodological standpoint, within their pages "nineteenth-century literature" usually means British and/or late-Victorian literature (aside from a few obligatory stabs at Emerson's transcendentalism, Poe's "Philosophy of Furniture," and, inevitably, *Moby-Dick*). United States writing from the early or middle part of the nineteenth century is largely overlooked. The explosion of mass-manufactured commodities and advertising culture near the *end* of the nineteenth century helps to explain the high visibility of things and objects in that period and, as a result, the emphasis on the late nineteenth century in literary criticism about things. However, I could not help but wonder about the period *before* the Civil War.

Toni Morrison argues in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness in the Literary Imagination* that the specter of Africanness in United States literature helped to constitute the concept of whiteness. In the same way, my study asks if things, or the specter of thingness, helps to constitute mid nineteenth-century United States personhood in literature. In the antebellum period, slavery made commodities out of people, the genocidal policies of the United States government hinged on the objectification of indigenous people, and the most vigorous period of continental expansion divvied up the landscape like a butcher's cut chart with railroad tracks and the Jeffersonian Land Ordinance of 1785. The American System of manufacturing's division of labor and use of semi-automated machines effected the interchangeability of manufactured things *and* workers, so where exactly were the boundaries of personhood inside the walls of a

factory? [1] What if the anxiety about inanimate things looking back found in Poe's "Maelzel's Chess Player" or Melville's "The Bell-Tower" is the fear of slave insurrection? [2] If the mid-nineteenth-century period in the United States was about constituting We the People, the pressing question was, *who gets to be a person?*

My fundamental approach throughout this study is based on theories of materiality. I draw from a variety of theoretical bodies, especially feminist, Marxist, post-structural, and settler colonial, and including Toni Morrison, Hortense Spillers, Elaine Scarry, and Michel de Certeau. However, my overarching viewpoint is influenced by critical theorists associated with the Frankfurt School: Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and Max Horkheimer. The Frankfurt School's Critical Theory is not merely useful for supporting my claims; these writers shaped and guided my thinking, concerned as they are with aesthetic making and mimesis, the philosophy of history, critique of the subject, the pressures and even manipulations that material culture places upon human lives, and, most of all, the urgent problem of humans being treated as objects. Additionally, my central argument in the first chapter, "Polemics and Pattypans," is indebted to the theoretical work of Bruno Latour, whose texts *Reassembling the Social* and "The Berlin Key or How to do Words With Things" provide the clearest, most concrete examples I have found about how things can have agency and how power can be displaced into things. Finally, my third and fourth chapters, "Poe's Haunted Settler Colonial Journeys" and "America the Crime Scene,"

[1] See, for example, the ephemeral girl workers in the paper factory in Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" (1855).

[2] Cassuto writes of the recent rediscovery of "many minstrel song lyrics in which black people are turned into things" (Inhuman Race 155). In Melville's *Typee*, the narrator mistakes people for coconuts, just as a beaver colony is mistaken for a human town in *The Last of the Mohicans*.

have at their theoretical cores Lorenzo Veracini's foundational studies of settler colonialism and his elucidations of settler narratives.

#

My study is split into two parts. Part One, "Breaking," examines texts that break apart the received subject-object paradigm. Chapter One, "Hawthorne's Trashy Toys," claims that Hawthorne writes about toys—especially trashy, falling-apart toys—as mimetic things that undermine subject-object dichotomies and which, within metafictional frames, theorize the status of artistic making and artworks. Mimesis, Adorno and Horkheimer write, is the distinction between identifying something and identifying *with* something. Mimesis has at its core the erasure of difference between Self and Other; practitioners of mimesis outflow boundaries to merge with the world. In other words, the playground of the mimetic faculty is that gap or bridge *between* the subject and the object. Art is "the mimetic vestige, the plenipotentiary of an undamaged life in the midst of mutilated life" Adorno writes, because art's mimesis does away with the central "mutilation" of subjects "subverted" to "ideology" *(AT* 117). I argue that when Hawthorne writes about dolls, puppets, hurdy-gurdies, and circuses, and when he sets up toy-like frames such as the peep-shows in "Fancy's Show-Box" and "Ethan Brand" and the panorama in "Main-street," he does not betray a poverty of imagination (as some literary critics have contended) but, rather, he sets into motion a vestigial mimetic art. Mimesis is playful, vagrant, extra-economic, irrational, and it dances around the aporia, the mystery, of the thing. As such it operates in contradistinction to Puritan religion's prohibition on idols, Yankee work ethic, Republican virtue, and the eighteenth century's legacy of Enlightenment and reason which, Adorno and Horkheimer write, "tabooed the knowledge which really apprehends the object" (*DE* 10).

"Hawthorne's Trashy Toys" theorizes instances of toys and trash in Hawthorne as items that, historically associated with domestic spaces, irrationality, and extra-economic pursuits, are intimately woven with the history of mimesis. Indeed, Hawthorne's recurring figure of the itinerant showman—with his dingy dioramas and peep-shows—comes into focus as *the* crystallization of Hawthorne's theory of art and making. And his insistent metareferential moves open up a space that mirrors the space loosened by mimesis's irrationality. Freedom is at stake in these loosened spaces. Because mimesis, as Adorno and Horkheimer argue, is the corrective to instrumental rationality, mimetic performances pressure Official History and ideologies like Manifest Destiny. Hawthorne's trashy toys and toy-like texts alike suggest a Way Out, an alternative to positivistic writing as well as a glimmer of hope for a future that is not predestined. At the same time, Hawthorne's trashy toys offer an avenue *into* new ways of reading—and valuing—what he refers to as "topics unworthy of a grown man's notice" (234).

Chapter Two, "Polemics and Pattypans" investigates a different sort of American storytelling: domestic advice manuals written between 1829 and 1841. I read these texts as dense, intricate fantasies of self-fashioning that, like Hawthorne's mimesis, disrupt the subject-object paradigm. Specifically, Lydia Maria Child's *The American Frugal Housewife*, William Alcott's *The Young House-Keeper*, and Catharine Beecher's *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* address the female housekeeper's enmeshment with nonhuman domestic things as the node at which subject-object disruption takes place, and present microcosmic model households that revise how materiality is enmeshed with both the degradation and the potential redemption of nonelite housekeepers. The centerpiece of these manuals is power: how it leaks away through faulty domestic design, habit, and procedure, and how a powerful, efficacious self may be (re)compiled. Central to compiling power are nonhuman things: tools, animals, food, trash.

Rather than assembling a household and management style that reinforce the object-status of nonhuman things, the manuals model methods of relational self-fashioning that recruit the nonhuman world.

This chapter begins with a critical assessment of the shopworn Americanist trope "Domesticity." While I did not initially set out to critique this term (which I had in previous writing lavishly used), in researching this chapter I butted up against the severe limitations of so much of the Americanist criticism of domestic advice writing. I wished to research ways nonhuman things operate within the pages of advice manuals, but I came up empty-handed. Things' specific outlines are blurry. The deficiencies in "Domesticity" criticism replicate the very biases (and even violence) against which these manuals push. Structuralist reading habits reduce things (including texts) to signifiers, symbols, mirrors, or indices that exist only to serve an intangible psycho-cultural reality; structuralist "Domesticity" readings of antebellum advice manuals cannot apprehend the myriad things within their pages—from spoons to mold—as anything but placeholders for ideologies.

My subsequent readings of the manuals of Child, Alcott, and Beecher, in contradistinction to "Domesticity" readings, attend to nonhuman things within their pages in all their lively specificity. In Child's *The American Frugal Housewife*, I investigate a cluttered, heteroglossic household in which bricolage—a tactical, even guerilla mode of articulating identity within a dominant culture—is simultaneously a mode of self-making and world-making. Alcott's *The Young Housekeeper* formulates a contingent, porous personhood that challenges received Cartesian versions of human selves at the same time it recuperates the status of domestic animals. And I read Catherine Beecher's *Treatise on Domestic Economy* as a detailed model of how to fashion a powerful self who is scaffolded by things.

Part II, "Making," expands the theoretical framework of the first two chapters to situate Edgar Allan Poe's major discovery stories and his Dupin trilogy within a genealogy of settler colonial discourse. While the primary texts of Part I are concerned with breaking apart the subject-object paradigm, those of Part II rehearse and subvert settler colonial discourse's investment in *making*: making subjects out of settlers and objects out of land and indigenous people. Chapter Three, "Poe's Haunted Settler Colonial Journeys," describes how Poe's major discovery stories ("Ms. Found in a Bottle", *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, and *The Journal of Julius Rodman*) center settler colonial discourse as the primary toolkit for self- and world-fashioning. Paradoxically, the texts also employ discourse, in the form of hieroglyphs, diegesis, and intertext, to expose the fragile, conditioned quality of settler making.

I outline key features of settler colonial discourse, transposing them over what Americanist critics have long called "the Adamic myth." In recasting "Adamic myth" tropes as settler colonial discourse, I hope to do away with the reifying effects of American exceptionalism in literary scholarship and, simultaneously, to fruitfully connect United States settler culture to other settler societies in the world. The key features of settler narrative form are 1) linear (as opposed to circular) history; 2) Christian palindromic meaning-making in which, as in Puritan typology or Manifest Destiny propaganda, time is at once layered and linear and in which the future is a reiteration of the past; and 3) settler screen memory, which is a way of storytelling that hides originating violence. In a separate section I detail what I call settler not-seeing, which is a pervasive, insidious way of thinking rather than merely a formal strategy. Settler not-seeing aims to elide, for the sake of white settler indigenity and "home," evidence of indigenous people and their material cultures, as well as evidence of theft and genocide in the history of North American "discovery" and settlement. Specifically, settler not-seeing insists

upon an evacuated, "virginal" space that has not yet been penetrated, and it maintains blindness to indigenous people by discursively blending them into a backdrop of "nature" or "dirt."

I continue by describing how Poe's major discovery stories do not merely rehearse, but also vex, settler discourse. The shapes of these stories, for instance, are linear, but because all three journeys are aborted rather than victorious, Poe pins a question mark on settler fantasies that march into blank-yet-glorious futures. The narrator of "Ms. Found in a Bottle" experiences the horrifying undoing of palindromic history when he, hidden on a ghost ship at the frontier of the world, finds himself in a sickly environment in which the dimensions of time and space have been removed. Arthur Gordon Pym and Julius Rodman, exploring frontier landscapes, are convinced that dirt mounds and stone hieroglyphs are "natural," dramatizing settler not-seeing even as the "editors" of their stories assert without doubt that the mounds and hieroglyphs are human-made. I conclude that these texts are haunted by that which settler discourse cannot admit: that the structures holding in place settler subjectivity, indigenity, and "home", the structures that hold in place North American land and indigenous people as their constitutive objects, are made of nothing but terrifyingly fragile discourse. Settler subjectivity is precarious, with its negation always just one or two discursive slip-ups away.

Poe's Dupin trilogy ("The Murders in the Rue Morgue, "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," and "The Purloined Letter") is the centerpiece of Chapter Four, "America the Crime Scene." I examine the major detective story tropes innovated by Poe—reconstructive plots, armchair detectives, clues hidden in plain sight, and young, beautiful, female murder victims—arguing that they both perform and interrogate the modes of settler self- and world-making I laid out in Chapter Three. At the same time the Dupin trilogy's plots spring from originating fictional crimes, they also echo Anglo North American settlement's originating crimes. At stake is

understanding and acknowledging how Poe's genre innovations operate not only in studies of nineteenth-century ideology, narratology, or subject-formation, but also how the still-popular detective story genre and all its offshoots reproduce again and again, in text and in film, settler discourse and the violent objectification of who and what has been colonized.

Each of Poe's genre innovations objectify by defining who is a subject and who or what are that subject's constitutive objects. First, Poe's reconstructive plots rehearse settler meaning-making by asserting linear (not circular) history, settler screen memory, and the Christian palindromic interpretive lens. Second, Poe's innovation of the armchair detective (a type that arguably reached its apex with Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot) asserts a self-constituting disembodied subject, a creature of discourse and logic rather than action. The armchair detective is shaped as much by the figure of the flâneur as he is by settler modes of naming, seeing, and world-making. Characterized by his ability to correctly interpret and name clue-things, he is not only Adamic, but, as the circumscriber of a single vision of the world, sometimes Messianic. Third, Poe's clues in plain sight are things that, while not hidden, are camouflage and so resist interpretation. Following Morrison's assertion that

> the metaphorical and metaphysical uses of race occupy definitive places in American literature, in the "national" character, and ought to be a major concern of the literary scholarship that tries to know it (63),

I argue that clues in plain sight perform—and sometimes interrogate—the settler mode of not-seeing. Fourth, I argue that Poe's innovation of young, beautiful, female murder victims, while a descendant of gothic victims, is fruitfully read within the context of the commodity fetish, a form whose conditions of possibility are North American "discovery," trade, and settlement. I focus on Marie's corpse in "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," a person-made-thing whose radical

pornotropic embodiment is both the special foil to Dupin's disembodied subject, as well as a sexualized commodity fetish.

Finally, I was surprised and puzzled to find in most of my primary texts metareferential and diegetic gestures that emphasize the thingliness—the quality of having been made—of the texts themselves. What first seemed like a coincidence developed into an exploration of how things *in* texts and the thingliness *of* texts are in fact synergistic concerns, in my coda, "Textual Thingliness, Metanarrative, and the 'Semblance of Freedom'". Just as things take center-stage in making and unmaking subjects and objects, awareness of the thingliness of texts can only arise from a rift between subject and object. Metareference, which "issues forth from a logically higher 'meta-level' within a given artefact or performance" (Wolf v) enacts within its very structure the same sort of self-conscious split and fall found in Genesis. It is as though these texts, in their metareferential self-consciousness, are fashioning *themselves*, in a monadic performance (perhaps like one of the more intricate Black Forest clocks) of how persons and worlds are unmade and made again.

Introduction to Part I: Breaking

Part I of this study gathers together primary texts that assemble persons and worlds in conjunction with nonhuman things that seem to have lives of their own. The writing of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Chapter One: "Hawthorne's Trashy Toys") and Catharine Beecher, Lydia Maria Child, and William Andrus Alcott (Chapter Two: "Polemics and Pattypans") pulls to the fore lively nonhuman things and in doing so, pressure, degrade, invert, or even break apart the received subject-object paradigm. In these texts, nonhuman things such as puppets, peep-shows, food, and kitchen utensils behave less as tools of or for human beings than as messengers from a different version of the world in which subjects and objects are not the only categories of being. While Part I is called "Breaking," what is pried apart is a subject-object paradigm that proves to be inadequate and stifling to artistic making and human freedom. Thus, the messages in these primary texts are, at bottom, hopeful, even utopian.

My primary texts in Part I treat other kinds of breaking as well. They address the loss of "traditional" oral transmission and breaks with an old-world past and an anterior state of being. Additionally (and unsurprisingly, given the Protestant roots of all of these authors), they address the biblical Fall. The Fall is followed (or even generated) by a doubled fracture: the fracture between Adam and Eve and God, and the fracture of self-consciousness: "Their eyes are opened, and they realize they are naked and sew fig leaves to cover themselves" (Genesis 3:7). Self-consciousness, then, is the postlapsarian condition. From its rift, subjects and objects arise: God

the *über*-subject against the object of his Creation, and Adam and Eve's subjectivity in relation to Paradise and the materiality of their own bodies. Thus, when Hawthorne dwells, for instance, on the puppet Feathertop's failure to realize himself as a person, or when Beecher urges housekeepers to redeem mankind through their enmeshment with the thing-world, these texts mourn—and even attempt to repair—the Fall and all that was lost when subjects broke away from objects.

Chapter One

Hawthorne's Trashy Toys

This chapter describes how Hawthorne writes about toys—especially trashy, falling-apart toys—as mimetic things that undermine subject-object dichotomies and which, within metafictional frames, theorize the status of artistic making and artworks. The germ of this chapter arose from two simple observations. First observation: Hawthorne writes a great deal about toys. His oeuvre is positively cluttered up with them: mechanical toys such as panoramas, dioramas, hurdy-gurdies, and automata, but also simpler dolls, hobby-horses, and penny toys. Yes, the biographical Hawthorne was evidently a devoted father (his *English Notebooks* mention trips to toy shops), but a devoted father does not necessarily a toy-obsessed writer make. Second observation: Hawthorne's texts have a peculiar—and insistent—habit of pointing out their own quality of having been made. Hawthorne's metafictional reminders occur overtly, in the form of prefaces, narratorial asides, and framing devices, as well as covertly. In either case, the effect is the same: we readers are not allowed to forget that the text is a made thing. From these two observations, then, a question emerged: is there anything interesting to discover by reading Hawthorne's made, thingly toys against the self-conscious thingliness of his texts?

Welcome to the Puppet Show

Toys are, ostensibly, anyway, trivial things associated with childhood, domestic spaces, irrationality, and extra-economic activity. So, it is not surprising that Serious Critics ignore, or else mince with distaste through, Hawthorne's toy-strewn realm. Richard Chase, for instance, in *The American Novel and its Tradition*, writes that when Hawthorne's writing falters, he, "not knowing how to re-establish the progression . . . trots out a traveling puppet-show . . . as if he were an entertainer on the stage who must improvise in order not to lose his audience" (83). Chase argues that Hawthorne's art fails when it seeks to entertain, when it is provisionary rather than controlled, and especially when it incorporates low-brow and childish things. Jean Normand, in *Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Approach to an Analysis of Artistic Creation*, is a bit more lenient than Chase. For Normand, Hawthorne's puppets and pantomimes confirm that "his work is above all a dramatic spectacle" (323). However, Normand glides over puppets not only by writing that they are "*merely* the foreshadowers of a more complex spectacle for which they are *merely* giving a preview" (323, emphases mine), but also by arguing that Hawthorne "invented the visual technique of the cinema on a literary level before the movie camera even existed" (311). Puppet shows *merely* being puppet shows, Normand suggests, is not quite good enough for Hawthorne, whose techniques do not draw from contemporary entertainers but, anachronistically, from the more reputable art of the cinema.[3] Willa Cather writes of *The Scarlet Letter* that the "material investiture of the story . . . is presented as if unconsciously; by the

[3] Although Normand seems to engage with materiality in his study by discussing the technology of the cinema, in effect his troubling, anachronistic method *de*materializes not only Hawthorne's use of toys (such as dioramas), but also the cinema itself.

reserved, fastidious hand of an artist, not by the gaudy fingers of a showman or the mechanical industry of a department-store window-dresser" (qtd. in Brown 150). Cather's remarks are meant to be high praise for Hawthorne, and the terms "showman" and "mechanical" are supposed to be undesirable traits.[4] Chase, Normand, and Cather could not be clearer: toys and showmanship do not belong in serious fiction, and they reek of vaudeville sweat and desperation. But Hawthorne knew quite well, it appears, that toys and show business are consigned to the literary and philosophical trash heap. His sketch "Little Annie's Ramble," which follows a small child wandering through a town, toy shop, and traveling circus, protests:

> Say not that [my ramble] has been a waste of precious moments, an idle matter, a babble of childish talk, and a reverie of childish imaginations, about topics unworthy of a grown man's notice. (234)

Scraping past the Victorian schmaltz about childhood, we dig up a warning: the supposed triviality of shows and toys—"topics unworthy of a grown man's notice"—are not to be overlooked by the "truly wise." And certainly, Hawthorne did not overlook them. He is guilty as charged of wheeling out puppet shows, sideshows, and dolls—even entire toy shops.[5]

What is more, for at least the earlier part of his career, in the 1830s, Hawthorne seized upon the vagrant showman as *the* crystallization of his theory of art. This is spelled out most

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[4] The structure of *The Scarlet Letter*, in fact, with its "symmetrical design" (Matthiessen 275) and stagey tableaus (the platform, the forest clearing, everything edged with shadows) is, arguably, both "mechanical" and showy.

[5] Some critical attention has been paid to Hawthorne's repeated use of the diorama. Jean Normand, for instance, writes, "If Hawthorne continued after his illness was over to shut himself away in order to look at things in the dark, if he displayed an interest in magic lantern shows and fairground dioramas, he did so in no dilettante spirit but with deliberate intent. It was upon a foundation of shadow that he built up his technique of indirect lighting" (308).

clearly in the projected—but never published—collection Hawthorne called *The Story Teller*. *The Story Teller* was a picaresque set of tales and sketches set within a frame whose narrator is vagrant story teller. Gary Richard Thompson writes, "The main theme is announced in the title: the tales and sketches are concerned with story telling, the modes concerned with story telling, the audience of story telling, the gathering of materials for story telling, and the character and vocation of the Story Teller himself" (213). *The Story Teller*, then, was a collection that would have been insistently metafictional (precisely like the novels of Goldsmith, Cervantes, and Fielding that Hawthorne emulated), that would have had a linear frame narrative, and that was concerned in a multilevel way with the characteristics and possibilities of mimetic art. However, the collection failed to find a publisher, so its tales, sketches, and frames were dismantled and published out of order later in *Twice-told Tales*, *Mosses from an Old Manse*, and elsewhere.

"Passages from a Relinquished Work" (published in *Mosses*) presents the would-be narrator of *The Story Teller*. He is an orphan who was raised by the imperious and Puritanical Parson Thumpcushion in a staid New England village. The narrator's character, at odds with his upbringing, leans toward the "wayward and fanciful," and he resolves to "[keep] aloof from the regular business of life" (175). However, he is tormented by lack of employment, growing "conscious that [he] must toil, if it were but in catching butterflies." He decides to unite the employments of "novelist" and "actor":

> The idea of becoming a wandering story teller had been suggested, a year or two before, with an encounter with several merry vagabonds in a showman's wagon, where they and I had sheltered ourselves during a summer shower. (176)

Such a vocation, he reflects,

would have been a dangerous resolution, any where in the world; it was fatal, in New-England. There is a grossness in the conceptions of my countrymen; they will not be convinced that any good thing may consist with what they call idleness; they can anticipate nothing but evil of a young man who neither studies physic, law, nor gospel, nor opens a store, nor takes to farming. (175)

Hawthorne's vagrant showman seeks possibilities for art and life—performative, wandering, extra-economic, "wayward and fanciful"—that are at odds with the reason of his New England surroundings.

Historically, New Englanders were no strangers to vagrant showmen, who were a primary source of entertainment. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Robert M. Lewis writes,

Even Americans who lived in remote villages—weary of toil in factory or on farm but lucky enough to have a dime or a quarter in their pockets—could enjoy the brief spectacles supplied by acrobats, animals exotic and extraordinary, 'curiosities,' conjurors, carousels, clowns, cowboys, dwarfs, dancers, dioramas, magicians, mechanical marvels, melodramas, menageries, and minstrels . . . and traveling was essential to any profitable amusement enterprise. (1)

Traveling entertainers trudged along networks of "rough tracks" connecting even the smallest New England villages.[6] These tracks were officially built, of course, for the trade of goods and services in the prosperous early republic years: "portrait painters, furniture makers, book dealers,

[6] De Certeau's distinction between "tactics" and "strategies" is useful here: "I call a 'strategy' the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power can be isolated from an 'environment.' A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* . . . and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it. . . . Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. . . . I call a 'tactic,' on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutional localization, nor thus on a border-line distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety" (*Practice* xix). Traveling showpeople's inroads into New England are, in this definition, tactical and subversive.

school teachers, circuit preachers, patent-medicine vendors, tinsmiths, and artisans of all kinds." Showmen, on the other hand,

> were less welcome, unless they exhibited mechanical marvels or beasts with unusual qualities that were deemed educational. The performances of itinerant actors, acrobats, and clowns were often considered among the vain amusements and frivolous diversions that threatened republican virtue. (4-5)

Vagrant showmen would have been outsiders, like the Italian boy with his barrel-organ and monkey in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Vagrant showmen would have also shared in the debasement of the alien forms of materiality (puppets, hyenas, dancing bears, painted slide-shows of foreign cities) with which their performances were enmeshed.[7]

Adorno writes that art, or at least honest art, is intimately linked to just the sort of threadbare sideshows that Chase, Normand, and Cather wish to elide but which, nonetheless, overflow Hawthorne's texts. Art's "distance from any purpose sympathizes, as from across the abyss of ages with the superfluous vagrant who will not completely acquiesce to fixed property and settled civilization" *(AT* 82). He adds that it is essential that art retain this link to its nomadic roots, because "when the last trace of the vagrant fiddler disappears from the spiritual chamber musician and the illusionless drama has lost the magic of the stage, art has capitulated" *(AT* 81). Capitulated, presumably, to instrumental rationality, which demands that art be a means rather than an end unto itself. So, no matter what rational vocation Parson Thumpcushion may have wanted for his ward, or what sort of didacticism New Englanders may have desired from puppet shows, the showman's art will not capitulate. And no matter what Serious Critics might want

[7] Hawthorne's *American Notebooks* describe an encounter in a tavern with "caravan people" whose cage of "leopards and hyenas" overturned (192).

Hawthorne to be—inveterate allegorist, father of the cinema, Oedipally tormented Puritan—his texts will always contain circuses, puppets, and toys, and the texts will not capitulate. Hawthorne's artistic pedigree includes not only class acts like Spenser and Bunyan, but also threadbare, nameless sideshows. Instead of straining to elevate or ignore these forms, then, perhaps we might read them as meaningful vestiges of magical, superfluous, wandering, playful mimesis.

"Better than the nicest little wax figure."

The Scarlet Letter's lonely little Pearl, at play on the boundary line between colonial settlement and wilderness, exercises her mimetic faculty to its "phantasmagoric" limits:

> At home, within and around her mother's cottage, Pearl wanted not a wide and various circle of acquaintance. The spell of life went forth from her ever creative spirit, and communicated itself to a thousand objects, as a torch kindles a flame wherever it may be applied. The unlikeliest materials, a stick, a bunch of rags, a flower, were the puppets of Pearl's witchcraft, and, without undergoing any outward change, became spiritually adapted to whatever drama occupied the stage of her inner world. Her one baby-voice served a multitude of imaginary personages, old and young, to talk withal. The pine-trees, aged, black, and solemn, and flinging groans and other melancholy utterances on the breeze, needed little transformation to figure as Puritan elders; the ugliest weeds of the garden were their children. (115)

Adorno writes that the "pure mimetic impulse" is "the happiness of producing the world once over" *(AT* 339). Mimesis is representation-as-imitation, and imitation, Coleridge writes, "as opposed to copying, consists either in the interfusion of the same throughout the radically different, or of the different throughout a base radically the same" (121). Mimesis, in other words, has at its core the erasure of difference. For example, Pearl's mimesis is a serio-playful forgetting of the divides between herself and others (her "one baby-voice" becomes multiple

other voices), human and nonhuman (pine trees become Puritan elders, weeds become children). In addition, mimesis is not simply concerned "with the representation *of* objects" but with the relationship *to* them (Schultz 5). Mimesis, in short, recognizes no red tape around even the trashiest material forms (sticks and rags), and it takes place in the hazy, shifting boundary zone between subjects and objects.

As it happens, the history of mimesis, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, is one and the same with the historical development of the human subject. "Europe has two histories," they write, "a well-known, written history and an underground history. The latter consists of the fate of the human instincts and passions which are displaced and distorted by civilization" (*DE* 192). The central "human instinct" is mimesis, which has its roots in prehistoric natural sympathy and magic:

> The magician imitates demons; in order to frighten them or appease them, he behaves frighteningly or makes gestures of appeasement. Even though his task is impersonation, he never conceives of himself as does the civilized man . . . as the image of invisible power. (*DE* 6)

The prehistoric magician does not, that is, fancy himself a disembodied subject. He cannot stand above or apart from the demons he wishes to placate; instead, he becomes *like* the demons. But with the historical development of the enlightened, rational subject around the eighteenth century, the human subject was pried away from so-called objects, and the mimetic faculty was driven underground. Mimesis in the "enlightened" world only bubbles up in child's play, in controlled, instrumental mimicry—as in fascism—or in artwork (or, Michael Taussig adds, in mimetically reproductive machines such as the camera and the gramophone).

Mimesis is bound up with a certain vagrant freedom. In one sense, mimesis depends upon *imaginative* vagrancy to make substitutions such as Pearl's stick-people. And in another sense,

mimetic practitioners have been, historically speaking, vagrants. The primitive human described by Adorno and Horkheimer is a "nomadic savage" who "disguise[s] himself as his quarry in order to stalk it" (15). Untethered to place or property, the nomad does not possess a self fully differentiated from the rest of nature. With the emergence of Enlightenment reason, "Uncontrolled mimesis [was] outlawed," resulting in "the religious prohibition on images" and also "the social banishment of actors and gypsies, and leading finally to the kind of teaching which does not allow children to behave as children." Primitive nomads, gypsies, actors, New England circus performers, children: all engage freely in mimesis, all are free from routinized labor, and free *from* "the fixed order of life and property" (*DE* 58). The trade-off is marginalization.[8]

In addition to mimesis's quality of vagrant freedom, a strand of childlike play runs through it, even if it is, like Pearl's solemn Puritan puppets, deadly serious play. "The Greek verbal form of mimesis," Schultz observes, "initially meant expressing an experience through dancing" (55). Dance captures mimesis's bodily presencing, its movement and playfulness, the flashing image of the tiny child becoming, briefly, Other. Aristotle writes that "To imitate is, even from childhood, part of man's nature" and that children take their first steps in learning through imitation" (*Poetics* 57). Gertrude Koch theorizes that the polymorphousness of mimesis coincides with "the earliest period of childhood prior to the ego having taken a definite shape"

[8] Adorno describes essay-writing as a wandering, mimetic experience: "Instead of achieving something scientifically, or creating something artistically, the effort of the essay reflects a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done. The essay mirrors what is loved and hated instead of presenting the intellect, on the model of a boundless work ethic, as *creatio ex nihilo*. Luck and play are essential to the essay" (qtd. Schultz 145).

(qtd. in Taussig 35), and Benjamin writes that children's mimetic play is blind to boundaries not only between self and other, but between human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate:

> Children's play is everywhere permeated by mimetic modes of behavior, and its realm is by no means limited to what one person can imitate in another. The child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher, but also a windmill and a train. ("On the Mimetic Faculty" 720)

Everything is up for grabs in mimesis. Hawthorne writes of his son:

> Little Julian . . . now sits with a slate and pencil, drawing as he says a bird—and next, a chair—both objects being represented by a similar scratch.

Julian's plastic signifier, the "scratch," no less presences a bird than it does a chair; both are sustained equally and even simultaneously by Julian's mimetic desire. In the same passage, material things are equally plastic (or, wax-like):

> Children always seem to like a very wide scope for imagination, as respects their babies, or indeed any playthings; this cushion, or a rolling-pin, or a nine-pin, or any casual thing, seems to answer the purpose of a doll, better than the nicest little wax figure that the art of man can contrive. (*The American Notebooks* 256)

Children, plastic selves, move mimetically through worlds that may as well be constructed of modeling wax. Things and Signs are used, transmogrified, and abandoned along an ever-shifting, magical track.

And yet: if things are so plastic, if their exact contours are less-than-relevant, then how is mimesis a bodily, or material, "presencing"? Is mimesis not an antiphenomenological act? Yrjo Hirn, for instance, in *The Origins of Art*, describes a mimetically-industrious "primitive man who avails himself of dolls and drawings in order to bewitch," and who "is generally quite indifferent to the lifelike character of his magical instruments. The typical volt gives only a crude outline of

the human body, and, which is most remarkable, it does not display any likeness to the man who is to be bewitched" (290). Similarly, "There is nothing resembling a portrait" in magical mimetic images, Marcel Mauss writes. "The image, the doll or the drawing is a very schematic representation, a poorly executed ideogram. Any resemblance is purely theoretical or abstract" (84). Like Benjamin's and Hawthorne's children, Hirn and Mauss's "primitives" are less concerned with the visible, tangible qualities of things than with some kind of invisible essence. However, this transcendentalist's habit of looking through things seems to suggest the very error of instrumental reason for which mimesis, at least according to Adorno, is the *corrective*.[9] After all, looking through material things blurs their individuality (and even their dignity). In the enlightened scientific mode, for example, nature is "stripped of qualities" and becomes "the chaotic stuff of mere classification," (*DE* 6), which scientific nomenclature cuts, splices, and re-orders. In the case of mimesis, then, disregarding the material realities of, say, a stick, in order for it to become a puppet of a Puritan elder seems antimaterial in the extreme.

However, Adorno and Horkheimer write of a kind of knowledge that mimesis furnishes, or at least nudges us towards, which *really* "apprehends the object":

> The [enlightened, rational] self which learned about order and subordination through the subjugation of the world soon equated truth in general with classifying thought, without whose fixed distinctions it cannot exist. *Along with the mimetic magic it tabooed the knowledge which really apprehends the object*. (*DE* 10, emphasis mine)

"Truth" in the enlightened, rational view is cemented to the ability to classify—to identify, sample, name. Mimesis, which permits a rolling-pin to be a baby and a scratch to be a bird, runs counter to such a definition of "truth." But how does "mimetic magic," if it cannot classify and

[9] Adorno argues that mimesis is "the unimpaired corrective of reified consciousness" *(AT* 435).

name, “apprehend an object”? Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that really apprehending an object means encountering it in its entrenchment with the whole of nature, still snared, still entangled. They describe “The murky, undivided entity worshipped as the principle of *mana* at the earliest known stages of humanity”:

> Primal and undifferentiated, it is everything unknown and alien; it is that which transcends the bounds of experience. (*DE* 10)

Reason disables mimesis by making incisions between subjects and objects. So, the answer to my earlier question is, no: mimesis is not antiphenomenological. As a practice, mimesis moves in the direction of the primitive, reaching out towards that murky, undivided realm of mana, which *precedes* “the split between animate and inanimate” and “Even the division of subject and object” (*DE* 11). Mimesis, then, is a magical sympathy that tugs at strings invisible to Reason’s classifying eye, such as the relationships between artifacts in Hawthorne’s “A Virtuoso’s Collection,” which are arranged not with temporal or geographical logic, but with “whimsical combinations and ludicrous analogies” (711).

With mimesis’s promiscuous interfusion comes a sense, at least in Hawthorne’s writing, of the diabolical. Although Hawthorne’s writing exercises mimesis in all its vagrant, playful, polymorphous freedom, his texts also explore the nauseous unease of the inability to classify. Take, for example, the narrator’s final suggestion in “A Virtuoso’s Collection,” that the makeshift, irrationally-ordered museum is Hades. Or, the sense of the mimetically talented Pearl’s fiendishness, or Professor Westervelt in *The Blithedale Romance*, whose “remarkably brilliant” grin possesses

> a gold band around the upper part of his teeth, thereby making it apparent that every one of his brilliant grinders and incisors was a sham. . . . I felt as if the whole man were a moral and

physical humbug; his wonderful beauty of face, for aught I knew, might be removable like a mask; and, tall and comely as his figure looked, he was perhaps but a wizened little elf.

The thin golden line that separates Westervelt's living gums from his "sham" choppers expands into an index of his entire unsettling being. Gossips speculate that Westervelt's "semblance of a human body was only a necromantic, or perhaps a mechanical contrivance, in which a demon walked about" (70). Westervelt's teeth imitate human tissue, but the golden mark of mimetic deception unleashes a mudslide of doubt. Mimesis, we understand, must be strictly controlled, because if given an inch, it will take a mile until the whole world is upended into a Tartarus of undifferentiated or category-jumping forms. Lyotard writes that for Adorno, "the reconciliation of the subject and the object has been perverted into a satanic parody, in a liquidation of the subject into objective order ("Adorno as the Devil" 132). And it is true: mimesis's erasure of subject-object boundaries has a dark underbelly. Worlds muddled by boundary-crossings, things-without-subjects, and mechanical things masquerading as human flesh, are underworlds indeed.

"The wrong side of the tapestry."

As I noted above, Hawthorne's texts have the peculiar, insistent habit of pointing out their own quality of having been made. Take, for example, this narratorial aside from *The Marble Faun*:

The gentle reader, we trust, would not thank us for one of those minute elucidations, which are so tedious, and, after all, so unsatisfactory, in clearing up the romantic mysteries of a story. He is too wise to insist upon looking closely at the wrong side of the tapestry, after the right one has been sufficiently displayed to him, woven with the best of the artist's skill, and cunningly arranged with a view to the harmonious exhibition of its colors.

Truth be told, this narrator sounds like a ringmaster or a huckster, extolling "the artist's skill" and cunning, the colorful "exhibition," while pretending to modesty. What is more, this text is not the product of some vague, literary genius, but "handiwork":

> If any brilliant, or beautiful, or even tolerable effect have been produced, this pattern of kindly readers will accept it at its worth, without tearing its web apart, with the idle purpose of discovering how the threads have been knit together; for the sagacity by which he is distinguished will long ago have taught him that any narrative of human action and adventure—whether we call it history or romance—is certain to be a fragile handiwork, more easily rent than mended. (xxxix)

This passage reads like reverse psychology. It *invites* us to investigate "the wrong side of the tapestry"—even as it claims the opposite—simply by directing us to its presence. Even if we do not turn the tapestry over and take a good, long gander at the knotty underside, Hawthorne effectively stamps MADE BY ME even on the tapestry's *right* side.

Calling attention to an artwork's madeness spotlights the gap between representation and what it is that that representation imitates (or, between signifier and signified). This gap is precisely the boundary zone in which mimesis operates. But mimesis's polymorphous boundary zone, as I discussed above, runs counter to reason. Adorno and Horkheimer write,

> As a system of signs, language is required to resign itself to calculation in order to know nature, and must discard the claim to be like it. As image it is required to resign itself to mirror imagery in order to be nature entire, and must discard the claim to know it (*DE* 13)

In other words, there are two ways to represent "nature," diegesis and mimesis, and each way has its cost. Diegetic language that "knows" or, as *The Marble Faun*'s narrator puts it, "elucidates," is condemned to distance. Such "knowing," with all the implicit violence of rationality, would even, the narrator frets, rip things apart. On the other hand, mimetic language (called "image" in

Adorno and Horkheimer's passage) mirrors its subject but cannot achieve the distance from its subject in order to *know*, to analyze, to name.

From an aesthetic perspective, at stake here is whether or not the artwork will be a means or an end. These stakes are posed as a life or death scenario in the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*:

> The author has considered it hardly worth his while . . . relentlessly to impale the story with its moral as with an iron rod, —or, rather as by sticking a pin through a butterfly, —thus at once depriving it of its life, and causing it to stiffen in an ungainly and unnatural attitude. (4)

Morals pinion and kill texts. This is because words, mimetic things themselves, must have the freedom of vagrancy, of play, of magical, secret sympathies, in order to move and live. Imaginative liberty is the open heart of mimetic art. Adorno describes the dangers of positivistic writing, which is defined as "the administrative repetition and manipulated presentation of what already exists" (qtd. Schultz 144). Positivistic writing—a category in which moralized fiction falls—is a conceptual closed circuit, like that of the rational Sadian libertine in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, who "though he seeks an other . . . only finds himself in his objects" (40). Positivistic writing means what it says, and says what it means, to paraphrase Alice and the March Hare, and there is no residue. Positivistic writing is stiff and ungainly, without any of mimesis's playful plasticity; it has entered rigor mortis.

Interestingly, Hawthorne describes words *themselves* as having an obstructive substance that threatens to petrify their own meaning. For instance, in a letter to his future wife Sophia he writes,

> I never use words, either with the tongue or pen, when I can possibly express myself in any other way . . . words come like an earthly wall betwixt us. Then our minds are compelled to stand apart, and make signals of our meaning, instead of rushing into one another (440)

This letter's courtship context might explain its author's preference for physical or intuitive, rather than verbal, communication. But the letter also illustrates beautifully the eroticism of the mimetic faculty, in which the subject dissolves itself into an 'object of desire'" (O'Connor 152). Furthermore, the dissolution that characterizes mimesis is synergistic, according to Habermas:

> Imitation designates a relation between persons in which the one accommodates to the other, identifies with the other, empathizes with the other. There is an allusion here to a relation in which the surrender of the one to the example of the other does not mean a loss of self but a gain and an enrichment. (390)

And as Hawthorne's letter to Sophia shows, mimesis's eroticism concerns human beings *and* words, even simultaneously. All poetic language, Paul de Man writes, "seems to originate in the desire to draw closer and closer to the ontological status of the object" (7), and mimesis is, according to K. L. Schultz, the longing of form to reach content. It is the curse of the poet, then, that the artistic medium (words) is, at the same time, the artistic obstruction, the "earthly wall" that must be surmounted.

But if language is obstructive and insufficient, and if there *is* the possibility of "a world beyond," the implication is that there is something else, something below or "out there," that language fails to represent. To put it bluntly, what exactly is on "the wrong side of the tapestry"? To recap, Hawthorne, in calling attention to his texts' madeness and by rejecting "elucidations," chooses *un*knowing, poetic language over rational knowing. Mimesis is the foil of reason because, in *becoming like*, rather than describing, the Other, mimesis "[makes] visible what rationality hides" (Schultz 17). So, the "wrong side of the tapestry" simultaneously evidences the madeness, the "handiwork," of the artwork *and* alien, irrational otherness. According to Alfred Gell, "Magic haunts technical activity like a shadow; or, rather, magic is the negative contour of

work" (224). Magic and madeness, that is, are mutually constitutive, because the technique of the artist seems to draw upon a transcendental reservoir of magic. Adorno writes,

> Artworks become appearance, in the pregnant sense of the term—that is, as the appearance of an other—when the accent falls on the unreality of their own reality. *(AT* 79)

When, that is, artworks display their own fabrication, they most effectively (and even magically) conjure the alien Other.

"The chief inhabitant of that wild world."

Hawthorne's sketch "Fancy's Show Box" (1837) conjures the alien Other precisely as described by Adorno: by accenting its own unreality with the metafictional device of a mechanical toy. Mr. Smith, a prosperous and self-satisfied gent, is visited in a reverie by three allegorical figures: Fancy, Conscience, and an unnamed, hooded figure. "Fancy" has "the garb and aspect of an itinerant showman, with a box of pictures on her back," pictures which, "at the pulling of a string, successively peopled the box with the semblances of living scenes" (451). Fancy's mechanical toy does not display scenes from Mr. Smith's actual life, but guilty episodes in the life of his imagination, during which he fantasized about committing crimes such as murdering a friend or desecrating a young woman's virtue. At the end of the sketch, the fiction writer—specifically the Romance writer—is likened to a criminal: "a novel-writer, or a dramatist, in creating a villain of romance, and fitting him with evil deeds, and the villain of actual life, in projecting crimes that will be perpetrated, may almost meet each other, half-way between reality and fancy" (454). Thus, textual "fancy" has the quality of aborted action, trapped forever in a toy-like netherworld, fated never to come to full fruition.

"Fancy's Show-Box" feels stagey and mechanical. Some of its jerkiness is the result of the hovering narrator who makes grandiose directives such as, "What is Guilt? A stain upon the soul. . . . Let us illustrate the subject by an imaginary example" (450). But much of the sketch's jerkiness is the result of its allegorical mechanism. And indeed, allegory is akin to a mechanical toy in many ways. Both are unabashedly *made*, and thus call attention to texts as things, and to the gap between representation and represented. Both depend upon reservoirs of absence or lack to complete them—or to substantiate their pathos. Both depend upon a sense of motion, of the processual rather than the static. Allegory, for example, Adorno writes, "[awakens] congealed life in petrified objects" (qtd. in Taussig 1), quite like, say, the hurdy-gurdy in *The House of the Seven Gables*, with its miniature cobbler, blacksmith, soldier, "lady with her fan," toper, and milk-maid:

> The Italian turned a crank; and, behold! every one of these small individuals started into the most curious vivacity. (116)

In fact, *all* writing, not simply allegorical writing, is arguably like a mechanical toy. Adorno, precisely as Hawthorne does in "Fancy's Show-Box," correlates fiction and peep-shows:

> In the novel the illusion of peeping into a box and a world beyond, which is controlled by the fictive omnipresence of the narrator, joins forces with the claim to the reality of a factitious world that is at the same time, as fiction, unreal. *(AT* 135)

Adorno's passage hints, like Hawthorne's show-box and hurdy-gurdy, at a beyond that is controlled by the patently unreal mechanisms of mimesis and narrator.

Both Adorno and Hawthorne correlate fictional texts with toys because toys precisely fit the description of mimetic things that are "pregnant" with otherness and the sense of Beyond. Richard Chase (in a more stately context than his critique of Hawthorne's puppet shows) argues

that the "American imagination" has "been stirred . . . by the aesthetic possibilities of radical forms of alienation, contradiction, and disorder" (2). Hawthorne's toys—although Chase might disagree—are examples of just such "radical forms of alienation, contradiction, and disorder." Hawthorne's toys are chronically incomplete things, what Rainer Maria Rilke calls "half-objects." And not only do toys linger "on the border of children's sleep" (Rilke 44), but they also shimmer on the boundary between what Meillassoux calls "the thing without me," and the "object" that is completed by humans. Haloed by superfluity, toys lie just beyond the clutches of humans. They are troubling, enticing, used, and used *up*. Toys have absorbed something of humans, but in their painted grins or resting wheels they, like the dolls or music boxes of horror movies, hammer an anxious, uncanny note about what *really* lies behind or inside them. Rilke describes this sense of secrecy in the vexed relationship between dolls and children:

> At a time when everyone was still intent on giving us a quick and reassuring answer, the doll was the first to inflict on us that tremendous silence (larger than life) which was later to come to us repeatedly out of space, whenever we approached the frontiers of our existence. (46)

Dolls do not only signal, in their abysmal silence, radical alterity; they also are agential in their manner of "inflicting" silence, of turning away.[10] Rilke's uncommunicative dolls call to mind the toys in Hawthorne's "The Custom-House," whose narrator describes a boundary-space of inspiration for the "imaginative faculty" made by "Moonlight, in a familiar room":

> the doll, seated in her little wicker carriage; the hobby-horse; —whatever, in a word, has been used or played with during the day, is now invested with a quality of strangeness and remoteness . . . the floor of our familiar room has become a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet. (47)

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[10] Jane Bennet, arguing for agential things, argues that "any list of thing-powers should include recalcitrance, elusiveness, and the ability to impede (and thus perhaps to chasten) the will to truth" (qtd. in Cohen 243).

We recognize this borderland "half-way between reality and fancy," from "Fancy's Show-Box". True, the moonlight, not the toys, make "The Custom-House" narrator's familiar home uncanny; the moonlight is the agent here. But it is significant that Hawthorne chose to scatter toys across this frontier, and that these toys, strange and remote, withdraw.

Truly *grasping* a toy, it seems, holding and possessing its magical secrets, is impossible. Hawthorne writes, in an 1842 notebook passage, of watching boys sail toy ships on Frog Pond in Boston Common. Of particular interest is "a full-rigged man-of-war" in miniature:

> when on a voyage across the pond, it so identically resembles a great ship, except in size, that it has the effect of a picture. All its motions, —its tossing up and down on the small waves, and its sinking and rising in a calm swell, its heeling to the breeze, —the whole effect, in short, is that of a real ship at sea; while, moreover, there is something that kindles the imagination more than the reality would do. If we see a real, great ship, the mind grasps and possesses, within its real clutch, all that there is of it; while here the mimic ship is the representation of an ideal one, and so gives a more imaginative pleasure. (*Passages* 354-5)

At first, it seems that the toy ship's charm lies in its cunning mimicry, a kinetic and daguerro-identical "picture" of "reality." However, it is not a perfect copy of the "real"; it also contains "more than the reality." But how is it that the smaller version contains more? How is it that the observer's mind is able to "clutch", "grasp," and "possess" a real, enormous ship, but it fails to "clutch", "grasp," or "possess" a toy ship small enough to fit in the hands?

Although Hawthorne is on one level describing visual possession, his verbs "clutch" and "grasp" are inescapably tactile. Merleau-Ponty asks "whether every relation between me and Being, even vision, even speech, is not a carnal relation with the flesh of the world . . . the thickness of the body . . . [is] the sole means I have to go unto the heart of the things, by making myself a world and by making them flesh" (253). The body and its perceptions, that is, are the

fluid boundary between “me” and things, and the only way to know them. Yet Hawthorne’s toy ship slips human clutches and retains for itself a sense of secret liberty. A real man-of-war, viewed from a distance, impresses the observer with a vast sense of space. At closer range, perhaps dockside, his entire field of vision would be filled to capacity with rope and beam. And at the closest range of all, the observer might climb aboard the ship to be swallowed up inside its wooden belly. In relation to a real man-of-war, a human being is firmly installed in the same “real” world. The mind is able to grasp the real ship from a thousand angles, and the human body, in scale with the ship—or at least with its gangways and windows—is “seen” by the ship. There is no mystery. Graham Harman writes that “to have a body,” for Merleau-Ponty, “is already to be folded into the things rather than to stand at a distance from them” (53). Therefore, the toy boat shuns us because its miniature world rejects our lumbering human bodies. Toys, too, Kenneth Gross writes,

> are the size of things small enough to be left behind, that hide themselves under beds, walls, or within drawers, lost objects that are patient, endlessly patient, without need for the food of the human eye. (39)

Miniature toys, despite their often anthropomorphic or tool-like appearances, don’t need us. And that, somehow, is a source of unbounded imaginative inspiration. Nabokov echoes Hawthorne’s imaginative “neutral territory”:

> there is, it would seem, in the dimensional scale of the world a kind of delicate meeting place between imagination and knowledge, a point, arrived at by diminishing large things and enlarging small ones, that is intrinsically artistic. (45)

Hawthorne's twilit mimetic hinterlands are, as he explicitly describes, artistic, and so, with tiny, untouchable toys looming up before our eyes or receding into the horizon, is the question of scale.

Hawthorne's assertion that "the mimic ship is the representation of an ideal one" also suggests that, besides being ungraspable because diminutive, toys are ungraspable because they are positioned in front of a dark reservoir of secrets, blocking our access like fire screens to a more breathtaking "ideal" world. Toys for Hawthorne occupy a two-faced position in relation to the thing-in-itself, that inaccessible reservoir of not-for-us. He writes,

> Though made of wood, a doll is a visionary and ethereal personage, endowed by childish fancy with a peculiar life; the mimic lady is a heroine of romance, an actor and a sufferer in a thousand shadowy scenes, the chief inhabitant of that wild world with which children ape the real one. ("Little Annie's Ramble" 231)

The toy's "peculiar life" (and "peculiar" denotes both distinctiveness and queerness) manifests in a "shadowy," "wild," alternate world, precisely like the "strange," "remote" frontier of "The Custom-House." That toys are gatekeepers to this wild Beyond explains some of their hush, as well as some of their fearsome allure.

"A small heap of glittering fragments"

Toys are also alien because they fall outside of rational economies of use. For one thing, domestic odds and ends are often repurposed for children's games. Baudelaire, in "The Philosophy of Toys", describes a "machinery of barbaric simplicity" that characterizes the material provisionality of children's play:

The soldiers are corks, dominoes, draughtsmen, knucklebones; the fortifications are planks, books, and so forth; the missiles are marbles or whatever else lies to hand. (200)

Cast-off things are ideal toys because, in their half-lives, they gain unregimented potential. Indeed, Walter Benjamin writes in "The Cultural History of Toys", toys were historically fashioned with by-products of other manufacture:

toys were not originally the invention of toy manufacturers, but were produced in the workshops of wood carvers, pewterers, and so forth. Not until the nineteenth century did toymaking become the province of a branch-industry of its own. (113)

Toys were, in other words, fashioned of trash. Neither the material nor the time used in the manufacture of toys had an economic predestiny, so toys are connected not only to the freedom and play of childhood, but extra-economic freedom and play. Owen Warland, in Hawthorne's "The Artist of the Beautiful," is ostensibly a watchmaker, but in his free time, outside the bounds of capitalist manufacture, he labors over the creation of a miniature butterfly automaton. Warland's endeavor is condemned by his old watchmaking master, Peter Hovenden, who complains that Warland's ingenuity cannot "grasp anything bigger than a child's toy!" (907). But Warland's toy ultimately possesses an extra-material surplus: life. Of course, as Benjamin notes and most of the toys that Hawthorne writes about attest, many of the toys of the nineteenth-century United States *were* made by toy manufacturers. Nonetheless, Hawthorne's toys still retain the aura of superfluity and handiwork.

Unlike the toy ships on Frog Pond, Warland's toy butterfly does not succeed in giving us the slip. It is crushed and destroyed by the grasp of the blacksmith's little child:

The blacksmith, by main force, unclosed the infant's hand, and found within the palm a small heap of glittering fragments, whence the mystery of beauty had fled forever. (220)

The omnipresent undergirding of a made thing, like this toy butterfly, is trash. (Julian Stallabrass writes that commodities are simply "deferred trash" [407]). Trash is matter come to a standstill, matter made incomprehensible by virtue of having come to the end of its useful life—yet still persisting, irrationally, in being. What Warland's butterfly makes obvious is that a toy, *already* irrational and useless from an economic and practical point of view, is always a hair's breadth away from trash.

Trash, then, is knotted to the "wrong side" of art, its material intricacies unmade and unbeautiful. And indeed, Hawthorne's writing is cluttered with an embarrassment of junk—disintegrating old clothes and wigs, broken furniture, moldy papers, decaying mansions, and a tattered, antique letter A. Hawthorne, as a biographical entity, seems to have been plagued with the uneasy possibility that his own art was itself trash. He famously complained about the literary "trash" produced by "a damned mob of scribbling women," but his *English Notebooks* describe his own works in uncomfortable proximity with just such trash:

> The shilling edition of "The Scarlet Letter and "Seven Gables" are at all the book-stalls and shop-windows; but so is "The Lamplighter," and still more trashy books. (110)

Hawthorne's "but" attempts to differentiate between his own books and those of Cummins, et al. However, Stallabrass writes that "When objects are seen together as trash . . . the qualities of the thing itself begin to appear in sharp relief . . . their arbitrariness and alien nature are suddenly revealed" (416). Might Hawthorne have perceived the alien otherness of his own artworks because of their proximity to candidly commercial works? That, perhaps, trash is simply the constitutive negative of *all* art? Schultz writes,

while the form of language imitates the structures of reality, it also mimes *ex negativo* what these structures have buried. This duplicity lies at the heart of aesthetic mimesis. (97)

Therefore, perhaps it is the task of mimesis's "making the world once over" to reserve space for the *un*made.

"But, sir, you have not the proper point of view."

Hawthorne's sketch "Main-street" is about trash and toys on three levels. First, the sketch, framed as a showman's mechanical panorama, concerns a trashy toy. Second, the text itself is exposed as operating in a mechanical, toy-like fashion. And third, the subtextual story that bubbles up through the text's cracks is a story of history's waste products.

"Main-street" relays a history—but not *the* history—of Salem by means of a "shifting panorama," which is introduced by a showman-like narrator who sounds very much like that of *The Marble Faun*. The history is a "pictorial exhibition, somewhat in the nature of a puppet-show,"

by means of which I propose to call up the multiform and many-colored Past before the spectator, and show him the ghosts of his forefathers, with no greater trouble than the turning of a crank. Be pleased, therefore, my indulgent patrons, to walk into the show-room, and take your seats before yonder mysterious curtain. The little wheels and springs of my machinery have been well oiled (1023)

This meta-artifice in place, "the curtain rises" and the spectacle commences, beginning with a scene of "primitive wood" populated by a native princess, Sachem, and "the Indian necromancer," Wappacowett. The show moves forward to the first English colonists, and traces several moments of seventeenth century Salem, including day-to-day Puritan life, the military

pomp of King Philip's War, and the witchcraft crisis. The show also represents several historical persons, including Endicott, Governor Winthrop, and specific maligned Quakers, accused witches, and lawbreakers in the throes of their terrible punishments. This is all relayed with lush imagery, in present tense.

But the scenes are punctuated by interruptions by first one critic—"an acidulous-looking gentleman in blue glasses, with bows of Berlin steel, who has taken a seat at the extremity of the front row" (1025)—and then another—"a gentlemanly person" (1029). This double-layered temporal structure is complicated further by a confusion and conflation of the narrator's and the showman's voices and points of view.[11] The first paragraph encapsulates the confusion, which extends to the end of the tale:

> A respectable-looking individual makes his bow, and addresses the public. In my daily walks along the principal street of my native town, it has often occurred to me, that, if its growth . . .could be presented to the eye in a shifting panorama, it would be an exceedingly effective method for illustrating the march of time. . . . I flatter myself, ladies and gentlemen, that the performance will elicit your generous approbation. (1023)

The "respectable-looking gentleman" appears to be the showman here, the narratorial "I," yet later the showman's dialogue and actions ("The showman proceeds" [1025]) are given in third person, layered over the narrator's ekphrastic description. Because there are two voices guiding us through the sketch, sometimes diverging and sometimes melding into one, we are seduced into doubting what we read and "see." The mimetic space of free-floating signifiers, then, is opened up with the curtain's rise.

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[11] Debra Malina writes that "transgression of the boundaries between narrative levels"—such as this confusion of the narrator's (extra-diegetic) and showman's (intra-diegetic) voices—are instances of metalepsis (1). Such metaleptic junctures, she argues, are sites at which the modern literary subject emerges.

History really is at issue in this sketch, as both the showman and the narratorial "I" initially purport. But history turns out to have different shapes and paces. First, there is Official History. Official History is linear and teleologically inevitable. Hence, "Main-street" serves up familiar portions of Manifest Destiny. For instance, in the panorama's initial scene of the primitive wood, where "The white man's axe has never smitten a single tree; his footstep has never crumpled a single one of the withered leaves," we still see,

> along the vista of impending boughs, there is already a faintly-traced path, running nearly east and west, as if a prophecy or foreboding of the future street had stolen into the heart of the solemn old wood. (1024)

The "path" of history travels from east to west along Manifest Destiny's heliotropic route; the axe-blow and boot-step of "the white man" is already marked by fate on this still-virgin landscape. Caught in destiny's inevitable snare, too, are the native people, a "vanished race" (1024): "The pavements of the Main-street must be laid over the red man's grave" (1028), the showman-narrator announces in the imperative. And indeed, the inbuilt mechanism of his panorama, which traces history along a single pathway, proves that this is so. So when, later in the show, a drunken Indian is shown mingling, degraded, amongst English colonist schoolboys, it seems almost superfluous for the showman/narrator to ask, "does it not go far towards telling the whole story of the vast growth and prosperity of one race, and the fated decay of another?" (1042). The same sense of Official History emerges when the panorama show arrives at the Salem witchcraft crisis. The sins of the accused witches are relayed as facts, and when a note of doubt about the reality of those sins creeps in— "May not the Arch Fiend have been too subtle for the court and jury, and betrayed them . . . into the awful error of pouring out sanctified blood as an acceptable sacrifice on God's altar?" —the showman-narrator reassures us,

> Ah! no; for listen to wise Cotton Mather, who, as he sits there on his horse, speaks comfortably to the perplexed multitude, and tells them that all has been religiously and justly done. (1046)

Along the track of Official History, even the cruelest errors are correct and just, because those acts have led us inevitably to the always-already Main Street of nineteenth-century Salem. And the grinding inevitability of the showman's mechanical panorama operates in precisely the same way as the doctrine of Manifest Destiny and the official stances of Puritan divines.

But the smoothly complicit face of Official History is pocked by, paradoxically, the showman-narrator's too-eloquent discourse. Exclamation marks sprout like weeds amid his voice-overs of Salem's darker chapters. When he begins to wax rhapsodic, long-windedly—

> Pass onward, onward, Time! Build up new houses here, and tear down thy works of yesterday, that have already the rusty moss upon them! Summon forth the minister to the abode of the young maiden, and bid him unite her to the joyful bridegroom! (1043)

—and so forth, the fellow in the blue-tinted glasses pipes up:

> "Turn your crank, I say," bellows the remorseless critic, "and grind it out, whatever it be, without further preface!"
> The showman deems it best to comply. (1043)

The critic interrupts the mechanical flow of history, as he does in each of his several interruptions. In this particular case, he also calls attention to the narrator, and the separation between the narration and the pictures that it describes. Form (the pictorial mechanism) and content (the effusive narration) split apart. Adorno and Horkheimer describe the Homeric pause, a feature in *The Odyssey* in which narration is suspended and weighty things are left unsaid, only their outermost contours traced by "eloquent discourse":

> It is the self-consciousness which causes force to desist in the narrative moment. Eloquent discourse itself, in contradistinction to mythic song, the possibility of retaining in memory the disaster that has occurred, is the law of Homeric escape. (DE, qtd. in Schultz 77-8)

That is, discourse that calls attention to itself makes way for the unsayable. Eloquence splits open a gap in exactly the same way the description of the pictorial exhibition splits open to make way for the dialogue between the critics and the showman. The critic in "Main-street" calls attention to the showman's overly-effusive language, and simultaneously Hawthorne calls attention to language's artifice. The half-buried parallel here is that artificial language, no matter how rhapsodic, is on par with a showman's mechanical toy. In short, language is only another mimetic machine, and so language is able to approximate "truth" only as effectively as a mechanical puppet show.

If, then, "Main-street's" form (the pictorial mechanism) and content (the effusive narration) split apart, what is the nature of the unsayable that is allowed to bubble up in that gap? At first, the unsayable seems to be a purely aesthetic affair. The critic dissolves the suspension of disbelief by pointing out the panorama's flat, creaky toy-ness, complaining,

> The trees look more like weeds in a garden, than a primitive forest; the Squaw Sachem and Wappacowett are stiff in their pasteboard joints; and the squirrels, the deer, and the wolf, move with all the grace of a child's wooden monkey, sliding up and down a stick.

Illusion is cheap. But the showman replies that "Human art" must "ask a little aid from the spectator's imagination," a suggestion that the critic rejects, claiming, "I make it a point to see things precisely as they are" (1025). This is not, it turns out, simply a matter of aesthetic similitude. The shabby, two-dimensional qualities of "human art," slide into problems of the representation of history. Both critics interrupt to complain about logical glitches in the exhibition, such as the historical impossibility of certain puppets being together. In other words,

the critics point out the exhibition's obvious constructedness alongside its paper-thin logic. What bothers the critics is that the panorama is irrational—precisely in the way that Enlightenment Reason, according to Adorno and Horkheimer holds *all* artwork irrational. "Main-street" yanks the reader back and forth between suspended disbelief and doubt, because the reader (unlike the critics) perceives the puppets as humans and the settings as natural and "inartifical" (1030) until the critics gripe about their pasteboard madeness. The reader, then, is complicit with the artwork's irrationality; reading fiction is irrational. However, the cool-eyed critics, in calling out the show's irrationality, also hint at the irrationality of Official History's mechanical teleology. "Main-street," then, begins to produce a shifty doubt that not only language, but *history* is just as constructed as a puppet show.

History, the showman-narrator assures us, has everything to do with your point of view. The two critics grumble that the display of "Anna Gower, the first wife of Governor Endicott" and "a rose of beauty," is "too ridiculous" because not only is she self-evidently "a pasteboard figure, such as a child would cut out of a card, with a pair of very dull scissors" but she cannot be the "prototype of hereditary beauty," as the showman enthuses, because she left no descendants. The showman rebuts the critics' complaints: "But sir, you have not the proper point of view . . . You sit altogether too near to get the best effect of my pictorial exhibition'" (1029). Part of this is humorous—the showman hopes the annoying critics will go away—but the showman also indicates that both the show and Official History look different from different vantage points. The first critic, recall, wears "blue glasses, with bows of Berlin steel." Such tinted glasses were designed as sunshades, and particular models had lenses that could flip to the side for use on moving trains, like blinders. The critic's glasses block light (he insists to the showman that "I want no other light and shade" [1029]) and extraneous motion, framing his field of vision

especially for him. He claims that he "'[sees] things just as they are'" (1029), yet he views all through a blue-tinted and unifying scrim.[12] In addition, this critic's tinted lenses prevent anyone else from seeing *his* eyes. He is, then, a disembodied, value-free Enlightenment subject. He believes he sees Truth with unwavering clarity while his own embodiment (his eyes) is blocked from the gaze of others. Yet in fact his tinted glasses condition his perspective, as does his privileged front-row seat.

The look of History, then, is mutable. From out of the crack between the showman's form (the pictorial exhibition) and its content (the history it purports to tell) crawls an alternative to Official History. For instance, the showman enlarges upon "brave Captain Garner" of King Philip's War, who looks is described as a gallant "cavalier" as he sets off on his "mettled steed" to slaughter an entire village of natives. The critic interrupts to complain that "The mettled steed looks like a pig . . . and Captain Gardner himself like the devil" (1042-43). On one level, the critic merely complains about the show's cheap construction. On another level, however, he alludes to the traditional, possibly Biblical, image of the Devil astride a pig (see Matthew 8:28-34). The show's faulty mimesis, or the critic's failure of imagination, allow the evil underbelly of "brave" Captain Gardner's actions to leak into the text. Similarly, the showman's grand, effusive

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[12] Hawthorne describes seeing as not only highly contingent, but also as depending at least in part on the agency and desire of the observed: "I doubt if anybody ever does really see a mountain, who goes for the set and sole purpose of seeing it. Nature will not let herself be seen in such cases. You must patiently bide her time; and by and by, at some unforeseen moment, she will quietly and suddenly unveil herself and for a brief space allow you to look right into the heart of her mystery. But if you call out to her peremptorily, 'Nature! Unveil yourself this very moment!' she only draws her veil the closer; and you may look with all your eyes, and imagine that you see all that she can show, and yet see nothing" (*The English Notebooks* 194). Artworks, in a sense, depend upon blindness. Adorno writes, "The artwork is both the result of the process and the process itself at a standstill. It is what at its apogee rationalist metaphysics proclaimed as the principle of the universe, a monad: at once a force field and a thing. Artworks are closed to one another, blind, and yet in their hermeticism they represent what is external" *(AT* 237).

dialogue papers over the problem of Salem's accused witches and Cotton Mather's "comfortable" complicity: "the great scholar must be right! So, lead the poor creatures to their death!" (1046). Moreover, we detect a proto-ecological (Romantic) anxiety over the loss of native flora and fauna:

> The wild forest is shrinking back; the street has lost the aromatic odor of the pine-trees, and of the sweet fern that grew beneath them. The tender and modest wild-flowers, those gentle children of savage nature that grew pale beneath the ever-brooding shade, have shrunk away and disappeared (1031)

Notably, these instances of an alternative history concern the guiltiest chapters in Salem's past (and we should not at this juncture forget that "Fancy's Showbox" concerns guilt, too). Adorno writes,

> If Benjamin said that history had hitherto been written from the standpoint of the victor, and needed to be written from that of the vanquished, we might add that knowledge must indeed present the fatally rectilinear succession of victory and defeat, but should also address itself to those things which were not embraced by this dynamic, which fell by the wayside—what might be called the waste products and blind spots that have escaped the dialectic. *(MM* 98)

The trashy pictorial exhibition of "Main-street" succeeds in allowing the history of Salem's "waste products and blind spots," its "vanquished"—native people, accused witches, Quakers, wildlife—to bubble up *ex negativo* from the cracks of "Main-street's" unsuccessful mimesis. The sketch purports to concern a place called Main Street—sanctioned and central—but the real story is about that which "fell by the wayside." And a

> pasteboard puppet show, it turns out, is a brilliant mode for telling those wayside histories: the show's trashy artifice is bound to fail as a copy of reality, so its audience is bound to doubt its message.

"Nothing, apparently."

"Ethan Brand" is subtitled "A Chapter from an Abortive Romance," and the tale's frayed, fragmented quality has been much commented upon. Hawthorne himself wrote that he had "wrenched and torn" the tale from his "miserable brain," likening the result to "a tooth ill-drawn and leaving the roots to torture me" (qtd. in Miller 266). Robert E. Morsberger writes that "Ethan Brand" "fails to incarnate the Unpardonable Sin in a sufficiently sinister form" (qtd. in Sarah Bird Wright 85), and Charles Swann pinpoints the tale's "inadequacy" as "the absence . . . of a history of the Unpardonable Sin," while "The old Dutchman (and his diorama with its historical pictures) is merely a side-show" (63). Yet this tale's gaping holes speak emphatically, and the traveling showman and his trashy diorama are not a "side-show" but the tale's center. Mimesis in its unabashed madeness is pivotal to "Ethan Brand" and to the stories that representation can and, more importantly, *cannot* tell.

Mimesis's boundary zone of freedom, magic, and childish play is set up explicitly at the beginning of the tale. First, the subtitle indicates that this is only a piece of "an Abortive Romance," and thus not only a self-consciously made thing, but a somewhat shamefaced one at that. Then, the first paragraph ushers us into a liminal play space that is much like that of Pearl:

> Bartram, the lime-burner, a rough, heavy-looking man, begrimed with charcoal, sat watching his kiln, at night-fall, while his little son played at building houses with the scattered fragments of marble. (1051)

Also like Pearl, Joe plays not with manufactured toys, but with debris, and like Benjamin's historical children, the debris is refuse from proper industry. Joe's mimetic clearing is dominated

by the lime-kiln, and the kiln's diabolical features are a consistent motif. The kiln lights up the clearing like a theater stage:

> . . . the open space on the hill-side was a solitude, set in a vast gloom of forest. Beyond that darksome verge, the fire-light glimmered on the stately trunks and almost black foliage of pines. (1063)

Space is cleared for little Joe's mimetic play, and it is also cleared for *ours*. Not for a moment are we to feel we have sunk into a naturalistic setting. The chiaroscuro of fire and shadow are too dazzling, the narrator of "our tale" (1060) is too vocal, and the sense of performance, audience, and play are too obvious. Characters sit on logs, amphitheater-style; Bertram is likened to a "clown" (1051); the absent girl Esther is a circus performer (1059); a dog makes an "exhibition" and "performance" of chasing its tail (1062). This is spectacle. We are here, along with the riff-raff from the tavern and curious boys and girls, to see the show. Presiding over it all, we have another ringmaster of a narrator who may or may not be up to the task of bringing all these acts under a cohesive tent.

Ethan Brand, now a legend, has returned after long years of wandering in search of the Unpardonable Sin. This sin is only sketched out by the narrator: Esther, a local girl who ran off to join the circus years before, is "the very girl whom, with such cold and remorseless purpose, Ethan Brand had made the subject of a psychological experiment, and wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated her soul in the process" (1060). We never learn the exact nature of this crime—as critics often complain—but only its philosophical parameters. Amid all the carefully constructed stage spectacle of the tale, the most terrible (or titillating) scene has been omitted. However, we do understand that Ethan's sin was to treat another human being, somehow, as an

object of investigation. His "cold and remorseless purpose" makes the devastating error of instrumental reason which, in brief, "treats human beings as things" (*DE* 67).[13]

Like the victims of detached, scientific rationality in "The Birth-Mark" and "Rapaccini's Daughter," Ethan Brand's victim Esther is female. Adorno and Horkheimer describe how, to enlightened Western civilization's "reality" and science's "ideas," females are natural victims:

> Man as a ruler refuses to do woman the honor of individualizing her. Socially, the individual woman is an example of the species, a representative of her sex, and thus, wholly encompassed by male logic, she stands for nature, the substrate of never-ending subsumption on the plane of ideas (*DE* 87)

Women are "allegedly natural" beings who inspire loathing because they signify ruling males' "temptation to lapse back into nature." They are, according to Enlightenment rationality, on par with primitive nomads, children, or animals, entrenched in and uncannily conversant with "nature." Women in general, then, in the scientific style of Ethan Brand, who has raised himself "to stand on a star-light eminence . . . laden with the lore of universities" (1064), are fair game for analysis and yet at the same time worthy of cool contempt precisely because they are, well, *game*. In addition, Esther's femaleness must be examined in conjunction with her mimetic career as a circus performer. Like the German showman with the diorama on his back, she, too, is a vagrant performer; they are both vestiges of the ancient mimetic practitioner described by

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[13] Ethan's crime is not the crime of scientism *per se*, as some critics have argued, since "Science itself has no awareness of itself; it is merely a tool. Enlightenment, however, is the philosophy which equates truth with the scientific system" (*DE* 66). Adorno and Horkheimer's reading of Sade's writing equate his morality—which stresses just the same "cold and remorseless purpose" as Ethan Brand, and the same "purposiveness without purpose" (*DE* 69) as a dog chasing its tail—with Enlightenment's instrumental reason. The work of Sade (like, apparently, the work of Brand) "pushes the scientific principle to annihilating extremes" (*DE* 74).

Adorno: Others who rupture the fabric of modernity and reason. Esther, already Other by virtue of being female, becomes Other twice over when she chooses the circus life.

It is imperative to note that Esther, the only named female character in the tale, is only visible through second-hand glimpses:

> fine stories were told of her glittering appearance as she rode on horseback in the ring, or performed marvelous feats on the tight-rope.

Esther's body is on display, available to thousands of prying gazes. Yet Esther's mimetic circus art is unwritten, a brief and dazzling "presencing" that leaves no trace. Adorno writes,

> art genres that fall below approved culture, such as circus tableaux and revues . . . confess to what authentic artworks conceal in themselves as their secret apriori. *(AT* 80).

The "secret apriori" of artworks is their ephemeral, superfluous vagrancy. Esther's trashy circus act encapsulates just the sort of irrationality so despised by instrumental reason. Esther, faceless and voiceless, rides her horse around the tale's blank center, her voided personhood and her despised art the "Nothing, apparently" upon which our goggling eyes rest.

A sense of Brand's unsaid sin yawns, too, "in its indistinct blackness," and "overshadows" everything else (1055). And, just as Brand's sin is a blank, so too is the sight that meets his eyes when he peers into the German's diorama:

> Ethan Brand gazed into the box for an instant . . . . What had he seen? Nothing, apparently; for a curious youth, who had peeped in, almost at the same moment, beheld only a vacant space of canvas. (1061)

It is not clear if the "curious youth" sees the same thing that Ethan Brand does. What *we* see (as the paradoxical phrase "Nothing, apparently" suggests) is both the blank canvas and whatever

else our own imaginations concoct in response to all the suggestion leading up to that moment in the tale. Sacvan Bercovitch explains such ambiguities as a "device of multiple choice":

> To have choice (in Hawthorne's fiction) is to keep open the prospects for interpretation on the grounds that reality never means either one thing or another but, rather, [reality] is Meaning fragmented by plural points of view . . . In other words, to interpret is willfully . . . *not to choose*. (21-22)

Although some critics have suggested that the omissions in "Ethan Brand" are aesthetic deficiencies, the tale's series of voided spaces—the blank canvas inside the diorama, the circus ring around and above which Esther traverses, the blank of Esther's character, the lack of backstory about Ethan's Unpardonable Sin, the pointless circle marked by the dog chasing its tail—are the centers of form and centers of content around which the tale is constructed.

This space of the unsayable—what representation cannot say—is created by representation drawing attention to its own madeness. The tale's series of frames, cleared spaces, audiences, and precarious performances point a finger as unsubtle as the showman's towards the shabbiness of all mimetic things:

> So, placing his box in a proper position, [the showman] invited the young men and girls to look through the glass orifices of the machine, and proceeded to exhibit a series of the most outrageous scratchings and daubings, as specimens of the fine arts, that ever an itinerant showman had the face to impose upon his circle of spectators. The pictures were worn out, moreover, tattered, full of cracks and wrinkles, dingy with tobacco-smoke. . . . in the midst of these would be seen a gigantic, brown, hairy hand—which might have been mistaken for the Hand of Destiny, though, in truth, it was only the showman's (1061)

This well-used diorama is in the midst of decay, moving steadily towards trash. In the same way that the Unpardonable Sin is not mimetically enacted, the diorama does not provide fixity. The diorama is as wobbly as Esther's tight-rope walk, its "scratchings" as ambiguous and plastic as

little Julian's "scratch." The text of "Ethan Brand," then, with its own "aborted" and deficient mimesis, parallels the diorama's "dingy" mimesis.

"Ethan Brand" dwells upon form's inability—or even refusal—to reach its content. The German's "gigantic, brown, hairy hand" reaches towards, but can never hold, the Elsewhere wonders painted on his diorama slides. Content shrinks from the showman's grasp, refusing to show its true face; the diorama's content is, to quote Jane Bennett, "radically free from representation, and thus nothing at all" (3). And when representation, whether a diorama or a text, draws attention to itself, it illustrates "the limits of what can be told" (Schultz 77). In the case of "Ethan Brand," not telling becomes a powerful tool. We see, and imagine for ourselves, and so feel, the nature of the Unpardonable Sin; we readers are recruited and made complicit with sinners, and so we must share in Brand's guilt. At the same time, not telling is a protection for Esther, because if she is not described in qualitative language, she is not (again) pinioned as a specimen for study. Not telling means not destroying Esther for a second time.

"Empty thing I am."

"Feathertop, A Moralized Legend" (1852) is perhaps Hawthorne's most tightly braided treatment of trash, toys, and metafiction. "Feathertop" is at once a tale of the substance of humanness and of the failure of mimetic art. These two ostensibly disjointed topics are unified in the stiff joints of a puppet, because puppets occupy a dusky strip of terrain between subject and object, human and nonhuman, trash and treasure. "The puppet serves as an ambassador or pilgrim to human beings from the world of things," Kenneth Gross writes. "The puppet is the material thing that has got an education, that has learned to act" (33). The puppet—liminal

figure, emissary, not-quite-human but not-quite-thing—is the quintessential figure of mimetic art: of its motion, its enchanting, imaginative promises, of the way it is able to stand up and walk on its own, but also its terminal polymorphousness, and the constant threat it carries in its very madeness of crumpling back into a static heap of trash.

Feathertop begins his life as a scarecrow built by Mother Rigby, a witch living on the outskirts of a New England Puritan colony. Mother Rigby aims not only to scare the crows away from her crops, but also "to produce something fine, beautiful, and splendid," and to "represent a fine gentleman of the period, so far as the materials at hand would allow" (230). Again, we encounter phrase "materials at hand" that Baudelaire uses in his essay on toys. Like Baudelaire's children, Mother Rigby engages with matter in a tactile, improvisational fashion. Her willingness to engage with the "materials at hand" means responding to things, allowing things to have a say in creation. Because puppets, like other toys, are cousins of trash and traditionally made of "scraps and remnants" (Gross 49), Mother Rigby fashions her scarecrow from household rubbish: a broomstick for a spine; arms made of a flail, a pudding stick, and a broken chair rung; legs from a hoe handle and "a miscellaneous stick from the woodpile"; torso "a meal bag stuffed with straw"; a withered pumpkin head. She clothes the scarecrow in worn, faded, and patched finery, and silk stockings through which "the wooden reality" of his legs show through (231). But Mother Rigby's work is not done. A sorceress is "a woman who knows how to place the world's materiality into movement" (Cohen 5), and so Mother Rigby jolts her scarecrow into life with the enchanted smoke of a meerschaum pipe and sends him into town.

It is significant—perhaps even essential—that Feathertop wends his jerky way into a Puritan colony. In the Puritan cosmology, *all* matter is trashy and toy-like—and not in a fun way. For instance, the seventeenth-century New England Puritan poet Michael Wigglesworth laments,

Learn what deceitful toyes, and empty things,
This World, and all its best Enjoyments bee:
Out of the Earth no true Contentment springs,
But all things here are vexing Vanitee. (71)

And, summing it all up,

Thy best enjoyments are but Trash and Toyes. (74)

The world of things is a world of inert husks, stage props with nothing behind them but wooden supports. Yet at the same time "Vanitee," from the Latin *vanitas*, or empty, is "vexing"; it is attractive, irritating, and impossible to ignore. What gives those "toyes" their allure? After all, Puritan things cannot talk; they cannot even turn rudely away, opaque. Instead, a Puritan thing must be transparent, an arbitrary sign if you will, so that God's Word might speak *through* it.

Puritans' aversion to toys stems from their anti-worldly metaphysic and its powerful iconoclastic impulse. For example, Protestant reformers used the term "puppet" for Catholic images, relics, and rituals, and earthly vanity in general (Gross 3), and designated toys for children were in short supply in Puritan colonies.[14] But still, the term "puppet" crops up again and again in Protestant writing, treated to a special scorn. Perhaps the reason for this is that even in the most austere circumstances puppets (and, really, all toys) retain a reservoir of secret enchantment, a strong "charge of the 'uncanny' or suppressed holy" (Nelson 60). Philippe Ariès writes,

[14] Henry James writes that Hawthorne used "the grim precinct of the Puritan morality" for his "play-ground" and his "toys" (qtd. in Colacurcio 7).

> Historians of the toy, and collectors of dolls and toy miniatures, have always had considerable difficulty in separating the doll, the child's toy, from all the other images and statuettes which the sites of excavations yield up in wellnigh industrial quantities and which more often than not had a religious significance: objects of a household or funerary cult, relics from a pilgrimage, etc. (69)

Dolls and puppets hold all the power of religious human effigies—indeed, perhaps *more*, since toys' relationship to trash and improvisational play gives them qualities of motion and freedom not to be found in other effigies.[15] Victoria Nelson describes a historical shift in Western religion's view of matter that coincided with the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment, in which matter was evacuated of spiritual significance. (Max Weber describes a similar "disenchantment of the world" and Adorno and Horkheimer call it the "extirpation of animism" [*DE* 2]). But, Nelson writes, "the repressed religious" continued to be visible, and is visible to this day, "in representations of puppets, robots, cyborgs, and other artificial humans in literature and film" (20). Feathertop, limping into a Puritan settlement, is an ambassador from the world of things, yes, but specifically from the outskirting, vestigial, forested place where Mother Rigby dwells, where material things might still be invested with religious magic and life.

At first, Feathertop enjoys sensational success as he walks along the main street, his magic in full bloom. He cuts a gorgeous figure and is assumed to be a foreign nobleman of great wealth and rank. He proceeds to Master Gookin's household, where he impresses the daughter of the house, Polly, and even inspires her love. However, Feathertop, enchanted trash-toy that he is, cannot survive in a Puritan colony. In the midst of wooing Polly, he looks into a mirror,

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[15] Except, perhaps, for *trashed* effigies: recall the magical moment in *The Marble Faun* when Kenyon discovers a Venus statuette in the dirt, "earthstained", "corroded", headless, broken-armed, which he "at first took to be a shapeless fragment of stone" (328-9).

and there beheld, not the glittering mockery of his outside show, but a picture of the sordid patchwork of his real composition, stripped of all witchcraft. (248)

Feathertop sees, in short, the "wrong side" of his own tapestry. He perceives his own patent (un)madeness—his "patchwork" and "composition"—and so perceives that he is, just as Wigglesworth warned, a mere trashy thing. Hawthorne, then, makes a subtle reply to the Wigglesworthian suggestion that "Thy best enjoyments are but Trash and Toyes": things might not *always* be trash and toys, but yes, things that are Puritanically drained of magic certainly are.

Feathertop hurries back home to Mother Rigby. He tells her, "I've seen myself for the wretched, ragged, empty thing I am! I'll exist no longer!"—echoing exactly Wigglesworth's term "empty thing." Then,

Snatching the pipe from his mouth, he flung it with all his might against the chimney, and at the same instant sank down upon the floor, a medley of straw and tattered garments. (249)

Feathertop's suicide is iconoclastic, read within the Puritan framework. Yet, what popish icon during the Reformation ever possessed the power to see, or to destroy, *itself*?[16] Feathertop's moment of reckoning in the mirror brings him more fully into being as a self—even if it is a puppet-self, not a human-self. After all, he sees himself as trash, but still, he *sees* himself. Feathertop's reckoning sums up Lacan's mirror stage, during which a pre-verbal baby sees himself in the mirror and, in the midst of the subsequent fracture, develops a "primordial" sense

[16] Although puppets are gifted with uncanny grace, they are also cursed with an inbuilt violence. The traditional Punch show, which dates to sixteenth-century Italy, is a good example of the miniaturized rage and pummelings of traditional puppet theater. In addition, puppeteers routinely dismantle their puppets for repair and cleaning, while children, as Baudelaire notes, twist, turn, throw, pry open, and ultimately destroy their toys, propelled by a desire "to get at and *see the soul* of their toys" (203). It is as though puppets, in their inherent, mimetic half-madeness and trashiness, carry within themselves an invitation to be undone.

of "I" (503). Feathertop, Mother Rigby's baby, is caught in a limbo of aborted development: he is aware of himself, but aware more of his lack than of his substance.

Feathertop was better off when he lacked a primordial subjectivity, when he simply glowed with all the secret luster of the thing-without-me. But in the Christian tradition, with self-recognition comes a devastating split—and Fall.[17] However, while Adam and Eve, God's handicrafts, cannot self-destruct, Feathertop the puppet, only a witch's Golem, is able to hurl himself back into the metaphorical mud from which he sprang.[18] Heinrich von Kleist's 1801, "On the Puppet Theater" also connects puppets with the Biblical Fall. Kleist's essay is structured as a conversation about the marionette theater between a narrator and a gentleman ballet dancer of the opera. "It is simply impossible for a human being to reach the grace of the jointed doll," the ballet dancer (perhaps startlingly) claims. Some of his rationale has to do with centers of gravity, relative weightlessness, and so on, but his central explanation for puppets' superior grace is "the disorder" that "self-consciousness imposes on the natural grace of the human being." Human beings, in short, try too hard. And, as in "Feathertop" (and, for that matter, as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), a mirror is the culprit: the narrator relays the "fall" of a certain comely youth who "Day after day . . . stood before a mirror, and one by one his charms fell away" (415). Conversely, the ballet dancer argues, losing the "power of reflection" increases grace:

"We see that in the natural world, as the power of reflection darkens and weakens, grace comes forward, more radiant, more dominating . . . As we look in a concave mirror, the image vanishes

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[17] Take, for instance, Adam and Eve's awakening of self-consciousness, which is also described as a visually fractured experience: "Their eyes are opened, and they realize they are naked and sew fig leaves to cover themselves" (Genesis 3:7).

[18] Mimetic behavior, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, "held the terror that the self would be changed back into the mere nature [or, in Feathertop's case, trash] from which it had extricated itself with unspeakable exertions and which for that reason filled it with unspeakable dread" (qtd. in O'Connor 153).

into infinity and appears again close before us. Just in this way, after self-consciousness has, so to speak, passed through infinity, the quality of grace will reappear; and this reborn quality will appear in the greatest purity, a purity that has either no consciousness or consciousness without limit: either the jointed doll or the god."

"Therefore," I said, a little distracted, "we must eat from the tree of knowledge again and fall back into a state of innocence."

"By all means," he replied, "that is the last chapter in the history of the world." (416)

The "jointed doll" is the made flip side of that which was never made, the great unmade: God. What separates the two is the simple surface of a mirror—but, at the same time, infinity.

A puppet is a made thing that is also *more* than a made thing and so, too, is any artwork. Once more in "Feathertop", Hawthorne makes the metafictional move that connects trashy toys to fiction writing. The narrator stops the story, just after Mother Rigby brings Feathertop to life, to say,

Shall I confess the truth? At its present point of vivification, the scarecrow reminds me of some of the lukewarm and abortive characters, composed of heterogeneous materials, used for the thousandth time, and never worth using, with which romance writers (and myself, no doubt, among the rest) have so over-peopled the world of fiction. (235)

Feathertop is a half-baked composition of recycled debris, just like a trashy romantic novel. (It is tempting to go so far as to suggest that Feathertop's plumed hat resembles a writing quill.) Readers of Hawthorne are familiar with his worn ruts of writerly guilt, a guilt steeped in Yankee work ethic and Puritanical aversion to artworks. After all, as William Perkins, an English Puritan preacher, declared in 1584, "a thing conceived in the mind by the imagination is an idol" (qtd. in Nelson 56). If all imaginative works are idols (and thus "trash and toyes"), then a fictional story about a trashily-hewn puppet is idolatrous twice over. But more than a rumination on Puritanical

guilt about imagination and materiality, “Feathertop” is about the fragility, the contingency, and ultimately, the failure of mimesis in general.

“Feathertop” shows that mimesis is fragile because it is a joint effort between the artwork and the audience. Yrjo Hirn writes that “Strong desire always creates for itself” (289), so that a mimetic copy need not be much more than an approximation of the original in order to be magically affective. This is because audiences, when propelled by desire, finish off images for themselves. When Feathertop parades down the sidewalk, the townspeople see a dazzling vision. One observer even remarks, “If he came to us in rags, nobility would shine through a hole in his elbow” (75)—despite Feathertop’s wooden legs showing through holes in his stockings. The townspeople “Orientalize” Feathertop, in that they project their desires onto what is quite literally a smokescreen. In one sense, the Orientalizing gaze of the townspeople provides a sour moral for the story: that humans are often, if not always, shams. But the more interesting addendum to this moral is that puppets, and indeed all artworks, need an audience to be complete, to live. A puppet is the ideal vehicle for making this point because “Even the most carefully formed puppets will be partial or imperfect, reduced or fragmented versions of a human creature; the puppet is itself, but it also supplements an absence” (Gross 27-8). Absences, lacks, and aporias, are the engines of desire. Sherry Turkle describes the “ELIZA” effect, which is the tendency for humans to project feelings onto toy robots such as Tamagotchis and Furbys, a kind of “human-robot bonding” (293). “The *opacity* of the machine . . . closes the gap between what actually can be done and what we *imagine* can be done” (Turkle qtd. in Nelson 65). In other words, it is precisely what the machine lacks (animal life) that incites imagination and even love.

Mimesis, in inciting humans to act and even to love, manipulates human audiences as though *they* were the puppets. “Pulling you this way and that,” Michael Taussig writes, “mimesis

plays this trick of dancing between the very same and the very different" (129). Representation—whether a puppet, a text, a mirror-image, or a subject constituting itself—always creates a fracture, and a fall. Already on stiff legs and translucent, Feathertop's mimetic performance of humanity must come to a self-inflicted end. So, too, must Hawthorne's artwork—his tale—come to an end, having been suspended and animated only fleetingly by the indulgence of the reader.

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Freedom is at stake in Hawthorne's use of trash and toys as both topics of and models for his writing. Things that are polymorphous have boundless potential. Trash, for instance, could be understood as the mere, useless afterlife of tools. On the other hand, trash is matter without a predestiny, and any student of Calvinism knows just what sort of wild freedom *that* is. Toys, too, are akin to trash in their freedom from predestiny, because of their ties to childhood and play, and because of their mimetic multiformity. (No matter how intricately specific the toy given on a child's birthday, they will almost always repurpose the toy for an unsanctioned use, or else skip the toy altogether and go straight for the boxes and wrapping paper.) Baudelaire writes that "The toy is the child's earliest initiation into art, or rather it is the first concrete example of art" (200), and so perhaps even as adults we expect to experience art with a certain magical hopefulness, an unwrapping of possibility, an invitation to engage.

I return one last time to Richard Chase's criticism that when Hawthorne's imagination fails him, he "trots out a traveling puppet-show . . . as if he were an entertainer on the stage who must improvise in order not to lose his audience." Chase, it turns out, was dead-on in his intuition of poverty in Hawthorne's use of puppets. But he was off the mark in his suggestion that the poverty in question related to Hawthorne's imagination. Hawthorne seemed to be acutely

aware that poverty, shabbiness, tattered holes, and obvious, threadbare hand-madeness provoke the imagination. Toys and trash, which are terminally half-made, unmade, decayed, used, and used-up, are probably not what Adorno had in mind when he extolled the “vulnerability, blemishes, and fallibility” of modern art. Yet, oddly enough, toys precisely fit the bill.

Chapter Two

Polemics and Pattypans

In the previous chapter, I described how instances of mimesis in Hawthorne's writing theorize artwork and artistic making beyond—and in spite of—the subject-object paradigm. The three American domestic advice manuals I examine in this chapter take making and unmaking the world in a different direction, vexing the subject-object dichotomy to carve out new modes of self-fashioning. Lydia Maria Child's *The American Frugal Housewife: Dedicated to Those Who Are Not Ashamed of Economy* (1829) argues that the housewife may transcend the "shame" of domestic economy by making use of the clamoring things around her—bugs, mold, yeast, babies, servants, fires—with the methods, not of a mastering subject, but a cunning *bricoleur*. William Alcott's *The Young House-Keeper* (1838) offers a vegetarian, whole foods diet as the avenue through which the housekeeper may invert gender inequalities that have rendered her a mere "animal," "slave," and "automaton." And Catharine Beecher's *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841) amends the distinction between intellectual and manual labor, which increases the housekeeper's intimacy with things, "elevates" her status, and musters the force of her influence. All three manuals model self-making methods that result, not in subjectivity, but in what Lisa M. Heldke calls "relational personhood" ("Food Politics"). Relational personhood is cobbled and contingent, assembled within a network of people, plants, animals, and inanimate things. The relational personhood modeled by these manuals, then, is inextricable from the

nonhuman things that swarm across their pages. All that food and furniture, all those multiplying pots, pans, cockroaches, and kittens are not inconsequential or "symbolic" bits of trash orbiting around a more important nucleus; they are integral to these manuals' formulas for self-fashioning.

That food, furniture, textiles, animals, and tools make up the most important—not to mention bulkiest—part of a domestic advice manual may seem obvious after even the most cursory glance at their tables of contents. Yet critics neglect those things. Such neglectful criticism yields the sort of blinded, hegemonic history that, according to Adorno, was "written by the victor," histories that do not account for "the waste products and blind spots that have escaped the dialectic" *(MM* 98). And indeed, the structuralist reading habits that have informed the majority of criticism on domestic advice blind us to material specificity. Structuralist reading habits apprehend both texts and the human-made material world as webs of significative links, reducing them to signifiers, symbols, mirrors, or indices that exist only to serve an intangible psycho-cultural reality. Things are amputated from their more dignified, transcendent "meanings," and thrown away. Of things and their critical neglect, Bruno Latour writes,

> Like humble servants, they live on the margins of the social doing most of the work but never allowed to be represented as such. . . . The more radical thinkers want to attract attention to humans in the margins and at the periphery, the less they speak of objects. As if a damning curse had been cast unto things, they remain asleep like the servants of some enchanted castle. Yet, as soon as they are freed from the spell, they start shuddering, stretching, muttering. (*Reassembling* 73)

In the context of nineteenth-century U.S. domestic advice, Latour's servant analogy could not be more apt. Domestic things and domestic workers alike have been humbled by an intellectual tradition that regards the soiled, the sweaty, the ephemeral, the digestible, as beneath contempt. But the three manuals I analyze in this chapter are fundamentally concerned with exposing—and

revising—how materiality is enmeshed in both the degradation and redemption of nonelite persons. These texts make humbled work and matter visible, daring us to take them for granted at the same time they endeavor to remedy the social hierarchies that shamed them in the first place.

I will first examine the body of literary and historical criticism on nineteenth-century United States domestic advice writing, indicating the ways that it has, despite its feminist and culturally-sensitive New Historicist goals, in fact *replicated* the subject-object dichotomy and the degradation of things, women's work, and the texts themselves. I will then turn to what I hope is a recuperative analysis of three manuals by Child, Alcott, and Beecher, reading them as aspirational models of personhood that diagnose and revise the subject-object dichotomy. It is my goal to begin the critical work of setting these thingly and thing-laden texts back into motion, "shuddering, stretching, muttering."

The Purgatory of "Domesticity"

The most problematic and far-reaching way that structuralist reading habits have muffled nineteenth-century United States domestic advice writing is through use of the term "domesticity." Virtually all of the historical and literary criticism on this writing, which budded with Barbara Welter's 1966 essay "The Cult of True Womanhood," uses the term "domesticity" as a tidy shorthand.[19] However, while for Americanists the term trips off the tongue and flows from the keyboard, it is not clear to what, exactly, it refers. Jane Tompkins, in 1985, wrote that "the cult of domesticity" is "a structure of norms . . . widely-held cultural beliefs about the

[19] Welter's "The Cult of True Womanhood" was published the same year, 1966, as the English translation of Lévi-Strauss's structuralist classic *The Savage Mind*.

special properties of childhood and the sanctity of home" (13), and similarly (but not identically), in 1988 Linda K. Kerber wrote, "New studies of the history of domesticity have understood domesticity to be an ideology whose objective correlative is the physical space of the household" (32). Nicole Tonkovich's 1997 "domesticity" is comprised of "gendered behaviors" (xvi), but since female writers could be "constructors of domesticity" without actually doing housework (xii), "behavior" and prescriptive discourse blur together. Lora Romero did not define "domesticity" at all in 1997—though the term appears in the title of her book—but we learn that it "was neither simply conservative nor simply subversive" (vii), that it has "cultural offspring" in the form of novels (1), and that, whatever "domesticity" is, it may be read in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* "as a resistance to a patriarchal educational system designed to prepare young women for the marriage market" (70). Amy Kaplan's 1998 essay, "Manifest Domesticity," following a different avenue away from the term's earlier critical definitions, argued for a "traveling domesticity" (583) that expands, contracts, absorbs, and refers by turns to the household, the nation, and to discourse. "Domesticity" is, in the end, not tidy at all. Each critic has seized the term for herself, making it speak to an array of issues.[20]

But the plastic, and at times massive, character of "domesticity" also has a tendency to mute the material, the specific, and the bizarre. "Domesticity" is an instance of what Bruno Latour labels the "slick substitution" of "replacing the *explanandum* with the *explanans*," in which "a complex, unique, specific, varied, multiple, and original expression is replaced by a simple, banal, homogeneous, multipurpose term under the pretext that the latter may explain the

[20] Heidi de Mare, in her review of the criticism on seventeenth-century Dutch interiors, writes, "'domesticity' is interpreted by most authors as the expression of something else" (13).

former." The effect is that the "phenomena" in question "vanish altogether" (100-1).[21] In the case of domestic advice manuals, not only are the phenomena of the (generically and rhetorically complex, unique, specific, varied, multiple, original) manuals obscured by their supposed explainers—"domesticity" or "separate spheres" or "the cult of true womanhood"—but the phenomena within their pages, too—all those cakes, ottomans, and bedbugs—become static "symbols" or "objective correlatives" of those explainers.

Yet part of the attraction of domestic advice manuals is their elaborations on thingly innovation and abundance. "Domesticity" critics do comment on all those things, but then they quickly recoil into the more decorous and properly "literary" space of semiotics, ideology, and "real" literature. For instance, Gillian Brown quotes at length Beecher's *Treatise* on the arrangements of the kitchen sink area, which includes cloths, kettles, brooms, bellows, and a clock. But all those things, for Brown, represent Beecher's prescription of "habits of system and order," which stand in for the biographical Catherine Beecher herself, who "is" the character Ophelia St. Clare, whose preferences are in turn geared by Brown to be the index of domestic arrangements in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which are, for their part, indices to "political issues" (14). Since kitchens "*display* the systems of political economy with which domestic economy intersects," Brown writes, "the responsible housekeeper observes the *significance* of kitchen things and seeks the best governing system for an orderly *domesticity*" (15, emphases mine). The kitchen, then, is a group of signs. But where did the *Treatise*, as a specific text, go? What happened to Catherine Beecher's rhetorical context and strategies, which include the

[21] In *Ruthless Democracy*, Powell writes about how Americanist critics' enshrinement of so-called "American Renaissance" literature was the product of a "swirling debate" over "just who was, or was not, an 'American'" (11), and as such the criticism did not merely study, but (like the "Domesticity" criticism discussed here), reproduced ideology.

construction of a narratorial persona not to be confused with either her sister Harriet or her biographical self? Where did the bellows and the clock go?

This vanishing act is a symptom of "domesticity's" aggressive metaphysical impulse. And "domesticity" is, properly speaking, a metaphysical term that not only does not account for things but *cannot* account for them. The OED defines "domesticity" (traced to 1690) as "The quality or state of being domestic, domestic character; home or family life; devotion to home; homeliness." Although Americanists deploy "domesticity" to explain advice manuals, the manuals themselves do not use this term: in the three texts I read below, the term "domesticity" never appears, although "domestic" appears on numerous occasions, often within the phrase "domestic economy." "Domestic economy" has an older etymology than "domesticity." The first definition of "economy" in the OED is "Management of a house; management generally," derived from ancient Greek roots meaning "house" and "to control"; "Domestic" dates to the fourteenth century and means simply, of the home—whether it be the house or the country.[22] The difference between "domesticity" and "domestic economy" is the difference between metaphysics and materiality.

"Domesticity" is sanitary. It hovers conceptually above the nitty-gritty of the household, detached from things and doing. "Domestic economy," on the other hand, is a term that navigates *through* the household and its materiality.[23] On the face of it, it would appear that "domesticity"

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[22] Amy Kaplan noted the double meaning of "domestic" in "Manifest Domesticity."

[23] One example of the dubious sanitation—both epistemic and microbial—found in domestic economy: "For a sudden attack of quincy or croup, bathe the neck with bear's grease, and pour it down the throat" (24), Child suggests, while "An ointment made from the common ground-worms, which boys dig to bait fishes, rubbed on the hand, is said to be excellent, when the sinews are drawn up by any disease or accident" (26), and "Nothing is so good to take down swellings, as a soft poultice of stewed white beans" (27).

is aligned with empowered, metaphysical subjectivity, while "domestic economy," dirty and endlessly busy, is entrenched on the side of the debased, embodied "object." But there is a paradox at play here. Since "economy" denotes management, "domestic economy" is entrenched, yes, but also in control. The "quality or state" of "domesticity" is, conversely, doomed to the spectral purgatory of one of Latour's explainers, endlessly suspended above the "being" which it describes. This means, first, that "domesticity" readings of texts may actually produce that sense of strandedness—the sense of women held "hostage" (Welter 151) like flies in "the enclosed web of domesticity" (Kelley xii)—that they purport only to investigate.[24] More important to my argument, things—whether advice manuals or cook stoves—can never, in a "domesticity" reading, be at the origin of action. "Domesticity's" things are suggestive of perennial bridesmaids: always an example, never the cause. If that is the case, then all of the power of such readings belongs to critics and their explanatory apparatuses, while texts and things, to paraphrase Jack Goody, are "caught in a structural maze," prisoners of classificatory schemata (24).

Neither Mirrors nor Incitements

[24] In a similar vein, Linda K. Kerber describes how "separate spheres" was a trope that took on a life of its own: "Exploring the traditions of histrical discourse, historians found that notions of women's sphere permeated the language; they in turn used the metaphor in their own descriptions. Thus, the relationship between the name—sphere—and the perception of what it named was reciprocal: widespread usage in the nineteenth century directed the choices made by twentieth-century historians about what to study and how to tell the stories that they reconstructed" (10-11). But while the term "sphere" is indeed prevalent in nineteenth-century writing, "domesticity" is not.

Critical use of the term "domesticity" illustrates the three-layered problem of structuralist reading habits generally when they are applied to domestic advice manuals: they negate material specificity, they replicate the subject-object dichotomy, and they objectify texts by treating them as "cultural artifacts."

The first layer of the problem is that structuralist reading habits negate material specificity, because structuralism treats things as "symbols" and "signs" of intangible, psycho-cultural truths, called "structures." Claude Lévi-Strauss writes,

> Social anthropology does not confine itself to a part of the domain of ethnology; it does not separate material culture and spiritual culture. . . . Men communicate by means of symbols and signs. For anthropology, which is a conversation of man with man, all things are symbol and sign which act as intermediaries between two subjects (*Structural* 11)

Lévi-Strauss is clear that the "domain" of the material should not be neglected.[25] Yet the role of material things in his picture is strictly limited: they are "symbols and signs" that correspond to abstracts like gods and social rules. In conversations between men, whether the conversation is communication generally or the practice of anthropology specifically, things have no voice of their own. They are servants, carrying and transferring the burden of a metaphysical social that always precedes them. Thus, Christopher Tilley writes, structuralism "totally dissolves and dispenses with . . . concrete social forms . . . Any specificity is denied" (55). Things are demoted, in the role of "symbol and sign," to mirrors of a more significant "conversation" that is being carried on elsewhere.

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[25] Latour, pressing Lévi-Strauss's suggestion that material and spiritual culture ought not be separated even further, argues that there is no separate, homogeneous layer that comprises "material culture" (*Reassembling* 84).

Structuralist readings of domestic advice, then, are committed to identifying "conversations" that lie behind texts; the texts themselves, and the things in their pages—no matter how detailed or innovative—are merely emanations of that metaphysical conversation. For example, Tonkovich lists Beecher's and Hale's "feather beds, mahogany furniture, kitchen crockery, flower and vegetable gardens, and domestic pets" (97-8) with relish, but her analysis cannot do anything but name those things, since "material goods" are, in her analysis, "outward signifiers of social class" (109). And Sklar begins her chapter on Beecher's *Treatise* with an alluring summary of the text's technological innovations, including "the beginning of household automation" (151), but proceeds to confine her chapter to the abstract categories of gender, economics, and "domesticity," which evidently spring, not from Beecher's innovations, but from a social elsewhere. Similarly, Tompkins describes the "imperialist drive behind the encyclopedism and determined practicality" of Beecher's *The American Woman's Home* (144). Books or lists of kitchen utensils do not give impetus to (let alone cause) that behind-the-scenes "imperialist drive"; they are only its effects. In such analyses, thingly specificity is swept under the rug, the embarrassing residue of more important conversations.

Therefore, structuralist readings cannot account for the instances when things, like bad servants, butt into the conversation. For instance, Lori Merish writes that in "numerous antebellum domestic manuals . . . tasteful domestic objects were frequently described as 'spiritualizing,' 'civilizing,' and 'humanizing' the self" (15). Merish's borrowed verbs hint that "domestic objects" act upon "the self" in multiple ways. Yet, despite this—as well as her tantalizing mention of "domestic animism" (143)—Merish's argument limits the role of "objects" to inert receptacles for "values" (89) and "the signs and symbols of a culture" (14). Lora Romero, like Merish, intuits that "the self" is somehow related to things but she, also like

Merish, shies away from stating that things make selves. Romero writes that in *Treatise*, Beecher describes how

> Corsets and other 'monstrous fashions' . . . impede the natural growth and development of the body and 'bring distortion and disease'—literally, to the female body but, metaphorically, to the female self. (23)

Romero's leap from the "literal" body to the "metaphorical" self is a leap away from gross matter to the demure safety of structuralist reading habits. In fact, Beecher's concern about corsets, if she is taken at her word, reveal something more interesting than yet another "literary" metaphor. Beecher writes,

> The girding of tight dresses operates . . . on the muscles of the body. If an article, like corsets, is made to hold up the body, then those muscles, which are designed for this purpose are released from duty, and grow weak. (116)

Beecher pinpoints an instance in which an inanimate thing shapes the human body, human behavior, and which even, in taking over the "duty" of human tissue, slides into its place. The corset insinuates itself into the role of almost-subject: it is able to "release" the human body from bondage in what could be described as a master-slave dialectic played out on the stage of a human physique. If there is a "female self" lost here, it is lost not to Romero's "patriarchal culture" (23), but to the machinations of that sinister corset. *Treatise*'s two pages on corsets (which ballooned to eight pages and an innovative design for a corset alternative in her 1869 *The American Woman's Home*), are only one instance of Beecher's direct engagement with the behavior of things. Nineteenth-century U.S. domestic advice is largely about things: how to use them, how to make them, how to arrange them, how to consume them. But structuralist readings

glide over the material specificity of things—their practical functions, their physical constraints, the material they are made of, the environment and labor from which they emerged, how they shape human bodies, behavior, and thought—because "symbols and signs" are fated to much simpler roles.

The second layer of the problem with applying structuralist reading habits to domestic advice texts is that such habits replicate the subject-object dichotomy. This dichotomy always carries within it a certain violence (recall my discussion in the previous chapter on how reason disables mimesis by making incisions between subjects and objects), coupled with a willful deafness to the voices of so-called "objects." Lévi-Strauss writes that anthropology

> is the daughter of [colonialism's] era of violence; its capacity to assess more objectively the facts pertaining to the human condition reflects, on the epistemological level, a state of affairs in which one part of humanity treated the others as an object . . . Exotic cultures, treated by us as mere things, could be studied, accordingly, as things. ("Anthropology" 26)

Yet ironically, Tilley points out, Lévi-Strauss "embraces precisely this [colonial, objectifying] epistemology" (54). Structuralism's power imbalance between subject and object is made more potent still by a metaphysical, nonhistorical subject. Paul Ricoeur, in his critique of Lévi-Strauss, argues that structuralism is not only "antiphenomenological," but it "establishes between the observer and the system a relationship which is itself nonhistorical" (32-34). The nonhistorical subject is privileged to be without an ephemeral body, a master of eternal truths. New Historicist and Feminist scholarship, then, perches uncomfortably upon structuralism's subject-object basis. Although such scholarship aims to make heard the voices of the abjected and embodied, it is untenable to critique, say, patriarchy, using structuralism's violent subject-object dichotomy as the unexamined starting point.

This untenability is particularly intense in the case of domestic advice writing. Although Americanist criticism has absorbed a wide variety of poststructuralist theories, structuralist critique has been reserved for these manuals, precisely because it is such a perfect fit: these texts have *already* been abjected and objectified by a philosophical tradition that turns up its nose at materiality and women's work.[26] For instance, Welter's "The Cult of True Womanhood" sets out to critique a subject-object imbalance evidenced in nineteenth-century U.S. texts, in which "men were the movers, the doers, the actors. Women were the passive, submissive responders" (159). But at the same time, Welter's tart rhetoric pokes fun not only at the texts she analyzes, but at the women's work and materiality described in those texts:

> In the home women were not only the highest adornment of civilization, but they were supposed to keep busy at morally uplifting tasks. Fortunately most of housework . . . could be regarded as uplifting. *Godey's* went so far as to suggest coyly, in 'Learning vs. Housewifery,' that the two were complementary, not opposed: chemistry could be utilized in cooking, geometry in dividing cloth, and phrenology in discovering talent in children. (164-5)

Welter's disdain for "housewifery" is obvious. We are meant to assume that cooking ranks lower than chemistry, that cutting cloth is but a pitiful imitation of true geometry. Ricoeur writes that to structuralism's nonhistorical subject, "Understanding is not seen . . . as the recovery of meaning" because "there is no historicity to the relation of understanding" (33). That *Godey's* may have had, historically speaking, educational—not oppressive—meanings is not considered by Welter, because inherent in her subject stance are assumptions about the timeless value of

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[26] Henry Louis Gates has described how, similarly, "Black art came to be seen as a cultural artifact (the product of unique historical forces)" (29); things that are thought "find their ultimate meaning and significance somewhere else, outside the texts at hand" (40). Textual objectification is also particularly intense, as many critics have pointed out, in case of slave narratives, a genre similarly rendered "artifact" by a combination of structuralist reading habits and social biases.

different kinds of work.[27] In making these assumptions, Welter not only does violence to women's work and the things (food, cloth, children's bodies) entangled with that work, but she does violence to the texts' meanings as well.

This leads to the third layer of the problem with applying structuralist reading habits to domestic advice manuals: such habits decenter texts by objectifying them as "cultural artifacts."[28] When domestic manuals are objectified as "artifacts," they are regarded as mute mirrors of a purported historical past.[29] Welter, for instance, writes that "evidence on the importance of nursing skills to every female is found in . . . books of advice" (164); "books of advice" are understood to be flawless reflections of historical beliefs. Kaplan, in another example, argues that "the internal logic of domesticity relies on, abets, and reproduces the contradictions of nationalist expansion in the 1840s and 1850s" (584); prescriptive writing here is a mirror that "relies on" historical practices and beliefs, and also an instrument that "abets" still more historical behavior. Both Welter and Kaplan assume that domestic advice was not only taken to heart by its readers, but that it was put into practice, and this practice produced the ends that the manuals project. Books as specific material, rhetorical things dissolve into a backdrop of

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[27] I am, of course, not the first one to comment on how Welter's historical moment—1966 and the "first wave" feminists—clearly informs her stance and agenda. Nancy Cott: "The intrusion of mid-twentieth-century assumptions entails a particular distortion of this subject because women of the past centuries rarely perceived, as many modern feminists do, an antithesis between women's obligations in the domestic realm and their general progress" (199).

[28] I borrow the term "decenter" from David Goslee, who writes, "Critics committed to some extraliterary agenda typically decenter a text by superimposing an impersonal ideology upon it" (*Tennyson's Characters* xvi).

[29] Hawthorne, in the "Preface" to *The House of the Seven Gables*, describes the cool cruelty of the violent scholar/subject: "The Author has considered it hardly worth his while . . . to relentlessly impale the story with its moral, as with an iron rod—or rather, as by sticking a pin through a butterfly—thus at once depriving it of its life, and causing it to stiffen in an ungainly and unnatural attitude" (4).

"actual" history whose engines *and* effects are invisible "structures" like "domesticity" and "expansionism."

But invoking advice manuals as historical evidence is a habit built on shaky methodological ground. Jay Mechling points out that advice manuals are understood by historians to either reinforce already-learned behavior or "to change prevalent practice" (both positions are taken by Kaplan above). Either stance, however, is based upon "a hypothesized"—and underexamined— "relationship between document and practice" (46). In fact, Mechling concludes, since domestic behavior (in his examples, child rearing) is learned through "social *interaction*" (48), manuals "neither cause nor reflect . . . behavior" (51), nor are they "evidence of . . . values in a culture" (51). Grace Lees-Maffei, writing about British domestic advice, echoes, "instructional literature does not supply historical information about actual consumption; rather, it exists as a group of ideals that we cannot assume are followed" (190). Both Mechling and Lees-Maffei, in clarifying the distinction between writing and historical "evidence," begin to carve out a poststructuralist space for advice manuals. But Nineteenth-century U.S. "domesticity" critics have been limited to a structuralist rubric in which manuals merely provide "symbols and signs" of, and provocations for, historical behavior and beliefs. The result is that antebellum advice texts, like the things within their pages, have been transfixed into untarnished, tongue-tied mirrors of "culture."

Aspirational Models of Self-fashioning

Structuralist readings of nineteenth-century U.S. domestic advice manuals, because they are limited to a rubric that negates material specificity, replicates the subject-object dichotomy,

and objectifies texts by regarding them as "cultural artifacts," also limit the ways that these texts may be approached and what they are able to say. But if domestic advice manuals are neither mirrors nor incitements of "structures," values, beliefs, or a purported historical past, then what are they?

Domestic advice manuals are aspirational models of self-fashioning. First, models: In my introductory chapter, I argue that taking things seriously entails, in reading literature, also taking the thingliness of texts seriously, and this means approaching them not as "artifacts" but as dynamic "models of reality" (Gates 40). Domestic advice is especially model-like in that, using imperative grammar, polemical rhetoric, and even diagrams, it presents microcosms that account for every last teaspoon.[30] Second, aspirational: Although many Americanists contend that nineteenth-century domestic advice "codified" and reproduced a middle class (Tonkovich 92), Lees-Maffei argues that

> Accounts of social behavior published in advice books are aimed . . . not at the members of the social group described, but at a readership aspiring to join the group. Established members of the middle class would not typically have used advice literature, gathering a social education through familial channels instead. (190)

[30] The prevalence of polemical rhetoric is perhaps one reason critics have overlooked domestic advice's materiality. Welter's critique of *Frugal*, for instance, seems to be wholly derived from the manual's final chapter, "Hints to Persons of Moderate Fortune," and much of the criticism on Catherine Beecher is limited to analysis of her polemical dictates. Polemical passages are seductive to critics because they contain ripe, low-hanging ideological statements—emphatically and sweepingly written—that almost beg to be plucked for structuralist interpretation. However, it is a mistake to take such passages as explanations for the totality of a text's message. Latour points out that such passages—he calls them "panoramas"—are only part of the whole picture. "What is so powerful in those contraptions," he writes, "is that they nicely solve the question of staging the totality, of ordering the ups and downs, of nesting 'micro', 'meso', and 'macro' into one another"; panoramas give "the impression of complete control over what is being surveyed." But however tidily a panoramic passage might seem to button up a text's "meaning," they are illusions, and it is in fact their very "excess of coherence" that "gives the illusion away" (188).

Advice manuals, in other words, fill a perceived gap when "familial channels" are judged inadequate, providing models of ways of doing that transcend face-to-face modes of knowledge acquisition. They are fantasies of new possibilities of being and doing. In the three manuals below, the sense of aspiration is not class aspiration per se. Although status is of central importance to these writers, it is difficult to categorize Alcott's proto-vegan diet, Child's trash recycling, and Beecher's bid for fewer servants and looser corsets, as bourgeois concerns. And third, self-fashioning: Domestic advice implicitly and explicitly addresses the question of personhood. This is because it is largely about work, and in particular a type of work associated with the body, women, debased and fleeting forms of materiality, mindless repetition, and captivity to tradition. Simply by virtue of being about domestic work, these texts force readers to apprehend persons who are, under normal circumstances, "virtually invisible" (Heldke 207). Additionally, domestic work challenges definitions of personhood because it muddles the distinction between self and Other. In domestic work, Heldke writes, "subjects and objects" "necessarily meet, touch, and overlap" (206), in day-to-day encounters of hands, eardrums, and nostrils with cows, carrots, and carpets.

In the specific case of antebellum texts, once explanations like "domesticity" are set aside, two additional qualities move to the fore: first, the richness and vitality of the thing-worlds they describe and, second, their concern with social status. Housewives, according to Child, have been "shamed"; housekeepers, Alcott writes, are treated as "slaves" and "automatons"; domestic labor, Beecher laments, has been rendered "degrading." These two overriding features—abundant thingliness and a concern with social status—hint at, as Deane W. Curtin writes, "what might have been said about personhood if our relations to marginalized aspects of life had been

taken seriously" (4). What urgent questions do these text-models formulate about a personhood that lies precisely at the joint of matter, work, and femaleness?

"Inanimate Concerns"

Lydia Maria Child's *The American Frugal Housewife: Dedicated to Those Who Are Not Ashamed of Economy* (1829) spotlights the social status of the housewife in its very title: "economy" may engender her shame but she will, with the help of the manual, learn to transcend it. How does "economy" generate shame, and how can that shame be circumvented with frugality? How is the housewife implicated in that transposition of shame and economy? And what is "American" about all of this?

The Frugal Housewife's definition of "true economy" is entrenched in materiality. *Frugal* has been described as a "traditional" guide to household management (Sklar 166) that promotes "domesticity" (Ryan 22), "the 'separate spheres' message" and "the 'cult of True Womanhood'" (Strasser 182), and which "[prescribes] a combination of piety and knowledge—the kind of knowledge found in a true woman's education, 'a thorough religious *useful* education'" (Welter 168). But these labels obscure that it is things, not abstract ideologies, that make an immediate appearance onstage as pivotal actors: "The true economy of housekeeping," *Frugal* begins, "is simply the art of gathering up all the fragments, so that nothing be lost. I mean fragments of *time*, as well as *materials*" (3). "True economy" is not about keeping account-ledgers or stockpiling cash, and it has even less to do with "piety" or "domesticity."[31] Instead, Child's "true economy"

[31] When Child writes, "No false pride, or foolish ambition to appear as well as others, should ever induce a person to live one cent beyond the income of which he is certain" (4), and, "They who never reserve a cent of their income, with which to meet any unforeseen calamity, 'pay too

means, in the precise etymological sense of "domestic economy"—a term that, as I argued above, navigates through the household's materiality—cobbling together scraps and residue, and making them useful again.

Frugal contrasts this scrappy "true economy" with a separate—yet equally material—"extravagant" economy. An erratic world economy has produced inflation and marketplace incommensurability so that "Luxuries are cheaper now than necessaries were a few years since." So, although the "effects of this depression must of course be felt by all grades of society," frivolous ladies persist in parading about "as various in their decorations as the insects, the birds and the shells." Child's disapproval of feminine adornment is not, however, mere puritanical sourness; her concern lies in the dangerous imbalance between humans and commodities, in which "a man's cloth is of more consequence than his character" (108-9).[32] What is more, such lopsided extravagance is the direct result of mismanaged female education:

> The fact is, our girls have no *home education*. When quite young, they are sent to schools where no feminine employments, no domestic habits, can be learned . . . . Thus prepared, they enter upon matrimony. . . . The bride is awakened from her delightful dream, in which carpets, vases, sofas, white gloves, and pearl earrings, are oddly jumbled up with her lover's looks and promises. Perhaps she would be surprised if she knew exactly how *much* of the fascination of being engaged was owing to the aforesaid inanimate concern. (96)

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dear for the whistle' whatever temporary benefits they may derive from society" (4-5), she sounds precisely like the Benjamin Franklin of *The Way to Wealth*, and indeed, she cites Franklin early on. Child, like Franklin, turns her nose up at superfluities that ape the wealthy, and she shares with Franklin the puritanical notion that wealth means having money in the bank, not spending it. But Child's "good economy" is not about money, exactly. True, money necessarily hovers in the background, with Child's reminders of the threat of the financial ruin of husbands "in this land of precarious fortunes" (95), and her pleas for housewives to keep account books (4).

[32] Child here anticipates Emerson's dismay that "Things are in the saddle, And ride mankind," and Thoreau's disgust at seeing young men "whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of . . . [the young men] have got to live a man's life, pushing all these things before them" (2). Child, like Emerson and Thoreau, calls for a reassessment of human relations with manufactured things.

This disillusioned bride dramatically misreads things, confusing the nonhuman with the human. Her "fascinated" misstep is strikingly similar to Marx's description of "commodities." According to Marx, commodities are things that transcend mere "use-value" and "sensuousness," and "appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own" (163-5). But while Marx's delusion (he calls it the "fetishism of the commodity") obscures human labor and relationships, The dreamy commodities that Child satirizes obscure the fact that domestic life means being enmeshed with far coarser things than vases and pearls.

Child does, then, set up a kind of "separate spheres" paradigm, but it is not a gendered opposition between the "public" and "private." It is a choice between two types of material economies.[33] The first choice is one in which housewives are helpless consumers, victims to bad educations and the siren songs of commodities ("Do not," Child admonishes, "let the beauty of this thing, and the cheapness of that, tempt you" [5]). The second choice is to remedy not only familial unhappiness but national economic woes by turning away from that "extravagant" economy:

> [Americans] never shall be prosperous till we make pride and vanity yield to the dictates of honesty and prudence. We never shall be free from embarrassment until we cease to be ashamed of industry and economy. Let women do their share towards reformation—Let their fathers and husbands see them happy without finery . . . . Let them prove, by the exertion of ingenuity and economy, that neatness, good taste, and gentility, are attainable without great expense. (6)

[33] *Frugal*'s rejection of the external marketplace of commodities places it in opposition to assessments of "the feminization of consumption" (Merish 2) and the "civilizing mission" of the commodity (McClintock 220). Rejecting the capitalist marketplace is also a classic trope of settler colonialism, which I discuss in my chapter "America the Crime Scene."

Even though, that is, "extravagance" and "finery" result in national "embarrassment," "industry and economy" point the way to "reformation" and redemption, and the choice lies in the housewife's hands.

Having framed the problem of economy thus, *Frugal*'s chapters of "odd scraps," remedies, and recipes provide the housewife with a remedial education in exerting "ingenuity and economy" in her engagement with things. Advice is not organized by principles, arriving instead in a pastiche of mismatched epistemes, varying measurements—pints and pounds take their place beside quantities "as big as a hen's egg"—and uncertain timing. Child's form and content both, navigating through and stitching together, employ the art of *bricolage*. Michel de Certeau defines *bricolage* as "makeshifts" that possess an "artisan-like inventiveness" (*Practice* xvi, vviii). He borrows the term from Lévi-Strauss, who writes,

> In its old sense the verb "bricoler" applied to ball games and billiards, to hunting, shooting and riding. It was however always used with reference to some extraneous movement: a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving from its direct course to avoid an obstacle. And in our own time the "bricoleur" is still someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman. (*The Savage Mind* 16-17)

There is a sportive sense to *bricolage*, as well as an implication that the *bricoleur* responds to the unpredictability of the nonhuman—balls, horses, dogs—whose movements are "extraneous" to a more choreographed economy of action.[34]

And indeed, nonhuman things in *Frugal* are active, unruly, and even threatening. Cockroaches, mold, cake, bed-bugs, yeast, vegetables, fires, weeping wounds, "lively emptings" (73)—a dough leavener—and even pork bobbing in barrels and beef scum rising in pots, are in

[34] Lévi-Strauss's definition of the bricoleur is offered in contradistinction to the engineer: "The engineer is always trying to make his way out of and go beyond the constraints imposed by a particular state of civilization while the 'bricoleur' by inclination or necessity always remains within them" (*Savage* 22).

constant motion. Child's anthropomorphic language emphasizes their oftentimes villainous agency: fires are "furious" (44); "There is more deception in [goose meat] than in any other kind of poultry" (53), cucumbers, like ill-chosen companions, have an "unhealthy influence" (18), and not only are red ants ominous, but so are the bottles that contained ant poison, which "should be broken, and buried" (21). These nonhuman things, unlike the vases and pearls of the bride's daydreams, are not "objects"; in fact, in all their commotion and drive they threaten to make the unsuspecting housekeeper *their* object. Things also interact with each other, lest we get the wrong idea and suppose they only exist to dialogue with humans. "Steel is injured by lying in woolens" (14), for instance; it is brooms—not the human gestures of sweeping—that wear carpets down (11); and "If you find your pickles soft and insipid, it is owing to the weakness of the vinegar" (85).

But *Frugal*'s advice does not, like Catharine Beecher's later manuals, provide scientific principles under which to consolidate and master this seething domestic chaos. Rather, *Frugal* teaches the housewife to monitor and respond to—but never quite subdue—things. Things have their own needs, predilections, caprices, and agendas. It is "economical" to "See that the vegetables are neither sprouting *nor* decaying: if they are so, remove them to a drier place," and "Examine preserves, to see that they are not contracting mould; and your pickles, to see that they are not growing soft and tasteless"; it is wise to save bread crusts for recycling into puddings and brewis, but "do not let crusts accumulate in such quantities that they cannot be used"; "Indian meal and rye meal are in danger of fermenting," Cockroaches "have an aversion to turpentine", and candle tallow "will not run" if the wicks are dipped in lime-water and saltpetre (8-10). Machines shape-shift into animals in statements such as, "When there is reason to apprehend extreme cold, do not forget to throw a rug or horse-blanket over your pump" (16). Time is

ordered not by the clock, but by the needs of meat: "If you have to keep [a kidney] over night, it should be looked to the last thing when you go to bed" (47). If *Frugal*'s housewife does not succeed in mastering things, she at least strikes a balance in which she cooperates with things to produce her desired results. "If the meat be very lean, put in a piece of butter" (56); "If you have fear that poultry may become musty before you want to cook it, skin an onion, and put it in" (57); "some pumpkins require more sweetening than others" (67); "if the oven is not ready, move the pans to a cooler spot" (77). Thus, the manual is, even in terms of its layout, disorganized. For every misbehaving thing, there is another way to improvise a response.

In keeping with Lévi-Strauss's *bricoleur*, *Frugal*'s housekeeper, "rebounding" and "swerving," anticipates, dodges, outsmarts, and compromises with the things in her house. In the bricolaged household, there are no subjects and objects because no one actor is in a position of complete mastery. Elaine Scarry writes that "in all forms of work the worker mixes himself with and eventually becomes inseparable from the materials of his labor" (83), and Heldke argues that this is particularly true in the case of foodmaking:

> foodmaking activities can challenge the sharp subject/object dichotomy . . . . Preparing food encourages us to blur the separation between ourselves and our food, even as we roll up our sleeves and stick our hands in the dough" because foodmaking entails an apprehension of the self in relation to the Other "in which [one assumes] neither total separateness from the ingredients . . . nor complete control over them. (217)

The housewife's immersion in the base materiality of the house signals her negation of subject-object dichotomies that would serve as the engine of her mastery. There is even the creeping suspicion that the house belongs more to fluttering moths and seeping mold than to the housekeeper; she does not possess dominion so much as she finds herself embroiled. De Certeau argues that the art of *bricolage* is tactical, in that it improvises through, rather than exerts will over, a space not entirely its own. He distinguishes between "tactics" and "strategies" thus:

I call a "strategy" the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power can be isolated from an "environment." A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* . . . and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it. . . . Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. . . . I call a "tactic," on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutional localization, nor thus on a border-line distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety. (*Practice* xix)

"Tactics" take place in the Other's territory, sly, fragmented, camouflage, insinuating, the operations of a guerilla force. "Tactics" are the peculiar province of the *bricoleur*.

Not only does Child's *bricoleur* operate tactically (as opposed to strategically) within the home; she also operates tactically in her relationship to the outer economy. She does not, however, operate in direct opposition to it (as "separate spheres" critics would have it), but rather using "devious" lateral strategies such as recycling and reselling (that call to mind the extra-economic history of toys described in the previous chapter).[35] "Save vials and bottles," Child writes; "Apothecaries and grocers will give something for them" (14); "it is well to keep white rags separate from colored ones, and cotton separate from woollen; they bring a higher price" (16). Child's *bricoleur* also outsmarts the marketplace by growing her own medicinal and culinary herbs, since "apothecaries make very great profit upon them" (36). And just as Lévi-Strauss's definition of *bricolage* includes an engagement with the "extraneous," *Frugal* advocates recycling. "Patchwork is good economy," Child writes.

It is indeed a foolish waste of time to tear cloth into bits for the sake of arranging it anew in fantastic figures; but a large family may be kept out of idleness, and a few shillings saved, by thus using scraps of gowns, curtains, &c. (3)

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[35] The spatiality described in de Certeau's definition of tactics and strategies contrasts with the spatiality of "separate spheres" analyses, which describe a domestic "sphere" that operates as a foil to a public "sphere," and in which the housewife reigns supreme. In such analyses, both the domestic and the public "spheres" constitute "propers."

Similarly, “The purple paper, which comes on loaf sugar, boiled in cider, or vinegar, with a small bit of alum” will produce a fine purple dye for textiles (39), and children should be taught “to save everything, —not for their *own* use, for that would make them selfish—but for *some* use” (6). For this suggestion Child provides an anecdote of a family in which “the older children would, of their own accord, put away the paper and twine [from a parcel] neatly, instead of throwing them in the fire, or tearing them to pieces. If the little ones wanted a piece of twine to play scratch-cradle, or spin a top, there it was, in readiness” (7). Child’s definition of “good economy” entails embracing “the useless and the neglected”, “displaced matter”: trash (Stallabrass 406, 408). However, since Child advocates patching together bits and scraps into new textiles or toys, it does not stay trash for long; it is scooped up, made once again useful, put back into place, and so (re)absorbed into the internal economy of the house. Child’s recycled matter is thus a challenge to the capitalist market. Not only does it (presumably) prevent household funds from entering the marketplace, but since trash is also “the direct product of ‘consumption’” (Stallabrass 406), recycling forecloses capitalism’s production-consumption loop. Stallabrass writes that “only in rich capitalist societies” is trash—“the material from which broken commodities is made”—“not endlessly used, bricolaged into intricate and ingenious devices, but is simply thrown away” (407). When Child’s housewife rejects luxurious commodities and waste to bricolage “economy” in all its shame and base materiality, she rejects the sanctioned relationship with things found in a “rich capitalist society.”[36]

[36] When Child’s housekeeper traffics in trash she also, according to Stallabrass, “reveals the lie of the consumer object” by “unmasking the symbolic pose of the commodity as a sham” (417). In fact, since, as Stallabrass points out, bricolaged trash stands in opposition to “rich capitalist societies,” there is a third way to interpret the difference between *bricolage* and other modes of

So, Bricolage emerges as simultaneously a mode of world-making and a mode of self-making.[37] Relationships with materiality, *Frugal* shows, are central to modes of doing but also to modes of being. "Economy," understood as sinking elbow-deep into materiality and its demands, asks that the housewife abandon her old relationship with things and enter into a new way of being in which the pieces of her self—her desires, her hands—merge with their milieu. De Certeau defines a person as "a locus in which an incoherent . . . plurality" of "relational determinations interact" (*Practice* xi), Dick Hebdige has described how bricolage is a means of assembling identity by appropriating and subverting the signs and materials of a dominant culture, and Wendy Knepper argues that *bricolage*, as a processual mode, is "a model for articulating identity" (71) within a dominant culture. The process of what we might call self-bricolage develops, in the case of *Frugal*, as the housewife engages the Other, recycles trash, and outsmarts the dominant culture in the form of the "extravagant" outer economy.

What is more, self-bricolage, Françoise Vergès argues, emerges within a context of "loss." Bricolage is not just "a creation in a situation of domination and conflict"; it is a practice that emerges from a void. "It is not about roots," he writes,

> but about loss . . . at heart, it is a practice and ethics of borrowing and accepting to be transformed, affected by the other. (qtd. in Knepper 71)

Bricolage sinks a floundering self into the Other, and the result is a resubstantiated but contingent self. Child describes the situation of "loss" thus: "The information conveyed is of a

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making, anchored not, like Lévi-Strauss's distinction between *bricoleur* and engineer, in a matter-metaphysics binarism, but economics.

[37] Jacques Derrida argues that, in the absence of a metaphysical beyond from which discursive meaning might emanate, we are all bricoleurs (285).

common kind; but it is such as the majority of young housekeepers do not possess" (6).[38] The lost transmission of knowledge is the result of that mismanaged female education that had girls learning to play the piano instead of to bake bread. *Frugal*'s (self)-bricolage is offered as a stop-gap for that void, for that loss of face-to-face transmission of household knowledge, and it replaces the dictates of "Granny" with a clamoring *heteroglossia* of advice: "I have been told" (9); "Dairy-women say" (15); "The Indians say"; "it is said" (19); "old nurses" (29) suggest; but "I never saw" (34); "some very experienced epicures and cooks, think" (42); and "A gentleman in Missouri advertises that he had an inveterate cancer upon his nose cured by a strong potash" (26). *Frugal*'s advice, then, posits a particularly American self, her lost domestic know-how patched back together in an epistemic quilt.

In the process of cobbling together a domestic economy with "odd scraps" of knowledge, materials, and time, Child's housewife cobbles a personhood that is insulated from the "embarrassment" and caprices of the American market economy. Although her materials may be limited to whatever is on hand, through her invention and motions she stretches open a space of freedom. *Frugal* thus offers a model in which personhood hinges on accepting and cooperating with the Other, and the shame of "economy" is erased by a new world and a new self bricolaged into being.

Housewives on the Hoof

[38] Bricolage then emerges in the same information vacuum from which, according to Jay Mechling, all advice discourse comes.

William Andrus Alcott, a white, male teacher and physician from New England, hardly seems a candidate for New Historicist-style resuscitations. For example, his advice writing of the 1830s is guilty, according to Mary P. Ryan, of "retain[ing] a patriarchal organization of labor" (26), and Lora Romero invokes him as a representative of "patriarchal government" (79). Such assessments, however, are at odds with Alcott's *The Young House-Keeper, Or, Thoughts on Food and Cookery*, published in Boston in 1838. In this manual, he advises that boys learn how to do "every kind of housework" including "washing and baking" (328), and that doing the laundry is really a better fit for men than women, because of "their superior strength" (330). Alcott's radical proposals slip by unnoticed by critics focused on "domesticity" because they are embedded in a text that is light on polemical statements and heavy on sentences such as, "The raspberry, like the strawberry, is in a state of absolute perfection only a very short time" (228). *The Young House-keeper*, that is, is a manual specifically and minutely about a special category of things: food. So, while the biographical Alcott would seem to be in a position of high status, his text—with its lowly, thingly topic, as ephemeral as those raspberries on the cusp of decay—has been overlooked.

In fact, the problem of the status of food and its makers is precisely where Alcott positions his manual. "The cultivator of the soil and the keeper of the house," he writes, "are considered as mere drudges, akin to the domestic animals of which they have the charge" (51). Those engaged in food production, he argues, are debased and bestialized by social hierarchies that scorn embodied labor and ephemeral products of labor. But at stake in writing off food, Curtin suggests, is not only the status of food producers, but human personhood generally:

> In marginalizing the lives of women, manual laborers, and persons of color (those who have been defined as responsible for food), dominant persons also marginalize the aspects of their

own lives that are 'ordinary' and 'bodily.' Attention to the experiences of marginalized persons reveals those aspects of *all* persons that have been marginalized. (4)

Paying attention to food, as Alcott also indicates, means attending to "the physical improvement of the community" (Alcott 17) as well as to all aspects of individual persons. "The object of all food," he writes, "is to nourish, and sustain, and render useful and happy the whole man—compounded as he is of body, mind and heart" (90). And paying *critical* attention to food and food-laden texts means bringing into focus the margins of textual pictures made grainy by critical overemphasis of "domesticity," "patriarchy," and all their structural cousins.

Food—at least as a material thing—has traditionally been relegated to the critical compost heap. Older ways of examining food treated it as yet another "artifact" standing in for more important, metaphysical truths. Mary Douglas, for instance, writes in "Deciphering a Meal" that the rules that "categorize" foods "correspond in form to the patterns of rules governing human relations" (71), and Lévi-Strauss writes in "The Culinary Triangle" that "the cooking of a society is a language in which it unconsciously translates its structure—or else resigns itself, still unconsciously, to revealing its contradictions" (in *Food and Culture* 43). The problem with food is, first, its mutability—since a food such as, say, rice, can take on a plethora of culinary incarnations, disguising its materiality as "cultural artifact"—and second, it slips from view even more easily than other everyday things since it literally slips down our throats. Food is a thing, that is, that masquerades as the most obliging of "objects." "We do not see our own food," Roland Barthes writes, "or, worse, we assume that it is insignificant. Even—or perhaps especially—to the scholar, the subject of food connotes triviality or guilt" (28).

More recently, however, the interdisciplinary field of Food Studies has called attention to the ways food production and consumption may be studied, not in terms of symbols or rituals,

but in terms of materiality and praxis. What, Food Studies asks, are the effects of eating—or not eating—and how does food function as a social actor? Caroline Walker Bynum, for example, argues that food and eating may be used to control the social environment (Counihan 130), David A. Davis writes that culinary practices involve "a complex set of power relations that involve race, class, and gender identities in a dynamic system" ("A Recipe for Food Studies"), and Counihan and Van Esterik argue that food "can be used to make unequal power relations visible" (9). Food Studies are indebted, of course, to Marxist theories of material history: Antonio Gramsci wrote in the inter-war period of the twentieth century that "the whole complex of social relations are most obviously and widely manifested" in "food, dress, housing, and reproducing" (79).

The Young House-keeper brings to front and center the status of female food producers and offers a vegetarian, whole foods diet as the avenue through which the housekeeper may invert social hierarchies. The text is "almost wholly confined to the nature and preparation of food" (17-18), but, the *Preface* begins, "Whatever views may be suggested by the title," it

> is intended as a means of rendering house-keepers thinking beings, and not as they have hitherto often been, mere pieces of mechanism; or, what is little better, the mere creatures of habit or slaves of custom. (17)

The problem is that housekeepers are things—"pieces of mechanism," "creatures," "slaves," not to mention, Alcott writes later, "automatons" (51)—and his "principal aim" is "to elevate the

important profession for whom it is written, instead of sinking it below its present unworthy level" (18).[39] The "sinking" to which he refers hints at the Biblical Fall:

> I hope [the text] will prove a timely contribution to the cause of human improvement—to the melioration, the elevation, the restoration of fallen humanity. (20)

Housekeepers have "fallen" to a dejected position, fully embodied, bestial, mechanical, unthinking. At issue is the fate of "fallen humanity" at large, since "the elements of the nation, nay, of the world itself, are prepared, to a very great extent, in our nurseries, and around the domestic fireside" (19). More than four hundred pages follow, mostly filled with miniature treatises on specific grains, fruits and vegetables—"The Plum," "Cabbage, Lettuce, &c."—a few chapters on animal foods like meat and cheese, and chapters on general principles of eating and cooking. But if the central problem of housekeeping, as Alcott sets it forth, is an objectified female housekeeper, how does it follow that the entire manual treats, not philosophical concerns, but specific, local, material, and even rather mundane foodstuffs? What is the connection, to put it another way, between Alcott's grandiose aim for the betterment of "fallen humanity," and his intricate plan for introducing more beans and peas into people's diets until "we should hear little more about their flatulence" (164)?

Alcott's solution for the restoration of the status of women to "thinking beings" is specific. Like Catherine Beecher after him, Alcott asserts that housekeeping is "a science" (18) with "missionary" overtones (38, 383). But his plan is not ever more regimentation of household

[39] Pessen writes that the Jackson-era labor movement was concerned with the dehumanizing effects of machines and the factory system, providing some context for Alcott's anxiety about automata.

duties, or more rigid boundaries between public and private "spheres," or increased specialization in household tools, as "domesticity" critics might suspect. Instead, he outlines a plan in which the housekeeper does as *little* work as possible (one to two hours of cooking per day is the suggested allotment), in which gendered divisions of labor are blurred (men and boys should help with the housework [53-4], and husbands should be "trained" [55] to "conform" to their wives' agendas [62]), and, most importantly, in which a whole foods, vegetarian (even what we would nowadays call vegan) diet is adopted. He enumerates the "moral and intellectual benefits" (82) of a vegetarian diet: plant foods are more nutrient-dense than animal foods; the digestion of meat requires excessive "expenditure of vital power," making meat not physiologically "economical" (85-6); and—in keeping with the Grahamites discussed in more detail below—meat and fish, like alcohol, coffee, tea, butter, sweets, and spicy foods, are overstimulating and thus deleterious to the brain and nervous system.

Alcott cites "Lawrence, Cuvier, and Lambe, in Europe, and a large number of physicians of this country" (81) as advocates of his dietary recommendations, but his most impressive endorsement comes from a Creator who has granted us food choices:

> Because we *can* eat all things—morally and mentally—must we therefore do it? And so in physical matters, and especially in the matter of eating and drinking, because we can digest all things, must we therefore eat all things? For what purpose, then, is man a free agent? Why has the Creator delegated to him the right of choice? (80)

Diet ought not be an accident of custom, but an opportunity to exercise God-given gifts of humanism. Curtin makes a distinction, like Alcott, between "edible" and "food," and plants the distinction at the very heart of personhood:

> All edibles are not counted as food. . . . The classification of something as food means it is understood as something made to become part of who we are. Classifying an edible as food means we have foreknowledge that it will become us bodily, and that it will be expelled. Food stands in a special relationship to the self and other that is different from the merely edible. (9)

It is not surprising that Alcott's most emphatic condemnation of poor food is that it is fit only for swine to eat (306, 321); our food choices help to comprise personhood and distinguish, like Genesis's Adam, humans from beasts.

The principle of an alimentary Fall is laced through Alcott's manual. He argues that "in the city" the appetite is so "perverted" that people do not even think of cultivating strawberries (217), and he urges that the path back to the Garden is, in part, through a sense of taste "wholly simplified" and thus "restored to its primitive state" (111). For instance, we need not "waste our precious hours . . . converting [stringy pears], by the cooking process, and the addition of sugar, molasses, and other things, into a substance, which, after all, is neither so wholesome, nor to an unperverted appetite so palatable, as a good raw apple" (209). Indeed, as if smiting the serpent, he writes, "The apple is one of the noblest gifts of the Creator to man" (189), particularly when "eaten in its raw or natural state," the "state in which the Author of nature has prepared it," and a state of which children—presumably because their appetites are still pure—never complain (194). Most New England cooking is an affront to the culinary skills of a god who speaks the "truth" through raw plant foods (202).

Alcott was, according to Richard H. Shryock, a "leading disciple" (177) of Sylvester Graham, a celebrated health reformer who lectured throughout New York and New England beginning in the 1830s. Although Graham's message focused on dietary temperance, it was shot through with certain moral, even puritanical, threads—as Shryock puts it, he "decided that the way to a man's salvation was through his stomach" (172). Graham's notions about the ideal diet

were specifically prelapsarian: foods should be as unprocessed as possible (Graham flour, for instance, retains the whole wheat kernel), and animal products best be avoided. Graham was influenced by Swedenborg via the Reverend William Metcalfe, and Swedenborg believed meat-eating was "the most vivid symbol of our fall from grace and the source of all evil" (Spencer 253). So, Grahamism constituted not just a dietary "return to nature" (Ross 44) but a return to the Garden.

Antebellum utopian communities like Brook Farm and Fruitlands (which was run by William Alcott's friend and second cousin Amos Bronson Alcott) were populated by Grahamites. Grahamites equated "natural living habits with liberty and classlessness" (Ehrenreich and English 49), and the movement's opposition to the medical establishment and its endorsement of alternative cures such as homeopathy, Thomsonianism, and hydropathy had class connotations.[40] Practitioners of Grahamism counted among their numbers "the leaders of abolition, temperance, and civic and social reform" (Ross 44), and they opposed child labor and the factory system. Natural health, then, was intertwined with human liberty in many forms, and so with the question of Otherness as such. What is more, Grahamism's "crusade for women's health was related both in cause and effect to the demand for women's rights in general," for example with regards to birth control and anti-corset reforms, and by mid century, "the health and feminist movements became indistinguishable" (Shryock 176).

Food, for Alcott as a Grahamite, is knotted up with the housekeeper's status as a free person. Doing all the housework and educating children is "more than she ought to do" (332), and cooking in particular is a drain on her time. "My greatest objection . . . to the use of butter

[40] The Thomson System, developed by Samuel Thomson (1769-1843 was developed in direct opposition to conventional medicine. It entailed, steam baths, herbs, and a certain amount of self-administration.

and cheese both," Alcott writes, "is that their manufacture involves a great amount of female labor . . . what can be more valuable than female labor, applied to the physical and moral management and early instruction of children?" (276). Yet "Woman" is "the willing slave of an arbitrary fashion"—that is, traditional cookery— "that demands of her to surrender her whole nature—bodily, mental and moral—to the din of plates, and pots, and kettles" (316-17). "Nor is it a small matter," he writes, "to wash a host of plates, and platters, and tea cups, and coffee bowls, and tumblers, and knives, and forks, and spoons, three or four times a day" (314). Freedom from cooking means more time to spend in educating herself and her children, and to spend exercising in the fresh air (231). It also means breaking the chains of her "slavery to hot food" (325) and all its attendant kitchen and dining utensils. (It is noteworthy that Alcott is perhaps the only nineteenth-century U.S. domestic advice writer whose catalogues of household things do not have a celebratory or delicious tone.) Alcott's proposal is that the housekeeper cook once every four or five days, feeding her family with fresh fruits, vegetables, and leftovers (321-3), and, when she does devote time to cooking, she should "cook many things at her leisure, even while pursuing other occupations" (325).

Vegetarian diets, just like the "slavery" and "automatons" Alcott invokes, circulate through questions about the relationship between the human and the nonhuman. For Alcott, humans and animals share kinship not only when a human is degraded—as when housekeepers are treated as "akin to the domestic animals of which they have the charge" (51), but also in their physiological states. He writes, "What is true of the horse and other domestic animals" regarding a balanced diet with adequate fiber, "is equally true of man" (295). However, when it comes to the ethical reasons for avoiding animal products, Alcott is almost silent, save his insistence that if milk must be drunk the source ought to be a free-range cow (271), and his oblique mention of

"the moral evils . . . the moral insensibility which [meat's] familiar use involves" (283). By "moral insensibility," Alcott perhaps refers to "one of the most widely held beliefs" in the nineteenth-century vegetarian movement, "that slaughtering [animals] bestialized people" because "meat-eating provoked aggression" (Spencer 262). In addition, Alcott cites Dr. George Cheyne, suggesting that he was aware of the eighteenth-century English dietary reformer's view that eating meat "must require a rocky heart, and a great degree of cruelty and ferocity" (qtd. in Williams 123). Alcott was clearly aware of the ethical problems about animals surrounding a vegetarian diet, but these are largely glossed over in *The Young House-keeper*.

What Alcott does not gloss over, however, are the connections between eating animals and the status of women; these connections comprise the foundation of his argument.[41] Feminists have long drawn parallels between the "systematic objectification of women and the objectification of animals" (Heldke 217), notably Carol Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. Nor is it difficult to find transpositions of women and meat in nineteenth-century U.S. writing. Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* (1819-20), for instance, contains families of teenaged girls named the Trotters and the Lambs. Robert Dale Owen, a leader of the U.S. Working Men's Party in the 1830s, attributed the fact that he had never entered a brothel to his vegetarianism (Claudia Nelson 12), and Sylvester Graham blamed meat consumption for men's overstimulated genitals in *A Lecture to Young Men on Chastity* (1838). Alcott in *The Young House-keeper* is not so explicit as Graham, but he writes that "flesh and fish . . . excite us much more than mild and bland substances" (87-8). For antebellum U.S. health reformers, the

[41] Alcott's prescriptions for free-range dairy cows mirror his prescriptions for the renovated housewife: she "should not be confined, or fed on slops, or bad hay or pasture, or impure water. She should have pure air and water, and enough of exercise" (271).

exploitation of animals and the exploitation of women were wound up together, ostensibly because of meat-eating's hot-blooded effects.

Vegetarianism is also linked to mastery and control over one's own body and bodily choices, and so over one's personhood. Vegetarianism, Curtin writes, "follows from a claimed power of self-definition in opposition to a dominant conceptual scheme" (132), and indeed, Alcott's whole foods, vegetarian diet is posited as a challenge to tradition and "fashion": two of the "First Principles" he lays out for his dietary scheme are "1. Obey the dictates of conscience. 2. Dare to disobey the mandates of fashion" (49). Precisely because, as Adams writes, vegetarianism "seeks to establish agency and implicate the consumer" (268), feminism embraces vegetarianism. Rejecting the consumption of meat means wresting Alcott's all-important "right of choice" (80) from the clutches of "fashion" and thus asserting—even creating—one's own personhood. When a female housekeeper refuses to cook, serve, or consume meat, she affirms the difference between herself and unthinking "swine" and "automata." When she chooses a vegetarian diet, she also distinguishes herself from other low-status people, such as helpless, milk-drinking infants, and "savages" like "The poor Greenlanders and Esquimaux" who are "driven to the necessity of subsisting chiefly on [animal] fat" (85-6).

Alcott's favored term "animal food" is rhetorically loaded, highlighting the self-defining properties of food choices. "Animal food" refers simultaneously to food *from* and *for* animals; since he equates meat-eating with both infancy and savagery, his logic indicates that infants and savages are, well, animals. It is commonplace in antebellum child-rearing manuals to find children theorized as little beasts in need of civilizing, while North American literature has long transposed Native Americans with fearful and grotesque ideas about meat consumption and cannibalism. Andrew Warnes, for instance, describes how Andrew Jackson's campaign speeches

labeled Native Americans "savage" and "inhuman butcherers" of women and children (158) and how Jackson capitalized on fantasies of the meat-devouring savage by initiating the ritual of the election day barbecue in the 1820's, turning "savagery back against the savage" (160).[42] Alcott, like Jackson and his campaign, knew that food—culturally resonant yet anchored in real, fleshly bodies—is a powerful way to slide from one identity into another. This is no symbolic or metaphorical slide, either. "Taking the category of 'food' seriously," Curtin writes, "leads to a suspicion that the absolute border between self and other which seems so obvious in the western tradition is nothing more than an arbitrary philosophical construction" (9). Food consumption literally incorporates the material Other into the self, so it weakens the boundaries of personhood and allows for types of possession and inhabitation more potent than anything in *The Exorcist*.

Because Alcott's formulation of personhood is contingent and porous, and because it follows from bodily choices, it challenges Cartesian notions of metaphysical personhood. This challenge hinges on the way that Alcott treats food, not as some kind of value-laden symbol, but as a material thing that provokes human behavior. Avoiding the consumption of meat can keep a man out of a brothel, according to Robert Dale Owen, not because of some metaphor between the treatment of women and the treatment of animals, but because avoiding meat keeps the body at a tractable temperature. For Alcott, too, because food provokes human behavior, it destabilizes the subject-object dichotomy. Alcott repeatedly stresses the importance of fully masticating one's food and indicates that one of the chief qualities of wholesome foods is that they force one to chew long and hard. His "grand objection" to hasty pudding, for instance, is that it

[42] Ironically (and awfully), after Jackson won the election in 1828 he proceeded to "butcher" "savages."

requires, or at least receives, little mastication. This, indeed, is the principal difficulty with a great many sorts of food so constantly said by dietetic writers to be indigestible. They are highly nutritious in their nature; but they are ground or beaten so as to form a complete paste that will almost slide down the throat, as fast as it is put into the mouth; and lastly, molasses, butter, oils, sauces or gravies, are applied to hurry them beyond the reach of the teeth and salivary glands, as fast as possible. (132)

Hasty pudding's nutrients are not viable when human teeth and saliva cannot do their part. Wholesome foods, by contrast, are so not merely because they contain nutrients, but because they demand certain chewing behaviors. Chewy foods are not exactly "objects" in their recruitment of human masticatory obedience. Likewise, the "complete paste" of the hasty pudding that "[slides] down the throat" almost unnoticed, seems as sinister in its slithery insinuation into human tissues as Beecher's corset. Food is no passive "object," and it must be monitored lest it get too forward.

The connection between Alcott's grandiose plot to restore "fallen humanity" and beans and peas, then, is that food is located at the very center of the question of personhood. "The body is the house the soul lives in" (27), he writes, and *The Young-Housekeeper* is thus a sort of domestic economy of person-making.[43] For Alcott, personhood is not fixed—humans are capable of becoming machines, automatons, savages, animals, or infants, and becoming "thinking beings" once more—and he articulates concepts of human and nonhuman between which food is the permeable, controllable boundary, and which our everyday choices delineate. There is no unassailable category of personhood: although eating whole foods leads to "the whole man" (Alcott 90), vegetarianism also "admit[s] that the autonomous man is conceptually vulnerable" (Curtin 131). What is important about Alcott's argument is that he mulls over the status and

[43] This declaration is an intertext with Alcott's 1837 work *The House I Live In; or, The Human Body: For the Use of Families*.

duties of female persons within the context, not of abstractions like sentiment or ethics, but of food. His entire manual is structured around the radical assertion that women and food occupy precisely the same dividing line between human and nonhuman, and for women and their societies to satisfactorily shift the balance so that women are restored to the position of human, something must be done about food.

Power Made "Steely"

Like Child and Alcott, Catharine Beecher's *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841) presents the status of housekeepers as its central problem. Although we are assured that "the duties of subordination" inherent in the housekeeper's station are in keeping with both democracy and Christianity—and that they are, in fact, "decided by the Creator" (26)—the degradation of women's physical labor is Beecher's point of entry. And as in Alcott's manual, at stake is not only the future of the nation, but the renovation of "degraded man" (37) generally. "Every American woman," Beecher writes, "who values the institutions of her Country"—that is, democracy and Christianity—

> and wishes to lend her influence in extending and perpetuating such blessings, may feel that she is doing this, whenever, by her example and influence, she destroys the aristocratic association, which would render domestic labor degrading. (62)[44]

[44] Beecher's concern about the degradation of housework is partly an offshoot of the Jackson-era labor movement. Edward Pessen writes, "Of primary importance to the leaders of the labor movement was what they called the degradation of labor. . . . Laborers not only worked long hours for low wages under bad working conditions, but they were also held in low esteem by their fellow men" (437).

On the one hand is Beecher's insistence on housekeepers' global, even Millennialist influence, and on the other hand is her acceptance of the "cheerful submission" (154) and "self denial" (224) that accompany mundane domestic chores. Beecher's message seems paradoxical—Amy Kaplan calls it "the paradox of what might be called 'imperial domesticity'" (586). How are we to read *Treatise*? Is it a compendium of patriarchal authority that seduces its reader into believing that doing the dishes is empowering? Or is it a proto-feminist manifesto? Is it, to put it another way, like Beecher's later text *The American Woman's Home*, a "blueprint for colonizing the world . . . under the leadership of Christian women" (Tompkins 144)? Or does Beecher's housekeeper only stand to gain a "compensatory power through her Christ-like submission" (Nelson 235)?

The problem is that analyses of *Treatise* have relied upon a rubric in which power is a metaphysical force, disembodiment equals power, and material things are irrelevant. Even though, for instance, Kaplan argues that for Beecher, "metaphor has a material efficacy in the world" (586), she does not indicate *how* metaphor is made material; there is a missing link because Kaplan's reading cannot account for matter. Although *Treatise* is indeed a polemic about power, it is also an instructional manual about bodies and things. Power, Latour argues, is made "steely" (*Reassembling* 68) and efficacious not by fragile social ties (let alone by metaphor), but by being displaced into things. *Treatise* offers a formula for female power that is silent and humbly industrious, but which is also influential, resilient, and capable of spreading over the globe precisely because it is deposited into bodies and things—into matter. Beecher thus makes a radical amendment to conceptions of materiality and power found in the western philosophical tradition. Elaine Scarry describes the way power "is in its fraudulent as in its

legitimate forms always based on distance from the body" (46). "To have no body," she elaborates,

> is to have no limits on one's extension out into the world; conversely, to have a body . . . is to have one's sphere of extension contracted down to a small circle of one's immediate physical presence. . . to be intensely embodied is the equivalent of being unrepresented. (207)

Embodiment, in the western philosophical tradition, means voicelessness, while the metaphysical subject of western philosophy is not only immune to bodily entanglements, but his voice is potentially boundless. It would seem that if Beecher's advice writing is indeed a bid for ever-expanding female "influence," she would efface the housekeeper's body and amplify her voice. Yet *Treatise* does quite the opposite: it aggressively promotes physical labor at the same time that it sanctifies "perfect silence" (152) and the "duties of subordination."

For Beecher, domestic labor is "degrading" not only because of misguided "aristocratic associations," but because it is neglected as a serious subject of study. American girls are overtaxed by cerebral or frivolous pursuits to the detriment of their "physical education" (42). The result is a lack of "counterbalance" (45) that leaves the female person physically and mentally enfeebled, and her domestic realm likewise mismanaged. Beecher's solution is for girls to learn and perform domestic labor as part of their "professional" (51) education, sweeping floors and doing laundry at schools where they also study chemistry, philosophy, mathematics, and literature. In doing so, they "secure a strong and healthy constitution, and a thorough practical knowledge of all kinds of domestic employments" (49). Beecher stresses the importance of the housekeeper having "a practical knowledge of her occupation" (67)—what Latour calls "the precise practice and craftsmanship of knowing" (*Visualization* 3)—rather than simply a theoretical one. Even if she has servants, she will be able to direct them more

effectively, perform certain duties herself (282), and take over in a pinch—which can happen at any point in the "fluctuating state of society" (41). Beecher amends the distinction between intellectual and manual labor, and at the same time she rectifies the health problems that have left American women physically weak and socially inefficacious.[45] [46]

But how is it that, by implementing practical domestic knowledge—"domestic exercise," Beecher terms it (128)—a healthy *and* influential female person is produced? Why not balance the female person strictly with healthful walks and "Calisthenic exercises" (56), leave the housework to the servants, and the power to men? It is tempting to read the female body here, in true "literary" fashion, as a metaphor for the house, or vice versa. But in fact, Beecher anchors the question of power back to materiality, substantiating that missing link. She intertwines well-ordered female bodies and well-ordered households because, as William Alcott also knew, the status of female bodies and the status of physical labor are entangled concerns. Heldke writes that in the western philosophical tradition,

> activities have been considered valuable according to the degree to which they could be considered 'knowing activities,' 'science,' 'theory,' 'art,' or 'head work.' Those activities not regarded as involving knowing—typically the 'hand work' of practical, manual labor—have not generally merited philosophical attention.

When Beecher wants to "raise the science and practice of Domestic Economy to its appropriate place, as a regular study in female seminaries" (50), not only does she meld "science" with

[45] In addition, Beecher's generic innovation could be described as the hybridization of domestic advice and conduct manuals, producing yet another fusion of head/hand work.

[46] Recall how Hawthorne describes *The Marble Faun* not as an artwork but "a fragile handiwork" (xxxix).

"practice" (and metaphysics with matter), but she restores value to "hand" work. Heldke continues,

> The division between 'head' and 'hand' work supports and is supported by a philosophical emphasis on maintaining separation between acting subject and acted-upon object. This philosophical emphasis in turn supports and is supported by a class, gender, and race bias against those who engage in physical labor. (204)

Beecher overturns that bias. Amending the distinction between intellectual pursuits and domestic labor—learning "not only to know how to do, but actually to do" (*Treatise* 67)—amounts to an outright rejection of the subject-object dichotomy in which those who engage in manual labor are degraded "objects." Not only, that is, is domestic labor resuscitated by Beecher's amendment; so are domestic laborers, so that domestic work is elevated to "the most important, the most difficult, and the most sacred and interesting duties that can possibly employ the highest intellect" (157). By blurring the distinction between "head" and "hand" work, Beecher ensures that the housekeeper has high social standing.

Beecher similarly amends the Cartesian distinction between the self and the body in order to produce a fully human, influential person. *Treatise* describes a process in which the housekeeper's body undergoes a restoration from enfeebled, ineffectual thing, barely able to nurse a baby or walk up stairs, to a fully formed person. Knowledge of "the construction of the body" (69) is the housekeeper's basis for taking care of her own health and the health of her family. Detailed descriptions of bones, muscles, nerves, and organs are accompanied by labeled illustrations of skeletons and flesh. This human body, pried open and flattened in scientific style, is likened to the nonhuman: membranes are "like India rubber" and muscles are just like the "red meat in animals" (75); "Vegetables, in a dark cellar, grow pale and spindling, and children,

brought up in mines, are wan and stunted" (124). The body emerges, at first, as a thing. But it is a thing that, through proper management, may unfurl into a human person. Beecher, like Alcott, relies upon a Graham-influenced understanding of personhood: the "mental" and "physical" are two fluctuating components of a whole self, delicately and reciprocally balanced: "mental excitement tends to weaken the physical system," Beecher writes, "unless it is counterbalanced by a corresponding increase of exercise and fresh air" (43). Beecher's chapters on health abound with Grahamite calls for temperance and simplicity, such as cold baths, corset reform, abstinence from alcohol and "stimulating condiments" (99), and a reduction of the—likewise stimulating—"animal food" (100) consumed. All this management results, Beecher suggests, in fully human persons. She writes,

> Many a pale, puny, shad-shaped girl, would have become a plump, rosy, well-formed person, if half the exercise, afforded to her brothers in the open air, had been secured to her. (76)

A shad is a type of herring, so this "shad-shaped girl" has more in common with the "red meat in animals" than the "well-formed person" she might have become, given the correct circumstances. And the correct circumstances, of course, would have been the proper "counterbalance" between mind and body. Personhood, in short, depends upon mind-body equilibrium; otherwise, the body is but a thing, like India rubber, meat, herrings, or vegetables.[47]

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[47] Gillian Brown writes that in Beecher's manuals, "labor is depicted as sometimes beneficial, sometimes harmful to the body," on the one hand extolling housework "as healthy, regenerative exercise," and on the other hand lamenting the "'terrible decay of female health all over the land'" (64). Yet what Brown theorizes as an apparent contradiction, explained by her distinction between "labor as an effect *upon* women's bodies, not an effect *of* women's bodies," is in fact a misreading. The opening pages of *Treatise* that lament the decay of the housewife's body attribute this failing to mental over-taxation and inadequate exercise, both of which may be *remedied* by moderate housework.

Treatise, self-professedly a manual on "domestic economy," only gets to the things in the house on page 258—two-thirds of the way through. This is because Beecher's commentary on the arrangement of nonhuman things is only possible after the housekeeper's personhood—physical and mental—has been attended to, balanced, and made whole and potent. By first fusing the connections between "head" and "hand" work, and self and body, Beecher indicates exactly how the housekeeper, though silent and self-sacrificing, makes her influence felt round the globe, through a dynamic, influential chain of contact: mind—>body—>things—>world. Things, that is, in the form of bodies and household items, carry power from the housekeeper's mind and out into the frontiers of empire and the furthest reaches of the mission field. When *Treatise* finally begins its treatment of nonhuman things, it arrives in an astounding cascade, page after page. In just one small example, Beecher enumerates the "tin ware" necessary to a well-run kitchen:

> Bread-pans, large and small pattypans, cake-pans, with a centre tube to insure their baking well, pie-dishes (of block-tin,) a covered butter-kettle, covered kettles to hold berries, two sauce-pans, a large oil-can, (with a cock,) a lamp-filler, a lantern, broad-bottomed candlesticks for the kitchen, a candle-box, a funnel or tunnel, a reflector, for baking warm cakes, an oven or tin-kitchen, an apple-corer, an apple-roaster, an egg-boiler, two sugar-scoops, and flour and meal-scoop, a set of mugs, three dippers, a pint, quart, and gallon measure, a set of scales and weights, three or four pails, painted on the outside, a slop-bucket, with a tight cover, painted on the outside, a milk-strainer, a gravy-strainer, a colander, a dredging-box, a pepper-box, a large and small grater, a box, in which to keep cheese, also a large one for cake, and a still larger one for bread, with tight covers. (320-1)

All these hyphenated things (milk-strainer, slop-bucket) illustrate a high degree of tool specialization, as well as the pre-scripted bodily regimens that go along with producing—and consuming and digesting—specific foods like "cake" and "bread." Such dictates of specialization and pre-scripted action have been read as exertions of disembodied power emanating from metaphysical elsewheres—from middle-class or New England hegemonic impulses, for example, or from the exactions of patriarchy, or the demands of consumer capitalism. But in fact, in the

context of Beecher's mind—>body—>things—>world chain, all these things should be read as the housekeeper's voice, her power, made "steely" (or, in this particular case, tinny), substantial, lasting, transportable.

And, because the procedure for using, say, a tin "apple-corer" is built into its design, even the bodily gestures of domestic work are transportable. It is not "metaphor" that has a "material efficacy in the world," but the specially-designed handle of the apple-corer. The apple-corer extends the reach of the housekeeper's influence in a prosthetic manner that Alfred Gell terms "distributed personhood"— "that is, personhood distributed in the milieu, beyond the body-boundary" (104). Persons, "as agents," are able to be "not just where their bodies [are], but in many different places (and times) simultaneously" (21). The things that are part of "distributed personhood" are "components of their identities as human persons, just as much as their fingerprints" (21). Such things, Gell makes clear, are not metonymic signs; they are "indexes", or "parts of persons, limbs, as it were" (104). Beecher's apple-corer is a limb that might twist and flex in Africa even when its owner is in Massachusetts.[48]

[48] Gell's—and Beecher's—formulations of personhood depend upon a rejection of not only a Cartesian mind-body dichotomy, but also a rejection of the barriers between human and nonhuman matter. This is different than Marxian analyses of things understood as human labor that is only perceived as having been petrified. Georg Lukacs, for example, writes that the "veil of reification" in Marx occurs when "a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity', an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people" (86, 83). In traditional Marxian accounts like Lukacs's, things stand in metonymically for humans, and things make the materiality of humans seem to disappear. Along these lines, Scarry writes of "A bodily attribute . . . projected into the artifact . . . which essentially takes over the work of the body, thereby freeing the embodied person of discomfort and thus enabling him to enter a larger realm of self-extension" (144). Artifacts, that is, function as metaphorical projections, not material prosthetics, of the human body; it is all imaginary, while the Cartesian separation between metaphysical subject and the separate, enchanted, dreamy object-world remains intact.

However, *Treatise*'s things are not merely obedient, transparent projections of "power" or "subjects." Beecher adjusts the power dynamic between the self and inanimate Others. Houses, for example, make their own demands, since "Every room in a house adds to . . . the amount of labor spent in sweeping, dusting, cleaning floors, paint, and windows, and taking care of, and repairing, its furniture" (259). Things also beget more things. "A table-rug, or crumb-cloth, is useful to save carpets from injury," for instance, "Table-mats are needful, to prevent injury to the table from the warm dishes," and tables should also be equipped with "Butter-knives, for the butter-plate, and salt-spoons, for salt-dishes" (306). These examples suggest a proliferating, thingly ecosystem of need and injury that is somewhat detached from the actions of humans. But in fact, it is not allowing things to become *too* detached, but reigning them in close, that ensures the housekeeper's full personhood. The chapter "On the Construction of Houses" outlines a theory of reciprocity between housekeeper and architecture that buttresses the housekeeper's health and self.[49] "There is no point of domestic economy," Beecher writes, "which more seriously involves the health and daily comfort of American women, than the proper construction of houses" (258). Poor house design forces "persons, in the perspiration of labor, or the debility of disease . . . to go out of doors in all weathers" (260), and frail women to trot endlessly up and down stairs, and everyone to breathe air made toxic by fires and miasma wafting up from the cellar. Houses, in other words, can make you sick, so the housekeeper must use her "influence" in deciding the design of her "future residence" (262), and ensure that it is planned with the maximum in convenience, comfort, and healthfulness.

[49] Romero describes a hygienic "economy of the self" (81) in which "bodily economy" (75) corresponds to domestic economy."

Not only, then, does the housekeeper extend her influence by projecting her self outward into the world via bodily labor and things; the world also reaches back into her through the same chain of connections: world—>things—>body—>mind. When Beecher's "feeble woman" is saved exertion (259) by a dumb-waiter that allows for "almost every thing needed to pass between the kitchen and parlor" to "be sent up and down, without any steps" (279), or by a floorplan that keeps the "parlor, sleeping room, nursery, and kitchen on the same floor" (273), she is scaffolded from without by architectural design. Although this house may make its demands on the housekeeper, it returns the favor by increasing her health and renewed influence. House design, in short, shores up the housekeeper's personhood. What is more, things like a "dumb waiter," a collection of wheels, pulleys, and weights (whose diagram resembles *Treatise*'s chart of a skinless human arm) may be inserted into the housekeeper's mind-body mix.

Treatise's formulation of personhood, neither metaphysical nor purely human, requires an abandonment of "the artificial divide between social and technical dimensions" (Latour *Reassembling* 87). It is through interconnectedness with the material world, rather than a theoretical distance from it, that the housekeeper gains efficacy and influence. In the same way that personhood is the result of balanced give-and-take between scientific theory and physical practice, mind and body, it is also the result of balanced give-and-take between the housekeeper's self and domestic Others. When, for example, the knees of a pair of pantaloons

> are thin, it is a case of domestic surgery, which demands amputation. This is performed, by cutting off both legs, some distance above the knees, and then changing the legs. (330)

The pantaloons make their "demands," and the housekeeper responds. The result is not only mended pantaloons, but a formula for health, "scientific" knowledge, and manual finesse in

which the nonhuman and the human, the intellectual and the physical, are stitched seamlessly together.

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The microcosmic model households of Child, Alcott, and Beecher are dense, intricate fantasies of self-fashioning. In detailing how to polish furniture, clean knives, sew buttons, or cook beans, they challenge the way shamed matter and shamed bodily work are tangled with female housekeepers' degradation. At the same time, households brimming with the din and activity of nonhuman things force us to see how housekeepers' personhood is built upon and enmeshed with Others. To be a person, according to these domestic economy texts, is not to float, ghostlike, in the spotless theoretical. It is to sink into materiality, neck deep, until one's personhood is indistinguishable from the world's widest reaches.

Introduction to Part II: Making

The second half of this study shares with the first an attentiveness to how subjects and objects, persons and worlds, are constituted over and against nonhuman things. In addition, the second half of this study has at stake the same urgent problems as the first: the question of freedom within the constraints of the received subject-object paradigm, and humans being treated as objects. The two halves of this study diverge in an important way, however. While the primary texts of Part I work to pressure, degrade, invert, or even break apart the subject-object paradigm, the primary texts of Part II—all by Edgar Allan Poe—have at their center discursive practices which forefront making subjects and objects. More specifically, they rehearse, interrogate, and undermine a range of settler colonial tropes that are designed to make subjects out of settlers and objects out of land and indigenous people. To be fair, the primary texts of Part I do include settler colonial tropes and flavors, with Beecher's expansionist polemics and Hawthorne's worrying of Puritan world-making and Manifest Destiny as two vivid examples. I would even go so far as to assert that it would be nearly impossible to find an antebellum text that does not have at least traces of settler colonial ideas; human slavery is the elephant in the room in the history of the United States, and elephant-like too are settler colonialism's strategies

of theft, rape, and genocide. However, settler colonial discourse finds a wider, more comprehensive, and more vexed expression in the writing of Poe than in many other texts of the era. In addition, that I find settler patterns in his stories that are overtly about colonial discovery (Chapter Three: "Poe's Haunted Settler Colonial Journeys") and then again, more covertly, in the Dupin trilogy (Chapter Four: "America the Crime Scene") makes Poe's writing a fertile example of the way settler colonial discourse can lurk in the strangest quarters.

Though settlers unmake worlds with the originating crimes of theft, rape, and genocide, settler discourse is about making. Just as surely as settler discourse revolves around forging a "new world" by chopping down forests or building railroads, it also generates pioneer self-fashioning: making subjects out of colonists and objects out of colonized people and land. And if settler colonialism's central goal is to make white indigenity and "home," then its central activity is policing the boundaries of white personhood and "home." Crucially, the delineation of white personhood and "home" is made over and against indigenous people, who are cast by settler discourse as nonhuman. Settler colonial discourse is about making, then, but it is an insecure sort of making, always at least a little nauseous with dread that that hard-won personhood and "home" may be revoked at any time. Settler discourse is insecure because, in its need to disavow originating crimes, it is structured fundamentally by paradoxes, inversions, and lies. That settler discourse's structures are darkened thus makes Poe's treatment of settler discursive techniques particularly rich. Why? Because Poe's writing is also darkened by paradoxes, inversions, and lies.

Chapter Three

Poe's Haunted Settler Colonial Journeys

In this chapter, I read Poe's three stories of aborted discovery—"Ms. Found in a Bottle" (1833), *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), and *The Journal of Julius Rodman* (1840)—describing how they exemplify as well as problematize features of settler colonial discourse. These stories serve up dark colonial journeys whose linearity, screen memory, attempts at making meaning in time and space, and the settler mode of not-seeing indigenous presence are sources of unease and horror. That settler discursive features are sources of unease and horror would seem to indicate that the texts undertake overt critique. However, the matter is somewhat more subtle. Take, first of all, Pym's British ship *Jane Guy*, cruising the world outfitted not merely with the usual sparkly trinkets that Europeans and Anglo-Americans traded with indigenous people—"beads, looking-glasses"—but an arsenal of cutting tools: "axes, hatchets, saws, adzes, planes, chisels, gouges, gimlets, files, spokeshaves, rasps, hammers, nails, knives, scissors, razors, needles" (135). Along the same lines, take Rodman's party, embarking on its river journey with "each man having a stout hatchet, and knife, besides his ordinary rifle and ammunition" (39), not to mention axes and cutlery. As they slice through the waters, Poe's

explorers' boats are equipped with things that possess the focused, bladelike outlines of Anglo culture, and that are meant to continue the cultural cutting long after the colonists have traded them away. Now, take those sharp tools alongside Hulsey's commentary that Rodman "always poses the question of agency, asking who or what is responsible for what he sees, but because he carries language with him, he is responsible for creating what he perceives" (28). Hulsey's idea that an explorer *carries language with him*, like a knapsack, a tool, perhaps even a weapon, suggests that in endeavors of exploration or settlement, *discourse*, not simply tools and cultural practices, is a vital means of making. Poe's three major discovery stories center settler colonial discourse as the primary toolkit for self- and world-fashioning. Rodman, Pym, and the narrator of "Ms. Found in a Bottle," armed with cutting tools both tangible and discursive, enter frontier spaces and, purposefully or casually, objectify indigenous people and land. At the same time, and paradoxically, it is also frequently discourse, in the form of hieroglyphs, diegesis, and intertext, that exposes the fragile, conditioned quality of settler making. When settler discourse falters, so do selves and worlds. Indeed, Poe achieves his greatest effects of unease and horror in these stories precisely at the wavering boundary line between—and the always-waiting queasy pit beneath—settler discourse's success, and its failure.

The "Adamic Myth" or Settler Colonial Discourse?

Before I describe features of settler narrative form and how they find expression in Poe's discovery stories, I first need to clarify the striking overlap between it and American Studies' so-called Adamic myth. The Adamic myth, Manzanas writes, is a particularly fecund myth "established by Romantic American literature as a central motif and paradigm of Americanness," in which a "self-propelled man," "granted dominion over the whole American garden," "seems

to incarnate the principles of linearity and progress which characterize the conquest and expansion of the West" (157). Nineteenth-century American literature dwells upon, reworks, inverts, fantasizes about, and obsesses over the Fall from and the longing to return to a measureless, lush, and superabundant Garden. Nostalgia for lost innocence and a more whole past feature in the myth, as do Adam's power to name, and a theory of American exceptionalism freed from history and musty Old World traditions. Although I do not disagree with the very substantial body of scholarship on the Adamic myth, these themes and motifs are in fact performances of the global phenomenon of settler colonialism. The ideologies of American exceptionalism are not in fact unique to America after all—although they may indeed be rooted in English Protestant capitalism.[50]

Lorenzo Veracini, in his foundational work *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, argues that what we have long called colonialism is but one mode of empire distinct from, and even antithetical to, settler colonialism. For example, Jürgen Osterhammel's influential definition of colonialism is

> a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule. (16)

But Veracini points out that by conventional definitions of colonialism,

[50] For certain, these ideologies masked the demands of capitalism. Marx and Engels wrote in 1848 that the "need of a constantly expanding market for its product chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe" and that it "must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere" (11).

colonisers cease being colonisers if and when they become the majority of the population. Conversely, and even more perplexingly, indigenous people only need to become a minority in order to cease being colonised. (5)

Clearly, Osterhammel's definition does not inadequately describe many instances of colonization. Another distinction between traditional definitions of colonialism and settler colonialism lies in the special characteristics of settlers, as opposed to migrants. Settlers are "unique migrants" because, Mahmood Mamdani writes, settlers "are made by conquest, not just by immigration," and because "Settlers are *founders* of political orders and carry their sovereignty with them (on the contrary migrants can be seen as *appellants* facing a political order that is already constituted)" (qtd. in *Settler Colonialism* 3). In addition, settler colonial political order "operates in accordance with a register of sameness" (*Settler Colonialism* 3), and in the case of British colonization in North America, and later in the United States, this sameness is emphatically white.[51] Veracini describes fantasy motifs that repeatedly appear in settler colonial discourse around the world: "pristine wilderness"; an "innocent" "pioneering endeavor"; settlers entering a "new, empty land to start a new life"; indigenous people who naturally and inevitably "vanish" (14); a fantasy of "an immaculate origin" (78); settler society existing in a perceived "state of nature" (82); narratives of civilization versus wilderness and waste; "idealized reconstructions of settler pasts" (90); stories of "travel, penetration into the interior,

[51] Deloria describes a rather different type of colonization practiced by French settlers in North America: By the time Lewis and Clark set off on their expedition, "French colonial policy had encouraged intermarriage with the Indians and the exchange of children to create kinship bonds with the Eastern tribes. The French sought to create a new kind of society of mixed Euro-Indian genetic background that would and could hold the lands claimed by the French king under the Doctrine of Discovery by appealing to their common ancestry" (8).

settlement, endurance, and success" (98). Veracini argues that these features obscure violent truth. Settler colonial society and discourse have performance as a central feature because

> Settler projects are inevitably premised on the traumatic, that is, *violent*, replacement and/or displacement of indigenous Others. However . . . settler colonialism also needs to disavow any foundational violence. (75)

What is more, "as well as denying any founding violence, disavowal is also directed at disallowing the very existence and persistence of indigenous presence and claims," so "various mythologies portraying dying races and 'vanishing' Indians should be referred to a specific settler need to ultimately disavow the indigenous presence" (*Settler Colonialism* 81). Although Veracini's text draws examples from the colonial settlement of Australia, Palestine, South Africa, and elsewhere, Americanists know the features of settler colonialism he describes like the backs of their hands. These are ideas that crop up in the writing of countless American writers (Samuel Danforth, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Caroline Kirkland), shaping an entire national discourse.[52]

Why does it matter whether we frame these features in terms of "settler colonialism" or "Adamic myth"? To begin with, if one is operating, as I am, from a critical stance that emphasizes materialism and historicity, it is important to view ideologies within their socioeconomic contexts. When Americanists celebrate what they view as the uniquely American Adamic myth, they in fact *reify* the myth by severing it from its roots in British expansion, as well as from America's relationship to other settler colonial societies. Scholarship that reifies the

[52] See also Benedict Anderson's theory of "imagined communities": nation-making that is largely dependent on the printed word.

Adamic myth amounts to a sleight of hand obscuring *another* sleight of hand.[53] I even wonder if Adamic myth criticism were guilty of many—if not most—of the problems with structuralist reading habits I described in Chapter One: negating material specificity, replicating the subject-object dichotomy, and objectifying texts by treating them as "cultural artifacts." At the very least, "Adamic myth" criticism dehistoricizes and geographically mislocates a discursive phenomenon.[54] In addition, unlike "colonial," whose successor is "post-colonial," arguably the central defining feature of settler colonial ideology is that it is open-ended, marching into a blank-yet-glorious future. Because we in the United States and elsewhere are still living in the settler colonial era, settler colonial scholarship has, by default, contemporary stakes. On the other hand, much of the scholarship on the Adamic myth is accurate, useful, and should be recycled for use in scholarship on settler colonialism in the nineteenth-century United States. For the purposes of my chapter here, I wish to make this essential point: those discursive (and aesthetic) inflections we have labeled "Adamic myth" should be situated within the global body of settler colonial discourse. While this removes the seductive, totalizing American exceptionalism ingredient, it opens up new possibilities for scholarly connections and for reflection upon an ideology that United States culture still lives.

Settler Narrative Form: An Overview

[53] "[The] western critical tradition has a canon, as the Western literary tradition does" (Gates 13).

[54] In addition, Paul Ricoeur's critique of Lévi-Strauss argues that structuralism is "antiphenomenological," and "establishes between the observer and the system a relationship which is itself nonhistorical" (32-34).

In the following pages, I focus on settler narrative form as opposed to the more abstract settler colonialism. Focusing on narrative form provides me with a handy apparatus for analyzing *other* narratives—in particular Poe's discovery stories—but also, and importantly, the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves are keystones of world- and self-fashioning. Narrative form is not an effect that emanates from an abstracted settler colonial ideology; it *is* settler colonialism.

Settler narrative form is defined by three key features: linear, open-ended construction, screen memory, and palindromic structure.

Linear, open-ended construction.

Veracini writes that colonial (as opposed to *settler* colonial) storytelling has a circular movement in which protagonists—think Odysseus—leave home, have adventures, and return home. This, I would argue, is also one mode of "discovery"; Columbus, say, leaves Portugal, "discovers" lands, and returns to Europe. Even the triangular route of the Middle Passage, from Africa to the Americas to Europe and around again, has a colonial shape (from the point of view of traders, not kidnapped Africans). On the other hand, "the settler coloniser moves forward along a story line that cannot be turned back" (97-98). The first, colonial, mode of discovery is a gathering up. It feels voyeuristic. Those sorts of colonizers never meant to stay forever. The second, settler colonial mode of discovery, on the other hand, appropriates from within. It feels parasitic, violating; it occupies and appropriates spaces, announcing "we are here, we *belong* here, and we are never leaving." [55] The settler colonial mode feels as inevitable as the

[55] In the case of North American settlement, the progress is inexorably westward and its engine is metaphysical. Arthur Bird wrote in 1889, "the United States of America,—bounded on the north by the North Pole; on the South by the Antarctic region; on the east by the first chapter of the Book of Genesis and on the west by the Day of Judgement" (qtd. in Bercovitch 148). Bird deftly encapsulates the Biblical fantasy overlaid on the history of American expansion,

progression of a glacier. In the popular discourse of 1840s United States, the story is providentially ordained westward expansion. The trajectory is understood to be "natural," and it is unstoppably linear. Take, for example, the writing of political columnist John O'Sullivan. His 1845 essay "Annexation," advocating the annexation of Texas and Oregon, describes "our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence." However, his 1839 essay "The Great Nation of Futurity" offers a purer sampling of this discursive flavor. He writes,

> The expansive future is our arena . . . We are entering on its untrodden space . . . with a clear conscience unsullied by the past. We are the nation of human progress, and who will, what can, set limits to our onward march? Providence is with us . . . The far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American greatness. (426)

O'Sullivan's hypothesis of national expansion, "propelling the onward march of the multitude, propagating and extending, through the present and the future," calls to mind the spread of a contagion: settlers are here to stay and born to proliferate.[56] Teleology is not only the rule, but the entire story.

Screen Memory.

There is no going back because the past has been erased; a second defining feature of settler narrative form is screen memory. Screen memory is a Freudian term used to describe a faulty

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highlighting the peculiar ahistoricity of the project, an ahistoricity that also lifts the material realities of geography onto a metaphysical plane. The American land comes to embody a sense of heliotropic progress, progress that because already the Word, is inevitable.

[56] Boelhower writes, "if the Indian protested, saying 'I am where my body is,' the colonist answered, 'I am where my boundaries are'" (56). The colonist's "I" is not tied to specific materiality, so it may then proliferate invisibly—indeed, like a contagion. Schultz writes, "With the advent of property the line between self and other becomes the chasm between subject and object, owner and possession, knower and known" (18).

reconstruction of events that obscures what really occurred.[57] In the case of North America, that which must be forgotten is that the land was already occupied, and theft from and murder of indigenous people are the core events of its colonization. But since "recurring representations of settler original idylls insist on an immaculate foundational setting devoid of disturbing (indigenous or exogenous) Others," settler discourse tells stories that forget crimes and paper over truth (*Settler Colonialism* 87). ("All reification is forgetting," Adorno and Horkheimer write [*Dialectic of Enlightenment* 191].) Two conflicting storylines—one forcefully but not completely forgotten, and aggressively replaced with another—create a grotesque combination. Timothy Neale writes,

> settler colonialism is an [interminable] structure, or system of relations, built to produce an [impossible] outcome: settlers find themselves 'at home,' untroubled by their having directly and indirectly profited from the violent dispossession of first peoples ("Notes on Settler Colonial Theory")

Home, that is, hinges upon forgetting not only the violence of dispossession but everything and everyplace that came before that trauma. Sacvan Bercovitch writes that the Puritan settlers' ocean crossing was an "opportunity to forget the Old World" (162), a world that frequently was difficult or even dangerous for those fleeing it. For instance, O'Sullivan writes in "The Great Nation of Futurity" that America has no history at all, only a future that bores inevitably forward into a blank time/space continuum. Thus settlers are able to be "at home" away from home because that old home has been erased:

> The American people having derived their origin from many other nations, and the Declaration of National Independence being entirely based on the great principle of human equality, these

[57] Veracini notes that screen memory is also at play in colonial (as opposed to settler colonial) narratives, but that it hides different things.

facts demonstrate at once our disconnected position as regards any other nation; that we have, in reality, but little connection with the past history of any of them, and still less with all antiquity, its glories, or its crimes. On the contrary, our national birth was the beginning of a new history

In O'Sullivan's fantasy as well as in Bercovitch's formula, culture is not transported in ships sailing over oceans. Once an emigrant arrives in America, all connection to the past is lopped off. America, it seems, is the product of a virgin birth. This virgin birth is a point of pride, but it is also high-maintenance, demanding constant discursive upkeep.

Palindromic Structure.

A third defining feature of settler narrative form is what Deborah Rose identifies as its palindromic structure. Palindromic structure rests upon a specifically Christian understanding of time that is at once linear and repetitive. Rose interrogates the "links between time and agency" that allow, for instance, an American cowboy song to conflate life on the open range with biblical patriarchs:

The major ontological disjunctive moment for Christians consists of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ—a disjunction that transfigured the conditions of human life on earth for believers. Roicoeur . . . calls this the 'Christian pattern'; it claims universality for its 'history of salvation.' My argument is that western colonizing practice replicates this pattern as the foundational template for frontier time, space, and action. (59)

Rose goes on to describe the Christian time structure, which

is palindromic and thus involves both linearity and mirroring . . . Palindromic narrative thus articulates the view that a plan of history exists, that history moves from an early (proto- or pre-) configuration through disjunction/transfiguration to the realized or fulfilled configuration. This mirror effect connects past and future in relational differentiation based on sequence and replacement. (60)

Christian history claims for itself a special position that has one foot in the material world and linear time, and another foot on a flexible allegorical plane that expands, contracts, doubles, and unfurls again. Biblical precedent and divine import hover like a gilded haze over every event and thing in the world, whether trivial or momentous. This echoes throughout the discourse of American "discovery" and colonization from the outset: "In the beginning all the world was America," Locke writes (qtd. in Bercovitch 237), burdening the landscape's materiality with meaning that somehow precedes it. The palindromic structure is obvious in Puritan typology, an analytic practice in which Old Testament characters and events are understood to foreshadow those in the New Testament. Emory Elliott writes,

> typology expanded into a more elaborate verbal system that enabled an interpreter to discover biblical forecasts of current events. Thus, the Atlantic journey of the Puritans could be an antitype of the Exodus of the Israelites; and the New England colony, a New Zion, to which Christ may return to usher in the Millennium. The first settlers were conservative, cautious typologists, but . . . by the 1640s New England's sacred errand into the wilderness and the approaching Apocalypse were accepted antitypes of sacred history. (34)

In typology, time is at once layered and linear, and it supersaturates both history and the present with meaning.[58] Frye adds, "Our modern confidence in historical process, our belief that despite apparent confusion, even chaos, in human events, nevertheless those events are going somewhere and indicating something, is probably a legacy of biblical typology (qtd. in Rose 60).

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[58] Berman adds, "The idea of America as a typological New Israel and Americans as typological Israelites was as old as the Puritan settlers. But during the Jackson era of westward expansion predominantly through white settler colonialism, this connection took on a new significance. The story of Jacob and Esau may have rhetorically established the white man's right to take the "red" man's land, but other Orientalist narratives circulating in American discourse confused this message by arguing that Indians themselves were literal descendants of Israelites" (362.) Such Orientalist narratives included, according to Berman, *Discourse on the Evidences of the American Indians Being the Descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel*, written by Poe's close friend Mordecai Manuel Noah.

Indeed, accounts of history, interpretations of biological evolution as "progress", and secular humanist beliefs, may also be read fruitfully from the point of view of the Christian calendar and Christian meaning-making. With regards to North American settler narrative form, its palindromic structures are evident in the hunger to move west towards "the promised land," and in words like O'Sullivan's: "We are the nation of human progress, and who will, what can, set limits to our onward march?"

Settler Narrative Form in Poe's Discovery Stories

In Poe's major discovery stories—"Ms. Found in a Bottle", *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, and *The Journal of Julius Rodman*—the three key features of settler narrative form are central to the stories' plot structures and themes. These key features are shown not simply to condition the protagonists' perspectives, but to falter and even fail.

All three stories, while not about settlers, have linear, open-ended plot structures. "Ms. Found in a Bottle" ends with the narrator describing how the ghost ship upon which he is a passenger whirls in concentric circles in an "ampitheatre" of ice, apparently about to be sucked down an immense drain. This narrator left home to explore the world by ship and met a mysterious fate far, far from home. *Pym*'s narrator, too, winds up in an unmapped, haunted place, forever suspended not-at-home in another of Poe's final "White-Out" scenes (Berman 354). "Ms. Found in a Bottle" and *Pym* present dark, warped versions of colonial narrative form in which the circular pattern that is *supposed* to be present in a story of seafaring adventure (again, think Odysseus) is aborted and unresolved. In these two stories, homecoming, even for the protagonists' corpses, never occurs. In *The Journal of Julius Rodman*, we are likewise left

hanging—the journal ends with Rodman in the neighborhood of the Missouri River after a near-fiasco with a bear—although this text was unfinished due to the vagaries of the publishing industry rather than through artistic design. And yet despite that, there is something fitting about Rodman being left suspended in the vague, fluctuating American West, since his motives for exploration are also vague and fluctuating. That is precisely the critique of "discovery" that Poe makes in all three of these texts: that although discourse about discovery is single-minded, on a fixed track, and not open for interrogation, it plays out for these three protagonists rather differently as their initial goals fade, as they lose the ability to interpret environments, and as they ultimately dissolve into alien landscapes.[59] These stories' endings offer the commentary that there is something not victorious, but sickening and even deadly, about settler colonialism's open-ended march. If settler colonialism's central goal is to make white indigenity and "home" at any cost, these stories' protagonists, in their terminal homelessness, have utterly failed. And if it is *white* indigenity in particular that is settler colonialism's goal, then the ending of Pym's narrative divulges that goal as both horrifying and, as a concept, exceeding the bounds of human bodies:

> And now we rushed into the embraces of the cataract, where a chasm threw itself open to receive us. But there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of snow. (217)

[59] Compare this with the nauseous unease of the inability to classify found in Hawthorne, for instance with regards to Professor Westervelt's false teeth in *The Blithedale Romance*, or the epistemic disorder in "A Virtuoso's Collection."

The "pathway" to, presumably, termination is blocked by the figure of whiteness. But there is no suggestion of rescue or relief; only horror that there is no escape from either open-ended history or the outsized specter of whiteness in this frontier space.[60]

Screen memory, another key feature of settler narrative form, furnishes the entire premise for *The Journal of Julius Rodman*. *Rodman* is impelled by a desire to penetrate virgin land. When the narrator sets out up the Missouri River towards the Far North in 1791, he claims that he and his party are looking to procure beaver pelts as well as to be the first "civilized" men to traverse the "gigantic barriers" of the Rocky Mountains (11). The narratorial "editors" (whose commentary works, at least ostensibly, to suspend the reader's disbelief) add that Rodman's party will explore

> those wide and desolate regions which lie north of our territory, and to the westward of Mackenzie's river, the foot of no civilized man, with the exception of Mr Rodman and his very small party, has ever been known to tread. In regard to the question of the *first* passage across the Rocky Mountains, it will be seen . . . that the credit of the enterprise should never have been given to Lewis and Clark. (27) [61]

Rodman reiterates the American tradition of Lewis and Clark's 1805-06 expedition, a tradition of forgetting and replacement. Vine Deloria, Jr. describes a "mythology" of the Lewis and Clark expedition, which even historians have traditionally understood "as the first effort by civilized

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[60] The case of Roderick Usher seems to suggest that there is something diseased and even grotesque about being fully indigenous, fully "at home."

[61] Why is it important for Poe to have his characters beat Lewis and Clark and the Hudson's Bay explorers to the punch? Readers of *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* were, by 1839-40, presumably fully conversant in the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-06. By pushing his fictional character Rodman into the space to be discovered, Poe asserts the ascendancy of his fictional text. Yet, since Poe never completed *The Journal of Julius Rodman*, Rodman's party never actually arrives in a country untrodden by "civilized man"—neither does it ever return home—and so the text is permanently suspended in a chasm of lack.

men to pierce the unknown West" (5). In fact, Deloria writes, "this belief is totally unfounded," noting that the expedition "merely followed paths already well established" and that they indeed "breached the unknown, albeit with considerable assistance from the local inhabitants," including French fur traders and second and even third-generation French-indigenous people, as well as indigenous people from present-day Washington and Oregon who had long-established coastal contacts with English and Spanish sailors (6-7). The Lewis and Clark expedition, then, was not the first instance of European men "piercing the wilderness," but merely the first official instance of Anglo-American men doing as much. In the mythology of Lewis and Clark, actual history is forgotten, screened by a more desirable narrative.

Forgetting proves to be part of Rodman's expedition as well. While settler colonial screen memory serves to cover up settlers' original sins, Rodman's screen memory reads like opium dreams. One instance suggests a weird, looming seductiveness of the Western frontier that wipes out the goals with which he began his journey. At the beginning of his journal, Rodman professes himself to be seeking beaver pelts and notoriety. But toward the end of the text, these goals disintegrate into scattered yearning:

> Men who had travelled thousands of miles through a howling wilderness, beset by horrible dangers, and enduring the most heart-rending privations for the ostensible purpose of collecting peltries, would seldom take the trouble to secure them when obtained, and would leave behind them without a single sigh an entire *cache* of fine beaver skin rather than forgo the pleasure of pushing up some romantic-looking river, or penetrating into some craggy and dangerous cavern, for minerals whose use they knew nothing about, and which they threw aside as lumber at the first decent opportunity. (104)

Westward expansion's commercial aims break down and are forgotten, tossed aside for the most ephemeral temptations. Rodman's "discovery" is purely ideological—valuable peltries abandoned and potentially valuable "minerals" used as ballast to free up the explorer's boat to be

lighter, more nimble, for still more discovery. This is discovery for discovery's sake, except that Rodman's sexual language ["pleasure of pushing"; "penetrating"] remind us that these explorers are male conquerors of a feminized, objectified landscape. A second form of screen memory in *Rodman* emerges when the "natural," not-human landscape is, via frothy rhetoric, objectified into an emphatically not-North-American place. Rodman tells us that "The prairies exceeded in beauty any thing told in the tales of the Arabian Nights" and that the prairie flowers look "more like Art than Nature" (57). An island is "fairy-looking," resembling more "what I had dreamed of when a boy, than an actual reality," and it exhibits

> a wonderful resemblance to an artificial flower garden . . .. looking rather like some of those scenes of enchantment which we read of in old books. We were all in ecstasy with the spot, and prepared our camp in the highest glee, amid its wilderness of sweets (59-61)

The impulse is to historicize America with rhetoric from the wrong hemisphere, in a manner that Berman calls "the 'Orienting' of the domestic frontier in Jackson-era settler discourse" (352). The history of North America and its indigenous inhabitants is vaporized, replaced by this diorama constructed of romantic allusion, nostalgia, Oriental imagery, and artifice. As a result, the real history of the North American frontier as a zone of foundational crimes is refashioned as a greedy little boy's all-you-can-eat "wilderness of sweets." The artificial, toy-like quality of *Rodman*'s "wilderness" calls to mind, of course, Hawthorne's peep-shows and panoramas. But while Hawthorne's patently artificial toys open up space for freedom, *Rodman*'s toy-like frontier has a static, eerie quality. Throughout the narrative, it is as though everything is somehow too easy for the explorers. Their encounters with natives and bears are sanitized, even comical. The explorers are the only truly living beings in this text, passing through a windless, flattened

landscape like actors moving through wooden stage sets. But actors onstage are not really free agents, so this elaborate screen memory is a trap.

Poe's "Ms. Found in a Bottle" offers a critique of palindromic history, another key feature of settler narrative form. The narrator, having survived a shipwreck and "having made it farther southward than any previous navigators" (139), stows away in the hold of a freakishly gigantic ship manned by dead-eyed old men. This crew, we understand, has been exploring for a very, *very* long time, and although they are fitted up like discoverers rather than settlers with their antique navigation charts and implements, they will never make the turn that completes their homebound loop.[62] "They all bore about them the marks of hoary old age," Poe writes.

> Their knees trembled with infirmity; their shoulders were bent double with decrepitude; their shriveled skins rattled in the wind; their voices were low, tremulous, and broken; their eyes glistened with the rheum of years; and their gray hairs streamed terribly in the tempest. Around them, on every part of the deck, lay scattered mathematical instruments of the most quaint and obsolete construction. (143)

It is tempting to write off this outdated bunch as personifications of what Marx called the nightmare of history. Yet the real horror of this story derives not only from the zombie-like quality of the crew, its tools, and its ship, but from the environment—an environment in which the dimensions of time and space have been removed. "The sun rose with a sickly yellow lustre," the narrator writes even before he stows away on the ghost ship, "and clambered a very few degrees above the horizon—emitting no decisive light. . . . We had no means of calculating time, nor could we form any guess of our situation" (138-9). Compared with O'Sullivan's grandiose

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[62] Boelhower writes that early maps reveal not only a "cultural paradigm, but also an interpretative gaze that objectifies the eye of the beholder" (51). Cartographic instruments in the age of discovery are "the prosthetic devices that made globetrotters out of the explorers and provided *homo europeus* with a new set of eyes, a new way of seeing" (52).

time-space formula—"The far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American greatness. In its magnificent domain of space and time"—time-space in "Ms. Found in a Bottle" is cramped and hopeless. If the palindromic view of history makes meaning in settler narratives, the desolate freefall in which the narrator of "Ms. Found in a Bottle" finds himself may be read as the *undoing* of the palindrome. There is no looking back or forward—either in time or space. After having been hidden on the ship for an unspecified period, the narrator writes,

> A feeling, for which I have no name, has taken possession of my soul—a sensation which will admit of no analysis, to which the lessons of by-gone time are inadequate, and for which I fear futurity itself will offer me no key. (141)

The narrator, hidden in the hold and invisible to the *Discovery*'s unseeing crew, seems to sit upon the special perch which the interpreter of palindromic history occupies, between a past and a future that can shine meaning on each other. And yet, in this environment not organized by the westward progress of the sun, the lessons of history are "inadequate" to explain his state of mind, and "futurity" fails, too.[63]

Settler Not-Seeing

[63] Palindromic history is similarly undone in *Pym*: "The terms *morning* and *evening*, which I have made use of to avoid confusion in my narrative, as far as possible, must not, of course, be taken in their ordinary sense. For a long time past we had had no night at all, the daylight being continual" (162). Additionally, palindromic history is challenged in Poe's story "Descent into the Maelström," in which we find another shrunken horizon accompanied by a horrifically expanded *vertical* perspective. The water bears the fisherman and his brothers "up—up—as if into the sky. I would not have believed that any wave could rise so high. And then down we came with a sweep, a slide, and a plunge . . . as if I was falling from some lofty mountain-top in a dream" (587). The horizon, which is supposedly laid open before the spectator and the explorer, is shut down here, almost as though the openness of the earth's horizon was an illusion all along.

While the three key features discussed above (linear, open-ended construction, screen memory, and palindromic structure) illustrate how settler colonial discourse makes worlds in the writing of Poe and others, the way that such discourse is, at heart, a discourse that *objectifies* finds its fullest expression in the special mode I call settler not-seeing. Because settler not-seeing is a pervasive, insidious way of thinking rather than merely a formal strategy, I cover it, and its variations in Poe's discovery stories, in this separate section.

I wrote above about the palindromic structure of settler-colonial narratives, that back-to-the-future motion of history repeating itself in a promised land of futurity. But what happens when the promised land is already occupied by other people? Veracini writes that "settler migration remains an act of non-discovery" based upon the "non-encounter" by settlers of indigenous people (*Settler Colonialism* 98). He elaborates,

> Settler projects are inevitably premised on the traumatic, that is, *violent*, replacement and/or displacement of indigenous Others. However . . . settler colonialism also needs to disavow any foundational violence (75)

The reason for this disavowal is that settler collectives—which Veracini calls "traumatized societies *par excellence*"—are "also *escaping* from violence" in whatever place they left, and

> a 'secure future' in a new land is recurrently and dialectically opposed to an 'uncertain prospect' in an old one, and a determination to produce a settled political body is routinely expressed. (76-77)

Morrison frames the same idea, playing out specifically in America, like this:

> The flight from the Old World to the New is generally seen to be a flight from oppression and limitation to freedom and possibility. . . . the attraction was of the "clean slate" variety, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity not only to be born again but to be born again in new clothes, as it were. The new setting would provide new raiments of self. (34)

"Non-encounter," then, means pretending that foundational violence never occurred, and that the violence necessary to maintain or expand settlements never occurred (for instance the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and its resulting wars or, later, the Snake War of 1864-68). It also means, frequently, disavowing indigenous presence altogether. There are many strategies for performing non-encounter, but the primary strategies I have found at play in Poe's *Rodman* and *Pym* are 1) "frontier" spaces evacuated of—yet paradoxically haunted by—indigenous Others; 2) disavowing the humanity of indigenous people by camouflaging them as part of the "natural" landscape. Each of these strategies is a mode of not-seeing that furnishes alibis for settlers.

Evacuated Frontier Spaces.

I will begin with the matter of "frontier" spaces evacuated of/haunted by indigenous Others. Veracini calls this strategy "perception transfer," in which "indigenous peoples are disavowed in a variety of ways and their actual presence is not registered." He elaborates,

> Examples of a systematic propensity to "empty" the landscape of its original inhabitants are ubiquitous: indigenous people are not seen, they lurk in thickets; ultimately, even if they were around, they may have been wiped out by a variety of what the Massachusetts Puritans called Providence's "wonderful preparation." . . . One of its consequences is that when really existing indigenous people enter the field of settler perception, they are deemed to have entered the settler space and can therefore be considered exogenous. (*Settler Colonialism* 36-37)

The clearest example of "perception transfer" in Poe's work, in which indigenous people are "not seen" or "lurk in thickets," is found in *Rodman*, although *Pym*'s Tsalal is similarly evacuated. At the beginning of *Rodman* the reader is set up to anticipate encounter and violent conflict:

> We designed to pass through the heart of a country infested with Indian tribes, of whom we knew nothing except by vague report, and whom we had every reason to believe ferocious and treacherous. (31)

"Infested," a term the narrator repeats, connotes a disorganized, parasitical existence and calls to mind Andrew Jackson's 1830 "Message to Congress: On Indian Removal," which asks,

> What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute . . . ? (161)

Strategic rhetoric shapes Jackson's willful blindness: the projected Republic is "studded" and "embellished" with jewel-like "art and industry," whereas forests and aimless "savages" are nothing but debris cluttering up the canvas.[64] Despite *Rodman*'s suggestive set-up, however, encounter and conflict are deferred. The narrator relates that "we had resolved to avoid, as far as possible, any meetings with the Indians" (33), and in this they are spectacularly successful. Traversing rivers in a birch canoe and a keelboat, the party camps almost exclusively on islands and never has reason to bivouac. The keelboat is heavily cargoed with not only provisions but trade goods—"silk and cotton handkerchiefs; thread, lines, and twine; hats, shoes, and hose; small cutlery and ironmongery; calicoes and printed cottons; Manchester goods; twist and carrot tobacco; milled blankets; and glass toys, beads, etc, etc." (40)—yet the reader never witnesses trading. Indians "hover" on the river bank by the end of the first chapter (as though their feet do not touch the land), but nothing more is said of this first contact. The second chapter describes a landscape at "the mouth of the river Platte" that is cleansed of humans "as this was the hunting

[64] European settlers of North America brought with them the idea of "wilderness" that is "a spatial correlative of unreason, madness," and "inhuman anarchy" (Stilgoe 11).

season, and they were doubtless engaged in the prairies, taking buffalo" (53). "The Editors" note that Rodman's party "had also passed the great village of the Omahas," of which Rodman takes no notice because "the boats probably went by it during the night" (69).

Rodman's party continues to not-see indigenous people until, at last, there is an encounter—although even this is kept at a sanitary distance. While on the Missouri river, Rodman and his fellows sight "a large party of mounted savages . . . coming down [a] gorge in single file, with the evident intention of taking us unawares." The party of Sioux "savages" amounts to about one hundred, the narrator says, and they "galloped down upon us." As luck would have it, however, the river bank happens to be "remarkably steep and high," so that the "savages" cannot reach the keelboat (81). The Sioux halt on horseback at the top of the high bank and Rodman's party stays in its boat, so that the text's central "encounter" is acted out like a theatrical production with the Sioux out of reach on their own "stage." The theatrics are enhanced by the narrator's note that the Sioux are "picturesque," "really gallant-looking men" (82). The confrontation swiftly devolves into what can only be described as a vaudeville farce. For no matter how majestic the Sioux look, they prove to be simpleminded to the point of slapstick: they are convinced by the silver-tongued Canadian, Jules, that the cannon on the keelboat is a displeased grasshopper god. The "savage" warriors beat a hasty retreat—but not without a some of their blood spilled first. The explorers' encounter with the Sioux on the high riverbank is, perhaps, a strain of not-seeing that is not mentioned by theorists of settler colonialism: not-seeing through stage farce. If the indigenous men have "gallant" good looks and simple minds, they are not "real men." If the indigenous men are onstage, they are only pretend; and if they are only pretend, they cannot have any natal or legal claims to land.

Camouflage.

The Journal of Julius Rodman vacillates on the western American landscape, indecisive about which features to pull forward and which to keep in the background in this newly "discovered" world. In the rare instances where the text notes evidence of indigenous life, it is camouflaged with the organic, even to the point of being indistinguishable from dirt. For instance, Rodman's party stops "to examine some remarkable mounds" of "various sizes, and shapes, all formed of sand and mud" and he confesses that

> I could not make up my mind whether these hillocks were of natural or artificial construction. I should have supposed them made by the Indians, but for the general appearance of the soil, which had apparently been subjected to the violent action of water.

"The Editors" murmur in a footnote, "These mounds are now well understood to indicate the position of the ancient city of the Ottoes" (54). How do "The Editors" understand that the mounds are human-made while Rodman the narrator cannot tell the difference? A hint of the answer lies in yet another footnote provided by "The Editors", in which they write that Rodman's account of particular locations do not match those of Captain Lewis (of the Lewis and Clark Expedition): There is no "falsity" in Rodman's "exaggeration, except in view of a general sentiment upon the thing seen and described. As regards his own mind, the apparent gaudiness of color is the absolute and only true tint" (47-8). Rodman, then, beams the tints of his sentiment outward upon "things seen and described." It is not willful blindness so much as the uncrackable sureness of this centered Enlightenment (white, educated, male) subject. That "The Editors" know that the mounds are manmade but Rodman cannot make this distinction—and that this is indicated on a footnote on the very same page—frames "The Editors" as a competing narrative, one that creates dramatic irony. The reader begins to wonder what *else* Rodman is not

interpreting correctly—and even whether he might be surprised by violence as a result of his self-assured blindness.

Unlike Julius Rodman, in his adventures abroad Arthur Gordon Pym suffers from epistemic anxiety and perceptual doubt. Perhaps the eeriest moment in *Pym*, among its myriad sensationally-wrought episodes, is a quiet moment in the penultimate chapter. Hiding out from the black-skinned Tsalalian "savages," Pym and his shipmate, Dirk Peters, find themselves in a weird system of chasms and gorges of stone which, the narrator confides, "we could scarcely bring ourselves to believe . . . altogether the work of nature" (199). The chasms are "covered to the depth of three or four inches with a powder almost impalpable," and in places "choked up" with heaps of "sharp flints somewhat resembling arrowheads" (200-1). Pym and Peters discover several "indentures" in the wall of the chasm, including what may or may not be a "rude" representation of a human figure, and some hieroglyphs. But while Peters is inclined to think these indentures are man-made, Pym convince[s] him of his error

> by directing his attention to the floor of the fissure, where, among the powder, we picked up, piece by piece, several large flakes of the marl, which had evidently been broken off by some convulsion from the surface where the indentures were found, and which had projecting points exactly fitting the indentures; thus proving them to have been the work of nature. (202)

This moment of indecision caps a series of similar oscillations. For example, Pym is at first convinced that the Tsalalians, who are "thickly embodied" and "natural" to the point of caricature with their blunt language, animal-skin clothing, wood and stone tools, and houses that are tree stumps or "mere holes dug in the earth" and "covered with branches" (171), are naively friendly. So, when the Tsalalians kill most of the English party with which Pym is traveling by entrapping them in a ravine and crushing them, Pym is sure that the ravine's walls, "by some convulsion of nature, or probably from their own weight, caved in overhead" (184). Only later

does he find evidence that the Tsalalians had engineered the landslide. Despite Pym's "proof" of the naturalness of the hieroglyphs, then, and the logical, assured fashion by which he reaches this proof, the passage is queasy with not-knowing. Out here in the black granite bowels of the frontier, not knowing whether to categorize a thing as natural or made is to have completely lost one's bearings, to have succumbed to epistemological free-fall.

Rodman's and Pym's tremulous ability to see and then not-see manmade mounds and hieroglyphs is an outgrowth of the larger colonial project that provides the impetus for their adventures. Césaire writes, "colonization='thingification'"(qtd. in Johnson 22), short-handing how colonization necessitates the dehumanization and instrumentalization of the colonized—how, that is, colonization defines subject-object positions. At the same time, Césaire hints at how colonization works, to again quote Grosz, as a "cutting of the world" (78), with all its violent connotations, into new, recognizable, and *useful* pieces. Rodman's and Pym's oscillations between blindness and seeing mark a twilit liminal zone where things can be pulled forward into the clearing of cultural comprehensibility—or not. These oscillations are also outgrowths of the discovery doctrine and its aggressively-marked distinction between the "natural" and the "made" world. The legal right of European Christian nations to claim and conquer non-Christian realms was well-entrenched by the Age of Discovery, and during the nineteenth century (and to this day) was enmeshed in U.S. court cases involving Native American land rights. The United States Supreme Court made a series of decisions in the first part of the nineteenth century, notably 1823's *Johnson v. M'Intosh*, in which Chief Justice Marshall wrote extensively about what Morrison calls North America's "mandate for conquest" (3):

> On the discovery of this immense continent, the great nations of Europe … as they were all in pursuit of nearly the same object, it was necessary, in order to avoid conflicting settlements, and consequent war with each other, to establish a principle which all should acknowledge as the law

by which the right of acquisition, which they all asserted, should be regulated as between themselves. This principle was that discovery gave title to the government by whose subjects, or by whose authority, it was made, against all other European governments, which title might be consummated by possession. (qtd. in Shapiro 162)

The endeavor of European "discovery" has a gaping blind spot at its heart; "discovery" can only be executed by European subjects or those gifted with the "authority" of a European government—who Marshall refers to as "all" and "they all." In a sweep, "discovery" or "possession" by any others is rendered not only illegal but simply gone from the gameboard. Although Marshall's decision is considered by those in the legal profession to be a foundation for United States landownership law, it is premised not only upon a chummy agreement ("between themselves") in the old boys' club of European nations, but on settler colonial not-seeing. The blindness to indigenous populations that the discovery doctrine—in practice as well as in Marshall's decision—is, yes, breathtaking in its bigotry, but more interestingly, it is an intricate, even fantastical performance that recasts and objectifies the materiality of indigenous human beings and North American land.

One condition of possibility for the discovery doctrine was a conceptual polarization of Christianity/Enterprise/Humanness on one side, and Non-Christian/Idleness/Naturalness on the other. European conquerors (and the ideologies that supported them) framed themselves as the standard of humanness, and indigenous people and their beliefs and technologies inevitably toppled entirely off this graph into the margins of the quasi-animal, or Golden Age throwbacks, or, in a more sinister mood, devils. Whatever the case, non-European people were deemed more "natural," less "finished" than Europeans. Captain John Smith's 1616 *A Description of New England* lays out this binary in terms that are not only familiar to students of American history, but which are part and parcel of settler mythology: The "planting and building a foundation for

[the colonist's] Posteritie" is "gotte from the rude earth," by the work of his hands. The indigenous people of New England, on the other hand, "are idle, because they know not what to doe," and so it is recommended not only to "converte those poore Savages to know Christ, and humanitie" but to set them to work, because these natives' "labors with discretion will triple charge and paines" (20). The colonist, in sum, is advised to convert the "rude earth" into pay dirt, and convert the similarly "rude" native idlers into Christian workers who, at last, may come to know "humanitie." Since, as Daston writes, "*artificialia* are made, *naturalia* are found" (20), it was of the utmost importance for pamphlets promoting colonization, such as Smith's, to emphasize the naturalness, the "foundness," and thus the availability of the landscape ("natural" availability was frequently colored with erotic language, which Kolodny calls "the land's implicit sexuality" [12]). The terms of Smith's discovery and settlement, like those of much of the discourse of North America's settlement, are the conversion of a fallow, "rudely" contoured organic landscape into a world of made things—"Fields, Gardens, Orchards, Buildings, Ships" (99)—as well as indigenous workers whose profitability is certain. Such terms produce an organic/inorganic divide that is thus both a reason for and a product of colonization. Whether or not a nonhuman thing—or a person—is "made" or "natural" becomes the pivotal index for primacy or subjection.

Because the categories of "natural" and "made" are so critical to the settler colonial project, the "natural" indigenous person is a persistent motif in discourse from the nighteenth and nineteenth Centuries. Writers of European descent (with Thoreau's interest in aboriginal stone tools as a notable exception) time and again remark upon not only the naturalness, but the organic fragility of indigenous technologies—birch canoes, reed wigwams, animal skin clothing—with the implication that European technologies are longer-lasting. And indigenous

bodies are just as "natural," just as subject to decay, as indigenous technologies. The Huron "urchins" in Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, for example, blend "so nicely . . . with the withered herbage, that at first it seemed as if the earth had, in truth, swallowed up their forms" (225), and in the same novel Heyward, bizarrely, mistakes a beaver colony for a bustling Indian town. Since indigenous bodies and technologies are so very natural, their contours blur with the surrounding landscape, and this camouflage effect is, after all, the important point, since it allowed the territorial principle of the discovery doctrine to encompass and subsume the human inhabitants of the territory in question. In other words, the indigenous people must be understood to be made of the very same dirt as the land. For example, Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, describing his dissection of an aboriginal burial mound, explains that the human remains are "entangled and held together in clusters by the earth," and the skulls are "so tender, that they generally fell to pieces on being touched" (104-5). These remains are quite literally attached to, and of, the "rude," indeterminate earth.

But these organic, dissolved bodies become rich compost for white farmers: Jefferson mentions large burial mounds which are "much reduced in their height, and spread in width, by the plough, and will probably disappear in time" (106). The inevitable entropy of indigenous Americans—who "will probably disappear"—is of course a centerpiece of United States settler colonial discourse; Jackson's 1830 *Message to Congress*, for example, cites "the progress of decay" of the "savages," who "have melted away to make room for the whites." Jefferson's comments on the ploughed-under burial mounds indicate how this supposedly unstoppable decay is closely tied to the indistinctness of "savage" matter and its kinship with dirt. And it must be noted that, if indigenous bodies are fertilizer for white farmers, then the "mere matter" of these bodies will in turn become nutrients to "make" white bodies. The disappearance of Indians, then,

is not a theoretical disappearance in a puff of smoke, but a material disappearance through incorporation into white bodies. William Cullen Bryant's "An Indian at the Burying-Place of His Fathers" repeats the motif of plowed-under of Indian bones ("That pale race, who waste us now, / Among their [the buried Indian dead] . . . guide the plow" [67)]), but Joel Barlow's "The Hasty Pudding" (1793, 1796) drives the point home. This poem's agrarian-settler fantasy is supported logically as well as structurally (the opening stanza describes a "squaw" cooking "hasty pudding," or Indian mush) by an elided indigenous body, an elision that is covered up by the aggressive assertion of *Anglo* indigenity. Indigenity is, it seems, produced by the speaker ingesting the corn of the Indians: "[Indian Corn's] constellation ruled my natal morn,/ And all my bones were made of Indian corn" (6). Barlow's lines are meant to be humorous, but the connection to Jefferson's Indian bone-meal compost is unmistakable. In both cases, the gesture is the same: the settler-colonizer absorbs indigenity, and so constitutes his white subjectivity, through the ingestion of particulate Indian nutrients. The effect is a sort of abstracted cannibalism, one which would be impossible if it were not for the tendency of indigenous bodies to decay and fall to pieces, to "melt away" into the soil.[65]

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[65] As the motif of Indian-bone compost suggests, and countless discursive fantasies about New World "savages" attest, cannibalism is connected to the thingification of "natural," decaying bodies. In *Pym*, cannibalism first comes into Pym's mind when he is starving, and a careening ship full of human corpses passes his sinking brig. When a carnivorous seagull drops a "horrid morsel" of human flesh at his feet, Pym relates: "now, for the first time, there flashed through my mind a thought, a thought which I will not mention. . . . I sprang forward quickly, and, with a deep shudder, threw the frightful thing into the sea" (102). This temptation of a "frightful thing" that heretofore had no place in Pym's "civilized" world is only one of many signals that his world is dissolving. Starving and parched with thirst, the task of holding fast to the outlines of the things of his world becomes nearly impossible, and so things and people lose their meanings, take on new ones, and trade places. The four unlucky castaways are potential meals for sharks, while a living tortoise salvaged from the ship's hold serves as a water jug, as they slowly drain the liquid contents of the animal's "sack" (their earthenware jug filled up, in an inversion of its use-value, with a gelatinous mass of vermin). They cut up a leather trunk—everyone is equipped with knives, which are often called forth to slice and stab—and eat it, actively dicing a thing of

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Poe's major discovery stories are haunted by the failure of settler colonial discourse—by the breakdown of linearity, screen memory, palindromic meaning-making, and settler not-seeing. *Rodman*'s screen memory, in its excessive artifice, feels suspect; Julius Rodman's inability to interpret the evidence of the city of the Ottoes while "The Editors" *can* gives rise to unnerving dramatic irony; *Pym*'s similar breakdown of interpretive abilities, compounded by his own insufficient settler not-seeing, generate paranoia and dread; and the narrator of "Ms. Found in a Bottle" loses his selfhood completely amid the undoing of palindromic meaning-making and the abomination of open-ended white history. Notably, all of the instances of textual haunting in these stories are the result of malfunctioning interpretive toolkits—toolkits with which, at the outset of their journeys, these explorers were confidently armed. It is perhaps strange that stories about Anglo explorers—ostensibly out to master the world—devolve in such a fashion (even if readers of Poe would expect nothing else). Morrison writes,

> it is difficult to read the literature of young America without being struck by how antithetical it is to our modern rendition if the American Dream. How pronounced in it is the absence of that term's elusive mixture of hope, realism, materialism, and promise. For a people who made much

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"civilization" into new kinds of things; when one of the castaways, Augustus, perishes, he is so decayed that his arm falls off when they heave him overboard, marking the dissolution of even a human body into fragmented things. The tortoise who has been their jug is later cut up into pieces and placed inside jugs and bottles. The climax of the castaway section arrives when the men decide to draw lots and eat one of their number. The loser, Parker, who has his own history of knife-violence, is "stabbed in the back," and after the others have "taken off the hands, feet, and head," along with the entrails, and thrown them into the sea, his culturally legible "body" becomes what Hortense Spillers calls "flesh," "that zero degree of social conceptualization" (67). Cutting off his hands and head sever him from his personhood, but cutting off his hands also negates his ability to use a knife, or any tool. In other words, the cannibals have re-cut their world and rendered a person a thing, and simultaneously they have cut so that Parker, no longer a subject, cannot cut *them*.

of their "newness"—their potential, freedom, and innocence—it is striking how dour, how troubled, how frightened and haunted our early and founding literature truly is. (35)

Morrison goes on to argue that young America's literature is darkened by the specter of Africanness and the crimes of slavery, and I would like to suggest that this literature is additionally darkened by settler colonial discourse's elision of America's *other* originating crimes. In the courses of their journeys, Poe's explorers lose confidence *specifically* in their ability to interpret indigenous humans and landscapes. As a result, these stories make both visible and strange the engineered quality of settler colonial perspective, the way it is preoccupied with the objectification of indigenous people and land, and the way it spans, bridge-like, over competing perspectives that—as *Rodman*'s mounds and *Pym*'s hieroglyphs indicate—are *equally valid*. That there are other, equally valid perspectives is perhaps the central horror these explorers face. Poe's discovery stories are structured by settler colonial discourse, but they are haunted by what settler discourse will not admit.

Chapter Four

America the Crime Scene

Between 1841 and 1844, Poe published three stories that were to become the urtexts for the detective story genre: "The Murders in the Rue Morgue, "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," and "The Purloined Letter," all starring sleuth Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin and his "peculiar analytic ability" of ratiocination ("Rue Morgue" 533). Features originated by Poe in these stories have since become genre tropes that persist, largely unaltered, to this day. Thus, we are presented with a fascinating circumstance in which antebellum mores circulate through contemporary popular media, from mass market paperbacks and "literary" mysteries, to television serials and big budget Hollywood thrillers. Two questions immediately arise. First, why haven't Poe's tropes lost their luster after nearly two hundred years? Second, what is at stake if storytellers today are still rehearsing tropes that retain distinctly antebellum tints? In this chapter, I argue that Poe's use of what are now considered the "classic" detective story tropes—reconstructive plots, armchair detectives, clues hidden in plain sight, and young, beautiful, female murder victims—belong within a genealogy of North American settler colonial discourse. It is my contention that Poe's Dupin stories—whose plots are built, like settler discourse, on originating crimes—

activate settler colonial discursive techniques to circumscribe reality, truth, and the difference between persons and things. At stake is our understanding of—and complicity in—the ideological ancestry of a genre that is still widely reiterated in Western popular culture.

Poe is universally considered the founder of the detective story genre, a genre that not only survives but thrives to this day. David Lehman writes that "Critics who may disagree on everything else concur in regarding Poe as the most significant figure in the detective story's history and development" (xiv). Authors of detective stories, too, credit Poe with not only having invented their genre, but inspiring their own work. P. D. James writes that "the detective story as we know it appears for the first time in the work of Edgar Allan Poe, to whom belongs the credit of establishing its main conventions" (639). Dorothy Sayers writes that "the wayward genius of Edgar Allan Poe" produced works in which "the general principles of the detective-story were laid down forever" (72); Alfred Hitchcock said that "It is because I liked Edgar Allan Poe's stories so much that I began to make suspense films" (qtd. in Peeples 148); Lewis D. Moore writes that Poe's three Dupin stories "stand, with the particular aid of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series, as an interpretive model for both development and divergence in the hard-boiled detective tradition" (8); Conan Doyle himself wrote that Poe's tales

> were one of the greatest landmarks and starting points in the literature of the past century for French as well as English writers. For those tales have been so pregnant with suggestion, so stimulating to the minds of others that it may be said of them that each is a root from which a whole literature has developed. . . . Where was the detective story until Poe breathed the life into it? (qtd. in Winkler 201-202)

To top all of that, Mystery Writers of America's annual awards are called the "Edgars." Evidence of Poe's influence on the crime genres could not be more abundant. Further, Poe's innovations (reconstructive plots, armchair detectives, clues hidden in plain sight, and young, beautiful, female murder victims) are taken for granted even by the most casual viewer of

television mystery shows. And yet I, as a professional writer of detective stories myself, cannot help but wonder what sort of antebellum ideologies I reiterate in my books. This matter begins to feel urgent if we take to heart Alyce Von Rothkirch's assertion that the success of a detective story depends upon the exploitation of readers' social fears; that, according to A. D. Smith, "characteristic forms or styles and genres of certain historical configurations" are the "core" of ethnicity (qtd. in Chríost 30); and that the "subject is engendered precisely by the process of its engagement in the narrative genres" (de Lauretis qtd. in Malina 1). If Poe's genre innovations still have life today, then so, on some level or other, do the social fears that produced them. Likewise, if genre formulates ethnicity and Poe's genre innovations are alive and well, then contemporary detective stories must formulate ethnicity that in some way draws from or resembles that formulated in Poe's detective stories.

The germ of this chapter came to me when, looking around myself at an awards banquet at one of the largest mystery writers' conventions in the world, I wondered about the politics of the genre in which I work. Detective stories in 2019 are peopled predominantly with white characters, with the enormously popular "traditional" and "cozy" mysteries most often set in small British, American, and Scandinavian towns that are overridingly—and unrealistically—white. These stories traverse well-worn paths in which outsiders interrupt rural idylls, or rot festers from within seemingly perfect rural idylls, or in which anti-agrarian forces such as real estate developers threaten rural idylls. I could not help but wonder at that convention: was I participating in some sort of unexamined white nationalism project? I also wondered, why do mystery readers wish to retreat to small, white towns when reading about murder? What is it about that rural idyll—indeed, the "Garden"—that makes it such a perennially fruitful setting for this genre? Beyond white nationalism, why does the genre fetishize young, beautiful, female

murder victims? (Although there is overlap here, because the quintessential murderee is also white, and very often blond.) What motivates the genre's anxiety about the boundaries of rural communities? And, do the answers to these questions lie at the beginnings of the genre, with Poe?

To investigate, in the following pages, after briefly addressing the paradox (or not) of the Dupin trilogy's Parisian setting, I read Poe's detective genre innovations against the settler colonial discursive techniques I introduced in Chapter Three.

The Paradox of the Dupin Trilogy's Parisian Setting

In Chapter Three, I discussed settler discursive techniques in Poe stories that are overtly about colonial discovery in North America and other frontier spaces. This chapter is an analysis of the same techniques in Poe's detective stories. But before moving on to that analysis, I must address the apparent paradox of the setting of Poe's Dupin trilogy, which is limited to Paris and its suburbs. After all, 1840s Paris is, at least on the face of things, just about as far away from a "frontier" as you can get. Is it not?

While Poe was fantasizing about Paris in the beginnings of the detective story genre, his direct genre descendants in France apparently could not help but fantasize about America. In "The *Flâneur*," Walter Benjamin describes how, among the earliest authors of detective stories—and following close on the heels of Poe—were French writers who persistently made analogies between Paris and the North American "wilderness." For instance, Dumas's *Mohicans de Paris* rhetorically links the forests and prairies of America and a Continental urban jungle, making Paris a "hunting-ground" and its hero a Natty Bumppo-esque stalker. Even *Mohicans de Paris*'s illustrations, Benjamin writes, continue this surprising analogy: "The woodcut used as a

frontispiece in the third volume shows a bushy [Paris] street . . . the caption under this picture reads: 'The tropical forest in the Rue d'Enfer'" (41). In addition, Benjamin writes that a detective story by Feval "had involved a redskin in the adventures of a metropolis" (42), Baudelaire wrote of "cities buzzing in our ears louder than an American forest" (qtd. in Benjamin 62), and Balzac wrote,

> The poetry of terror of which the American woods with their hostile tribes on the warpath encountering each other are so full—this poetry which stood Cooper in such good stead attaches in the same way to the smallest details of Parisian life. The pedestrians, the shops, the hired coaches, or a man leaning against a window—all this was of the same burning interest . . . as a tree stump, a beaver's den, a rock, a buffalo skin, an immobile canoe, or a floating leaf. (qtd. in Benjamin 42)

For these French writers, there is a compelling overlap between the phenomena of urban Europe and that of an American forest. And somehow, the birth of the detective story is sited here.

Benjamin accounts for American "wilderness" fantasy motifs appearing in early French detective stories by connecting them to the also fantastical lone (white, male) individual faced with the enormity of a wild new continent. "The original social content of the detective story was the obliteration of the individual's traces in the big-city crowd," he writes ("The *Flâneur*" 43). We are meant to understand—in a move that for Benjamin is surprisingly unanchored by materiality—that Mohicans in Paris, or a European city street layered rhetorically with beaver dens and buffalo skins, are merely shorthand for an apprehension of incommensurability. Yet in *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin quotes Meryon and Ponson du Terrail's explanation of the same sort of phenomenon, who approach from a related, though different, angle:

> There is an effort to master the new experiences of the city within the framework of the old traditional experiences of nature. Hence the schemata of the virgin forest and the sea. (qtd. in Benjamin *Arcades Project* 447)

Taken together, Benjamin's quotes from "The *Flâneur*" and from *The Arcades Project* highlight a spatial-temporal paradox. In the Meryon and Ponson du Terrail explanation for urban-wilderness analogies, wilderness is "old," something belonging to, presumably, a historical Europe. Yet Benjamin's explanation for the same type of analogy refers to a *new* world wilderness. Which is it? Does it matter? In fact, the spatial-temporal paradox here mimics the back-to-the-future motion of settler palindromic narratives, which I discussed in Chapter Three. Both of Benjamin's formulations evince a craving for the "virgin forest" to say something more, about the past, about the future, about human selves.

Poe's abundant Old World-set fiction, too, evinces craving: for rich and mysterious worlds, laden with mystical possibility and a more profound attachment to the earth ("Ligeia" stands out as a vivid example). Critics have frequently explained Poe's Old World settings (or should I say Old World-*ish*, as I would describe the Europe of Disney films) as products of the gothic tradition, or of Poe's interest in the gothic tradition. Contrastingly, John Evelev argues that with Poe's use of "vaguely specified European settings and times," he "wrote with reprinting in mind, making the text available or open for appropriation into as many publishing contexts as possible" (161). I do not disagree with either of these explanations but would add that, regarding each other from across the Atlantic, nineteenth-century American and French writers may have been orientalizing each other. Orientalizing gazes, even when they are not vicious, still essentialize, glamorize. They have taproots deeply buried in wistfulness, desire, and, if one is psychoanalytically inclined, the subconscious. They are gazes that tell us more about the spectator than what is purportedly being observed. Edward W. Said writes that the Orient was for Europe "one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (1) and that "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate

and even underground self" (3). Following Said's ideas, I suggest that the Old World is one of America's constitutive Others. For an American writer like Poe, the Old World is a site of irrationality, primal darkness, and "a useless, binding, repulsive past" (Morrison 35). Irrational Paris, with its teeming population, weird murk, rabbit warren neighborhoods, and foolish police force, is the perfect backdrop for Dupin's clean, supreme rationality. (Or, perhaps, irrational Paris provides the ideal audience of dupes for Dupin's trickery, as I will explain later.) When Dupin is set off against Paris thus, he does not seem *of* Paris as much as a sort of New Man constructed over and against Paris. Indeed, the very pinnacle of settler manhood in an urban wilderness.[66]

Poe's First Genre Innovation: Reconstructive Plots

A frequent criticism of Poe's Dupin stories is that their chilly plotting takes primacy over feeling. For instance, Timothy Steele writes that "the three Dupin pieces are almost completely exercises in analysis," and they are characterized "by sensational mechanical effects and a paucity of emotional substance" ("The Structure of Detective Story" 562). John T. Irwin writes that "analytic detective fiction . . . invented by Poe in the Dupin tales of the 1840s" is "a genre that grows out of an interest in deductions and solutions rather than in love and drama" (1). Howard Haycraft complains of "Marie Rogêt" that "As a story, it scarcely exists. It has no life-blood. The characters neither move nor speak. . . . Only a professional student of analytics or an inveterate devotee of criminology can read it with any degree of unfeigned interest" (16-17).

[66] Lewis writes in *The American Adam*, "The proposition, implicit in much American writing . . . [is] that the valid rite of initiation for the individual in the new world is not an initiation *into* society, but, given the character of society, an initiation *away from it*" (115).

Jacques Lacan remarks of "The Purloined Letter" that "everything transpires like clockwork" ("Seminar on the Purloined Letter" 30). But obscured beneath such commentary is that Poe innovated the special narrative construction of the detective story. In this structure, the narrative begins after a crime has been committed and the detective reconstructs the events surrounding the crime by interpreting clues. Two features of this construction stand out. First, the story's events are out of order, with the entire focus—until the final exposure of the criminal—cast backward upon the inciting crime. Second, the *re*construction of events is also nonlinear, with the detective piecing together clues out of order, until at last, with the final clue locking into place, the events may at last be understood in a linear fashion.

Some critics give the construction of Poe's detective stories the benefit of being modernist. For instance, David Frisby writes that "The corpse at the beginning of the detective story, that ruin of a life left there unexplained in terms of its origins, exemplifies . . . newness, absolutely" (94). Others have argued, conversely, that Poe's narrative structures pay tribute to very *old* literary forms. Norman Ravvin argues that Poe's work embodies "an interruption of the archaic" (2), and Timothy Steele writes (in no uncertain terms),

> The detective story is undeniably Aristotelian in a variety of ways, and whatever the customary attitudes toward it, it is unquestionably sustained by literary conventions which have a long history. Furthermore, the detective story, despite its recent origin (Poe being generally considered the father of the genre), does wear a distinctly 'unmodern' aspect. Although much modern fiction represents a flight from prearrangement and order, the successful detective story inevitably offers a narrative which is clearly structured ("The Structure of the Detective Story" 556)

But while Poe's detective stories do indeed depend, in a manner of which Aristotle would probably approve, upon sturdy plotting, I argue that their reconstructive plots pay tribute to neither newness nor oldness but, rather, critique discursive concealment, celebrate linear history, and concretize always-already truth. It is productive to read these gestures within the context of

settler self-fashioning (to borrow a term from Huang and Weaver-Hightower). As I discussed in the previous chapter, Poe's three stories of aborted discovery—*Rodman*, *Pym*, and "Ms. Found in a Bottle"—serve up dark colonial journeys whose linearity, screen memory, and attempts at making meaning in time and space are sources of unease and horror. By contrast, Poe's three Dupin stories and their innovative reconstructive plots present, if not optimistic, then coldly controlled revisions of the same problems. Thus, the Dupin stories perform *and* interrogate features of settler narrative form. Poe's Dupin stories begin with obscured violence—inexplicable corpses, a missing letter with devastating contents—the truth of which is hidden. In the process of reconstructing linear history, Dupin exposes hidden original crimes. The Dupin stories accomplish two things: first, they *expose hidden violent origins*, counter to one function of settler narrative form; second, they *celebrate the always-already presence of linear history and truth*, working in tune with settler narrative form.

In order to illustrate, I think it will be useful to outline the unusual structures of the three Dupin stories.

"The Murders in the Rue Morgue."

-Like many nineteenth-century stories, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" gets off to a slow and convoluted start. Before we arrive at the murder mystery, pages are devoted to ruminating preamble about "analytical power" and "the faculty of re-solution," the circumstances of the narrator meeting Dupin and their lives together in Paris, and an episode that exemplifies concisely Dupin's powers and methods of deduction. Thus, the story is thickly framed by theory, context, and atmosphere—features that are not granted much space in the plotted portion of the story.

-The narrator and Dupin read a newspaper article about the "extraordinary murders" of two women at their home in the Rue Morgue. (The newspaper account has its own timeline, which begins with the discovery of two corpses in a trashed and bloody Paris home.)

-The narrator and Dupin read another newspaper article the next day, which includes statements from several witnesses and many more details surrounding the circumstances and aftermath of the murders.

-Dupin discusses with the narrator his "opinion respecting the murders" (544). Dupin damns the Parisian police as having "no method in their proceedings," saying that they have become blind to the truth "by holding the object too close" (545). Dupin and the narrator decide to investigate the murders themselves, because "an inquiry will afford us amusement" (546).

-Dupin and narrator visit the Rue Morgue, examining for themselves the house and neighborhood in the company of a *gendarme*. After leaving, Dupin steps briefly into a newspaper office, with no explanation given to the narrator (or the reader).

-The next day, Dupin hints to the narrator that he has already solved the crime. He says he is awaiting the presence of a person he has invited to their home, via a newspaper advertisement for a found Ourang-Outang. Dupin then engages the narrator in a dialectic in which Dupin is apparently already in possession of the solution and is merely leading the narrator through an imaginative reconstruction of the crime.[67] Dupin reveals late in this exchange a tuft of Ourang-Outang fur and a hair ribbon that he removed from the crime scene and withheld from the police (and the reader). These are the pivotal clues that crack the case open.

-A sailor, the owner of the missing Ourang-Outang and the ribbon, arrives. Dupin coaxes him into a full confession of how his marauding pet killed the women in the Rue Morgue.

-A brief narratorial summary relays that the sailor was "instantly released, upon our narration of the circumstances . . . at the *bureau* of the Prefect of police" (568).

"The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is shrouded with constricting layers. Not only does it begin with exposition and backstory, but the majority of the story is relayed through newspaper articles, which have their own nested sub-timelines, and through Dupin's dialogue about what he surmised (the previous day) at the crime scene, and finally the sailor's dialogue about the circumstances of the crime (in the past). Even the denouement, describing how the sailor was released by the police, reads as though from a great distance. Far from simply being related in past tense, then, this story is bogged down by the past; the only events that are related in "real time" take up the span of a few brief paragraphs: Dupin and the narrator visiting the crime scene,

[67] This dialectic is the prototype for similar exchanges between Holmes and Watson and innumerable detective duos thereafter.

Dupin stopping by the newspaper office, and the arrival of the sailor at Dupin's house. The rest of the story has its eye trained backward, iterating and reiterating the violent past. The way truth is accessed in this story, from a structural standpoint, works like layered transparency sheets, each adding additional details about the crime. The first two layers are the "official" newspaper accounts which, while they do not contain grievous errors, lack critical pieces of information, rendering the crime seemingly insoluble. The next layer is Dupin's dialogic account after he has examined the crime scene himself, and the final layer that brings the entire picture into full clarity is the sailor's account.

On one level, the journey that the sailor describes apes the circular, colonial narrative structure: he leaves his home in France, travels abroad (to Borneo among, presumably, other places), and returns home, yet he does not return home as he left it. Now he is saddled with a large and threatening living cargo. He tells Dupin how troublesome the home voyage was, "occasioned by the intractable ferocity of his captive" (564). An "intractable" captive on a ship may, of course, be compared to captive Africans voyaging across the middle passage, particularly since the sailor's "ultimate design" is to sell the Ourang-Outang. Further aping the African slave trade, the sailor uses a whip to control the Ourang-Outang. Because the end result of importing the captive is senseless murder, we understand the sailor's journey is a failure. This is not a functional circle that may be repeated *ad nauseum*; the murders have reshaped what should have been a circular pattern into a linear one by swerving the story into a new, violent direction.

"The Mystery of Marie Rogêt"

-The narrator's introduction mounts his story as "real" by remarking upon its similarity to the (historical) fate of Mary Cecilia Rogers in New York. He says that the story of Marie Rogêt,

eerily similar to the recent sensation of Mary Rogers, is something "I both heard and saw so long ago" (724). Thus Poe's fiction pretends to be a sort of typological precursor to actual history.

-The narrator summarizes at length the circumstances surrounding the violent end of Marie Rogêt, a Parisian perfume counter girl discovered bound and dead in the Seine. This initial summary is not framed as a newspaper article or hearsay, but in the neutral metalanguage of Truth.

-Because the mystery remains unsolved a month after Marie's death, Dupin is recruited by the police to help get to the bottom of things. The prefect of the police pays a call upon Dupin and the narrator at their home and tells them more details about the case.

-The narrator procures a police report and copies of every newspaper covering the case, and brings them to Dupin at home.

-Dupin and the narrator review the "mass of information" (729) and the narrator summarizes it at length. His summary is broken up by passages from newspapers. These provide still more detail—and confusion—about Marie's demise.

-Upon finishing his review of this discourse, Dupin mocks the folly of newspapermen, who have written "a tissue of inconsequence and incoherence" (743), and "the extreme laxity" of the police (751).

-The narrator makes a "scrupulous examination" of affidavits (752) and Dupin scrutinizes newspapers some more. Dupin again expounds in detail upon the "extreme remissness of the police" (754), using their oversights as a launching point for more of his lengthy—and, really, insufferable—analysis of the murder, all the way to the identification of the killer. This is presented as a monologue. We can only imagine that the narrator is sitting, dumbstruck and rapt, as Dupin lectures him; he makes nary a peep. Dupin arrives at a pivotal observation: that if one were to locate a certain rudderless boat, they will discover that its owner is Marie's killer.

-After that cliffhanger, we are (anticlimactically) treated to an editor's parenthetical remark that the rudderless boat was found off the page, and the murderer was caught.

-Last, Poe-the-narrator makes the disclaimer that Dupin's solution to Marie's murder could not possibly provide the solution to Mary Cecilia Roger's murder. (In letters, the biographical Poe did indeed suggest such a possibility.)

Like the first Dupin story, Poe's second installment stagnates in exposition. This story, based upon the actual murder of Mary Cecilia Rogers in New York, is considered the first "true crime" genre story, so perhaps it may be forgiven for its pedantry. And yet it is, in the end, fiction, and what is more, from the very outset Poe bends the "truth" of history to veneer his

fictional account with the feeling of authenticity. So, far from being a "true crime" story, Poe absorbs actual history into the service of his fiction, activating *logos* but also appearing to compete with the historical accounts—in fact, precisely in the same fashion that he both absorbs and competes with the history of the Lewis and Clark expedition in *The Journal of Julius Rodman*.

Finishing "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," the reader cannot help but wonder, where was the plot? As far as action goes, this story is a dud, and it is as far away from a sensation tale as you can get. Dupin cracks the case without ever leaving his home; his success lies in being able to simply *imagine* a complete scenario based upon all of the clues at hand, not overlooking even the smallest detail. What is more, he is able to make complete analyses based upon written official discourse rather than dialogue with other people. Yet it is not only the newspapers, affidavits, and police reports that bring Dupin to the truth, but their errors and omissions. From his "mass of information" Dupin trims away excess and pulls into the foreground seemingly trivial details that speak truth. In this sense Dupin is indeed Adamic, as many critics have noted, as he names truth. Discourse is both the muddier of waters—as the faulty newspaper reports illustrate—as well as the road to truth, as Dupin's monologue shows.

"The Purloined Letter"

-The story gets off to a brisk start, with the prefect's gusty entrance into the library of Dupin and our narrator. He asks Dupin to help him solve the baffling case of a missing letter.

-Following some banter in which Dupin rather presciently suggests that the prefect cannot solve the case because "'Perhaps the mystery is a little *too* plain'" (975), the prefect relays the facts: a damning letter has been purloined from the royal apartments, which confers upon the thief blackmail powers over, it is implied, the dalliancing Queen of France. The thief was seen purloining and it is known that he still has the document and that it is not kept upon his person. Yet the police, despite having examined the thief's home from top to bottom, have failed to find

the letter. Dupin is blasé and condescending, and simply recommends that the police search the premises again.

-A month later, the prefect returns to Dupin's library, finding Dupin and the narrator once again there. The police still have not found the letter, so Dupin "drawlingly" (982) proposes that the prefect write him a check for the hefty reward offered for the letter's return, and he will give him the missing letter. The prefect hands over a check for fifty thousand francs. In return, Dupin gives him a letter. The prefect scurries away.

-Dupin explains himself, in a now-familiar Dupinian monologue, to the thunderstruck narrator. The police failed, he says, because they have not entered imaginatively into the thief's way of thinking. Dupin describes his own thinking with regards to the thief's methods, and then reveals that he has already called upon the thief at home and made a surreptitious examination of the premises. Dupin identified the letter hidden in plain sight in a card rack, returned the next day, and stole it, replacing it with a facsimile. The original letter is what he passed to the prefect.

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Reading the Dupin trilogy alongside key features of settler narrative form (linear, open-ended, construction; screen memory; palindromic structure), we find Poe working through and playing with these features as he innovates the detective story's reconstructive plot.

Beginning with settler narrative form's emphasis on linear, as opposed to circular, structure, I have already noted the warped colonial circle of the sailor's story in "Rue Morgue." On a more macro level, all three Dupin stories in fact do not have linear plots. On the contrary, they are radically disordered. It is important to note that they are all constructed as parallel flashback plots, with the story of Dupin and the narrator interwoven with accounts of the crime and its circumstances. The "past" plot, that of the accounts of the crime, is not linear but, rather, cumulative in detail and variation, although some accounts have their own nested linear logic. The "present" plot, that of Dupin and the narrator's conversations and actions, is for the most part linear except for the three machinations of Dupin—withholding the Ourang-Outang fur and the ribbon, placing the newspaper advertisement to summon the sailor, and stealing/replacing the purloined letter—which are revealed after the fact. The result is stories with disarrayed pieces

that orbit around a single fixed point: the serene, all-knowing Dupin. Paradoxically, though, the Dupin stories are absolutely committed to the idea of linear history: their entire reason for being, really, is for Dupin to order the history of the crimes out of chaos. Dupin alone is able to impose order through the correct interpretation of signs (it really begins to sound like Puritan typology at this point), and once order is achieved, truth shimmers forth. History *is* linear, these stories say, but history may *appear* to be broken if one reads the signs wrong.

Screen memory (revision of a painful or untenable past) makes up the very premises of the Dupin stories: a crime is obscured and considered, by the police and the newspapers, unsolvable, or, as in the case of "Marie Rogêt," the newspapermen have solved it incorrectly. "Rue Morgue" and "Marie Rogêt" rely almost exclusively upon newspaper and police accounts of the crimes—that is, official discourse. Discourse forgets and obscures the truth, just as discourse (like that of Jackson-era newspaper columnist O'Sullivan) forgets and obscures the original sins of settler populations. Newspapers plaster over crimes, but Dupin, in reading them, doubting their reliability, and finding their omissions, locates the cracks in those faulty histories. He pries up what proves to be flimsy pasteboard to reveal the horrible truth hidden beneath. Screen memory revolves, according to Andrew Zimmerman, around displacement and condensation (420), and "The Purloined Letter" in particular is interesting from this perspective. Displacement and condensation rule the plot. The thief is able to initially obtain the letter by hiding another in plain sight; he is able to keep it by again hiding it, inside-out, in plain sight; he fails to conceal it from Dupin *because* it is hidden in plain sight; and when Dupin steals the letter, he replaces it with a fake. Lacan argues that "The Purloined Letter" teaches us that structural relationships and substitutions tell stories just as much as "real" content—and this is precisely how settler screen memory operates.

Finally, I will address how reconstructive plots in the Dupin stories incorporate the third key feature of settler narrative, palindromic structure. The first thing to note about the Dupin trilogy in comparison to "Ms. Found in a Bottle," *Rodman*, and *Pym* is that truth is singular, fixed, and retrievable, on the plane of the always-already. Unlike the epistemological free-fall found in the discovery stories, in the Dupin trilogy accessing truth is only a matter of reconstructing events. Second, the overall structure of the Dupin stories is palindromic: even as the facets of the mysteries are arrayed across the texts, by the middle of each story Dupin *already has solved them yet withholds the solutions until he believes the narrator will be able to handle the truth*. That is, even as the substance of the plot looks backward over the crime scene, Dupin has already moved ahead. Dupin occupies a special vantage point allotted to him alone, from which he is able simultaneously to see past and future. Loafing in his private library, he is out of history and out of the material world in precisely the same way as, say, Locke's America ("In the beginning all the world was America"). Everything that matters already happened, even as it is still happening. The forms of these three stories are palindromic in that the two tiers of the parallel flashback plots move in opposite directions. The first tier, Dupin and the narrator's tier, looks backward, reconstructively. The second tier, that of the accounts of the crime, moves forward. Dupin presides over it all as the one who will name truth, reunite signifiers with signifieds, and restore linear history.

Poe's Second Genre Innovation: The Armchair Detective

The mid nineteenth-century detective story, Walter Benjamin writes, is inherently concerned "with the disquieting and threatening aspects of urban life," and the detective protagonist of such stories has its origins in the Parisian flâneur. The flâneur is a certain male

type, an indolent urban stroller, a keen observer, a bemused student of the urban panorama who "goes botanizing on the asphalt" (36). He is connoted, Karin Baumgartner adds, with "a radical male consciousness associated with independence and detachment" as well as "visual control in the public sphere" (352). Mary Gluck writes that the flâneur emerges as the center of "a type of urban literature . . . part popular history, part tourist guide, and part epic chronicle." Such literature was "pioneered in 1840s Paris and . . . used to celebrate the diversity and dynamism of the modern city." [68] But although the flâneur was enmeshed in urban chaos, he still possessed "a disturbing ambiguity, manifested in his invisibility . . . His distinguishing characteristic was precisely his lack of personal qualities, his complete anonymity" (1-2). Poe's 1840 story "The Man of the Crowd"—written just before "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and often considered a proto-detective story—gives us just such a character, a narrator who sits in the window of a London coffee house "absorbed in contemplation" of the "dense and continuous tides of population" flowing past in the street (507). Invisible to those he watches yet (self-) centered as a subject, he apprehends the urban dwellers outside as an inchoate mass, as well as "with minute interest [in] the innumerable varieties of figure, dress, air, gait, visage, and expression of countenance" (507).[69] Poe's narrator has the ability to zoom in tightly enough to see "filigreed buttons" and "lack-lustre eyes," yet he is separated from the scene by plate glass and a smug faith in being able to accurately interpret all he sees. His detachment renders him a scientist

[68] In *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, Deborah Parson identifies the first entry of flâneur/flâneuse in *Encyclopedia Larouse* in 1808: "idler, shopper, watcher of crowds."

[69] Baumgertner argues that "The flâneur . . . derives aesthetic meaning from the teeming crowds while remaining aloof from them. Like a scientist, the flâneur collects observations from his study of modern life" (365). Keith Tester writes, "The flâneur is the secret spectator of the spectacle of the spaces and places of the city" (7). The spectacle is *for* the spectator—for him, if, that is, he centers himself as the subject and surveyor of his realm.

("botanizing on the asphalt") and those he observes, specimens. Likewise, the glass of the window is suggestive of the lens of a scientific optical instrument. The flâneur and his urban specimens are encased in a subject/object relationship saturated in Enlightenment philosophy and science.[70]

The flâneur, having come to life within the pages of those 1840s urban texts, is a creature of discourse. Baumgartner writes that "the flâneur of the 1840's . . . was the first to render in words the bewildering heterogeneity of the modern city" (351), and that is exactly what the narrator of "The Man of the Crowd" accomplishes: he is not simply observing, but cataloging with language. He slices away the "junior clerks" from the "upper clerks" on the sidewalk, picks out gamblers, thieves, businessmen, peddlers, beggars, and one man in particular whom he fancies harbors secret evil in his heart. As a creature of discourse, it is fitting that the flâneur operates largely *through* discourse. In this way, Dupin could not be more quintessentially a flâneur. During the day, the narrator and he shut themselves up inside a "grotesque" (532) and decaying Parisian mansion to read, write and converse, but once night falls they

> [sally] forth into the streets, arm in arm, continuing the topics of the day, or roaming far and wide until a late hour, seeking, amid the wild lights and shadows of the populous city, that infinity of mental excitement which quiet observation can afford. (533)

Whether closeted with their books or strolling in the streets, it is words and more words that dominate their attention. When it comes to solving mysteries, too, Dupin seems to rely largely upon police reports, and especially newspaper articles from which to draw his conclusions.

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[70] Again, see Boelhower on the "prosthetic" nature of cartographic instruments in the age of discovery.

Although Dupin and the narrator walk the Paris streets at night, in the daytime they seal themselves up inside architectural carapaces in a fashion that is familiarly Poelike. “Our seclusion was perfect,” the narrator says in “Rue Morgue.” “We admitted no visitors. . . . We existed within ourselves alone” (532). In “Marie Rogêt,” the narrator says of himself and Dupin: “Engaged in researches which had absorbed our whole attention, it had been nearly a month since either of us had gone abroad, or received a visitor, or more than glanced at . . . one of the daily papers” (728). We never learn what they are researching, but taken with the gloomy, bookish atmosphere, and combined with similar scholar characters in Poe’s oeuvre (Morella, Ligeia, Usher, the narrator in “Berenice”) it must be esoteric indeed. And speaking of Poe’s oeuvre, it is impossible not to compare Dupin, in that dank old Paris mansion, to Roderick Usher hunkering in his own decaying architectural shell. But unlike Usher, who cannot leave his home because he has grown to be a part of it, Dupin, in his extreme self-possession and secrecy, gives the sense of bringing “home” with him when he sallies forth. In fact, “Rue Morgue” relates that the narrator is the one paying for the shared mansion, so Dupin may be likened to a hermit crab in more ways than one. He is at home wherever he is, because home for him is the mind of the Cartesian subject—“*je pense, donc je suis*.” Indeed, Dupin-the-mind seems to partially *evacuate* his body when he, in a fugue state, speaks the most distilled truth, such as in “Rue Morgue”:

> His manner at these moments was frigid and abstract; his eyes were vacant in expression; while his voice, usually a rich tenor, rose into a treble which would have sounded petulantly but for the deliberateness and entire distinctness of the enunciation. (533)

Dupin’s “frigid” manner and “vacant” eyes suggest a corpse, while his high-pitched voice, because “deliberate,’ is more spiritualized than neutered. Whether corpse or spirit, this version of Dupin is disembodied, as though his entire self is given over to mind at the expense of his

material body. What is more, he is only able to ascend into this paper-thin, voided state when within the protective carapace of his own house. A mind situated within an architectural "body" is a grotesquery indeed.[71] [72] Dupin's hermit crab-like critical distance is also related to a brand of subjectivity particular to the settler colonial project. Veracini writes,

> every settler is a 'first man' and, therefore, settler manhood (as opposed to metropolitan manhood, for example, but also to indigenous manhood—that is, settler manhood as opposed to exogeneous *and* indigenous alterity at once) is a truer form of manhood: a manhood that grows in isolation and is self-constituted, volitional, self-imposed. (*Settler Colonialism* 103)

Should we read Dupin less as a flâneur or a Cartesian subject than as an American type, a wilderness explorer setting himself, like Natty Bumppo, over and against the mass of urban men? Benjamin describes his own scholarship with rhetoric that intercalates reason and New World exploration and settlement:

> Forge ahead with the whetted axe of reason, looking neither right nor left so as not to succumb to the horror that beckons from deep in the primeval forest. Every ground must at some point have been made arable by reason, must have been cleared of the undergrowth of delusion and myth. (*The Arcades Project* 456-7)

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[71] Benjamin writes of sinister, ensnaring domestic furnishings prevalent in detective novels after Poe: "the furniture style of the second half of the nineteenth century has received its only adequate description, and analysis, in a certain type of detective novel at the dynamic center of which stands the horror of apartments. The arrangement of the furniture is at the same time the site plan of deadly traps, and the suite of rooms prescribes the fleeing victims [sic] path" (Benjamin qtd. in Frisby 99).

[72] Dupin's architectural "body" echoes the way the housekeeper's personhood is scaffolded by the house in Beecher's *A Treatise on Domestic Economy*. In both instances, the architectural carapace amplifies personal power.

All three theories/fantasies of male subjectivity—flâneur, settler, Cartesian rationalist—would share space on a Venn diagram. What they have most in common is detachment as the requisite for discovery.

From the comfort of his home library, Dupin exercises Adamic dominion over the cases he investigates, naming truth and casting aside all that is incorrect or superfluous. His monologues cut to bits and reassemble newspaper articles and police reports. The reader is not supposed to doubt for a second that the resulting collage is the truth. And truth, as I mentioned above, is compiled from *written*—not spoken—discourse. For instance, in "Marie Rogêt," the narrator and Dupin are visited by the police prefect, who regales them late into the night with the confounding case of the murdered girl. Yet the narrator also relates,

> Dupin, sitting steadily in his accustomed arm-chair, was the embodiment of respectful attention. He wore spectacles during the whole interview; and an occasional glance beneath their green glasses, sufficed to convince me that he slept not the less soundly, because silently, throughout the seven or eight leaden-footed hours which immediately preceded the departure of the Prefect. (728)

Dupin has so little regard for the prefect's spoken discourse that he sleeps through it all. In "The Purloined Letter," Dupin is nonchalant about the prefect's urgent wish to discuss the case: "Proceed," the narrator says to the prefect. "Or not," Dupin says. And later in the same story, Dupin pays a call upon the thief at home, but although the men speak, we hear nothing of their conversation, instead learning later what Dupin *saw* at the apartment. Dupin rarely has interest in what other men say aloud (an exception is the sailor in "Rue Morgue," although even that is somewhat questionable since Dupin gives off strong whiffs of Knowing All already). He *is* interested in written discourse, but only insofar as it provides a faulty map which he can tear up and glue back together again. Just as Dupin's long withdrawals at home and his voyeuristic mode

abroad signify that he is a self-made individualist of independent thought, so does his dependence on written discourse and his disdain for spoken discourse.[73]

Dupin reconstructs crimes—that special version of world-making I discussed in the previous section—through the examination of written discourse, but he also reconstructs crimes by correctly interpreting clue-things. "The thing," Elizabeth Grosz writes,

> is a cutting out of the real, the solidification of what exists in the flux of the real. It is an outline imposed on the real by our purposes and needs. (Grosz 78)

Grosz's concept of the thing is related to the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis in linguistics and anthropology, which asserts that language determines thought and thus that linguistic constraints and possibilities define what is known as the world. Similarly, Heidegger writes,

> Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates beings *to* their being *from out of* their being. Such saying is projecting of the clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that beings come out into the Open *as*. (198)

Peter Schwenger continues, "When such a being is named, then, it is also changed. It is assimilated into the terms of the human subject at the same time that it is opposed to it as object" (22). This is domestication, objectification, colonization, with all the implied violence of those terms. Naming is not petrification so much as lethal sundering: "The space between words and

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[73] Gates describes how writers, since the Enlightenment, have arbitrarily used literacy as *the* index of humanness. Contextualizing American slave narratives, Gates writes,

> Literacy—the literacy of formal writing—was both a technology and a commodity. It was a commodity with which the African's right to be considered a human being could be traded. (11)

Speaking, well, anyone can do that, the idea goes; it is the written stuff that builds the world.

things once again manifests itself as fatal" (23). So, the cutting or 'clearing" of the world is what constitutes the subject/object relationship. Thingliness itself, according to Grosz, Heidegger, and Schwenger, is culturally constructed, and I would add that because of the cutting and pulling-forward that marks their genesis, things can possess varying degrees of ghostliness, of being camouflage to nature, and flickering (in)distinctness if they lie on the margins of cultural visibility. This irrational liminal zone is where Dupin treads. His Paris is a world of cluttered interiors, busy streets, and dubious suburbs, each location brimming with things. Dupin's success lies in being able to imagine which things to pull forth and name as "clues," and which to disregard as mere backdrop. The police fail because they cannot make these distinctions.

In addition, Dupin is equipped with the skill of assigning meaning to the clues he has gathered up, effectively reuniting signifier with signified. Harpham writes that Poe is "seeking always to discover the unifying principle which could reintegrate parts and retrieve a lost unity. In Poe's aesthetic theory the Many does not contradict the One; it awaits it" (111). In the case of the Dupin trilogy, Dupin's crime solutions suture together what violent crime rent apart. The vicious, graphic, unworlding violence in "Rue Morgue" and "Marie Rogêt," followed by the halleluiah moments when, for the narrator, Dupin brings it all together again, mimic the pattern of the Romantic sublime.[74] Confronting absence in all its horror is the experience of the

[74] In what is considered the foundational text on the poetic sublime, Longinus describes a gap between form and content, and apprehension of this gap is tied to an experience of bottom-dropping-out-for-under lack. With a wistful gaze directed towards the past which produced Homer and Sappho and which had not yet fallen prey to the corruptions of greed, bribery, and indifference, Longinus's nostalgia is bound to a notion of ho
listic origins (Grube 57-8). The Romantic poets plumbed such nostalgia to the depths. For Deguy, sublimity in Longinus is the moment of awareness of the gap between what something is, and what it is called. Sublimity is thus marked by a nostalgia for unified origins, and by suturing the "unforgettable division" (11) through willful amnesia. What is forgotten is difference; the act of "repairing" and "healing" is a movement from multiplicity to unity. Hertz, similarly, defines the "sublime turn" as the movement from disintegration to figurative reconstruction—that is, the

sublime—for instance the bloody and incomprehensible crime scene of "Rue Morgue," of which it can only be said "To this horrible mystery there is not as yet, we believe, the slightest clue" (538). On one side are the disordered material signifiers—bruised cadavers, rifled chests of drawers, a topaz earring on the floor—and on the side of the signified . . . nothing. Things have lost their meaning because the police are unequal to the task of binding form and content back together.

Poe's Third Genre Innovation: Clues Hidden in Plain Sight

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movement from fractured pieces to a whole. Burwick points out that "Poe skillfully exploited the visual attributes of the sublime as set forth by Burke and others," and "previous commentators have cited evidence of his familiarity with Burke and Immanuel Kant on the sublime" (424-5). In other words, Poe was not writing blind when it came to matters of the sublime, but within aesthetic traditions.

However, I do not suggest that Poe deliberately mimicked the sublime moment and the sublime turn in the Dupin trilogy. Rather, the sublime's energizing nostalgia, and the *shape* of the sublime, undergird the pattern of horror and understanding through which these stories pass. One way to read Poe's detective stories is to interpret Dupin as orchestrating the "sublime turn" when he restores unity of meaning to the crime scene. Just after Dupin puts it all together for the narrator in "Rue Morgue," the narrator writes, "I understood the full horrors of the murder at once" (559). In this moment—"at once"—the last suture is pulled tight. It all makes sense. The authors of mysteries have repeated this moment at the climaxes of their stories ever since, perhaps only dimly aware of the Romantic genealogy of the gesture. It must be noted, however, that the experience of horrible absence and the subsequent turn are the experiences of the *narrator*, not Dupin. What does it mean that Dupin himself possesses no nostalgia, no sense of abysmal lack and its correlative horror, but instead remains always complete in his vision? Dupin the armchair detective—and he alone—sews up the gap and delivers the narrator and the reader back to a holistic origin. Furthermore, Dupin's air of always-already knowing strongly suggests that the gap (for him) was never there at all. Dupin is impervious to such Romantic roller-coasters. Indeed, it seems that Dupin's own hand controls the on/off lever for this particular roller-coaster, because not-knowing could have easily been alleviated for everyone if Dupin had only shared all of his clues with the police and the narrator. So really, Dupin not only orchestrates the sublime turn (in restoring lost unity), he also, if not causes, then unnecessarily *extends* the sublime moment of incomprehension. The manner in which he presides over these plots is almost godlike.

The spatial center of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is a shattered, grisly crime scene at the Parisian apartment of a mother and her adult daughter. The reader's initial encounter with this scene is by way of an article from the "Gazette des Tribunaux," from which we learn,

> "The apartment was in the wildest disorder—the furniture broken and thrown about in all directions. There was only one bedstead; and from this the bed had been removed, and thrown into the middle of the floor." (537)

This is an intensely domestic crime scene; the scattered furniture, like all furniture, uncannily whispers of human bodies, making a broken chair leg seem almost as alarming as a broken human limb. The displaced bed, meanwhile, hints at the possibility of sexual violence.[75] Domesticity—a specifically feminine domesticity—has been brutally violated. And there is gore:

> "On a chair lay a razor, besmeared with blood. On the hearth were two or three long and thick tresses of grey human hair, also dabbled with blood, and seeming to have been pulled out by the roots. . . . Of Madame L'Espanaye no traces were here seen; but an unusual quantity of soot being observed in the fire-place, a search was made in the chimney, and (horrible to relate!) the corpse of the daughter, head downward, was dragged therefrom; it having been forced up the narrow aperture for a considerable distance." (537-8)

The emblematic import of this tableau—the dead daughter wedged face-down in "the narrow aperture" with bloodied traces of her mother nearby—is, on one level, a stillbirth. But because the daughter was "forced up," the tableau also viciously insists upon a return to an anterior state. A time before birth, even a time before conception—indeed, a return to the virginal past. As with

[75] Poe uses the deferred threat of violent encounter with "Indian tribes" in *Rodman* in quite the same way he uses the bed on the floor: both instances amount to violent connotations to increase the reader's anxious anticipation, but which have little or no payoff. Yet Poe's connotations work to commoditize his texts with sensational or even salacious flavors.

all detective stories, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" nods to deep, primal nostalgia even as it enacts violence. This, as I have discussed, is also the shape of settler narratives.

Madame L'Espanaye's shattered body is eventually found in a rear courtyard. Her throat, the newspaper reports, is

> "So entirely cut that, upon an attempt to raise her, the head fell off. The body, as well as the head, was fearfully mutilated—the former so much so as scarcely to retain any semblance of humanity." (538)

Later in the story, Dupin adds more detail to the matter of Madame L'Espanaye's torn-out hair, saying to the narrator,

> "You are aware of the great force necessary in tearing thus from the head even twenty or thirty hairs together. You saw the locks in question as well as myself. Their roots (a hideous sight!) were clotted with fragments of the flesh of the scalp—sure token of the prodigious power which had been exerted in uprooting perhaps half a million of hairs at a time." (557)

Madame L'Espanaye has been scalped.[76] In the work of an American writer, scalping is surely significant—Poe gives scalping a satirical treatment in his 1839 "The Man that was Used Up." In this story, a retired military gentleman is said to have survived scalping—among other things—in a "tremendous swamp-fight away down South, with the Bugaboo and Kickapoo Indians" (380). Mabbot writes in his introduction to "The Man that was Used Up,"

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[76] Gitter writes, "This literary fascination with the magical power of women's hair coincided in Victorian everyday life with an intense popular preoccupation with hair and hair tokens. At the peak of the fad, in the forties and fifties, hair became something of a Victorian culture obsession: whole suites of jewelry were fashioned, as if through alchemy, from the plaited hair of family members, lovers, and friends, living and dead . . . From the anthropologist's point of view, this sort of glorification of hair is perhaps not very different from the elaborate ritual disposal of hair, nail parings, spittle, and excrement in primitive societies, where it is believed that a 'sympathetic connexion' persists between a person and everything that has once been part of the person's body" (268).

> The story was timely, for the newspapers were full of references to the troubles with Indians in Florida in 1839, in which the Kickapoo tribe was involved. Readers of historical sources will recall that prisoners were often mutilated by their captors, and some even survived scalping. (377)

Nor would scalpings perpetrated by Kickapoos have been the only ones to which Poe was exposed. Scalping was a common practice throughout North America and carried out not only by indigenous people but also adopted by European settlers, with instances documented as late as the Civil War. As a form of human trophy-taking, scalping is indeed a "sure token," as Dupin says in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." Moreover, it is not merely a token of the "prodigious" strength of a criminal who proves to be an Ourang-Outang, but it is also a token, a clue, of the shadowy presence of American colonial violence even in Poe's fictional Paris.

The most baffling thing about this crime scene, however, is that although indistinguishable shouts were heard issuing from the apartment, "the door of the chamber in which was found the body of Mademoiselle L. was locked on the inside when the party reached it." Further, although the mother is found in the courtyard, there seems to be no way anyone could have gotten in *or* out of the home, because "The door leading from the front room into the passage was locked, with the key on the inside," the roof trap-door is firmly nailed shut, and the chimneys are too narrow to admit a human being. In fact, when the neighbors break into the apartment after hearing the shouts, they do so "with difficulty" (542-3). In sum, this is a locked room mystery, a sub-genre which continues today. Westlake and Davis write that "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is "usually considered the first locked room mystery" and that

> The philosophical underpinnings of the [sub-genre] are very much part of the nineteenth century's preoccupation with the scientific method. . . . all phenomena in mystery fiction were required to have a rational explanation: walls, floors, and locked doors had impenetrable mass, and crimes could not be committed by ghosts and demons oozing through walls. (7-8)

While Poe is credited with innovating the locked room mystery, in this section I wish to discuss this type of mystery in the context of Poe's broader genre innovation, clues hidden in plain sight. Clues hidden in plain sight means evidence of theft or violence that is not hidden, but that is, at first and/or not to anyone but the detective, nevertheless impossible to interpret. Not only do locked room mysteries by definition always feature clues hidden in plain sight, but in fact, the discursive geneses of both of these innovations coincide. Poe's clues hidden in plain sight rehearse—and interrogate—a specific way of not-seeing indigenous people and their material cultures, and not-seeing the evidence of theft and violence that is enmeshed with the genealogy of North America's European "discovery" and settlement. Specifically, this way of not-seeing insists upon a virginal or nascent space that has not yet been penetrated (the "locked room"), and it maintains blindness to indigenous people by discursively blending them into a backdrop of "nature" or "dirt." That clues in Parisian-set detective stories are linked to the way indigenous North American people are constituted by settler discourse may seem like a stretch. However, I follow the lead of Toni Morrison, who writes,

> I remain convinced that the metaphorical and metaphysical uses of race occupy definitive places in American literature, in the "national" character, and ought to be a major concern of the literary scholarship that tries to know it. (63)

Morrison's study describes how American literature is constituted by specters of blackness and Africanness. It is my contention that Poe's Dupin stories, despite their French settings, are haunted by the specter of unsettled indigenous people hiding in the thickets of frontier liminal zones.

"The Purloined Letter" offers Poe's most obvious and celebrated instance of a clue hidden in plain sight: the missing letter is discovered, not beneath a floorboard or inside a sofa

cushion, but out in the open, dangling from a "dirty blue ribbon" on a "trumpery filigree card-rack of pasteboard" (990). Although Dupin blames the police's failure on a lack of ingenuity, their blindness is perhaps not due to obtuseness as much as to a world undone by crime. Roberts writes,

> Crime pitches an object or a person out of its assigned place in a classificatory system so that we cannot identify it for what it is, infer a cause, or anticipate a result. (93-94)

The *context* of a thing, that is, defines it as much as whatever qualities the thing possesses in itself. Crime—whether it is theft or murder—disarranges the categories of the everyday. W. H. Auden writes,

> The corpse must shock not only because it is a corpse but also because, even for a corpse, it is shockingly out of place, as when a dog makes a mess on a drawing room carpet. (408)

Auden twice links the corpse to dirt, first literally (the dog's mess), and then theoretically, since the corpse is, like all dirt, "out of place." Corpses are thingified humans, brought into being by trespass and violence; trespass and violence are, of course, exactly what American colonial history and detective stories have in common. On some level, then, the police in "The Purloined Letter" can hardly be blamed for not seeing the letter, since its new, criminal context does not match the everyday, nothing-has-happened presentation of the letter on the card-rack. Roberts goes on to write that Poe's vital clues—the Ourang-Outang hair, Marie's clothing and accessories, and the stolen letter—are all devoid of cultural context. Things in the Dupin stories have a peculiar status "where Poe removes all abstract qualities from things and designates them as wholly substantive. The purloined letter, for example, begins its itinerary as something much like a gothic object . . . in that its excessive meaning always exceeds its materiality" but by the

end of the tale this relationship is inverted and replaced with a facsimile letter whose "power resides wholly in its materiality" (96). The "strict materiality" of clues, their "absence of any cultural codification," makes the "meaning" of Poe's clues "entirely extrinsic" (97). These clues, Roberts argues, are mere shells. The process by which clues may be hidden in plain sight, then, is to drain them of whatever "cultural codification" they possess, thereby camouflaging them to their surroundings.

"The Murders in the Rue Morgue" can also be read as a performance of settler not-seeing. As I noted earlier, the crime scene, as a locked room, first establishes the conundrum of a "virgin" space that has, paradoxically, been violently breached. A significant portion of the text supplies what are supposed to be summaries of witnesses to the crime in a newspaper article. All of the witnesses are the L'Espanayes' neighbors in their "miserable thoroughfare" (546). None of the witnesses *saw* anything out of place, but many of them heard shrieks of agony followed by "two voices in loud and angry contention" (540). The witnesses—including a "native of Amsterdam," an Englishman, a Spaniard, and an Italian—agree that one of the "loud and angry" voices was that of a Frenchman, but they cannot agree on either the language used by, or the gender of, the second voice. The Frenchman thinks it was an Italian, the Spaniard believes it was a Russian, and so on. Setting aside that Dupin's Paris is evidently as much a "smelting pot" as New York (as Emerson put it in 1845), the impulse of each of the witnesses is to suggest the voice in question belonged to an Other. Dupin says,

> " . . . each one spoke of [the voice] as that *of a foreigner*. Each is sure that it was not the voice of one of his countrymen. Each likens it—not to the voice of an individual of any nation with whose language he is conversant—but the converse." (549)

Dupin is saying that all of the witnesses fell victim to a bias of not-hearing. Only Dupin has the proper vantage point to triangulate the testimonies like a logic puzzle. And then of course, in the famous twist Dupin reveals that the unidentifiable criminal voice was not that of an Italian or a Russian, but of . . . an Ourang-Outang. In a dramatic reveal, he produces a to-scale sketch he made of the bruises found upon Mademoiselle L'Espanaye's throat and asks the narrator to match his own hands to the enormous bruises. The narrator is gratifyingly astounded:

"This," I said, "is the mark of no human hand." (559)

All of humankind is meant to get off scot-free in "Rue Morgue." Even though the "virginal" locked room was breached, it was not breached by a human; the crime scene has been conceptually evacuated of all humans except for the dead.

While "Rue Morgue" attempts to provide humans with an alibi for trespass, "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" offers a more sour take. Marie's body is found floating in the Seine, but the first substantial clues as to what happened to her emerge when her personal belongings are found in a forest clearing in the suburbs outside of Paris.

Two small boys . . . while roaming among the woods near the Barrière du Roule, chanced to penetrate a close thicket, within which were three or four large stones, forming a kind of seat, with a back and footstool. On the upper stone lay a white petticoat; on the second a silk scarf. A parasol, gloves, and a pocket-handkerchief were also here found. (734)

Here we have an Arcadian nook with primitive stone furniture, "penetrated" by young explorers. This place is grotesque—grotto-esque—in the textbook sense. Thompson writes that "In the early Renaissance, workers excavating the streets of Rome broke through a lower level of the city dating to some 1500 years earlier" to find "wall paintings and decorations in which realms of existence which are ordinarily perceived as separate or distinct in some way" were fused.

Pictures in the grottos illustrated such bastardized forms as plants with stalks that ended in human heads, or plants that had "metal tools growing from their stems" (78). These are, in short, border phenomena. Further, the way the grottos were discovered—penetration of hidden, forgotten spaces—adds a connotation of sanctioned zones. That is to say, from a historical perspective it is fitting for grotesque forms in art to be found inside grotto-like spaces. This is certainly the case in "Marie Rogêt": the naturalistic grotto is alarmingly littered with ladies' accessories. While I discuss textile clues at greater length in the next section, I would like to point out here that the petticoat, silk scarf, parasol, gloves, and handkerchief are emphatically—screamingly, actually—"matter out of place."

Beyond "matter out of place," Poe makes a broader point with the crime scene in this story, which is that crimes, those dirty, out-of-place events, occur *beyond the frontiers of settlement*, and females who venture past the settlement come to bad ends. What is more, the purity principle levied upon the locked-room crime scene in "Rue Morgue" and which was maintained by the non-human murderer is at play in "Marie Rogêt" too, as Dupin slut-shames the suburbs. Yet in "Marie Rogêt," Poe capitalizes on the instability of suburban space, highlighting the sinister things that one might find in a *seemingly* picturesque thicket. Dupin deduces that the accessories were placed in the thicket far more recently than is supposed by pointing out that, as pastoral as this place seems, it is in fact crawling with people. He says to the narrator,

> "Those who know any thing of the vicinity of Paris, know the extreme difficulty of finding *seclusion*, unless at a great distance from its suburbs. Such a thing as an unexplored, or even an unfrequently visited recess, amid its woods or groves, is not for a moment to be imagined. Let any one who, being at heart a lover of nature, is yet chained by duty to the dust and heat of this great metropolis—let any such one attempt, even during the weekdays, to slake his thirst for solitude amid the scenes of natural loveliness which immediately surround us. At every second step, he will find the growing charm dispelled by the voice and personal intrusion of some ruffian or party of carousing blackguards." (759)

This passage, with its clearly articulated preferences with regards to outdoor spaces, is fascinating to read beside *Rodman* and its conveniently evacuated landscapes and recalling Veracini's theorization of settler colonialism's "libidinal investment in the notion of 'virgin land" (*Settler Colonialism* 87). Dupin voices, first, irritability at finding oneself *not* alone on a landscape one had presumed was empty. He is of course speaking of the Paris suburbs, not the American frontier, but at the same time Dupin unmistakably prefers evacuated space (and the word choice "unexplored" also alerts us to a connection to frontiers). The passage also suggests that suburban spaces are *dangerous*, because they are unsettled—that is, populated by wandering "blackguards." Now is a good moment to once again refer to Jackson's *Message to Congress*:

> What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms . . . ?

Jackson's desire for cities, towns, and farms is the inverse of Dupin's desire for solitude in "unexplored" nature, but then, Jackson's landscape must be evacuated of indigenous people before such settlement may commence. In addition, both Jackson and Dupin signal an identical disgust for unsettled people. The "settlement" of indigenous people in North America is a recurring theme in American hegemonic discourse, as well as the model for Christian frontier missions (for instance those of the Whitmans and Spaldings in the 1830s and 40s) and Indian boarding schools. Embedded in the impulse to "educate" or "civilize" is the desire to anchor hunter-gatherers in place, since people who seasonally migrate challenge Western landownership traditions and laws. Poe's writing's fixation with "pure" landscapes—a fixation also found in "The Domain of Arnheim" and "The Landscape Garden"—taken with the *im*purity of the Paris

suburbs with their *un*fixed people wandering through the thickets, emerges as but one gesture of many in the discourse of (un)settled land.

Further, the Paris suburbs of "Marie Rogêt" are grotesque boundary zones, and this is not only because of the "grotto" in which Marie's things are discovered. The narrator laments that the theoretical solace-seeker in the Paris suburbs

> will seek privacy amid the densest foliage, all in vain. Here are the very nooks where the unwashed most abound—here are the temples most desecrate. With sickness of the heart the wanderer will flee back to the polluted Paris as to a less odious because less incongruous stink of pollution. (760)

That these suburbs are "incongruous" is their most offensive flaw. Morrison has commented upon Poe's writing about the "fear of borderlessness and trespass" (51), and I would like to argue that this fear—clearly evident in Poe's treatment of the Paris suburbs of "Marie Rogêt"—manifests as a grotesque formulation of space. Ravvin writes of Poe's grotesque that, "there has been little agreement among Poe's readers on how to interpret his use of the grotesque. In the preface Poe wrote for his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840) he did little to define—or to differentiate between—the two provocative terms in his title." While usually "the influence of interior and architectural decoration on the grotesque becomes the focus of critical investigation of this mode in Poe's writing," Ravvin continues, the grotesque can also be "a cultural phenomenon" rather than "a stylistic mode appropriated from the visual arts" (3). For instance, Kayser's grotesque is "a site where opposing forces contend, where the satiric and the horrific, the comic and the tragic fuse and give 'rise to a transcendent vision of the true state of things" (Kayser 109, qtd. in Ravvin 3-4). Grotesque things, Harpham writes, "stand at the margin of consciousness between the known and the unknown, the perceived and the unperceived, calling into question the adequacy of our ways of organizing the world, of dividing the continuum of

experience into knowable parts" (3). The grotesque, then, can be understood as a fluctuating zone of cultural tensions and even reconfiguration. In the case of "Marie Rogêt," landscapes sitting at the frontiers of urban settlement are spiritually polluted places in which sinister, rootless people weave their bodies and their voices through the underbrush. The presumption is that those rootless people, like the indigenous communities forcibly removed as a result of the Indian Removal Act, are out of sync with the "natural" beauty of the landscape and, anyway, do not really belong. In the same way that indigenous people and their material cultures flicker in and out of view in American settler colonial discourse, clues in detective stories alternate between offensively out-of-place—the corpse on the carpet—and invisible even in plain sight—the purloined letter on the card rack. Whether or not a person (or thing) really exists is not as relevant as whether or not those engaged in making meaning are equipped—or willing—to see.

Poe's Fourth Genre Innovation: Young, Beautiful Female Murder Victims

Next, I argue that Poe's genre innovation of young, beautiful, female murder victims is a variant of the commodity fetish, a form whose conditions of possibility are North American "discovery," trade, and settlement.

"The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" opens two years "after the atrocity in the Rue Morgue" (28), with both Dupin and the narrator having relapsed into "habits of moody reverie" and "abstraction." But their existence is once more intruded upon by a befuddling crime. Marie Rogêt, a "sprightly *grisette*" employed at a perfume counter, sets out to—purportedly—visit a female relative one Sunday, only to be discovered floating lifeless, battered, and bizarrely bound,

in the Seine four days later. Dupin, heretofore oblivious to the mystery, is visited a month after the discovery of the corpse by the police prefect. The bewildered prefect makes Dupin "a direct and certainly a liberal proposition" in exchange for assistance in the case, and Dupin accepts. In this way Dupin is recruited without leaving his own home. It is the narrator, not Dupin, who goes to the prefecture to retrieve "a full [textual] report" of the information previously relayed by the prefect, and the narrator goes to the newspaper offices the next day to collect "a copy of every paper in which . . . had been published any decisive information in regard to this sad affair" (729). Not once does Dupin leave his home in pursuit of the mystery's solution; his method of deduction is to evaluate the textual evidence at hand. Holding himself at a sanitary distance from the grisly materiality of the clues, Dupin is the familiar disembodied, context-free subject of Enlightenment discourse. Hidden—protected, even—behind the green lenses of his eyeglasses, he names truth without ever seeming to immerse his own body in the business.

Dupin's disembodiment, although present in all three Dupin stories, in "Marie Rogêt" serves as a special foil to the way Marie's corpse is fetishized. In vivid contrast to Dupin's disembodied status, Marie's corpse—so much more than her personhood—is the axis upon which the story turns. On one level, this story is about the construction of a certain type of male personhood (dry, sanitary, rational, valuable) that is definable only in contradistinction to a certain type of female personhood or, really, non-personhood (disobedient, morphing, irrational, putrefying, fleshly, disposable, interchangeable). But on another level, and continuing with the trope Poe began to develop in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" with the brutalized body of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye stuffed up the chimney, "Marie Rogêt" crystallizes the fetish of the young, beautiful, brutalized female murder victim, a convention that persists in the detective, suspense, and thriller genres to this day. The trope is so infused in these genres, such a

commonplace in film, that we take it for granted. And yet, here is Poe at the very beginning, writing the trope into being, so we should ask what difference it makes to his story that the victim is female? Or that she is young, and that she is beautiful?

Poe routinely traffics in gothic tropes, and it would be simple and not even careless to suggest that the violence done to Marie is nothing more than another iteration of the gothic damsel who has been, since Walpole, continually under threat of weird sexual violence. Snodgrass writes that "The victimization of tender, vulnerable young women is the heart-thumping stuff of Gothic lore," a pattern long set by folklore and fairy tale.

> From the Middle Ages, literature portrayed saintly females in a number of unbearable dilemmas: daughters refusing incestuous relationships . . . women suffering rape and dishonor . . . alleged witches facing persecution and torment . . . and victims of barbarism . . . Most common of these misogynistic scenarios was the plight of maidens rejecting betrothals arranged by their fathers . . . In subsequent martyrdoms, the anti-brides chose torture and death over union with odious, sometimes murderous husbands.

Snodgrass describes how Walpole built upon this legacy, setting the Gothic's pattern "of male stalkers and pursuers of females" who are fleeing "rape, cloistering, forced marriage, torture, or death" (118). Not all gothic stories, it should be noted, revel in female victims writhing beneath the male gaze. Hoeveler, Wright, and others argue for a distinction between female Gothic and male Gothic. "The division between male and female Gothic is evident in the author's choice of tone," Wright argues. "Male Gothic often victimizes and graphically brutalizes heroines as a source of titillation and voyeuristic fascination" while "female Gothic reflects concern for the powerlessness and male domination of heroines within the rigid gender restrictions of society and church" (qtd. in Snodgrass 116). But even if the sexual pursuit of hapless young female victims is quintessentially male Gothic, Poe takes this idea to the limit—indeed, beyond the limit—and *kills off* those victims. This can be read as the ultimate in conquest, the ultimate

pornotropic gesture. Poe's female murderees, and every titillatingly described young beautiful female murder victim in the myriad detective and thriller stories, films, and television shows since, amount to nothing more than the objects of snuff porn. No matter how powerless a gothic heroine is, she still has some semblance of agency, of subjectivity. Poe's female corpse, however, has neither. What does it mean that Poe in the Dupin tales takes the brutal titillations of the male Gothic one step further—the final step—and renders the female characters not simply victims, but *dead*?

Although Poe adopted the voyeuristic gaze of the male Gothic in the Dupin stories, they, with their chilly detachment, are in fact a departure from the Gothic's heightened emotionality, in which the reader herself is embroiled. Howells writes "As readers [of Gothic fiction] we are consistently placed in the position of literary voyeurs, always gazing at emotional excess without understanding the why of it . . . we can only look on with appalled fascination as floods of feeling rush through the characters" (qtd. in Wright 110). So, in one sense, the female victims of "Rue Morgue" and "Marie Rogêt" are *post*-Gothic; we are past the point of emotion, victimhood, and suffering because by the opening of the tales, the victims are already dead. The urgency of the crime has passed; in the postmortem calm, Dupin wields his leisurely logic. Thus, while "The drama of terror has the irresistible power of converting its audience into its victims" (Moncada qtd. in Wright 44), in the Dupin stories the reader is no victim, but—even faced with accounts of brutal murders—a cool logician alongside Dupin.

But by "cool" I do not mean sanitized. "Marie Rogêt" does not shy away from describing the victim's corpse—indeed, the story lingers upon its descriptions. Far from sentimental or sensational, the descriptions of the corpse are unemotional and detailed. For instance,

> The face was suffused with dark blood, some of which issued from the mouth. No foam was seen, as in the case of the merely drowned. There was no discoloration in the cellular tissue. About the throat were bruises and impressions of fingers. The arms were bent over on the chest and were rigid. The right hand was clenched; the left partially open. On the left wrist were two circular excoriations, apparently the effect of ropes. (730)

And on and on. In the absence of sentiment as well as with such clinical word choices as "cellular tissue," we are instantly reminded of the misogyny intertwined in the history of the medical profession. In a closely linked topic, in the absence of sentiment, Marie is a corpse stripped of personality, just as the skin of her wrists has been stripped away. She has become a thing. What is more, textiles are literally wrapped up in Marie's death to the point of merging with her corpse. Ropes dig into wrists. "A piece of lace was found tied so tightly around the neck as to be hidden from sight." One layer of the skirt of her dress, "had been torn upward from the bottom hem to the waist, but not torn off. It was wound three times around the waist, and secured by a sort of hitch at the back." Another torn strip of dress is "found around her neck, fitting loosely, and secured with a hard knot" (730). Dupin deduces that the killer tore and wound these strips of cloth to create carry-handles to more easily move the body. Thus Marie's corpse, wrapped with and penetrated by textiles, is not only a body turned into a thing by discourse, but a body made grotesque by interminglement with the nonhuman world, and a body leveled to the value of just one of several puzzle pieces that must be fitted back together.

Now, it would be easy to dismiss the relationship of Marie's corpse to the textiles that twine around and embed themselves in her flesh as somehow essentially feminine because textiles are historically associated with femininity in the Western world. "We struggle with what might be called a depth ontology," Küchler and Miller write,

> a very specific Western idea of being, in which the real person, myself, is someone deep inside me, while my surface is literally superficial. . . . This denigration of surfaces has been part of the

denigration of clothing and, by extension, of those said to be particularly interested in clothing, often seen as women, or blacks or any other group that thereby come to be regarded as more superficial. (3)

The frivolity and excess of Marie's accessories—parasols and gloves and petticoats for a simple excursion to the countryside—coupled with their orphan status in the grotto-esque thicket, feels somehow rancid. It is almost tempting to mutter that the gussied-up shop girl got what she deserved. Further, the way strips of cloth are sunk into her corpse seem to affirm some fundamental affinity between young women and clothing. Both woman and clothes, this interminglement seems to say, are equally disposable, equally subject to decay, equally *thing*. And yet as the fabric cuts deeper into Marie's flesh at the same time that the corpse swells in death, surfaces and depth begin to trade places; death blends the inner and outer self into one. Although the Sadean innuendo of Marie's binds is unmistakable, that innuendo may refer less to violent sex among the living, and more to fetishism for things. Benjamin writes,

Every fashion couples the living body to the inorganic world. To the living, fashion defends the rights of the corpse. The fetishism that succumbs to the sex appeal of the inorganic is its vital nerve. (qtd. in Johnson 147)

Clothes are a liminal zone where flesh touches fibers; a clothed person presenting herself to the world asserts a hybrid personhood.[77] In this way, Marie's corpse, with its embedded textiles and cloth carry-handle, is a grotesque amalgamation of organic and inorganic. However, Marie's

[77] Judy Attfield writes that the body is "the point at which the object/subject relation is managed" (240). In its proximity to the body, then, "fashion has been observed in the psychoanalytic sense as a means of spectacular self-realisation and aesthetic self-expression in the development of so-called 'modern individualism'" (84), and "Clothing and textiles have a particularly intimate quality because they lie next to the skin and inhabit spaces of private life helping to negotiate the inner self with the outside world" (121).

textile-bound corpse, as well as her accessories in the thicket, should be considered within a larger framework of fetishes as they relate to nineteenth-century commodity culture. Johnson writes that in the Victorian era, "a world of fig leaves and piano skirts, the confusion of the animate and the inanimate is perfectly natural. The trick is to channel the easily excited desire toward commodities" (147). Indeed, Marie, manning her perfume counter before her death, is a player in a sexualized commodity culture:

> her great beauty attracted the notice of a perfumer, who occupied one of the shops in the basement of the Palais Royal, and whose custom lay chiefly among the desperate adventurers infesting that neighborhood. Monsieur Le Blanc was not unaware of the advantages to be derived from the attendance of the fair Marie in his perfumery. (725)

Marie's beauty is a lure for customers; she is really earning her wages, not by selling perfume, by being one more item on display in the shop. To answer one of my questions—what difference does it makes to the story that the victim is beautiful?—Marie's beauty matters, not because she provides the story with an aesthetic feature (after all, the reader fully sees her only when she is a disfigured corpse), and not simply because, in the vein of the male Gothic, her beauty offers sexual titillation to the reader, but because her beauty is framed by the world of commodities.

Benjamin writes that the Parisian world through which the flâneur strolls would not have been possible without the nineteenth-century phenomenon of shopping arcades. He quotes an 1852 guide to Paris that describes the arcades as

> glass-covered, marble-paneled passageways through entire complexes of houses whose proprietors have combined for such speculations. Both sides of these passageways, which are lighted from above, are lined with the most elegant shops, so that such an arcade is a city, even a world, in miniature. ("The *Flâneur*" 36-37)

This little world is all artifice, "uncanny," a diorama, "a cross between a street and an interieur" (37). The arcade's sky blazes with neither sun nor moon, but with gaslight. And the flâneur's wilderness, his habitat as well as his subject of study, is the world of commodities:

> If the arcade is the classical form of the interieur, which is how the flâneur sees the street, the department store is the form of the interieur's decay. The bazaar is the last hangout of the flâneur. If in the beginning the street had become an interieur for him, now this interieur turned into a street, and he roamed through the labyrinth of merchandise as he had once roamed through the labyrinth of the city. (54)

Here, the wilderness of flora and fauna is replaced with a wilderness of merchandise. The bazaar is a "labyrinth" because factory—as opposed to handmade—goods are impersonal, turning away from human eyes. The bazaar does not welcome so much as ensnare with alien seductions. Marx describes "the mysterious character of the commodity-form" that lies in the fact that "the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the product of labor themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things." That is, commodities absorb human labor and seem to pass it off as intrinsic to themselves, like a lot of Pinnochios come to life. Yet unlike Pinnochio, commodities do not wish to join humanity; they remain adamantly Other. What is more, the mystical commodity form "also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labour as a social relation between objects" (164-5). The world of commodities, then, may be described as having its own ecosystem. Perhaps it is no wonder that American "wilderness" fantasy motifs cropped up in early French detective stories, given the kinship between bazaars thick with commodities and an American continent thick with alien life and geology. Marie's perfumery in the basement of the Palais Royal is not one of the glassed-in arcades Benjamin describes—the Palais Royal shopfronts are positioned under an

open-air colonnade—yet she is still decidedly working within that wilderness of goods, a wilderness in which she herself is one of the artificial fruits.

It is my contention that young, beautiful, female murder victims in detective stories is a trope that should be situated within a genealogy of settler colonial discourse. This is because the concept of human bodies as fetishes arose in age of global trade and colonization. This age produced the fetish in the realm of the commodity at the same time that the traffic of African slaves conceptually transformed human bodies into things. Spyer writes,

> the concept of the fetish is directly linked to the history of European expansion . . . fetishes were first described outside of Europe by Portuguese and then Dutch merchant-adventurers as the pidgin *fetisso* on the Gold and Slave coasts of West Africa in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (1)

Fetisso means, Mitchell writes, "made thing," and the term was applied by European traders to objects whose use was unclear to them, objects which thus came to stand "for a confusion of the religious and the economic or, in other words, for a denial of the proper boundaries between things" (qtd. in Spyer 2). Despite this lack of clarity, traders used fetishes to seal inter-cultural trade agreements, often having Africans swear upon them in lieu of legal contracts. Fetishes are inherently unstable, "composite, border" phenomena that not only possess a "characteristic hybridity" (Spyer 1), but which tend, Pels writes, to oscillate between meanings without ever landing. Thus, if Marx's commodity-as-fetish is human labor in "coagulated state, in objective form" (142), then seventeenth-century fetishes could be described as the congealed substance of cultural incommensurability. The fetish is "untranscended materiality" (Pels 97), a thing that "[holds] out a promise of fulfillment and ultimate arrival," and "seems to initiate access to a beyond," but never arrives (Spyer 9). A fetish is, to put it another way, a signifier devoid of any one signified. Although we are fully conversant in twentieth-century psychoanalysis's take on

erotic fetishism, in fact the term was first used to refer to an erotic fixation upon nonhuman things as early as 1800, when French novelist Rétif "compared the sexual power of a woman's shoes to '*des fétiches de Guinée*,'" (Logan 117). It is fascinating that the earliest recorded use of the term deftly triangulates femaleness, commodities, and West Africa—Guinea was, of course, a source of people kidnapped by slave traffickers. The perhaps surprising implication here is that the exoticized Otherness of Africa is layered onto the Otherness of European femaleness, and emblemized by a commodity item, the shoe. The concepts of commodity fetish and erotic fetish seem to have a common root.

Still, if a fetish is by definition a "made thing" entangled from the beginning with trade and commodities, how can Marie's corpse—after all, human remains—be classified as a fetish? Perhaps unsurprisingly in the light of Rétif's shoe fetish observation, the answer lies in a particular process of reification rooted in the transatlantic slave trade, a process Hortense Spillers calls "pornotroping." (I must emphatically note that I do not wish to suggest that Marie—until the circumstances of her murder a free white woman—is equivalent to a captive black person. Rather, I aim to illustrate how Poe's treatment of Marie's corpse appears within specific conditions of possibility for thinking about human bodies that emerged in the colonial slave trade.) Spillers writes that pornotroping is a process by which culture and personality are stripped from a captive body, reducing it to what she calls "flesh." She distinguishes between "body" and "flesh,' arguing that therein lies the central distinction "between captive and liberated subject-positions." While a "body" holds cultural meaning of many kinds, "flesh" is culture-free, "that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography" (67). The body-made-flesh renders it the object of

violence, particularly sexual violence. In the socio-political order of the New World, Spillers writes,

> 1)the captive body becomes the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality; 2) at the same time—in stunning contradiction—the captive body reduces to a thing, becoming *being for* the captor; 3) in this absence *from* a subject position, the captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression of "otherness"; 4) as a category of "otherness," the captive body translates into a potential for pornotroping (67)

It is not simply that New World slave bodies were treated as things to be bought, sold, and raped. Spillers suggests a radical reconceptualization of human bodies—*some* human bodies—that not only restricts liberty but also splits them open to endless fantasy and re-fantasy. These are not bodies made captive simply to do agricultural and domestic labor; these bodies bear the fantasies of their captors. While Marie, until her murder a free white woman, is not a slave, her body is bound after her murder in a sort of ritual of captivity, just as countless free, white, female characters have in the crime genres ever since.

Poe does not shy away from the question of rape in "Marie Rogêt," but although "All Paris is excited by the discovered corpse of Marie, a girl young, beautiful and notorious" (54)—and with reminders of Marie's nubility we are surely meant to understand this to be a titillated excitement—despite all that, "The medical testimony spoke confidently of the virtuous character of the deceased" (32). Poe nudges and winks about notoriousness and *grisettes* (a word for working-class young women that connotes flirtatiousness), yet Marie's corpse is found to be virginal—yet another enactment of discovering the virgin land. The violence to Marie's body was not sexual, we are told, and yet how could it be anything *but* sexual when even the reader is recruited into fetishistically perusing her youth, beauty, and femaleness? In other words, Marie's body need not have been violated in a strict medical sense when her entire personhood brought down to the level of thing *is in itself* the central pornotropic act. On the one hand, Poe's coquetry

here works in the service of his plot: the lack of rape makes the murder of a beautiful young woman all the more puzzling since, of course, her body as a sexual orifice serves as the most obvious motive for murder. On the other hand, anyone conversant in even the rudiments of French deconstruction can attest to the titillation brought on by lack. Poe negates the possibility of rape while at the same time, with his young, beautiful, female as a captive thing, invites the reader to endlessly, shamelessly violate her body. "Power," Scarry writes, is "always based on distance from the body" (46); "To have no body, to only have a voice . . . is to be the wounder but not oneself woundable" (206). In a sense, then, Dupin's disembodied ratiocination from the ivory tower of his mansion is a power play, with Marie's objectified flesh shoring up his subjectivity. What a depressing, unimaginative structure, it seems, although it is saved from utter tediousness if we remind ourselves how Dupin and Marie exist at the detective genre's genesis. We may trace Dupin's white male supremacy and Marie's fetishized, commoditized female flesh to the hard-boiled pulp noir of the 1950s to the domestic abuse thrillers that fill out the bestseller lists in 2019. The trunk of the detective genre if, perhaps, not all of its diverse branches, has always been about that bodiless male and his constitutive Other, the female dragged down and murderously bound to materiality.

In one sense, then, Marie's corpse simply serves as a repository of loathing for matter. However, as I noted above, the way her corpse absorbs and grafts to textile commodities also presents a grotesque body, one which bridges the space between human and nonhuman things. Bakhtin writes that "the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits" (26). Duden echoes that in the premodern cosmos, "the skin does not close off the body, the inside, against the outside world. In like manner the body itself is also never closed off; it is composed of

material that is no different from the world surrounding it. . . . The 'body' as a discrete object of social control . . . had not yet taken shape' (11-12).[78] While Bakhtin and Duden refer specifically to a premodern European cosmology, Marie's nineteenth-century corpse, too, merges with the rest of the world. What, then, is the world with which her body merges? It is a Paris of mass-produced shop goods marketed to women—lace, garter, slip, shoe, artificial flowers for her hat. Harpham writes that the grotesque

> arises with the perception that something is illegitimately *in* something else. The most mundane of figures, this metaphor of co-presence, *in*, also harbors the essence of the grotesque, the sense that things that should be kept apart are fused together. (11)

When a piece of lace is bound "so tightly around the neck as to be hidden from sight," when her skirt has been wound around her waist "and secured by a sort of hitch at the back," an alarm-bell of wrongness sounds. That lace is "illegitimately *in*" her neck, and a person is not supposed to have a handle like a tea kettle. This is a world of grotesque, mass-produced commodities that is very specifically nineteenth-century in its queasy merge of human flesh and shop goods.

Indeed, shop goods feature prominently as clues in "Marie Rogêt." One of the newspaper articles in the story posits that the corpse cannot positively be identified as Marie's because

> "Her foot . . . was small—so are thousands of feet. Her garter is no proof whatever—nor is her shoe—for shoes and garters are sold in packages. The same may be said of the flowers in her hat" (44-45)

Here again is this story's peculiar flattening of human and nonhuman clues onto the same plane. Marie's feet—and elsewhere her arm hair—are as interchangeable and disposable as "shoes and

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[78] Such an "object of social control" is then tied to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*—see the chapter "The Docile Body."

garters sold in packages." Dupin concedes that packaged articles of clothing and ornamentation are not in themselves enough to identify the corpse. But, he adds,

> it is not that the corpse was found to have the garters of the missing girl, or found to have her shoes, or her bonnet, or the flowers of her bonnet, or her feet, or a peculiar mark upon the arm, or her general size and appearance—it is that the corpse had each, and *all collectively* (45-46)

The identity of Marie's corpse, Dupin is saying, is made up a collection of parts and, remarkably, some are body parts and some are shop goods—that is, Dupin does not indicate that there is any categorical difference between Marie's feet and Marie's bonnet. It is not *only* that Marie's corpse has lace embedded in it or that her slip was transformed into a carry handle; the core identifiable personhood is a grotesque amalgamation of commodities and body parts. Without the special amalgamation, each part—whether it be an arm or a garter—is interchangeable with myriad others.[79] [80]

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[79] "The association of the female body with materiality, sex, and reproduction . . . makes it an essential—if not an accidental—aspect of the grotesque. The socially constructed difference which means that male and female bodies are not only physically different but are also hierarchically arranged and asymmetrically valued underlies the literary use of woman's body as the primary figure of debasement" (Miles 90).

[80] A discussion of grotesque amalgamations of commodities and body parts in Poe would not be complete without a discussion of the "The Man that was Used Up," which first appeared in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* in 1839 and in *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* a year later. In this tale, a narrator attempts discover more about the "remarkable" Brevet Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith, particularly respecting "the mysterious circumstances attending the Bugaboo war" (381), of which Smith played a part. Smith, handsome and skilled at "delightfully luminous conversation" (381) has dazzled the narrator's circle of acquaintance and intrigued the narrator himself. And yet no one, from the Reverend Doctor Drummummup, to the exquisite ladies at the theater, to the hostess of a *soirée*, is able to fully account for Smith's heroic past. Finally, the narrator goes to the home of Smith himself, where he personally witnesses the transformation, by a valet's application and adjustment of prostheses, of "an exceedingly odd-looking bundle of something" on the floor into the hero himself. It seems that the Bugaboos and Kickapoos did not limit themselves to scalping Smith, but dismantled the man entirely. The tale is satirical, but it is also unabashedly grotesque with Smith as an amalgamation of body parts and manufactured prostheses. At the same time, the tale illustrates a *discursive* grotesque, with

Interchangeability was a central concern in the American system of manufacturing, which developed over the course of the nineteenth century. Howard writes that "a central concept" of the system

> is that the parts of a mechanism, such as a gunlock, must be interchangeable. The theoretical advantages of interchangeability are fairly obvious: The product can be assembled by semiskilled help without fitting and filing, and repairs from stock parts or parts from salvaged guns can be made promptly with a minimum of skill. (633)

The American System was also characterized by division of labor and the use of semi-automated machines in manufacture, two developments that in combination freed up a workforce of women and children who needed only to have been trained in a single task. In effect, the attainment of interchangeability of the manufactured thing conceptually made workers, too, interchangeable. In the same way that Marie's garter is indistinguishable from other packaged garters, Marie the

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Smith's identity triangulated between the heteroglossic utterances of multiple gossips, and with Smith's name "a collage of military ranks and common proper and family names" (Almeida 164). Smith is a composite of flesh, discourse, and manufactured commodities not undergirded, it seems, by any absolute truth.

Most often read a parable of the construction of personhood, "The Man that was Used Up" is "a Gothic wonderland of excess and fragmentation" that questions "the stability of the subject position in American fictions of identity" (Almeida 169). The tale explores "the fractured nature of identity" within the social and political vicissitudes of Jacksonian America (Faherty 6) while at the same time it interrogates the depth of the personhood of a war hero who, having survived dismemberment by "the Bugaboos and Kickapoos" "down South" (i.e. "Indians"), is a living representative of Manifest Destiny. But "The Man that was Used Up" is also a commentary on technological innovation. Smith lauds "the rapid march of mechanical invention," saying that "we are a wonderful people, and live in a wonderful age. Parachutes and railroads—man-traps and spring-guns! Our steam-boats are upon every sea, and Nassau balloon packet is about to run regular trips . . . between London and Timbuctoo" (381). Man-traps and spring-guns (a gun rigged to fire upon a trespasser, booby-trap fashion) are two technologies devised to protect private property from trespass. Smith, as the dismembered veteran of the Bugaboo War, is himself a victim of violence that is the end result of *settler* trespass. What is more, popular rhetoric in the antebellum period celebrated the new technologies of transportation—such as the railroads, steam-boats, and balloons that Smith extolls—as a way to expand the United States.

urban shop girl is indistinguishable from other shop girls. Her commoditization is complete. Poe stages a disturbing ritual of reification at the site of Marie, trading her personality for flesh, her individuality for universality. At her post as a beautiful lure at her perfume counter, in her corpse's cominglement with textiles, and as an amalgamation of organic and inorganic components, Marie is a commodity fetish. Most of all, Marie is *Poe's* commodity fetish, a titillating piece of female flesh packaged up with violence and lace to lend his story commercial dazzle.

Alibis

Throughout the Dupin trilogy, much is made of Dupin's purportedly rational method of deduction—his "ratiocination." But although the narrator claims that Dupin solves his crimes with reason, an examination of the stories reveals that this is in fact a fantasy. This fantasy distances Dupin, and seems to distance an assumed white male bourgeois reader, from the vaster, systemic patterns of colonial crime that haunt these stories. In effect, Dupin, and Poe's ideal reader, are furnished with alibis. What is more, this fantasy repels *all* readers' inquiries into systemic patterns of crime.

In "The Guilty Vicarage," W. H. Auden writes that the reader of detective stories turns to fictions whose plots not only hinge *upon* guilt but which, in distancing the reader from the murderer, provide relief *from* guilt. "The phantasy, then, which the detective story addict indulges," Auden concludes, "is the phantasy of being restored to the Garden of Eden" (412). To begin with, the fantasy that it is even *possible* to return to the Garden necessitates the special back-to-the-future motion of settler palindromic history:

settlers construe their very movement forward as a 'return' to something that was irretrievably lost: a return to the land, but also a return to an Edenic condition. (Veracini, *Settler Colonialism* 98)

Settlers are motivated to find themselves "back home" in a lost, mythical past, and the engine for their return is nostalgia.[81] Detective stories, as discursive performances woven into the fabric of the settler colonial era, are likewise energized by a nostalgic craving for return. For a return to wholeness and innocence, as Auden suggests, but at the same time, and in apparent contradiction, for a return to the scene of the crime (indeed, like a gloating criminal). But how are we to interpret this contradiction? Does the reader of detective fiction really get to have his cake and eat it, too—taking a voyeuristic tour of scenes and acts of violent crime while simultaneously enjoying a state of innocence? How exactly does this work?

To get at the heart of these questions, I would like to make a return myself, to an odd, understated, yet pivotal feature of the Dupin trilogy: Dupin's machinations. These machinations are,

1. Dupin withholding the Ourang-Outang fur and the sailor's hair ribbon from the police, the narrator, and the reader.

2. Dupin placing the newspaper advertisement to summon the sailor (unbeknownst to the narrator and the reader).

[81] The destructive force of such nostalgia cannot be underestimated in, for example, our current historical moment of Trumpist nationalism that binds forcefully together a (palindromic) nostalgia for a better past with imperatives for a whiter future.

3. Dupin stealing/replacing the purloined letter (unbeknownst to the police, the narrator, and the reader).

These machinations run counter to Dupin's purported rational mindset. They occur off the page. They are comprised of Dupin taking action rather than merely thinking. As a result (and as I noted in my section about the armchair detective) Dupin may *pretend* to be removed from the world, but his critical distance is all for show. Dupin's machinations illustrate how, far from being the spectatorial, discourse-dependent, solipsistic character advanced by the narrator and his own aloof pretensions, he is in fact a meddler, a schemer, a bit of a showman, and a practitioner of gray-area ethics. Bryant even goes so far as to indict Poe the author for Dupin's duplicity, writing,

> in 'Rue Morgue,' Poe never plays fair. He conspires so effectively to conceal his hoax that we fail to catch on; we are not allowed to 'disentangle'; the ritualizing does not work. 'Rue Morgue' is a dysfunctional antiritual of satire, an unreliable narrative that attacks readers but does little to clarify their condition because they never really know that they are being attacked. It is a dupin(g) of the reader that is concealed primarily for the gratification of the perpetrator, Poe. (32-4)

Not only is the reader manipulated, but in stealing and withholding evidence, Dupin is more closely aligned with criminals than with the police. Even if we take Dupin's reconstructions of truth at face value, still he has hidden what is shameful to him: action (placing the newspaper advertisement, stealing/replacing the letter) and contact with bodily materiality (greasy hair ribbon, animal fur). In short, Dupin's chief puzzle-solving method is *not* ratiocination, as the diegesis announces, but a furtive *mimesis*.

Thus, Dupin's mimesis takes the form of action and enmeshment with materiality, and it also manifests in imaginative empathy. In "The Purloined Letter," for instance, the narrator and Dupin have this exchange:

> "And the identification," I said, "of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent, depends, if I understand you aright, upon the accuracy with which the opponent's intellect is admeasured."
>
> "For its practical value depends upon this," replied Dupin; "and the Prefect and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and, secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement, of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their *own* ideas of ingenuity; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which they would have hidden it." (985)

Dupin is saying that the police—who, recall, probed and graphed the thief's apartment in two and three dimensions—measured the wrong things. He is also saying, in true Enlightenment style, that another human being's intellect is available for probing and graphing (something that never occurred to the unenlightened police). And it turns out that the only way for Dupin to take the full measure of an Other's intellect is, temporarily, to evacuate his own and enter into that of the Other. Parreira writes,

> The clues left by the criminal enthrall the analyst in such a manner as to set his whole energy in motion. To Scotland Yard or the Quay d'Orsay, clues are meaningless; to the detective they are full of meaning. The logic that binds them together springs from an affinity, or rather an erotic promontory, apt to extract an entire psychology from a mark on the wall, a crumpled necktie, or a mud-stained shoe. (34)

Parreira's terms "affinity" and "erotic" suggest the detective's loss of self in his hyper-focused interpretation of the Other's traces. Perreira does not use the term mimesis, but as I mentioned in my chapter on Hawthorne, mimesis has at its core, like the erotic, erasure of difference. It is a form of imaginative vagrancy that is magical, superfluous, wandering, playful, with roots in prehistoric magic. In mimesis, the ironclad subject-object relationship dissolves. Just as Dupin

strolls at night through the Paris streets, "seeking . . . that infinity of mental excitement which quiet observations can afford" (533), he also goes slumming in other, criminal subjectivities.[82] But although Dupin's empathy is imaginative, it is not friendly; empathy, after all, is not the same as sympathy. While the police use plodding methods of space appropriation, Dupin's appropriation of the thief's very subjectivity—however temporary—feels parasitical. Dupin's empathy *colonizes*.[83]

Dupin, then, is a double-sided character. On the one hand, the stories' diegeses assert Dupin the value-free Enlightenment subject, the spectatorial flâneur, the rational New Man over and against irrational Paris. On the other hand, Dupin also breaches the boundaries of that centered subject when he indulges in secret machinations and when he goes slumming in Other subjectivities. Interestingly, Poe the author seems invested in promoting only the "rational" side of the character, given that Dupin's machinations are always hidden from the reader's view. It is as though Poe wished to write his detective as a centered subject *par excellence* but, when it came down to it, the plot twists and flashes of brilliance Poe came up with for Dupin were stubbornly mimetic. What remained was for Poe to write a veneer of "rational" language over this fact. If this were the case, then the "rational" language of the Dupin stories is yet another variation of discursive screen memory. Another possible explanation is that, as in many other instances in his oeuvre, Poe seems committed to diegetic frameworks that help suspend disbelief

[82] Dupin's arrival at the whole picture through intersubjective slumming makes one wonder what he would have made of the "natural" mounds and hieroglyphs in *Rodman* and *Pym*.
[83] Lacan describes the mode like this: "The subject adopts a mirror position, enabling him to guess the behavior of his adversary" (*The Ego in Freud's Theory* 180). It is interesting to note that, first, the thief is a Neapolitan (and so "foreign" to the Parisian setting) and, two, that Dupin holds a personal grudge against the thief for an old slight. But neither the thief's foreignness nor the fact that he is an enemy prevent Dupin from entering into his subject position.

or that enhance even sensational stories with an air of erudition.[84] In any case, we seem to glimpse Poe wrestling with his writing for control. Authorial intentions aside, Dupin's double-sided character helps to explain how these stories can both rehearse *and* interrogate settler colonial discourse: the texts are not in agreement with themselves.

If Dupin's rational methods are fantasy, then it is only fair to wonder if his rational *solutions* to the mysteries are only fantasy. Skulking in the margins of these stories is the possibility that Dupin's reconstructions of crimes are committed less to truth than to, well, to his sham. Upholding the fantasy, the illusion, and the *importance* of sham ratiocination emerges as the trilogy's most urgent investment. More urgent, certainly, than the injustices of the crimes themselves which, we may recall, are reported with the most distanced language. *Distance*, then. Distance that is celebrated in the detective, distance as a style of reportage. Distance as a plotting device. Distance, most disturbingly, from emotional engagement with the victims of crimes. What is distance from a crime—"I was not even there"—but an alibi? An excuse, a cleansing of the hands, the gift of freedom and innocence by way of absence.[85] But if these stories' most urgent investment is to provide alibis for Poe's presumed white, male, bourgeois reader, what precisely are the crimes from which they must distance themselves?

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[84] Dupin's machinations also undermine analyses such as that of Zanger, who gives Dupin credit for being an actual solipsist who has retired from the world: "In general . . . the Faustian hero moves from the world of thought to the world of experience; Poe's protagonist moves in precisely the opposite direction, withdrawing both physically and spiritually from engagement with society" (Zanger ed. Louis J. Budd, 199).

[85] Fantasies of disembodiment are, according to DiAngelo, a central strategy for upholding white supremacy. DiAngelo writes in *White Fragility* of "a whiteness that dresses in camouflage as humanity"—that is, of white American experience understood as the "universal human experience" (x, 29). As the standard of humanness, whiteness is not available for interrogation, and in its purportedly universal quality whiteness takes on the illusion of disembodiment. Whiteness is fantasized as the "reality" in which everyone and everything else swims.

First, the reader is given an alibi for the abusive pornotropic gaze that surveys Marie Rogêt's thingified corpse. When her corpse is found to be virginal, the reader is reassured that the crime was not sexual and yet, as I argued above, how could it be anything *but* sexual when even the reader is recruited into fetishistically perusing her youth, beauty, and femaleness? This alibi for the *specific* crime of rape elides the *systemic* horror of females-as-things, a crime in which the reader is complicit even as he reads the story. Second, when the narrator, seeing the to-scale sketch of the hand-shaped bruise on Mademoiselle L'Espanaye's throat, says "This . . . is the mark of no human hand" (559), humanity as a whole is presented with an alibi for the murders. Poe writes the goriest crime imaginable, but the reader is allowed to remain innocent. While no human hand strangled, tore, or scalped the L'Espanayes, the social patterns of colonizing, dominating, kidnapping, and enslaving in which everyone is a player—the sailor, Dupin, the narrator, all of Paris, all of Europe, all of America—shoulder ultimate responsibility for the L'Espanayes' deaths. In other words, humanity's alibi for the *specific* crimes of the L'Espanayes' murders elides *systemic* violences of colonialism. Third, in "The Purloined Letter" the thief is a Neapolitan and thus an ethnic "foreigner" in the context of Dupin's Paris. While the Neapolitan's "foreignness" marks *his* theft of the letter a provocative crime, Dupin's identical crime of theft marks the *solution* to the crime. This injustice is elided by Poe's choice to keep Dupin's crime safely off the page. In the end, it seems that Dupin's solutions to specific crimes provide only superficial closure; a multitude of unapprehended crimes crowd half-hidden and unsolved behind a scrim of "reason."

Perhaps the takeaway here is simply that systemic social violence is fundamentally irrational; the "whetted axe of reason" is unequal to this thicket. But I would like to push just a bit farther by returning to the central focus of this study as a whole—that is, attending to the

material specificity of textual things, allegedly trivial things, the "objects on the margins" about which Walter Benjamin writes. In the Dupin trilogy, materiality is tarnished and bereft: the "dirty blue ribbon" from which the purloined letter hangs, the sailor's "greasy" hair ribbon, a clump of Ourang-Outang fur, the mutilated bodies of Marie Rogêt and the L'Espanaye women, an abandoned parasol, a fragment of scalp. Dirty, greasy, bloody, animal, *thing*: materiality furnishes the debased and silent substratum upon which Dupin's fraudulent "solutions" ride. And when materiality *does* speak—for instance through the clues of the hair ribbon and the Ourang-Outang fur—Poe keeps it off the page, forefronting Dupin as its interpreter instead. But in the case of the Dupin trilogy (and arguably all crime fiction), passive reading equals *complicit* reading. We readers can only extricate ourselves from complicity in systemic crime by peering around Poe's series of blinds, patching up his elisions. In the midst of such work the voices of things begin to call, beckoning us towards a less dominating, more introspective forensics.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that Poe's innovated detective story tropes—reconstructive plots, armchair detectives, clues hidden in plain sight, and young, beautiful, female murder victims—belong within a genealogy of North American settler colonial discourse. Settler discourse is focused on *making*—making "new worlds," settler subjectivities, and making things out of indigenous people and land. Backgrounded by a Western cultural tradition that debases and even abhors materiality, materiality becomes the stage upon which settler domination is enacted, with objectification its primary weapon. I also argued that Poe's purported ratiocination is really only a blind that distances Dupin and the reader from systemic social crimes and injustices of the settler colonial era.

To conclude my argument, I return imaginatively to the hotel banquet hall at that mystery writers' convention. Watching what sort of books are celebrated, rewarded, *awarded*, by that community of writers, readers, and publishers. Having now concluded that the detective story genre—a genre in which I myself professionally write—is indeed erected on the settler colonial mode of domination, and acknowledging that both writing and reading are person- and world-making acts, I ask from an academic perspective, at the same time asking myself as a writer, *what now?*

Foremost, we must acknowledge that we are still living in the settler colonial moment. Veracini writes in *The Settler Colonial Present*,

> settler colonial relationships to place and between peoples are now completely naturalized, and we are going through no revolutionary crisis. We live in the long aftermath of the global settler revolution. (95)

Mark Rifkin echoes that settler colonialism remains "vital in the ongoing performance of quotidian modes of inhabitance and selfhood" (330). And given that, according Patrick Wolfe, settler "invasion is a structure not an event" (163), we must become alert to how settler colonial gestures nestle in myriad places, obvious (such as in, say, United Nations resolutions or United States law) as well as hidden. Veracini catalogues some of these gestures. Land grabs in the "*terra-nullis*" that is Africa by soveign and hedge funds. Conservation efforts that reproduce "human/nature and civilization/nature categories" and that are "based on notions of universal 'progress' [that] systematically exclude indigenous constituencies and indeed displace them." "Urban pioneers" gentrifying the "wilderness" of inner cities, disavowing the "expendable peoples" who already occupy those spaces. The teleological rhetoric used by geneticists. How the "frontier" of the internet is discussed in terms of "commons" and "enclosure" (63-66).

"Back-to-the-land" movements and the recent tiny house movement, both of which are saturated in classic settler colonial tropes such as "opting out of the market" and the fantasy of exercising a fuller agency via land ownership and a *Walden*-like immersion in earth and hand work. Veracini also stresses the pervasiveness and power of settler colonial narratives because, as I noted in Chapter Three, the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves are keystones of subject-formation. Popular settler narratives include science fiction, "a genre that routinely imagines the future as an extension of the 'frontier' past," the globally bestselling board game *Settlers of Catan*, and vampire stories—notably Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* saga—which are

> about the specific difference between discrete groups and processes of assimilation that can only proceed in one direction. Horrific tales about an encounter that produces death or an assimilation that is a type of death (*The Settler Colonial Present* 70)

Readers, movie-goers, and board game-players (not to mention the authors of those narratives) inscribe over and over a very specific mode of domination.

As Veracini's analysis of vampire stories demonstrates, genre fiction (as opposed to so-called literary fiction) is not merely throwaway entertainment, even when it is unabashedly produced for entertainment and leisure. Yet because of genre fiction's emphasis on generating "product" for consumption, I argue (and I have personally observed) that genre fiction writers and editors are not usually in the habit of examining the ideologies underlying their work. However, Veracini writes that it is at the level of the quotidian, of common sense, that settler colonial ideology "is most naturalized and therefore least visible" and therefore that is precisely "where it should be retrieved." He continues,

> If vampire stories are settler colonial stories, this is when we let the sunrays streaming through and bring in the garlic. (*The Settler Colonial Present* 96)

So, following Veracini one last time, I recommend that writers and publishers of crime fiction, instead of blindly producing "product," become alert to the ways the genre might be decolonized. This might not necessarily mean eliminating "classic" tropes like young, beautiful murder victims—although here I should mention the Staunch Book Prize, which is annually "awarded to a novel in the thriller genre in which no woman is beaten, stalked, sexually exploited, raped or murdered." Playing with, subverting, and interrogating problematic tropes may have just as much power as eliminating those tropes altogether, because trope-play "makes strange." Finally, crime fiction writers must acknowledge that the debasement or even abhorrence of materiality is, in their genre, the central pivot upon which settler colonial domination turns: *Bodies* (expendable bodies, authorized white male bodies, visible bodies, invisible bodies, bodies that are objects not people); *Land* (its "frontiers," its boundaries, its sanctioned and unsanctioned areas); *Things*, everyday things—that is, clues—and who gets to determine their meaning. We should begin our decolonizing work with representations of materiality, starting with the substrate of what and who is most degraded or taken for granted, and rebuild from there.

Coda:

Textual Thingliness, Metanarrative, and the "Semblance of Freedom"

The primary texts that I chose for this study, by Hawthorne, Beecher, Child, Alcott, and Poe, serve up various, and often surprising, formulas for how nonhuman things make and unmake persons and worlds. All of these primary texts were produced in the United States within the span of two decades, so it would feel natural, working as I am in American Studies, to attempt now to make some sweeping conclusion about, say, American culture or nationhood during that period. While it would be academically irresponsible *not* to historically contextualize these texts (and indeed, I believe that I have done so), at the same time I am uneasy about holding up texts as artifacts of culture. Throughout this study I have critiqued the blind spots produced by those sorts of structuralist readings, and I have made an effort to push past such habits to attend instead to what Benjamin calls "objects on the margins"—a category which can include texts. At the same time, I repeatedly turned to aesthetic theory to help me read from a stance that honors and more deeply investigates things (including people) that, to quote Adorno, "fell by the wayside—what might be called the waste products and blind spots that have escaped the dialectic" (*MM* 98). So it is with aesthetic theory, rather than cultural studies, that I would like to conclude. In these last pages, I describe how a frequent byproduct of writing *about* nonhuman things in all their particularity is a stress laid upon the thingliness—the quality of

having been made—*of* the text itself. This is a mystifying trait shared by the majority of my primary texts.

Chapter One, "Hawthorne's Trashy Toys," argued that Hawthorne writes about toys—in particular trashy, falling-apart toys—as mimetic things that undermine subject-object dichotomies and which, within metafictional frames, theorize the status of artistic making. But Hawthorne's polymorphous or open-ended artworks also convey this utopian message: Even if the world is broken, you can remake it. Take, for example, the final scene in the panorama of "Main-street". Salem is "a wintry waste of snow . . . the Great Snow of 1717":

> It would seem as if the street . . . were all at once obliterated, and resolved into a drearier pathlessness than when the forest covered it. The gigantic swells and billows of the snow have swept over each man's metes and bounds, and annihilated all the visible distinctions of human property. So that now, the traces of former times and hitherto accomplished deeds being done away, mankind should be at liberty to enter on new paths. (1049)

When the showman attempts to turn his crank and melt away the snowy scene, he finds that "The scene will not move. A wire is broken" (1050). He must abort the conclusion of the show, which was to bring Salem to the current moment and into the future. The show's final image, then, is that of Salem "annihilated" and the east-west track of teleological history "obliterated." The broken puppet show presents an alternative to rational knowledge and Official History. What is more, it allows room for guilt about Salem's violent past, and it offers the possibility of absolution through the snowfall's erasure and for, even, the "liberty" of a "new"—not predestined—"path".

Adorno and Horkheimer write that mimesis is the distinction between identifying something and identifying *with* something; the mimetic faculty balances precisely on the subject-object divide. But it seems to follow that only *incomplete* artworks offer the possibility of utopia,

in contradistinction to the preordained, predigested products of "culture industry" or propaganda. This is because only incomplete artworks recruit their audiences into completing them. It is, for example, through the Homeric caesura, through a *gap* rather than by way of substantiation, that "the semblance of freedom glimmers" (*DE*, qtd. Schultz 79). And more often than not, Hawthorne's supposedly trivial toys and gaping oversights are where both unutterable guilt and unutterable hope emerge.

In Chapter Two, "Polemics and Pattypans," I argued that doing away with the subject-object paradigm and antiphenomenological biases inherent in structuralist reading habits exposes that domestic advice manuals are themselves engaged in erasing the subject-object paradigm and antiphenomenological biases about women, women's work, and the materiality of everyday domestic worlds. "Domesticity" criticism, in assuming a disjuncture between a metaphysical social and a material world of bodies and things, scrubs away the features of its object of study. De Certeau and Giard write that women's domestic work—"manipulating raw material . . . organizing, combining, modifying, and inventing," and comprised of "precarious inventions without anything to consolidate them, without the acknowledgment to raise them up"—is a kind of writing whose "trace must be erased" (69-70). But Child, Alcott, and Beecher, in writing about domestic work, capture that trace, consolidate those inventions, insisting that we acknowledge their crisp contours. From there, a question develops: *What difference does it make when domestic advice is written down? That is, when it is thingified?*

Each of the three manuals I discussed in Chapter Two hints at parallels between their messages about personhood, and a certain self-consciousness about being books. Child's philosophy of the bricolaged household and housewife is underscored formally by her patchworked epistemes, "scraps" of advice, incommensurable measurements, and assertions that

no written advice can replace experience. Alcott alludes metareferentially to the liberating, redemptive qualities that, scripture-like, seem to issue from the physicality of his text:

> If this book should fall into the hands of one person who believes there is more of truth than declamation in the foregoing sentiments, let me prevail with her when I urge her to read, and consider, and study the chapters which follow. (316-17)

For Beecher, whose manual takes pains to bridge the theory/practice, head/hand binarism when it comes to domestic labor, the very act of writing a manual on domestic advice bridges that gap. "It may be objected," she writes, "that such things [as domestic labor] cannot be taught by books," but "Do not young ladies learn, from books, how to make hydrogen and oxygen?" (65).[86] In each case, there seems to be something about books that helps to prop up these authors' formulas of redeemed personhood. Indeed, domestic advice is able to function as an aspirational model of personhood *only* if it is written down—only, that is, if it is transformed into a thing.

Historians have contextualized the production of nineteenth-century U.S. domestic advice within the history of technology, and therefore some work has been done on the thingliness (as opposed to the discursiveness) of the genre. But although historians describe how technological changes in printing and transportation helped to expand the readership of U.S. domestic advice manuals—and so, presumably, increase the demand for *more* manuals—they still enlist "social" explanations (the battle-weary "domesticity," "separate spheres," and so forth) to account for the content of the manuals.[87] In other words, even within the critical context of material history,

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[86] Beecher even adds a marketplace dimension to the book's thingliness in *The American Woman's Home*: "Every woman who wishes to aid in [the] effort for the safety and elevation of our sex can do so by promoting the sale of this work, and its introduction as a text-book into schools" (469).

[87] Kelley writes that "the technological explosion in printing in the second quarter of the [nineteenth] century represented the greatest advance in that field since the fifteenth century" (8)

domestic advice is still treated as a transparent "cultural artifact" whose thingliness is overlooked. Yet domestic advice manuals, as material things, compile the abstract "social" effect of renovated and redeemed female personhood—the effect of power. [88] They do this in five ways.

1) When authors write about domestic work and things, they necessarily make them strange. Russian Formalist criticism has described the ways that literature "[foregrounds] its linguistic medium," serving to "estrange and defamiliarize" the everyday world (Abrams 127). Making strange is especially potent in the case of domestic labor and things because they, according to the three manuals I analyzed, are degraded to the point of invisibility. Writing's effect of making strange pulls domestic things, such as pickles and dumbwaiters, forward into vivid hyper-importance, displaying how they are enmeshed with and provoke human persons. Latour writes that when "objects" become "participants in the course of action . . . It's hard to imagine a more striking foreground/background reversal, a more radical paradigm shift"

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and that Boston, New York, and Philadelphia dominated U.S. publishing as the result of favorable transportation conditions. Cheap, mass-market publishing, and an easier reach for the dissemination of cheaper books was compounded, according to Kelley, by the emergence of subscription libraries (which ensured a minimum bulk sale for many books), and higher literacy rates. Although some critics mistakenly attribute the explosion of U.S. domestic advice writing in the 1830s and 40s to a metaphysical "domesticity" (Sarah Leavitt, in a strikingly erroneous example, writes, "Domestic advice manuals originated in the 1830's with the Victorian era and its emphasis on home and family" [9]), U.S. domestic advice writing was in fact a latecomer in a long European tradition with roots in medieval conduct manuals. By the 1830's there was, in the U.S., an established interest in British domestic advice and conduct manuals and a desire for American versions (Lees-Maffei). These were made possible, and reached a wider audience than ever before, by changes in printing and transportation technologies.

[88] "Even as textual entities," Latour writes, "objects overflow their makers" (85). And because the texts themselves are often examples of innovation, such as Beecher's important conduct/advice hybridization in *Treatise*, we can even read the texts as not just emerging from and entangled in technology and innovation, but sometimes even technological innovations themselves.

(*Reassembling* 70). Writing about domestic matter(s) is one such "radical paradigm shift": by virtue of being summoned forth into strangeness on the inky page, domestic work and domestic things gather up a power and authority that they do not possess as vanished traces or mute servants of everyday routines.

2) Writing down domestic advice imbues domestic matter(s) with power because they are thus transformed into what Latour calls "immutable mobiles" ("Visualization" 7). "Immutable mobiles" are things that are both fixed and transportable, such as books and maps, that efficiently allow "the mobilization of many resources through space and time" (23). "Immutable mobiles" stake out claims for power because "a location"—perhaps a cabin on the prairie—"can accumulate other places far away in space and time" (Visualization 11)—for instance, an English Gothic cottage, or Cotton Mather's pulpit, or a Parisian kitchen. When even the homeliest domestic advice is transcribed into book form, it becomes both fixed and transportable. A New England recipe for cherry pie, printed and bound, could have been brought fully intact, without the casualties of word-of-mouth transmission or local custom, to the furthest reaches of India or the Oregon Country. The written recipe is petrified procedure that stakes a claim for power as materially as a missionary's wooden chapel.

3) When domestic advice is transformed into a book, it may be read in private. Jack Goody writes that, with a book, "one can learn in privacy . . . one can learn to change one's cooking, change one's ways of behaving, without seeking the direct advice of others." Independence from the knowledge of one's immediate social circle enables books of domestic advice to operate as engines of social aspiration: "one might say," Goody writes, "that on the domestic level, the publication of manuals of 'correct' behavior made possible the rapid assimilation of social climbers" (142).

4) Domestic advice replaces ephemeral human beings—for instance, the inspiring or censoring presence of Granny by the cookstove (Goody 89). One might even go so far as to say that domestic advice manuals are more durable, transportable grandmothers whose memory will never slip.

5) Written domestic advice is also inherently scientific, and in the western philosophical tradition, alignment with science equals alignment with power. Goody suggests that the development of written domestic advice is transposed over the development of scientific power generally: "the dissemination of recipes and books of household management among the English middle classes," he writes, "was a fact not unconnected with the dissemination of knowledge by the Royal Society" (140). Written domestic advice does not simply *pretend* to make domestic labor "scientific" as some sort of patriarchal booby prize; written domestic advice *actually* makes domestic labor scientific. The move from the mute motions of a housekeeper sweeping a floor, for example, to written instructions in a manual about how to sweep a floor, is the move from mutable, uninscribed ephemerality to something that is immutable, inscribed, and so transportable and reproducible (*Visualizations* 22). What is more, Latour writes,

> The two-dimensional character of inscriptions allow [sic] them to merge *with geometry*. . . . space on paper can be made continuous with three-dimensional space. The result is that we can work on paper with rulers and numbers, but still manipulate three-dimensional objects "out there." (22)

A cottage blueprint, a diagram of cuts of meat, and a recipe condense and package power for maximum material influence "out there." Such power is not metaphorical; it is the result of the inherently scientific, geometrical, and model-like qualities of written inscriptions. In short, even while these manuals pay lip service to various ideologies—Western expansion and the settler colonial project in Beecher and Child, Protestantism in Beecher and Alcott, patriarchal social

order in Beecher, antebellum health fads in Alcott, and so forth—from their thingliness or, more exactly, from space and mobility created by their thingliness, spring opportunities for power and freedom.

In *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, *The Journal of Julius Rodman*, and "Ms. Found in a Bottle," which I covered in Chapter Three, "Poe's Haunted Settler Colonial Journeys," settler discourse is haunted by dread and insecurity because it is structured by paradoxes, inversions, and lies. These discovery stories portray protagonists who are lost—geographically, psychically—as their interpretive apparatuses waver and crumble, exposing their engineered qualities and the epistemic doubt running underneath. Sometimes these engineered qualities are exposed by intertexts and allusions, but the most prominent instances are produced by the "editorial notes" in *Pym* and *Rodman*, which contradict the narrators with competing narratives. I already covered the murmuring "Editors" in Rodman, whose conviction that the mounds about which Rodman wonders are *most definitely* made by indigenous people produces dramatic irony, doubt, and even dread.

Similarly, *Pym* is famously capped by a "Note" written in a narratorial voice and diegetic level not found elsewhere in the text. The "Note" is primarily concerned with the meaning of the hieroglyphs in Tsalal. While in the main text Pym (mostly) believes the hieroglyphs to be naturally-occurring, the "Note" contradicts him and "Mr. Poe" by describing how the hieroglyphs resemble Arabic and Ethiopian characters:

> But as the facts in relation to *all* the figures are most singular (especially when taken in connexion with statements made in the body of the narrative), it may be as well to say a word or two concerning them all—this, too, the more especially as the facts in question have, beyond doubt, escaped the attention of Mr. Poe. (220)

The "Note's" extradiegetic voice works, in one way, to inject a dose of rationality at the close of a narrative that grew increasingly outlandish. As I remarked in Chapter Four, Poe seems committed to diegetic frameworks to help suspend disbelief, or to enhance even sensational stories with an air of erudition. But just as Poe's intertextual challenges to the primacy of the Lewis and Clark expedition and the story of Mary Cecilia Rogers in effect confuse and even weaken logos in *Rodman* and "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt", the "Note" in *Pym*, in pointing out what "Mr. Poe" may have missed, calls attention to its own fabrication. And since the "Note" itself, conveniently enough, addresses the matter of the authenticity of writing (the hieroglyphs), upon concluding *Pym* the reader is left dangling in a chasm where the author is not the author, the voice of "Mr. Poe" seems to have replaced Pym's voice, and the text suddenly stands out in stark relief as a made, as a fake, thing. In the case of the "Note," calling attention to the thingliness of the text generates what Weinstein refers to as the chronic "unreadability" of *Pym*. As a thing without a clear message or maker, this text resists control like an untrained dog on a leash.

While reading and writing about Poe's Dupin stories discussed in Chapter Four, "America the Crime Scene," I often found myself wondering, Why are the Dupin stories told by the narrator and not by Dupin? After all, although metanarrative is frequently used to lend authenticity to fictitious characters and events, Dupin's stories do not seem to require authentication. Not only does Dupin himself speak of reason and deploy rational methods, but the texts-within-texts (newspaper articles, police reports) arguably offer a more immediate authentication than a narrator can. Yet the narratorial frame does create aesthetic distance (not to be confused with critical distance). What difference does that distance make? I argue (with a nod

to deconstruction) that the Dupin stories, like *Pym* and *Rodman*, have ruptures in their story levels from which bubble an un-story—uncontrolled, unbidden.

In narratology, diegesis traditionally operates in contradistinction to mimesis. Schmid writes,

> As early as Plato, it was recognized that the text in a narrative literary work is made up of two components. In *The Republic* . . . Plato calls the epic a mixed genre, encompassing both "pure narration" (*diegesis*) and also "imitation" (*mimesis*) of the characters' speeches (118) [89]

Diegesis in the Dupin stories is comprised of the narratorial "I." Diegesis conditions perspective and *tells* the reader what should be understood. The verbal accounts of the police prefect as well as the newspaper articles and police reports comprise the hypodiegesis, or embedded diegesis. Very little "real time" action and dialogue—mimesis—takes place. As a result, diegesis and hypodiegesis exert a totalizing control over these stories. I remarked on these stories' constricting layers, and other critics have commented on their lifeless and mechanical qualities; these effects are the result of muscular diegetic layers pushing meaning to the point that the stories sometimes barely feel like fiction at all. Such constriction creates distance between the reader and the events of the story, leaving room for Dupin to trap both the criminals and the reader with his tricks. Additionally, because of their thick diegesis, the Dupin stories inch toward the sort of positivistic writing criticized by Adorno: "the administrative repetition and manipulated presentation of what already exists" (qtd. Schultz 144). They read like propaganda

[89] Russian formalism uses the terms *sujet* and *fabula* to make a similar distinction: "*sujet* is a phenomenon of style, it is the compositional construction of the work" while *fabula* is "a description of the events in the novel." (Schlovsky qtd. in Schmid 176-7). In both theoretical formulas, the constructedness and logic of diegesis or *sujet* takes implicit primacy over the plasticity and irrationality of mimesis or *fabula*.

for one—and only one—version of meaning-making and world-making which, I argued, is that of settler colonial domination.

And yet, despite that muscular diegesis, I described in Chapter Four how mimesis still occurs in the Dupin stories. Not simply in what little watered-down action and back-and-forth dialogue there is, but in two ways that are unsanctioned by the diegesis and which, in fact, *interfere with* the diegesis's totalizing message: 1) Dupin's three machinations (withholding the Ourang-Outang fur and the ribbon, placing the newspaper advertisement to summon the sailor, and stealing/replacing the purloined letter), and 2) Dupin's intersubjective slumming, which relies upon imaginative empathy.[90] The diegesis's messages in the Dupin stories are that history is linear, there is only one reality, "ratiocination" is *the* way to access reality, and Dupin is a disembodied logician. The instances of mimesis arising from inconsistencies in the narrative levels, however, tell an un-story: truth is accessed via empathy and imagination; Dupin is more of a "poet" (in Benjamin's definition) than a logician; and finally, because of Dupin's showmanlike machinations, the very legitimacy of the "truth" and linear history at which he arrives must be called into question. (It could be argued that Dupin has a great deal more in common with the panorama huckster in Hawthorne's "Main-street" than Aristotle.) As a result,

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[90] Jameson's *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* argues that in the postmodern era, economy and culture have collapsed into a stifling closed system. Within this system there is no room for critical distance in which an individual may gain perspective on either the economy or culture. The subject is engulfed and, by implication, his agency and even identity are subsumed by global capitalism. In the absence of the audience's critical distance, art is emptied out, flat, reflective: "flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality" in postmodern art (9). Postmodern art objects are meant only to be objects; they convey nothing but themselves. At times, Jameson continues, art succeeds in expressing its own flatness and subsumption, but these instances arise from ruptures rather from intentionality on the part of artist or audience. Within his analyses of Van Gogh's *A Pair of Boots*, Jameson alludes to Heidegger's proposal that there is a "gap or rift" between "Earth and World" from which art emerges. "Earth" is, presumably, sheer materiality, while "World" is of perception and idea.

one begins to become suspicious of the *narrator*. After all, the narrator's diegesis does most of the work of framing Dupin as logical and disembodied. But . . . is he telling the truth? Does he have an agenda? Could it be that the narrator is the *true* subject in the Dupin stories, constituting his subjectivity over and against a colonized story? Even if the narrator attempts to "settle" the stories, the very fact of calling attention to the texts' (and thus his own) fabrication causes the entire charade to waver. Like the spirit thread in Navajo blankets that allow the weaver's soul to escape an otherwise perfect design, the eruptions of mimesis in the Dupin stories furnish for them—and the reader—a secret Way Out.

All of the primary texts chosen for this study offer alternatives to Official History—alternatives to predestiny, teleology, settler colonial narratives, capitalist marketplaces, degrading gender roles—and it is chiefly through their metanarrative content and textual thingliness that these alternatives emerge. Yet, I have puzzled over the connection between these texts' emphasis on nonhuman things and the stress laid upon the thingliness—the quality of having been made—*of* the texts themselves. Was the occurrence of both in each author's writing only a coincidence? Was I merely "reading too much into" texts, unduly alert to thingliness in all of its guises? Is metanarrative just "very antebellum"? Or is there some driving synergy between texts *about* things that at the same time emphasizes those texts *as* things? I conclude that it is the latter, and the answer (this will come as no surprise by now) is grounded in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*. He writes,

> Not only do artworks, as Heidegger pointed out in opposition to idealism, have things that function as their bearers—their own objectivation makes them into things of a second order. What they have become in themselves—their inner structure, which follows the work's immanent logic—cannot be reached by pure intuition; in the work what is available to intuition is mediated by the structure of the work . . . If [artworks] were nothing but intuitable they would be of subaltern importance, in Wagner's words: an effect without a cause. (*AT* 129)

One of the points Adorno makes here is that the structural thing-quality of artworks conditions their meaning; artworks are no mere "subaltern" repositories for the artist's ideas. This quote captures the urgent need to attend not only to the "content" of writing but also to the thingliness of texts, or risk missing meaning altogether. Adorno implies that, insofar as texts are not simply idea repositories, their structures, their thingliness, convey meaning (he calls it "logic") *beyond* whatever has been deliberately built into them by their creators. Elsewhere, he elaborates,

> Artworks surpass the world of things by what is thing-like in them, their artificial objectivation. They become eloquent by the force of the kindling of thing and appearance. They are things whose power it is to appear. Their immanent process is externalized as their own act, not as what humans have done to them and not merely for humans. (*AT* 107)

Adorno's implications are jaw-dropping. He asserts that artworks possess a "force," a "power," that is theirs alone, that they can "act" of their own accord, and that they are not merely by *or* for humans; within their thingly structures they possess their own being-for-themselves. Their independent being airlifts them entirely out of the subject-object paradigm customarily attributed to human-nonhuman relationships.

The connection between texts *about* things that emphasize that the texts are *themselves* things is, then, that these are simply two ways of removing so-called objects from the subject-object paradigm. They go hand-in-hand. In the moment that something—whether a toy, a human being, or a text—stops being an object and becomes a thing, a gap opens up. The gap may be hazy, threatening, polymorphous, playful. The gap is a zone of freedom, possibility, hard truths, or utopia. To put it another way, in the moment that something—whether a toy, a human body, or a text—stops being an object and becomes a thing, it is de-instrumentalized. Without an object's slavelike use-value to its subject, a thing has no predetermined use or message—or even

no use or message at all. That is how this study's primary texts offer glimpses of outsider worlds hidden from official view: mimetic worlds, childish worlds, female and domestic worlds, and the suppressed criminal history of North American Anglo colonization. But these glimpses are only available to readers who grant things—toys, human beings, texts—the freedom not to be objects.

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