

UC San Diego

UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

American maritime industry and a charity of wages, 1790- 1850

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/102152ms>

Author

Eyring, Mary Kathleen

Publication Date

2012

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

American Maritime Industry and a Charity of Wages, 1790-1850

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor
of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Mary Kathleen Eyring

Committee in charge:

Professor Nicole Tonkovich, Chair
Professor Michael Davidson
Professor Sara Johnson
Professor Rachel Klein
Professor Kathryn Shevelow

2012

Copyright

Mary Kathleen Eyring, 2012

All rights reserved.

The Dissertation of Mary Kathleen Eyring is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2012

DEDICATION

To my mother, whose voice I can still hear in the lines of the books we loved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Acknowledgments.....	vi
Vita.....	ix
Abstract.....	x
Introduction: American Maritime Industry and a Charity of Wages, 1790-1850.....	1
Chapter 1: “To be the medium of her charity”: The Performance of Vicarious Charity During Philadelphia’s Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793.....	51
Chapter 2: To “make them a useful part of the human race”: The Benevolent Education of Maritime Laborers at America’s First Schools for the Deaf.....	115
Chapter 3: “A field of usefulness seemed spread out before me”: Nancy Prince and the Economics of Evangelizing in Postemancipation Jamaica.....	178
Chapter 4: “A Charity of Wages”: Sarah J. Hale and the Business of Maritime Benevolence.....	232
Conclusion: The City of Brotherly Love in 1840: A Charitable Workplace Transformed.....	282
Bibliography.....	293

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the moment she strode across a room crowded with her colleagues and new students to welcome me to the Literature Department at the University of California, San Diego, Nicole Tonkovich has made me feel like a valued, informed, well-connected, and capable member of an inclusive academic community. As a professor, editor, and the chair of my dissertation committee, she's displayed an incredible knack for nudging me in the direction of clearer and more responsible scholarship and then letting me believe I've arrived at it myself. She's given me not only the confidence that I can succeed professionally, but also the experiences and tools that make success likely. I join the host of students who owe their achievements in academia and their sense of pride and belonging in higher education largely to her guidance and support.

I am grateful to the other professors on my committee, Michael Davidson, Kathryn Shevelow, Sara Johnson, and Rachel Klein, for their similarly valuable contributions to my education and to this dissertation. Each has shown a willingness to meet with me, to read carefully over my work, and to offer trenchant and useful critiques. Even more remarkable, given the demands on their time, is that none of them has ever made me feel like this support has been an imposition in the least. I could not have completed this dissertation without their generosity and expertise.

A number of people have supported my research at libraries and universities where I've collected source materials. Rob Melton at the Social Sciences and Humanities Library at UCSD helped me locate a wealth of information on nineteenth-century women writers stored practically at my fingertips. Nic Butler, the manager of the Charleston Archive at the Charleston County Public Library, shared his encyclopedic knowledge of

everything published in and about Charleston and located many of the sources upon which sections of this dissertation depend. I'm grateful to Nicole Dittrich at the Special Collections Research Center at Syracuse University Library for lending me assistance and sharing her talent for deciphering illegible handwriting from centuries past. I also appreciate the staff at the New York Historical Society, Michael Pittman of New York University's Bobst Library, the staff at the Massachusetts Historical Society, and Linda August at the Library Company of Philadelphia for their time and knowledge. I've benefitted immensely from the presentations, discussions, and criticism offered by my colleagues at The Atlantic World Workshop at NYU. And I owe sincere thanks to the editor, editorial board, and consultants at *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* and to the members of the Southern California Society for the Study of American Women Writers for their commitment to publishing extraordinary scholarship and encouraging me to follow suit.

Chapter 2, in part, has been accepted for publication and will appear in a special issue of *Legacy* 2013. Eyring, Mary Kathleen, University of Nebraska Press, 2013.

Closer to home, I've been supported by individuals who've let me blur all reasonable distinctions among friend, editor, family member, and research assistant. Melissa Milewski read and commented extensively on chapters of this dissertation even as she worked assiduously to finish her own book. Kaeli Andersen provided me access to New York City's secret sanctuaries of study, made even more distinctive by her warm and engaging presence. Lisa Thomas has been a good editor, a good sport, and a great friend. Roger and Kathy Carter made it possible for me to shuttle between diverse parts of the country as I researched and wrote. My parents gave me everything worth having,

and then taught me to use reading and writing to make sense of it all. My siblings and their spouses cheered me on as I worked. Finally, my most heartfelt thanks go to Jacob Carter, who, had he known the long hours of technical assistance, driving to archives hither and yon, hauling books to and from various libraries, wrestling with unwieldy reels of microfilm, and tinkering with pictures, slides, and photocopies that this adventure of dissertating would require of him, might never have urged me to apply to UCSD in the first place. But knowing him, he probably would.

VITA

2002-2006	Bachelor of Arts in English, Brigham Young University
2007-2009	Master of Arts in Literature, University of California, San Diego
2007-2012	Doctor of Philosophy in Literature, University of California, San Diego

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

“To ‘make them a useful part of the human race’: The Benevolent Education of Maritime Laborers at America’s First Schools for the Deaf.” *Legacy*, forthcoming.

“*The Day of the Locust* by Nathaniel West.” *The Encyclopedia of Jewish-American Literature*. Ed. Gloria L. Cronin and Alan L. Berger. New York: Facts on File, 2009.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

American Maritime Industry and a Charity of Wages, 1790-1850

by

Mary Kathleen Eyring

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2012

Professor Nicole Tonkovich, Chair

This dissertation studies organized charity work as it was performed in Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Charleston, and Kingston, Jamaica from the last decade of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century. I study the writings of Charles Brockden Brown, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, Sarah Pogson Smith, Nancy Prince, and Sarah Josepha Hale alongside other primary and secondary texts to show the mutually sustaining bond between benevolence and other forms of capitalistic labor of this period, particularly literary production. I argue that charity work functioned during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as an innovative and profitable form

of labor that allowed marginalized individuals to contravene the strictures surrounding race, gender, and class that determined a laborer's earning potential within the American workforce. My research closely analyzes a variety of literary and historical sources to demonstrate that women, people of color, the disabled, and other disenfranchised groups carefully positioned themselves along circuits of exchange in a global economy because they recognized that charity was not a hobby but a business, successful only to the extent that it adapted itself to viable economic models and responded rapidly to shifts in larger market trends.

Introduction:

American Maritime Industry and a Charity of Wages, 1790-1850

When Sara Josepha Hale, the Boston-based editor of the *Ladies Magazine*, founded the Seaman's Aid Society in 1833, her charity eschewed the one-sided distribution of alms—the model then operative among the city's impoverished—and instead embedded itself in the profit-and-loss structure of a competitive business. Under the management of the Society's leaders, seamen's wives and children sewed clothing for sailors to be sold at a store they also staffed. Their compensation, as Hale conceived of it, was a way to refigure alms as “a charity of wages” awarded according to the performance of the supplicants (“Extracts from the Annual Report” 1836). Hale's social influence and earning potential as an editor rose in direct correlation with the success and public acclaim of her charitable initiative. Her written opinions on the poor, standards of moral rectitude, European fashion, and American consumerism, coupled with the renown of her innovative approach to benevolence, attracted the attention of the Philadelphia publisher Louis A. Godey, who in 1837 hired her as the editor of his periodical for women. Hale ran *Godey's Lady's Book* with the same professional acumen she had engaged as a charity worker in Boston, and under her management, the magazine's subscriptions multiplied tenfold in two decades. Her real innovation, however, was not in aligning the profits of literature with the profits of charity work; it was in capitalizing in especially shrewd and expansive ways on the imbrications of the literary, the charitable, and the commercial in America's largest maritime centers, connections which had begun generating profits for laborers barred from conventional professions as early as the eighteenth century.

In fact, it was American writers who first identified the existence of a charitable impulse that seemed to sweep beneath American history like a current, buoying up and carrying the dross of society as it pulsed inexorably forward. “We should give *bountifully*, and *sufficiently* for the supply of the poor’s need,” Jonathan Edwards admonished his congregation in Massachusetts in 1732 (“Duty of Charity” 398). Motivated by visions of financial rather than spiritual salvation in the South more than a century earlier, John Smith claimed to be swayed primarily by the demands of “Religion, Charity and the common good”—an aspiration that would likewise dominate discourse (if not policy) in Puritan New England (*Generall Historie* 220). Nathaniel Hawthorne, refashioning early American history into fictions that bolstered the ideological initiatives of the mid-nineteenth century, imagined that the effect of a sanctimonious and exacting Puritan social order was to transform one of its transgressors, Hester Prynne, into “a self-enlisted Sister of Charity,” a woman dedicated in later life to “bestow[ing] all her superfluous means in charity on wretches less miserable than herself” (255, 101). The American disposition, such authors hold, has historically tended toward compassion and benevolence as its default.

Contemporary scholars have been no less interested in the scope and significance of American charity; many, like myself, have been heartened to see a redemptive strain in a history of American commerce more frequently characterized by greed and exploitation. I have benefitted especially from the insights of scholars including Lori Ginzberg, Debra Bernardi, Jill Bergman, and Susan Ryan, who show how the ideals of charity championed by the nation’s male leaders and writers were overwhelmingly carried out by capable and energetic women who challenged the assumed distinction

between public and private spheres during the nineteenth century. While their scholarship has tended to view charity as the spontaneous offering of generous hearts, a manifestation primarily of the magnanimity and tenacity of Americans with means, social influence, and ample discretionary time, I see something more. Even a cursory study of centers of American industry, commerce, and trade reveals that sites of robust economic production, without a single notable exception, were also sites of active and aggressive charitable activity. These charitable activities, however, were not the purview of captains of industry or powerful churchmen, but were presided over and carried out predominantly by those possessed of considerably less financial and social capital: white women, and, in crucial instances, men and women of color. In order to compete with other ventures positioned to capitalize on the needs of impoverished residents of urban seaports, like stores that sold shoddy clothes for seamen at a staggering markup, these charitable organizations turned from the distribution of alms that characterized the nation's earlier and less sophisticated charitable activity, and instead adopted the profit structure of competitive businesses. Although this model of charity work could generate revenue and social power for its managers, it didn't require a substantial investment of initial capital; this low barrier to entry, combined with its close affiliation with religious doctrine and clerics, made charity work both an accessible and socially sanctioned undertaking for women and other disenfranchised classes. I argue that these charity workers carefully positioned themselves along circuits of transnational exchange in a global economy because they recognized that charity was not a hobby but an industry, successful only to the extent that it adapted itself to viable economic models and responded rapidly to shifts in larger market trends.

It is hardly coincidental that the earliest American theorists of charity I have mentioned thus far—Jonathan Edwards, John Smith, and Nathaniel Hawthorne—spent their lives on and around the sea, since flourishing port cities have historically been regions of heavy industry, robust economic growth, and vast inequities of wealth. Additionally, they are hubs of exchange: of commodities, ideas, people, and pathogens. The cities I study to chart the development of charity as a thriving industry—Philadelphia, Charleston, Boston, New York, and Kingston, Jamaica—were also intake ports for refugees of global conflict; theaters for returning sailors and travelers to tell and retell sensational stories of kidnappings, captivity, and other racialized threats abroad; and sites of exploitation of the underpaid and imperiled laborers upon whose backs the success of maritime industry rested. Philadelphia, Boston, and New York were also the centers of the American print trades, which depended on this circumatlantic flow of ideas, information, and capital, and were increasingly sustained throughout the nineteenth century by the women writers like Sarah Hale who transformed benevolent and reform-minded ideals into the themes of poetry, plays, articles, bestselling novels, and the nation's most popular literary magazines. In this context, I will study the emergence of charity as a profession that worked in concert with other for-profit enterprises. In this case, my focus is specifically on the circulation of ideas and ideologies through the medium of literary production. As a capitalist enterprise, I argue, charity work of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was poised to reap profits from the fortunes and fatalities of transatlantic commerce, and to redistribute at least part of that gain to the “deserving poor.”

The intertwined growth of organized charity and the print trades during the first half of the nineteenth century depended on the flows of capital enriching thriving seaports. Charity work and literary production became inextricably connected largely because of the professional decisions of women writers who saw the same potential for profits in charity work that motivated literary enterprise. Both professions had relatively modest beginnings before women identified and availed themselves of the potential for both to generate greater capital. American presses of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries generally confined themselves to printing cheap copies of English texts, as the nation's first publishers were wary of assuming the risk of publishing the work of obscure American writers. Aspiring women writers often had to give publishers security in the form of lengthy subscription lists—comprising mostly the names of family and friends—before they could see their work in print. A few women writers could support themselves with the profits of their writing, but they were exceptions in the sea of women who saw only meager compensation for their literary production—in the remarkable event that their work was published at all. This was not a trivial matter, since many women writers of the early nineteenth century lacked the financial protection of a husband and needed a reliable source of revenue. Those I write of here—such as Sarah Pogson Smith, whose brief marriage ended in a bitter separation, and Sarah Hale and Nancy Prince, both widows—were among them. Since writing was a risky way to make a living, these women sought innovative ways to appeal to their audiences, ingratiate themselves with publishers, and—as American readers began to clamor for texts on managing households, educating children, cooking and entertaining, and promoting the health of a family—to accrue credibility as authorities on domestic matters despite their

status as single women. Supporting coordinated charitable enterprises in urban seaports—sites of extensive poverty as well as centers of publishing—was one especially effective way to do this. The groups that united in support of a charitable cause might also comprise a likely audience for writers and publishers, who could depend on sympathetic readers to spend money on a text that spoke to or supported a charitable cause they believed in. Furthermore, the nature of charity work itself, as an activity geared toward disabled bodies, impoverished residents, and people of color in maritime centers, allowed even childless or single women to exercise authority as societal “mothers” for groups of people whose class, race, or disability made them subjects of paternalism. And savvy women writers grasped and responded to a crucial reality: the profits of writing could come in forms other than cash, such as greater social influence or personal agency. As their calculated literary efforts granted them more control over the bodies of those deemed “impoverished,” charitable women writers were able to cast themselves as protectors of the ideal of American domesticity even as they lived outside its norms.

As they mined the circuits of capital that connected charity work and literary production in maritime centers, these writers, including women of color like Nancy Prince, transformed both professions. Women, particularly those who used organized charity work to garner interested audiences and accrue an aura of credibility on domestic matters, became the nation’s first best-selling authors and its most influential editors. As Jane Tompkins reminded a generation of scholars who had neglected this achievement in her foundational work of criticism *Sensational Designs*, Susan Warner’s novel *The Wide, Wide World* became America’s first “bestseller” in 1850, two years before Harriet

Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became the best-selling novel of the nineteenth century.¹ When Sarah Josepha Hale assumed the editorship of *Godey's Lady's Book* in 1837, the literary magazine had 10,000 subscribers. By 1860, still under her management, the circulation had soared to 150,000, making it one of the most popular periodicals—for men or women—in the country. The texts of Warner, Stowe, and Hale all focused on the kinds of domestic issues that would attract the attention of charity workers during the nineteenth century: abandoned children and poor orphans, enslaved laborers, and the impoverished or disabled seaman and his wife and children left on land. These literary developments have been noted extensively by scholars, most recently in the exhaustive compilation of essays *A History of the Book in America*, published by the American Antiquarian Society and University of North Carolina Press in five volumes from 2000 to 2010.² But the ways ambitious and professionally savvy women writers transformed the field of American charity work are directly related to their record-shattering achievements in American literature and at least as remarkable. My study will be the first to examine this related transformation and to situate the rise of organized

¹ Although the term “bestseller” wouldn't enter common parlance until the last decade of the nineteenth century, Warner's novel achieved the immediate and widespread popularity that would be the hallmarks of a bestselling novel to which all profit-conscious authors and publishers, instructed by her success, would aspire. Chapter 5 of Tompkins's book, titled “Sentimental Power: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Politics of Literary History,” puts the omission of Warner's and Stowe's texts from the American literary canon as it was conceived and reconceived at pivotal moments during the twentieth century within a telling historical context, shedding light on the academic and social values that, for almost a century, discouraged scholarship on Hale and other hugely influential women writers of the nineteenth century. Nearly three decades after its publication, Tompkins's book still suggests productive ways to read texts by understudied writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “as agents of cultural formation” (8). In this case, I read across a wide variety of genres to show how texts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reflected and shaped a developing culture of American benevolence.

² The volumes cover the history of print in America from the seventeenth to late-twentieth centuries and treat this history as part of related historical developments, as the titles of each volume suggest: *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, *An Extensive Republic*, *The Industrial Book*, *Print in Motion*, and *The Enduring Book: Print Culture in Postwar America*. The second volume is particularly pertinent to my study of transatlantic benevolence, and I draw heavily upon the scholarship it presents.

charity work within the broader social, commercial, and literary trends it participated in and influenced.

Under the aggressive management of white women and, in some notable cases, men and women of color, many of whom were performing charity work to promote their careers as writers (or, even more frequently, writing to promote their social positions), charitable enterprises began to take on the scope and shape of organized businesses during the first half of the nineteenth century. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, American charity work was largely administered in an ad-hoc fashion by town leaders and clergymen in the North and by slaveowners (and on occasion their wives) in the South. These men of political, economic, or religious authority in early American communities also had the authority to step in and assume the role of father for a household deprived of its male head. The household might include a wife, children, enslaved laborers, and indentured servants, and the deprivation of their patriarchal figurehead might result from death, disability, criminal behavior, or extreme poverty. Some communities, like the Rhode Island towns that Ruth Wallis Herndon studies in her essay “The Domestic Cost of Seafaring: Town Leaders and Seamen’s Families in Eighteenth-Century Rhode Island,” upheld a code by which town fathers routinely assessed need among town residents, determined the fitness of applicants for charitable aid, and then administered an appropriate form of charitable assistance.³

In most other American communities, the charitable operations of male leaders were less coordinated. In Boston, clergymen like the Reverend Edward Thompson

³ Herndon’s study is part of a compilation titled *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*, edited by Margaret Creighton and Lisa Norling. This volume, published in 1996, helped establish the framework within which scholars can study domestic practices on shore as fundamentally connected to economic and social life on ships.

Taylor worked alone to address the negative byproducts of a brisk and ruthless shipping industry on communities of seamen and their families.⁴ And, as Barbara Bellows observes in her formative study *Benevolence Among Slaveholders*, southerners inclined toward benevolence (both men and wealthy white women) in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries respected the traditional social order of the plantation, supposedly based on “mutual bonds and reciprocal duties,” and did not step in to aid enslaved men and women even when those “mutual bonds” clearly exploited rather than supported people of color (68). Outside of plantation life, class divides among whites fragmented charitable efforts, so that sporadic benevolent gestures only reinforced socioeconomic stratification. In the “slave South,” Stephanie McCurry finds, “charity exacted its price, and what little of it the Low Country saw served rather to measure than to traverse the class divide between yeoman and planter women” (125). Even in the North, charitable operations were often severely limited in scope, haphazardly managed, and woefully inadequate to the growing poverty in the nation’s largest commercial centers, and the men who administered them were disinclined to neglect their own professional pursuits to restructure an activity they considered a somewhat distasteful expediency, not an occupation that could reward their time or efforts.

Thus there was clearly an opportunity to consolidate economic, domestic, and moral responses to poverty along the Atlantic coast into streamlined charitable operations, and a successful effort stood to benefit not only impoverished and disabled residents of maritime communities, but also the individuals coordinating it. People

⁴ As he administered charity among mariners, Taylor simultaneously stoked America’s emerging literary landscape, as writers of maritime life were among the congregants inspired by his eloquent rhetorical style. David S. Reynolds points this out in *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville*.

excluded from many conventional avenues of wage-making, including white women and men and women of color, sized up a potentially lucrative opportunity, and aimed to fill the gaps in the underdeveloped market of benevolence. But the charity thus extended would not come free: the men and women who devoted their time and energy to radically reorganizing the field of benevolence approached the task as a profession and expected to be compensated for their specialized labor. Because of this aggressive approach, the charitable managers of the nineteenth century would realize profits not only in the form of social control, but also in material forms: greater visibility and success in related fields like writing, tokens of gratitude from wealthy residents of maritime communities beset by urban poverty, and money earned from profit-driven charitable initiatives, a portion of which could be reapportioned to the needy at the discretion of increasingly powerful charitable workers.

Even as the transactions between powerful charitable managers and impoverished supplicants generally reinforced strictures around class, race, education level, and disability, shrewd individuals who might normally be classed among those marginalized groups were able to finesse the charitable transaction to reposition themselves on the more advantageous side. I have already noted how single women including Sarah Pogson Smith, Sarah Josepha Hale, and Nancy Prince were able, even in the midst of domestic instability and economic need (and in Prince's case, physical disability), to extricate themselves from the ranks of the "deserving poor" by identifying more stigmatized populations—like the deaf, poor mariners' wives and children, or enslaved and recently emancipated laborers—and arrogating a measure of social authority and

legitimacy by making these groups the objects of their charitable aid.⁵ But even before these women used charity as a strategy to distinguish themselves from the masses of single, poor women, other charity workers had identified the power of benevolence to tip the social balances in their favor. Men and women of color living in Philadelphia in the 1790s, for example, saw an opportunity during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793 to extend vital aid to the city's suffering citizens, and in doing so, to ameliorate race relations in the city and curry support for a church building that would allow black Philadelphians a more organized and autonomous public life in the decades immediately following the epidemic. My focus on charity as a profit-oriented profession, rather than an avocation for the wealthy and well-off, allows us to see marginalized groups—single women, men and women of color, and the disabled—as able to assume a modicum, and in some cases an abundance, of social and economic agency and even power.

I clearly rely on the work of Susan Ryan, Stephanie McCurry, Lori Ginzberg, and Barbara Bellows as I frame my approach toward transactional maritime charity work within a body of scholarship that has tended to treat benevolence in the antebellum North and South as a one-sided extension of aid. During the last three decades, Ginzberg has written extensively about women's charity work in the antebellum North, and particularly about the women leaders of the suffrage, temperance, and antislavery movements of the era. In 2003, Ryan's *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence* built on the work of Ginzberg and other theorists of antebellum charity work to advance a compelling argument that such benevolence actually worked to

⁵ I do not focus extensively on fictional women in this study of maritime benevolence, but Hawthorne must have been sensible enough of this trend to imagine a single mother in a perilous social and economic condition, Hester Prynne, taking advantage of precisely this function of charitable labor.

reinforce racial and class ideologies and worked against the interests of the “deserving poor.” Both Bellows and McCurry study charity work in the antebellum South, and their work guides me to see how southern charity workers modified, contested, ignored, or promoted the charitable initiatives popular in the North. Although my research will revise existing theories of American benevolence, I benefit enormously from the careful work these scholars have done on the structure, participants, and social context of particular charitable organizations, and I depend on their work to chart the historical development of charity as a profession that became increasingly capitalistic as the nineteenth century wore on.

In addition, I rely on the scholarship of Margaret Creighton, Lisa Norling, Marcus Rediker, Peter Linebaugh, Paul Gilroy, and other theorists of circumatlantic socioeconomic practices to place this study of benevolence squarely within a *maritime* context, where I believe the structures of social power and systems of economic transactions that animated both ship and coastal life illuminate the heretofore unexamined trends that transformed the nature of American charity work as the American maritime industry swelled toward its apogee in the mid-nineteenth century. In particular, Linebaugh and Rediker’s *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (2000), Creighton and Norling’s edition of essays titled *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920* (1996), and Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) are key texts from which my study of benevolence on land and sea draws frequently, although I also cite other pertinent books and articles by these scholars. Finally, I rely heavily on the foundational work of David Reynolds and Jane Tompkins,

whose exploration of the individuals, texts, and social forces elided from more than a century's worth of scholarship on the literature of the "American Renaissance" has paved the way for scholars of two (now almost three) decades to place understudied writers within a more complete historical framework, and in so doing, to further demystify the secret history of American literary, social, and economic practices of the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries. As I bridge these three areas of study, I hope to show how literary production, maritime commerce, and charity work all required their participants to cross borders. All three involved transactions that worked across divides of class, gender, race, political affiliation, and location, and studying them as part of an interrelated system rather than autonomous sectors of the American economy will bring to the fore the individuals who positioned themselves across traditional boundaries—between public and private, home and abroad, foreign and native, rich and poor, altruistic and opportunistic—the better to profit from the capital that ran through the literary, water, and charitable trades and connected their diverse network of participants.

As I study lesser-known charitable women writers and other agents of charity in my own attempt to shape this historical perspective, my methodology consists of close readings across genres conventionally understood to comprise the "literary," including novels, poems, and plays, while amplifying them by giving the same analytical attention to newspaper accounts, legislative documents, personal narratives, journals, and letters. As well, secondary scholarship from disciplines including literature, history, economics, and disability studies enriches my study. I draw especially from compelling new scholarship that, in this spirit of interdisciplinarity, considers the crucial connection between literary production and maritime economic trends during the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries, such as Stephen Shapiro's *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World System* (2008). This work of scholarship also fixes 1793 as a crucial moment in American literary and political history, and considers, as I do, how Charles Brockden Brown, writing in and around Philadelphia during the 1790s, was especially attuned to the influence of transatlantic commerce as a novelist and as a resident of a thriving seaport. Shapiro argues, as I do, that the rhythms of transatlantic shipping shaped maritime communities and connected their cultures and economies even across great distances. "The early American novel was born and circulated from within the network of these nouveau riche traders, their families, and associates as an alternative, nonpartisan mode of displaying their political discontent, class interests, and perceived connection with the larger world of Atlantic mercantile traffic, which was itself in transition at the time," he writes (6). While Shapiro considers the novel within this context, I consider how political discontent, class interests, and connections among transatlantic communities gave rise to the profession of organized benevolence, designed to create substantial profits for its participants on either side of the class-oriented transaction.

I'm also inspired by provocative new research that reconsiders the transnational circulation of commodities and the development of national economies in light of the vital (but often undervalued) contributions of women and other marginalized groups. In *Traveling Economies: American Women's Travel Writing* (2007), for example, Jennifer Bernhardt Steadman sheds new light on nineteenth-century economies of authorship by carefully attending to the writing of "women who traveled for work" rather than leisure (4). The challenging experiences and hard-won profits of these mobile working women

represent a reality more common than the paucity of scholarship documenting it would suggest. However, while Lori Ginzberg, Christine Stansell, and Anne Firor Scott have studied women's antebellum charity work extensively, the feminized nature of benevolence and its relationship to immigration, travel, literature, and commerce have yet to be considered in any depth. Even less understood are the ways that the social construction of disability during the nineteenth century shaped charitable initiatives focused on the unemployed, impoverished, and morally destitute, although Douglas Baynton, Harlan Lane and Lennard J. Davis have provided a historical and theoretical framework within which such a study could be carried out. Here, I speak particularly of Lane's groundbreaking study of the transnational origins of American Sign Language and American education for the deaf, *When the Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf* (1989); Douglas Baynton's scholarship on the dark period of Deaf history from 1880-1960, when American Sign Language was banned from the classroom and a Deaf World united by a shared language had to find strategies to cope with this assault; and Lennard Davis's studies on the ways the literary tropes of the nineteenth century reinforced the social construction of disability, such as his book *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (1995). I hope to build on this promising new scholarship by connecting threads of economic, literary, disability, and cultural theory into a nuanced study of charity work that acknowledges the commercial and social valences of organized benevolence and motivates future research that treats charity work as a complex, necessary, and robust industry during an era of unprecedented circumatlantic trade.

My theoretical approach will draw particularly from the work of transnational, postcolonial, and disability theorists. Scholars including Shapiro have provided useful

frameworks for a study of literature and related social movements that considers their transitional valences. Much of my study, as I have noted, concerns the crossing of borders: the ship's routes through oceans, rivers, and canals; the charitable transactions that crossed socioeconomic, racial, national, and cultural divides; and literature by women who bridged public and private forums to publish texts that dramatized transnational themes like piracy, captivity, travel, and commerce while simultaneously enabling the print trades themselves to profit from the transatlantic circulation of bodies, wealth and information. I also cross another border, one described by Susan Gustafson in a crucial piece of transnational scholarship as a gap that long supported a theoretical schism between the fields of early American studies and U.S.-American studies, divided by the years 1815-1835. "These two decades are a kind of temporal gap or aporia between the major monuments of national history: the founding era and the antebellum period," Gustafson writes. "During this 'temporal gap,' 'democracy' underwent an unprecedented process of institutional elaboration; at the same time, its conceptual tension with 'empire' was clarified and strengthened. This process of conceptual and institutional elaboration was profoundly shaped by an Atlantic world context of revolution and counterrevolution" (118).⁶ In this dissertation, I respond to Gustafson's call for an "approach to the study of American empire" that "moves backward through time in a search for origins," by attending specifically to a time frame that includes the two decades immediately following the War of 1812. During this understudied era, the impulses of American imperialism were carried out not just by political leaders, but also

⁶ I cite from an article titled "Histories of Democracy and Empire" in *American Quarterly*, March 2007. Gustafson revisits these themes in modified form in her most recent book, *Imagining Deliberative Democracy in the Early American Republic* (2011).

by American women writers using their closely imbricated charitable enterprises to advance the claim of the “domestic” upon bodies marginalized from mainstream American culture by race, poverty, and disability. As they attended to real need in urban centers marked by vast disparities of wealth, charity workers reinscribed prevailing social hierarchies that supported a limited ideal of the “exceptional” American body, but they also connected themselves to a broad and remarkably diverse network of laborers around the Atlantic who saw how administering benevolence might allow them to profit personally from an imperialistic thrust that constantly produced new manifestations of “foreignness” and “poverty.”

My study relies on postcolonial theory as it examines the ways these benevolent laborers responded to a product of imperialism that Rediker and Linebaugh call the “motley crew” of multiethnic (and sometimes disabled and impoverished) laborers supporting the water trades on land and on shore. I also engage postcolonial frameworks to illuminate the competitive missionary culture that grew up after emancipation in the British colonies in the Caribbean and systematically exploited freedmen and -women and the marginalized charitable workers who labored at the lower tiers of the mission organization. Additionally, I follow the lead of Christopher Krentz in demonstrating how even white, American-born citizens could become objects of paternalism and sociopolitical control if they were born or became deaf. The deaf, like the Native Americans, were marginalized by a discourse—stoked by the political policies and literature of the 1820s and 1830s—that used markers of educational, religious, linguistic, and ethnic difference to draw distinctions of “foreign” and “native” around groups of people born and raised on American soil. Because deaf children did not share the

language of their parents, they could not identify with their religious or political affiliations until widespread education for the deaf, supported by women charity workers, gave them a shared language and culture. As Deaf culture developed during the nineteenth century, it became the target of jingoistic critics, who sought ways to curtail the emergence of a non-English-speaking American minority. Krentz notes that while postcolonial theorists like Spivak and Bhabha refer to “oppressed people in colonial situations, their insights directly relate to deaf Americans’ efforts to enter the discourse of the dominant hearing society around them” (25). In these attempts, deaf Americans were both aided and inhibited by the energies of charitable workers including charitable women writers. These charity workers provided funds and public support for the schools that gave the American Deaf World its defining characteristic, a shared language, but they also perpetuated a model of paternalism that—while it afforded poor, single, or childless charity workers an opportunity to perform their support for ideals of American domesticity—left generations of deaf children subject to the pedagogical whims of administrators, teachers, and charitable managers who finally abolished American Sign Language in deaf schools in 1880 in favor of a severely limited oral-only education. Both disability and postcolonial theories allow me to see charity workers of the nineteenth century in an unprecedented way: as professionals who sought profits from a national economy whose growth also perpetuated the poverty, prejudice, and attitudes toward disability that worked reflexively to affirm the relevance of their benevolent work.

My object is to show how the actions of individuals who wrote or are documented in understudied texts across a variety of genres counter the prevalent view of benevolence

as the special preview of white, educated, moneyed men and women and show it instead to have been a profit-generating enterprise for individuals who could have been objects of charity but instead positioned themselves to control the increasingly sophisticated charitable organizations of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As I show how their collective actions shaped structures of power in a variety of public and private spaces touched by charitable enterprise—homes in maritime communities, hospitals, schools for the deaf, Christian missions in the Caribbean, and seamen’s clothing stores—my argument owes an obvious debt to Foucault, Said, Gramsci, and Habermas. Weaving the relevant strains of transnational, disability, and postcolonial theories together with a close reading of texts by and about the nineteenth century’s understudied charity workers, I advance a study of maritime charity work of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that treats organized benevolence as neither wholly nefarious nor wholly noble, but instead as a flourishing and feminized industry, subject to the same structures of capitalistic control governing maritime economies, and capable—as all hierarchical institutions—of great power to bless and to blight.

I depend on key primary and secondary texts to define three central terms of my argument: charity, industry, and technology. My contribution to the study of American benevolence is a conception of “charity” that goes beyond the label given to any altruistic or neighborly act. I define charity, and specifically charity *work*, as a form of labor that addresses the needs of individuals and groups where other private and public institutions have failed, and that necessarily, as I comprehend it, compensates the charity worker in some material (although not necessarily monetary) form. The charitable action thus has at its object not merely the amelioration of a social condition, but also the amelioration of

an economic condition. Charitable labor activates a complex relationship between social and economic conditions, and between charitable agent and object. Sometimes, the charitable act can benefit both the charitable agent and the charitable object, but in other cases, the object of charity may lose a measure of social control equivalent to the economic assistance he or she receives, or the social and economic power of the agent may become inversely correlated to the social and economic position of the object. To elucidate this complex relationship, I have coined two terms to describe the participants driving a common type of charitable transaction. The first is “vicarious charity,” by which I mean a charitable interaction between a giver and a recipient that is mediated by a third party, whom I call a “broker of charity.” If individuals are sensible of an obligation to perform charity but loath to occupy themselves with the dirty work of crossing socioeconomic divides to extend the charity personally, they may seek the social, religious, economic, or political rewards attached to charity work by giving material resources to a liaison, the “broker,” who then transmits the charitable offering to the (somehow) impoverished party. If, as I argue, charity is always connected to forms of compensation for its participants, everyone in this mediated exchange stands to benefit. A wealthy person may be perceived a philanthropist by doing little more than measuring out cash or parting with a surplus of abundant resources, and his or her name can be attached to a benevolent social initiative at relatively little expense. The broker of charity can act as an essential participant in a charitable transaction without having to put up any of the material resources that enabled it. For a person who is impoverished, assuming the role of “broker of charity” is one way to gain social power over other poor people, or to garner the prestige among wealthy people that is often a form of compensation for charity

work, without supplying any capital. Even if the broker is exploited and imperiled by the contact with the needy party, he or she still stands to reap the (sometimes considerable) rewards of charitable labor. And the objects of this mediated offering receive whatever material or nonmaterial aid the wealthy person engages the broker to transmit, and if the aid is sometime diluted in the course of the vicarious transaction, it is still a form of aid nonetheless. I have created these terms to advance my argument that, over the course of the nineteenth century, charity work transformed from an individual and one-sided extension of aid into an increasingly collective and corporatized form of profitable labor.

I speak of maritime “industry” and of charity taking on the characteristics of industrialized labor in what was, strictly speaking, a pre-industrial era. In doing so, I follow the lead of maritime scholars and charitable women writers of the nineteenth century, although I acknowledge that charity and maritime workers of the first part of the nineteenth century were experiencing only the early stages of what would become the large-scale industrialization of the nation (particularly the North) during the last half of the century. I contend that the term “revolution,” as it is sometimes applied to this development, is misleading. The process of industrialization in the United States—as in England and Europe—happened over time, and new forms of labor modified or amplified old practices of production and consumption without wholly overthrowing them. Linebaugh and Rediker, for example, refer frequently to the “merchant shipping industry” of the eighteenth century, which constantly sought new ways “to mobilize, organize, maintain, and reproduce the sailing proletariat in a situation of labor scarcity and limited state resources” (150). They assert that shipping moved from proto-industry

to full-fledged industry as early as the late-seventeenth century, characterized by the collective labor and capitalist control that would typify it for the next two centuries.

When I describe charity work of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—a product of the maritime industry that facilitated travel and trade around the Atlantic—as itself a form of industry, I use a word that featured prominently in the texts of the writers I study. In Charles Brockden Brown’s *Arthur Mervyn*, the protagonist says that his search for “some path of lucrative industry” leads him into the business of brokering charitable transactions, a telling confession that my study of the performance of vicarious charity during the Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic of 1793 is the first to acknowledge (88). According to her personal narrative, Nancy Prince sees “industry” in the open-air markets of Jamaica sufficient to counter the prevailing impression among Boston’s charitable managers that the freed slaves were “a stupid set of beings” (54). An article in *The North American Review* of 1836 praised the managers of Sarah J. Hale’s Seaman’s Aid Society for offering poor seamen’s wives and children the opportunity to make low wages as seamstresses for the Society’s clothing store. Hale demanded that her charitable applicants perform their fitness for this form of aid when members of the society visited their homes, a practice the article optimistically describes as “guarding their virtue by promoting their industry” (“Reports of Seaman’s Aid Societies” 538). These uses of “industry” in maritime scholarship and literary sources suggest two distinct definitions of the term: first, a system of production and consumption; and second, an individual’s inclination or ability to produce.

But I submit that these distinct definitions work together to describe the economy of benevolence that developed in the nineteenth century. In this competitive market,

where compensation was attached to a variety of forms of charitable aid, a benevolent individual's penchant for industry (a willingness to produce) could be monetized (as part of a larger system of production) and then mobilized among individuals who were *not* industrious (because they apparently lacked either the ability or inclination to produce something of market value). While I try to carefully mark the conditions that allowed the circumatlantic world to industrialize before the United States would become an "industrial" nation, I do propose that forces of labor and control that allowed for this outcome were mustering strength in the decades before technological advances, economic models, and political sentiment would combine to radically alter the situation of America's workforce. Charity work began to marshal the energies of benevolent laborers into a collective workforce and take on the organizational structure of a capitalistic enterprise as early as the late-eighteenth century. By the time the nation had realized its "Industrial Age," charity work was not a social movement that responded to the grim byproducts of America's new forms of production, but an integrated part of the industrial landscape—a competitive venture that leveraged the energies of the benevolent to create profits for managers who saw the economic, not merely spiritual, value in charitable labor.

When maritime scholars describe the transformation of the Atlantic shipping from the sporadic excursions of fishermen and sailors to a full-fledged "industry," they generally acknowledge the technological advances and mechanical complexity that abetted this transformation. Here, "technology" needs to be carefully defined, because its resonances are wide, relating not only to maritime industry and to the business of literary publishing, but also to social practices in coastal communities. Thus technological

advances in both maritime and literary fields drove the transformation of American charity work. Technology changed the functionality, capacity, speed, and longevity of ships over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the economic impact of maritime mechanical achievements was not limited to vessels. In England and America, workers wielding remarkable technologies carved canals through land to connect bodies of water even before railroads had activated the early stages of modern industrialization. These canals facilitated trade and travel, transported raw materials that fueled innovation, and even supplied power for the first factories in the United States. They made some once-viable seaports irrelevant and drained their populations, and they dictated where new urban seaports would spring up. Subjects of charitable aid in these seaports saw the influence of technologies on their quotidian experience. In 1825 the Erie Canal, for example, made the Hudson rather than the East River New York City's most important waterway—as a gateway to Canada and the interior of the United States—and the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb soon moved from its midtown location to a campus closer to the Hudson, the better to capitalize on the maritime commerce that supplied jobs for deaf students and capital (partially in the form of charitable donations) for the school. The American Seamen's Friend Society, a maritime charity run by New York businessmen, ignored the implications of this shift and built its first boardinghouse for sailors on the banks of the East River in 1842. They didn't respond to the economic realities of a more technologically advanced maritime world until 1908, when they relocated to a location near the Hudson. They moved too late. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Seamen's Friend Society was “shrouded in heavy debt” at the same time that Sarah J. Hale's Seaman's Aid Society in Boston, run as

a competitive business venture by women and always acutely attuned to innovations in the maritime world, commanded more than \$150,000 in funds (“American Seamen’s Friend Society,” *Tenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities of Massachusetts* 29).

Part of the reason Hale may have been especially attentive to maritime technological developments was the enormous impact they had on her literary as well as charitable endeavors. More sophisticated ships were certainly able to transport more paper, ink, type, and finished texts and to do it more quickly, but the print trades—specifically printing, publishing, retailing, and binding—were themselves modernizing. In 1790, William Pretzer observes, the type cases and two-pull wooden press a printer used “would have been familiar to [his] father or grandfather—and readily grasped by Gutenberg himself” (161). Print businesses tended to be small and local, with “caution as the watchword” (Gross 8). But while new technologies like stereotyping and power presses were slow to catch on in publishing because they demanded a “substantial investment of capital up front,” as Robert Gross acknowledges, competition between the presses of Carey & Lea in Philadelphia (Mathew Carey had made his name by self-publishing a scathing critique of black Philadelphians during the epidemic of 1793) and Harper & Brothers in New York drove them to explore new methods of production. When Harpers gained the advantage in the 1830s (as Hale was managing the Seaman’s Aid Society and editing *The Ladies’ Magazine* in Boston) by “installing power presses as soon as they became practical,” other outfits followed suit, driving down prices and dramatically multiplying the number of texts in print (Gross 24, 42). This multiplied the number of texts written by charitable authors engaging with the themes of organized

charity: minutes of local women's benevolent societies; copies of welfare-oriented legislation certain societies supported; and poems, plays, personal narratives, and novels that dramatized the ills of sprawling urban poverty, slavery, alcoholism, and disability, which might be sold to raise funds for some related charitable initiative. As they made it easier for literary texts and bodies to move throughout the Atlantic and as they enriched the men and women who might find reasons to direct a portion of their time or resources to the impoverished populations that grew as urban centers expanded, new technologies of shipping and printing fueled the development of a transatlantic industry of charity.

This charity work (together with literary forms including the novel) took part in shaping and enforcing forms of bodily control that adapted to new social and economic conditions created by rapid advances in mechanical technology. As it did so, charity work fostered the development of technology in another form: techniques of surveillance and control calculated to regulate the behavior of the impoverished in maritime communities. As they refined and deployed this technology, antebellum charity workers in the North responded to ongoing public discussions about the utility and ethics of physical punishment. Richard Brodhead argues that, during the decades preceding the Civil War, a growing distaste for bodily coercion as a form of discipline led a number of prominent critics of corporal punishment—including Susan Warner and Harriet Beecher Stowe, both beneficiaries of the new technologies that disseminated their views in the form of popular novels—to advocate for “discipline through love,” or “disciplinary intimacy” (87). As Brodhead describes it, through demonstrations of affection, authority figures could persistently remind individuals under their charge of their shortcomings vis-à-vis the idealistically “good” version of themselves construed by the authority figure,

and then depend upon reciprocal affection (along with guilt and fear) to motivate the individual to conform to that ideal, initiating a nonviolent system of disciplinary control that nevertheless retained the same—perhaps even greater—coercive power.⁷ “[T]his ideally intensified *love* power,” Brodhead writes, “has the effect of holding—indeed of virtually enclosing—the disciplinary subject in a field of projected feeling” (72). Charity work, taking shape as a sophisticated field of labor at precisely the moment the public debate over corporal punishment raged, advanced the proposition of “discipline through love” according to the same physiological principle but in slightly altered form: discipline through charity.

Disciplinary benevolence took on the characteristics Foucault ascribes to discipline more generally: “It is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a ‘physics’ or an ‘anatomy’ of power, a technology” (*Discipline and Punish* 215). At the same moment that northern writers decried physical violence as one of the chief evils of slavery, reform-minded Americans turned their attention to the nation’s dismal debtors’ prisons and poorhouses. Under pressure from critics who condemned the conditions under which the impoverished were arraigned and incarcerated, the United States government abolished federal imprisonment for personal debts in 1833, and most states quickly followed suit. This judicial reform was possible largely because organized charity workers had already proposed an alternative to these disciplinary institutions: the charitable aid society, which had the two-part purpose, as one observer remarked in 1838,

⁷ Brodhead makes this trenchant observation to support his argument: In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, “Topsy escapes from St. Clare’s lifelong ownership only into Eva and Miss Ophelia’s lifelong ‘influence,’ where she becomes not herself but the ‘good’ self they have invented for her” (87).

“of extending aid to the wives and children of sailors [or some other presumably improvident group], *and* to improve the moral and religious character of this useful class of men” (“Seaman’s Aid Society,” italics mine). Both purposes were essential to the success of the charitable organization as an institution that harnessed the power inherent in the technique of discipline through charity. Indeed, the efficient benevolent society could extend aid and improve religious and moral character in a single transaction. For the charitable manager, making an object of benevolence a good *worker* with the help of mechanical technology was no less important than making the object of benevolence a *good* worker through charity work’s innovative technologies of coercion.

Sarah J. Hale’s Seaman’s Aid Society provides a particularly apt demonstration of the efficient benevolent society, which extended aid only when it could be used as a tool to coerce supplicants to conform to a certain standard of behavior. As Hale presented it in her many writings as manager of the Society, the poverty of sailors and their wives and children was not just an economic challenge, but also a social threat. Their poverty, she argued, indicated a certain moral turpitude, and made them more likely to exhibit signs of deviance. In 1840, she wrote of her society in the *Merchant’s Magazine and Commercial Review*:

Its members comprise the most respectable ladies of that city, whose sympathies are enlisted for the sailors, a noble and important, though somewhat improvident class of men. In most cases poor, cast about by the waves and storms from point to point upon the ocean, they become as unstable as the element upon which they float, and acquire habits which too often leave their families in destitution, if not deprived entirely by shipwrecks, of their legal protectors. This institution has already been of important service to that unfortunate class of our citizens. (339)

Administered by Boston's "most respectable citizens," and geared toward extending aid *and* improving the characters of a "somewhat improvident class of men" (and their wives and children), the Seaman's Aid Society was an institution not just of benevolence, but of benevolence as a technique to reform the behavior of a morally deficient class of people.

While charity workers could apply technologies of disciplinary benevolence in established institutions of power, such as the hospital for yellow fever victims or the residential school for deaf children, they also created new institutions, like the workroom where objects of the Seaman's Aid Society's charity sewed clothing for sailors to be sold at the Society-run store. Hale reported with some pride that, in just one year, her innovative charitable operation distributed approximately \$1,400 to women and children thus employed, but the real triumph, as she perceived it, was the power of these wages to be wielded as a disciplinary tool in the hands of the Society's managers ("Seaman's Aid Society" 167). Benevolence could influence behavior not only in institutions that *attracted* the materially and morally impoverished (the school, the hospital), but also, more pervasively, in the homes, churches, and workplaces of those who applied for aid, as the field of organized benevolence mobilized charity workers (including missionaries, members of aid society committees, and managers of charitable organizations) to survey the private behavior of supplicants, the better to determine their "fitness" for aid. Little wonder that the "committee of laborers, who visit our workwomen as friends, to encourage their virtuous efforts," as Hale reported, inspired these workwomen to invariably appear "busy and cheerful" when the Society's agents of surveillance arrived at their homes ("Extracts" 1836). Hale rarely commented on the growing proficiency of her workers (in a technical sense) without connecting it to the elevated state of their

characters: “They have improved greatly in their sewing, and in their habits of punctuality,” reads one telling example from her annual reports (“Fourth Annual Report” 270). When it was engaged not as a form of generosity but as a technology of discipline during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, charity work encircled its objects within the deliberately oppressive grasp of a benevolent embrace.

I frame this study of American charity work within the late-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries for reasons that have everything to do with these economic trends in American port cities and that are thus necessarily tied to certain geographic locations. I begin my study in 1793 in Philadelphia, when the city, then the capital of the nation and a major seaport, was devastated by an epidemic of yellow fever carried into the city with the wave of refugees fleeing the Haitian Revolution. The majority of its inhabitants fled Philadelphia, but those left behind—primarily enslaved and impoverished men and women—tended to the ill and the dead with such diligence that residents who returned when the epidemic abated were stunned at the city’s salubrious façade. Also in the 1790s, and persisting into the 1820s, Americans traveled across the Atlantic under threat of kidnapping and captivity. I study one woman writer, Sarah Pogson Smith, who lived in antebellum Charleston—a center of American commerce and a major hub of circumatlantic travel—during this time period. Pogson Smith found an opportunity, by dramatizing this threat and then connecting it to disability, another perceived threat to American Christian domesticity, to accrue economic and social power as a single woman not just in Charleston, but in every populous urban center forced to grapple with the concomitant challenge of disabled bodies. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, American evangelicalism availed itself of circuits of trade and travel into the Caribbean. During the

gradual abolition of slavery in most of the British Empire after 1834, missionary work in Kingston and other British colonial ports became a laudable endeavor not just for white men, but for men and women of color, who, I argue, became not just mobile but also strategic charity workers. From the 1820s until 1850, unprecedented profits in both whaling and trade bolstered the economies of New England towns like Boston and New Bedford while simultaneously creating a population of temporarily or permanently single and unemployed women, disabled men, and fatherless children. I study the efforts of certain women, especially Sarah Hale, to address this negative externality as executives of efficient charitable organizations.

Although the American shipping industry predates the contagion and international unrest of 1790 by more than a century, the dates 1790-1850 correspond to a period when shipping in American vessels—across oceans and through lakes, canals, and rivers—flourished as one of the most efficient and inexpensive ways to transport goods and bodies among increasingly interdependent ports across the globe. After 1850, ship manufacturing in the United States declined as the preeminence of the American wooden sailing ship gave way to the more powerful and capacious British steamship. And while flatboats and steamboats remained viable ways of transporting cargo along rivers, an expanding circuit of railroad tracks and the development of the steam locomotive provided a more efficient way to move commodities and passengers laterally across the United States. Finally, the heavy maritime traffic that had long characterized many ports along the Eastern seaboard increasingly gravitated toward a few major ports better equipped to handle large ships and to facilitate transport between other central ports.

Salem is one of the ports that saw a significant decline in shipping traffic as the nineteenth century wore on, but its ensuing social, political, and economic misfortunes supplied themes for literary texts that promoted the unprecedented growth of the American print trades with bestselling accounts of indigence and avarice tempered by effective benevolent responses. Hawthorne tells the story of Salem's "self-enlisted Sister of Charity" in 1850, the year that marks the outer boundary of my study and the year of the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*—and also (to Hawthorne's chagrin) Susan Warner's bestselling novel *The Wide, Wide World*. Stories about the very real decay of some erstwhile capitals of maritime commerce and the plight of needy individuals grappling with personal misfortune worked, in a dramatic shift in fortunes, to enrich centers of publishing like New York, Philadelphia, and Boston as peripheral port cities became increasingly irrelevant. The custodians of Hester Prynne's story, in fact, are the customs officers who reflect wistfully on the port's former glory. In the year of *The Scarlet Letter*'s publication, Salem's "decaying trade" bears scant resemblance to the days "only a half a century ago," when "Salem was a port by itself; not scorned, as she is now, by her own merchants and ship-owners, who permit her wharves to crumble to ruin, while their ventures go to swell, needlessly and imperceptibly, the mighty flood of commerce at New York or Boston" (8, 9). We meet these customs officers not only as relics of a bygone era of prosperity, but as candidates for benevolent aid, "a row of venerable figures . . . talking together, in voices between speech and a snore, and with that lack of energy that distinguishes the occupants of almshouses, and all other human beings who depend for subsistence on charity, on monopolized labor, or anything but their own independent exertions" (10). Like Hawthorne, I fix 1850 as a vantage point, but in this

case as a point from which to look back across years that would see the crucial interdependence of monopolized labor, the independent exertions of workers, the rise of the American publishing industry, and the related rise and refinement of an organized and competitive form of charitable aid.

In the first chapter, I begin at the outer chronological boundary of my study in Philadelphia during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. Philadelphia was then the capital of the young nation and its largest port city. The prominence of the city and its reputation for tolerance attracted the white refugees of the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804, who, along with a sizable number of black and mixed-race companions, servants, and slaves, fled violence in the French colony of Saint Domingue. These refugees traveled with miniscule and microscopic stowaways: the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which transmitted the deadly yellow fever virus. An unusually warm fall conspired with political unrest in the Caribbean to create a breeding ground for disease soon after the refugees began to arrive in Philadelphia. When fever broke out near the end of 1793, the majority of Philadelphia's citizens left for second homes or the estates of wealthy friends and families, and the roughly 700 citizens who stayed behind were, for the most part, those who could not afford to leave, did not have the freedom of mobility to flee, or had nowhere to go. The epidemic that so completely disrupted Philadelphia's daily life, however, did not leave its white and well-off residents insensible of their social, religious, and political obligations to manifest attributes of benevolence—or at least to appear to be doing so. They wanted to distance themselves from the sites of contagion in the city (primarily the cramped, noisome neighborhoods near the docks where the *aegypti* bred and where many lower-income Philadelphians lived), but, less than twenty years after the

formation of a new republic, did not want to be seen as renouncing the principles of civic virtue that dominated public discourse and policy. They were willing to donate their resources—including servants, slaves, money, and other property—to the public response to the crisis, but loath to risk unnecessary contact with diseased bodies. Another group of Philadelphians comprising servants, poor and middle-class blacks, enslaved laborers, poor whites, and a few white, middle class citizens, remained in the city because could not leave, or (in some cases) felt they had a moral obligation to stay and do what they could to maintain the basic functions of the city.⁸ Across this divide between the population who stayed and the groups who fled Philadelphia, the stage was set for the performance of vicarious charity. In the midst of the epidemic, “brokers of charity” stepped forward to call upon wealthy citizens to remember their republican duty during a time of crisis, and volunteered to transmit their charitable offerings personally to the sick, dying, and bereaved.

I argue that although it was a faulty circuit that imperiled some laborers as it insulated wealthy, white Philadelphians from the dangers of the epidemic, a network of vicarious charity still worked more effectively than government or other commercial institutions to preserve the city during a grave crisis, first and foremost because everyone stationed along the circuit had something to gain. Philadelphians who donated their resources to be applied vicariously in sites of suffering and contagion could fulfill a

⁸ One of the prominent citizens who remained was the physician Benjamin Rush, who treated a number of yellow fever patients during the crisis. In *Covenant and Republic: Historical Romance and the Politics of Puritanism*, Philip Gould writes, “The citizen’s moral, physical, and political health were inextricably related, Rush theorized, and a healthy citizen was characterized by an automatic civic selflessness” (108). Of course, this ideal of “civic selflessness” was marred by exhibitions of what Gould calls “the darker implications of self-regulation in post-Revolutionary civic culture,” which provided the moment for disenfranchised Philadelphians to step forward to address the crisis in ways that self-interested white citizens would not (108).

widely acknowledged religious and political obligation to extend public benevolence without endangering themselves. The most influential brokers of charity to operate during the crisis, the black clergymen Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, volunteered the services of the members of their Free African Society in order to demonstrate to political and religious leaders that black Philadelphians' commitment to the ideals of "republican virtue" qualified them for a greater degree of participation within Philadelphia's public life. In particular, they hoped to garner support and financial contributions for the construction of a church building—begun amid tepid support in the middle of 1793 and then abandoned when yellow fever broke out in the fall—that would provide the Free African Society with a center from which to organize and advance the interests of the black community. To this end, they offered to pay black laborers from the coffers of the Society if they would perform unpleasant and perilous work as nurses, gravediggers, carters of dead bodies, casket-makers, and street cleaners free of charge to the white men and women for whom they labored. Men and women of color thus stood to share in the rising fortunes of the Free African Society, but they also stood to profit personally as laborers paid by Jones and Allen. Some of them may also have had reason to hope their employers (or, if they were enslaved, white slaveowners) would return to the city after the epidemic subsided and reward them with greater responsibility, autonomy, wages, or respect for the dangerous work that preserved Philadelphians' homes and businesses in their absence.

These complicated motivations for extending acts of valuable service during the contagion—all potentially compensated in some way—give the lie to the notion that individual actions are either benevolent or transactional. During Philadelphia's crisis of

1793, I argue, the actions that sustained the city were benevolent transactions, part of the strategic behavior of people who knew that effective charity could net material rewards. This strategy was sound, at least to the extent that white leaders of Philadelphia's largest religious denominations supported the final stages of construction of the African Church of Philadelphia in 1794, which did afford black Philadelphians a more organized and autonomous public life in the decades immediately following the epidemic. Some of those who worked against men and women of color during the epidemic—like Dr. Benjamin Rush, who assured them they were impervious to the virus, and the publisher Mathew Carey, whose enormously popular account of the crisis grossly misrepresented their valuable contributions—came forward to join the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery in 1797. Jones's and Allen's role in activating a network of vicarious charity did not protect men and women of color from the prejudice that still simmered beneath the surface of Philadelphia's public life and erupted again in the 1820s, but it did allow savvy brokers and equally savvy charity workers to benefit in real and quantifiable ways from the service that also supported the nation's capital and one of its most crucial seaports during a public health catastrophe.

To advance this argument, I perform close readings of Allen and Jones's *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia in the Year 1793 and A Refutation of Some Censures Thrown upon them in some late Publications*, their energetic repudiation of the aspersions cast by Mathew Carey in his aptly named *Mathew Carey's Disaster Story, Hot off the Press: A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia* (1793), which I also examine closely. Carey's account marks one of his first forays into the business of

publishing; before he died, his formidable press would stoke the competition in American publishing that shaped the nature of the print industry and spurred the percolation of texts, like Jones's and Allen's, that documented the related transformation and growth of American charity work. I also review the account of one of the refugees from Saint Domingue, French physician Jean Devèze, who tended a special fever hospital at Andrew Hamilton's estate where he was assisted by enslaved women who accompanied Haitian refugees and had extensive, non-institutional knowledge about the yellow fever virus. This chapter also relies on the journals and personal correspondence of Quaker women such as Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker and Margaret Morris to show how the tenets of Quaker doctrine that called for unbounded benevolence were checked by the economic and political ambitions of Quakers who claimed fidelity to these doctrines even as they supported the violence of the transatlantic slave trade and helped to perpetuate Philadelphia's racial tensions. Finally, this chapter draws upon Charles Brockden Brown's *Arthur Mervyn, or Memoirs of the Year 1793* to support an argument that the men and women who stayed in Philadelphia to manage the devastation of disease did so because they understood how the complex nature of charity work could work to benefit each participant of a mediated charitable transaction.

I turn my attention to the American South and to the era surrounding the War of 1812 in the second chapter of this dissertation. As contagion continued to rage in Philadelphia and other populous seaports during the first decades of the nineteenth century, another danger threatened Americans who traveled across global waterways: an acrimonious relationship with their erstwhile British rulers had left Americans vulnerable to attack as they traversed the Atlantic. Barbary pirates, availing themselves of the scant

protection afforded to American ships and undeterred (if not in fact encouraged) by the British navy, waylaid vessels en route to England and Europe and, in some cases, took their passengers captive. This threat—along with fierce international competition for dominance of global waterways—persisted well into the nineteenth century, and was a particular cause for concern during and immediately following the War of 1812. Sarah Pogson Smith, the English-born daughter of a West Indies planter, came to Charleston around 1790, where she published a number of poems, essays and dramas, including one of the many texts calculated to capitalize on fears surrounding transatlantic travel and the patriotism this threat ignited. This play, *The Young Carolinians; or, Americans in Algiers* (1818), hinges on sentiments comparable to those in Susanna Rowson’s *Slaves in Algiers; or, a Struggle for Freedom* (1794) and the “authentic” accounts of hapless voyagers like Eliza Bradley and Maria Martin.⁹

This play is now the best-known work in Pogson Smith’s relatively obscure oeuvre, but it is only one of several texts that show her to differ in a crucial way from other writers of her era: according to the relatively sparse documentation of her life, she dedicated the profits from selling copies of her tale of Algerian captivity and several other texts to charitable causes, including the “education and care of the indigent deaf and

⁹ Pogson Smith’s play is a fiction that does not claim to be true, but like the purportedly true stories of Barbary captivity written during the decade, it negotiates a sometimes-permeable divide between fact and fiction, as Paul Baepler notes in his edition of American Barbary captivity narratives, *White Slaves, African Masters*. During the early nineteenth century, he writes, “several survivors of Barbary captivity published immensely popular accounts of their suffering in North Africa.” He notes that some details of these accounts were highly sensationalized, the better to capitalize on Americans’ fear of North Africans. A number of authors, like Pogson Smith, were inspired to pen imaginative renderings of this drama, but they also blended fiction with fact—in this case, to invest fictional narratives with the real political and social consequences of this threat to the new nation’s international viability. “The story of Barbary captivity became a common tale that involved hundreds of men and women, invoked public subscriptions for ransom funds, forced the government to pay humiliating tributes in cash and military arms to African rulers, stimulated the drive to create the U.S. navy, and brought about the first postrevolutionary war” (Baepler xvi).

dumb” and a “seamen’s floating church” (Wilcox 3). In this chapter, I argue that Pogson Smith thus marked herself twice as an astute businesswoman. She recognized how themes of transatlantic trade, like piracy, had captured the interest of American readers; and she also realized how the broader implications of transatlantic trade allowed her to tap into pools of capital greater than the relatively meager profits that rewarded the efforts of most early-nineteenth century women writers. Throughout her life, Pogson Smith crossed state and national boundaries as she traveled and set up homes, and as a writer and charity worker, she saw how aligning herself with benevolent causes that united groups across traditional political and regional boundaries could give her a competitive advantage as a mobile charitable women writer. Soon after Pogson Smith moved to New York to marry Peter Smith in 1823, their marriage dissolved, and Peter granted her a paltry annuity that could not sustain the comfortable lifestyle to which she had become accustomed. She needed money, and she needed material support and social protection from her family and friends in Charleston, New York, and a handful of other urban maritime centers. Instead of begging for this aid, Pogson Smith published a collection of poems titled *Daughters of Eve* in 1826, the year her marriage ended, and donated the profits from selling copies of the text to the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb.

Pogson Smith’s choice to return to writing at this fraught period of her life is somewhat surprising, since she couldn’t expect that the profits of her book-length volume of poems would generate enough money to materially raise her standard of living. But Pogson Smith, like other women writers of her era, recognized that authors could be compensated in forms that superseded the strictly monetary. The cause she chose to

support, a school for the deaf established in New York City in 1818, was uniquely positioned to appeal to a broad network of supporters along the Eastern Seaboard, and Pogson Smith—who had friends and supporters living in these same locations from Boston to Charleston—saw how she could connect herself to the Institution with her writing and thus accrue a measure of social and economic power even in the wake of marital woes. The New York Institution attended to the challenge of disabled bodies in maritime communities by offering a course of instruction that trained students in trades of high market value in all of the nation's urban seaports: sewing, carpentry, bookbinding, and horticulture. These courses of study were specifically designed to appeal to families of deaf children in centers of robust commercial activity throughout the nation, the better to capitalize on the Deaf World's ability to cross geographic, political, and social boundaries. Since disability was not a problem limited to a specific geographic region (as slavery was perceived to be), and since the Institution promised to turn disabled dependents into self-sufficient laborers in commercial centers in both the North and South, the school itself was distinctive in its ability as a benevolent initiative to transverse the boundaries that generally divided charity work in the North from charity work in the South.

As a writer, Pogson Smith faced the liabilities that dogged her contemporaries: women's writing—often sold through subscriptions to encourage wary print professionals to publish the work—tended to be intensely local in its appeal, generally required the author to speak as an authority on domestic matters, and often failed to generate significant revenue. She also recognized her particular limitations, as a southern woman living and writing in the North and as a single, childless woman who could claim no

credibility on topics of home and family. In the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, however, she saw a way to address these deficiencies. The school's emphasis on deafness as a disability that plagued communities throughout the nation (and particularly major seaports, with their large populations that naturally included more disabled residents than small cities or towns) gave it relevance far beyond its northern location, and thus allowed Pogson Smith the remarkable chance to support a charitable initiative with broad national appeal in an era of regionally specific charity work. The school's treatment of deafness as a shortcoming to be mitigated rather than a characteristic shared by a linguistic minority produced a disability model of deafness that invited Pogson Smith to perform the role of "mother" for an infantilized group, and thus to assume a degree of credibility on domestic matters despite her own childlessness. Most importantly, Pogson Smith saw how she could use charity work to encourage her social network to validate her laudable literary efforts not just with subscriptions to her work, also but with "tokens of friendship."

These tokens of friendship were a medium of exchange that went beyond the monetary—a currency that compensated charitable women writers for their work with markers of respectability including social alliances, temporary room and board, and social prestige. They had particular value for poor, single, or childless women who used charity to reposition themselves as benefactors rather than supplicants. In this chapter, I study histories of the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, histories of the schools for the deaf in Philadelphia and Hartford, early examples of poor laws designed to address the economic problem of deafness in maritime communities, letters of deaf students in New York to their families in the South, and the poetry and

plays of Pogson Smith. I read these primary texts alongside current studies of benevolent relationships operative during Pogson Smith's tenure as charitable women writer, including scholarship by Eugene Genovese, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Barbara Bellows, William and Jane Pease, and Stephanie McCurry, to illuminate the models of charity work—and the very specialized definitions of “charity”—that obtained in the Charleston of Pogson Smith's early life and the northern residences of her adulthood. I frame a close reading of Pogson Smith's literary and charitable work within this scholarship to show how “tokens of friendship” became the currency that activated valuable transactions among charity workers, charitable women writers, and the residents of communities that stood to benefit when benevolent laborers directed their considerable professional acumen toward addressing the social and economic challenges that threatened their prosperity. Pogson Smith's early and significant success in melding charity work and literary production within this economy of benevolence presages the success more ambitious charitable women writers like Sarah Josepha Hale would have in effectively incorporating the two professions over the next two decades.

The third chapter of this dissertation traces a well-traveled shipping route from New England to the southern United States and on to the Caribbean. It begins in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1799, when Nancy Prince was born, the granddaughter of a man “stolen from Africa, when he was a lad,” and a woman “who was an Indian of this country” (Prince 1). In addition to her heritage, Prince's lived experience crossed a number of generic divides: between home and abroad, healthy and disabled, financially secure and destitute, salaried and charitable. It is this last crossing—which involved all of the others—that I make the focus of this chapter. After an early life devoted to finding

wages for herself and the other children of her destitute and repeatedly widowed mother, she moved with her husband to Russia, where he worked in the czar's palace. He died in Russia, and Prince again sought wages in and around Boston before she agreed to join the Reverend David Ingraham as a missionary among Jamaica's recently emancipated laborers in 1840. Prince's motivations were fundamentally misaligned with Ingraham's: he wanted to use any means necessary to enlarge the congregations of his mission in Jamaica (the metric by which he was rewarded by sponsoring organizations in the northern United States and England), and Prince wanted to "aid, in some small degree, to raise up and encourage the emancipated inhabitants" and to make a modest wage with which to support herself (50). Prince's major object in Jamaica was expanding the educational opportunities for emancipated laborers, particularly women and young girls; converting them from their traditional faiths to Christianity was much less important to her. Almost immediately upon her arrival in Jamaica, Prince would discover that her disinclination to bolster Ingraham's authority (and earning power) by aggressively proselytizing on his behalf made her vulnerable to the exploitation of the mission's rapacious leaders and to the Jamaicans agitated by the efforts of Protestant American missionaries.

Despite her concerted and desperately needed efforts to promote education in Jamaica, Prince returned to Boston in 1842, destitute and physically broken by her experience. While some scholars argue that Prince's unsuccessful efforts to labor in the Caribbean show that the missions were unorganized or that her years in Jamaica constitute a relatively insignificant period of her life, I argue that her attempt—and ultimate failure—to work among Jamaica's ostensibly benevolent American missionaries

shows these organizations to be hyper-efficient, ruthlessly competitive, and focused on profits to the extent that they finally worked against the interests of the people in Jamaica they purported to help and the mission's marginalized laborers like Prince. It was her disastrous attempt to perform charity work in Jamaica that prompted Prince to write a narrative of her life a few years after she returned to Boston, specifically—by her own clear acknowledgement—as a way to avoid becoming subject to the control of the “many benevolent societies for the support of widows” (Prince xxvii). These ambitious benevolent societies, Prince learned from painful experience, promoted the kind of discrimination and predatory business practices that characterized both local charitable organizations and the missions in the Caribbean they helped support. Writing was, as I have observed, a risky way for a woman to support herself, but Prince preferred to take on the known risks of literary work rather than subject herself to the hidden costs of corporatized charitable labor.

Naturally, Prince's first-person account, *A Black Woman's Odyssey Through Russia and Jamaica: The Narrative of Nancy Prince* (1850), provides essential information about Prince's charitable activity and supplies the basis for this chapter's argument. Additionally, contemporary scholarship provides new ways of thinking about the implications of Prince's mobility, writing, and economic condition. This scholarship includes Susan Clair Imbarrato's *Traveling Women: Narrative Visions of Early America* (2006) and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert and Ivette Romero-Cesareo's edition of *Women at Sea: Travel Writing and the Margins of Caribbean Discourse* (2001). I engage the work of other scholars, including Sandra Gunning and Jennifer Bernhardt Steadman, to situate Prince within a larger group of women of color motivated by the flow of capital not only

to travel and in some cases to install themselves in positions of influence in charitable organizations, but also to publish accounts of this work. While I engage with the arguments of these scholars, I contend that Prince's travels to Jamaica have been misunderstood as constituting a reprieve from her professional responsibilities. In fact, I argue, Prince's travels to Jamaica represent her effort to make a wage as a charity worker, and her failure to do so illuminates the degree to which mid-nineteenth century Protestant missionary work in the Caribbean had taken on the organization and practices of a capitalistic enterprise, to the detriment of those who labored at its lower levels and the impoverished groups it proposed to aid.

In the final chapter of this study, I return to Philadelphia by way of Boston, where Sarah Josepha Hale decried the vanity and greed that fueled circumatlantic trade as she simultaneously situated herself to capitalize on the negative social and economic impacts of global shipping. In 1828 she moved from her native New Hampshire to Boston to assume the editorship of the *Ladies' Magazine*. In 1833, Hale founded the Seaman's Aid Society, a women's organization that attended to maritime poverty around Boston's port with a number of profit-seeking businesses run as charitable initiatives for the benefit of the mariners' wives and daughters they employed. Hale's charitable venture, acutely attuned to the trends of a robust transatlantic shipping economy that produced both capital and urban poverty, represents the pinnacle of the kind of competitive charity work I describe in this dissertation. Born in 1788, Hale was roughly a decade younger than Sarah Pogson Smith and a decade older than Nancy Prince, and worked in a northeastern urban literary environment with which both were familiar. But Hale's successes in both literature and benevolence would far outstrip those of her contemporaries. Hale certainly

capitalized on the connections between print and benevolent trades forged in the previous three decades, but her visible platform as editor and her aggressive approach to poverty in one of the nation's largest port cities allowed her to dramatically extend the imbrications of the literary and the charitable. Hale presented her Society as an arm of Reverend Edward Taylor's maritime charity, but in fact, Hale completely transformed Taylor's charitable operation from a modest initiative distributing clothes and other goods to needy seamen and their families into a benevolent corporation comprising a clothing store staffed by seamen's wives, a school for seamen's daughters (actually a workroom where female pupils sewed clothing for the store), a lending library, and a mariners' boardinghouse. During a decade when most maritime charities, especially those run by women, managed somewhere in the vicinity of hundreds of dollars, Hale's society commanded more than one hundred thousand dollars in cash and saleable goods by the middle of the century (*Tenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities of Massachusetts* 29).¹⁰

The success of Hale's Society depended largely upon her professional visibility as an editor, her respectability as an associate of Taylor, her recognition that charity was not unlike literary production in its ability to generate real profits, and her demonstration of the ways the two professions could be mutually supportive. In this chapter, I describe the astute business strategy by which Hale reproduced Pogson Smith's personal success as a charitable woman writer on a grand, collective scale. To do this, I examine Hale's

¹⁰ The Seamen's Friend Society in New York incorporated a number of smaller maritime charities around the country, including most of the women's maritime charities operating during the 1830s and 1840s. The Seamen's Friend Society apportioned very modest sums to these organizations; for example, the Norfolk Female Aid Society received only \$150 annually from the New York organization to run a boarding house for sailors ("Chaplain Crane's Address" 100).

fiction and non-fiction texts, other authors' fictional accounts of maritime poverty and feminine benevolence, and records of the Seaman's Aid Society and the contemporaneous maritime charities Hale borrowed from and influenced during her tenure at the Society. Under her leadership, hundreds of women took their places in a professional organization that promised compensation in some form to each one, from the seamen's wives earning wages as seamstresses or clerks for the Society store to the charitable managers who wielded social power and control over these poor women as a reward for "guarding their virtue by promoting their industry" ("Reports of Seaman's Aid Societies" 538). Hale's Society was widely regarded—by herself and other critics—as a huge financial and social success, and other societies took note and adopted certain features of her enterprise. As her Society refashioned the nature of American benevolence in Boston and surrounding cities, however, it worked to ossify the social and racial prejudices that, combined with the aggressive management of white women aspiring to Hale's leadership style, made women's charitable organizations increasingly hostile environments for poor women and women of color who sought profits as charity workers. Rebuffed from the ranks of the allegedly tolerant Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society in the late 1830s, Nancy Prince provides a telling example of how the competitive benevolent economy Hale helped to shape in the vicinity of her Seaman's Aid Society worked exactly like a capitalist industry—by rewarding those at its highest organizational levels while further marginalizing the workers near the bottom, even the impoverished people they purported to help.

When Hale moved to Philadelphia in 1841, four years after she began editing *Godey's Lady's Book* from Boston, she arrived in a city transformed since a body of

laborers saw a chance, in the midst of a public health crisis, to link dangerous labor to the material and non-material forms of compensation such deeds deserved. In 1793, men and women of color worked free of charge, or at least at no charge to white Philadelphians, in response to the summons of a few brokers of charity who saw the market value of this benevolent labor. While many were members of the Free African Society, none of these charity workers were members of organizations specifically devoted to performing charitable labor; instead, this crisis provided an unexpected moment for workers in a variety of professions to see how charity work could allow them to arrogate a greater measure of social and economic agency. The American print trades were in a similarly undeveloped state in the last decade of the eighteenth century. A handful of men—Philip Freneau, Charles Brockden Brown, Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, and Mathew Carey—published literary accounts in the wake of Philadelphia’s 1793 epidemic, but no women published widely-read observations or dramatic renderings of the event. Even male authors had to grapple with the reticence of risk- and innovation-averse print professionals; although Carey’s *Short Account* was popular enough to merit multiple editions, he had to publish it himself.

But by 1841, when Hale relocated to the city, Philadelphia was a different place than it had been only a half-century before, transformed by the sweeping changes in literature and charity work as both developed into large-scale industries. And Hale herself played a significant role in this transformation. In the five decades since the yellow fever epidemic, benevolent societies organized and run by women had sprung up to perform formally the functions the laborers of 1793 had performed on an ad-hoc basis, perhaps inspired by the widely publicized accounts of Hale’s Seaman’s Aid Society. And

due partly to Mathew Carey, whose text maligning people of color for seeking some form of compensation for their valuable work during the 1793 epidemic ignited the growth of the hugely successful Carey publishing house, Philadelphia was a center of the thriving American print trades. The competition between Carey and his son Henry in Philadelphia and the four Harper brothers in New York fueled innovation in publishing and prompted opportunistic print professionals to foster a mutually supportive relationship with a host of women writing popular novels, plays, poems, personal narratives, travelogues, magazine articles, and book reviews. The events of 1793 in Philadelphia encouraged innovators in publishing and charity work to see the greater potential for profits in both fields, and during the next fifty years, savvy laborers precluded from other forms of employment would forge the alliance between the two professions that culminated in Hale's success as one of the nation's preeminent editors and most influential charitable managers.

As I conclude this dissertation, I reflect on how laborers marginalized by gender, race, marital status, economic condition, and disability effectively bridged the literary and the charitable. My focus on the bridge itself illuminates a diverse network of laborers who worked between and across the broad economic, social, regional, and literary categories that have disciplined earlier studies of American benevolence. The range of genres that women and people of color commanded as authors in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries becomes significant in entirely new ways if we consider these generic crossings as part of a larger strategy developed by professionals shrewd enough to see that their position at the margins of mainstream American society could be engaged to their advantage—that their distance from the center put them closer to certain

boundaries they could traverse to assume greater social and economic agency. As innovative American charity workers successfully crossed social classes, racial groups, public and private spheres, geographic regions, and oceans over the first half of the nineteenth century, their work actually erased the divide between the vocational and benevolent, delineating instead a distinct and sustainable profession that attached the actions of charity workers to predictable forms of compensation. Seismic shifts in labor and social relations, applied sciences, and political policy would, in the decades of Hale's tenure as editor of *Godey's* from 1837 to 1877, reinforce the divide between the American North and South. Following on the heels of these innovations, the rise of an extravagantly wealthy class during the Gilded Age would highlight the growing disparity between wealthy and poor, white and non-white, and "able-bodied" and disabled. But even as American port cities became more strident about their differences in the decades surrounding the Civil War, the model of charity as a viable industry, forged as American ships spangled the globe during an era of unprecedented trade, travel, and immigration, continued to connect the diverse inhabitants of maritime communities as active participants in a transatlantic circuit of charitable labor.

Chapter 1:

“To be the medium of her charity”:

The Performance of Vicarious Charity During Philadelphia’s Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793

Critics have called Arthur Mervyn a voyeur, an opportunist, an agent of social reform, a capitalist, and a “field through which sociohistorical forces collide,”¹ but none have remarked on the role he most consistently performs as the eponymous protagonist of Charles Brocken Brown’s eighteenth-century novel: that of self-anointed broker of charity.² Time and time again, the altruistic nineteen-year-old hatches philanthropic visions that far outstrip the meager capacity of his threadbare purse. By design more often than coincidence, Mervyn typically conceives these visions in the proximity of wealthy white citizens whose spirits are willing to alleviate need but whose flesh—particularly in the vicinity of infectious disease—is weak. Mervyn is not similarly constrained. Unencumbered by familial ties, impoverished, and predisposed to the same genetic illness that claimed the lives of his siblings in early adulthood, he fears neither

¹ While I allude here to Stephen Shapiro’s characterization of Arthur Mervyn in *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel* (259), Shapiro’s main focus in this work is not the character himself but rather on the way Brown uses Mervyn’s character to illuminate dynamic social and political forces operative in urban and rural Pennsylvania. “Mervyn’s motives seem hieroglyphic at times because Brown is placing pressure on familiar modes of narrative perspective to indicate the coming to dominance of commercial political economy as a historical passage that requires a different form of representation than is currently available to him,” Shapiro writes. While I am equally interested in the exigencies of Philadelphia’s political economy, I contend that Mervyn’s motives are elucidated if we consider his character not simply as a “field through which sociohistorical forces collide,” but rather as an interested agent negotiating power dynamics and exchanges between individuals of disparate social classes and ethnicities (259). For more on Mervyn’s roles as agent of reform or opportunist who trades on the “cultural capital of his good looks and bookish manners as they magnetize and charm the city’s bourgeoisie,” see Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro’s introduction to the 2008 edition of *Arthur Mervyn* (xxxvii).

² Now read as a single narrative, Arthur Mervyn’s story was originally told in two separate novels. The first, *Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793*, was published as a complete work between March and May 1799, with the first nine chapters appearing in serialized form in the summer of 1798. A sequel followed in September or early October of 1800.

death nor loss of rank or fortune. He is thus in a position to negotiate exchanges across an understudied chasm that opened during Philadelphia's yellow fever epidemic of August-October 1793, one that divided the dying and destitute from the elite who preferred to discharge the moral and social demands of charity through bodies they deemed less valuable (and less vulnerable) than their own.

Near the end of his perilous mission as a broker of charity during the ravages of the epidemic, Mervyn adumbrates a charitable venture that has become typical of his management style. He hears—as he is wont to hear—of the unhappy situation of someone for whom he has boundless desire but scant resources to assist. Instead, he proposes to convince a wealthy woman to supply material aid to this sick woman lately bereft of an illegitimate child. Mervyn has known the would-be benefactress for mere days, and she knows nothing of the bereaved mother. He describes his plan to another wealthy woman, who listens to this proposal with a mixture of incredulity and horror. “And on the strength of this acquaintance,” she gasps, “you expect to be her almoner? To be the medium of her charity?” Mervyn's interlocutor might well marvel. But by this point, Mervyn has made facilitating charitable transactions between wealthy and woeful something of a pattern since he left his father's farm outside of Philadelphia to seek his fortune in the city. His conviction that moral and material wants should be sated is dogged and absolute. His own poverty acquaints him with willing benefactors, and once installed at their dinner tables, he takes stock of the resources he can now command as “medium” of their charity. Early in the novel, Mervyn emerges as a sort of benevolent hustler, Philadelphia's most altruistic wheeler-dealer.

But Mervyn's story is one of conversion, not compulsion. The woman he would convince to provide sustenance to the unwed mother is educated and wealthy, the "absolute mistress of her fortune, [who] has neither guardian nor parent to control her in the use of it" (145). She is, in other words, at her liberty to reject or respond to Mervyn's proposal. He hopes she will weigh his offer against the demands of her conscience and recognize its merit, and to this end he is prepared to appeal to her piety, generosity, and decency. But for a host of other prospective agents of charity in pestilence-ravaged Philadelphia, the offer did not carry the same terms. *Arthur Mervyn* tells only part of a complicated history of mediated charitable transactions during Philadelphia's 1793 epidemic. Mervyn brokers deals between wealthy white (or exotic European) benefactors and impoverished beneficiaries. Behind this, there is a secret history. During the direst stage of the epidemic, two black clergymen and founders of the Free African Society, Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, volunteered the service of their society members to tend to Philadelphia's sick, dead, and dying, and other marginalized laborers independently extended crucial aid.³ In this chapter, I will reexamine these well-documented contributions of men and women of color during the yellow fever epidemic

³ Most scholarship on the responses of people of color to Philadelphia's health crisis of 1793 focuses on Richard Allen and Absalom Jones's refutation of Mathew Carey's allegation of indolence and corruption among African-American laborers during the epidemic in his 1794 narrative, *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia*. Allen and Jones's rebuttal, *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia, in the Year 1793: and a Refutation of Some Censures, Thrown Upon Them in Some Late Publications* (1794), sought not only to exonerate these laborers, but also to draw attention to the widespread callousness and inefficacy among white Philadelphians during the crisis. For an exploration of this controversy and its sociohistorical context, see Gary Nash's *Forging Freedom: the Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840*, the essays in Estes and Smith, eds., *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*, Thomas E. Will's "Liberalism, Republicanism, and Philadelphia's Black Elite in the Early Republic: The Social Thought of Absalom Jones and Richard Allen," and Newman, Rael, and Lapsansky, eds., *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African-American Protest*.

of 1793 as manifestations of what I call vicarious charity, or the attempts of certain white, wealthy, religious Philadelphians to salve their consciences and simultaneously save their health by dispatching agents—frequently coerced, and invariably imperiled—of their charitable aid.

Practitioners of vicarious charity acted out of the entrenched beliefs in racial hierarchies, social stratification, moral obligation, and religious dogma that were, at that very historical moment, so hotly contested in bloody theaters in both the Old World and the New. Individual beliefs among the elite who extended vicarious charity were no less varied, dynamic, and complex than the beliefs that motivated the agents they coerced. While these agents were all in some way compelled to administer aid, their experiences and attitudes were not monolithic. Some extended aid to the dying and bereaved in Philadelphia reluctantly and perfunctorily. Others, after being charged to perform duties no reasonable person could wish to perform, drew on their own perceptions of civic duty, moral rectitude, and social responsibility to rise far above the servant's mandate. This chapter will explore the actions and impacts of those who served, whether nobly or grudgingly, within the shifting geopolitical paradigms of the transatlantic world.

I read Arthur Mervyn's unlikely recovery from his own bout with yellow fever as a metaphor for the remarkable charitable actions that allowed Philadelphians to wrest their city from the fatal grip of the 1793 epidemic. I argue that although vicarious charity was a flawed paradigm that obscured the efforts of its real agents and allowed a complacent elite class to imperil lower-class laborers in the name of benevolence, those who stationed themselves along the circuit of vicarious charity, even at its lowest levels, still had something to gain. Elite and middle-class white citizens could fulfill binding

social and religious obligations to their fellow men without risking unnecessary exposure to infected bodies. Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, acting as liaisons between Philadelphia's black and white populations, marshaled the capabilities of middle- and lower-class blacks into a charitable workforce in order to demonstrate the virtues of affection and civility that should qualify African Americans for citizenship rights in the new republic. In doing so, they elevated the social status of people of color in Philadelphia during the decade following the epidemic, and by extension, their own status as black community leaders. The people of color who served—whether as enslaved or indentured laborers, live-in servants, domestic hands, or day laborers—saw both short-term rewards and long-term benefits for serving the white people who had influence over their financial and social status, and in many cases controlled their future earning potential. Although a faulty circuit that overtaxed those at the lowest ranks of society and privileged those at the upper echelons, a network of vicarious charity still helped the Free African Society garner support for a church building that functioned as an important center of black life during the early part of the nineteenth century, and it worked more effectively than government or commercial institutions to sustain a crucial urban center during a time of crisis.

“Those Hundred Days of Horror”

Nature's poisons here collected,
 Water, earth, and air infected—
 O, what a pity,
 Such a City,
 Was in such a place erected!

Philip Freneau, “Pestilence: Written During the Prevalence of a Yellow Fever” (1793)

If Philip Freneau gives geographic environment—or the prevalent miasmatic theory of disease—rather too much credit in his poetic attempt to make sense of an unfathomable illness, the political significance of Philadelphia’s situation on a globe in turmoil cannot be overstated. His poem tries to link the devastating contagion in Philadelphia to the city’s proximity to noxious shorelines, and if subsequent scientific discoveries would more accurately link the disease to the female mosquitoes breeding *in* the water, they would never discredit the theory that had Philadelphia not grown up on a major waterway, its history would have been another one entirely. As it was, Philadelphia of the late-eighteenth century was positioned as a lookout, a watchtower commanding views of rebellion and warfare on two continents. And in the summer months of 1793, the watchtower—surrounded by its pestilential moat—would become a keep.

Philadelphia of the 1790s was the temporary capital of the nation and the country’s largest, wealthiest, and most cosmopolitan city.⁴ It was a center of political and intellectual activity as well as a crucial port within a global network of mercantile trade. It was, in other words, well placed to become the sanctuary of refugees fleeing revolution in France and Saint Domingue and social and political conflicts simmering in Ireland. “Refugees from these revolutionary events filled the streets of 1790s Philadelphia and

⁴ According to John Harvey Powell, one of the Epidemic’s most quoted twentieth-century historians, Philadelphia had roughly 55,000 inhabitants in early 1793, including 2,500 people of color (xviii). As Shapiro and Barnard point out, New York, another large and well-connected city, attracted refugees of global conflict as well (“Introduction” xiii). Other refugees gathered in Baltimore, Newport, and Charlestown; Baltimore had its own Yellow Fever Epidemic in 1794 and New York in 1795 (see Thomas Drysdale, “Account of the Yellow Fever in Baltimore, in 1794” and Bob Arnebeck, “Yellow Fever in New York City, 1791-1799”). Philadelphia, however, attracted a considerable percentage of those refugees. The combination of Philadelphia’s prominence within both political networks (as the capital of the United States) and economic circuits (as a major port facilitating the circumatlantic mercantile trade) made it especially attractive to both the financially ambitious and the politically minded. Refugees began to arrive in force in July of 1793, and by August more than two thousand refugees—mostly from the Caribbean, but from Ireland and France as well—had swelled the ranks of the city to 57,000.

New York with émigrés of every stripe and color,” Stephen Shapiro and Philip Barnard write, “from Royalist French aristocrats and planters from the Caribbean fleeing ongoing revolutions to enslaved ‘French negroes’ or ‘wild Irish’ revolutionary activists and intellectuals” (xiii). As Philadelphians accommodated their new bedfellows with a proliferation of newspaper articles and advertisements printed in French and held benefit performances to raise funds for their relief, the city’s reputation as a hospitable asylum spread and attracted still more refugees.⁵

Although unrest and rebellion seethed on all sides of the Atlantic during the last years of the eighteenth century, the year 1793 was a watershed even in a decade of remarkable years. On January 21, Louis XVI bowed his head beneath the guillotine’s blade in the public square aptly rechristened the “Place de la Révolution.” As fighting between hostile political factions dragged on, the prices of grain and other foodstuffs rose, precipitating desperate food shortages and widespread rioting. Promising to curtail these rising prices, Maximilien Robespierre ascended the ranks of the Committee of Public Safety in July and, from his lofty but perilous perch, inaugurated a yearlong Reign of Terror against real and suspected dissidents. In June, the National Constituent Assembly had revised its “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen” of 1789 to give even greater emphasis to the equality of “all men,” “by nature and before the law.”

Inspired and emboldened by the Assembly’s grandiose rhetoric, free men of color in the

⁵ Details about these benefit performances and other early attempts to raise fund for refugees of the French and Haitian revolutions are difficult to procure. Powell’s otherwise exhaustive account, for example, slips into the passive voice in regards to these charitable initiatives. “A committee was formed,” he writes, “subscriptions taken, more than \$15,000 collected.” Powell’s scholarship has been called melodramatic, but on this point it is restrained when it should say more. Some sources suggests that money from these fundraisers went to widows whose husbands died in Saint Domingue, and in 1794, Philadelphians raised \$3,000 to send some 150 refugees back to Saint Domingue and another \$4,000 to send 200 refugees to France. (See Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom By Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath*, 86-89.)

French-held colony of Saint Domingue clamored for their share in this ostensible victory for the common man (“Declaration of 1793”). In 1789, equality became a rallying call. In a deadly and determined uprising on the night of August 21, 1791, Saint Domingue’s enslaved laborers took up their own call for equality as a battle cry. And by 1793, their cry had become a demand that could not be ignored.

The escalating agitation of free men of color, along with a growing number of enslaved laborers, excited the interest of Spanish and British colonists, who had long eyed Saint Domingue’s thriving port, verdant hills, and rich, productive fields. George Washington, who had claimed one of his “first wishes” was to see slavery eradicated “by slow, sure & imperceptible degrees,” watched warily in August of 1793 as France freed 15,000 slaves to marshal support against British and Spanish troops collecting like hungry predators around France’s crippled colonial holding (Letter of 1786). Faced now with the claims of obligation to an erstwhile ally in America’s own quest for independence, Washington regarded involvement in this international feud with apprehension. “Unwise we be in the extreme to involve ourselves in the contests of European Nations,” he opined, “where our weight would be but small, tho’ the loss to ourselves should be certain” (“Washington to Gouverneur Morris”). Finally, Washington could preach the imprudence of Americans flying to the French revolutionaries’ side, but he could not stop refugees of revolution in France or Haiti from flocking to his.

Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson mistakenly reported, in a 1793 letter to his daughter, “St. Domingo has expelled all its whites, [and] has given freedom to all its blacks and colored people” (“The Haitian Revolution”). In fact, Britain had sent a large expeditionary force to Saint Domingue, and a considerable number of white French

planters remained through the crises of the early 1790s. But Jefferson might be forgiven this misapprehension, since to Philadelphians greeting the deluge of refugees, it must have seemed as if the colony's entire white population—and no small number of black and mixed-race companions, slaves, and servants—had suddenly collected on their doorsteps. Whatever their political sympathies, all Philadelphians were now involved in the implications of revolution for a large and diverse population of émigrés. Gary Nash estimates that 15,000 Saint Domingans, roughly two-thirds white and one-third black, fled the island for American seaports. Of the approximately two thousand who came to Philadelphia, more than 900 were people of color (“Reverberations” 45).⁶ Most of these were servants or enslaved laborers, but some were wealthy enough to have owned land and even slaves before the Revolution.⁷ The fine distinctions of race that animated a nuanced social code in Saint Domingue, however, largely collapsed under the two primary categories that obtained in Philadelphia: white and black. And whatever their stations had been before revolutionary conflicts roiled Europe and the Caribbean, the émigrés were somewhat leveled in Philadelphia by separation, hunger, loss, and poverty. Even some who had managed to preserve their wealth were reduced to seeking for estranged family members in queries printed in local newspapers.⁸ If 1793 had been

⁶ For more on émigrés from Haiti's four main racialized groups (wealthy white plantation owners, middling whites, African slaves, and wealthy land- and slave-owning people of color), see Shapiro and Barnard's introduction to *Arthur Mervyn*, xxxiii.

⁷ Susan Branson and Leslie Patrick make the important point that enslaved laborers would not remain so for long in Philadelphia's fervid pro-abolition climate of the late eighteenth century. As many as half of the 900 people of color who arrived from Saint Domingue were enslaved, but Émigrés who brought slaves with them “were required by Pennsylvania's gradual abolition law to free any slave who had resided in the state for six months” (196). Slave owners typically put this off until the last possible moment, and then quickly indentured the slaves they freed. See “Étrangers dans un Pays Étrange: Saint-Domingan Refugees of Color in Philadelphia” in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David Geggus.

⁸ One notice in Brown's *Federal Gazette* read: “If the misfortunes of Santo Domingo should have obliged either of the partners of the house of l'Enfant & Chevalier, of Cap Francois, to take refuge in this country,

marked by dramatic campaigns for human equality, it was also a year that saw the triumph of equality in one terrible guise. Of all the forces that would combine to equalize a disparate population of refugees seeking asylum in a liberated nation, none would operate more democratically or with more disregard for personal fortune, race, social standing, political persuasion, age, or creed than the yellow fever—the American Plague.

In January of 1793, as the crowd assembled to witness a king's execution in France and white planters, free men of color, and enslaved laborers in Saint Domingue grappled with the promise and implications of citizenship rights, strange forces conspired in Philadelphia. Though inhuman, they would collude with social and political movements to deadly effect. January was unseasonably warm, and came on the heels of a balmy December. Dr. Benjamin Rush, a prominent political figure and an esteemed physician, began to note the strange weather in conjunction with an uncommon number of maladies among the city's population.⁹ "The weather which had been moderate in December and January became cold in February," he observed. Spring came early, and May and June saw abundant rain. By July, temperatures were "uniformly warm," and more portentously, deathly dry. Pools of water that had gathered during the spring stagnated and then dried, providing ideal breeding grounds for the *Aedes aegypti*

or Mr. Godefroy Beutier, inhabitant of the district of Rozeaux, quartier of Jeremie, or the daughter of Mr. Grehault de la Motte, of Nantes; they may hear of something interesting, by applying to B. & E. Carnes, No. 71, Second-street" (qtd. in Powell 4).

⁹ Rush was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and famous as he became during the outbreak of yellow fever, his political life survived his medical practice. In 1807 and 1809, for example, John Adams sought Rush's opinion as the country clamored for war with the British. (See John Adams's letter to Benjamin Rush of 1807 and Adams to Rush, 1809.) His political views influenced his approach to medicine: He was more likely than most other white physicians, for example, to treat poor Philadelphians, and he repeatedly expressed gratitude for the service of black nurses during the epidemic, even when other Philadelphians were disregarding or maligning their contributions. For more, see Billy G. Smith, "Comment, Disease and Community," 157 and Phillip Lapansky, "'Abigail, a Negress': The Role and the Legacy of African Americans in the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 65.

mosquito, the unknown vector of the yellow fever. “There was something in the heat and drought of the summer months, which was uncommon in their influence upon the human body,” Rush noted (*Account 7*). Across the city, doctors were called to the bedsides of patients exhibiting similar symptoms: a dull ache in their heads and backs, nausea, chills, fatigue, and then, after a few days’ respite, soaring fever, intestinal hemorrhaging, vomiting (internal bleeding gave the vomit a black color), and then a typhoid-like stupor just before death. Patients also developed the yellowish hue in eyes and skin that give the disease its name, but “none of the cases,” Dr. Rush recorded, “excited the least apprehension of the existence of yellow fever in our city” (*Account 10*). Dr. Adam Kuhn, one of the city’s most distinguished practitioners and a professor at the medical school, initially dismissed the episodes as “the remittent and intermittent fever, which always prevail among us, at this season of the year” (“Putrid Fever”). Other physicians tended to agree. The “common bilious fever,” after all, was hardly cause for alarm, particularly during months as warm and dry as these.

By August, however, doctors began to wonder how “common” the malady was. The cases were certainly numerous, but the malignancy of the disease reminded Rush of cases he had seen during an outbreak of yellow fever in Philadelphia in 1762. In the final weeks of summer, he was ready to name this disease “the *Bilious remitting Yellow Fever*,” cognizant, presumably, that making this announcement in a thriving urban center was something akin to crying “fire” in a crowded theater. Once he had identified the malady, he set out to discover its source. His reasoning was couched in baldly political terms. “It has often been asked,” he wrote, “Why did not the yellow fever prevail in Philadelphia before the year 1793, particularly in the year 1778, when it was left in a

more filthy state by the British army than it has been at any time since?” (*Observations* 6). In one stroke, Rush associated the British with decay and disease while deflecting attention from the city’s current state of sanitation as a source of contagion. The source he finally fastened on was even less capable of producing a plague than the British occupation of fifteen years past, but its political resonances were even more complex and relevant to the disaster at hand.

Rush observed that the majority of his patients were taken ill after spending time on Water Street, a tiny and densely populated street located, as its name would suggest, alongside the docks. One block away, a shipment of coffee carried alongside refugees from Saint Domingue on the sloop *Amelia* moldered on Ball’s Wharf after rotting on the voyage. The neighborhood thought it an “annoyance”; Rush thought it a deathtrap (*Account* 12). In reality, the putrefying coffee was a red herring. It was also a symbol of both the known and the unacknowledged stakes of colonial dominion. The coffee did not breed yellow fever, as Rush alleged, but in one sense, it did bring disease into the city. The Americans, French, British, and Spanish indulged insatiable appetites for sugar and coffee—the two chief products of Saint Domingue—without considering the invisible and remote risks of such an indulgence.¹⁰ Their competing interests in the lush, productive colony and their reliance on slave labor stoked the conflicts that finally drove a wave of Saint Dominguan to Philadelphia’s shore. And with them came not only the precious coffee, but also the disease that would be transferred from Saint Dominguan to Philadelphian by the female mosquito—a tiny agent of vicarious contagion.

¹⁰ Gary Nash offers this fascinating statistic: “[O]n one-sixth of the land area of Virginia, [enslaved black laborers] produced nearly half of the world’s sugar and coffee” (“Reverberations” 44.)

Like the forces of capitalism, the yellow fever virus was an invisible thread that ran through this flow of commodities and bodies around the Atlantic world. It thrived in wet, moderate climates, but the regions that played host to the virus shared a more important commonality: contact with Africa, where the yellow fever originated.¹¹ If the virus relied on *Aegypti* as vector, it engaged the slave ship as vehicle. The yellow fever appeared in the New World in the 1640s, and for two centuries enjoyed, as David Geggus writes, “a spasmodic history, appearing as epidemics of the ‘black vomit fever’” (38). As it happened, one of these epidemics raged from 1792 to 1794. The Saint Dominguan revolutionaries found an unexpected ally in the virulent fever, which rarified the ranks of French troops sent to put down the slave rebellion and, in the last five years of the eighteenth century, claimed 12,700 British troops and sent another 1,500 back to Britain as invalids. “In Saint Domingue,” Geggus argues, “the battle casualties of British regiments were always remarkably low. The great majority of the British dead—about ninety-five percent—unquestionably died of disease” (50). Though military plans and political strategy of the eighteenth-century’s revolutionary era rarely credited it as a player, yellow fever lurked always at the edges of the stage, and occasionally stepped forward to take a starring role.

The fever was such a fixture of Caribbean life that wealthy white residents of Saint Domingue tended to regard it as a nuisance rather than a crisis. The action of *Secret History; or the Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808), the epistolary novel Michael Drexler calls Leonora Sansay’s “synthesis of fiction and biography,” begins in 1802, but

¹¹ In *The American Plague: The Untold Story of Yellow Fever, The Epidemic That Shaped Our History*, Molly Caldwell Crosby makes the interesting observation that Asia, which never participated in the African slave trade, has never had an epidemic of the yellow fever despite having a climate in which the virus would flourish (11).

its narrator's cool composure in the face of the yellow fever generally comports with the attitude of Dr. Edward Stevens, a Caribbean doctor who read early symptoms of the fever in 1793 as "rather unpleasant than alarming" (Drexler 5, Stevens "For the General Advertiser"). "Clara has had the yellow fever," the narrator writes of the protagonist, a beautiful woman who returns with her husband to Saint Domingue in hopes that he can reclaim the property he lost in the early years of the Revolution. "Her husband, who certainly loves her very much, watched her with unceasing care, and I believe, preserved her life, to which however she attaches no value since it must be passed with him" (5). Certainly, Clara's fear of the yellow fever might well pale in comparison to the very real threat of her abusive husband; the narrator, however, initially has an equally placid attitude toward the colony's revolutionary crisis. But like the whispering of enslaved laborers that grew to a murmur, and then a rally, and then a battle cry, the yellow fever mustered strength until it could not be shrugged off. And the combination of the two events—revolution in Saint Domingue and then fever carried with displaced bodies and precious commodities across the Atlantic—rocked the political and economic foundation of the circumatlantic world.

By the end of 1793, the Philadelphia yellow fever outbreak had become the most famous epidemic in the United States, doubtless because of the extent of its destruction and the prominence of its victims. In three months it claimed 5,000 lives, or roughly ten percent of the city's January 1793 population, and drove 17,000 people to flee the city.¹² More importantly, it demonstrated the liabilities of a circumatlantic socioeconomic order

¹² Here, I follow Shapiro and Barnard's lead in relying on the statistics offered by Estes and Smith in *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation*. Because the doctors treating patients often mistook one fever for another, it is difficult to say precisely how many lives the yellow fever claimed, and estimates vary significantly between sources.

hampered by inequities of wealth and status when collective disaster demanded a collective response. It is true that the yellow fever virus did not discriminate between races, genders, or social ranks, but if the virus itself would not be a respecter of persons, wealthy white Philadelphians were prepared to compensate. The disease had shaken their confidence and robbed them of their complacency, but it had not toppled a social structure organized around determinants of race, class, and gender. As a wealth of historical documents reveal, a small, racially and socially diverse cast of citizens labored with tremendous energy and magnanimity to stave off or repair the ravages of the epidemic. But, appealing to this code, some elite residents of the city ostensibly fulfilled the demands of social decency and moral decorum without risking their health or fortune to a disease whose essential character they could not fathom. Often prompted by altruistic “brokers of charity”—Arthur Mervyn had his historical counterparts, as we shall see—they dispatched their servants, slaves, or lower-class neighbors to transmit the offerings of their charity and communicate the generosity of their spirits. In doing so, they did not entirely subsume the agency of those they employed. Instead, they provided the means and the moment for Philadelphia’s marginalized citizens to demonstrate the willingness of their own hearts, and their awareness that remuneration could take many forms. Just as a refusal to extend aid could bring highly undesirable consequences, these laborers knew that their willingness to perform dangerous labor might bring material, not simply moral, rewards.

“The Standard of Charity”

In 1993, on the bicentennial of Philadelphia’s yellow fever epidemic, the University of Pennsylvania Press reprinted John Harvey Powell’s seminal history of the disaster, *Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793*, with a new introduction. It lauds the heroic efforts of black Philadelphians who not only “nursed the sick, carried victims to Bush Hill, and buried the dead by night,” but also “worked under appalling conditions, some for no pay” (xi). The next page, ostensibly continuing in this same vein, slips into a strangely impersonal rhetoric: “Philadelphians rallied to fight the yellow fever. The city cleaned up the streets and, after repeated outbreaks of the fever in the 1790s, in 1800 built the first major municipal water system in the nation. This did away with the need to store rainwater in barrels, and incidentally with many breeding grounds for mosquitoes” (xii). The historical details are easy enough to verify, but the history is fundamentally inaccurate. Cities do not clean up streets, and cities do not build water systems; people do.¹³ The authors of the introduction, as previous and subsequent scholars of the epidemic, might reasonably decline to identify the human agents of this crucial work. The intricate network of transactions that regulated social and municipal work during Philadelphia’s pestilential crisis is difficult to see, and harder still to limn. But, as I will show, sketching the shape of this network and illuminating its gravitational centers—financial, social, religious, and

¹³ Michal McMahon argues that one of the most important responses to the 1793 health crisis was this effort to improve the health and cleanliness of Philadelphia’s streets and public spaces. Although he focuses on wealthy citizens and elected public officials rather than the paid laborers who brought these improvements to pass, his article “Beyond Therapeutics: Technology and the Question of Public Health in Late-Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia” gives a fascinating overview of the efforts of city leaders and concerned citizens “to ameliorate what they believed lay behind the periodic epidemic: a filthy urban environment and a dangerously polluted water supply” (98).

political—throws into relief not simply the street cleaners themselves, but the human and invisible masters they served.

On a number of crucial points, Powell's history relies heavily on Mathew Carey's sensational account of the narrative, *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia*, first published in 1793. One of the great weaknesses of Powell's work is that he repeats Carey's account of Philadelphia's yellow fever crisis as if it were established fact. In reality, the Irish-born Carey, enjoying protection as a publisher in the United States after his political writings rankled both the Irish Catholic party and the British government at large, was one among the droves of people who fled the city in the first weeks of the epidemic. He turned his attention to Philadelphia's dead and bereaved only when financial need motivated him to publish a description of the devastating epidemic. That same financial need likely motivated him to write an account that would sell, an account that did not hew closely to eyewitness testimony as much as relate episodes of fantastic cowardice, bravery, depravity, or suffering. For an ambitious author, the demands of the truth had far less pull than the demands of the bottom line. In the end, Carey was amply rewarded for the literary inclinations he filtered through a keen business sense. By January 16, 1794, he was preparing the volume for its fourth edition, an outcome he could happily ascribe to "the uncommon degree of favour which this pamphlet has experienced" (*Short Account* 8).¹⁴ In the few short months since the epidemic had run its course, Carey had established himself as an authority on a historical

¹⁴ Sally F. Griffith calls Carey's pamphlet an example of "'on-the-spot' disaster reporting," a genre which, as she points out, became a mainstay of American journalism. Although she provides an interesting connection between Carey's "instant history" and the ability of a community to find meaning in shared tragedy, her argument, like Carey's, ignores the contributions of people of color as it praises the (white, male) "heroes" of the epidemic (45).

event he had not witnessed. That is not to say, however, that Carey's history is not a useful document. In fact, it is an essential one. The hyperbolic tendencies of its author—calculated to resonate with hoards of prospective readers—illuminate the extant ideologies necessary for a circuit of vicarious charity to operate.

The performance of vicarious charity can be a reasonable response to disaster only in the presence of three conditions: A socioeconomic divide that produces a clearly demarcated elite class vis-à-vis an underprivileged class; a fear of contagion that reifies these social divides with geographic buffers and physical barriers between the (generally healthy) elite and the (presumably diseased) masses; and a pervasive sense of moral and civic duty among respectable citizens that, when dormant, may be recalled to them by those liaisons between disparate social classes I have called “brokers of charity.” Before I describe the actions of Philadelphia's brokers and vicarious agents of charity during the fall of 1793, I will first demonstrate that these three conditions existed in the city. When these inequities of wealth and status, coupled with a fear of trans-class contagion, characterize a society at least partially disciplined by shared conceptions of charity, benevolence may not be wholly abandoned before it is practiced in an indirect, mediated, and potentially exploitative form. Although Mathew Carey's poetic licenses render in dramatic and sometimes fantastic forms the heroism of the heroic and the cowardice of the craven, these poetic licenses work more credibly to highlight Philadelphia's unique suitability, from the oppressive heat of August until the frost of early November, for an ethos of vicarious charity to thrive.

In August, Philadelphia's already yawning social divide was reinforced by the first episodes of fatal disease. Water Street, where Benjamin Rush treated the first

victims of yellow fever, was dingy and densely populated. Its proximity to the water made its working-class inhabitants easy prey for the *Aegypti*, the tiny, disease-carrying stowaways on vessels running between American seaports and Caribbean islands.

Inhabitants who lived on the wider, less crowded streets away from Philadelphia's wharves¹⁵ were somewhat favored by the fact that the mosquitoes have a short flight range and tend to stay close to their breeding site.¹⁶ As Carey's account reveals, the physical disadvantages of living in cramped, noisome quarters near ships and water that nurtured agents of disease were compounded by socially constructed liabilities.

Handbills and pamphlets disseminated widely among urban residents—based on the prescriptions of Benjamin Rush and other physicians—encouraged everyone to “avoid all unnecessary intercourse with the infected” and “to avoid all fatigue of body and mind, and standing or sitting in the sun, or in the open air; to accommodate the dress to the weather, and to exceed rather in warm than in cool clothing” (17).¹⁷ Carey repeats these

¹⁵ Without appreciating the significance of the mosquito's prevalence and mobility in regard to the cases of fever, Carey nevertheless corroborates the argument that smaller, more crowded streets close to the water saw more fever cases than the wider streets away from the water where Philadelphia's middle- and upper-class citizens lived. “The mortality in confined streets, small allies, and close houses, debarred of free circulation of air, has exceeded, in a great proportion, that in the large streets and well-aired houses,” he writes. “In some of the allies, a third or fourth of the whole of the inhabitants are no more. In 30 houses, the whole number in Pewter Platter alley, 32 people died: and in a part of Market-street, containing 170 houses, only 39. The streets in the suburbs, that had the benefit of the country air, especially towards the west part of the city, have suffered little. Of the wide, airy streets, none lost so many people as Arch, near Water-street, which may be accounted for, by its proximity to the original seat of the disorder. It is to be particularly remarked, that in general, the more remote the streets were from Water street, the less of the calamity they experienced” (61-62). For more on the escalating rents and high cost of living in Philadelphia's “older core wards” that drove poor residents toward the waterfront and other forms of socioeconomic stratification during the 1790s, see David Paul Nord, “Readership as Citizenship in Late-Eighteenth Century Philadelphia,” 21.

¹⁶ Susan E. Klepp observes that the mosquito's limited flight range meant that the yellow fever “rarely appeared far from the waterfront and almost never in the countryside” (168).

¹⁷ Rush's own directions for “curing and preventing the Yellow Fever” echoed this encouragement to exercise “great moderation in the exercises of the body and mind”; he also promoted “warm clothing [and] cleanliness.” In addition, he advises that “[f]resh air should be admitted into the room in all cases and cool air when the pulse is full and tense” (“Dr. Rush's Directions”). On Water Street, however, fresh air was a scarce resource. On any given day, household refuse and other waste rotted outside homes, and in the late

admonitions as sensible advice, but he, like many of the city's physicians, had a myopic view of the city's population. No recommendations adapted themselves to those whose economic circumstances did not afford them the luxury of choosing when they could be indoors, or how often. Carey does not suggest how a person whose livelihood demanded great physical exertion or long hours outdoors—like a dockhand, for example, or a seaman, fisherman, scavenger, or any of myriad other day laborers—might preserve his or her life from fatal disease without losing it to starvation or exposure to the elements. This is to say nothing of the impracticality of this prescription for those who had long supported themselves in a dependable post-mortem industry as casket makers, morticians, carters of bodies, or gravediggers. Those who could blithely assume that all of Philadelphia's inhabitants had ample clothing, warm and cool, from which to organize their daily deportments could probably easily imagine most intercourse with the infected to be of the "unnecessary" variety. But the people who routinely took physically strenuous or dangerous jobs, wearing whatever clothes they had, likely held a different view of what constituted "necessary" versus "unnecessary" labor.

Carey mentions—briefly, and without comment—one laborer forced by economic need to take a job that demands this wholly undesirable intercourse with the infected. "The corpses of the most respectable citizens, even of those who did not die of the epidemic, were carried to the grave, on the shafts of a chair, the horse driven by a negro, unattended by a friend or relation, and without any sort of ceremony," he writes (*Short Account* 22). Friends and families of the wealthy victim may have seen no reason to

summer of 1793, the smell of putrefying coffee on Ball's Wharf added to the stench. Allowing fresh air into a room, in the overcrowded and noisome neighborhoods near Philadelphia's docks, was not as easy as Rush would have it seem.

accompany the body to a graveyard filled with contaminated corpses, but the lone living person among this miserable cortege must have seen a compelling reason indeed. This carter, it is clear from Carey's account, was not a friend performing a personal favor for this "respectable citizen." Instead, it seems the wages of this grim work outstripped for this man the risk of communing with the diseased and deceased. Carey called the fever "dreadfully destructive among the poor," and estimates that 7 out of 8 people who died were "of that class" (61).¹⁸ Low-income residents of Philadelphia were undoubtedly at higher risk of infection and death, partially because they could not afford a nurse's care,¹⁹ but also because financial need prompted them to take far greater risks than the wealthy.²⁰ Unaware of the fever's real origin, wealthy citizens burned bedding and clothing that had contacted a diseased body, avoided all social intercourse with a fever victim or the victim's family, and gave homes marked by pestilence a wide berth. In these manifestations of widespread terror, Philadelphia's working-class citizens saw a

¹⁸ Billy G. Smith elaborates on Carey's estimate: "His observation is confirmed by the disproportionate number of mariners, laborers, artisans, clothes washers, and prostitutes among the victims. Inferior diets, overcrowded housing, and inadequate sanitary conditions intensified the vulnerability of the lower classes to yellow fever. Most important was the inability of impoverished residents to escape the afflicted area" ("Comment: Diseases and Community," 150). See also Smith, *The "Lower Sort,"* 52-56.

¹⁹ Philadelphia's elite paid high—sometimes absurd—sums for a physician's care and the barrage of (mostly dubious) medicines he prescribed, but as J. Worth Estes points out, the invasive and highly experimental procedures many doctors recommended undoubtedly harmed patients rather than helped them (viii). Benjamin Rush became the champion of the "American" form of treating the disease: bleeding a patient to relieve overtaxed blood vessels, which Rush believed to be at the root of the fever's fatal symptoms. The "French" method, advocated primarily by Dr. Jean Devèze, a French refugee from Saint Domingue, eschewed bleeding in favor of a series of liquid purges and herbal tonics. The debate over the validity of Rush's method versus Devèze's raged for years, and Rush was wounded personally and professionally in the public criticism of his methods. For more on this controversy, see Jacquelyn C. Miller, "Passions and Politics: The Multiple Meanings of Benjamin Rush's Treatment for Yellow Fever" and Paul E. Kopperman, "'Venerate the Lancet': Benjamin Rush's Yellow Fever Therapy in Context."

²⁰ Carey cannot resist reading the mortality rate among Philadelphia's poor as a commentary on their personal values. Just after he reports that "[The fever] has been dreadfully destructive among the poor," he opines, "The inhabitants of dirty houses have severely expiated their neglect of cleanliness and decency, by the numbers of them that have fallen sacrifices" (61). A general perception that the poor brought disease upon themselves by indolence and neglect for hygiene helped to quell real concern when laborers exposed to dead and dying bodies began dying in much greater numbers than wealthy and middle-class citizens exempted from these duties.

suddenly expanding market for their services. If the wealthy would not touch a sick person's blanket, let alone body, they must discover a viable alternative. As jobs for caretakers, house cleaners, scavengers, and carters of dead bodies multiplied dramatically, a growing number of laborers exposed themselves to *Aegypti*'s fatal blood transfusion as an occupational hazard. In the process, these workers served as a porous but substantial buffer for citizens who could afford to remain indoors, away from the mosquito and the contaminated blood it transmitted.

Unlike these imperiled laborers, most residents of means or connections did not tempt fate by long remaining in a diseased urban center. Benjamin Rush identified the yellow fever virus in the third week of August. By August 25th or 26th, writes Carey, "removals from Philadelphia began." Even this wily turn of phrase cannot obfuscate the identities of this latest round of refugees, or the reason they fled. "[S]o great was the general terror, that, for some weeks, carts, waggon, coaches, and chairs, were almost constantly transporting families and furniture to the country in every direction." What rank of men could afford to rent or own residences in the country? Carey unintentionally answers this question by mentioning, in passing, those who were left behind. "Many people shut up their houses wholly; others left servants to take care of them" (*Short Account* 17). Certainly, Philadelphia of the late-eighteenth century organized itself into social ranks: the servants and the served. Those who fled could afford the high costs associated with the flight. They needed to procure food and lodging outside the city, and had to have enough cash in reserves that they could afford to leave their jobs in Philadelphia without the aid of a loan, since the city's banks refused to lend money. And if they sought passage on stages, they had to buy an expensive ticket to the very end of

the line, as far as Baltimore or New York. Such luxuries would be outside the grasp of those, like many of the French refugees from Saint Domingue, who had fallen on hard economic times or who had no friends or relations in the country or nearby cities. Those who stayed either couldn't afford to leave, didn't have the freedom of mobility to flee, or felt a strong sense of duty to tend to the sick and the distressed in the beleaguered city. A few who stayed were wealthy and upper-middle-class white professionals willing to lend their resources to the crisis at hand. The majority were middle- and working-class people of color and "middling" and poor whites. Race, rank, and station would determine their relative positions within a circuit of vicarious charity implemented when 17,000 terrified fugitives abandoned even sick "friends, and relations," trusting that those who remained would fulfill the terms of the social contract that implicitly bound the respectable American citizen to his family, home, city, and industry (Jones and Allen 17).²¹

As this exodus began, the fear that pervaded the city during the first weeks of the epidemic gave physical proportions to the social chasm dividing Philadelphia's elite and moderately wealthy from its laboring poor and destitute citizens. By September 10, the President and Governor had left the city, a frenetic stream of government officials and prominent citizens following in their wake. Mayor Matthew Clarkson remained, and, with only the vestiges of an organized government, tried to assemble an appropriate response to an unprecedented crisis.²² As Clarkson's foundering administration endlessly

²¹ I will elaborate on the terms and nature of this social contract, but a useful historical perspective is provided in Thomas E. Will's "Liberal Republicanism and Philadelphia's Black Elite in the Early Republic: The Social Thought of Absalom Jones and Richard Allen."

²² The intrinsic connections between Caribbean trade and travel and the yellow fever virus were brought home to Mayor Clarkson when his twenty-one-year-old son, a student of medicine, succumbed to the fever while visiting his brother in St. Kitts. Despite this loss and his wife's bout with the yellow fever, Clarkson apparently called at City Hall every day throughout the epidemic. See Powell 140-41.

weighed motions and passed resolutions calling for more aid from the able-bodied citizenry, the poor and afflicted who normally fell under the jurisdiction of the overworked “Guardians of the Poor” languished on the streets. The almshouse first refused admission to anyone without a certificate of good health signed by a physician, and then, when several paupers died of fever in the house, refused to accept anyone at all (Carey *Short Account* 17-18). The desperate Guardians then seized the circus of a prominent equestrian’s estate as a place to collect (although not to treat) impoverished fever victims. Terrified inhabitants of the neighborhood, who recoiled on the street at the offer of a friendly handshake, and “valued themselves highly on the skill and address with which they got to windward of every person whom they met,” hardly ventured from their homes, let alone to the blighted Water Street. Now, they looked on in horror as Water Street was brought to them. “The inhabitants of the neighborhood of the circus took alarm,” goes Carey’s understatement, “and threatened to burn or destroy it, unless the sick were removed; and it is believed they would have actually carried their threats into execution, had compliance been delayed a day longer” (19). Suddenly, bodies that Philadelphia’s wealthy had once dismissed as inconsequential or even invisible became monstrous and grotesque, great looming harbingers of death.

The only suitable lazaretto, it seemed, would lie outside the city proper, away from terrified property owners with their penchant for pyrotechnic resolutions to vexing social problems. With some compunction, the Guardians commandeered Bush Hill, the splendid estate built by Andrew Hamilton and now providentially unoccupied by its current owner, Hamilton’s grandnephew William. Bush Hill had been a symbol of Republican splendor when Vice President John Adams occupied it from 1790-1792; one

year later, it became a symbol of the young Republic's systematic commitment to socioeconomic stratification. Situated on 150 acres on the northernmost border of the city, the fledgling hospital became a container not simply for the sick, but for any who seemed liable to contaminate a city in crisis. The mansion, unsurprisingly, was ill suited to the needs of a functional hospital, and the city's few remaining doctors were so overtaxed with cases in the city center that they only sporadically made time to visit the impoverished patients at Bush Hill. Those who could afford medical care at home were anxious not only to have the diseased poor quarantined at Bush Hill, but any of the lower classes who might become carriers of disease. As Arthur Mervyn discovers when, in a destitute and friendless state, he is forcibly carted to Bush Hill, Philadelphia's poor had to actively resist incarceration at the squalid hospital, whether they suffered symptoms of the fever or not. Carey writes:

No wonder, then, that a general dread of the place prevailed through the city, and that a removal to it was considered as the seal of death. In consequence, there were various instances of sick persons locking their rooms, and resisting every attempt to carry them away. At length, the poor were so much afraid of being sent to Bush-hill, that they would not acknowledge their illness, until it was no longer possible to conceal it. For it is to be observed, that the fear of the contagion was so prevalent, that as soon as any one was taken ill, an alarm was spread among the neighbours, and every effort was used to have the sick person hurried off to Bush-hill, to avoid spreading the disorder. The cases of poor people forced in this way to that hospital, though laboring under only common colds, and common fall fevers, were numerous and afflicting. There were not wanting instances of persons, only slightly ill, being sent to Bush-Hill, by their panic-struck neighbours, and embracing the first opportunity of running back to Philadelphia. (*Short Account* 32)

The disease reinforced a conception of poverty that equated economic frailty with contagion and decay. Bush Hill became a convenient receptacle for people who posed a variety of real and imagined risks to the able-bodied citizenry. When a Committee was

appointed on September 14th “to attend to and alleviate the sufferings of the afflicted with the malignant fever, prevalent in the city and its vicinity,” its primary concern was the deplorable condition of the hospital, which, if it were to continue to serve as a dumping ground for disabled bodies, must provide its excess of patients with at least some qualified nurses, committed doctors, and custodians (*Proceedings of the College of Physicians* 12). In just two weeks, Bush Hill had earned a reputation throughout the city as a miserable place. Carey, always inclined toward the melodramatic, called it “a great human slaughter-house” (32). Whatever description it deserved, the new hospital lying outside the city center was a physical testament to the yawning gulf between wealthy and poor Philadelphians. If charity would be extended during this crisis, its agents would have to be willing to traverse this chasm.

This assumes, of course, that Philadelphians would feel moved to extend charity during the epidemic. Only when acts of charity accumulate significance as markers of social standing or moral probity within civic and religious communities would a majority of elite citizens averse to personal risk still be anxious to perform charity, particularly when it could be accomplished through the bodies of lower class, vicarious agents. Wealthy and well-off Philadelphians had been willing enough to open their purses for the refugees of Saint Domingue a few weeks earlier, but that was before tracts like Carey’s trumpeted that the “imported disorder” had unquestionably arrived from the West Indies on vessels hailing “from the different infected islands” (67). These benefactors, it seemed to them, had been punished for their hospitality. And yet, as the epidemic began to subside, Carey would still serve as “a witness and recorder of magnanimity” shown during the crisis. Whence did white Philadelphians summon magnanimity in this time of

terror? During the second week of September, as “the deceased persons became daily more numerous,” Mayor Clarkson published a fervent address to his constituents, “announcing that the guardians of the poor, who remained, were in distress for want of assistance, and inviting such benevolent people, as felt for the general distress, to lend their aid.” In response, ten citizens came forward and “offered themselves to assist the guardians of the poor” (Carey *Short Account* 28-29). In the medical community, the overwhelmed doctors who remained in the city met to determine “what steps should be taken by them on the occasion, consistent with their duty, to their fellow citizens” (*Proceedings of the College of Physicians* 1). These distinguished men, highly visible pillars in the community, may well have prompted their contemporaries and admirers to take this matter of duty seriously. On one level, they may have been motivated by noblesse oblige. But what Charles Brockden Brown calls a “spirit of salutary emulation” of civic and religious leaders also grew out of the demands of religious dogma, and a post-Revolutionary political ethos that stressed the individual citizen’s social and moral responsibility (2). Even if these demands were occasionally undergirded by conflicting philosophical impulses, the net effect of their consistent emphasis on the duty of the individual to those less fortunate pervaded political and religious doctrine until none could be insensible to the demands of charity on the respectable citizen—even those who fled or otherwise removed themselves from sites of “disease and poverty” (Brown 2).

I argue that when Mayor Matthew Clarkson urged citizens to “‘rally round the standard’ of charity,” he was using the word “standard” not in the sense of an emblem or marker, but in the sense of an understood code of conduct established by authority, custom, and general consent. By the time the 1793 epidemic struck, a duty to perform

charity had been enshrined in both political and social codes regulating the behavior of Philadelphia's wealthy and middle-class citizens, and any citizen aspiring toward social or religious "respectability" understood the significance of this mandate. In a political sense, charity became a manifestation of the new republic's commitment to unity and social cooperation. Thomas Will argues that "Republican thought, culminating in the war and independence, fundamentally transformed the way people interacted," elevating "new social bonds of respect, affection, and civic virtue" over the "traditional ties of family . . . and fixed status" (559). This "civic man," or in Will's words, "the propertied individual whose independence undergird his civic 'virtue' and enabled him to voluntarily sacrifice his own interests to the greater good at the whole" often seems to contemporary historians to be at odds with the "economic man," that "individual who was naturally driven to maximize his own interests and who need do no more in order to serve the common good" (560). But in fact, Will argues (and I agree), a majority of "individuals in the early republic managed to subscribe simultaneously to principles from both conceptual modes" (561). Without being aware of the analytical distinctions that shape contemporary discussions of liberalism versus republicanism, white, elite and middle-class Philadelphians could have simultaneously held both views: the individual should generally act according to his own-self interest in order to secure personal gain, but he should also be prepared to sacrifice for the good of the community.²³

Although the political doctrines delineating the citizen's charitable obligation excluded those denied citizenship rights in the young nation, as the total population of the

²³ Philip Gould describes the origins and sociopolitical utility of this ethos of Republican virtue in *Covenant and Republic: Historical Romans and the Politics of Puritanism*, especially pp. 20-60.

city diminished, Matthew Clarkson extended the concepts of “economic man” and “civic man” to people of color, encouraging them to incorporate tenets of both paradigms as they responded to the yellow fever epidemic. He pleaded for their assistance. The black clergymen Absalom Jones and Richard Allen stepped forward to volunteer the services of African Americans, and Clarkson lost no time in encouraging white Philadelphians in distress to take advantage of this offer.²⁴ In doing so, Clarkson was effectively asking these people of color to subvert their own personal interests to the good of the larger (white) community, a demand that people of color from both the United States and British and French colonies in the Caribbean were abundantly familiar with. But when complaints began pouring into City Hall of blacks charging unusually high fees for dangerous services, including caring for sick bodies and removing corpses, Clarkson heard Jones and Allen explain the reason, and then he issued a surprising edict. According to Jones and Allen, the high prices could be explained by basic economic theory:

That some extravagant prices were paid, we admit; but how came they to be demanded? The reason is plain. It was with difficulty persons could be had to supply the wants of the sick, as nurses; —applications became more and more numerous, the consequence was, when we procured them at six dollars per week, and called upon them to go where they were wanted, we found they were gone elsewhere; here was a disappointment; upon enquiring the cause, we found, they had been allured away by others who offered greater wages, until they got from two to four dollars per day.
(*Narrative 7*)

Clarkson had first been eager for Jones and Allen to “use [their] influence, to lessen the wages of the nurses,” but when he heard the black leaders explain that the situation was the result of bidding wars—the same economic principle that enriched the city’s

²⁴ See, for example, the letters of Margaret Morris, dated 25 Sept. and 10 Oct. 1793.

merchants, traders, and bankers—he demanded that the black laborers be allowed to reap what rewards they could for their work. The matter of their wages should be left, he declared, “to the people concerned” (8). As the fever raged, Clarkson needed “civic man” to carry the day, but he knew that the survival of this thriving seaport depended on the coexistence of “economic man,” even during a public health crisis, and even among the city’s marginalized residents.

In a religious sense, the duty of the individual to perform acts of charity was less contested, even across divergent creeds. William Penn codified it for Quakers in one of the earliest examples of written Quaker doctrine, his 1682 collection of epigrams, *Fruits of Solitude*. Influenced by the teachings of the Apostle Paul in the Christian Bible, Penn contends that charity is necessary for spiritual salvation: “Nay, tho’ we had All Tongues, All Knowledge, and even Gifts of Prophecy, and were Preachers to others; ay, and had Zeal enough to give our Bodies to be burned, yet if we wanted Charity, it would not avail us for Salvation” (297). Inequities of wealth and status, according to this foundational Quaker text, are an essential feature of the mortal experience. “God sends the Poor to try us, as well as he tries them by being such: And he that refuses them a little out of the great deal that God has given them, Lays up Poverty in Store for his own Posterity” (287). Elizabeth Drinker, a well-to-do Philadelphian and Quaker who recorded details of daily life in the city in her personal journals, saw the number of Quakers in Pennsylvania decrease from more than one-quarter of the total number of inhabitants when she was born in 1735 to less than one-seventh when she died in 1807.²⁵ But her journal entries

²⁵ This was partly the result of people converting to other faiths, but more frequently a consequence of the Quaker mandate that any member who married a non-Friend renounce his or her affiliation with the faith.

suggest that during the yellow fever epidemic, Penn's prescriptions, at that point more or less canonized in Quaker doctrine, shaped the response of the approximately seventeen hundred Quaker families still living in Philadelphia at the end of the eighteenth century (Crane *Diary of Elizabeth Drinker* x). It is true that some, like the family members of Quaker merchant Benjamin Smith and his wife's mother Margaret Morris, would flee the city. Others, like Drinker, were insulated by their affluence. They employed servants who braved the majority of necessary contact with the outside world, another way that wealthy whites could remove themselves from the dirty work of the epidemic even if they did not physically leave the city. The significance of charity within their spiritual worldview prompted Quakers to find ways to respond to the needs of the sick and distressed, but wealthy and well-off Quakers looked for ways to fulfill this mandate within the protective walls of their homes.

One way affluent Quakers could protect themselves from the contagion but still extend charity was to engage their domestic laborers in the dangerous business of tending to infected bodies. Despite the energy with which Quaker leaders including Anthony Benezet advocated for abolition in the 1770s, these households might still include enslaved laborers in the 1790s. William Penn's late-seventeenth-century discourses on charity did not extend far enough to proscribe Quakers from participating in the violence of the transatlantic slave trade. In fact, only three years after they arrived in Pennsylvania in 1681, the state's earliest Quaker settlers greeted the *Isabella*, a ship out of Bristol carrying 150 enslaved Africans, not with opprobrium but with the keen interest of customers. "So eagerly did the pacifist Quaker settlers snap up the newly arrived laborers, whom they set to work clearing trees and bush and erecting crude houses in the

budding village,” Gary Nash writes, “that most of the specie they had brought to Philadelphia from England departed with the *Isabella* when it sailed down the Delaware the next spring” (*Forging* 8). Elite Quakers of William Penn’s colony, including the West Indian merchants Samuel Carpenter, Isaac Norris, and Jonathan Dickinson, managed Philadelphia’s slave trade and were among the city’s wealthiest slaveowners. The port’s trade peaked in 1762 and fell off by 1770, but, as Nash writes, “the involvement of Philadelphians with slavery was far from over” (10). Indeed, this involvement over the next few decades would throw into striking relief the disconnect between Quakers’ religious doctrine and their participation in the traffic in human capital. Penn preached the virtues of charity, but, to quote Nash again, “[a]t the outset of their ‘holy experiment’ the pacifist Quakers had ensnared themselves in a troublesome institution, for slavery by its very nature involved coercion and violence to extract labor from its unwilling victims” (9).²⁶ Enslaved laborers might be coerced into performing work of many varieties—including, when the occasion called for it, the charity work that was touted from pulpits and in religious texts as the spiritual obligation of the devout Quaker.

Throughout the epidemic, enslaved laborers, along with indentured servants, domestic laborers, hired hands, and members of the Free African Society, took on the risks of extending charitable aid at the behest of Quaker owners and employers seeking oblique (rather than direct and dangerous) ways to satisfy a religious demand. Consider, for example, the people of color who assisted Margaret Morris, a Quaker matriarch and a

²⁶ For more on the participation of Philadelphia’s Quaker merchants in the transatlantic slave trade, see Donald D. Wax, “Quaker Merchants and the Slave Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania” and Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit*.

widow since the age of 29, when members of her family contracted the virus. Margaret flew to the bedside of her son Dr. John Morris when a servant—probably dispatched by John’s wife Abby—informed her on September 5th that her son was sick. Margaret found Abby overwhelmed, with her maid called away to attend to her sick mother, and only an indentured servant, whom Margaret describes as “a little girl,” to care for John and Abby’s children. Margaret sent the children to Abby’s father, so “that the house might be quiet” and she could care for her dying son. But Benedict Dorsey, a respected Quaker grocer living four blocks away, feared his grandchildren were carrying the disease and sent them back to their parents, informing them that “they could not be there.” Realizing that her son’s condition was grave, Margaret sent them to Dorsey a second time, this time accompanied by Abby, and was heartened when they did not return. Her relief was short-lived, however, when hours later she discovered her grandson cowering in the cellar because Dorsey “would not let him stay, they were afraid he would bring the disorder to them.” Dorsey had agreed to house only his granddaughter, and to make matters worse, Abby had contracted the fever on the errand (“Letter of 25 Sept.”).

Now caring for two fever victims, Margaret appealed to her son-in-law Benjamin Smith, who, rather than responding himself, recalled a letter published in the newspaper early that week wherein Mayor Clarkson had relayed the offer of the Free African Society to provide nurses. As the advertisement directed, Smith applied to the Society’s leaders Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, who sent a man and a woman to help Margaret. These black nurses provided the assistance Margaret’s family did not. Even when John took a turn for the worse and she sent the male nurse to fetch Benjamin Smith,

the nurse returned empty-handed. Instead, the black woman cared for Abby while “the Man I sent to B Smith took care to provide the coffin,” and other black men provided by the Free African Society helped her bury John’s body. At this point, Benedict Dorsey’s refusal to take in his dying and now widowed daughter was jeopardizing his standing within the Quaker community, where he was being criticized for having “the heart of a viper.” He needed to demonstrate benevolence, but he chose to fulfill his basic familial duty vicariously, by sending “a black woman of his own” to assist Margaret and Abby. Abby died several days later. A nameless cast of “Negro” men and women—as well as the nameless “maid,” “girl,” “Man,” “black woman” and “clerk”—populate the letters of Margaret Morris and her son Benjamin Smith, who also died of the fever (“Letter of 25 Sept.”). This nameless cast performs critical work, but only on the periphery of written accounts that overwhelmingly focus on the service of white Quakers to their close relations. This provides further evidence that while fear of disease discouraged some Quakers from interacting directly with diseased (or potentially diseased) bodies, the health crisis highlighted rather than obscured the religious injunction, codified by William Penn, which made charity a requirement of salvation. Skyrocketing mortality rates during the epidemic, in fact, might have made Quakers fearing imminent death and judgment especially inclined to take credit for charitable deeds, even those performed vicariously through the bodies of imperiled agents.

Like Morris, Elizabeth Drinker generally stayed within her home and relatives’ homes as agents of charity circulated around her. She listened to the woeful tales of women who showed up on her doorstep holding papers “directed to charitable Ladies,” a coterie Drinker certainly would have considered herself a member of (Crane 305). Both

Morris and Drinker saw their value as Quaker matriarchs severely compromised by unnecessary exposure to urban pestilence, but they reconciled self-interest with the Quaker mandate to perform charity. Of her husband, whose work often took him into the center of the city as the epidemic raged, Drinker said, “if benevolence and beneficence will take a man to Heaven, and no doubt it goes a great way towards it, [Henry Drinker] stands as good, indeed a better, chance than any I know of” (Crane xii). Motivated by the explicit demands of their religious doctrine but wary of exposure to city-wide pestilence, Quakers like Drinker and Benedict Dorsey (in a much more extreme example) found a way to affiliate themselves with the performance of charity as supporting cast members.

An obligation to extend charity was not a tenet unique to Quaker doctrine, and in fact appeared in the theologies as well as quotidian activities of Philadelphia’s prominent Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Episcopalian citizens, as well as the city’s non-Christian luminaries and the French Catholic refugees from Saint Domingue. Benjamin Rush, who most closely associated himself with Presbyterianism but also, according to Richard Allen’s biography, was a crucial supporter of the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, spoke at length about the necessity of charity in both spiritual and civic realms.²⁷ Opining on the “rise and progress of religion in the soul,” Rush wrote, “we are struck with our duties to our fellow creatures being placed within and above the outward duties to God. How great is the love of God to his distressed children, when he dispenses with the duties to himself in their favor, and admits of an act

²⁷ According to Allen, Rush “did much for us in public by his influence,” particularly because he “espoused the cause of the oppressed, and aided us in building the house of the Lord for the poor Africans to worship in” (*The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen* 14). For more on Rush’s relationship to Philadelphia’s African American Community, see Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath*, 77-93.

of charity to a fellow creature as a more acceptable offering to himself, than prayer or praise” (“Letter to P. Stockton”). Thomas Jefferson claimed that it was conversations with Rush about this and other topics of religious significance that prompted him to compile a volume of biblical texts that emphasizes doctrines of practical import, like charity, rather than supernatural origin myths and phenomena. In a letter proposing the project to Rush, Jefferson faulted ancient philosophers, finding that “In developing our duties to others, they were short and defective.” He offers this reasoning: “They embraced, indeed, the circles of kindred and friends, and inculcated patriotism, or the love of our country in the aggregate, as a primary obligation; towards our neighbors and countrymen they taught justice, but scarcely viewed them as within the circle of benevolence. Still less they have inculcated peace, charity, and love to our fellow men, or embraced with benevolence the whole family of mankind” (“Letter to B. Rush”). Jefferson’s perspective on the value of charity, informed by Deism and refined during conversations with Benjamin Rush, reveals that even Philadelphia’s non-Orthodox Christians accepted a duty to their fellow men as a central—even essential—tenet of the religious code that dictated social interactions between respectable citizens.

The words and actions of two other men—one Lutheran, one Catholic—who were particularly influential public servants during the epidemic reveal the visible and quantifiable ways that religious injunctions to perform charity shaped the outcome of the 1793 crisis. Jean Devèze, a French physician, fled St. Domingue and arrived in Philadelphia in 1793, just in time to apply the extensive knowledge of the yellow fever he cultivated in the Caribbean to the crisis in Philadelphia. When he became the resident physician at Bush Hill, he distinguished himself from the doctors performing Benjamin

Rush's bleeding cure by adhering to the French method of treatment, which eschewed the lancet in favor of various tonics administered orally. Partly because his methods were less invasive, and partly because he devoted a significant portion of his time to conducting autopsies of fever victims, Devèze was able to contribute substantially to an understanding of the disease and to the development of effective treatments. In performing this valuable service, he said, he followed the example of affection and self-sacrifice set by the directors of the hospital, particularly the merchant Stephan Gerard, an ardent champion of Devèze's methods. "If my endeavours have been useful, it is in part owing to the encouragement they inspired me with, and to the example they placed before my eyes, in performing with the most religious pity, the most meritorious acts of benevolence and charity" (*An Enquiry* 6). Devèze's inclination to attach these "meritorious acts of benevolence and charity" to their "religious" valences communicates an important message to his opponents, the American doctors who objected to Devèze's service at the hospital on account of his foreignness, which must have registered for them not only in medical but also in religious terms.²⁸ Here, the French Catholic Devèze makes clear that on the points of benevolence and charity, Catholicism and Protestantism concur, and he and his fellow French refugees are no foreigners to their civic duty to show charity to those who opened their homes and purses to them mere weeks earlier. Indeed, in many ways, his dedicated medical service, which occupied his every waking hour, was no less diligent than the efforts of J. Henry C. Helmuth, a German Lutheran

²⁸ This controversy grew quite heated, and several American physicians devoted to Rush's methods seemed determined to prevent Devèze from serving at Bush Hill, even though none could deny that he was badly needed. See Powell 153-59.

minister. One representative entry in his detailed account of his ministry during the epidemic reads:

Wednesday Went to the widow Wegman whose son has been sick since yesterday. Went to Morgan's, his wife is sick, but better. Buried Eisenbrey. Visited a sick person in the Fron- between Wirestr. and Ardbuckle Row. Was asked to come to Rolier's house, but the sick person was already dead. Visited Kraft's, the daughter is dying. Spent a lot of time with the old Herzmann, who also lay down and wanted to write down his will. Visited Stucker's, he had a heart attack and is dying. Buried the young Weissmann and Katto. Preached about how important and blessed it is to live with Jesus. Met D. Rush who is feeling well and confident. Felt bad myself. Lord, your will may be done! ("Journal of 18 Sept. 1793")

Devèze may have tended to the bodies, and Helmuth to the souls, of Philadelphia's sick and beleaguered, but the voluntary service of the Catholic doctor and the Lutheran minister both imply an allegiance to an accepted code of behavior, one that in political and religious terms required Philadelphians of means to willingly subvert self-interest to the interests of the larger community.

The duty to offer aid to those less fortunate was so effectively impressed on affluent Philadelphians of almost every religious creed that those who ignored the example of Rush, Devèze, and Helmuth and left the city during the epidemic felt compelled to refigure their flight as an act of premeditated charity.²⁹ Mathew Carey gave a particularly ardent defense of duty thus construed. "It was the duty of every person to avoid the danger, whose circumstances and situation allowed it," he argues. "The effects

²⁹ Although Rush stayed in the city during the health crisis, he did not necessarily encourage others to do the same. To his various recommendations on avoiding the fever, written during the early days of the epidemic, he amended the generally accepted conclusion that the only certain way to avoid the illness was to leave the city entirely. See Billy G. Smith, "Comment: Disease and Community" 149.

of the desertion were, moreover, salutary.³⁰ The sphere of action of the disorder was diminished. Two or three empty houses arrested the disease in its progress, as it was slowly, but surely travelling through a street, and probably rescued a neighborhood from its ravages.” He reasons that if the 17,000 fugitives had stayed in the city, the number dead might have risen to 6000 or more, and this tragedy would be made worse by the prominence of the victims. Carey consoles his readers with the reminder that it was only middle-class and poor citizens who took the brunt of the fever’s blow. If the city’s elite, white citizenry had been less attendant to their moral duty to absent themselves from the scene of destruction, he opines,

[W]e should . . . perhaps had to deplore in the number, another Clow, a Cay, a Lea, a Sims, a Dunkin, a Strawbridge, men of extensive business, whose loss will be long felt—a Pennington, a Glentworth, a Hutchinson, a Sargeant, a Howell, a Waring, men endowed by heaven with eminent abilities—a Fleming, a Grasel, a Sproat, men of exalted piety and virtue—a Wilson, an Adgate, a Baldwin, a Carroll, a Tomkins, an Offley, citizens of most estimable characters. Let those then who have remained, regard their long-absent friends, as if preserved from death by their flight, and rejoice at their return in health and safety. (*Short Account* 94)³¹

A considerable number of those who remained did not live to rejoice that men of extensive business, eminent abilities, exalted piety, and estimable characters had the generosity to preserve their lives for the wellbeing of the city, and that only those of ordinary ability and hardscrabble business experience were lost.

³⁰ Carey offers detailed (if conjectural) support for this controversial position. “Perhaps had all our citizens remained,” he speculates, “famine would have been added to our calamity; whereas, the markets were abundantly supplied during the whole time. The prices, too, were, in general not far beyond what they usually are at the same season of the year” (94).

³¹ The loss of a Lea would have been particularly ruinous to Carey, who did not merely admire the family from afar. After his daughter Frances Anne Carey married Isaac Lea in 1821, Lea became Carey’s partner in a thriving publishing business.

Carey, of course, includes himself in the ranks of those who were benevolent enough to leave the city. And while he (along with the Leas and Dunkins and Grasels and Adgates) might attempt to assuage his conscience with a flimsy defense that must have smacked of desperation and decidedly un-Christian opportunism to anyone who weathered the epidemic in the city, the fact remains that those who fled felt compelled to rationalize their actions against political and religious codes that demanded charitable actions from privileged citizens. The yellow fever would decimate the city's population and rock the nation's young government, but it would reinforce rather than subvert its social structure and mores. Contagion fueled a terror that reified the divide between Philadelphia's "estimable" and ordinary or destitute residents, but those who fled the city did so knowing that extenuating circumstances had not diminished the value of charity as a standard of social and moral respectability. The stage was set for the performance of vicarious charity. Widespread panic had widened the aisle between the prosperous and the distressed; those with the advantage were deeply aware of their ability as well as obligation to afford relief; and two black clergymen, Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, were willing to negotiate the divide.

"In the Midst of a Burning Fiery Furnace"

Then it came to pass that a pestilence fell on the city; . . .
 So death flooded life, and, o'erflowing its natural margin,
 Spread to a brackish lake the sliver stream of existence.
 Wealth had no power to bribe, nor beauty to charm, the oppressor;
 But all perished alike beneath the scourge of his anger . . . (94)
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Evangeline" (1847)

Longfellow uses an epidemic-ravaged Philadelphia as the backdrop for the tragic dénouement of his epic poem, but in writing it he could not have relied exclusively on the history of the epidemic presented in Mathew Carey's narrative. During a short but prominent passage in that account, Carey comes very near to asserting that the pestilential oppressor *could* be bribed, at least insofar as "vile" black nurses and caretakers were, to his way of thinking, so amenable to accepting extortionate sums for their services that bribery became *de rigueur* for anyone who hoped to obtain adequate medical care for himself or his family.³² Two black clergymen watched three editions of Carey's version of history find their way into the hands of avid readers before they determined "to step forward and declare facts as they really were," that is, to detail the charitable efforts of black Philadelphians to care for public and private property during the epidemic and to nurse the sick—in many cases, those "whose friends, and relations, had left them" and to gainsay Carey's charges of extortion and bribery (Jones and Allen 17). In fact, Carey's castigation of the black men and women who had risked (and in a number of cases, sacrificed) their lives during the crisis gave these clergymen, Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, an opportunity to depict these black laborers as models of republican virtue, despite the fact that the republic still denied them citizenship rights.³³ Their text, *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, during the Late Awful Calamity in*

³² See Carey's *A Short Account*, pp. 62-63.

³³ As leaders of the Free African Society and careful managers of its public image, Jones and Allen knew that aspersions like Carey's could have potentially devastating ramifications for Philadelphia's black population. This knowledge, they said in their *Narrative*, "causes us to be more particular, and endeavour to recall the esteem of the public for our friends, and the people of colour, as far as they may be found worthy; for we conceive, and experience proves it, that an ill name is easier given than taken away. We have many unprovoked enemies, who begrudge us the liberty we enjoy, and are glad to hear of any complaint against our colour, be it just or unjust; in consequence of which we are more earnestly endeavouring all in our power to warn, rebuke, and exhort our African friends, to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man" (13).

Philadelphia, in the Year 1793: And a Refutation of some Censures, Thrown upon Them in Some Late Publications, already the subject of vast scholarship, needs to be reexamined as a document that makes clear that Allen and Jones and their congregants served myriad masters, and that details several reasons they extended this service. I argue that the clergymen's passionate defense of their people functions as an unequivocal demand that if charity were to be systematically extended through vicarious circuits, those who administered benevolence from a safe remove be required to acknowledge the agents they dispatched to carry their offerings into "the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (3). As we reveal the identities of these agents, we must also acknowledge the role Jones and Allen played as brokers of charity whose remarkable efficacy in enabling circuits of vicarious charity sprung partly from personal motivations.

In his *Short Account*, Carey reported what he perceived to be the widespread depravity and corruption among blacks during the epidemic, and a reluctance to serve that seemed inexcusable to those, like him, who believed the fallacy that blacks were immune to the fever and felt this constituted something very much like a divine call to come to the vulnerable white people's aid. "When the yellow fever prevailed in South Carolina," he wrote, "the negroes, according to that accurate observer, dr. Lining, were wholly free from it. 'There is something very singular in the constitution of the negroes,' says he, 'which renders them not liable to this fever; for though many of them were as much exposed as nurses to this infection, yet I never know one instance of fever among them'" (62). Irrefutable evidence, in records of deaths and burials of hundreds of people of color, forced Carey to concede that this doctor was not accurate in his observation; but, he wrote, although "[t]hey did not escape the disorder . . . [t]he error that prevailed on

this subject had a very salutary effect; for at an early period of the disorder, hardly any white nurses could be procured; and, had the negroes been equally terrified, the sufferings of the sick, great as they actually were, would have been exceedingly aggravated” (63).³⁴ As Philip Lapansky points out, we don’t have evidence that this fallacy was widespread among blacks, or that Jones or Allen personally subscribed to this theory of immunity. If they ever believed it, they could not have done so for long, since blacks began to contract and die from the yellow fever not long after the epidemic broke out (Lapsansky 63). Instead, it seems likely that Jones and Allen had a sense of the danger when they asked their black parishioners to step forward and serve, and those who accepted the call knew that the stakes—social, religious, professional, and physical—were high.

When Jones and Allen issued this call, they became the most influential and effective brokers of charity to emerge from the yellow fever epidemic. One of the few points on which their *Narrative* agrees with Carey’s is that the city’s leaders (medical and political), desperate for assistance, contacted the clergymen and begged them to procure laborers to perform a host of crucial jobs.³⁵ The tens of thousands who had fled may

³⁴ Carey’s racism in calling the exposure of hundreds of people of color to the yellow fever a “salutary effect” of woeful ignorance or blatant dishonesty was lost on him. He maintained that his account of the epidemic had been frank and evenhanded, going so far as to single out Allen and Jones for special praise. “I would fain ask the reader,” he later said, “is this the language of an enemy? Does this deserve railing or reproach? Is it honorable for Jones and Allen to repay evil for good?” (*Address of M. Carey to the Public* 5). Allen and Jones saw through this ploy. “It is unpleasant for us to make these remarks,” they admitted, “but justice to our color demands it. Mr. Carey pays William Gray and us a compliment; he says, our services and others of their colour, have been very great &c. By naming us, he leaves these others, in the hazardous state of being classed with those who are called the ‘vilest’” (*Narrative* 12-13). That Carey, ultimately a member of the city’s abolition society, could not see the injustice in his account reveals something about the biases that influenced even those who called themselves sympathetic to Philadelphia’s black residents.

³⁵ Jones and Allen say they responded to a newspaper solicitation; Powell, following Carey’s lead, implies that the mayor reached out to them; and other sources say that Benjamin Rush first encouraged the

have imagined that someone could make their empty homes (as potential brakes in the sweep of disease), property, and servants useful, and they were eager that their understood duty to their fellow men be fulfilled, but they did not go so far as to propose a plan whereby these generous impulses might be executed. Philadelphia's approximately 2,142 residents of color represented a promising potential workforce, particularly given Rush's and other physicians' assurances that they were impervious to disease, but they were preoccupied with the effects of widespread disease, general panic, and a stagnating economy on their own lives.³⁶ Under these circumstances, they were unlikely to spontaneously disregard their immediate obligations and personal safety and organize themselves into ranks of scavengers, cleaners, nurses, casket makers, carters, and gravediggers. Instead, Jones and Allen would need to serve as the connectors between sick and abandoned Philadelphians and a force of capable black laborers in a circuit of vicarious charity.

Jones and Allen assert that the city leaders' solicitation excited their compassion and a strong sense of duty, but they may have had another wholly rational motivation for agreeing to use their pull to recruit black laborers: they may have hoped that the service they and their followers rendered would mitigate an animosity between whites and people of color that had long characterized racial relations in Philadelphia, and that the outcome

clergymen to recruit the services of the black community. For more, see Thomas A. Horrocks and John C. Van Horne's introduction in *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation*, ix.

³⁶ Susan E. Klepp's exhaustive search of Philadelphia's public records of 1793 revealed this statistic. Although the November census counts only 1,746 blacks, that figure "is certainly an undercount since black live-in servants were not separately enumerated—adding 400 persons raises the number to 2,142 resident African Americans ("How Many Precious Souls are Fled?" 168). In fact, even that estimate may still be low. According to Phillip Lapsansky, nearly 50 percent of blacks in Philadelphia were live-in workers. There were also approximately 200 black laborers who were still enslaved in 1793, and the 900 blacks accompanying Saint Dominguan refugees swelled Philadelphia's black population to about 3,300. For more, see Lapsansky 68.

would boost the fortunes of the African American community. The clergymen were intimately acquainted with these racial tensions. Both born into slavery, Jones and Allen had each purchased his freedom through hard work and tremendous personal sacrifice. Jones, for example, was able to purchase his wife's freedom shortly after their 1770 marriage, but it would be another fourteen years before he could afford to obtain his own, at the age of thirty-eight. Allen burned bricks and chopped wood to raise the \$2,000 required for his manumission sometime after he turned twenty-one in 1781. Both found time, while they were enslaved, to learn to read and write despite the fact that neither had access to a formal education. Allen, a Methodist preacher, supported Jones when he led an effort to create an independent black church in 1791, and stood by his side as the roof beams of their African Church of Philadelphia were raised in August of 1793. Together, they served widows, orphans, and disabled members of Philadelphia's black community as leaders of the Free African Society founded in 1787, so they had an apparatus in place to organize black Philadelphians into a relief force during a time of crisis.

When the fever struck in 1793, however, they might still have found reason to decline this office. Just one year earlier, as Jones was in the very act of leading his followers in prayer, white Methodists publically evicted him from St. George's Methodist Church, a building he and other people of color had contributed money and labor to renovating. And when Allen and Jones solicited donations for their new church, one which would function in part to pacify white congregants averse to the idea of worshipping with blacks, they met a chilly response. With difficulty, they secured promises worth a few thousand dollars, only to have many white donors renege on their pledges and give money instead to the wave of French refugees from Saint Domingue.

These stinging slights notwithstanding, Jones and Allen answered the solicitation “to the people of colour to come forward and assist the distressed, perishing, and neglected sick,” and “[a]fter some conversation, . . . found a freedom to go forth, confiding in him who can preserve in the midst of a burning fiery furnace, sensible that it was our duty to do all the good we could to our suffering fellow mortals” (Jones and Allen 3). According to their written account, they were moved by pity and a sense of duty. But these two leaders must also have hoped that the services they extended would further their cause with Philadelphia’s white community and that after many days they would find again the bread they cast upon the city’s noxious waters.

The months between the groundbreaking of their church in 1793 and its completion in 1794 were a crucial period during which Jones and Allen needed to curry favor with white Philadelphians to secure monetary, political, and social support for this undertaking. They hoped the African Church of Philadelphia would be a cultural as well as religious center for African Americans. More importantly, they knew it could be site from which to conduct a campaign for nationwide abolition, an initiative recently invigorated as eyewitnesses to a successful slave revolt poured into the nation’s capital city. If Carey thought that the unhappy condition of sick Philadelphians “seemed to indicate a total dissolution of the bonds of society in the nearest and dearest of connexions,” Jones and Allen may have seen an opportunity for people of color to model characteristics of the ideal American citizen for the benefit of those strongly opposed to extending citizenship rights to blacks (*Short Account* 23). Although most scholarship on Jones and Allen’s *Narrative* deals only with the sections describing the yellow fever epidemic, I think it is hugely significant that a large portion of the text—almost a full

half—makes a direct and impassioned case for abolition. Saint Dominguan refugees had doubtless confirmed that freedom for enslaved laborers was not as remote a possibility as it had seemed only a decade earlier. As Thomas E. Will argues, “from [Jones’s and Allen’s] perspective the dissolution of the bonds of society afforded an opportunity to forge new social bonds between members of their race and the larger community” (Carey *Short Account* 23, Will 558). To these two clergymen, the yellow fever epidemic was terrifying and unfortunate, but it afforded them the opportunity to launch a public relations campaign that could challenge the perspective of their “unprovoked enemies,” always “glad to hear of any complaint against our colour,” with an exhibition of their followers’ commitment to the health of Philadelphia’s citizens, and thus to the health of the young republic.

To execute this campaign, Jones and Allen were determined to offer the services of a large population of people of color, whether these people volunteered their efforts or not. This becomes particularly clear if we study the pronouns that dominate their *Narrative*, a detail easy to gloss over and yet, I contend, enormously telling. Take for example, the passage below, which recounts the pivotal decision that would involve hundreds of black Philadelphians in the dirty business of caring for the neglected sick.

They write:

Early in September, a solicitation appeared in the public papers,³⁷ to the people of color to come forward and assist the distressed, perishing, and neglected sick; with a kind of assurance, that people of our colour were not liable to take the infection. Upon which *we* and a few others met and consulted how to act on so truly alarming and melancholy an occasion. After some conversation, *we* found a freedom to go forth, confiding in him

³⁷ If this solicitation wasn’t in fact penned by Mayor Clarkson, it was certainly inspired by his distress. For more, see Powell 99, which on this matter relies on Jones and Allen’s account, rather than Carey’s, to provide more information about this solicitation.

who can preserve in the midst of a burning fiery furnace, sensible that it was *our* duty to do all the good *we* could to our suffering fellow mortals. *We* set out to see where *we* could be useful. (3, emphasis mine)

Two men who toiled long hours to purchase their freedom do not use the word lightly, but just who was it that “found a freedom to go forth?” In this instance, Jones and Allen take the liberty of speaking for an entire group of enslaved, indentured, and free people of color. It would not be the only time they would take that liberty. Like Arthur Mervyn, they came up short when they applied only their own resources to a communal catastrophe. They personally nursed the sick and visited those in need, but tens of thousands were suffering, and two men could make little difference to their unhappy circumstance. More importantly, they knew that the concerted (to say nothing of highly visible) efforts of people of color could mitigate a public health crisis and burnish the image of the African American community in one stroke. The “we” they use here is a rhetorical and political strategy as well as a gesture of faith in their followers. The Mayor and the overtaxed physicians of Philadelphia did not know that when Jones and Allen pledged the support of black individuals, they were offering a prophecy rather than a statement of fact.

And so, before they knew they had the consent of the people whose services they offered, Jones and Allen stepped forward not simply as leaders, but as mouthpieces for many members of their community. As they did so, they stepped also into the role of brokers, and began to match people in need with people who could help. Among the “few others” who accepted this role as liaison between social and racial groups was William Gray, a prominent African American; together, this small committee began to negotiate the divide between suffering white people and charitable people of color. “We

called on the mayor the next day, to consult with him how to proceed, so as to be most useful,” Jones and Allen write. The “we” Jones and Allen use here differs crucially from the “we” invoked several lines later. As deaths increased so rapidly it was difficult to find laborers to remove corpses, they write, “The black people were looked to. We then offered our services in the public papers, by advertising that we would remove the dead and procure nurses. Our services were the production of real sensibility; —we sought not fee nor reward” (4). Jones and Allen may not intentionally obfuscate here, but the actual bodies encompassed by the ubiquitous pronoun “we” need to be carefully marked. Jones, Allen, and Grey attended a meeting. But during and after the meeting, they did not merely volunteer their own services, free of charge. In articulating this offer, they spoke for hundreds of people of color who would face directly the dangers of a circuitous charitable transaction.³⁸

Jones and Allen, leaders of a large black community and the acting, if unelected, managers of their present and future parishioners’ images, had good reason to come to the aid of beleaguered white citizens in hopes of reciprocity in the future, but the individuals they called upon to pass through the “burning fiery furnace” needed a reason that resonated on a personal level. Their charity would require tremendous personal sacrifice, often preventing them from attending to the affairs of their own suffering

³⁸ Phillip Lapsansky asks the questions that many historians have asked: “How many blacks were involved in the relief effort?” His answer: “There are no hard numbers. Jones and Allen at this time were in direct contact with about 300 individual blacks, and they note that the number of black nurses was ‘twenty times’ that of whites. Whatever their number, their role was critical and central. When blacks began regularly to succumb to the fever, Benjamin Rush for one was in despair. ‘Negroes are everywhere submitting to the disorder,’ he wrote. ‘If it should spread among them, then will the measure of our suffering be full’” (Lapsansky 65; Benjamin Rush to Julia Rush, 25 Sept. 1793).

families, as Jones and Allen acknowledged.³⁹ Throughout the epidemic, the number of black nurses “was twenty times as great” as the number of white nurses (Jones and Allen 13). And while Allen, Jones, and Grey were remarkably effective at matching white sufferers with black caretakers, their followers had no reason to expect that the charitable transaction would ever flow in the opposite direction. “We have suffered equally with the whites,” Jones and Allen wrote, “our distress has been very great, but much unknown to the white people. Few have been the whites that paid attention to us while the black were engaged in the other’s service” (15). Why, then, did hundreds of people of color serve, if they were systematically treated this way? Like Jones and Allen, these people exercised a measure of faith, this one predicated on the beliefs that valuable labor would be rewarded, and that some rewards—sometimes the most valuable—are not awarded in monetary terms. Their willingness to respond to a major public crisis because of the personal benefits they might derive suggests that charitable initiatives are most successful when the benevolent gesture is clearly part of a larger contract of exchange, and everyone positioned along the circuit sees clearly what it is they stand to gain.

Although scholars speak regularly about Philadelphia’s African American community, or of a black community including not only black Americans but also immigrants and refugees from Africa, Europe, Great Britain, and the Caribbean, Jones and Allen spoke for a diverse population. As clergymen, they counted several hundred men, women, and children among their parishioners, and these people may have been

³⁹ In their *Narrative*, they wrote, “Thus were many of the nurses circumstanced, alone, until the patient died, then called away to another scene of distress, and thus have been for a week or ten days left to do the best they could without any sufficient rest, many of them having some of their dearest connections sick at the time, and suffering for want, while their husband, wife, father, mother, &c. have been engaged in the service of the white people” (14).

especially inclined to heed the call of their theological leaders as a religious mandate. But even these congregants served multiple masters. Along with honoring Jones and Allen (and, by extension, God), about half of all blacks in Philadelphia were live-in servants and honored their employers as a matter of economic exigency. When wealthy whites left the city and entrusted their property to their black servants' care, they expected them to act, as always, not as independent agents but as executors of their employers' wishes. One way these white citizens could negotiate the demands of "economic man"—prompting them to flee from a diseased city, and "civic man"—reminding them of the multiple religious and political injunctions to care for one's fellow men—was to treat these black servants as extensions of their own power and capacity. In this sense, their households could span both the pestilential city and the salubrious countryside. White citizens would preserve their health in the country as their servants alleviated suffering in the city, and the conflicting demands of both "economic" and "civic" man could be satisfied simultaneously. Since Benjamin Rush had declared the country to be a perfect protector of health, and blacks to be impervious to disease, these servants had every reason to expect a reunion with their employers that would require them to account for their diligence in performing this gesture of vicarious charity. The reward might be material or monetary, but it would certainly also come in the form of future job security; the repercussions of defaulting on this service might be dismissal from crucial employment, and a sullied reputation among other potential employers. The very conditions under which white employers left their black servants to work encouraged communal interaction and discouraged isolation. Many servants, according

to reports, were left with little food and other provisions, so that to survive, they needed to participate in the social and monetary transactions of the larger community.⁴⁰

For the other half of Philadelphia's black population, those who were not live-in servants, the city's stagnating economy made the wages of dangerous work among the dead and dying a relatively attractive alternative to unemployment and destitution. As they left the city, businessmen closed up their shops. Sea captains would not dock their ships, farmers would not bring their produce to markets in the city, and the customs house closed down.⁴¹ Banks, libraries, and coffee houses locked their doors, and only one of the city's eight newspapers continued to operate. "Business," reported Carey, "became extremely dull" (*Short Account* 27). The black laborers who found themselves unemployed might have been in dire straits if not for a new strategy of Jones's and Allen's, who had found it necessary to amend somewhat their original promise that the services of their followers would require "not fee nor reward." They were still adamant that the contributions of black people be offered free of charge to the white community—this was the crucial foundation of their public relations campaign—but they were discovering that "it was very uncommon, at this time, to find any one that would go near, much more, handle, a sick or dead person" (Jones and Allen 4). Although they understood that gratitude and financial compensation could be connected, black laborers were understandably inclined to prefer the latter when they had to choose between the

⁴⁰ Reports Carey, "Many of our citizens who fled from the city, neglected or forgot to leave their servants money enough for their support; so that some of these poor creatures had to depend for sustenance on the charity of their neighbors" (*Short Account* 79).

⁴¹ This lone newspaper, one of the city's four "dailies," was Andrew Brown's *Federal Gazette and Philadelphia Daily Advertiser*, which went to press with astonishing regularity during the epidemic. Although on some days its content fit onto a single sheet, it appeared almost every day from August–November 1793. For more on the paper's role in promoting communal unity during and in the wake of the crisis, see David Paul Nord, "Readership as Citizenship in Late-Eighteenth Century Philadelphia."

two. Again, however, Jones and Allen found a way to act as crucial go-betweens. From the coffers of the Free African Society, they hired five men for between sixty-three and seventy days each, paying them a total of three hundred and seventy-eight dollars to collect and bury the dead. They paid a total of thirty-three dollars for black laborers to build coffins, and incurred debts amounting to one hundred and ten dollars in order to compensate other black laborers for their services.⁴²

And while they publically advertised myriad instances of blacks performing critical work free of charge, Jones and Allen recognized that most black laborers needed paid employment in a distressed economy. Consequently, they intervened to protect both their wages and their public images, which they knew would be tied to the image of a larger black community. When desperate whites began bidding wars for the services of black nurses, cleaners, gravediggers, and carters, Jones and Allen stepped forward to explain the situation to the mayor and request that these laborers, as the only ones willing to do critical but potentially dangerous work, be left to claim the market price for their services (Jones and Allen 7-8). During a moment of economic as well as social crisis, Jones and Allen knew that financial rewards would motivate many blacks to offer their services to whites. They did not prevent these transactions. Instead, in their roles as liaisons between racial groups and managers of a public relations campaign, they finessed the transactions so that they resembled, as much as possible, the charitable offerings of

⁴² This deficit is accounting for approximately two hundred and thirty three dollars that Jones and Allen say “we received for burying the dead, and for burying beds” (6). Since they made it clear when they offered their services (or rather, other blacks’ services) that they wanted no monetary reward, it is not clear under what circumstances this money was “received.” It is possible that, effectively as Jones and Allen advertised these free services, some white survivors were scrupulous about paying for the essential services of black laborers. Jones and Allen take pains, however, to underscore that they never desired nor sought such financial remuneration, and that in the end, it did not offset the debts they incurred as they cared for Philadelphia’s sick and dying.

the young republic's ideal citizens. Their strategy gives the lie to the fallacy that public actions are either benevolent or transactional. The most sustainable charitable initiatives, Jones and Allen recognized, are benevolent transactions—initiatives designed to offer material or nonmaterial incentives both to the recipients of aid and to the individuals willing to carry them out.

While these black laborers performed charity (at least in the sense that their work was offered free of charge to whites, even if their black leaders found ways to compensate them) as a way to attend to their material and financial needs, other blacks performed valuable unpaid labor at the behest of human masters. Two hundred of the city's black population were still enslaved, and hundreds others were indentured servants, which in many cases functioned as slavery merely cosmetically recast. Unfortunately, historical details about these individuals are hard to procure.⁴³ We learn about them primarily from the writings of white men and women, who attribute a lack of agency to all black laborers that makes the distinction between slavery and indentured servitude difficult to detect. Margaret Morris, for example, speaks of the black laborers in her household—even those provided by the Free African Society—as human resources that she controls, even though her personal correspondence does not record that she owned slaves. Still, she speaks not of a woman she “hires,” common parlance of the day, but of “the woman I had,” whom she sent to care for her sick daughter-in-law. Likewise, she speaks of “the Man I sent to B Smith,” not the man who “went” to her son-in-law's

⁴³ Phillip Lapsansky, for example, combed records of manumissions and indentures, Committee of Guardians minutes, city directories, the 1790 census, and Almshouse records at Philadelphia City Archives but could find no information about one individual listed in Mathew Carey's list of fever victims as simply “Abigail, a Negress” (68). And Margaret Morris writes of the man and woman who came from the Free African Society to assist her in caring for her dying adult children, but she does not mention their names (See “Letter of 25 Sept.”).

home, a crucial difference (“Letter of 25 Sept.”). According to this account, the service of some blacks to sick and dying whites was not a question of choice, but a matter of compliance.

Jones and Allen recount a number of instances of blacks serving white Philadelphians without compensation, like a man named Sampson, who “went constantly from house to house where distress was . . . without fee or reward,” or Sarah Bass, a “poor black widow,” who “gave all the assistance she could, in several families, for which she did not receive any thing” (10).⁴⁴ Jones and Allen do not always infer the reasoning of those who labored without reward, but the implication is that these people willingly assisted others, free of charge, out of pure generosity. This might have been a sound public relations strategy for the African American leaders, but it can hardly be considered an accurate account of the motivations of all black laborers who served whites during the epidemic. Some 200 enslaved laborers, if they were told to assist suffering whites, had no choice in the matter. The same was true for many indentured servants. And the black companions of French refugees from Haiti, even those who were not enslaved, could ill afford to defy the whites who brought them to America, lest they find themselves without employment or protection in a foreign land. Jones and Allen’s account extols those who served sick and suffering whites willingly, but it neglects to mention those who were compelled to serve.

This is not to say that no person of color voluntarily extended charity during the epidemic, but even the widow Sarah Bass, or the black man Caesar Cranchal, who said,

⁴⁴ In their account, Jones and Allen describe a number of instances of blacks refusing pay or serving without payment or other reward. For more, see their *Narrative*, pp. 10–12.

“I will not take your money, I will not sell my life for money,” understood that compensation isn’t always monetary, and isn’t always immediate. The esteem of their white employers and masters could go a long way toward improving their economic and social condition, and white masters’ opprobrium could prove fatal to themselves and their families. Hard experience had taught these laborers that the market could put a value on qualities of loyalty, compassion, and willingness in a worker. For example, a young black boy who was either an enslaved or hired laborer at the Gilpin household seized on an opportunity, created by the exigencies of the epidemic, to acquire greater professional responsibilities. According to Jones and Allen, this boy “was intrusted with his young Master’s keys, on his leaving the city and transacted his business, with the greatest honesty and dispatch, having unloaded a vessel for him in the time, and loaded it again” (Jones and Allen 12). As he managed important business transactions, and managed them well, this young man made a compelling case that he could excel at a job that demanded more of him than his current position, and certainly demonstrated the tremendous value he added to his “young Master’s” enterprise. Whether or not he saw monetary payment for this service (unfortunately, the *Narrative* is silent on this point, and the unnamed boy’s history is hard to trace beyond the text), he certainly realized ample rewards: increased stature in the eyes of his master, professional exposure to Philadelphia’s merchants and seamen, and the cultivation of a reputation that transcended the simple household duties of the domestic servant.

The unpaid contributions of Philadelphia's black doctors, like Samuel Wilson,⁴⁵ or its black nurses, including women who had firsthand experience with the yellow fever in Saint Domingue and brought to the United States what medical historian Londa Schiebinger calls "knowledge worth recruiting," literally altered the outcome of the epidemic ("Atlantic World"). Black nurses from Philadelphia and Saint Domingue promoted health far more effectively than white physicians, especially those enthusiastic proponents of the bleeding cure. More even than the much-lauded Saint Dominguan refugee Jean Devèze, these nurses transformed Bush Hill from a filthy, understaffed "refuge of the destitute" into an efficient hospital with impressive survival rates (Devèze 20).⁴⁶ And while these nurses may have been motivated by compassion, they also knew the value of payment deferred. Some labored initially for no reward or modest fees, but by the end of the epidemic, they commanded high prices for their lifesaving labor. Like others who joined the ranks of Jones and Allen's charitable workers, they knew that even internal attributes of honesty, courage, and competence could be monetized in Philadelphia's labor economy.

From their own lived experience, Jones and Allen could sympathize with these enslaved and poor laborers, but as community leaders during the crisis of 1793, they devoted considerable energy to convincing a white audience of the charitable rather than self-interested motivations of their black followers. They labored among blacks, but they wrote *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People* for literate whites; otherwise,

⁴⁵ For more on Wilson, see the diary of Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, ed. Elaine Forman Crane, Jan. 29, 30, 1798; Aug. 3, 28, 1798; and Nov. 18, 1799.

⁴⁶ For an account of Bush Hill's remarkable transformation from country estate to functional hospital and medical research institution, see Jean Devèze, *An Enquiry Into, and Observations Upon the Causes and Effects of the Epidemic Disease, which Raged in Philadelphia From the Month of August Till Towards the Middle of December, 1793*, especially pp. 84-138. For more on this transformation, see Powell, 140-72.

why would they feel the need to declare “facts as they really were” to the black laborers who toiled in Philadelphia’s real and metaphorical trenches, and did not need to be informed that they performed dangerous, unpleasant work? Like other black workers, Jones and Allen knew that charitable contributions could be monetized, and they lost no time in calculating the dollar value of their followers’ labor for a white audience’s benefit. They begin their *Narrative* not with poetic accounts of charity rendered to whites by blacks, but with a balance sheet. They display the dollar amounts they expended in compensating blacks for work performed so that, as leaders and liaisons, they could extend these critical services to the white community free of charge. On the bottom lines of the ledger sheet is their summary: “From this statement, for the truth of which we solemnly vouch, it is evident, and we sensible feel the operation of the fact, that we are out of pocket, £177.98” (6). Lest it escape their white readership, Jones and Allen state in bald terms that their followers paid for the privilege of cleaning loathsome sick rooms, wiping fevered brows, hauling off dead bodies, and burying corpses—and then, to drive the point home, they affix a dollar amount to these services.

But what Jones and Allen show is a net loss to a black *community*, not to all people of color who worked for whites during the epidemic. And just as the 1993 introduction to Powell’s *Bring Out Your Dead* was misguided in reporting that “a city” cleaned its streets and safely stored its water, readers of Jones and Allen’s text should be reminded that communities don’t clean sickrooms, care for diseased bodies, or bury corpses; individuals do. More importantly, whole communities aren’t generally paid for services rendered; individuals are. Jones and Allen vouch for the fact that “we” are out of pocket £177.98, but that doesn’t mean any single black worker saw his personal net

worth reduced by this amount. Indeed, some of the blacks who served sick and distressed whites during the epidemic saw monetary rewards, and those who didn't might have hoped that the gratitude of their employers or masters and a reputation for diligence and industry would manifest themselves in material form at a future date. Certainly the risk of displeasing a white employer or master could carry real consequences, and these, like monetary and material rewards, would register at a personal rather than communal level.

And yet, Jones and Allen were inclined to tie the services of individuals, valued in financial terms, to a larger community in order to argue that all African Americans, not just those of extraordinary ability, deserved political rights within the new republic. Jones and Allen called attention to the financial cost of offering their black followers' services to white citizens, but they could not have been either surprised or discouraged by this outcome; as brokers of charity, the rewards they sought were not primarily financial. They knew that, if accurately represented, the charitable behavior of blacks could work to burnish the image of Philadelphia's entire black population; encourage grateful whites to donate to a church that represented black culture, spirituality, and community; and win supporters for their campaign for nationwide abolition.⁴⁷ In this regard, Jones and Allen were, at least for a period of time, quite successful. In their campaign for abolition, they counted Benjamin Rush and Benjamin Franklin among their outspoken supporters, and even Mathew Carey joined the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery in 1797. As mouthpieces and leaders of this community and liaisons between racial and social groups, Jones's and Allen's status was certainly linked to the personal behavior of many individuals. Slanderous accounts like Carey's and the memoir of Jean

⁴⁷ For more, see Lapsansky 70.

Devèze, who never mentions the crucial support of black nurses at Bush Hill,⁴⁸ reveal the shortcomings of a charitable framework that requires service from imperiled laborers and then assigns the credit to insulated citizens who can afford to contract out their civic and religious obligation to perform charity. Certainly, the service of people of color during the Philadelphia epidemic of 1793 did not stamp out racism or irrevocably elevate the status of all blacks. And yet, those who labored within the vicarious charitable circuit of the epidemic were not misguided when they believed that doing so might benefit them personally. Editions of Carey's pamphlet published subsequent to Jones and Allen's *Narrative* left out the stinging criticism of black laborers, and in 1794, black and white citizens joined together to see the African Church of Philadelphia open its doors.⁴⁹

These developments raised the fortunes not only of the two leaders who spearheaded these initiatives, but also people of color who could enjoy the social, professional, and political benefits of belonging to a thriving African American community united by a church that served as important social and religious center. When Jacob Turner and Sarah Needham, two black servants who worked for Elizabeth Drinker, were married in April 1799, Absalom Jones conducted the ceremony in the new African Church of Philadelphia. According to Shane White and Graham White, "Elizabeth Drinker had offered to hold a wedding supper for her two servants 'if they would have it here in a sober way,' but the offer had been promptly though politely turned down, the couple preferring to make their own arrangements. 'A wedding without a frolick,' Drinker observed in her diary, 'would be no wedding, I believe, in their view.'" As

⁴⁸ This oversight is compounded by the fact that Devèze does single out individuals and some groups for special praise, including a Mrs. Saville, "principal nurse of the hospital," but he never mentions the services of black nurses, some of whom he may have worked with in Saint Domingue (see his *Enquiry* 38).

⁴⁹ See Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1849*, 113.

White and White note, this event demonstrated both the strong social and religious life, separate from white life in Philadelphia, that blacks could enjoy in Philadelphia in the decade immediately following the epidemic, and the respect they were accorded by their white employers like Drinker. There was something entirely respectful in the way Turner and Needham refused Drinker's offer, and something telling in the way Drinker tried to consider the matter from their perspective. In this case, two black Philadelphians had opportunities they wouldn't have had before the African Church was built—"the ability to attend a black church [and] to celebrate a wedding with their compatriots away from disapproving white eyes" (White and White 86). Their service during the epidemic, partially rewarded with warmer public support for the church, allowed black Philadelphians to have a more cohesive, self-sufficient community life during the early part of the nineteenth century. Some of those who extended dangerous service to whites during the epidemic had a great deal to lose by refusing this service, but many also recognized that they had something to gain.

The Death That Did Not Come

The effective service of those who found reasons to participate in a circuit of vicarious charity helps to explain, I believe, a major inconsistency in Charles Brockden Brown's novel. At the outset of *Arthur Mervyn*, Brown introduces his protagonist as a man on the very brink of death. "Some defect in the constitution of our mother," Mervyn says, "has been fatal to all [my siblings] but me. They died successively as they attained the age of nineteen or twenty, and, since I have not yet reached that age, I may reasonably look for the same premature fate" (17). His certain death provides one of the primary

motivations for Mervyn to risk his personal safety by interacting frequently with diseased bodies, like the nefarious Thomas Welbeck, and tending to the corpses of fever victims, like the hapless Susan Hadwin. He even contracts the yellow fever himself; and yet, by the end of the novel, he is in perfect health. The novel leaves him with happy prospects for a propitious marriage and profitable career, and never mentions the turn of fortune by which he escapes an all-but-certain early death. Rather than reading this as an oversight on Brown's part, I interpret Mervyn's miraculous aversion of death as a metaphor for a larger crisis averted during Philadelphia's 1793 yellow fever epidemic. The fever claimed a substantial number of victims, to be sure, but it was not the devastating catastrophe it could have been. Although the epidemic ravaged Philadelphia, it was not, as Susan Klepp reminds us, a tragedy on the scale of the Southern outbreaks of yellow fever of 1853 and 1878, which killed 20,000 individuals, or even the Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic of 1699, which claimed 15 percent of the total white population (171-72). Most of the epidemic's historians don't acknowledge that, as J. Worth Estes points out, only between five to ten percent of all those infected with the fever died as a result (7). Surely, part of the reason for this outcome is the efficacy with which black nurses and other laborers performed valuable service in place of many of the city's wealthy white citizens. Moreover, gratitude for the work black laborers performed during the epidemic breathed new life into Jones and Allen's effort to construct a church that would enrich black social, political, and religious experience in Philadelphia. In the face of opposition from Quakers, Episcopalians, and Methodists, and under threat from the yellow fever crisis, early work on the African Church halted in late 1793. But, Gary Nash finds, "by the time the epidemic had passed, the opposition to the African Church, except among the

Methodists, seems to have dissolved” (*Forging* 125). Many black workers risked their lives to tend to the dying during the epidemic; by doing so, they invigorated public life for black Philadelphians, and helped forge a community that could find strategies to cope when the tide turned again and racial conflicts made the city an increasingly hostile environment for blacks during the 1820s and 1830s.

This crisis suggests that charity is most effective when it aligns with the self-interests of its various agents, as it did during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. Because a large population of black laborers, organized by two ambitious black clergymen, derived certain material and non-material benefits by coming to the aid of sick and dying whites, a majority of Philadelphia’s fever victims survived even when the political and financial functions of the city essentially shut down. And because of the efficacy of black nurses, cleaners, and caretakers in performing the duties that should have fallen to fugitive white citizens, the story of this epidemic could be imagined as a kind of parallel to Arthur Mervyn’s story: the tale of a death sentence commuted. By early 1794, daily life in Philadelphia could resume its normal pace. Over time, business, governmental, and social activities recommenced, and Philadelphia’s brief crisis did not affect its long-term standing as a port city of crucial significance within a young and growing republic. While black public life in Philadelphia hadn’t been dealt a “death sentence” pre-1793, the city’s black leaders faced stiff opposition to communal initiatives including the African Church, and opportunities for black Philadelphians to organize, flourish professionally, and establish centers of social life seemed stagnant, if not moribund. Immediately after the epidemic, however, prominent white leaders joined Allen and Jones in celebrating the completion of their church, filled with new sympathy

for a group of people who had expressed their sympathy in the form of life-saving actions for the city's white and black residents. Philadelphia's yellow fever epidemic of 1793 provides an example of a network of vicarious charity, enabled by a number of interested administrators and agents, supporting a crucial economic, political, and cultural center during a time of great turbulence. For whites who hoped to save their health and their city, for black leaders who sought support for initiatives that would benefit Philadelphia's people of color, and for those people of color who sought stability in employment and financial security, a circuit of vicarious charity succeeded where medical, government, and commercial institutions failed. The strong organizational structure and attractive incentives that defined the network of vicarious charity during Philadelphia's 1793 epidemic allowed it to outperform other industries, and to function as a crucial stabilizing social and political force during a moment of crisis.

Chapter 2:

To “make them a useful part of the human race”:

The Benevolent Education of Maritime Laborers at America’s First Schools for the Deaf

Philadelphia’s yellow fever epidemic of 1793 forced port cities around the Atlantic to acknowledge the potentially deadly downside of robust commerce and accessibility to a host of other maritime communities. Despite a quarantine against all Philadelphia vessels, New York City experienced major outbreaks of the fever from 1795 to 1822, and in 1824, the yellow fever “prevailed so fatally in Charleston” that some of its residents fled to New York and other northern cities to wait for the “season of storms” to run its course (Sarah Pogson Smith to Peter Smith, 16 Sept. 1824). Indeed, during the first decades of the nineteenth century, yellow fever plagued urban ports from Boston to Savannah, and as far west as New Orleans.

Besides the threat of death, the yellow fever virus presented a terrifying possibility: the high fever that was its hallmark could render its victims deaf, even if it spared their lives. To most Americans, if deafness was a preferable outcome to death, it was only marginally so. When Edward Pye Chamberlayne, a Deaf man born in Virginia in 1821, was struck by a train and killed at the age of fifty-six, his family rejoiced at the fortune of “a prisoner escaped, a sick man cured” (qtd. in Joyner 2). By transforming a hearing person into a deaf person, the fever had still effectively robbed a family of a whole member.¹ In the early nineteenth century, many Americans considered deaf

¹ It is now conventional in Deaf Studies to distinguish carefully between the physical and cultural dimensions of deafness. Following a formulation suggested by James Woodward in 1972 and adopted by most scholars, I use the lowercase “deaf” to refer to an individual or group distinguished by an audiological

individuals to be mentally as well as physically inferior to hearing individuals, and their disinclination to educate or even communicate with deaf people produced a specious confirmation of this fallacy. As soon as their disability was discovered, many deaf people ceased to inhabit the cultures and economic classes of their families. Working-class families who depended on their children to become self-sufficient laborers or economic providers despaired that their deaf children would deplete, and never enrich, the family's meager coffers. Wealthy families lamented the burden of children who would never move comfortably within their elite social circles and could not easily secure an economically or socially propitious marriage. When disease, injury, or genetics caused deafness, the beloved kinsman was replaced with a stranger—a silent doppelgänger with whom his or her family could not easily communicate, and whose professional and social future looked dismal.

This bleak prognosis would change in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Schools for the deaf, administered primarily by men but staffed and supported by the crucial efforts of women, emerged in several populous cities, all situated on major rivers or seaports. These urban maritime centers were logical sites for the desperately needed schools. Their large populations naturally included correspondingly high numbers of deaf and other disabled individuals; furthermore, maritime laborers were constantly exposed to the injuries and diseases that could cause deafness, and their families living in crowded port cities were particularly vulnerable to these and other

condition and the uppercase “Deaf” to refer to an individual or group of people who identify as a linguistic minority and share a common culture and language. When I am referring to a group that includes both individuals who identify as Deaf and those who do not hear but who do not sign or identify with Deaf culture, or when I refer to both the cultural and physical aspects of deafness, I follow the lead of other Deaf scholars in using the formulation “d/Deaf.” For more on this distinction, see Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, *Deaf in America: Voices From a Culture* (2-5).

diseases circulating around the Atlantic. While the growing body of rigorous scholarship on Deaf education in the United States produced by Harlan Lane, Douglas Baynton, John Van Cleve, and others has not yet taken up the relationship of these schools to their maritime surroundings, that inquiry is overdue.² In this chapter, I argue that American schools for the deaf enjoyed the greatest success when, by equipping students with marketable skills—notably skills related to the burgeoning print trade—of particular relevance in maritime communities throughout the nation and then relying on the charitable support of women and men enriched by maritime commerce and by their savvy use of print circulation, they both contributed value to and extracted value from the flows of transatlantic capital.

To this end, I will examine how one of the largest of these schools, The New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, allowed a network of hearing charitable workers to capitalize on the Deaf World's ability to transverse nineteenth-century geopolitical boundaries. The school's location in a city that was fast becoming the print capital of the United States and its own investment in the print trades—as a training ground for deaf students to develop proficiency as bookbinders and as a reliable consumer of schoolbooks to transmit a curriculum to students who could not hear—made it an especially relevant charity for one woman writer, the Charlestonian Sarah Pogson

² Harlan Lane's *When the Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf* offers an exhaustive account of the history of deaf education and American Sign Language, beginning with the efforts of the educator Charles-Michel de l'Épée in eighteenth-century France to find a language in which to teach deaf children about God. Lane's work has profoundly influenced Deaf studies since 1985, when this text was published. Douglas Baynton's *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign Against Sign Language* charts the rise of a "Golden Era" of American Sign Language ushered in by schools for the deaf like the ones in Hartford and New York City before ASL and Deaf culture fell victims to the campaigns of xenophobes and eugenicists in the 1880s and sign language was forbidden in schools for the deaf for the better part of the next century. For more contemporary inquiries into the history of education for the deaf and its influences on American Deaf culture, see John Van Cleve, ed., *Deaf History Unveiled: Interpretations from the New Scholarship* and Brenda Jo Brueggemann, *Lend Me Your Ear: Rhetorical Constructions of Deafness*.

Smith, to support when her marriage failed and she needed to earn money while preserving her social respectability. As a single woman and southerner, Pogson Smith could not capitalize on the northern sympathies or domestic credibility that characterized the most successful women writers of her era; instead, she decided to donate the profits she garnered by selling a collection of her poems titled *Daughters of Eve* to the New York Institution via the New York Female Association, a women's charity created to support the school. In one stroke, she thus aligned herself with a national Deaf community that cut across regional sympathies, found authority to write as a concerned "mother" for a group of people infantilized by disability, and ingratiated herself with print professionals eager for the New York Institution to produce both cheap labor and a steady stream of customers for their schoolbooks. Her success in melding the profits of writing with the profits of charity in the 1820s presages the remarkable success ambitious charitable women writers like Sarah J. Hale would have in effectively merging the two professions over the next several decades.

The first American schools for the deaf, particularly the one in the largest maritime center, New York City, depended on ties among religious sentiment and action, charity work, and commerce, including New York City's growing print trade. Although they celebrated in sentimental writing and public gatherings the opportunity to "convert" children who could not read or understand Biblical doctrine to Christianity, the women who supported schools for the deaf in the name of charity were necessarily aware of the economic demands of their maritime surroundings. Disabled bodies were more than pathetic; they were a financial drain, especially in seaports, where seamen were deposited after sustaining debilitating injuries on ships and where other disabled individuals

gathered to seek the low-paying jobs the water trades created. New York had the largest deaf population in the nation, followed closely by Pennsylvania and Virginia, but most states in the nation had several hundred deaf children and adolescents (Beck 4-8).³ The large numbers of deaf adults supported by state and private funds drained community resources. The success of a school for the deaf in France, as well as reports of self-sufficient Deaf individuals in communities like Martha's Vineyard who communicated and transacted business in sign language, prompted Americans grappling with the challenge of these disabled bodies to explore the possibility of a school conducted in sign language as a viable solution. A school for the deaf could do more than relieve families and cities of the burden of neglected and uneducated deaf children; it could train deaf students to provide relatively cheap goods and services, and produce bodies that better comported with the image of Americans as a blessed, productive, Christian people.⁴ The

³ In 1825, 644 deaf individuals under age 25 lived in New York, 56 in New York City alone. Only half of that number were deemed "of sufficient ability to support themselves," and at least a quarter were "supported by charity" rather than their families. In 1825, New York was the largest port city in the nation, having just surpassed Philadelphia in size in the first decades of the nineteenth century (Beck 4). It was also in the early stages of becoming a formidable rival to Philadelphia and Boston as the center of the American print trades. While publishing in the city was primarily carried out by a number of local, family-run businesses in 1825, the first of the large New York City publishing houses, Harper Brothers, was founded in 1817. George Palmer Putnam and Charles Scribner catered to the market Harper created throughout the 1820s and 1830s when they established houses in the city in 1840 and 1846, respectively. By 1850, New York City was the acknowledged capital of the American print world.

⁴ Although this paper will consider the professional experiences of some graduates of the New York Institution, the paucity of personal accounts written by these graduates makes it difficult to represent the possibilities and limitations of these professional opportunities from the perspective of the deaf students themselves. This chapter attempts to construct a view of this professional landscape from the accounts of hearing charitable workers and administrators connected to the school, but their writings do not always accurately represent the injustices and exploitation that deaf laborers faced during the course of the nineteenth century. I will present cases of Deaf teachers, craftsmen, mechanics, and writers who were fairly compensated for their skilled labor. But certainly many educated deaf Americans were especially attractive to maritime employers because they were cheap labor. By the time they graduated, students at the New York school had developed a marketable skill that could provide a good wage, but they began their course of study by learning basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, so that students who could attend the school for only a few years were equipped for little more than menial jobs. "By means of this knowledge," the administrators reasoned, "they will be enabled to read print and manuscript, and to perform with accuracy and expedition, the various duties of book-keeping, and to do all that is required in

New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb opened in 1818, and from the outset, its maritime location and the investment of its administrators in maritime commerce shaped a curriculum that supported these goals. The first president of the school's Board of Directors, DeWitt Clinton, left the post two years after he took office as Governor of New York, where he transformed New York's port and Atlantic shipping routes with the construction of the Erie Canal. This further enhanced the prominence of the city, and by extension the school, making it a uniquely cosmopolitan American school for the deaf with the ability to attract students, faculty, and charitable supporters from around the transatlantic world.⁵ This makes the New York Institution a particularly

the general course of business. A child having acquired the preceding attainments, can, with great facility, and will, with more than *ordinary correctness* communicate the objects of errands and messages on a common slate, provided for the purpose, return answers, make bargains, receive and pay money, and generally perform, all that is required of a *youthful agent*" (*Circular of the President and Directors* 7). The descriptor "youthful agent" may not have referred to age, but to laborers infantilized by their disability well into adulthood, and may indicate one reason why maritime employers were especially inclined to support the training of deaf laborers who could perform crucial, but low-paying, work. Nora Ellen Groce's extensive research on the experiences of deaf Americans during the nineteenth century reveals that, except in communities with many Deaf individuals and a high regard for Deaf language and culture, "most deaf people earned substantially less, on average, than the hearing, and a disproportionate number had menial jobs" (85). While many Deaf scholars, including Carol Padden, Tom Humphries, and Ben Bahan, speak almost reverently of the shared language and sense of cultural identity that American schools for the deaf provided students, they also acknowledge that these benefits, while a tremendous boon to the American Deaf community, did not necessarily protect deaf graduates from discrimination in the workplace. This paper will focus primarily on the ways that the education of the deaf allowed a network of hearing charitable workers to capitalize on the Deaf World's ability to transverse nineteenth-century geopolitical boundaries, but other studies including Groce's take up the issues of exploitation that plagued the workplace for deaf laborers. See, for example, Robert M. Buchanan, *Illusions of Equality: Deaf Americans in School and Factory, 1850-1950* and Lois Bragg, ed., *Deaf World: A Historical Reader and Primary Sourcebook*.

⁵ Although the majority of the 3,345 students who attended the New York Institution during its first 75 years were from New York, a notable minority hailed from 28 other states, including California, Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Ohio, Illinois, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Some of the students were members of another minority group in addition to the Deaf community. Five deaf students came to the school from the West Indies, one came from Africa, one came from South America, one came from India, and one came from Mexico (*History of the New York Institution* 63-64). The student body, however, did not accurately represent the diversity of the d/Deaf population in America, as thousands of deaf people of color were never able to attend the Institution. It was not legal to teach a slave (deaf or hearing) to write in any state in the South except Maryland or Kentucky until after the Civil War, only several deaf students of color (fewer than a dozen) attended the New York Institution and Hartford school during the nineteenth century, despite the large

useful location to study the development of deaf education and the charitable workers who organized to support it in locations stretching as far south as Charleston, South Carolina.

In this maritime setting, the school developed a curriculum that offered a liberal education as well as training in marketable vocations: sewing, horticulture, carpentry, or bookbinding. This curriculum, selected with the assistance of members of the New York Female Association who monitored the progress of deaf children at school, reflected charity workers' keen awareness of the ways a Deaf community emanating from the school could follow maritime trade routes and cross traditional geographic, political, and social barriers between the northern and southern United States. In an era when charity workers in the North and South had fundamentally different approaches to charity, including fundamentally different perspectives of what charity was and who it should be applied to, the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb was unique in attracting national support in the form of tuition and charitable donations by highlighting shared circumstances in American maritime communities. Every state in the nation—in the North, South, and West—had a sizable population of impoverished deaf

numbers of deaf Americans of color. The 1830 census counted 2,916 “white deaf and dumb” living in the Northern United States (a region that included Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware) and 144 “colored deaf and dumb” in the same region. In the South (Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia) there were 1,115 “white deaf and dumb” and 439 “colored deaf and dumb” counted. In the “South-Western States” of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Arkansas, and Florida, there were 684 white deaf people and 148 deaf people of color noted in the census. In Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan, there were 648 white deaf people and 12 deaf people of color (Beck 12). Deaf scholar Christopher Krentz coined the term “the hearing line” to invoke the parallels between the experiences of the Deaf and African Americans during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, but these statistics show that histories of d/Deaf Americans and Americans of color are not merely parallel, but intertwined. According to the 1830 census, the country had 5,363 white deaf people, but also at least 743 deaf people who navigated both the “hearing line” *and* the color line throughout their lives (Beck 12, Krentz 2).

residents, and the four trades taught at the New York school had tremendous value in communities along all of America's major waterways. This curriculum broadened the professional and social prospects of the school's diverse student body, and it also benefited the members of the New York Female Association, as we will see in the case of Sarah Pogson Smith, who were able to promote their charitable and literary work to a remarkably wide audience by capitalizing on the school's national, rather than local, appeal.

More Than “Interesting Coincidence”: The Rise of Deaf Education in Maritime Communities

Pogson Smith's astute marketing strategy, which allowed her to promote her writing to an audience united across geographic borders by a shared concern for deaf children, can only be appreciated if we first consider the history of the d/Deaf in America as a *maritime* history—frequently lived along the nation's rivers, lakes, and oceans. Maritime laborers and their families living in populous seaport communities were painfully familiar with the diseases—and the injuries—that could cause disabilities including deafness. Because of their constant exposure to the water that bred biological vectors of the virus, they were particularly vulnerable to yellow fever. And yellow fever was only one of many common diseases known to cause deafness during the nineteenth century. Any illness accompanied by high fever, such as scarlet fever, measles, whooping cough, mumps, and typhus, carried a risk of deafness in addition to the threat of death. Small pox and meningitis were relatively common causes of deafness, particularly in children, and even a case of the common cold could result in deafness if it

produced symptoms severe enough (*History of the New York Institution* 60)⁶ Poor living conditions, inadequate or contaminated food and water supplies, and extremes in coastal weather made mariners and their families easy prey for a huge variety of fevers carried by traveling bodies, commodities, and vessels through port cities.

Records of the nineteenth century also indentified physical traumas such as “falls, blows, and other accidents” as causes of deafness in adults and children who were born hearing (*History of the New York Institution* 60). The accoutrements of the iconic seaman in the nineteenth-century popular imagination—the peg leg, the hook as prosthetic hand, the eye patch—spoke to the hazardous working conditions that made disability a daily reality rather than a romantic fancy for many seamen. The “most horrible din” of the ship, “occasioned by the play of the gun carriages . . . , the cracking of cabins, the howling of the winds through the shrouds, the confused noise of the ship’s crew, . . . and the clacking of the chain pumps,” was enough to leave seamen “for some time Deaf” (qtd. in Rediker 2). Prolonged exposure to loud noise and serious injury were both common occupational hazards for the nineteenth-century seaman, and either could certainly cause permanent limited hearing loss or profound deafness.

When illness or disability suddenly transformed a hearing individual into the only deaf member of an extended family, community, or workforce, deafness could be an

⁶ In the nineteenth century, physicians and even casual observers became obsessed with indentifying the medical roots of deafness, the better to eradicate what they considered a wholly deplorable condition. The correlation between well-known diseases like the ones I have mentioned and the onset of deafness in children and adults was easy to identify. The case of a child born deaf, however, baffled physicians (and, later in the nineteenth century, eugenicists) who could not accept that deafness might simply occur naturally at birth in a child born to hearing parents. To prove the applicability of a medical (rather than cultural and sociolinguistic) model of deafness, physicians began to assign cases of genetic deafness to increasingly far-fetched causes. In his 1824 *Observations and Correspondence on the Nature and Cure of Deafness, and other Diseases of the Ears*, the physician Samuel Akerly attributed some cases of deafness to foreign objects—such as “a fly,” “hardened wax,” and “a grain of Indian corn”—becoming lodged in the ear (16-19).

immensely isolating and debilitating condition, but deafness was not inherently a disadvantage in competitive maritime economies. Beginning in the late-seventeenth century, a large community of deaf individuals thrived on Martha's Vineyard, a center of maritime industry during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁷ The major difference for these deaf individuals was the presence of a natural language, shared by deaf and hearing people alike, that allowed them to communicate with their families, neighbors, clergymen, and teachers—and just as importantly, with current and potential employers, customers, and fellow laborers. Jonathan Lambert, a Deaf man who came to the Vineyard in 1692, worked as carpenter, farmer, and cooper. He served as “master” of the brigantine *Tyral* when it sailed to Quebec to bring back prisoners from the Quebec expedition of 1690. Extant records show that he collected the reward granted to those who served in that military campaign. When he died at the age of eighty, he left land, a house, oxen, cattle, horses, swine, sheep, a sword, a gun, and a library of books to be divided among his four children, two of whom were also Deaf (Groce 80). If his fellow townsmen could not all replicate his success, it was not because their deafness prevented it. The fortunes of the deaf on Martha's Vineyard generally followed the trends of the maritime industry as a whole, but they also mirrored the fortunes of their hearing townsfolk. Deaf Islanders were successful farmers and fishermen for more than two centuries; many held both occupations at the same time. “Tax and census records,

⁷ Residents of Martha's Vineyard, particularly in the small towns of Tisbury and Chilmark, tended to intermarry, and many apparently carried a recessive gene for deafness. Consequently, as Nora Ellen Groce observes, “For over two and a half centuries the population on this island had a strikingly high incidence of hereditary deafness. In the nineteenth century, and presumably earlier, one American in every 5,728 was born deaf, but on the Vineyard the figure was one in every 155.” Groce found abundant evidence, from talking to older residents of Martha's Vineyard and studying historical records, that residents of the island in general and the town of Chilmark in particular were fully bilingual in English and Martha's Vineyard Sign Language (MVSL), a language which influenced American Sign Language (ASL) before falling into disuse by the end of the twentieth century (3).

statements of bank investments and land holdings give the impression that the deaf did just as well financially as hearing people,” Nora Ellen Groce concludes. “Their tax returns and statements of personal assets were no different from those of other Islanders, year in and year out. Almost all of the deaf people were neither wealthy nor impoverished but fell into that broad category of middle class” (84-85). The experiences of Deaf seamen, fishermen, farmers, and other laborers on Martha’s Vineyard made it clear that cultural responses to deafness, rather than the absence of hearing itself, made deafness such a liability in maritime economies.⁸

But the fact remained that the responses to deafness in most of America, and certainly in its competitive seaports, ranged from pity to open scorn. Wealthy parents of deaf children often ignored them and neglected their education, and impoverished families who could not care for deaf children or simply declined to do so took advantage of the assistance afforded by orphanages or poor houses.⁹ These responses created a vexing social problem not only for the deaf themselves, but also for the hearing parents and family members of deaf children and residents of cities where the ranks of the “indigent deaf and dumb” swelled as the population grew. Additionally, this plight drew the interest of wealthy and well-off white women, who saw a chance to apply their

⁸ The belief that lack of education, rather than genetic predisposition, contributed to the “unfortunate” circumstances of the deaf thrived off of evidence such as the success of this deaf community, which in turn stoked support for deaf schools. “By the privation of hearing, the other faculties and energies of the mind, are not impaired, nor are the intellects and understandings, in any sensible degree, weakened or deteriorated,” one of the New York Institution’s directors assured potential donors in 1819 (Miller 3). See also *Circular of the President and Directors of the Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb* 4.

⁹ New York State’s poor laws of the 1820s and 1830s contained sections devoted exclusively to the “deaf and dumb,” one of many indications that deaf individuals who did not have access to education or language could not hope to replicate the success of the Deaf on Martha’s Vineyard. For more on this, see *The Poor Laws of the State of New-York; to which is added an act requiring the overseers of the poor to furnish the superintendent of common schools with a list of the deaf and dumb persons of their respective towns—and also the instruction of the superintendent to the overseers, in relation to the execution of said act*, 1832.

managerial capabilities or professional skills to a benevolent project—part of the accepted purview of Christian women—that could address a social problem, alleviate a strain on local economies, and extend their circles of public influence. These interested individuals began searching for tenable solutions, and the success of the Deaf on Martha’s Vineyard suggested one that could benefit both the deaf in maritime communities and their hearing benefactors.¹⁰ If the deaf could learn written English in their natural language, sign language, they could engage productively with both a unified Deaf community and the able-bodied laborers who supported American industry.

In 1817, the Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc, a distinguished graduate of the prestigious Institution Nationale des Sourds-Muets à Paris, founded the nation’s first school for the deaf in Hartford, Connecticut.¹¹ A society of “benevolent citizens of New York” were granted an act of incorporation for a school for the deaf and dumb on April 15, 1817, which, as one nineteenth-century historian noted, “by an interesting coincidence, was the same day that the Asylum at Hartford was opened” (*History of the New York Institution* 25). In 1819, Philadelphian David G. Seixas began educating and boarding deaf children in his home, and by 1821 had

¹⁰ A collection of writings by Alexander Graham Bell make it clear that, at least by the nineteenth century, many Americans were familiar with the remarkable Deaf community on Martha’s Vineyard. While he was still a professor of elocution at Boston University, Bell, prompted by stories of this Deaf community, traveled to Martha’s Vineyard in the 1880s with a few assistants to study the deaf population there. His detailed notes on Island deafness, including meticulous hand copies of town records and discussions of their relevance, can now be found in the Dukes County Historical Society Library in Edgartown, Massachusetts.

¹¹ Some might dispute this point, since the first deaf school in the United States was technically opened by William Bolling near Petersburg, Virginia in March 1815, but the school struggled to operate for a single year and closed before the fall term was underway in 1816. For more on the history of the school for the deaf in France and its influence on the creation of schools for the deaf in America, see “Hearing With the Eye: The Rise of Deaf Education in the United States” by Barry A. Crouch and Brian H. Greenwald in *The Deaf History Reader*, ed. John Vickrey Van Cleve, pp. 24-46 and Harlan Lane’s *When the Mind Hears* 112-206.

attracted enough sympathy from prominent citizens to secure a charter for “an asylum and school in the city of Philadelphia, where the children of the rich, for a moderate compensation, and of the poor, gratuitously, laboring under the privation of the faculty of speech, are maintained and educated” (“An Act to Incorporate and Endow the Pennsylvania Institution” 30).¹² The opening of three schools in quick succession, and the location of each—in an urban center with thriving literary cultures supported by maritime commerce—raises some doubt as to whether this sequence of events were indeed merely “interesting coincidence.” Funded by tax dollars, charitable donations, and grants made possible by the profits of maritime commerce, these schools were necessarily invested in and connected by the capital circulating around the Atlantic world.¹³

The histories of the schools in Hartford, Philadelphia, and New York City could all be referenced to support my argument that these institutions attracted crucial support specifically because of their potential to transform deaf students from social burdens into skilled laborers capable of bolstering economies along the Eastern Seaboard and America’s major waterways, but New York was uniquely positioned during the decade the Institution began operation. Its fortunes were rising at the same time that southern seaports, particularly Sarah Pogson Smith’s Charleston, were flagging under a sluggish

¹² Shortly after the establishment of the Philadelphia school, Seixas was forced to resign after he was accused of sexually assaulting female students. “In one respect, then,” Christopher Krentz says, “we can see the new schools as colonizing institutions that sought to propagate the values of the hearing majority and creating disturbing opportunities for exploitation” (39).

¹³ Hartford was later home to Harriet Beecher Stowe and Mark Twain (both of whom lived on Asylum Hill), among other literary luminaries.

recovery from the market crash of 1825.¹⁴ To some nineteenth-century Charlestonians and New Yorkers, and to many modern historians, the waxing of New York's maritime economy and the waning of Charleston's were not merely coincidental, but correlated.¹⁵ Their respective economic conditions directly influenced the degree to which both cities were able to attend to their disabled and other marginalized groups. South Carolina did not have a school for the deaf until one opened in Spartanburg in 1849, and there was never a school for the deaf in Charleston. The Kentucky Asylum for the Tuition of the Deaf and Dumb, founded in 1823, was the only school for the deaf in the South until a school opened in Virginia in 1839. It struggled initially to secure a qualified teacher, and was considered far less prestigious than the schools in the North. Because New York City's relative prosperity, combined with the New York Institution's reputation, encouraged many southerners to send their deaf children to the city to be educated, the most instructive place to study the cultural and professional experiences of deaf

¹⁴ William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease argue that other factors contributed to Charleston's grim economic fortunes. "Charleston's political strength, like her economic, was threatened by the population surge westward" in the first part of the nineteenth century. "Merchant failures following the 1825 crash had accentuated the mercantile decline which had begun by 1810 and which had given the city's political power increasingly to resident planters, who frequently sacrificed urban commercial interests to agriculture. By 1828 economic stalemate seemed the city's lot. Business had not revived after 1825—indeed, the market was glutted with every 'article of Northern produce or Manufacture' that even sharply reduced prices could not attract buyers. And while New York, whose trade had thrived since the Erie Canal's opening in 1825, was also in the doldrums, New York's impasse was an interruption of a decade's growth, while Charleston's was a continuation of decay" (10-11).

Barbara Bellows argues that Charleston's economic recession particularly affected the poor, which included those with disabilities including deafness, and corroborates my argument that New York's Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb was particularly relevant during "the shocking deterioration of South Carolina's leading city compared to the boom times of New York City." "The Charleston Poor House, a familiar landmark for almost a century, no longer stood as a symbol of community aspiration," she writes. "Its grim façade . . . loomed as a constant reminder of the erosion of Charleston's place in the national hierarchy. The local economy stumbled during Jefferson's Embargo of 1807 and the subsequent War of 1812 and collapsed in the Panic of 1819. Decline in the price of short staple cotton from Carolina's worn-out fields during the early 1820s delayed recovery. The development of the steamship made old trading patterns with Europe obsolete and dashed the future prospects of the city. New York City benefitted most from this new technology and superseded Philadelphia as the nation's leading port city" (67).

¹⁵ See, for example, Bellows 67-68.

individuals from the South is not in the communities of their birth, but in the city that afforded them both a shared Deaf culture and a social and professional future.

Surveying the Maritime World From a Deaf Center

To make sense of an expansive, complex, and dynamic nineteenth-century maritime world, scholars find ways to distinguish and organize its component parts. Each port must be considered in terms of its unique geopolitical circumstances; factors such as geographic location, population demographics, major imports and exports, and military significance then invite comparisons to other ports that share some of these characteristics. Not surprisingly, this has tended to support an epistemological framework that considers American ports in the North—connected by physical proximity, climate, agricultural conditions, political sentiment, and industrial infrastructure—in relation to ports in the South, similarly united by a set of shared conditions. While this approach has proven useful to scholars seeking to better understand socioeconomic trends of the transatlantic world, it is one that by default originates from a hearing center. The nineteenth-century American maritime world is organized quite differently from a Deaf perspective. From this vantage point, commerce in port cities, trade among domestic and international ports, and even economic and political developments take place within the organizing framework of the Deaf World, one that does not necessarily align along a North-South axis.

Deaf scholars use the term “Deaf World” to refer to a community of people who speak a common language (in the case of the North American Deaf World, American Sign Language) and share a common cultural identity, both of which the deaf acquire—

and then take part in shaping—at residential schools.¹⁶ “In this way,” according to Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, “the schools become hubs of the communities that surround them”—that is, the hubs of the Deaf World (6). Because fewer than 10 percent of deaf children are born to deaf parents, many deaf children led relatively isolated lives until, in 1817, schools for the deaf began to offer them a meaningful way to understand and engage with the world of their hearing kinsmen.¹⁷ Deaf children in hearing families around the United States could not understand the cultural, historical, and political identifications of their homelands until access to American Sign Language allowed them to learn the written language in which those affiliations were articulated and reinforced. Throughout the nineteenth century, the largest and most prestigious schools for the deaf were in Connecticut and New York, and so at least some Deaf children learned what it meant to be citizens of the South while they were students in the North.

The experience of one Southern family who sent children to study at the New York Institution demonstrates how the medical and socioeconomic implications of deafness created communal alliances that cut across the associations of the hearing world and produced an alternative map of the maritime world. In 1833, Thomas Tillinghast was born in North Carolina to a white slaveholding family of ample economic resources.¹⁸

¹⁶ For more on the history of this term and its contemporary resonances, see *A Journey Into the Deaf-World* by Harlan Lane, Robert Hoffmeister, and Ben Bahan. See also the collection of essays in *Deaf World: A Historical Reader and Primary Sourcebook*, ed. Lois Bragg.

¹⁷ Padden and Humphries write: “Although somewhere between 11 and 30 percent of deaf schoolchildren inherit their deafness, fewer than 10 percent are born to parents who are also Deaf. Consequently, in contrast to the situation in most cultures, the great majority of individuals within the community of Deaf people do not join it at birth. This unique pattern of transmission lies at the heart of the culture. . . and one of its consequences is the central role the school plays in the community” (5-6).

¹⁸ I am indebted to Hannah Joyner for bringing the correspondence of the Tillinghast family to my attention. For a more complete history of the Tillinghast family, and a discussion of how their experiences with the Deaf World compare to other wealthy white families in the nineteenth century South, see Van

When his parents discovered that he could not hear, they sought medical attention in New York City, a move that seemed advisable to them given the reputation and experience of physicians in the North, but that offended the pride of their extended family members. When a second son, David, lost his hearing at age four, the family let their regional loyalties dictate their advice. “I dare say he may be cured without going to the north which as you observe would be attended with heavy expense,” David’s maternal grandmother wrote to his parents. “As far as observation and experience, or rather recollection, goes, I have been told to doubt the superior skill of Northern to Southern doctors especially in regard to Southern patients and I think at least you ought to try to get all the advice and information you can before you take that step” (Robina Norwood to Jane Tillinghast, 21 Mar. 1846). The disapproval of their family notwithstanding, the Tillinghasts consulted with doctors in New York about the diagnoses of both their sons and attempted to enroll Tom in the New York Institution. When their application was rejected because of the school’s limited capacity, they sent Tom to study and board with the Ivey family of Newbern, whose deaf daughter Eunice Ann had been educated at the New York Institution a few years earlier. This meant Tom would have, as Eunice promised the Tillinghasts, “a deaf-mute for his constant companion.” Just as importantly, he would also have a connection to the culture of the Deaf community thriving at the school in New York (Caroline W. Nelson to Samuel Tillinghast, 20 Jan. 1842).

After some period of time, Tom transferred to the Virginia school for the deaf, but his parents were not satisfied; they still felt that the New York Institution was more

prestigious, in their view entirely “superior” to the Virginia school (William Tillinghast to John Tillinghast, 1 Mar. 1852). In August 1853, Samuel Tillinghast was finally successful in enrolling both his sons in the New York school: David would begin his formal education, and Tom would develop his skills as a bookbinder in the school’s advanced class. Their hearing brother William’s prediction that “Tom and David will be very happy together” turned out to be true in ways William could only dimly appreciate (William Tillinghast to John Tillinghast, 13 Sept. 1853). The boys thrived among a community that shared a common language and an interest in the linguistic, rather than medical, dimensions of deafness. Although hearing educators and administrators at the New York Institution generally agreed with most Americans that the deaf were an unfortunate, physically inferior group deserving of benevolence rather than a cultural minority capable of assimilating into hearing society, they had a relatively optimistic view of what exceptional deaf students could achieve. One hearing onlooker remarked:

[T]here are very few, and those marked by natural imbecility, who do not acquire as great an amount of positive knowledge, as the average of speaking men. . . . On the other hand, there are many whose attainments in every branch of good English language, not more than their perfect command of written language, and the readiness, appropriateness, and justness of the sentiments they express, have repeatedly called forth the admiration of the most intellectual and fastidious examiners and visitors. (*History of the New York Institution* 37-38)

Even if the New York Institution, like the schools modeled after it, adopted an ideological framework based on paternalism and a disability model of deafness, Tom and David Tillinghast were part of a community of Deaf students whose intellectual cultivation impressed hearing observers and confounded their expectations of what “deaf mutes” could accomplish. More importantly, their education transformed their

professional prospects, mitigated the significance of the physical “defect” that had wrested them from the socioeconomic classes of their parents and siblings, and galvanized an increasingly successful and visible cultural group.

The strength of the burgeoning Deaf community, with its disruptive influence over the borders of a maritime world that otherwise divided itself latitudinally over political, social, and economic issues, was not greeted with universal approbation. The deaf themselves could celebrate a newfound identity and enhanced social and economic potential gained in residential schools, but if their families viewed the northern epicenter of the Deaf World with distrust, the percolation of Deaf culture seemed implicated in more sinister political machinations. “I fear that they will make an abolitionist of you way off so far from your home,” one of David Tillinghast’s hearing sisters wrote to him at the New York school (Sarah Tillinghast to David Tillinghast, 21 Jan. 1860). In fact, as Hannah Joyner notes, Sarah Ann Tillinghast’s fears were not unfounded. “Deaf individuals often did not have well-developed bonds with their families. They had not necessarily absorbed a strong proslavery southern identity at their families’ hearths” (104). At school in New York, David had indeed forged associations that superseded his connection to his slave-owning family’s lifestyle and philosophies. In North Carolina’s socioeconomic milieu, David could never become a master of a plantation, even if he supported the system of slavery that undergirded that economy. But in the North, in the shadow of his school and within a thriving community of its graduates, he could prosper economically and socially. That attraction proved too great for David to resist, even as his family pled for him to return home, like his brother Tom had, when he finished school. He accepted an appointment as instructor at the New York school, and wrote to

his family, “I think I had better stay where I can be useful and have employment” (David Tillinghast to William Tillinghast, 18 Jul. 1862). Although born in the South, David’s education at the New York Institution realigned his cultural and political affinities. But while his family viewed his newfound identity in the Deaf World with unease, they would see the real benefits of supporting his education in New York. When the Civil War bankrupted his family, David was able to send money home to them and to secure a job for Sarah Ann as head housekeeper at the New York Institution, demonstrating in material terms how a deaf student’s education in the North could profit his family in the South.¹⁹ And David Tillinghast’s experience was not exceptional. Within the New York Institution’s classrooms and dormitories, many deaf individuals—hailing from cities and towns across the United States and even from Canada and Mexico—forged associations that would prove stronger than familial bonds. These associations, however, could benefit their families and native communities as students learned how to negotiate a maritime world and engage more profitably with the people and commodities circulating within it.

The Theology of the Bottom Line

Nineteenth-century histories of the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb stressed both the masculine and religious natures of the Institution’s founders, somewhat disingenuously. They highlighted the efforts of New York’s “men of science, benevolence, and social influence, who had become interested in the subject of deaf-mute instruction at a time when there was as yet no established school for this

¹⁹ See Joyner 151–52.

afflicted class of our fellow men in America” (*History of the New York Institution* 25).

And they took special interest in one of these men, Harvey Prindle Peet, a former pastor who gave up “the work of the christian ministry” to become an instructor at the Deaf school in Hartford and then the energetic principal of the New York Institution in 1822

(6). Like other nineteenth-century American evangelists who worked to colonize and convert non-Christian cultural groups such as Native Americans, Peet did his best to merge the offices of pastor and teacher.²⁰ He became known for the “lucid and forcible manner” in which he would “deliver in pantomime a religious lecture or a moral exhortation, or explain a scripture lesson” (*Biographical Sketch* 8). But in fact, the

²⁰ Scholars including, most recently, Christopher Krentz have pointed out the similarities between white Americans’ attempts to educate and convert the d/Deaf and Native American tribes. Certainly, the obvious parallels are there, and yet the connections are even deeper and more complex. Deaf and Native American populations were not merely analogous; they were mutually constituting. “From the earliest documented times in American history, there were reports of deafness among indigenous Indians,” Harry G. Lang writes. “In 1618, the Jesuits in America wrote to church officials inquiring whether a ‘deaf mute Indian’ could be admitted to the church. . . . Two decades later, Roger Williams, a church leader and founder of the colony of Rhode Island, noted that among the Wampanoag Native children, ‘some are born deaf and so dumb’” (Lang 3). Scholars of sociolinguistics in Deaf communities continue to study Native American sign languages, used by hearing and d/Deaf members of tribes as a way to communicate among themselves and with members of other tribes, to discover productive new insights into the structure of sign languages and the nature of cross-cultural contact in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America (See, for example, Esther Matteson, ed., *Comparative Studies in Amerindian Languages* (1972).) But while both the Deaf and Native Americans could use sign language, and while both were subjected to actions of American colonizers who felt that educating Native Americans and deaf people was “the Christian, moral, and patriotic thing to do,” there were important differences between the colonial initiatives directed toward Native Americans and those directed toward the d/Deaf (Krentz 11). Krentz writes, “If . . . deaf Americans were colonized by hearing people, their example also reminds us that colonization, for all its oppressive features, could have beneficial effects. . . . [D]eaf Americans were unique in that their language and communal consciousness were typically not passed on through family, but through the schools founded with the help of hearing patrons.” He goes on, “Unlike African Americans, Native Americans, or other ethnic peoples, deaf Americans had little sense of belonging to a group prior to hearing involvement, illustrating a singular way that a colonizing enterprise could enable new cultural forms. Their emergent sense of self was in some respects even more convoluted than that of other minorities or colonized groups, more bound up in and dependent upon the dominant society even as that society oppressed them” (48).

The similarities between Native Americans and the d/Deaf, however, intrigued nineteenth-century Americans. Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, as Krentz points out, were both fascinated by “sound, silence, speech, and gesture.” Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans*, which, as Krentz argues, “takes on central issues that were confronting the young republic, including the relationship between civilization and wilderness, between whites and Native Americans, and between illicit and elicited desires,” begins with the line “Mine ear is open,” taken from Shakespeare’s *Richard II* (78).

motivations behind the establishment and operation of the New York Institution could most accurately be characterized not as male and religious, but—in a more unlikely pairing—as feminine and economic.

One charitable organization that offered crucial support to the New York Institution was the New York Female Association, with which Sarah Pogson Smith became affiliated a year after its founding.²¹ “Impressed by the claims of the Deaf and Dumb upon the benevolence of the community,” the society formed in 1824 and declared its mission: “to administer aid for the support and instruction of such indigent Deaf and Dumb persons as may be selected and placed in the Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in the city of New York, and who, for want of adequate provision, cannot otherwise receive the benefits of instruction.” Specifically, the Association raised money to pay the board and tuition of students whose families could not afford the cost; in doing so, the women became important advocates for the school itself. In turn, they hoped to capitalize on the success of the school with an increase in social prestige and influence, and to enjoy the material benefits of living in a community where a surplus of qualified, affordable labor including skilled graduates of the New York Institution drove down the costs of goods and services the women consumed. Mrs. C.D. Colden, the first “Directress,” presided over a body of nearly one hundred dues-paying “managers,” “subscribers,” “life members,” and “honorary members,” most of whom were women, except for a few clergymen. Among the list of members were the names of prominent public figures in New York: Hamilton, Roosevelt, Morton, Wadsworth, and Buchanan.

²¹ There were at least two associations with this name, and this one is not to be confused with the society of Quaker women who founded The New York Female Association to give aid to refugees of Philadelphia’s yellow fever epidemic in 1798.

These women collected funds for the Association at exhibitions and sermons, and from the sale of “fancy articles” and collections of poetry like Sarah Pogson Smith’s *Daughters of Eve*. Her volume of poetry, an early literary notice of deafness, also exemplified the attitude of the women toward the deaf. They were “the Daughters of Eve,” emboldened by “charity’s *enkindling* zeal,” to attend to deaf children, but their concern with the children extended beyond the bounds of the strictly maternal. “Bring wealth, bring gratitude and tears;/ What sacrifice too great,/ Redeeming from such fate?” Pogson Smith asked her readers. In her easy conflation of “charity” and “wealth,” she made a case that the challenges to domesticity, like disabled bodies, occasionally demand an economic response (8).

In this spirit, the board of managers met monthly, but all members were eligible to serve on a committee, made of up twelve women and reconstituted every month, who visited the New York Institution to observe students and made recommendations about its administration and curriculum (*Address and Constitution of the New York Female Association* 5-8). These women helped develop the school’s emphases on book crafting and sewing, two of the four areas of study with particular appeal in maritime communities, and areas in which the organization’s women, including writers like Pogson Smith, had personal and professional expertise. Acting as voices of authority on these traditionally feminine skills, the Female Association could then exert a broader influence on the training of maritime laborers. They presented the plight of uneducated deaf children not simply as a moral or religious quandary, but also as an economic liability in competitive markets. “They are . . . thrown upon the world without principles, and without the ability to obtain a livelihood, a burden to society and to themselves,” they

warned (*Address and Constitution* 4). Their inclination to connect their charitable labor to the tides of capitalism manifests a keen understanding of markets shaped not just by the influence of their husbands (who included, according to membership records, military generals, politicians, and businessmen), but by their own influence—as consumers of goods and services, as writers seeking to be published in an increasingly competitive market, and as charity workers who could help effect the transformation of economically dependent deaf adolescents into profitable maritime employees. As they appealed for public support, they knew that financial assistance would aid the deaf and their own enterprises in the same stroke. They saw the crucial connection between organized charity work that supported deaf education and financial profitability—for deaf students, certainly, but also for themselves and others enriched by thriving maritime commerce sustained by specialized and affordable labor.

The New York Female Association's support—material and rhetorical—was particularly valuable during the school's first challenging years. A group of prominent New Yorkers began discussing the establishment of a school for the city's deaf residents in the first decade of the nineteenth century, but did not apply for an act of incorporation from the state legislature until 1817, and did not open the school for more than a year after they obtained it. The success of the school in Paris, flourishing with the assistance of government funding, was both an inspiration and a threat. On the one hand, it demonstrated the viability of certain pedagogical methods and the likelihood of favorable economic outcomes. On the other hand, it supplied The Hartford Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons with a famous teacher, the deaf prodigy Laurent Clerc. Thomas Gallaudet relied on both Clerc's expertise and fame as

he promoted their new school, opened on the very day the New York Institution received its act of incorporation. Most proponents of the New York school balked, certain that Hartford had the “great advantage” of experienced teachers and convinced that it could easily accommodate all of the United States’ deaf pupils (*Biography of Harvey Peet* 25). Other proponents, undeterred, organized the first census of New York’s deaf population. The results of their informal (and incomplete) survey yielded two significant conclusions. The first was that a fairly large number of school age “deaf-mutes” lived within the city limits: at least fifty-six in a total population of about 120,000. The second was that many families of deaf children could not afford to send them to the Hartford school. “Most of these unfortunate deaf-mutes belonged to families in very moderate and even indigent circumstances,” they found, and “it was manifestly impracticable to send any considerable number of them to a boarding school at a distance” (26).²² To those interested in starting a school for the deaf in New York City, the large and economically stratified deaf population presented several problems, all of which could be answered with a single solution. A school for the deaf in New York would educate deaf pupils who could not afford to travel to or board in Hartford; convert deaf children who could not understand the religious or political beliefs of their parents; and train deaf laborers who lacked the language skills and training necessary to become economic producers.

²² Although the anecdotal evidence gathered during the informal survey indicated that a high number—even a majority—of deaf children lived in poverty, it would be irresponsible to correlate deafness directly with poverty. Genetic deafness could, and frequently did, occur in children of wealthy parents. Diseases that produce high fevers were a common cause of deafness in the nineteenth century and did occur more frequently in crowded, unsanitary living conditions, but doctors were not able to “cure” hereditary deafness, and so access to medical care would have made no difference to a child’s being deaf or hearing as the result of genetics. In fact, it was often the deaf family members of wealthy and influential people—the deaf wives of Alexander Graham Bell and Samuel Morse, for example—who excited the most public sympathy and inspired reforms in deaf education and vocational training. For more, see Krenz pp. 3-4.

No matter the lofty objectives, however, the school still needed to attend to its financial solvency. Its first board, headed by DeWitt Clinton and comprising 25 successful New York businessmen and politicians, determined to admit only pupils who could pay tuition, and who lived near enough to the school that they could live at home (Mitchill *A Discourse 3, A History of the New York Institution* 12). When the first class opened in the Almshouse behind City Hall on May 12, 1818, only four students met this modest requirement. The board, realizing that willing spirits alone could not underwrite the school's operations, appealed to the city's benevolent societies. The women of the New York Female Association, although relegated to the role of "visiting officials" subordinate to the board of men, became the key to the school's survival. Able fundraisers, they collected donations from their vast networks of charitable men, sold subscriptions to publications like Pogson's, and organized public events to attract attention to the plight of the city's impoverished deaf and promote the school as a possible solution. One of their most effective initiatives was to meld in the public consciousness the mission of the New York Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb and religious rhetoric that stressed the Christian's duty to those who had no knowledge of the Bible or the relationship between moral probity and spiritual salvation. New Yorkers moved by their piety to donate to the school financed not only its religious objective, but also its political and economic aspirations.

In 1822, the women who would formally adopt, two years later, the name of the New York Female Association organized a public sermon delivered by the Reverend John Summerfield at the Dutch Church on Nassau Street. In his lengthy address, Summerfield recounted a brief history of the first four years of the New York Institution,

and an account of the vital role women played during that formative period. By 1822, the Institution had fifty-three pupils, “many of whom,” he said, were “altogether supported by the hand of charity, fed, and clothed, and educated.” This charity, he affirmed, was largely feminine in nature. “The committee of ladies, who have visited from time to time the establishment, to ascertain and provide for those wants which it is their peculiar province to relieve, . . . we salute [as] ‘those women who laboured with’ us ‘in the Lord’” (17). The New York Female Association also raised funds to pay the board and tuition of a group of students (usually about five at a time) who had been denied funding by the state government, beginning in 1818 and continuing until 1845. The support of women was crucial even after the New York State government passed, in 1819 and again in 1822, acts to provide financial aid to the fledgling Institution. In 1819, the legislature granted a sum of ten thousand dollars to the school. In 1822, it provided funds for board and tuition for three years for up to 32 of the city’s “indigent deaf and dumb.” This multiplied by many times the meager number of students who could afford their own board and tuition, but, as Summerfield noted, these legislative acts did not assure the Institution’s success (*By-Laws of the Directors* 7-23). The government capped the number of students who could attend the school with state support at well below the number of school-age deaf New Yorkers, and the school was not large enough to accommodate all the children from other states, like Tom and David Tillinghast, whose parents were both interested in the school and able to afford tuition. Although the legislature’s funding was essential to the school’s survival, the administration of male politicians, board members, and principals still depended on the work of women’s charities and charitable women acting independently to bring in additional funds and win

public support for the Institution. Over the next several decades, the Institution would grow because of their labor, and the women themselves would benefit as they bolstered the economic fortunes of their communities by attending to the education and vocational training of deaf students.

The growth of the school coincided with the growth of the city, providing further evidence of a connection between the economic fortunes of New York City and the personal fortunes of its disabled residents. In 1856, the school moved from its first permanent location on Fiftieth Street and Fifth Avenue north to James Monroe's former estate in Morningside Heights. The move was prompted by growth on two fronts: the school outgrew its midtown location at roughly the same time the growing city began to close in around the school. The city had donated the property to the school in 1827, when it was little more than farmland north of the city's commercial center, but it had increased dramatically in value in the three decades since the school's opening, and could now be sold at a great profit.²³ The school, preparing for an eventual enrollment of "between four and five hundred pupils," itched to enlarge its footprint away from the constrictions of the city's expanding streets and avenues (*Biography of Harvey Peet* 30). Certainly, a number of developments combined to spur the city's growth between 1817 and 1856. But among the most significant were those related to maritime commerce and travel: a surge in immigration, a growing circulation of imports and exports, and increased accessibility to other maritime centers. The New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb was directly tied to one of the most crucial of these

²³ In 1858, a little more than a year after the New York Institution moved off the property, the archbishop of New York City—promoted from bishop in 1850—laid the cornerstone on that site for St. Patrick's Cathedral. The imposing Gothic Revival building exemplified the increasing international prominence and economic influence of the city.

developments. The first president of the school's board of directors, DeWitt Clinton, resigned his post two years after he was elected governor of New York, where one of his first and certainly his most ambitious undertaking was the construction of the Erie Canal. This complex, technologically innovative structure transformed New York's port and the communities—disabled and able-bodied—connected to it.

Begun in 1817, the year the New York Institution opened, and immediately dubbed “Clinton's Folly” because of its staggering seven million dollar cost, the Erie Canal was the first waterway to connect the eastern seaboard with the western interior of the United States. Linking the Hudson River to the Great Lakes, the Canal provided a much faster alternative to overland travel, and reduced transport costs between the nation's coast and its interior by as much as 95 percent. The surge in commerce, travel, and colonization enabled by the canal was directly responsible for transforming New York City into the largest and most prominent of the country's ports. The city became the coastal gateway to all of the Midwest, elevating New York from a self-sufficient region to a springboard for western, northern, and southern expansion—the nation's “Empire State.” By extension, the Canal was also responsible for increasing the enrollment of the New York Institution, as the number of deaf in the city grew in proportion to its overall population, and an enriched state legislature became ever more likely to support the education of indigent deaf students within its corridors.²⁴

The New York Institution, linked to the Erie Canal and subsequent prosperity of New York's ports through the leadership of DeWitt Clinton, continued to follow a

²⁴ For more on the sweeping impact of the Erie Canal, and especially on De Witt Clinton's management of the project, see *The Erie Canal: A Primary Source History of the Canal That Changed America* by Janey Levy.

pathway of expansion and success forged by the crucial waterway. The school relocated and expanded in Morningside Heights in 1856; the state legislature passed a measure to enlarge the Canal between 1834 and 1862. When the New York Institution moved, it resettled along the banks of the Hudson River, a site of enormous national significance since the opening of the Canal made it the preferred route from the Atlantic to the Great Lakes and beyond. The school took full advantage of this association, and the inclination toward benevolence that prosperity could inspire. “Such are the facilities of access by railroad and steamboat to the city of New York, from all parts of the State,” administrators noted, “and such the liberality of the railroad and steamboat companies, in passing the unfortunate deaf and dumb to and from school, either free, or at reduced rates of fare, that there exists no motive for dividing the patronage of the State between two or more schools, on account of the distance part of the pupils have to travel.” Because the Canal connected parts of a large state as well as diverse parts of the country, they felt, “every . . . consideration is in favor of the State’s maintaining one large, efficient, well organized school, rather than two or three small and inferior ones” (*Biography of Harvey Peet* 30-31). One large, superior school would also attract more pupils from New York and other states, more government funding, and more donations from charitable communities and individuals. These funds would benefit the deaf students and their families, and they would also benefit administrators and instructors—men and women—who drew a salary from the school. The school’s prestige would enhance the cultural capital of the women who made up the board’s various sub-committees.²⁵ Furthermore,

²⁵ As I have noted, the women of The New York Female Association were the chairs, treasurers, and secretaries of the school’s Ladies Visiting Committee, but women also worked as grammar, sewing, and

the success of a large school for a disabled but decidedly capable study body would benefit all who lived and worked in New York and other maritime communities.

Impoverished deaf students were equipped with skills that would allow them to produce competitively priced goods and services, and while their education and compensation were tied to the colonial impulses of white, able bodied Americans, these benefactors gave Deaf communities the invaluable opportunity to develop a shared language and cultural identity.

The New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, even under the leadership of a former clergyman and a bevy of religious men and women, would never go so far as to sacrifice its financial interests to its spiritual mantra. Schools for the deaf could teach students “their duties . . . to God who made them, and the Savior who redeemed them,” but they could not run on faith alone (qtd. in Joyner 41). Undergirding the theological initiative was a brick and mortar foundation, one that required a network of laborers—all compensated in some way—to create and maintain it.²⁶ Even the benevolent actions of these administrators, teachers, stewards, matrons, and charitable workers had a real value in the local economy. As they worked, these men and women saw gains in the form of salaries, favorable publicity in the community, and greater financial success in economies bolstered by the labor of the very disabled individuals whose survival had once been a public expense. Advocates of education for the deaf

articulation teachers; as nurses and housekeepers; and as members of the school’s Library Committee (*History of the New York Institution* 43).

²⁶ While government funding, charitable donations, and regular tuition covered most students’ expenses at the New York Institution, students were required to work to help maintain the school, a practice usually credited to the earliest women’s schools established during the same era. “In part to save money, most residential schools expected students to provide some of the maintenance,” Jessica Lee finds. “Gender strongly informed labor divisions. Boys commonly did jobs that involved physical strength and that reflected masculine vocations: assisting with the school farms, building furniture, and providing grounds care. Girls remained in a domestic realm, cleaning rooms, cooking, and sewing clothing” (8).

might claim that “the degree of consolation and delight which education . . . imparts to the family . . . is great, and not to be estimated in dollars and cents,” but in a competitive maritime economy, there was very little that could not be attached to a market value (qtd. in Joyner 43). Education for the deaf comported with nineteenth-century Christian doctrines, but it also comported with the doctrine of American capitalism. Disabled bodies challenged the perception many white Americans held that theirs was a chosen, blessed nation, but education for the deaf could mitigate this “curse” and promote the economic prosperity that represented, in real terms, what chosen bodies could own and redeem.

A Benevolent Curriculum

Sarah Pogson Smith published *The Daughters of Eve* just after her husband left her in 1826, but rather than keeping the profits to support herself, she donated them to the New York Institution. She recognized that by doing so, she was appealing to a broad network of supporters stretching from her current home in New York to her hometown of Charleston, and accruing more material support for herself than her writing ever could. To understand why this was the case, we must first examine the curriculum of the school. It was carefully designed to resonate with the economic realities, aspirations, and anxieties of Americans living along the entire length of the eastern seaboard, and even along the nation’s western frontier. By the middle of the nineteenth century, every “indigent deaf-mute in the State [of New York], between the ages of twelve and twenty-five, was entitled to education at the public expense,” but private funding, including donations collected by the New York Female Association, also allowed the school to

finally accept students from the South like David and Tom Tillinghast, creating a more geographically diverse student body (*History of the New York Institution* 30). But it was what the school taught, as much as how it was financed, that attracted the interest and then the patronage of these wealthy southern families. Of course, it taught students the basic tenets of religion and reminded them of their debt to the hearing individuals responsible for their education, sometimes in the same breath. At a public exhibition of deaf students in 1828 (a common feature not only of education for the deaf and other marginalized groups, but also of elite public education for white male students), a boy who had studied at the school for three years demonstrated the effects of its curriculum. Asked to give an example of “benevolence,” he responded, “The *benevolent* legislature has determined to grant \$10,000 to our directors for building a new asylum. The *benevolence* of God sent his beloved son from heaven to redeem all our lives from punishment” (*Report of the Secretary of State* 44). But even if teaching this conflation of God’s goodness and power and the power of white, hearing benefactors was essential to currying public favor and securing funding for the school, it was an abstract platitude, not a marketable skill. In between chapel services that taught religious dogma, the Institution taught a more practical curriculum, and one even more attractive to political and professional supporters. It equipped students with skills that could be exhibited in another public forum—the maritime workforce.

The skills of sewing, horticulture, carpentry, and bookbinding that students could acquire at the New York school were not chosen at random. Students should learn, the administrators of the board concurred, “such trades as from local circumstances, can be most remuneratively carried on, and which promise the best assurance of future support

to the pupils” (*Report of the Secretary of State* 32). These four skills, uniquely suited to the demands of maritime economies, suggest that the school’s administrators saw an important commonality among the students’ local circumstances: they were all connected, directly or indirectly, to the tides of maritime commerce. The school equipped deaf students hailing from communities along the Atlantic and major North American rivers with skills that would benefit them—and their future employers and benefactors.

The Institution offered classes in sewing to both its male and female pupils. Women students received extensive training in dressmaking, and young men learned to make shoes and tailor clothing. Vocations that depended on skill with a needle—upholstery and clothing construction, cobbling, and garment alteration—were especially viable in urban seaports, with their high populations, large numbers of well-to-do residents, and steady stream of sailors and travelers needing to be fitted out for water voyages. The New York Female Association was a particular proponent of sewing as a course of study. “Sewing,” they affirmed, “constitutes [a] necessary part of the female education” (*Annual Report* 6). In fact, at the New York Institution, sewing was a useful—if not always necessary—part of all students’ education, male and female. Students who were able to afford tuition (called “pay pupils” or “part pay pupils”), were required to provide their own clothing, bed, and bedding, but students supported by charity received clothing and bedding made by the deaf students themselves, using the materials supplied in sewing classes (*By-Laws of the New York Institution* 7, Akerly 3). By a generous comprehension of the term “customer”—since charitable donations, government funds, and students’ own tuition covered the expenses of the cloth and

notions, and students were not compensated beyond the training they received—the school “became the largest customer” of the clothing and bedding its students produced (*History of the New York Institution* 32). In this way, the school operated much like the maritime charities that employed the indigent wives and seamen of sailors in making clothing for their own and their husbands’ consumption, such as Sarah Josepha Hale’s Boston-based Seaman’s Aid Society. The skill these maritime charities and the Deaf school taught had a double value: they trained poor and deaf young women in a trade that they could use to provide for themselves and their families in competitive economies supported by maritime trade, and they also worked reflexively to sustain the charitable organization, and with it the measure of power granted to its charitable and salaried managers.

Sewing did not simply have value as a domestic skill in maritime communities; it was also central to shipboard life. Skilled men and women on shore might provide the shoes, clothing, and other equipment necessary for a water voyage, but onboard the ship, sailors sewed and patched sails, mended their clothing, and wove fishnets. All seamen, including disabled seamen, used sewing skills to support maritime life. And the work of the ship was demanding enough that weary sailors might sew or knit as a form of recreation. Sarah Orne Jewett’s *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1910), an exploration of maritime life in a quiet northeastern community, describes an “elderly, gaunt-shaped great fisherman,” a survivor “of an earlier and more vigorous generation,” knitting a stocking from blue yarn with such expertise that he doesn’t look at his work as he sits near the doorway of his home (128). “There was something delightful in the grasp of his hand,” the narrator says, “warm and clean, as if it never touched anything but the

comfortable woolen yarn, instead of cold sea water and slippery fish” (131). Indeed, as the teachers at the New York Institution must have recognized, woolen yarn was as necessary to sustaining sea life as the fish, and deaf students on land and at sea could expect to find a market value for the sewing skills they developed at school. Jessica Lee reviewed minutes of nineteenth century conferences of instructors at deaf schools and found that sewing was one of the most common vocations taught to girls (11-12). Among male students, classes in shoemaking were popular, and throughout most of the nineteenth century, shoemaking was the most common occupation for deaf men behind agriculture and printing (Van Cleve and Crouch 162). The curriculum of the New York Institution prepared students for a workplace reality: people marginalized by disability, like people marginalized by race, were more likely than their white, able-bodied counterparts to labor as domestic workers (which would, like seafaring, certainly require the use of sewing skills) or practitioners of some type of manual trade. The ability to sew would serve male and female students well as they competed for jobs in economies bolstered by maritime commerce, where tailored fabric and leather swathed bodies, adorned homes, and trimmed the masts of ships.

The programs in carpentry and horticulture, like the classes in sewing, were fairly standard except for the language in which they were taught, but they were highly innovative in the way they adapted to maritime commerce and appealed to the unique economic condition of the antebellum American South. The carpentry classes taught skills of basic woodworking, of obvious value to employers in the nation’s centers of shipbuilding in New York and Massachusetts but of little consequence to Charlestonians, since shipbuilding in the city was in decline and the eight master shipwrights left in the

city by 1833 used more slave carpenters than white journeymen (Pease and Pease 44). But the school also offered special emphases on cabinet and furniture making, two trades of far greater interest to southerners. While large-scale manufacturing failed to grow in southern cities in the 1820s, mechanics in the construction trades, producers of consumer goods such as furniture and carriages, flourished. When white southern families saw the prospect of their uneducated and uncommunicative deaf children finding employment as skilled carpenters, they flooded the New York Institution with more applications than it could accept. The school's horticulture program had a similar effect. In the 1820s, a trade in rice and cotton sustained Charleston's port. It was the nation's only major port city whose chief exports were agricultural goods, and it had learned how a single innovation in the industry—like the development of short-staple cotton and a method to process it—could transform the region's economy. Equipped with knowledge of plant cultivation and familiarity with standard and innovative agricultural methods, the New York Institution's graduates were far better positioned to benefit from the South's investment in agricultural trade than they were before they entered the school, without training in horticulture or a command of written English. In some ways, they were even better positioned than hearing laborers who did not have formal training in the latest agricultural technologies. The school's records show that more of its graduates became "farmers" or "farmhands" than entered any other occupation (*History of the New York Institution* 54). As late as 1890 and 1900, census records show that the largest number of employed deaf American men were still in agricultural jobs (Van Cleve and Crouch 158). While carpentry and horticulture were useful skills in the communities surrounding the school, they had special relevance to communities in the South—

including Texas, where a number of Deaf students eventually settled—which depended on craftsmanship and agriculture long after those industries had been supplanted by large-scale manufacturing in the North. Because of proximity and government involvement, the school could count on a large enrollment of students from New York and surrounding states, but this specialized curriculum helped it attract students from the South and thereby increase its earnings and sphere of influence.

The school's classes on bookbinding, and, as the school grew, on printing and engraving, were similarly connected to the rhythms of maritime commerce. Fiction and nonfiction texts that departed from strictly religious themes or the broadside form, including the novel, reached unprecedented heights of production and consumption in the late 1820s, at precisely the time that deaf education began to flourish in America. "The early American novel was born and circulated from within the network of . . . nouveau riche traders, their families, and associates as an alternative, nonpartisan mode of displaying their political discontent, class interests, and perceived connection with the larger world of Atlantic mercantile traffic, which was itself in transition at the time," Stephen Shapiro writes (6). This transition in trade routes, abetted by the construction of the Erie Canal, would favor New York City's port, as Shapiro notes, transforming it into a center of commerce and literary production. The concurrent developments of deaf education and American publishing proved, to a certain extent, to be mutually sustaining. The majority of authors, publishers, printers, bookbinders, retailers, and readers in the nineteenth-century literary marketplace were hearing. A small but significant portion, however, was deaf. The administrators of the New York school, seeing financial opportunity in the concurrent rise of literary production in America and traffic in New

York City's port, positioned themselves to capitalize on this development. They established and then expanded the school's bookmaking program, particularly encouraging the bright pupils of the "high class," including the North Carolinian Thomas Tillinghast, to pursue this trade. And the exchange was reciprocal, since the school purchased books published in New York City to fill the shelves of its classrooms. By the mid-nineteenth century, printing was the most common industrial occupation for deaf men, and remained so until the first quarter of the twentieth century (Van Cleve and Crouch 162). The labor of Deaf engravers, printers, and bookbinders trained at the New York school—no less than the labor of Deaf authors like the acclaimed poet James Nack, one of the school's graduates—contributed in real and quantifiable ways to a maritime economy bolstered by the production of American literature.²⁷ As the number of published texts increased during the course of the nineteenth century, so too did the number of texts that dealt with transnational themes—such as the spate of narratives that imagined the woes of Americans captured by North African pirates, including one published by Sarah Pogson Smith—and, at least peripherally, with the disabled body. These publications demonstrate how literature and literary production both fueled and relied on maritime traffic and the labor of able-bodied and disabled maritime workers. The classes in bookbinding at the New York Institution had forged a connection between a literary marketplace—encompassing readers, writers, and publishers around the Atlantic—and benevolence extended to a geographically diverse Deaf World. The

²⁷ Although d/Deaf individuals had an important role in the nineteenth century literary marketplace, contemporary disability theorists now critique the idea that the popularity of the novel was a boon to the Deaf World. The rise of the American novel, aided by d/Deaf writers and craftsmen, gave rise to the myth of normalcy and contributed to the disabling of deaf bodies. Leonard Davis's "Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century" is considered the foundational text in this productive area of inquiry.

emphasis on book construction served as one crucial cornerstone in a curriculum, developed at the New York Institution and then copied at other schools for the deaf, that equipped deaf students to add value to maritime economies throughout the nation, and then positioned the school to capitalize when individuals and states benefitting from robust economies could devote a part of their surpluses to charitable enterprise.

“Tokens of Friendship”: Sarah Pogson Smith and the Wages of Transatlantic Charity Work

As an early-nineteenth century woman writer, Sarah Pogson Smith melded the rhetoric of benevolence with the realities of financial profitability, and her association with the New York Female Association and the New York Institution provides a specific example of how all interested parties—deaf students, benevolent and salaried supporters of deaf education, families of d/Deaf children, and maritime laborers—could profit from the transatlantic and cross-cultural nature of the Deaf World growing out of the school.²⁸ For the vast majority of her life, Pogson traveled around the Atlantic rather than installing herself on its coasts, a characteristic that shaped her life and work. She was born on 17 September 1774 in Essex, England. Her father, John Pogson, owned several plantations in the West Indies, and perhaps his economic interest on the other side of the Atlantic piqued Pogson’s interest in transatlantic travel and commerce. In 1793 she immigrated to Charleston, South Carolina, where she lived with her brother Milward

²⁸ I am grateful to Kirstin Wilcox of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for sharing some of her research on Pogson Smith’s life with me and for directing me to a vast archive of primary sources relevant to the author’s life at Syracuse University. Because of her, and because of the help of knowledgeable scholars at Syracuse University Library’s Special Collections, I was able to locate a trove of documents that allows me to correct inaccurate published information about Pogson Smith, such as the common assumption that she had children of her own.

Pogson, a clergyman at a local Episcopal church. She remained there for the next three decades, unmarried, and dependent for lodging, food, and clothing on Milward's generosity.

Perhaps spurred by economic need, Pogson began to write, publishing poems, essays, and plays that revealed both her thorough education and her fascination with cultural and religious conflicts as byproducts of transatlantic travel. She sprinkled her texts liberally with footnotes that credit her wide-ranging sources: contemporary studies of Hindu and Muslim religious practices, ancient histories of Greece and Rome, the Hebrew and Christian bibles, and works by Isaac Newton. A number of her texts dramatize encounters between Christians and other religious adherents. *The Power of Christianity, or Abdallah and Sabat* (1814), for example, features Christian protagonists who enact recognizable Christian virtues among Muslims in exotic locales. Pogson's interest in the religion and culture of North Africans may have had economic as well as personal motivations. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, for example, she took advantage of a nationwide enthrallment with Barbary captivity narratives to publish her own tale of the plight of three Christian South Carolinians waylaid on a journey to England by North African pirates in the play *The Young Carolinians, or Americans in Algiers* (1818), a fiction that nonetheless depicted the very real fear of Barbary captivity that beset mobile Americans in the first quarter of the century.²⁹

Published the same year the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb opened its doors, *The Young Carolinians* depicts the misapprehensions and

²⁹ For a more complete discussion of the enormously popular Barbary captivity narratives, including their historical context and geopolitical significance, see Paul Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*.

the paranoia that southerners directed toward all foreign, non-Christian people—including the deaf individuals in their own communities. Pogson represents Algiers as “the land of captivity” not only because hostage Americans are held there, but also because the Algerians are held hostage to their own ignorance. It is chiefly their lack of education, Pogson implies, that renders the foreigners depraved, “untaught to feel for, what [they] never felt.” In this state, the ignorant Algerians are slaves “to rude ungoverned passion; to pride, to avarice and lawless love” (*Essays* 42). Uneducated deaf children, unable to share the language or religious beliefs of their parents, were seen as equally ignorant—and almost equally foreign. One southern advocate for the education of the deaf marveled that “thousands grow to manhood by our firesides in as total ignorance of the language which is spoken there, as that of which is spoken around the hearthstone of the Chinese” (qtd. in Joyner 37). The misbehaviors of deaf children, like the lawlessness of the heathens, were ascribed to “mental darkness,” a condition that could be cured through an education rooted in Christian doctrine. As the secretary of the New York Female Association wrote of the deaf in 1830: “[M]any of them are endowed with talents of no mean order, but the same vivacity and activity of mind by which they are almost always distinguished, displays itself in the uneducated in violent and ungovernable passions.” He went on, “The difficulty of conveying abstract ideas to their minds . . . renders it almost impossible to give them any ideas of moral or religious restraint. They are therefore thrown upon the world without principles, and without the ability to obtain a livelihood, a burden to society and to themselves” (*Address and Constitution* 4). In the South, where gradations of black and white had enormous social and political significance, deaf children were described as being, “by nature . . . dark and

miserable.” Their “dark minds” were “locked in hopeless ignorance.” Like the Barbary pirates Pogson depicted in her drama, deaf children were marked spiritually and socially by their “darkness” and inability to govern their “passions,” and regarded even by their family members as “strangers and aliens” (qtd. in Joyner 11).³⁰

When Pogson came to Charleston in 1793, she arrived in a vastly different place than the one she would leave for a time in the 1820s, and those changes adversely affected the alienated deaf and other marginalized populations. In the days of Charleston’s “colonial greatness,” historians William Pease and Jane Pease note, Charleston commanded a thriving trade in rice, indigo, and long-staple cotton, and “the city had grown rich to the rhythms of shipping and commerce” (9). When the Revolutionary War began, it surpassed almost every port on the Atlantic coast—including New York City—in traffic and profits. But the postwar years blighted Charleston’s prosperity, and the embargos of the War of 1812 and the depression following the war further crippled the city’s economy.

Such was the environment in which Pogson developed her literary skills.³¹ The influence of Charleston’s stagnant economy and bleak economic prospects probably contributed to her decision to write about topics popular with publishers, like the

³⁰ Dr. Harvey Peet wrote at length on the “spurious notions”—some compared to pagan superstition—that uneducated deaf children cultivated, and felt that “the moral and religious state of these unfortunate beings is a subject of deep and painful interest” (*Notions of the Deaf and Dumb Before Instruction, Especially in Regard to Religious Subjects* 4).

³¹ As Pease and Pease note, the economic woes in Charleston particularly affected its maritime industry, especially in comparison to New York City. Barbara Bellows writes, “The development of the steamship made old trading patterns with Europe obsolete and dashed the future prospects of the city. New York City benefitted most from this new technology and superseded Philadelphia as the nation’s leading port city. Within one Charlestonian’s lifetime, the decline in coastal trade nudged the city from fourth among American cities after the Revolution to sixth in 1830; on the eve of the Civil War, it plummeted in a breathtaking descent to twenty-second. The shocking deterioration of South Carolina’s leading city compared to the boom times of New York City made the tariff protecting American industry a particularly bitter issue for Charlestonians” (67).

titillating tales of captive Christian virgins at the mercy of licentious infidels. It may have also prompted her to look for innovative ways to advertise her work, increase her name recognition, and distinguish herself from other authors in a depressed marketplace. One way for a woman writer to do this was to affiliate herself with prominent women's charities, which had a vital function as Charleston's sluggish economy left government officials and private citizens without resources or inclination to support the health and wellbeing of the city's poor. These charities, like women's charities in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, effectively bridged the domestic space of the nurturing mother and the public space of commerce and capital. Associating with charitable workers who operated in their sanctioned role as "nurturers" to raise funds and provide for the welfare of impoverished and disabled groups, was, for Pogson, more than a way to exercise professional ambition and attain social prominence without comprising her feminine respectability. It was a marketing tactic—one she honed in Charleston and then carried with her for the rest of her career.

Although Pogson could rely on a single model of professional self-promotion in the South and then later in the North, the charity work at the center of her strategy had to be much more artfully adapted to particular cultures and economies. In Charleston, where she began her earliest work with women's charities, an economic system dependent on slave labor produced a definition and model of charity specific to the region. Benevolence tended to be a private gesture, usually extended by wealthy whites to the enslaved laborers of their household or poor whites who depended on them for

work or other resources.³² This benevolence coincided historically with organized charitable and reform movements in the North, but differed fundamentally in motivation and form. “Even at the city’s lowest [economic] point during the 1820s,” Barbara Bellows writes, “citizens fell into ‘the spirit of the age’ sweeping the nation and formed myriads of voluntary associations to promote welfare and moral reform among the poor.” There was, however, a crucial difference between charity work in New York and Charleston. Bellows writes, “But at the same time, their renewed commitment to slavery, now so aggressively at odds with the sensibilities of the humanitarian movement, divorced Charlestonians from the mainstream of reform organizations” (xiii). Charitable organizations in Charleston tended to be small and intensely local in their scope and reflected what Bellows calls the “moral economy” of the city (68). Poor people were far more likely to attract their attention if they had an endorsement from a wealthy white citizen and met a number of criteria, including a year’s residence in the city. Such organizations rarely, if ever, became involved in the struggles of enslaved men and women, deferring to the plantation’s traditional social order based on “mutual bonds and reciprocal duties.” And women’s charities in Charleston were intentionally passive and theoretical rather than active and applied. In a culture where labor was the

³² Eugene Fox Genovese’s critical examinations of nineteenth-century southern society—in which he acknowledges inclinations toward compassion and benevolence among the slave owners who perpetrated “one of history’s greatest crimes”—offers us an usually complex view of the sociohistorical context in which organized charity work in the South was carried out. Genovese writes, “The Old South, black and white, created a historically unique kind of paternalist society. To insist upon the centrality of class relations as manifested in paternalism is not to slight the inherent racism or to deny the intolerable contradictions at the heart of paternalism itself.” He goes on, “Imamu Amiri Baraka captures the tragic irony of paternalist social relations when he writes that slavery ‘was, most of all, a paternal institution’ and yet refers to ‘the filthy paternalism and cruelty of slavery.’ Southern paternalism, like every other paternalism, had little to do with Ole Massa’s ostensible benevolence, kindness, and good cheer. It grew out of the necessity to discipline and morally justify a system of exploitation. It did encourage kindness and affection, but it simultaneously encouraged cruelty and hatred. The racial distinction between master and slave heightened the tension inherent in an unjust social order” (29).

province of the poor and enslaved, “freedom meant freedom from labor,” even charity work, and especially in behalf of those born into the laboring class (70).³³

Although Pogson began writing and became involved with charity work while she lived in Charleston, this narrow focus and limited local exposure somewhat compromised the efficacy of participating in organized charity work as a method of broad self-promotion for an aspiring author. Still, Pogson realized some benefits from her involvement with Charleston charities. Following a common convention for a woman writer of the early nineteenth century, in 1807 Pogson published her first text, a blank-verse, short book-length poem titled *The Female Enthusiast*, under the byline “A Lady.” Publishing a text anonymously protected a woman writer from public criticism of either her talent or her propriety, but it made it difficult for an author to capitalize on the merits of her oeuvre. In 1814, Pogson tested one way of indicating her identity without compromising her public image: she still credited *The Power of Christianity, or Abdallah and Sabat* to “A Lady,” but in large print on the title page, she advertised that the proceeds of the volume would go to two Charleston charities: the Ladies Benevolent Society and the Protestant Episcopal Society. In Charleston, ladies’ charities were small and few enough that their membership was fairly well-known within the city’s privileged, white social groups, and Pogson’s friends and neighbors could have fairly easily recognized her identity and might even have spread her reputation as writer by word of mouth throughout the community. The slim volume boasts a lengthy subscription list, including the names of Charleston’s most prominent citizens: the

³³ Stephanie McCurry’s study of poor whites in South Carolina shows that women who performed charity in the antebellum South respected strict boundaries around class as well as race, and “what little [charity] the Low Country saw served rather to measure than to traverse the class divide between yeoman and planter women” (125).

Misses Pinckney, who ordered ten copies; members of the Izard and Middleton households; and members of the Grimké family, including Sarah Grimké, who became a well-known abolitionist.³⁴ On the list are also common, undistinguished names, an indication of Pogson's professional savvy. By connecting her writing to two esteemed women's charities, she won the support and patronage not just of Charleston's wealthy and well-connected citizens, but also of the people who wanted to be like them.

As a business strategy, this method had its flaws. The impressive subscription lists, with their famous names, sometimes overshadowed the author and her work. Pogson's 1818 *Essays, Religious, Moral, Dramatic and Poetical* (which included *The Young Carolinians*) was misattributed to Maria Henrietta Pinckney until 1971, when William S. Kable revisited the files of South Carolina district copyrights and discovered the error.³⁵ Charleston's charities were not well known in the North or even outside of South Carolina, so a lesser-known name than "Pinckney," like "Pogson," might easily fade into obscurity as the text circulated around the country.³⁶ However, these

³⁴ The Grimké sisters were useful allies for Pogson Smith, who would return to live in Charleston at the end of her life as a single woman largely dependent on the generosity of friends and family. "[T]hose southern expatriates, the Grimké sisters," Elizabeth Fox-Genovese writes, "loudly denounced the special toll that slavery exacted from white women: In their view, the condition of women in a slave society can only be compared to that of slaves; life in a slave society intensified both women's enslavement and their consciousness of it" (47). In reality, although her life as a single woman was undoubtedly more complicated socially and financially than the life of a white single man living in the same period, Pogson's education, her freedom to travel, and her ability to pursue charity work as one way to enhance her cultural capital give the lie to the Grimké sisters' claim. Still, they might have been more liberal in bestowing their friendship and patronage on a young, single woman writer than other Charleston women, and their prominence in the community would have increased Pogson's name recognition. The fact that she did not advocate for abolition in her writing would have mitigated the liability of associating with these well-known abolitionists in the South.

³⁵ See William S. Kable, "South Carolina District Copyrights: 1794-1820" in *Proof: the Yearbook of American Bibliographical and Textual Studies* 1 (1971).

³⁶ The descendants of Thomas Pinckney, who came to Charleston from England (by way of the West Indies) in 1692, were hugely influential in Charleston business, politics, and society for the next two centuries. For Pogson Smith to have attracted their patronage suggests that she moved, as a woman writer, in the most elite circles of Charleston society. For more on the Pinckneys and the benefits that could

shortcomings notwithstanding, Pogson used this tactic for the rest of her life. In the North, where women's charities were larger and spanned state borders, her fundraising efforts secured her a wide network of friends and readers. As Pogson's personal fortunes changed and made her increasingly dependent on the patronage of these friends and relatives, she recognized that goodwill—the product of donating the proceeds of her writing to charity—had a practical value that superseded even that of profits. As a woman who lived alone and supported herself for most of her life, Sarah Pogson Smith became an expert at extracting goodwill from the communities where she travelled and temporarily resided. To do so, she used her writing to support one charitable project that had tremendous value for her potential benefactors all along the eastern seaboard: The New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb.

Pogson became acquainted with the New York Institution in 1823, when, to the surprise of her family members and friends in Charleston, she married Judge Peter Smith of Petersboro, New York. Smith was a widower with six grown children who admired his second wife for possessing a “good mind, highly cultivated” (letter to Gerrit Smith of 19 Oct. 1823). Pogson Smith was devoted to her husband, but her constant traveling—to the communities around the home they established in Petersboro, to Philadelphia, Hartford, Trenton, and back to Charleston—was a source of irritation to him, and they quarreled constantly about money. In response to his demand that she keep a record of expenses incurred during travel, she began to send him itemized accounts of every cent she spent, down to “sundries of soap, writing paper, pens etc” (2 pounds); steamboat

accrue to their network of friends and supporters, see “The Thomas Pinckney Family of South Carolina,” compiled by Mabel L. Webber, in *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 39.1 (Jan. 1938), pp. 15-35.

passage to New York to pick up her sister, fleeing an outbreak of yellow fever in Charleston (6 pounds); and each week's worth of washing (1 pound) (letter to Peter Smith of 3 Dec. 1824). In desperation, she began to appeal to her brother in Charleston and to Peter's son Gerrit Smith, who ran his father's successful real estate operation and later became a prominent New York politician and abolitionist. "I have received *no money* from my husband but what was necessary to pay my expenses of *board and lodging* at the rate of *less than* eight dollars per week—including *washing and travelling*, and *very incidental* expenditures—during an *unavoidable* absence from him, at times last Spring and Summer," she wrote to Gerrit (Letter of 8 Jun. 1825). Although he sympathized with his stepmother more than with his father, with whom he had a fraught relationship, Gerrit tried to broker a reconciliation between Peter and Sarah. The attempt, like Pogson Smith's attempts to placate her husband, proved unsuccessful. Peter Smith apparently never had high hopes for the marriage's success. As early as August of 1824, he told his wife, "it would be *unwise* for us in this state of things to attempt to keep house, [for] we cannot live happily together," and he could never be persuaded otherwise (Letter to Pogson Smith of 31 Aug. 1824). The couple separated for the last time in 1826.

This was the year that Pogson Smith published her volume of poetry, *Daughters of Eve*, and donated the proceeds to the New York Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. The title page read, "Published in aid of the New York Female Association, for the support and instruction of the indigent DEAF AND DUMB; there being at this time Seventy Applicants who cannot be received at the institution from inadequate funds," and the letters of the words "deaf and dumb," perhaps by the choice of the printer, were

larger than the letters of the title, “Daughters of Eve.” In March, she wrote to Gerrit’s wife Nancy, “I am, and shall be henceforth purposefully among the *Deaf and Dumb* on one and *too trying* subject.” She inquired whether Nancy would purchase a copy of her poems to support a “*Deaf and Dumb* charity,” the New York Female Association, to whom she so conspicuously dedicated the book. “If so,” she wrote, “let me know as *soon as possible*—for to day or tomorrow the Printer will begin—and shall want every name to *publish* at the end of the little volume. I must inquire, and if you asked any *person*, do me the favor to collect their names and subscription amount” (Letter of 2 Mar. 1826). Pogson Smith’s decision to turn again to writing at this fraught period of her life is somewhat surprising. She needed money, since Peter seemed determined to interpret his legal obligation to his estranged wife in the narrowest way possible. Milward Pogson wrote Peter from Charleston to make the case that his sister could not live “respectably” or “in plain comfort” on less than one thousand dollars a year, but in the end, Peter grudgingly agreed to give her an annuity of just seven hundred dollars (Letter of 18 Nov. 1825). Pogson Smith was in straightened financial circumstances, and needed to find a way to supplement the annuity, but writing was a risky way to do it. As she likely realized when she began writing in Charleston, and certainly saw when she moved to New York, writing was an unreliable way to churn a profit, even under the best of circumstances.

And Pogson Smith was not working under the best of circumstances. All American writers suffered from Americans’ preference for cheap pirated copies of British and European texts in the first decades of the nineteenth century, but as a southerner, Pogson Smith was at a particular disadvantage in an era when writing tended

to highlight sectional loyalties. “Given the ‘tyranny of distance’ the vast American continent imposed on a scattered population with inadequate means of transportation,” Robert Gross writes, it was “hardly surprising” that print could work to heighten sectional resentments and to carve audiences into “segments according to class, region, religion, occupation, ethnicity, gender, and race” (4-5). Women’s writing tended to be even more divisive. Joanne Dobson and Sandra A. Zagarell argue that “The circumstances of literary production and distribution [including selling texts in advance by subscription, as Pogson Smith was attempting to do with Nancy] continued to make income sporadic well into the nineteenth century,” and also “favored the growth of the specialized and fairly local audiences that constituted the principal readership for women’s writing” (372). Sarah Josepha Hale, who did find a way to support herself by parlaying her literary experience into an editorship in Boston in the 1820s, noted this feature of the market and was quick to capitalize on it: her 1827 novel *Northwood* bore the strategic subtitle *A New England Tale*. Pogson Smith’s regional affiliations were much less useful to her as an author. Her identity as a southerner wouldn’t win her any readers in the North, and in her hometown, readers were prejudiced against any title by an American author. The Charleston Library Society prided itself on favoring books from London, so that in 1826 six out of ten of the 5,057 items in its collection came from England (Gross 27). To compound her disadvantages, by the late 1820s, most women writers were writing not about the “dialogues of public life” that had engaged women of the Revolutionary period like Mercy Otis Warren, but about “the domestic”—“motherhood and family, the education of children, morality, household management,

and daily life” (Dobson and Zagarell 374). What authority did a childless woman with no husband have to publish—in any genre—her feelings on American domesticity?

Pogson Smith, though at a clear disadvantage in the literary marketplace, was sensible enough to recognize these liabilities, and shrewd enough to compensate. Immediately following her separation from Peter, she made the crucial decision to stay in New York City, rather than return to her family and friends in the South. Her choice was surprising: she had lived in Charleston for the majority of her life, and in New York for only three troubled years. But an author could hardly have made a wiser decision in the 1820s, when New York City—thanks largely to the early success of Harper Brothers Publishing, started in 1815—was becoming the capital of the print world. Its fiercest competition came from nearby cities, from the presses of the profit-hungry Mathew Carey in Philadelphia, and some of the new presses in Boston. The print trades were risky ventures, to be sure, but if authors and publishers were making money anywhere, it was overwhelmingly in northern seaports. She made another careful calculation when she decided to publish a book on behalf of a certain charity, the New York Female Association, and in support of education for the deaf. “Publishing projects were most effective when particular groups in the population could be singled out for notice and engaged with materials addressed to their special interests,” Gross finds (36). Charitable organizations became “forces for change” in the publishing world, as “evangelicals and reformers were quick to seize upon the new means of disseminating their message and flooded the nation with print during the 1820s and 1830s” (Gross 9). Pogson Smith’s biography suggests no special reason why she should be a proponent of education for the deaf. Her letters speak of no Deaf relative or friend, and her other charitable projects

dealt with seamen, like the “seaman’s floating church” to whom she donated the profits of another drama, *The Arabians*, in 1844. As a lifelong traveler, she was more connected to mariners than to the deaf, but her connection to both was likely through the marketplace: books sold when they were marketed to a group united by a special interest, and Pogson Smith did not need a reason beyond the economic to support a particular cause with her writing.

But Pogson Smith’s selection of a charity to support was remarkably perceptive in the connections it discovered and mined between the print trades and education for the deaf in New York. Printers and publishers may have already been aware that the New York Institution was training students as bookbinders, and these professionals were surely warm toward any training programs that would supply them with cheap, qualified labor. But the deaf were potential customers as well as potential employees. The deaf, even more than other students, depended upon *reading* as a primary form of apprehension in a formal school setting. Teachers were not reliably fluent in American Sign Language (and became less rather than more fluent as the century wore on), and so relied on a huge array of books to present and explicate information. Professionals in the print trades were primed to see educators of the deaf as invaluable customers. Savvy publishers were largely responsible for an enormous increase in the consumption of schoolbooks over the first half of the nineteenth century. If teachers and parents protested that they had learned their letters from crumbling copies of Webster’s “blue-and-black speller,” the proponent of educational reform, primed by the publisher, scoffed at their mulishness. “Should we think that man sane who would confine his reading to one book for years in succession,” asked one reformer, “and then offer for a reason ‘that

the old one was not worn out?” (qtd. in Gross 42). During the 1820s and 1830s, Gross finds that “so many new [school] texts were introduced so frequently that parents raised a familiar complaint: all the changes were calculated to improve the profits of publishers, rather than the education of children” (43). Still, teachers and administrators continued to defend the constant purchase of new books, eager to show they embraced “the rapid circulation of new ideas and information” (42). Students at the deaf schools in Hartford, Philadelphia, and New York were often featured in exhibitions where they demonstrated their transformation from silent, mysterious dependents to rational and fully expressive beings, but if they were in one sense presented as a kind of commodity—a product that a subscription to Pogson Smith’s book or a donation directly to a school might purchase—the students were also customers. Their transformation was effected as they consumed as many books as school administrators could be persuaded to buy. Pogson Smith, even if she wasn’t an expert on Deaf culture or education, must have surmised that print was necessarily an essential medium of a deaf child’s education. Writing in support of a local school for the deaf was a canny way for her to ingratiate herself with the print professionals who determined whether to publish an author’s work. *Daughters of Eve* made it likely that not just her friends, but also publishers, printers, and booksellers in America’s capital of publishing saw her as a supporter of lucrative print-based education for the deaf.

Advertising her support of the New York Institution also allowed Pogson Smith to overcome the problem of sectional resentments that dogged other women writers of the era. Aware that she couldn’t claim to be a “New Englander” with any credibility, and familiar with the challenges plaguing all writers—male and female—in the South,

Pogson Smith chose instead to follow the geographic boundaries limned by the Deaf World. As the Deaf World traversed traditional political, social, and geographic divides by uniting a group of people who were deaf or had a deaf person under their care, it also worked to mitigate strong regional loyalties. To be sure, families from the South might still be wary when their deaf children went to study in the North, and fewer than a dozen people of color attended the New York Institution before the Civil War, but students at the school found that their shared deafness superseded the political and regional identities of their families. The sign language available at the school, the dormitories, and the curriculum of the school—which highlighted what port cities along the nation’s oceans, rivers, and canals had in common, and prepared students to labor in them—forged a strong Deaf community that cut across the nation’s north-south divide. Pogson Smith, born in England, raised in Charleston, and married in New York, lived a life that also traversed these divides, and when she dedicated *Daughters of Eve* to the support of deaf education, she found a viable framework within which to market herself as a transnational writer to a remarkably diverse national audience. The list of subscribers at the back of the volume to which Pogson Smith had hoped to add Nancy Smith’s name shows that she obtained subscriptions for more than three hundred copies of the volume in a range of cities: New York, Hartford, Boston, Salem, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Annapolis, Fredericksburg, and Charleston. And a record from the New York Female Association shows that Mrs. Colden, the society’s first director, sold seven dollars’ worth of copies of *Daughters of Eve* in New Orleans (*Address and Constitution* 10). If one of the persistent problems facing women writers of the 1820s, as Dobson and Zagarell find, was that they tended to appeal to “fairly local audiences,” Pogson Smith found a way to

overcome this real challenge to a woman writer's success by marketing herself not as a resident of New York or a product of Charleston, but as a champion of the Deaf World that cut across both.

As her affiliation with the Deaf World allowed Pogson Smith to market her work to a group united by a single cause across geographic boundaries, it also allowed her to exercise her authority as unconventional "mother" within an alternative conception of "domesticity." Deafness, like many forms of disability, awakened a paternalistic response in many observers. This worked against deaf adults treated like children by their hearing peers, and could sustain exploitative power structures in deaf schools and places of employment. But the paternalism that hampered deaf individuals gave Pogson Smith a way to command some credibility on "domestic" matters, even if she lacked children and a husband. The title of her volume, *Daughters of Eve*, immediately conjures images of domesticity. The titular "daughters" are in fact mothers, and specifically mothers of deaf children. A stanza of one poem reads: "*Mothers* well know what *mothers* feel:/ A child forever *dumb!*/ Forever *deaf!* O but to heal,/ Would they not supplicants come?/ Bring wealth, bring gratitude and tears;/ What sacrifice too great,/ Redeeming from such fate?/ Parting with limb,/ To rescue him!/ A tribute for his happier years" (8). Pogson Smith did not have a deaf child, but she did not need to be a mother to treat a deaf person as a child; such behavior was common practice, and the widespread paternalism surrounding the deaf allows her to speak not just *for* mothers of deaf children, but *as* a mother of deaf children. In doing so, she makes larger suggestions about the threat disability poses to domesticity, particularly the ideal of domesticity as centered around a productive male head. Describing the deaf child, she imagines in her

poem: “He saw! and felt *he* must not seek,/ What others sought and won:/ Forlorn the hope, he *could not* speak;/ Nature’s lone helpless son,/ Dared not a Lover’s look to glance;/ To earth, his trembling fell:/ Ah! Had he *speech* to tell,/ Or ear to hear,/ How soon from fear,/ Might love’s fond suit advance . . . With manly pride/ May seek a bride” (6-7). Pogson Smith takes for granted that the deaf boy can never marry or function as the head of a family; instead, he is doomed to become a social outcast—“Nature’s lone helpless son.” Of course, Pogson Smith might have been seen as threat to domestic norms herself, a “lone helpless [daughter]” and a very plausible charitable claimant. But instead, she assumes the posture of concerned parent for all deaf boys who might change their fortunes by attending the New York Institution (where, it is implied, they can learn a marketable skill and socialize with deaf girls), and in doing so casts herself as part of the charitable solution to this threat to stable domestic life, rather than a single, childless woman in need of financial assistance herself.

Perhaps Pogson Smith’s most useful strategy as a woman writer was to see that, even if she found ways to transcend sectional loyalties with her fidelity to the Deaf World, and even as she presented herself as a “parent” of the deaf, concerned about their destabilizing influence on American domesticity, her payoff as a woman writer would likely come in forms beyond the strictly monetary. Dobson and Zagarell point out that only for a “fortunate few,” like Hannah Anderson and Susanna Rowson (who published her own captivity narrative, *Slaves in Algiers*, in 1794), did writing “become a possible source of cash” (368). But cash was only one form of compensation, and Pogson Smith had real use for other forms. Mary Kelley found that editors of literary magazines like Thomas Willis White, who founded the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1834, relied on

friends to fill the pages of their magazines, and “[t]hose who wrote for White were less likely to receive money than tokens of friendship, which ranged from free issues of the magazine to china tea sets to pens, paper, and ink” (388). For Pogson Smith, who was set back but not financially ruined in the wake of her separation, “tokens of friendship” were a form of compensation for writing at least as valuable as cash. Such tokens were not merely symbols of appreciation or regard for her work; they could also constitute a viable medium of exchange, vouchers extended by individuals or interested groups that could be redeemed at an opportune moment for the material and non-material appurtenances of respectable social life otherwise denied to divorced, childless woman. Pogson Smith had a social network that, if she could strategically maintain it in the aftermath of the separation, might ensure her comfortable subsistence within this network of exchange. Her well-off and generous friends in New York, Connecticut, Philadelphia, and New Jersey would invite her to stay with them for parts of the year. Gerrit Smith had the authority, upon his father’s death, to increase her annuity, and he had expressed an inclination to do so. Finally, her brother and sister-in-law in South Carolina, with whom she corresponded frequently, promised to look after her financial “security” and sent the well-wishes of her old friends in Charleston (Letter from Milward Pogson to Sarah Pogson Smith of 12 Nov. 1825). Pogson Smith decided to seek these forms of aid not as a beggar, but as a writer who could be compensated for attending to the domestic and economic challenge of disabled bodies—one problem all her friends, living in port cities or urban areas supported by maritime commerce, shared despite their geographic diversity—with charity recast as “tokens of friendship.”

Because of a curriculum designed to support maritime industry in all American maritime communities, the New York Institution was unique in its broad appeal along the Eastern Seaboard. In addition, it had particular appeal to the individuals in Pogson Smith's life with the greatest potential to aid her materially. Gerrit, a businessman and aspiring politician, was attuned to the actions of the state's former governor DeWitt Clinton, including his tenure as the president of the New York Institution's board of directors. Judging by the length and geographic diversity of the subscription list for *Daughters of Eve*, the fame of the school, and the rise of interest in deaf education generally, captured the attention of her friends in states hosting the largest Deaf schools: New York, Philadelphia, and Connecticut. Not surprisingly, these are also the states named most frequently in Pogson Smith's written correspondence detailing her travels to stay with friends. And the New York Institution was particularly suited to appeal, as a charitable initiative, to her brother and sister in South Carolina, where agricultural skills like the ones taught at the school were in such demand, and where cheap labor—as deaf workers would probably be classified—was especially welcome in a foundering economy. In the years following the publication of *Daughters of Eve*, Pogson was enjoying “tokens of friendship” in both material and nonmaterial forms as a reward for her carefully calculated literary efforts. Gerrit increased her annuity to twelve hundred dollars a month when his father died in 1836. They exchanged warm letters until she died, all of which he carefully preserved. For the rest of her life, she traveled frequently to stay with friends around the country who welcomed her to their social gatherings, and she spent a decade living with her widowed sister Frances in Charleston until Pogson Smith's death in 1870.

In carefully selecting a topic, a cause, and an audience for *Daughters of Eve*, Pogson Smith had finessed a brilliant transformation from potential charitable claimant to charitable benefactor. The money, food, board, and social protection she enjoyed from friends and family along the Eastern Seaboard, actually forms of charitable aid, could be refigured as “tokens of friendship” extended as compensation for her own laudable charitable work on behalf of the “indigent deaf and dumb.” In a note at the front of *Daughters of Eve*, Pogson Smith expresses her thanks to the subscribers, “for enabling her to become an humble, but gratified instrument of contributing towards the moral and religious improvement, utility, and happiness of the truly destitute, the indigent *Deaf and Dumb*.” And she is not coy about who these subscribers are: “The contents of this work are only calculated for the partial eyes of *friendship*,” she says, after thanking the subscribers “with much personal regard” (3-4). Pogson Smith’s audience would always be disproportionately made up of friends, but so would the audiences of many women writers of the era, charged to sell advance copies of their work by subscription before risk-averse publishers would agree to print them. Pogson Smith approached this not as a disadvantage, but as an opportunity for her to market herself—*especially* to her friends—as a woman committed to sustaining domestic norms by addressing the threat of disabled bodies on maritime social and economic relationships, and therefore a woman deserving of not merely subscriptions to her literary work, but also forms of compensation that transcended the monetary. Scholars are right to point out that all women authors of this period demonstrate “the extraordinary fact that they had gained access to the published word,” despite the formidable barriers to their entry into the literary marketplace (Dobson and Zagarell 367). Pogson Smith’s savvy

professional calculations allowed her to publish her only novel, *Zarah, The Believing Jew*, in New York in 1837 and another drama, *The Arabians, or, the Power of Christianity*, in Philadelphia in 1844. But beyond these few successes in publishing, Pogson Smith's literary career is remarkable because, in addition to being published, she was able to use her writing to shore up tremendous social support from geographically diverse locations despite the fact that she lived outside domestic norms and across regional divides. She was shrewd enough to see that, if she marketed her work to the right group, her writing might allow her credibility as a "domestic" authority, transcend the sectional loyalties that dogged many women writers during her life, and compensate her both financially and, more importantly, in "tokens of friendship" from influential friends who could preserve her standard of living and protect her social respectability.

Pogson Smith accomplished on a small scale what literary giants like Sarah Josepha Hale would perfect over the course of a professional career—the careful melding in the public's mind of women writers with charitable initiatives that bolstered traditional domestic ideals and created capital in the nation's most prominent seaports. But if Pogson Smith's literary achievements were relatively modest, it is still notable that she used her literary work to support an educational institution that would transform life for many of the nation's deaf residents and the concerned parties who grappled with the challenge of disabled bodies. The New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb was tied, from its inception, to these larger literary and economic concerns of the country and the transatlantic world. One of the first and largest hubs of the Deaf World, and a major locus of Deaf culture and community, the Institution followed the tides of the maritime world to cross geographic and political bifurcations, and equipped

students to labor in both the industrializing North and the persistently agrarian and craftsmanship-based South. Supported by the efforts of women, including Pogson Smith, who positioned themselves to capitalize on the profits of charity work among the disabled, the school's skilled deaf graduates contributed value to centers of maritime commerce and strengthened the perception among white, Christian Americans (given expression in poems like those in *Daughters of Eve*) that theirs should be an exceptional nation of blessed bodies.

The benefactors' devotion to this ideal, however, began to work to the detriment of the school as the century wore on. Surrendering its pragmatic commitment to the growth of transatlantic maritime economies to the tide of xenophobia sweeping the nation in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the New York Institution abandoned its classes on sewing, horticulture, carpentry, and bookbinding in favor a strict military curriculum in the 1890s. Amid growing fears that deaf students, flashing signs in a mysterious language, were becoming clannish foreigners rather than more capable Americans, the school's administrators banned the use of American Sign Language. Without a full language in which to teach students marketable skills, the instructors at the school instead devoted full days to precise military drills and fruitless exercises in English enunciation. The suffering of deaf Americans during these "Dark Ages" of deaf education was also the nation's misfortune, as it lost a large number of employees specifically trained to provide competitively priced goods and services to employers and customers in maritime economies.³⁷

³⁷ This severely compromised method of education would plague Deaf Americans in the workplace. Robert M. Buchanan argues, "the reduction or suppression of sign language restrained the academic, vocational, and intellectual progress of many, if not most, deaf students [and] left them ill-prepared to

The period of education that Deaf Americans still call the “Golden Age of Sign,” exactly corresponding to the years the New York Institution developed and promoted a curriculum specifically adapted to the demands of a transnational maritime economy, was a brighter age for hearing supporters of deaf education as well. During the years 1818-1880, the school carefully analyzed the economic needs of a diverse group of people in communities along America’s waterways. As it trained deaf laborers to be at the point of profits reaped from the water trades, it promoted the growth of American maritime economies and the personal fortunes of potential donors who saw the material—not just spiritual—value of organized charity work among the d/Deaf. Individuals, families, and local governments were no longer saddled with the burden of providing for uneducated and impoverished deaf children and adults. Deaf language and culture flourished, becoming the foundation for a rich and thriving Deaf World. The school, and its supporters like Sarah Pogson Smith, capitalized on flows of commerce that transported capital, ideas, cultural texts, and bodies—able and disabled—around the Atlantic world.

Chapter 2, in part, has been accepted for publication and will appear in a special issue of *Legacy* 2013. Eyring, Mary Kathleen, University of Nebraska Press, 2013.

assume anything more than marginal positions in agriculture, industry, and commerce” (xiv). For a detailed examination of the vocational opportunities available to d/Deaf Americans in the last part of the nineteenth century, see Buchanan’s *Illusions of Equality: Deaf Americans in School and Factory 1850-1950*.

Chapter 3:

“A field of usefulness seemed spread out before me”:

Nancy Prince and the Economics of Evangelizing in Postemancipation Jamaica

In the preface to the second edition of her personal history, *A Black Woman's Odyssey Through Russia and Jamaica: The Narrative of Nancy Prince*, Nancy Prince wrote, “There are many benevolent societies for the support of Widows, but I am desirous not to avail myself of them, so long as I can support myself by my own endeavors. . . . Not wishing to throw myself on them, I take this method to help myself, as health and strength are gone” (xxvii). Her book provided a portion but not a life's supply of economic resources, and so time and want periodically tested Prince's commitment to eschewing the aid of benevolent societies. Each time Prince could have acceded to the implicit demands of New England's prosperous charitable managers, she renewed her resolve. Editions of *The Narrative of Nancy Prince* appeared in 1850, 1853, and 1856. The text itself, as much as the circumstances that accompanied these appearances, speaks to the complicated social and economic arrangements that animated charitable transactions in nineteenth-century America and the British Caribbean (never simply unidirectional extensions of aid, even if benefactors advertised them as such), and documents the material incentives attached to one form of charity, missionary work, that offered real financial profits only to those willing to approach it as a field of competitive labor.

Compared to the personal narratives of women of color born into slavery, like *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave* (1831), which could be disseminated to galvanize anti-slavery sentiment, Prince's account of her life as a free woman of color—

constrained only by poor health and economic need—received relatively little attention from contemporaneous readers and critics. It was not until the end of the twentieth century that the narrative began to attract the sustained attention of scholars. In 1988, Anthony G. Barthelemy included it in a volume of the Oxford/Schomburg series titled *Collected Black Women's Narratives*, inviting critiques of Prince's text as a commentary on race, hybridity, national identity, and emigration in the nineteenth century. More recently, it has been read as an example *par excellence* of travelogue, and particularly of nineteenth-century women's travel writing.¹ Tracing the many and diverse homes Prince claimed for varying lengths of time, some scholars find support for an argument that Prince was enchanted with what Susan Clair Imbarrato calls “travel in all its frustrating glory” (2).² In an essay in *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, Virginia Whatley Smith sees Prince's financial concerns as occasioning brief detours on a plucky traveler's path. “After providing for her impoverished family” upon her return from Russia, Whatley writes, “Prince sets off for new adventures in the Caribbean and West Indies” (209). I am inclined to read the events in the *Narrative* another way: For a woman saddled with economic responsibility, Nancy Prince's travels, and specifically her travels in the 1840s to perform charity work in postemancipation Jamaica, represent a means of—not a reprieve from—providing for herself and her impoverished family.

¹ In *Black and White Women's Travel Narratives*, Cheryl J. Fish considers Prince alongside Mary Seacole and Margaret Fuller in order to examine “comparatively and historically the political context, transnational interventions, and cultural critique embedded in these works” and make a case that “mobility and travel abroad to perform benevolent labor provided black women with contexts from which to make striking transnational contrasts and to intervene between nations and their laws” (14).

² In her book *Traveling Women: Narrative Visions of Early America*, Imbarrato very briefly compares Nancy Prince's *Narrative* to a number of other journals and letters representing the “varied geographical and social perspectives” of women who traveled “north and south along the Atlantic seaboard and west on the Ohio frontier” during the years 1700-1830 (2).

That is not to say that contemporary scholarship does not acknowledge the economic valences of Prince's writing, but too often Prince's incessant financial anxieties are viewed as complicating rather than motivating her travels. Jennifer Steadman calls Prince's multiple voyages examples of "ragged-edged travel," a designation meant to underscore the challenges women faced when they traveled not for leisure but "to support themselves, to serve their communities, to enter national and international political debates, to criticize social and political institutions, and to demonstrate their own and their gender's and race's fitness for the rigors of public life." Steadman very productively identifies "work-motivated trips" like Prince's two voyages to Jamaica among the peregrinations of nineteenth-century women travel writers, but no scholarship has yet explained how or why Prince selected charity work, specifically in the Protestant missions of Jamaica, as the best way to support herself financially (5). Missionary work could be but was not reliably profitable labor in the nineteenth century, and ultimately it did not prove to be so for Prince. Her *Narrative*—comprehensive when it describes social and economic conditions in her adopted homes, but cryptic when it touches on her personal life—offers only the following by way of explanation: "My mind, after the emancipation in the West Indies, was bent upon going to Jamaica. A field of usefulness seemed spread out before me" (48). As Prince was doubtless aware when, as a recent widow in a perilous financial situation, she made the decision to set sail for her first trip in 1840, the charity workers who enjoyed the greatest success in Jamaica approached it as a vocation—a "field" of labor where "usefulness" provided monetary compensation. To do this, they often worked under the auspices of Protestant churches based in the northern United States, winning material support for their missions of aid by making proselytizing

among newly emancipated laborers their ostensible focus, and figuring the amelioration of socioeconomic conditions in the area as a concomitant aim and a natural byproduct of religious conversion. Prince, whose objective in Jamaica was to establish a school “for the poor girls that were destitute,” recognized the necessity of participating in the incentive structure of this missionary organization in order to make her work among poor children profitable—or at the very least, feasible (58).

Steadman argues that Prince “traveled in search of economic and social opportunities, using travel to locate alternative markets for the labor and talent that were devalued at home, having found comfort and security the exclusive province of wealthier Americans” (26). I argue that postemancipation Jamaica promised economic and social opportunities to laborers who plied traditional for-profit trades, like needlework (the skill Prince practiced to bring in wages in Russia), as well as enterprises not typically considered profit-driven, like these missionary efforts. In this chapter, I will expand a conception of “economic opportunity” and “labor” in postemancipation Jamaica to include the labor of Protestant missionaries, especially white women and women of color like Prince, who found missionary work a “field of usefulness” only insofar as their proselytizing could yield a material as well as spiritual harvest. Prince’s frustration with her experience in Jamaica, and her inability to support herself with her work there, has been read as a criticism of disorganized, inefficient Protestant missions.³ In fact, I argue, Prince’s complaints, along with accounts of other women competing in Jamaica’s

³ Cheryl Fish, for example, speculates: “Nancy Prince may have found the method used by the class-leaders [working under the white ministers in Jamaican congregations] too full of ‘superstitions,’ as the idea of the spirit was elevated above the written gospel which was dear to her” (in Paravisini-Gebert and Romero-Cesareo 233). And in *A Stranger in the Village*, Farah J. Griffin and Cheryl Fish call appointments in the Jamaica missions, compared to jobs in other sectors, “less secure institutional position[s]” (49).

mission field, describe organizations that were ruthlessly efficient, hyper-competitive, and focused on profits to the extent that they often worked against the interests of people living in Jamaica and marginalized women and non-white charitable laborers. This aggressive business approach originated with women's benevolent societies in the northern United States and England that raised funds to support missionary efforts. These societies helped provide the means for a cohort of mobile, white mission leaders to transmit that competitive ethos to the Caribbean, which in turn became the workplace of marginalized charitable laborers like Prince. When Prince disavowed the methods of the region's most successful mission leaders, she denied herself the financial profits and nonmonetary benefits they controlled, and so turned to writing about her experiences to support herself. For Prince, publishing an account of her travels became a way to supplement the meager profits of her difficult charitable labor without submitting to the managers of New England's benevolent organizations. Her work, in charity and literature, shows the intertwined routes of the traveler, the charitable worker, the evangelist, the author, and the merchant. At times, it is impossible to distinguish these individual threads in a network of transatlantic trade that tied the fortunes of all maritime laborers—even charity workers—to the organizational and profit structures of competitive business.

“To Get a Higher Price for My Labor”: Finding a Wage, Finding a Home

A typical incident in Prince's account of her early life illuminates the economic anxieties—as prevalent in her *Narrative* as the racial, national, and domestic dynamics that receive more scholarly attention—that motivated her travels. In 1814, her mother's

third husband had just died, and Prince, fifteen years old, worked odd jobs with her brother George to support their widowed mother and her eight children. “We stayed with our mother until every resource was exhausted; we then heard of a place eight miles out of town, where a boy and girl were wanted,” she writes. “We both went and were engaged. We often went home with our wages, and all the comforts we could get” (5). Prince’s *Narrative* persistently documents a symbiosis between “home” and “wages.” In more sanguine circumstances, perhaps home is where the heart is. For Nancy Prince, home was where the wage was.

The details in Prince’s narrative make it difficult to characterize her travels, as Whately Smith does, as the result of her decision to “[set] off for new adventures.” Adventure was not among the many things young Prince’s life lacked, and her inclination as a grown woman was to relocate in pursuit of stability, both domestic and financial. Prince was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1799, the granddaughter of a man “stolen from Africa, when he was a lad,” and a woman “who was an Indian of this country” and “became a captive to the English, or their descendants” (Prince 1). She knew from her grandparents of the staggering costs of slavery, and she learned from her own life that even freedom could be circumscribed by racial prejudice and extreme economic need. Her mother outlived four husbands, including Prince’s father, and Prince began early in life to bear the burden of her family’s support. All of her working conditions were taxing; some were abusive. “I often looked at my employers,” she reflected, “and thought to myself, is this your religion?” (7). Prince’s grandfather, a devout Congregationalist, had taken her to church with him when she was young, and the

religious sentiments and motifs she absorbed there helped shape her perspective on labor, and, when she was able, motivated her to chart a new professional course.

Prince and her siblings were resourceful and creative as they found ways to bring home wages, but prevailing religious dogma put strict limits on the kind of work they could procure. They learned from painful experience that the wages of sin in religious communities were often inversely connected to the wages of work. In 1815, Prince's oldest sister Silvia "took it into her head to go to Boston, as a nursery girl, where she lived a few months and was then deluded away" (Prince 7). Brought up in poverty and under crushing personal responsibility for her own and her younger siblings' survival, Silvia Prince was attracted to prostitution as a way to make money, but perhaps also as a means of escaping the "hard labor" and "unkindness" that seemed to characterize most positions the Prince children secured. Even Nancy Prince took advantage of an altered economic climate at the end of the War of 1812 to advance professionally: "Soon as the war was over, I determined to get more for my labor" (5). Still, Prince writes of Silvia's effort to do the same, "To have heard of her death, would not have been so painful to me" (8). At great personal risk, Prince traveled to Boston in the winter to save her sister's "precious" soul from the clutches of sin—and redeem the valuable body of one of the Prince family's oldest and most capable laborers (10).

This event in Prince's *Narrative* has literary as well as historical counterparts. Lucy Brewer, the transgressive protagonist of Nathaniel Hill Wright's *The Female Marine* (published in installments beginning in 1815, the year Silvia Prince traveled to Boston), also comes to Boston in search of higher wages, and like Silvia, is ostensibly

duped into prostitution.⁴ Their circumstances, however, differ in notable ways. Lucy is pregnant when she flees to Boston to find wages and an alternative home, while Silvia had respectable employment before she gave up her position and associated home in search of a new source of wages and a new domestic arrangement. More importantly, Lucy's tragedy is presented as a moral one, while Silvia's—even in a narrative bookended and interlaced with expressions of Prince's Protestant faith—is first and foremost an economic one. Prince certainly considers the spiritual cost of her sister's depravity, but unlike the white Lucy Brewer, Silvia Prince belongs to a family of laborers already disenfranchised by their race even if their professional behavior is above reproach. Nancy Prince can ill afford a scandal that affects not simply the perceived “respectability” of her family, but, crucially, each individual member's ability to secure jobs in reputable households. When one of her siblings, at age seven, died of consumption, Prince praised the “mercy” of God in reducing the burden on her family's overtaxed resources (5). But Silvia's fate is worse than death; if she is “ruined,” as she claims, she threatens to ruin the fortunes of her entire family (9). Prince's religious views worked alongside the practical concerns of her day-to-day life, and her own experience as an economic provider for a large family demonstrated the correlation between the value of the untarnished soul and the earning potential of that soul's corporeal home.

But while Prince carefully attended to this correlation, and even went so far as to reclaim Silvia from the sin that would circumscribe her own and her family's future

⁴ Daniel A. Cohen's introduction to *The Female Marine and Related Works: Narratives of Cross-Dressing and Urban Vice in America's Early Republic* offers an illuminating perspective on the city and society in which Silvia Prince was searching for work, and suggests a number of reasons why a young woman in financial straits might engage in prostitution as a way to support herself in the absence of viable social safety nets.

professional opportunities, she grew weary of managing her siblings' various wages and homes, and of being held liable for their occupational missteps.⁵ “[W]ith a determination to do something for myself,” she writes, “. . . and after seven years of anxiety and toil, I made up my mind to leave my country” (15). Marriage provided the moment for Prince to realize this objective. She wed Nero Prince, one of twenty men of color who served in the tsar’s palace in St. Petersburg, in February of 1824, and sailed with him for Russia aboard the *Romulus* on April 14th. When she arrived, she began to make a home for herself in characteristic fashion: by making a wage. In addition to taking in children to board, Prince started a garment-making business.⁶ To expand her clientele, she became proficient in the languages spoken in the court and community, and employed a journeywoman and apprentices to help with the work. When the Empress started clothing her children in Prince’s linens, her work was suddenly “in great demand” (32). Freed from the necessity of providing for her siblings and relatively unconstrained, according to her report, by the racism that shaped the economic landscape in New

⁵ Under this strain, Prince understandably experienced some relief when two of her brothers went to sea. “My brother George and myself were very desirous to make our mother comfortable: he went to sea for that purpose,” she relates (11). A few years later, she writes of the second brother: “John left his place, and was several months on my hands again; finally, he made up his mind to go to sea; I was so thankful that he had concluded to do something, that I took two months’ wages in advance to fit him out for Liverpool” (14). Her brothers’ inclination and ability to make wages at sea ameliorated the conditions of Prince’s life on land even before she married a man working abroad, as Sandra Gunning observes, “to take advantage of the full range of mobility denied to her as a woman.” Gunning also notes that historians including W. Jeffrey Bolster “have demonstrated that black men could achieve relative economic and personal independence via a life at sea and that for early nineteenth-century blacks as a whole ‘maritime rhythms’ were thus ‘entwined in the family life, community structure, and the sense of self’” (“Nancy Prince and the Politics of Mobility” 44).

⁶ Taking children in to board, where they would help with domestic responsibilities in exchange for food and lodging (and perhaps, in Prince’s case, would assist her with aspects of her trade, such as taking orders for garments or delivering finished articles), was a material boon to Prince in Russia, and could also be a way for missionaries in Jamaica to supplement their meager salaries. Some white missionaries engaged black children in household chores in exchange for boarding them and supporting their religious education. Sponsoring organizations in the northern United States were supposed to provide funds towards the children’s support, but that funding waned during the middle of the nineteenth century and fell off entirely during the Civil War. For more, see *Letters from Jamaica 1858-1866*, ed. Charles G. Gosselink, pp. 40-41.

England, Prince celebrated her new home and the new form of wages that supported it. But the climate “did not agree” with her, and in poor health, she left St. Petersburg and sailed for Boston in August of 1833 (45). Her husband’s death precluded her return to Russia, and she was forced once more to find wages and establish a home.

Prince had labored productively in Massachusetts before, but she found that her old home had changed during her absence. Her mother and Silvia had died, many of her friends (and probably former employers) were also “gone to their long home,” and the religious community she identified with as a young woman “was in much confusion” (46). The changed social conditions and her own compromised health closed off old avenues of wage making to Prince. But the altered economic landscape of New England also suggested new forms of labor. During the nine years she spent in Russia, benevolent organizations in the northern United States—inspired by public support for temperance reform and abolition—had grown in number, in scope, and in funding.⁷ Prince saw a chance to make a home not with people in elevated social and financial circumstances, as she had as an adolescent domestic laborer, but with people of her race and socioeconomic background. She writes:

I am indebted to God for his great goodness in guiding my youthful steps; my mind was directed to my fellow brethren whose circumstances were similar to my own. I found many a poor little orphan destitute and

⁷ Susan M. Ryan documents the increase in benevolent organizations run by or involving women in the antebellum period, and ascribes it, in part, to “a collective racial guilt”: “By the antebellum period, slavery loomed so large in the national imagination that it became a key referent in discussions of a range of injustices, from the law’s disregard for the rights of married women to the plight of underpaid seamstresses and Irish day laborers. Moreover, the language of degradation and rescue had a distinctly hierarchical and color-coded quality; the ignorant and the destitute required ‘elevation’ out of darkness: ‘fallen’ women benefitted from the interventions of the respectable; and the new urban slums were dark space into which the light of reform must shine” (2, 4). In her *Narrative*, however, Nancy Prince was conspicuously silent on the matter of abolition in the United States. Perhaps, as Sandra Gunning argues, she preferred to enact her support “through a personal desire” to aid young children in postemancipation Jamaica (“Nancy Prince and the Politics of Mobility” 50).

afflicted, and on account of color shut out from all the asylums for poor children. At this my heart was moved, and I proposed to my friends the necessity of a home for such, where they might be sheltered from the contaminating evils that beset their path. For this purpose I called a meeting of the people and laid before them my plan: as I had had the privilege of assisting in forming an Asylum for such a purpose in St. Petersburg, I thought it would be well to establish one on the same principles, not knowing that any person had had a thought of anything of the kind. (46)

Up to this point in Prince's life, she made a wage in order to make a home. But in an economy that now included the labor of benevolent organizations (many managed and staffed by women), making a home with poor children now appeared as a viable way to make a wage.

Prince began her home for orphans with eight children, and appointed a board of seven women and a committee of twelve men "of standing" in the community to superintend (47). Prince had the experience, the motivation, and the desire to make the organization a success, but her effort became a difficult, and crucial, lesson to Prince that any charitable organization, in order to be successful, had to operate according to an economically viable business model. Prince's ambition and altruism were insufficient to guarantee the success of her enterprise: "At the end of three months the committee was dispensed with," she writes, "and for want of funds our society soon fell through" (47).⁸

⁸ Prince does not disclose what became of the orphans in her society's care. Presumably, they were again subject to whatever systems of aid had attended to them before they became the concern of her society. In a fascinating study of orphans and "foundlings"—children whose biological origins are never known—in nineteenth-century New York City, Julie Miller finds that "the only institution in antebellum New York that would accept foundlings was the public poorhouse, or almshouse, which was mandated by law to care for the city's destitute and homeless. Yet it had a reputation for terrible squalor" (3). She finds that the number of orphanages and institutions for foundlings increased in both New York and Boston after the Civil War, but even these institutions did not provide long-term solutions for children. Orphans, foundlings, and "asylum boys," Matthew A. Crenson finds, "were usually prepared to be placed out on indenture," and in the sense that the children had to develop marketable skills and be prepared to move frequently to mine that complicated connection between "home" and "wages," Prince could appreciate

This foray into the business of organized charity introduced Prince to the fundamental tension that would trouble her decade-long career as a charitable laborer. Her impulse was to help people whose lives had acquainted them with the hardship she had known as young girl, but in order to accomplish this aim, she needed to engage in a competitive economy that became increasingly aggressive and profit-driven as charitable operations became more numerous and more expansive in their geographic reach, and particularly as they looked to benefit from the sponsorship of local churches by participating in their incentive structures. Suffering personally for want of funds as her home for girls failed for the same reason, Prince made the choice to travel to Jamaica as a missionary in 1840. Her motivations, which I will examine presently, were complex and yet entirely rational. But as she made a home in Jamaica that depended on the wages of this work, she found that the mission's financial incentives were hard-won, and often too meager to justify the effort.

Emancipation and the Evangelist: The Changing Field of Missionary Labor in Jamaica

When Prince arrived in Jamaica, she stepped foot on a land in the throes of social, political, and economic transformation after the emancipation of the island's enslaved laborers during the 1830s. One constant throughout all the turmoil, however, was the presence of missionaries. During the first half of the eighteenth century, these missionaries were generally Anglican, as were the majority of white slaveowners, and

from her own childhood experience the difficult circumstances facing the "asylum boy [or girl]" (Crenson 7).

while they might try to recall a sense of religious fervor to lapsed Anglican planters, they generally targeted enslaved laborers. As the century wore on and especially during the nineteenth century, the Anglican missionaries were joined by Moravians, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Congregationalists—and it is primarily these denominations that I refer to when I use the designation “Protestant.”⁹ These missionaries were black and white, men and women; they hailed from North America, Great Britain, and Europe; and they represented a spate of denominations. These evangelists had made homes and wages among Jamaica’s enslaved laborers, and they were therefore positioned to capitalize immediately on the promises of emancipation in 1834. On an island in flux, their presence provided a certain historical continuity, but it did not necessarily inspire conversion.

White, male Anglican missionaries began to labor in Jamaica in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, but realized only modest success among the enslaved laborers of the island. They faced stiff opposition from colonial planters, who worried that proselytizing might foment unrest and rebellion among their slaves. They also faced the daunting task of persuading enslaved laborers with scant discretionary time or resources to devote a portion of both to the building of God’s kingdom in the midst of their squalor. And, most significantly, the missionaries overestimated their own centrality in the “conversion” process of individuals who had already been forced to adapt their own

⁹ This catalogue is not comprehensive, but the degree of religious discord in America and England during the first half of the nineteenth century meant that the denominations themselves were in flux. For example, Prince mentions Wesleyan missionary schools in her *Narrative*, but during the 1840s, the ministers and laymen who would form the Wesleyan Methodist Connection were still in the process of cutting ties with the Methodist Episcopal Church, and would have been considered, if they came to Jamaica during this time, Methodist missionaries. This list represents the largest denominations, and the denominations from which various splinter groups would have absorbed their proselytizing ideologies.

belief systems to the foreign values of the slave ship and colonial plantation. “The passage from traditional religions to Christianity was arguably the single most significant event in African American history,” Silvia Frey and Betty Wood argue. This “passage,” however, was “the product of reciprocal process rather than of conversion by confrontation” (xii). Africans and Afro-Caribbeans responded to the teaching of Protestant missionaries, and to their own economic and social conditions, by incorporating certain tenets of Christian doctrine into their own well-established belief systems developed throughout centuries in Africa. Nancy Prince’s experience of absorbing patterns of religious worship from her grandfather in Massachusetts is only one example of the generational transmission of spirituality that produced forms of worship in America and the British Caribbean that reflected but did not strictly adhere to the doctrines of Protestant missionaries.¹⁰ In a letter to the clergy and laity of plantation colonies in 1727, the Anglican bishop of London lamented that so many African-born slaves were “accustomed to the Pagan Rites and Idolatries of their own Country and prejudiced against all other Religions, particularly the Christian, as forbidding that licentiousness which is usually practis’d among the Heathen” (Gibson 5-6). Even the quantifiable “success” of baptizing an enslaved laborer did not always read as success to Protestant missionaries who, unable to convince converts to disavow the faith of their fathers, saw a wholly distinct form of Christianity grow up around their religious labors.

¹⁰ The reality that white and black evangelists—much less white slaveowners—were seldom able to actually impose their religious belief systems on enslaved laborers gives the lie to the popular pro-slavery argument of the early nineteenth century, which held, as Susan Ryan puts it, “that [slaveowners’] actions were benevolent not only because American slavery had brought about the Christianization of Africans but also because members of this ‘naturally’ dependent race fared better under the tutelage of their white owners” (3).

But even as they “signally failed to appreciate,” as Frey and Wood observe, “that slaves found it difficult, if not impossible, to identify closely with either them or their version of Protestant Christianity,” missionaries of some denominations found more success than others among Jamaica’s enslaved laborers (64). The Anglicans, despite enjoying a virtual monopoly on missionary activity in the first half of the eighteenth century, saw their efforts stymied by antagonistic planters and apathetic slaves, and exerted relatively little influence on the religious practices of Afro-Caribbeans. The Moravians, however, began to effect the widespread conversion of slaves to Christianity, and provided the model for other denominations’ missionary efforts among emancipated laborers in the mid-nineteenth century. An offshoot of the Lutheran Church, the Moravian Church began sending laborers to proselytize in the British Caribbean in 1754.¹¹ They made inroads in plantation communities in Jamaica in two ways. First, they flouted the racial hierarchies that disciplined the efforts of Anglican preachers, insisting on forming a “universal fellowship” within their church, where black and white congregants would mingle “in the manner of good friends” (Frey and Wood 83, Bossard 280). Second, the Moravians advertised an intentionally external and ceremonial (rather than internal and textual) brand of religious worship, one where rituals of fellowship and piety superseded read or recited public devotions. The practices they observed—the kiss of greeting or peace, baptism by immersion, the ritualistic washing of parishioners’ feet, and blessing through the laying on of hands—resonated among groups of laborers who

¹¹ Before this, the Moravians had opened missions in the Dutch Caribbean, beginning in 1732. They planned but failed to establish a mission in South Carolina in the 1730s, and the station they set up in Jamaica in 1754 was their first in the British plantation colonies. For more, see J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas Fratrum 1722–1957*, pp. 13–154.

practiced and would not renounce the sacred rituals of their parents' and grandparents' tribal religions. Their commitment to equality, however, had always been primarily theological and largely abstract, rarely inspiring Moravian clerics to seriously agitate for abolition. When abolition came in 1834, partially in response to the slave uprising of 1831 and perhaps even to some degree because Christian doctrines had, as planters feared, equipped Afro-Atlantic peoples with what Frey and Wood call "an ideology of resistance" (1), the Moravians had no exclusive claim on the loyalties of the emancipated laborers. The missionaries of competing denominations—Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists—were hungry to arrogate the Moravians' most successful methods and apply them with people supposed to be on the brink of greater wealth and personal autonomy.¹²

The incremental emancipation of slaves in Jamaica from 1834-1838 that occasioned what Thomas Holt describes as "the vast social upheavals and transformations that such a transition entailed" opened a new and potentially lucrative market of potential converts. It also demanded new organizational models for missionary work. These models had to adapt to social and political structures destabilized by the competing interests of colonial governors and attorneys general, planters, and black laborers in varying stages of manumission. The ideal of emancipation, envisaged in 1837

¹² This slave uprising, also called "The Baptist War," waged across ten days and mobilized as many as 60,000 of Jamaica's 300,000 enslaved laborers. Mary Turner calls the rebellion "sketchily organized and rapidly suppressed," but to the extent that it was organized, that order can be credited to the black Baptist preacher Samuel Sharpe, born in the parish of St. James in 1801. He "united the Native Baptist traditions of slave leadership and free thought with this radical Christian tradition of principled resistance" (159, 199). The rebellion was one of a number of events that pointed toward the benefits of abolition and inspired the political movements that led to the emancipation of Jamaica's slaves in the 1830s. For more, see Turner's *Slaves and Missionaries: the Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787-1834* and Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*.

by Britain's colonial secretary Lord Glenelg as a law that would guarantee "personal freedom, in that full and unlimited sense of the term in which it is used in reference to the other subjects of the British Crown," was supposed to ensure that no vestige of racial discrimination tinged public welfare initiatives including poor relief and vagrancy laws (qtd. in *Essence of the Contract* 34). That ideal did not transfer neatly to reality. "By mid-century," Holt writes, "Glenelg's confident embrace of political democracy had given way to mounting anxiety that black political power in Jamaica might actually be used in black people's political and economic interests. From that point forward, colonial officials sought ways to blunt the impact of black political participation, first through changes in Jamaica's governmental structure in 1854, then through what amounted to a poll tax on voters in 1859, and finally by abolishing Jamaican self-government altogether in 1866" (36). The leaders of Protestant missions in Jamaica found a way to capitalize on the discontent engendered by the gap between the opportunities emancipated laborers were promised and the political and economic challenges they realized. Focusing their efforts on the most impoverished of Jamaica's inhabitants, these leaders encouraged the charitable laborers they managed, including Nancy Prince, to advertise conversion as a spiritual transformation that could ameliorate material conditions.

And in fact, well-funded missions did have the resources to ameliorate material conditions, but these resources typically functioned as incentives for the most successful missionary preachers (in terms of number of individuals baptized and attendance at church meetings and classes) rather than compensation for poor missionaries like Prince or aid for impoverished converts in Jamaica. Missionaries marginalized by race or gender were especially vulnerable to exploitation when funds were doled out among

Jamaican missions. The promises of salaries, room and board, and other forms of support that motivated laborers to commit to missionary work were not fundamentally false, but they obscured the competitive incentive structure that made economic survival as a missionary unlikely for all but a few white men.

Prince first heard these promises from the Reverend David Ingraham, a Congregational missionary who spent just over two years in Jamaica before he came to Massachusetts in search of fresh companions (in reality, subordinates) for his mission.¹³ “He lectured in the city,” Prince writes, “on the results arising from the emancipation at the British Islands.” Ingraham’s goal was to recruit missionaries to “go there to labor” at his station near Kingston, and his methods were aggressive. He called on Prince personally to “persuade” her to accompany him, assuring her that a formal education was not a prerequisite of the job; “the moral condition of the people was very bad,” he said, “and needed labor aside from anything else” (48). When Prince set sail for Ingraham’s Jamaica mission on the ship *Scion* on November 16, 1840, she traveled toward a

¹³ Ingraham attended the Lane Seminary in Cincinnati (where Lyman Beecher served as president from 1832-1850 and his daughter Harriet Beecher met her husband Calvin Stowe, a professor of sacred literature). His ardent abolitionism antagonized his superiors at the Seminary and motivated him to move with a group of like-minded men, dubbed the “Lane Rebels,” to the Oberlin Institute in 1835. At Oberlin, Ingraham met his wife, Elizabeth Hartson, one of the women whose enrollment made Oberlin the first coeducational college in America. (It was also the first American institution of higher education to admit black students.) Ingraham’s poor health inspired him to seek warmer climates (see Gosselink 13-14). In the winter of 1836–7, he took Elizabeth to Cuba, where, according to James Harris Fairchild (writing in 1883), “he conceived the idea of establishing a self-supporting mission among the colored people of Jamaica, recently emancipated” (135). With his wife, he moved to Jamaica in 1838, and spent the next three years before his death in 1841 recruiting missionaries to one of the first American missions (according to Fairchild, the very first) to be established in Jamaica after emancipation. The sources that concur with Fairchild’s assertion, however, ignore crucial details. For example, the *Missionary Herald* of 1871 calls Ingraham “the first missionary from America to the emancipated negroes of Jamaica” (376). That assertion is patently misleading, since Ingraham was never without companions in Jamaica, including his wife, who accompanied him on his first voyage there. The nineteenth-century histories that laud Ingraham as a lone pioneer rather than crediting his wife and other laborers (among them, Nancy Prince and several white women) demonstrate the extent to which white mission leaders were able to reap the material and social rewards for the efforts of the marginalized people who labored under them, as I will argue later in the chapter. For more on Elizabeth Hartson’s biography, see Gosselink 14.

workplace that would value her labor as a free woman of color much differently than it valued the esteemed Reverend's. Her compensation from the London Missionary Society, Ingraham's sponsoring organization, depended on her willingness to employ his methods.¹⁴ His own daughter, Sarah Ingraham Penfield, saw her salary withheld and lost her station in Jamaica to a rival preacher when she and her husband pioneered new methods of evangelizing and offering charitable aid. If Prince sailed for Jamaica under the impression that Ingraham would protect his protégée as she found innovative ways to administer charity, she was mistaken. In a competitive market that disproportionately valued the contributions of men and largely ignored the complicated social milieu in which potential converts lived, Prince (like Sarah Ingraham after her) sailed for a "field of usefulness" only to find herself on a field of international political and economic contest, less a scion than a serf.¹⁵

The Jamaica Mission: A Transatlantic Network of Capitalists, Workers, and Converts

¹⁴ I will describe the London Missionary Society's origins and organization in the paragraphs below.

¹⁵ This was literally the case for some groups of marginalized laborers who sailed to Jamaica with the expectation of making a wage. Prince describes their plight upon arriving in the country and finding that their personal freedoms were to be held in ransom until they could make a living. In Kingston, Prince writes, "there were in the House of Correction three hundred culprits; they are taken from there, to work on plantations. I went to the Admiral's house, where the emigrants find a shelter until they can find employment, then they work and pay for their passage. Many leave their homes and come to Jamaica under the impression that they are to have their passage free, and on reaching the island are to be found, until they can provide for themselves." She goes on, "How the mistake originated, I am not able to say, but on arriving here, strangers poor and unacclimated, find the debt for passage money hard and unexpected. It is remarkable that whether fresh from Africa, or from other islands, from the south or from New England, they all feel deceived on this point. I called on many Americans and found them poor and discontented,—rueing the day they left their country, where, notwithstanding many obstacles, their parents lived and died,—a country they helped to conquer with their toil and blood; now shall their children stray abroad and starve in foreign lands" (55). Prince would discover that missionary work, like other forms of labor, also obscured incentive structures in order to lure marginalized laborers—perhaps, like the mariners I describe in Chapter 4, a "motley crew" that represented the multiethnic nature of circumatlantic labor—into exploitative professional positions.

The hyper-competitive conditions in which Nancy Prince worked in Jamaica can only be fully appreciated if I first describe the participants in the transatlantic market of souls—including the participants whose aggressive approach to missionary work created and perpetuated these conditions, and the diverse network of people laboring under their management. When he set out to persuade Nancy Prince to join him in Jamaica, Reverend Ingraham did not select her randomly: her gender and especially her race made her an ideal missionary companion. Another of the Moravians' successful innovations, copied by other churches, was their practice of enlisting people of color to preach and help convert their brethren in the British Caribbean. Among enslaved, poor black women and children wary of the advances of white male preachers, women of color could be particularly useful ambassadors for Protestant churches. They could gain footholds in plantation communities where white preachers, foreigners in the social milieu and unfamiliar with black laborers' religious beliefs and practices, failed. "The colored people give more readily, and are less suspicious of imposition, if one of themselves recommends the measure," Prince observed shortly after her arrival in Jamaica. "[T]his the missionaries understand very well, and know how to take advantage of it" (53). Both men and women of color became "able, articulate leaders," argue Frey and Wood, who "arose from the ranks to give emerging Afro-Christianity a more indigenous character" (114). Often, as Frey and Wood imply here, these missionaries were active rather than passive or coerced participants in Christianizing efforts. But whether they volunteered or were recruited, like Prince, to help spread the message of the gospel, their involvement in missionary efforts helmed by white men gave the churches' enterprises the look of adaptable, organic organizations rather than imported bureaucracies. When the

Moravians achieved considerable success by installing African-Americans or Afro-Caribbeans in positions of leadership, other churches took notice—and followed suit. The black leaders thus anointed became some of the most practiced and influential Protestant missionaries in the Caribbean.

One of these leaders was George Liele, born into slavery in Virginia in 1750, who became an unusually powerful missionary in the American South and the British Caribbean over the course of a life devoted to travel and preaching. Liele credited the “natural fear of God” he acquired in his youth to his father, who was regarded “both by white and black people” as “the only black person who knew the Lord in spiritual way in that country” (Letter of 18 Dec. 1791). Under the influence of his master, Henry Sharp, Liele’s belief in God began to take on the more formal aspects of the Baptist faith. The minister Matthew Moore baptized him in 1773 and, at Moore’s urging, Liele began to “exercise his gift” for preaching at a quarterly meeting (Letter of 18 Dec.). Within the relatively democratic structure of the Baptist church, Liele was eligible to hold a leadership position, and he was licensed as a probationer soon after his baptism. Sharp allowed—even encouraged—Liele to preach to his fellow bondspeople on plantations in Georgia and South Carolina before he freed him sometime before the Revolutionary War began. Liele built a sizable congregation in the vicinity of Sharp’s plantation before he fled Savannah with the British when it was evacuated in 1782.¹⁶ He proselytized even as a refugee on the sea, so that by the time he arrived in Kingston, Jamaica, he had a handful of poor white converts with whom to form the first Baptist church in Kingston, a church

¹⁶ Among those who regularly attended Liele’s First African Church of Savannah were future leaders of the African Protestant Christian community in Georgia, including David George. For more, see Milton C. Sernett, *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, p. 44.

that grew to be several hundred strong by 1791 and included mostly enslaved laborers and free people of color. His success in spreading the Afro-Baptist movement in Jamaica demonstrated the influence that black preachers could have on the laborers of sugar and mountain plantations, and white mission leaders eager to expand their congregations attempted to leverage the social power of black missionaries and preachers like Liele. David Ingraham may have seen in Nancy Prince a savvy, hardworking woman with experience living and laboring abroad and an affinity for charitable activity. Much more clearly, he saw a woman of color whose gender and race, combined with her demonstrated professional acumen, equipped her for work he could not perform as a white man. But by recruiting Prince to complement his ministry, Ingraham, not Prince, stood to gain most. His race and position, liabilities as he strove for credibility among enslaved and freed laborers, ultimately qualified him to command the profits—social and material—of Prince’s missionary labor.¹⁷

But the partnership, even if it struck Ingraham as inspired, was doomed from the start. Ingraham’s years in Jamaica and the tradition of white Protestant missionary work on the island had taught him to approach his work circuitously, to use black surrogates as liaisons between his church and communities of potential converts or risk scaring them off. Prince approached her work in Jamaica, like all her professional commitments, head-

¹⁷ In this sense, Prince and Liele are not exactly parallel examples. Prince’s experience, of finding her ability to chart her own professional course in the Jamaica mission and to make money curtailed by her race and gender, is the more typical one. Liele, on the other hand, became a powerful religious leader in Jamaica. “A man of unique leadership skills,” Frey and Wood write, Liele was able “to maneuver successfully for his own measure of power.” He had to work hard—even aggressively—to claim this power, but he proved it was possible. “A strategy of personal diplomacy with powerful planters, who protected him and his followers, was a key element in his ability to use evangelical religion as a vehicle for expansion and redefinition of leadership roles” (115). Liele is, perhaps, the exception that proves the rule. His ability to parlay relationships with planters into personal and ecclesiastical success made him, as Frey and Wood acknowledge, “unique.”

on. Her object, she baldly announced, was to “aid, in some small degree, to raise up and encourage the emancipated inhabitants, and teach the young children to read and work, to fear God, and put their trust in the Savior” (50). Her approach was to help people, using religion as one way to encourage and support poor emancipated laborers. In this objective, she clashed fundamentally with Ingraham. His goal was to baptize people, and if religious conversion happened to provide financial and social support, so much the better. Even among other white American missionaries in Jamaica, Ingraham had a reputation for approaching missionary work as a cutthroat business. He recognized that funds from the United States were limited, and doled out to the leaders with the largest congregations. One missionary, Ralph Tyler, complained that Ingraham made more money than other American preachers in the area because he was “too free in admitting to the church” (qtd. in Kenny 80).¹⁸ But in treating missionary work as a competitive business, Ingraham was not nursing a paranoia or acting on a delusion; he was acknowledging a fact.¹⁹

Ingraham was one of the first American missionaries to establish himself in postemancipation Jamaica, but he did not enjoy a monopoly on the market of souls for long. Drove of missionaries flocked to Jamaica in the late-1830s, and even some of Ingraham’s own companions, laborers he had specifically sought out and recruited in the United States (including Ralph Tyler), helped to stoke the competitive professional

¹⁸ It is particularly notable that Tyler would criticize Ingraham, since it was Ingraham who had recruited Tyler to the mission. The two knew each other at Oberlin College, where Tyler was a student in the seminary when Ingraham arrived with his band of “Lane Rebels.” When Ingraham asked Tyler and three other men to come to Jamaica to assist him with the work, all arrived with their wives in 1839. But once Tyler was a laborer in the mission, as this quote makes evident, he saw Ingraham as a competitor rather than a mentor.

¹⁹ For more on the tension between Tyler and Ingraham and other missionaries’ frustrations with Ingraham, see Gale L. Kenny, *Contentious Liberties: American Abolitionists in Post-Emancipation Jamaica, 1834–1866*, pp. 79–81. See also Paravisini-Gebert and Romero-Cesareo, p. 241 n.14.

atmosphere that singed even the mission's white leadership—and scorched its lowest ranks. White women and women of color were especially vulnerable in the mission's fiery professional atmosphere, but Ingraham was shrewd enough to see that even he was not impervious to the pressure. Prince sailed without Ingraham to Jamaica and then met him there, and as she describes their reunion, she glances across this provocative detail: “On the 11th of April I arrived at Kingston, and was conducted to the Mico Institutions, where Mr. Ingraham directed me to find him; he had lost his pulpit and his school, but Mr. Venning, the teacher, kindly received me” (52). In the unforgiving environment Ingraham helped create, not even the mighty could afford to forget that this form of charitable labor had all the features of a for-profit enterprise: executives, monetary incentives, a bottom line, and stiff competition. If an idealistic missionary forgot this reality, a pragmatic Mr. Venning invariably stepped up to remind him of it.²⁰

Missionaries in Jamaica faced, as this account would suggest, two primary forms of pressure: economic and social. Especially in the years immediately following emancipation, missionaries labored under tremendous financial strain. In order for them to be sustainable, “fields of usefulness” like the one Prince sought in Jamaica needed to be fields that yielded monetary as well as use value. “During the first few years of [Ingraham's] mission,” James Fairchild reported in 1883, “missionaries relied almost wholly upon their own field for support, and to a considerable extent upon the work of their own hands” (136). Most missionaries learned a skill before they arrived in the Caribbean, and they were prepared to ply their trade when business slumped (much like

²⁰ Charles Venning was an Englishman who came to Jamaica to work on a sugar estate. While he was there, he “had a change of heart,” and switched his profession to teaching. Not long after, he applied to join Ingraham's mission. He drew the attention of his superiors and other missionaries not as much for his teaching as for his marriage to an Afro-Jamaican woman (Gosselink 209).

Paul, the itinerant missionary-cum-tentmaker of the ancient Mediterranean world). Ingraham was a “skillful mechanic,” and Prince could make and sell clothes if she needed to; she may well have done so, although she does not mention it in her short account of her time in Jamaica (135). Additionally, laborers in Ingraham’s mission had to develop practical skills to supplement their specialties. “They built their own mission houses and school-houses and chapels,” Fairchild writes (136). Even after the mission became larger and more stable during Ingraham’s tenure, missionaries in Jamaica would continue to live off a combination of wit and wages. Sarah Ingraham, who should have enjoyed the fruits of her father’s efforts to expand and stabilize the mission when she became a missionary near Kingston in 1858, instead grappled with many of the same anxieties that beset him and his companions. And in some ways, her experience was harder. The intervening years allowed the competitive tendencies (including gender and racial discrimination) of the mission to congeal, so that the legacy David Ingraham left to his daughter was a professional landscape in which—regardless of skill or tenacity—only a select few could succeed.

Like her parents, Sarah studied at Oberlin College in Ohio, earning a degree in literature before she married Thornton Bigelow Penfield in August of 1858 and returned with him in December to her birthplace. She was three years old when she left Jamaica (with Nancy Prince, who sailed with Sarah and her family to New York and then stayed with the Ingrahams before travelling to raise funds for her second voyage to Jamaica), and nineteen when she returned. Contemporaneous accounts made note of Sarah’s heritage—“the daughter of Rev. Mr. Ingraham, deceased, one of the first missionaries from this country to the emancipated people of Jamaica”—but no welcoming party in

Jamaica assembled to receive her as a returning hero (“American Missionary”). When they arrived at the Oberlin station, an area of the mission to the northwest of Kingston, Sarah and Bigelow instead met a chilly reception.²¹ “There was nothing for us to live on or with,” Sarah wrote to her mother-in-law. “I have been obliged to scrimp before but never as I have since we came here” (Letter of 3 Jan. 1859).²² Under these circumstances, Sarah explored the option Nancy Prince had tested in Russia. She probed the same connection between home and wages that Prince spent her early life mining, and took in children of color to board. “We did not intend to take so large a family so soon upon our hands,” Sarah wrote, “but it seemed unavoidable, as we hoped it would be a blessing to the children, we said let them come and the Lord will provide for us.” In fact, the children were a blessing to the Penfields as they provided unpaid domestic and farm labor. Sarah, like Prince, would rely as a young, mobile woman on resourcefulness, a natural professional instinct, and a specialized form of knowledge born of travel and hard experience. “We shall have to economize closely,” she quickly ascertained, “to keep our heads above water” (Letter of 3 Jan. 1859). She was prepared to do so, but she was not prepared for the professional rivalries and diminishing funds that would make even scrupulous economizing fruitless.

Both Prince and Sarah Penfield travelled as missionaries to Jamaica under the impression that they would be compensated financially for their labor. Both would discover equal parts truth and error in that assumption. Sarah’s expectation that her hard labor would steadily yield commensurate material rewards proved grossly misguided.

²¹ “Bigelow” was Thornton’s preferred moniker.

²² All letters from Thornton Bigelow Penfield and Sarah Ingraham Penfield are from Charles G. Gosselink, ed., *Letters From Jamaica, 1858-1866*.

“In the course of two or three years,” she optimistically predicted, “I think we shall have quite a cozy little home here” (Letter of 28 Jan. 1859). But three years later, the cozy little home had not materialized, and dreams of it were vanishing. The Penfields had long articulated support of abolition, in Ohio and in the Oberlin station in Jamaica, but they had not considered how the war to realize it in the United States would disrupt all service industries—including charity work in the Caribbean. “Many articles of food, especially those which are imported, and almost everything made of cotton [is] being raised to such high prices” a wiser Bigelow wrote to his parents. “This, however, would not affect us much but for the fact that our salary is quite in arrears and that what little we get comes very irregularly and with great difficulty” (Letter of 30 Oct. 1862). Their salary, always meager, appeared sporadically and in steadily diminishing denominations as the pre-war and wartime economy flagged. As laborers who had chosen to reap their wages from the profits of charitable activity, the Penfields were forced to realize that charity was not performed in a vacuum; it followed the fortunes of larger international market trends.

Eighteen years earlier, Prince affirmed that her first priority was to “raise up and encourage the emancipated inhabitants,” but she had made the crucial connection, as the Penfields had, between raising up the poor and raising her own standard of living. Life had made her a clear-eyed realist. In a brief aside in her *Narrative*, she states the obvious, a point hardly in need of elaboration: “The people promised to pay me for my services,” she writes, and so she served, “expecting they would pay me” (50, 64). Her expectation was warranted, but not reliably met. In order to attract and maintain qualified laborers like Prince, missions needed to generate revenue, but they struggled to do so

without alienating new and potential congregants. In the late-eighteenth century, the Anglican cleric W. Stanford tried and failed to convince Jamaicans to give up their traditional religions in favor of Christianity, in large part because they dismissed his efforts as a tawdry attempt to extract from them the three-dollar baptism fee. Although the sum was supposed to go some distance toward supporting local missionary operations, it now seemed to inhibit the success of the enterprise. The fee was abolished for a time, and then a new system of reduced fees was introduced in the area.²³ By the time Prince arrived in Jamaica, the price list for various ordinances was convoluted and volatile, a result of mission leaders probing the limits of their congregants' purses and tolerance as they attempted to determine the market price for their intangible products. "Some pay fifty cents, and some more, for being baptized," Prince writes. "[T]hey receive a ticket as a passport into the church, paying one mark a quarter, or more, and some less, but nothing short of ten pence . . . They must attend their class once a week, and pay three pence a week . . . besides the sums they pay once a month at communion" (75). Clearly, profit-hungry mission leaders were trying to extract the maximum dollar amount possible from their impoverished disciples, but since all fee systems, no matter how creatively itemized, had to be nominal enough not to deter prospective converts, they were insufficient to support growing religious organizations. And so, in order to lure charitable laborers like Prince with promises of pay, mission leaders looked beyond the Caribbean for financing. The islands were connected to North America and Great Britain through commerce, these professional evangelists reasoned; why should they not be connected by the wages of charity also?

²³ See Frey and Wood 133.

At approximately the same time that Stanford and his companions did away with the baptismal fee, missionaries began to solicit the support of sponsoring organizations in England and America. And in order to claim the profits these organizations supplied, missionaries at the lower ranks needed to comply with the institutional practices put in place by mission leaders. One of the largest and most influential of these organizations was the London Missionary Society, a non-denominational group formed in England in 1795 with the objective of spreading Christianity in the British colonies, from Calcutta to the Caribbean. The managers of the Society were catholic in their theological approach, leaving it “to converts from among the heathen to adopt that form of Church Government which to them should seem most agreeable to the Word of God” (“London Missionary” 355). They were more discriminating in the administration of their funds. The Society began operating in Jamaica in 1834, doling out financial resources supplied by membership fees and the voluntary contributions of individuals and congregations.²⁴ Society leaders found ways to quantify ministers’ and missionaries’ success, and kept careful note of relevant statistics for each of the twenty-eight stations they supported. They published for the consideration of current and potential donors each building’s maximum capacity and average attendance for meetings and Sunday schools. These documents made it painfully obvious which ministers “succeeded” according to these measures, and which ones foundered. The Reverend C.A. Wookey filled eighty percent of his building in Royal Flat on any given Sunday, while the Reverend A.P. Thomas in

²⁴ One item in the 1826 *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East*, based in London, instructs subscribers on the proper form of a donation to the society by will. Either “money or stock,” the article reads, “may be given by Will” (xvi). The Society apparently collected enough money in this way to necessitate such instructions. And, as I discuss below, women’s benevolent organizations were remarkably successful at collecting material support for foreign missions, and became essential to the operations of various missionary societies.

Dry Harbour filled barely one-fifth (356). This information was valuable to the Society's administrators, who apportioned funds according to the size of each minister's congregation. Even the way this information was publicized and presented in pamphlet form to influential parties, with attendance broken down by station and by minister rather than as a general report with an aggregate sum, fostered rivalry among preachers and forced them to affix a dollar amount to every seat filled.

The London Missionary Society was one of the largest organizations financing missionary labors in the Caribbean, but it was not the only one. Although these organizations varied somewhat in their scope and ostensible purpose, they shared one crucial feature: they all depended on the organized efforts of women to raise and distribute funds. A group of British Baptists formed the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, and at the suggestion of George Liele, began directing funds to the Caribbean. They financed the first Baptist mission on the island, at Montego Bay, in 1814.²⁵ In his 1825 account of the sources of this money, the treasurer of the Baptist Missionary Society credited Mrs. White, president of the Dover Female Society, for raising ten pounds, the Female Missionary Association of Camberwell for raising thirty-seven pounds from subscriptions and another seventy-five pounds from the sale of their "fancy work," Miss H. Kiernan for donating eight pounds from the sale of "pocket books," and "a few young ladies" in Dr. Newman's congregation in London for raising seventeen pounds "for the mission" (*Missionary Herald* 366-67). North American missionary societies appeared soon after the formation of these British societies, and generally

²⁵ For more, see Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, p. 21.

mimicked their organizational structure and operations.²⁶ This included a multid denominational composition and reliance on the contributions of women.

In a comprehensive overview of women's fundraising for missionary efforts in India, the Caribbean, and Asia, the Boston-based charitable laborer Isabel Hart acknowledged the necessity of this work—for missionaries and for the women themselves. Financially, she avers, "The missionary work had come to a point where it must have this help" (9). But the arrangement between missionary societies and women fundraisers turned out to be transactional in addition to charitable. "*Here* the awakening of womanhood was almost as marked," she writes of this serviceable relationship. "She claimed higher culture—she wanted specific training—she knocked at the door of venerable and of progressive colleges for admission—she peered into science—she studied and practiced the arts—she wanted more room to see, to breathe, to range—she asked for wider opportunities, for better work—she entered into the various activities and avocations of life." Missionary work provided the chance for interested, capable, and discontented women to transform avocations into vocations. "In all the multiform benevolences and holy activities of the life, we discern a voice, saying: '*The Master is here and calleth for thee.*' Because she had heard that cry, and in response has said, 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!' the various missionary societies have their existence and work" (8, 10). Educated women found ways to acquire "specific training" and apply it to

²⁶ The New York Missionary Society was founded in 1796, the Northern [New York] Missionary Society in 1797, the Missionary Society of Connecticut in 1798, the Massachusetts Missionary Society in 1799, the Standing Committee on Missions of the Presbyterian Church in 1802, the Missionary Society of Rhode Island in 1803, the Western Missionary Society in Pittsburg in 1803, and the Standing Committee on Missions of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1806. For more information on these organizations, see Charles L. Chaney, *The Birth of Missions in America*, pp. 158–74.

missionary work, a field that became more organized and competitive as a result of their aggressive professional approach.²⁷

In fact, societies comprised of intent and specialized women were organized and competitive in the extreme, to the extent that they became inhospitable environments for some of the very individuals they purported to help. Poor women and women of color found themselves at the margins of organizations run efficiently and almost exclusively by white women of means and social standing. Nancy Prince found that this hypercompetitive ethos made missionary societies and other women's charities contentious and prejudiced toward women of color. Even the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, which boasted an acceptance of both "black and white ladies" into its ranks, alienated Nancy Prince despite her concerted effort to contribute to their initiative (*Report of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society* 63). Sometime after she returned from Russia and the BFASS had been founded (both occurred during the same year, 1833), she attended the BFASS meetings "with pleasure, until a contention broke out among themselves." Dejected, she withdrew from the society. "[T]he weight of prejudice has again oppressed me," she wrote, "and were it not for the promises of God, one's heart would fail" (47). During the late 1830s, "after the emancipation in the West Indies," Prince records that she became increasingly interested in "going to Jamaica." She began attending missionary society meetings, including the one in the summer of

²⁷ Contemporaneous reports of missionary work in Jamaica and the minutes of missionary society meetings mention a myriad of women's organizations dedicated to sponsoring missionary work in Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean. But women shaped the competitive nature of missionary work from positions of authority in other institutions as well, including schools, hospitals, and almshouses. One review of British organizations devoting aid to Jamaica names the Women's Self Help Society; the all-female committee of the Kingston Sailors' Home (established in 1864 to provide "accommodation and relief for necessitous men of the Royal and Mercantile Marine"); the Jamaica Female Training College, "consisting of both gentlemen and ladies"; and the Dorcas Society, "managed by a Committee of Ladies," established "for the purpose of supplying very poor people with clothing" (Sinclair and Fyfe 413, 403, 409).

1840 where she heard Reverend Ingraham deliver his recruiting pitch in the form of a public lecture. Prince's interest was piqued, for, as she wrote in her *Narrative*, "A field of usefulness seemed spread out before me" (48). But she would discover that the men and women funding missionary work abroad were just as professionally aggressive as the members of women's abolition societies, and just as likely to oppress.

Indeed, there was overlap between the two kinds of societies, both in membership and in purpose. Protestant abolitionists disgruntled with the reluctance of the American Home Missionary Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to condemn slavery or refuse donations from slaveholders began their own enterprise, the American Missionary Association. "This Society," they pledged, "in collecting funds, in appointing officers, agents, and missionaries, and in selecting fields of labor, and conducting the missionary work, will endeavor particularly to discountenance slavery, by refusing to receive the known fruits of unrequited labor, or to welcome to its employment those who hold their fellow-beings as slaves" (Tappan 11). The men and women so committed to abolishing the practice of unrequited labor in the South and the Caribbean, however, did not go so far as to ensure that the free women of color among their ranks were fairly compensated for their labor.²⁸ Nancy Prince worked in Jamaica as the coalition that became the American Missionary Association in 1846

²⁸ The American Missionary Association was made up of men and women, and was not unique in this regard among American missionary societies. It is apparent that women were thus able to exert significant influence on the scope and method of proselytizing even outside of organizations helmed and comprised entirely of women. For example, Adoniram Judson, Jr., the American Baptist missionary who helped create the first Baptist missionary association, assured his colleagues that he and Mrs. Judson were always "united" in their commitment to missionary labor. Wives of mission leaders and the founders of missionary organizations often labored in partnership with their husbands, like the wives of Julius Beardslee, David Ingraham, Thomas Penfield, and Charles Venning (Christian 6). For more on Ann Judson, see Wayland, *Memoir of the Life and Labors of Adoniram Judson*, pp. 46–48 and James D. Knowles, *Life of Mrs. Ann H. Judson, Late Missionary to Burmah*.

was being formed. The contention and avarice she encountered in the midst of these individuals and groups was partially the result of the business models of women's benevolent societies in New England. One unacknowledged consequence of their organized, aggressive initiatives to aid the poor and afflicted people of color in distant countries was the impoverishment and affliction of the people of color working at their side.

The hypercompetitive ethos stoked by women fundraisers in missionary societies of North America radiated outward to the most remote missions in Jamaica. Not only did the practices of sponsoring organizations encourage competition among missionaries in Jamaica, it also forced them to eye missionaries in other countries not as partners in the work, but as competitors vying for their funds. American and British missionary societies' attention and resources were always divided among disparate geographic locations. In 1841, Nancy Prince sat in a Baptist missionary meeting at the Queen Street chapel in Jamaica, where "[s]everal ministers spoke of the importance of sending the gospel to Africa" and expressed a hope that the island's five thousand members would contribute five hundred pounds toward that end (52-53). By mid-century, interest in reallocating British and American missionary resources to other parts of the world grew as the novelty of emancipation wore off, and, as Thomas Holt puts it, "black political potential appeared real enough to British policymakers that they began scurrying for legal ways to curtail or constrain it" (*Essence of the Contract* 37). Idealized religious discourse that had supported early visions of racial equality as a necessary component of abolition now seemed misguided, perhaps dangerous. The London Missionary Society hastily proclaimed their work in the Caribbean "accomplished" and withdrew their

support from the area, citing the “urgency of claims upon their resources” in other parts of the world (“London Missionary” 355).²⁹ Missionaries like Sarah Ingraham Penfield, whose father was supported by the wages of the London Missionary Society, longingly trained their gaze on the lands it now favored.³⁰ It was not enough that Christianity had caught hold in Jamaica, or that social and economic conditions still called for charitable aid. Larger social, racial, and political concerns depleted the missions’ coffers. Sarah Penfield’s heart was divided between her home in Jamaica and the colonies where the London Missionary Society was now directing its financial resources: Samoa, Australia, Madagascar, China. “We should both prefer to labor among the real heathen,” she wrote wistfully to her husband’s parents (Letter of 21 Aug. 1860).

These rivalries among missionaries for economic resources bred bitter social rivalries. While money was almost always at the root, these fights became personal. Nancy Prince learned to tell the difference between flattery and friendship—and learned from painful experience that a purported friend in New England might not be a friend on the ship or in the unforgiving workplace of the Caribbean mission. It apparently did not take Ingraham long to recognize his error in mistaking Prince for a subordinate who

²⁹ One area of growing interest for the London Missionary Society was Africa, as European and American powers made use of religious proselytizing as one way to assert their authority in contested areas of the continent. David Livingstone’s account of his experience working as an employee of the “perfectly unsectarian” London Missionary Society offers an illuminating perspective on the economic underpinnings of missionary work in that region of the world, and the alliances mission leaders struck with many kinds of businessmen—even slave traders—in an attempt to arrogate power and control over valuable African resources (Livingstone 6).

³⁰ The London Missionary Society was only one of many societies to impress upon Jamaican missionaries the competition they faced in the form of missionaries in other countries. The Wesleyan Missionary Society met in May of 1841 and determined “that the Society could not efficiently maintain its numerous and important foreign missions, without a large augmentation of its regular income.” An official report of the meeting was sent to missionaries in the Caribbean, and they were ordered to “make greater exertions for maintaining the work among themselves” by extracting money from their congregants—or risk losing their jobs (*Evangelical Magazine* 290).

would labor willingly in support of his institutional ambitions. In Massachusetts, he had assured her that her “limited education” would not jeopardize her ability to labor in Jamaica (Prince 48). But what the Reverend failed to mention was that her strong professional ambitions, fundamentally misaligned with the typical missionary’s objective, would surely jeopardize her ability to support herself as a charitable laborer there.

Ingraham’s goal was to baptize, a hunger Prince either did not appreciate or chose to ignore. The first mission station Prince labored in, near St. Ann Harbor, was operating in the typical fashion of Protestant missions when she arrived. The white male leader, Thomas Abbott, had selected a woman of color to lead a religious class to recruit new converts and encourage participation in Sabbath meetings, where the number of seats filled would correlate to the preacher’s salary and the station’s allowance. Acutely sensible of this correlation, Abbott put pressure on his subordinates, and they put pressure on theirs. The class leader apparently relaxed moral standards and modified theological doctrines to appeal to the widest number of present and potential congregants. Prince could appreciate the woman’s need to be paid for her labor, but she saw an inverse correlation between the aggressive methods of the station and the wellbeing of the people living there. “I attended her class a few times,” she writes, “and when I learned the method, I stopped.” Prince’s career as a charitable laborer in Jamaica was off to a rocky start, and her potential earning power, if she did not comply with the incentive structure in place, was uncertain at best. The woman passed on to Prince the economic reality she had been made to recognize: she “gave me to understand if I did not comply I should not have any pay from that society” (50). Within days of her arrival in Jamaica, Prince grasped a harsh reality: the funds of missionary stations in the Caribbean, supplied in part

by women's organizations in New England, were meant to incentivize mission leaders and their subordinates to produce baptisms, not to reward lower-tier laborers for proposing innovative methods of helping emancipated laborers.³¹

Prince had brushed up against the harsh reality of the island's proselytizing workplace, but she was not immediately thrown off course. Abbott, informed of her litany of complaints about his operation, implored her not to broadcast reports of the lax standards for admission into his congregation that guaranteed his enterprise's financial solvency. "He hoped," Prince writes, "I would not express myself so except to him." Perhaps to ensure her confidence, he hastily paid Prince "for the time [she] had been there" and sent her to find another station in which to labor (51). But Prince's original commitment to missionary work as a form of securing funding for charitable projects she found more worthwhile was shaken. When she moved to Kingston and called on the American Consul, he compounded her misgivings. Even her account of their conversation obscures the identities of benefactors and beneficiaries, reflecting Prince's growing perplexity over who was supposed to benefit from the presence of white

³¹ Unfortunately, Prince gives us no biographical information about this class leader, and no insights other than these into the nature of her job at the missionary school. There are, however, accounts of other black women who became class leaders underneath white clerics. One such woman was Louisa Peterswald, born a free woman of color in Jamaica, who worked as a teacher in a Presbyterian mission at Carron Hall. She held this position during the time Prince worked in Jamaica, but a few years after her marriage to the Scottish missionary William Anderson in 1841, the couple left Jamaica to labor in the United Presbyterian mission at Calabar, Nigeria. Louisa, like Prince, attempted a few innovations in her job, training her students in "knitting, sewing, and crochet work" in addition to the religious instruction she was hired to give, but it was her marriage to a white missionary, not her "extraordinary energy and competence," that gave her real job security (Johnston 20). Marrying a white man seemed to be one fairly reliable way for a woman of color to assure herself of a position within the mission. The British schoolteacher Charles Venning came to Jamaica as a missionary and also married a woman of color. "His wife," notes Gale L. Kenny, "was the last remaining person on the AMA [American Missionary Association] payroll in the early 1880s" (82–83). That the longevity and visibility of these women's careers is connected to their white husbands speaks to the uncertainty that might otherwise mark the professional life of a woman of color who, like the black class leader in Abbott's mission, lived in fear of potential competitors like Prince. For more on Louisa Peterswald Anderson, see W. Marwick, *William and Louisa Anderson: A Record of Their Life and Work in Old Calabar*.

American missionaries working among freedpeople in Jamaica. She writes, “I then called on the American Consul, he told me that he was very glad to see me for such a purpose as I had in view in visiting Jamaica, but he said it was a folly for the Americans to come to the island to better their condition; he said they came to him every day praying him to send them home” (52). Prince’s mounting confusion over the transactional nature of charity work in Jamaica produces confusion for her readers. When the consul says that “Americans came to the island to better their condition,” whose condition is he speaking of? Did the American missionaries come to better their own condition? Or did they come to benefit the Jamaicans’ condition? And who begged for the missionaries to be sent home—the missionaries themselves, or the people they were (perhaps) supposed to be benefitting? Prince’s early experiences in the Jamaica mission suggest that the motivations were as complicated as her semantics. Perhaps missionaries from America and their sponsoring organizations in New England and Britain were hoping to better the condition of recently freed laborers. But everyone involved in missionary work, at every position along the circuit of exchanges they enabled, certainly hoped to better their own conditions.

Like so many laborers in the lowest ranks of the mission’s organizational hierarchy, Prince was put in the uneasy position of determining whether she wanted to better the condition of her superiors, or the condition of the poor people working in Jamaica. The consul made it clear that the two could be mutually exclusive. Prince decided in favor of the poor people of color in Jamaica: “I continued with the same opinion, that something must be done for the elevation of the children, and it is for that I labor,” she writes (51). Prince thus declined to work for the same objective as the

Protestant missionaries with whom she came to the region, and in the same stroke ensured that no matter whose condition benefitted from her labor, it would not be her own.

Indeed, as Prince continued to flout the mission's professional protocols, she found herself laboring from increasingly unstable positions at the workplace's margins. Her commitment to help the people, rather than zealously effect the transformation of Jamaican laborers into Christian converts, put her at odds with the people who determined her social rank and economic condition. "I gave several Bibles away," she writes of one exemplary instance, "not knowing that I was hurting the minister's sale, the people buy them of him at a great advance" (52). Prince began to turn a critical eye on the mission's financial objectives, and everywhere she looked, she found something to attract her gaze. She travelled with the Reverend J. S. Beardslee, another white Congregational minister, into the "interior of the country," and watched with disgust as he strove to ensure his own professional survival by any means possible.³² She recorded:

Most of the people of Jamaica are emancipated slaves, many of them are old, worn out and degraded. Those who are able to work, have yet many obstacles to contend with, and very little to encourage them; every advantage is taken of their ignorance; the same spirit of cruelty is opposed to them that held them for centuries in bondage; even religious teaching is bartered for their hard earnings, while they are allowed but thirty-three cents a day, and are told if they will not work for that they shall not work at all; an extraordinary price is asked of them for every thing they may wish to purchase, even the Bibles are sold to them at a large advance on the first purchase. Where are their apologists, if they are found wanting the strict morals that Christians ought to practice? (56–57)

³² Prince misspells his name "Beadslee," but when she writes of "the Rev. J. S. Beadslee," she can only be referring to Julius Beardslee, who had been laboring in Jamaica for two years before she arrived.

In Beardslee, Prince saw a particularly illuminating example of the competition that motivated the business practices of the Protestant mission. Julius Beardslee had been a student at the Oberlin seminary when David Ingraham asked him to come, with his wife, to labor in his Jamaica mission. Beardslee arrived in 1839, but sometime in the early 1840s (probably just after Prince left), he returned to Oberlin to complete his theological education and became a convert of a rival theologian, Thomas Campbell, who opposed Ingraham's emphasis on the confession of sins as a requirement for baptism.³³ Ingraham had passed away by the time Beardslee returned to Jamaica, but Beardslee took advantage of a stipulation in the deed of the station managed by Sarah Ingraham and Thornton Penfield that "whoever could get two thirds of the members to give him a call to become their minister, with the concurrence of two thirds of the trustees, could have lawful possession of the premises." He successfully ousted the Penfields, and then growing "bolder," set his sights on overtaking an outstation under the care of Charles Venning, "upon which," complained Bigelow, "he has and can have not the shadow of a claim. He seems to have thrown away all love and honor in the battle he is waging against us" (Letter from Bigelow of 2 Jul. 1861). Sarah imagined that it was his disapproval of their habit of allowing their young borders to dine at the table with visiting mission leaders that inspired such belligerence, but, as Prince had quickly ascertained, Beardslee made a practice of exchanging the welfare of his subordinates and congregants for greater personal profits. He devoted himself to creating a hypercompetitive professional atmosphere rather than a haven for his growing flock, and laborers

³³ For more, see Melissa Johnson, "The Movement in Jamaica" in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, pp. 422–23.

marginalized by their gender, race, or inexperience were especially apt to become casualties of his power plays.

In the precarious situation of working under such a superior, Prince's strategy was to move further into the margins of the competitive mission organization—further from its chief executives like Beardslee, and further from the religious racketeering she so distained. She accepted a position at a mission school, a role consistent with her desire to help the poor children of Jamaica and a role sufficiently removed from the active proselytizing expected of other missionaries. But even this work, she found, was fraught with exploitation. According to her *Narrative*, twenty-seven church missionary schools, including Wesleyan, Presbyterian, Moravian, and nondenominational London Missionary Society schools, educated a combined total of 952 students essentially free of charge, provided they paid a tax of one pound a year. But the school Prince worked most closely with was stringent about collecting this fee from their young pupils, or perhaps was unique among schools in charging an additional fee. “The Rev. Mr. Horton, a Baptist Minister in Kingston, told me he had sent ninety children away from the Baptist school because they did not bring their money,” Prince writes. “It is sufficient to say they had it not to bring!” (56).³⁴ Thomas Holt finds historical evidence that black parents were required to pay “substantial school fees” to support their children's education. The

³⁴ Prince's observation represents a profound insight into the economics of Jamaica's educational system that, while obvious to her, escaped many of the white men managing the mission schools. The Reverend Phillip Henry Cornford, a British missionary who arrived in Jamaica roughly the same time as Prince, in 1841, blithely concluded that “from mere indifference the payment of the school fee is refused.” His personal narrative imagines a fictional conversation to support his theory: “The man who cried out to his son when starting for school, ‘Bwoy! tell your ‘Cool Massa,—yearree? (i.e. do you hear?)—your daddy no send fippenny for copy book ‘case him hab six horse for keep, and time is too hard,’ was but a specimen of what many are in comparatively setting at nought the education of their children” (Cornford 97). Prince had the insight to see that, if this conversation did bear some relation to reality, the father's financial concerns could not be called trivial, or ascribed to “mere indifference.”

discrepancy between Prince's report and Holt's assertion could be attributed to a change in political policy during Prince's tenure in Jamaica. Because, with the exception of a "few plantation classes set up during the apprenticeship period," most schools were run by sectarian groups (primarily Baptist and Methodist missionaries) who demanded extortionate fees, Parliament passed a measure to subsidize these ecclesiastical schools in 1835 and 1836 (*Problem of Freedom* 194).³⁵ In 1841, however, just as Prince became involved with education in Jamaica, the grants were discontinued, and pupils who did not have money to bring to the school were once more turned away at its doors. The missionaries managing the school saw the children who could benefit from their education not as candidates for charity, but as customers. The funding and incentive structure of the mission did not allow these missionaries to run an educational operation with no regard for their bottom line, and the missionaries, depending on fluctuating salaries, were not inclined to push this point.

Prince took another step away from the operations of the mission when she determined to disrupt the sectarian educational system with an innovation of her own. She proposed the creation of a new school, one that differed from other schools in its pedagogy as well as its operating budget. The seed capital for her venture, she determined, would come directly from the donations of interested New Englanders, thereby bypassing the bureaucratic power grabs of American benevolent societies and the

³⁵ Holt describes the funding of education in postemancipation Jamaica in great detail in this book, including the political figures and events that affected the Parliament's policies. For more, see pp. 188–201. For an illuminating historical perspective on education in Jamaica during the period Prince labored there, see *Memoir of William Knibb, Missionary in Jamaica*, by John Howard Hinton. William Knibb worked as an educator in a Baptist school from 1830 to 1840, and his "beloved brother and successor in the pastoral charge," a Mr. Abbott, is the same Abbott who paid Prince off and begged her not to promulgate criticism of the aggressive methods he compelled his black class leaders to use in St. Ann's Bay (Hinton v).

ecclesiastical managers of the Jamaica mission. And the curriculum of her school would subordinate religious platitudes to more practical instruction. She studied the local market, where more than 250 stalls stocked with fresh fish, pork, beef, turtle, vegetables, and other produce were “all attended by colored women” (53). Her analysis of the livelihoods of freedpeople in Kingston, particularly the women and children she wanted to help most, confirmed her impression that an education in marketable skills, not abstract theology, would benefit them most. Even British government officials, when they met to revise educational policy, echoed Prince’s conclusion. “A system of education for that large portion of the community who depend on daily toil for support can only be rendered effective by combining habits of manual labor with elementary instruction,” one Assemblyman opined (“Reply of Assembly to the Governor,” qtd. in Holt *Problem of Freedom* 192). Prince’s school for girls would be called the “Manual Labor School,” and would teach such habits. Just as importantly, it would disavow the racial prejudice that animated the mission schools, where white leaders commissioned black teachers to use the schoolhouse as a setting to impress upon students the need to disavow their ancestral religions in favor of Christianity, and, in glossing over essential subject matter, confirmed the leaders’ spurious notion that the students were fundamentally ill-suited to intellectual growth.³⁶ Prince openly challenged the racism at the heart of this pedagogical approach. Of her research at Kingston’s open-air market, she wrote:

³⁶ One missionary, the Reverend John Clark, titled a section of his published report on the progress of the Baptist mission in Jamaica “Capability of the Black Man for Education,” and wrote: “It was said to be impossible to educate the black man, that it was a useless thing to see his social elevation and intellectual improvement; that he was incapable of attaining to the refinement and civilization of European nations. The work of social progress, we admit, is only in its first stage; and much, very much, remains to be achieved” (14).

Thus it may be hoped they are not the stupid set of beings they have been called; here *surely we see industry*; they are enterprising and quick in their perceptions, determined to possess themselves, and to possess property besides, and quite able to take care of themselves. They wished to know why I was so inquisitive about them. I told them we had heard in America that you are lazy, and that emancipation has been of no benefit to you; I wish to inform myself of the truth respecting you, and give a true account on my return. (54)

Prince determined to support the industry and penchant for enterprise she saw exhibited at the market by creating a school geared toward the real needs of the pupils it instructed. Her idea had merit in the postemancipation economy, but it contradicted the ideology of Ingraham's mission. It was thus incumbent upon her to raise her own funds for her school, and she relished the opportunity to do so. On July 20th, 1841, she set sail—with a sickly Ingraham and his family, including his young daughter Sarah—for Philadelphia, intent on collecting the resources that would allow her to be an autonomous charitable manager.

During her sojourn in the northern United States, Prince managed to amass sufficient funds for her school despite a series of discouraging setbacks. David Ingraham died shortly after their arrival in New York, and Prince spent a week with his cousin's widow in Newark. While she was at Mrs. Ingraham's home, she fell through an open trap door and landed, fifteen feet below, on hard coal. She had to remain with the Ingrahams three weeks while she waited for a dislocated shoulder to heal, and then became seriously ill when she travelled to Boston by boat. The monetary, physical, and opportunity costs of her injuries were high: when she could have been travelling to collect funds, she was instead convalescing, draining valuable resources. When she was finally well enough to fundraise, she met with less success than she hoped.

Although old friends gave her donations “of books and money” and the steady stream of missionaries “coming and going” to and from the Ingraham’s home in Newark “all seemed to be interested in [her] object,” other potential donors balked (59). Susan Ryan argues that “[r]esistance to black education” was not the exclusive province of the antebellum South. “Anglo-Americans in the free states thwarted the cause of black education in various ways, ranging from dismissal of its importance and withholding of financial and political support to outright obstructionist and violent acts,” she writes. Despite the fervid efforts of a few activists, “free black education remained a low priority for most policymakers in the North” (115-16). Prince did not find policymakers or prospective benefactors more amenable to the idea of sponsoring free education for people of color in the Caribbean. She raised funds primarily within circles of dedicated and outspoken abolitionists, like the Quakers Lucretia Mott and her husband James.³⁷ When these relatively small groups had been tapped, she found the accrued funds inadequate to her objective, and so subsidized the venture with fifty dollars from her own purse—a precious investment of her hard-earned capital. She did not expect a high return on this investment; her tepid interest in the potential profits of charitable labor and her disinclination to turn her charitable enterprise into a competitive venture produced her modest definition of “success” for the school. She hoped, she wrote in her *Narrative*, “that when I returned to Jamaica, they would refund the money to me” (60). Prince hoped for only adequate compensation as she labored on the periphery of the Protestant

³⁷ Lucretia Mott was an energetic advocate of education for women and people of color, but as Carol Faulkner points out, “such calls for female [and black] education were not calls for equality” (27). For more on Mott’s views on race and gender, and how those views responded to the positions of Quaker and antebellum American culture, see Faulkner’s *Lucretia Mott’s Heresy: Abolition and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*.

missionary society, and thus to be spared the negative externalities of its fiercely competitive business structure. She did not appreciate the way the ethos of the mission penetrated all charitable enterprises in Jamaica, or the real risks of her personal investment in the island's economy of benevolence.

Prince returned to Jamaica, funds in hand, on May 6, 1842. In the short time she had been gone, the social condition of the country had destabilized dramatically, with tensions between former slaveholders and freed slaves mounting and periodically erupting in violence.³⁸ In this altered political environment, Prince grasped a side of the Protestant missions' business strategy that had eluded her before: missionaries labored under stiff competition and escalating demands on their time, energy, and resources, but one form of compensation they enjoyed was sustained protection within the mission organization. Now, Prince realized too late that her decision to reject the financial backing of the mission had disqualified her from the social and physical protection offered by the mission community. "Had there been a vessel in readiness," Prince wrote,

³⁸ Economic, environmental, and political forces stoked this unrest. During the first years of the decade, serious drought plagued the freedmen and -women who farmed to support themselves, and they faced, as Thomas Holt observes, "successive failures of [their] provision crops." White planters looked for ways to reduce the wages of the laborers they employed, stoking tension between wealthy whites and poor blacks. But black workers also had to compete for jobs with "increasing numbers of African and East Indian indentured laborers, [who] affected the supply side of the wages-labor equation." And winning scarce jobs was not a guarantee of payment: "Even at reduced wages," writes Holt, "planters were often either unwilling or unable to meet their wage bills" (*Problem of Freedom* 129-30). Depressed prices in the sugar market during the 1840s bred shortages in capital, and further encouraged exploitation of emancipated laborers and competition among all workers for dwindling jobs. The reconstruction of political parties in the postemancipation era afforded Afro-Jamaican legislators a stronger voice in political affairs, which excited the opposition of "superior classes," who became "anxious and uncertain of their ability to remake the lower orders" (39). In this charged atmosphere, the crime rate increased, and "violent crimes against persons were more frequent," such as the attempted attacks on Nancy Prince she describes in pages 64-66 of her *Narrative* (see also *Problem of Freedom* 187-88). For more on the economic and political developments that contributed to unrest during the 1840s, including the British Sugar Duties Act of 1846 (which ended Jamaica's tariff protection and made it impossible for its sugar producers to compete with Cuba and Brazil, where plantation owners still used slave labor), and the introduction of indentured laborers into the island's economy, which "further reduced the employment and remuneration of Jamaican workers," see Shirley C. Gordon, *Our Cause for His Glory: Christianisation and Emancipation in Jamaica*, pp. 1-10 (3).

“I should have come back immediately, it seemed useless to attempt to establish a Manual Labor School, as the government was so unsettled that I could not be protected” (63). But there was no vessel in readiness, and so Prince was forced to stay, an independent charitable manager at the mercy of hostile white planters, threatened freedmen and -women, and rapacious missionaries.

The vultures began to circle their prey. “As soon as it was known that I intended to return, a movement was made to induce me to remain,” she wrote. “These people that I had hoped to serve, were much taken up with the things I had brought, they thought that I had money, and I was continually surrounded; the thought of color was no where exhibited, much notice was taken of me” (64). Indeed, Prince’s race was no matter of concern to either white missionaries or black congregants—everyone had designs on her money, and no one recognized an obligation to guard her as a comrade. Committees helmed by distinguished white leaders conspired to appropriate the funds she brought, and lone ruffians fired gunshots at her bedroom window, hoping to win the money by force. “This is the fruits of slavery,” she lamented, “it makes master and slaves knaves” (65). In a panic, she gave her valuables to Beardslee for safekeeping, forgetting that she had spurned his executive control and simultaneously stepped outside the already narrow bounds of his goodwill. In the sentence after she records this action, she says, “Notwithstanding all this, they made another attempt to rob me, and as a passage could not be obtained for me to return home, I was obliged to go to the Mico establishment again for safety, such was the outrage” (66).³⁹ It is not clear whether the referent “they”

³⁹ Jane Mico was the wife of a trader, Sir Samuel Mico, who had grown rich as a member of the Levant and East India Companies. When she died in 1670, she left huge sums of money to various charitable organizations, including a sum to be used to ransom Englishmen in bondage to the Algerians. According to

includes Beardslee, the subject of the previous sentence, but it is certain that whether or not he actively harmed her, Beardslee did nothing to safeguard his erstwhile subordinate. Prince was realizing the staggering costs of operating as an autonomous charitable manager in a land roiled by violence and agitated by the work of Protestant missionaries—and discovering that, in this climate, there was little potential upside.

Prince's Final Crossing: From Religious Marketplace to Literary Marketplace

Prince escaped the clutches of the Protestant mission's ruthless workforce when the American Consul finally procured her passage on a ship bound for New York on August 18, 1842. She was penniless, but discovered, as the captain navigated the waters surrounding the slave-holding states of the American South, that she still had in her possession one object of high market value: her body. Only a specialized set of knowledge born of extensive travel and keen observation saved Prince from enslavement when the captain urged his black passengers to go ashore in Key West, where a state law permitted the imprisonment of free black seamen when their ships were in port. Prince knew of the law, and remained onboard for the duration of their stay. The voyage gave her other occasions to appreciate the value of her body. Off the coast of Texas, she records, "I was made to forget my own condition, as I looked with pity on the poor slaves, who were laboring and toiling, on either side, as far as could be seen with a glass" (78). Then, as the ship doubled back past Florida, the captain helped her peer over the side of the ship, "that I might see the awful sight, which was the vessel of slaves laying at

Ronald G. Walters, "Lady Mico left her bequest of £1,000 in 1670. Thanks to the decline of piracy and the resulting shortage of Christians to redeem from their captivity, the sum had risen to £120,000 by 1828, when an abolitionist member of Parliament suggested it be used for 'the promotion of education in the British colonies'" (92).

the side of our ship! the deck was full of young men, girls, and children, bound to Texas for sale!” (82). Finally, on August 1, 1843, Prince arrived in Boston, “poor in health, and poor in purse, having sacrificed both,” she writes, “hoping to benefit my fellow creatures” (84). Back in the place of her birth, Prince took stock of a workplace she knew well, and steeled herself again to make a wage and a home in a land that bred much of the racism and institutional discrimination that, transmitted southward by captains of commerce including proselytizing ministers, plagued the Caribbean missions. She writes of working, during the first twenty months after her arrival, with “those with whom I mostly sympathized, and shared in common the disadvantages and stigma that is heaped upon us, in this our professed Christian land.” She found herself even less competitive in the local job market than she had been as a young girl, as her disastrous venture in Jamaica had depressed her economic, physical, and emotional state. She writes:

But my lot was like the man that went down from Jerusalem, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounding him, departed, leaving him half dead. What I did not lose, when cast away, has been taken from my room where I hired. Three times I had been broken up in business, embarrassed and obliged to move, when not able to wait on myself. This has been my lot. In the midst of my afflictions, sometimes I have thought my case like that of Paul’s, when cast among wild beasts.
(86)

Prince’s foray into the world of professional charity work left her bankrupt and broken in spirit, but with a greater appreciation of the real value of a free—even if disabled—body. With a determination, once again, to do something for herself, she began to apply her body and mind to another professional field: writing. If she had lost rather than made money following Paul’s example of travelling abroad for the gospel’s sake, she now saw

an opportunity to profit from parlaying an interest in writing—and an affinity for the rhetorical flourishes the biblical missionary so relished—into a marketable craft.

Prince may have modeled her writing on any of the innumerable texts in circulation during her lifetime, but her finished *Narrative* displays a melding of literary genres and techniques popular among American readers of the mid-nineteenth century. Clearly, she uses biblical rhetoric to anchor her text in the capricious seas of the literary marketplace. She borrows from the Gospel of Luke to describe the staggering cost of traveling to Jamaica to benefit her fellow men (“my lot was like the man that went down from Jerusalem”) and from Paul, who famously appeals to his readers by regaling them with lists of his misfortunes. (“Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck,” begins one exemplary passage that must have resonated with Prince as she sailed from Jamaica.)⁴⁰ But Prince also entered a market saturated with the memoirs of men and women of color and the accounts of men and women abroad. Sometimes, those authors were one and the same, people of color who wrote about events in their lives that compelled or coerced them to travel. In 1789, ten years before Prince’s birth, Olaudah Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative* appeared, and in 1831, a British abolitionist transcribed and published *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Narrated by Herself*. Both texts showed how travel might prove a boon to enslaved laborers navigating a route to freedom even when they did not manage their own voyages. Prince’s interest may have been piqued also by texts that recounted the adventures of white travelers seeking adventure or education, such as Harriet Martineau, Richard Henry Dana Jr. (a fellow native of Massachusetts), or Catherine Sedgwick,

⁴⁰ I quote here from the King James Version of the Bible, 2 Corinthians 11:25.

whose *Letters From Abroad* appeared in 1841.⁴¹ And certainly Prince's literary ambitions and style were influenced by the actions and orations of women of color whose personal narratives would appear after hers, but who labored in similar geographic and professional spaces. She may have known or heard of Mary Seacole, born in Jamaica in 1805, whose lifelong "impulse . . . to be up and doing" made her an unusually enterprising and visible laborer in Kingston during the years Prince lived there (Seacole 21). Sojourner Truth joined the Northhampton (Massachusetts) Association of Education and Industry—two special interests of Prince's—in 1844, during the "twenty months" Prince alludes to as the period during which she explored her professional options before turning to writing at the end of the decade.⁴²

Prince's *Narrative* drew something from these autobiographical accounts, travelogues, and verbal expressions of political and social commentary. Her *Narrative*, published in its first iteration in 1850, functions as part travel writing, part religious discourse, and part personal history. Prince made little effort to smooth over the joints connecting these diverse styles. In the midst of describing her great danger at the hands of conspiring men and women in Jamaica in the summer of 1842, for example, she breaks abruptly into an eight-page exposition on the climate, terrain, and architecture of the island. And a seven-stanza religious poem is appended to the back of the *Narrative*,

⁴¹ The French-born Martineau published two travel narratives in the late 1830s: *Society in America* in 1837 and *Retrospective of Western Travel* in 1838. Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* appeared in 1840, as Prince was traveling to and from the Caribbean.

⁴² Obviously, the few titles I have mentioned here represent a fraction of the travelogues and personal narratives published by white and black authors during Prince's lifetime. Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, published just five years before Prince's *Narrative*, may well have influenced her literary approach or even inspired the project, but a complete catalogue of the texts that may have come to her attention as she was transitioning from charity to literary work is impossible to imagine, let alone create. For a more comprehensive list of the texts that would now be classified "travel writing," see Bendixen and Hamera, pp. 250-59.

without introduction or comment. Prince had never claimed an elite liberal education or any special qualification for publishing a personal narrative; at the beginning of the text's second edition, she announces her rather mundane objective in writing it. "By the sale, I hope to obtain the means to supply my necessities" (xxvii). Her goal was not to disrupt the field of American literature, and to the extent that her style innovatively blended the characteristics of diverse genres, that innovation grew out of a life lived between and across traditional generic divides: home and abroad, land and sea, foreign and native, self-sufficient and impoverished, charitable and commercial. Self-conscious about her lack of formal education, Prince may have seen evidence in the texts of Olaudah Equiano and Mary Prince or the speeches of Sojourner Truth of the social value (and marketability) of varieties of discourse that, as Sandra Gustafson observes, "emphasized spontaneity and emotional honesty over learning" (268). Native American and African American orators and writers, Gustafson argues, "advanced written communication as a democratic mode in contests with those who used formal speech to dominate social inferiors" (269). Prince had been the subject of such formal speeches, on the tongues of officious members of women's benevolent societies and the Reverends Ingraham, Abbot, and Beardslee, and she found a more suitable home for her honest, direct rhetoric in a competitive literary marketplace than she had in the hypercompetitive market of souls.

Still, competition blunted the force of Prince's written words, just as it had blunted the force of her spoken words in Jamaica. Her *Narrative* was not a bestseller, nor did it become famous even for a time or among a select group of readers. But it did sell copies, and apparently the profits of this endeavor were encouraging enough that, when her resources diminished, Prince opted to issue another edition of her text rather than

appeal to the benevolence of New England's calculating charitable managers. The literary marketplace was crowded and contentious, but the charitable marketplace was even more so. And the risks and rewards of the literary market were fairly straightforward, while the real costs of charitable transactions were hidden, often apparent only after aid had been accepted, and then extracted in both monetary and intangible forms. Prince had given up her time, health, personal resources, and safety to compete in the field of organized benevolence, and now, as health and resources waned, she refused to do it again. Scholars have puzzled over one emphatic declaration in her *Narrative*: "I do not approve of women societies; they destroy the world's convention; the American women have too many of them" (51). The line floats in the midst of Prince's transcript of her dialogue with Mr. Abbott, so either might conceivably claim the sentiment. But wasn't this a woman who, rather unconventionally, travelled the world and set herself up in business among societies of women customers, professional associates, and friends? Certainly. Throughout the *Narrative*, however, Prince draws a line between the society she kept as a young domestic laborer in Massachusetts and a seamstress in Russia and the societies in New England supporting Protestant missionary labor, which enriched some overweening clerics and empowered the white women who sponsored it, but bankrupted a poor woman of color who was inclined to innovate rather than exploit people's needs to support herself.

Prince connected the initiatives of these "women societies" with the incentive and revenue structures that fostered unhealthy competition in the Jamaica mission field, complicated the already-fraught lives of emancipated laborers, and finally forced her out of the market even after she had raised the seed capital for a venture that could have

benefited these laborers and charitable workers marginalized—as she was—by race, gender, and disability. It was not a dearth of women’s charities that jeopardized Prince’s health and personal wealth—it was a glut of them. “There are many benevolent societies for the support of Widows,” she remarked, “but I am desirous not to avail myself of them, so long as I can support myself by my own endeavors” (xxvii). Prince had learned over a long and varied professional career that a person of her capabilities and empathies, disenfranchised by socioeconomic status, race, gender, and physical ability, had a stronger competitive advantage in the literary field than she did in the mission field. Her life and *Narrative* document the transactional nature of nineteenth-century charity work and lay bare the grim economic realities of a type of benevolence that transformed the Protestant missions of Jamaica into crucibles for those who could not—or would not—approach them as brisk businesses churning earthly profits in the market of salvation.

Chapter 4:

“A Charity of Wages”:

Sarah J. Hale and the Business of Maritime Benevolence

Sarah Josepha Buell Hale was a forty-year-old widowed mother of five, supplementing her income as a milliner with profits from her forays into literary production, when an offer to edit the *Ladies' Magazine* in 1827 gave her the chance to focus her efforts and extend her professional horizons. When in 1828 she relocated from her native New Hampshire to Boston, where the *Ladies' Magazine* was published, she arrived in a city that drew energy and sustenance from the bustling activity of its wharves. The city had reached unprecedented prominence as a seaboard commercial center, and the impact of its maritime economy touched shores across the world as well as the waterways connecting them. One Bostonian boasted that there existed “no quarter of the civilized or uncivilized globe in which the enterprise, energy, and pluck of a Boston merchant and a Boston shipmaster did not find an entrance, or from which a wealth of commerce did not return” (Rossiter 46). The thriving economy, however, depended upon sailors, among whom were those who enabled but did not reap the financial rewards of the merchant shipping industry. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker speak of the ship in terms of the “slavish, hierarchical discipline in which human will was subordinated to mechanical equipment” (150), and Ruth Wallis Herndon connects the hierarchical structure of the ship to the paltry wages that most seamen could expect in exchange for their physically demanding and dangerous labor (55, 69). As Herndon notes, poverty, disease, and disability threatened not only the sailor, but also the

family he left on land.¹ Such seafarers, and more frequently their families, thus became objects of “discipline, control, and public charity” at the hands of town officials, clergymen, and self-appointed benefactors (57). As Boston played a central role in the transnational circulation of commodities, bodies, information, and wealth, the lowliest of its inhabitants suffered disproportionately the adverse impact of its flourishing trade.

The grim manifestations of industrial poverty particularly affected Sarah Hale.² Her rural hometown saw ample hardship—including the financial misfortunes that beset her own family—but this was her first encounter with urban poverty, which in contrast seemed sprawling, perpetual, and woefully uncontrolled. She left her millinery work and relocated to Boston in hopes of sustaining more profitable opportunities to support herself and her children, but in the image of the suffering seaman’s wife and children, she saw another opportunity to wield the social control for which she would become famous as an influential editor over the next several decades. In 1833, Hale founded the Seaman’s Aid Society. Her charity eschewed the one-sided distribution of alms—the model then operative among Boston’s impoverished—and instead embedded itself in the profit-and-loss structure of a competitive business. Under the management of the Society’s leaders,

¹ It is true that a few women hired out as sailors, and wives of captains might accompany their husbands on voyages, but because Sarah Hale focused her charitable efforts on the wives and children of seamen, this chapter will assume married men or young men trying to support themselves and/or their natal families to be the default. For more on the wives of “whaling masters” who joined voyages in an effort “to preserve unbroken the ties of domestic life,” see Joan Druett’s *Petticoat Whalers: Whaling Wives at Sea, 1820-1920*, which presents a vast array of historical documentation to complicate the spurious notion that whaling vessels were invariably single-sex environments (13, 14).

² As I note in the introduction of this dissertation, the industrial “revolution” was in fact an extended historical process, and as Lisa Norling notes, the development of the American whaling industry “from sporadic shore whaling into a full-scale deep-sea industry in the first few decades of the eighteenth century” certainly marks it as an industry in what was, strictly speaking, a pre-industrial revolution moment (8). In fact, shipping in general was characterized by the technological advances, mechanical complexity, and entrepreneurship that shaped the whaling industry in the early eighteenth century, and shipping became a full-fledged industry long before such innovations would transform the American economy in the nineteenth century.

seamen's wives and children sewed clothing for sailors to be sold at a store which they also staffed; their compensation was a way to refigure alms as "a charity of wages" awarded according to the performance of the supplicants ("Extracts" 1836). Hale thus staked a claim not only in the structures of control Herndon describes, but also in the economic fortunes of the thriving nineteenth-century maritime industry.

She might well have read her own fate in the unhappy visage of the abandoned seaman's wife, since in 1822 her own husband died and left her with five young children to support. But remarkably, when Hale reminded her female readership of the "divine commendation . . . attached to our feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked," the widowed mother saw herself on the administrative rather than receiving end of such an interaction (*Ladies' Wreath* 367). Her entrepreneurial application of biblical verse became increasingly viable as a burgeoning whaling industry in the 1830s and 1840s took more men to sea and technological advances allowed for longer—and more dangerous—voyages. While religious injunctions motivated loosely coordinated charitable gestures among clerics and the particularly pious in early-nineteenth century American communities, discharging the religious obligation to "impart to him that hath none" (as the Gospel of Luke put it) offered a different promise to Hale. The spectacle of seamen's families' poverty and powerlessness gave her the opportunity to fend off the specter of her own. Already accustomed to mining scripture for everything from the abstract to the quotidian, Hale could now extract from its pages a plausible business model. Combining her inclinations as a writer with a keen business sense, Hale was able to create from the deplorable circumstances occasioned by seamen's prolonged absences, injuries, or poverty an opportunity for a few enterprising women of her era to exercise an

unprecedented level of control over financial endeavors undertaken in the name of charity.

In addition to the work of Rediker, Linebaugh, and Herndon, research by Lisa Norling and Daniel Vickers chronicles the forces of class, race, economics, and domestic policy that shaped seventeenth- through nineteenth-century Atlantic maritime culture and further corroborates an important and relatively recent line of inquiry that sees social practices and economic fortunes onboard vessels as inextricably tied to corresponding practices and fortunes on shore. In this chapter, I expand this research to include white, middle-class women who created charities in response to the terrestrial impact of seafaring on coastal communities. While men and women in seafaring towns accepted the absences, poverty, and disabilities of sailors as possible (and in some cases, certain) costs of the trade, women like Sarah Hale regarded such outcomes as disruptions of conventional domestic life. In the perceived disruptions, these women saw an opportunity to share in the spoils of both social control and economic power available as byproducts of Atlantic maritime culture.

A significant body of research treats Hale's prominent role, as an editor and author, in shaping what would become known retrospectively as the "Cult of True Womanhood," and another expanding body of research examines how "the particular interplay between economic, social, and cultural shifts" in American seaport communities "throws into striking relief not only the conflicted development of liberal individualism for men . . . but also the development of its female corollary, Victorian domesticity"

(Norling 3).³ Hale is figured, in Norling's work as elsewhere, as a spokeswoman for this iteration of decorous domesticity, but she functioned much more actively in maritime culture than simply as the author of social norms against which seamen and their wives could measure their own unconventional relationships.

This connection between Hale's role as an architect of Victorian domesticity and her influence in both demonstrating and furthering the economic imbrication of seafaring communities, commodities, and charity has, to this point, been neglected by studies of the interrelationship between land and sea. I argue that, as a charity worker and writer who productively mined the overlap of maritime economies, domestic practices, religious belief, and literary production, Sarah J. Hale demonstrated the viability of charity not simply as a pastime for restless middle-class women, but as an industry that swelled in conjunction with the fortunes of the transatlantic shipping industry. When Hale moved from Boston to Philadelphia in 1841, four years after she assumed the editorship of *Godey's Lady's Book*, she saw another city whose charitable workforce had been transformed over the half-century that also saw the escalation of the American shipping

³ Ruth E. Finley's *The Lady of Godey's*, published in 1931, was the first major biography of Hale. In presenting her as a prominent champion of conventional domestic ideals, Finley strongly influenced readings of Hale for the next several decades. Among these is the classic 1966 essay in which Barbara Welter references passages from *Godey's Lady's Book* to establish the central characteristics of the "Cult of True Womanhood" (see "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860"). Also following Finley's lead, Isabelle Webb Entrikin, who wrote a shorter biography of Hale in 1946, called the editor "one of the foremost women of her own day," but accepts as fact that "her influence extended into the lives of almost every middle class household," and no further (v). More recent scholarship, however, troubles this interpretation by noting the easy commerce between public and domestic spaces that shaped Hale's social and professional life even as she preached the virtues of conventional domesticity to nineteenth-century women. Nicole Tonkovich, for example, argues that Hale's relatively thorough education, which her brother Horatio conducted during his recesses from Dartmouth, paralleled Horatio's formal schooling and "challenges the artificial distinction between public and private spheres that later scholars have credited Hale with promulgating" (28).

For a discussion of liberal individualism as explored by Melville, see *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* by David S. Reynolds, 138-42; for more on the connection between economy and liberal individualism, see Heller, Sosna, and Wellbery, *Reconstructing Individualism*.

industry. The system of benevolence in Philadelphia, as in many urban seaports, had taken on the shape and scope of an organized business during the years that Hale had helped transform the charitable workforce in Boston, and perhaps partially in response to published reports of the unprecedented financial success of her innovative Seaman's Aid Society. Recognizing ecclesiastical endorsement as a vital shibboleth as she encoded the terms under which charity would be extended or denied, and using financial rewards as a way to motivate and manipulate the actions of seamen's wives, mothers, and daughters, Hale had created a highly visible model of American benevolence that influenced the nature of charity work in a number of prominent seaports as it capitalized on the fortunes—and negative social externalities—of a flourishing maritime economy.

From Alms to Incentives: The Making of Boston's Benevolent Workforce

From beginning to end, Sarah Buell Hale's life was intimately connected to the tides of the sea. Her brother Charles briefly sought a livelihood as a sailor before he died at sea at twenty-six, leaving a wife and two daughters to be supported by members of the extended family. Five years after she made the living conditions, employment opportunities, and property rights of seamen's wives the object of her interest and charity, Hale's son Horatio joined Captain Charles Wilkes on the first United States Exploring Expedition to the Antarctic in 1838 (Rogers 15, 74). But Hale's experiences resonated with those of the Seaman's Aid Society's female benefactors beyond even their shared connection to the sea. Although she lived comfortably and enjoyed considerable social prominence, she felt early in life the sharp spur of poverty. Her father never fully recuperated from his service in the Revolutionary War, and after a failed attempt at

farming the unyielding New Hampshire terrain, he set up an inn in Newport in 1811 only to sell it within a few years of its construction. The family's economic condition surely contributed to Buell's decision to teach school, which she did until she met David Hale, a young lawyer from Alstead, at the relatively advanced age of twenty-five (*Ladies' Wreath* 386). A felicitous marriage in 1813, however, did not stave off for long the poverty Hale suffered in her youth and adolescence. David Hale died of pneumonia in 1822, just before the birth of their fifth child, William, and before David's law practice had become profitable.

At this juncture, Hale faced a situation comparable to that of the widowed seaman's wife, and like them, she was subject to the existing structures for alleviating aid in communities where a social safety net was more often an afterthought than a priority of the regions' European colonists. Before Hale's Seaman's Aid Society would rewrite the model of charitable aid to allow for women administrators, Boston and surrounding areas had long seen fathers as responsible for attending to the needs of those in their households. In these cases, both "father" and "household" were loosely conceived, and a male family member, church leader, or elected official could easily step in to govern the affairs of a household that included not only wives and children, but also servants and enslaved laborers. Not surprisingly, this model favored the white family members of educated and relatively wealthy men. For example, Hale saw the advantage of her husband's professional connections and his elected appointment at the time of his death as Worshipful Master of the Corinthian Lodge of the Masons when his associates helped her establish herself as milliner after his death (*Ladies' Wreath* 387).

Hale's salvation from real poverty contrasts sharply with the experience of Rachel Wall, eighteen years Hale's senior, who was executed in 1789 at the age of twenty-nine for "the crime of Robbery" along Boston's wharves, which became, by her own account, a means of survival after her husband abandoned her a few years after their marriage. In an first-person account published in Boston shortly after her execution, Wall mentions—in chronological order—"pious" parents, the "Hon. gentlemen who were my Judges," and "several Ministers of the town who have attended me since I have been under sentence," suggesting Boston's trajectory of charitable action for women who had not Hale's good fortune of marrying a middle-class professional. From the time Wall left her parents for the "bad company" of her husband until she returned her "sincere thanks" to the honorable gentlemen who facilitated her confession and execution, her survival depended entirely on her own ambition and cunning. This led her into the captain's quarters of a ship lying at wharf in Boston, where she found and stole the only liquid assets mentioned in the narrative (283-86). Wall's experience suggests that the Boston of Hale's early childhood was more equipped to prosecute than to preserve a woman's body outside of a normative patriarchal structure. And while contemporary scholarship tends to read Hale's charitable work alongside the myriad reform movements of the mid-nineteenth century directed toward prostitutes, "fallen" and abandoned women, alcoholics, freed slaves, orphans, and the disabled, we get a much more accurate sense of the existing apparatus for alleviating need that shaped Hale's early life and likely influenced her lifelong investment in benevolence if we look to these historical conditions of her youth, rather than to the proliferation of charitable organizations she witnessed in adulthood.

Rachel Wall's execution is surely a dramatic example of what could happen to a New England woman who found herself outside the protection of patriarchal coverture in the eighteenth century, but contemporaneous fictional women fared little better. Again, if we look backward and read Hale in light of earlier American women writers, we can tease out the anxieties against which she may have evaluated her circumstance as a suddenly single mother and trace an alternative set of historical origins for the charitable ideology of the Seaman's Aid Society. In Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* (1797), the orphaned Eliza Wharton becomes sexually involved with a notorious rake at her own peril. If her New England community has made provisions to protect or assist a woman who conceives a child out of wedlock, they are curiously absent from Eliza's narrative, and even her pious widowed mother and an equally sanctimonious female friend cannot adequately address the needs of the impregnated and unwed Eliza. As no practical structure exists to re-introduce Eliza to the protective embrace of respectable society, the narrative follows her plight to its logical conclusion, and its last image is the gravestone of a thirty-seven year old woman, a monument that became an object of not just literary but also historical fascination. "Great was her charity to others," the inscription proclaims, and yet Eliza Wharton dies alone, outside of the charitable assistance of even close friends and family (169).

A composite of purportedly true stories called *The Female Marine*, published two decades after Foster's novel and just after Sarah and David Hale married and established a home in New Hampshire, offers more detail about historical responses to the plight of

“needy” women along Boston’s wharves.⁴ From 1815 to 1818, the highly sensational stories detailed the adventures of Lucy Brewer, who, like Eliza Wharton, is seduced and impregnated by a rakish character. Lucy flees to Boston, where the child dies and she finds herself impoverished and alone. With no other means of survival, Lucy is fairly easily coerced into prostitution before she realizes the impediment her gender and designation as a “fallen woman” present to her self-sufficiency and dons male garb to enlist as a U.S. marine during the War of 1812. Her choice suggests that a life at sea appealed to many faced with poverty, regardless of their gender. In a narrative later amended to Lucy’s account, Mrs. Rachel Sperry, the madam of the Lucy’s Beacon Hill brothel, makes a case for her particular method of alleviating “misery and want” and defends prostitution as a course of action that supported her when she found herself a widowed mother (138). Certainly, Rachel Sperry offered a more organized form of relief than the feeble efforts of benevolent individuals like Mrs. Beauchamp of Susana Rowson’s *Charlotte Temple* (1791), whose compassionate impulse only works so far as to procure a deathbed for the similarly impregnated and spurned Charlotte. Even the minister whose charity among the seamen of Boston provided the basis for Hale’s Seaman’s Aid Society, Edward Taylor, labored alone to distribute “alms” among supplicants whose needs, by Hale’s own account, far outstripped the capabilities of his rather haphazard charitable operation (“Extracts” 1836). Not until Sarah Hale harnessed both the moral and economic possibilities embedded in maritime charity work would a

⁴ As I observed in Chapter 3, n. 4, the stories, ostensibly written in the first-person by Lucy Brewer, were likely penned by hack writers under the direction of entrepreneur Nathaniel Coverly Jr. For more on Coverly and the possible connection between the fictional Lucy and the real-life Deborah Sampson Gannett, who dressed as a man to serve in the Continental Army during the American Revolution, see Daniel Cohen’s introduction to *The Female Marine and Related Works: Narratives of Cross-Dressing and Urban Vice in America’s Early Republic*.

benevolent businesswoman aggressively counter the relatively cohesive operations of Rachel Sperry's historical counterparts, who recognized like Hale the rich dividends of social power and profit accruing to those who attended to "needy" women of urban seaports.

Perhaps aware of this lack of practicable social safety nets for single mothers and married women whose husbands were absent for long periods of time, and cognizant of the limits of the generosity of even family and close friends in alleviating need in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Hale began to supplement her income as a milliner with a flurry of literary production. In the years immediately following her husband's death, Hale published a book of original poems, a fashionable "gift book," and a novel, *Northwood*, in 1827. Her cultural capital as a woman of education and connections gave her the time and background required to write, and she apparently judged this the best use of her time. The youngest of her five children was born two weeks after David Hale died, and even if she had natural abilities and interest as a seamstress—and she did not—the millinery business was an impractical way to both raise and support a family. Additionally, Hale seemed to find it personally distasteful. She needed money, but like her eighteenth- and early-nineteenth contemporaries Susanna Rowson, Hannah Foster, and the author(s) of Lucy Brewer's narrative, she held unyielding views about the work that put women beyond the pale of respectable society. In 1839, she aired these views in a novel about a woman orator, pointedly titled *The Lectress: or Woman's Sphere*, where an upright husband declaims against an apparently "charming and modest" woman's foray into public speaking (5). "I would sooner listen to a maniac's ravings, for there is some *method* even in a *man's* madness," he holds forth, "but when a woman steps from

the sphere allotted her by God, and enters upon an office for which she has neither physical nor moral strength, and exposes herself to the gaze and observation of a gaping crowd, we must in charity suppose her laboring under a delusion which it must be painful for a refined mind to witness” (5-6). The implication seems to be that the gentleman need not choose between the maniac and the lectures; any woman who would exhibit even laudable talents in full public view shows lapses in judgment that suggest compromised mental faculties.

For Hale to balance her natural inclination toward writing and charity work with these stringent views on the “sphere . . . allotted her by God” required masterful choreography. Her gambits as an author demonstrate her gift for extracting the most value from the marketplace while inflicting the least damage to her image as a decorous widowed mother. Her gift book *The Memorial* (1827) was not only small and almost ostentatiously feminine, it was also perfectly tailored to catch hold in a market captivated by the quaint and decorative volumes. Her first novel owed its success to the same strategy. Explicitly aimed at “those who have the superintendence of young girls”—certainly the appropriate domain for a respectable woman—*Northwood* preaches “lessons of prudence, forbearance, and humility” to its readers, and yet speaks at length to the economic and moral implications of American slavery, a charged topic that proved at least as lucrative as ethical for Hale to consider.⁵ Not incidentally, it also provided her

⁵ Hale herself attests that it was the promise of profits that motivated her writing, not necessarily a particular theme or “a desire to win fame” (*Northwood* iii). She recounts that, as a widow and “sole protector of five children,” she determined to write a novel “in the hope of gaining the means for their support and education” (*Woman’s* 686). Her efforts were not misapplied: the book was a commercial success, and, under the subtitle “A New England Tale,” it was printed in London, which Hale saw as “a very remarkable compliment to an American book” (*Northwood* iii). The resulting profits gave a single mother of five the satisfaction of sponsoring an elite education for each of her children, “as their father

the professional exposure that would facilitate a move to Boston, where she could apply this attention to economic markets, cultural trends, and financial profitability in a location that functioned as a center of both publishing and maritime activity.

In fact, *Northwood* touches on a variety of issues that would follow Hale from the rocky pastures of New Hampshire to Boston's wharves, none perhaps as provocative as the relationships connecting literacy, race, and social class privilege. From its inception, Hale's Seaman's Aid Society distinguished between "Managers" and the "claimants on their charity," who were "mostly widowed mothers, or those who have others besides themselves to support," and Hale's first novel helps to explain why a woman in exactly this position of widowhood and dependence rose above the ranks of indigent "claimants" ("Extracts" 1836). As a woman, Hale was unable to attend college, but her proximity to a brother who attended Dartmouth and liberally discussed the content of his courses with her, as well as a self-imposed regimen of study with her husband, who had access to a wide range of books with which to educate himself, meant that she enjoyed an elite, if informal, education. Perhaps, like a similarly educated character in *Northwood*, she "could not avoid feeling some mortification while comparing [her] own acquirements with those of 'College learned' men," but her familiarity with Latin, mathematics, philosophy, and a host of literary classics indicated a rarefied social position, no matter her misgivings about the inadequacies of her training (12). In spite of this, her first novel, published in 1827 and subtitled *A New England Tale*, assigned the problems of class stratification and slavery to the South in order to portray the North as a site of

would have done," but the real advantage of the book's success was Hale's sudden visibility to urban publishers. For more on the impact of *Northwood's* "relative success" on Hale's professional life, see Okker 44.

democracy and unqualified opportunity. To do so, she ignored the flow of bodies and commodities as well as information and ideologies through waterways connecting the Southern and Northern United States—as other quarters of the globe. Reevaluating her work after living in Boston, Hale could no longer deny this pertinent fact.

Northwood's protagonist is Sidney Romilly, born during the dawn of the nation in Northwood, New Hampshire, but raised by a wealthy uncle near Charleston, partly to ease the burden of raising ten children on his parents and partly to assuage his aunt's and uncle's anxiety at producing no heir. In young adulthood, Sidney journeys home to Northwood, accompanied by Mr. Frankford, a young Englishman fresh off a vessel from Liverpool with an indefatigable curiosity about American customs that provides the narrator with the pretext for discoursing at length on the "true character" of the nation and its inhabitants. As this narrative unfolds, it consistently casts the issue of race as intrinsically connected to deviance, and something to be grappled with in the South, but not in the North, where, as Squire Romilly assures Mr. Frankford, "[We have not], in the New England States, many such persons as you designate by the appellation of *rabble*. There may be, in the cities, a few worthy of that ancient and significant name; yet not many of these are native-born American citizens" (133). As a young girl in New England, Squire Romilly's sister rarely even saw a person of color. "You know how frightened I always was at a negro," she writes home to her mother from Charleston, where she finds a multitude of enslaved laborers constituting part of the *mise-en-scène* of her new husband's estate. "But, mercy! here the negroes are as thick as bees. . . . When our carriage drove up to the gate . . . I trembled all over, for I began to remember the stories I had read of slaves murdering their masters and mistresses, and many such bloody things.

. . . I was so frightened, thinking some of them might have knives in their hands to kill us, that I could not help shrieking as loud as I could” (24). Within the novel’s limited geographic and cultural frame, Lydia Romilly’s anxiety represents simply the irrational judgments of a callow mind, but it becomes significant when considered in terms of the social and political developments of the South that influenced even the New England of Lydia’s early life. Reports of the plight of creoles who fled to the United States during the Haitian revolution of 1791-1804 must have resonated particularly with creole New Englanders like the Romillys who, despite their fervid patriotism as “native-born American citizens,” had only routed their identities through the concept of “American.”⁶ This identification with the creoles of Haiti helps to explain why, even as far north as New Hampshire, Lydia Romilly associated race with terror and why, when she arrived in Charleston—a major intake port for refugees from Haiti—in the last years of the eighteenth century, this anxiety reached fever pitch.

Northwood never extends its gaze south of Charleston to develop the historical context of Lydia’s sentiments, and the narrator dismisses her fears, ignited in the North and stoked in the South, by informing the reader of the “crooked, blotted, mis-spelt scrawls,” adorning her writing, a detail included “as a warning to beautiful young ladies, lest, like her, they should depend on the graces of their persons, and neglect the cultivation of their minds” (22-23). Racialized bodies inhabit only the shadowy margins of New England society, the narrative tries to claim, and so the northerner may not often confront the issue of race head-on, as the southerner does, but a superior education should

⁶ For more on how the Haitian revolution stoked social and political anxiety in Charleston, see the collection of essays edited by David P. Geggus titled *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, particularly Robert Alderson’s “Charleston’s Rumored Slave Revolt of 1793,” pp. 93-111.

equip the Yankee to consider the geographically remote challenge of racial tension with reason and impartiality. And yet, as Hale was to discover as a resident of Boston, those in the North who might be designated “by the appellation of *rabble*” (a term freighted, as Squire Romilly makes clear, with racial undertones) were great in number and still greater in need. By defining race as a problem limited to widespread slavery in the South, and the injustices and assumed deviance associated with race confined largely to plantations, *Northwood* could still champion at least the Northern United States as a place of freedom and relative equality. Still writing from New Hampshire, Hale had yet to see how much race and class dictated who lived on alms and who was at liberty to distribute them in New England’s urban centers.

By definition, beneficiaries of charity in early- and mid-nineteenth-century Boston were “impoverished,” either materially or morally, but histories of seafaring in the Atlantic provide us with information about their race neglected by Hale in her records of the Seaman’s Aid Society. Much as Squire Romilly may have been loath to admit it, race was also part of the northerner’s life, and nowhere more so than in thriving maritime centers. Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh call attention to the multiethnic makeup of what they term the “motley crew” of Atlantic seafarers in the eighteenth century, a characteristic of the industry that perpetuated into the nineteenth century, for many of the same reasons (212-13). “Even though the Navigation Act of 1651 stipulated that three fourths of the crew importing English goods were to be English or Irish under penalty of loss of ship, tackle, and landing,” they point out, “English ships continued to be worked by African, Briton, quashee, Irish, and American (not to mention Dutch, Portuguese, and Iascar) sailors.” As the American merchant shipping industry came into its own, it faced

the same realities that created the motley crews manning British vessels, a reality legislators could do nothing to change. For, as Rediker and Linebaugh note, “As the conditions of seafaring life ebbed and flowed, as hard discipline, deadly disease, and chronic desertion thinned the ranks of the ship, the captain would take on sailors wherever he could find them” (151). This exigency shaped the crews on board merchant, slave, and naval ships; it may have also shaped seaboard communities of sailors and their family members.⁷

In New Hampshire and in Boston, Hale may have only distinguished between the “Managers” and the “claimants on their charity,” but the time and cultural capital necessary to perform urban charity work meant that administrators of the Seaman’s Aid Society were likely white women (“Extracts” 1836). Hale records nothing about the race of her charitable claimants, and Daniel Vickers cautions against assuming details about seaboard communities in the absence of written records, which are relatively scarce compared to the copious documentation surrounding most shipping voyages. We might conjecture that wives and children of indigent seamen reflected the fluid national boundaries of the maritime state, but as Vickers warns, “tracing [mariners’] personal stories into port involves daunting problems of evidence” (2). Vickers focuses his study on vessels originating from Salem, Massachusetts, and finds reliable evidence that

⁷ Both literary and historical texts of the nineteenth century support this observation. The crew of Melville’s *Pequod* is constituted by what David Reynolds calls “a conglomeration of all creeds and races ‘federated along one keel’” (51). Likewise, Sandra Gunning reads Nancy Prince’s personal narrative, *A Black Woman’s Odyssey through Russian and Jamaica*, originally published in 1850, against the scholarship that has “traditionally envisioned black men and women as heavily invested in the politics of local American places and peoples” and finds instead “important moments of African American participation in transnational political activity” (32). Such activity would have necessarily included transnational travel and would have often involved transatlantic voyages. For more on Prince’s participation in nineteenth-century maritime culture, see Gunning’s “Nancy Prince and the Politics of Mobility, Home and Diasporic (Mis)Identification.” For more on the inextricable connections between race and global waterways, see Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*.

African Americans made up roughly 10 percent of these crews, but even this information does not reveal how many of the sailors hailing from Salem (30 percent), other regions of Massachusetts (35 percent), or other states and countries around the Atlantic rim (35 percent) were white (177). It seems reasonable to conclude, as does Vickers, that “[m]aritime labor has always been attractive to people of color within the Atlantic world” because of the relatively high wages it offered even in the second-tier positions for which they would be hired, and it is highly probable that each of these sailors left family members in the community from which he sailed (239). That Sarah Hale and her associates in the Seaman’s Aid Society directed their charitable attention to some women of color, especially in Boston’s larger and more cosmopolitan port, then, seems likely. We can conclude with even more certainty that the very nature of charitable aid—and particularly Hale’s, which extended charity only insofar as the beneficiary was deemed to warrant it—reinforced social hierarchies surrounding class, race, and education in maritime communities.

In 1852, twenty-five years after the *Northwood*’s initial publication, Hale released a preface to accompany a new edition of the book, now renamed *Northwood; or, Life North and South: Showing the True Character of Both*. The title’s alteration from *Northwood: A New England Tale* marks a dramatic shift in ideology. Writing in the 1820s from New Hampshire and without ever having lived in a coastal city, Hale could comfortably position, through her loquacious narrator and patriotic characters, the issue of racial inequality as a distinctly southern problem, one the North lamented but was powerless to redress. A novel criticizing slavery and suggesting a means for its improvement, if not its eradication, seemed to be the quintessential “New England Tale.”

But by 1852, Hale's novel was slightly amended to reflect a historical fact as well as her biographical experience: The issue of race underscored a crucial similarity between "*Life North and South*," even if *Northwood* cast the two as essentially different. The vectors of slavery, revolution, and transnational trade shaped the coasts of the Atlantic and the waterways between them, collapsing the distance between Charleston and Boston and connecting the "*True Character of Both*" to the manifestations of commerce, travel, slavery, and poverty on both the southern coast she imagined in her novel and the northern maritime center she had, by the time her novel was reprinted in 1852, become uniquely familiar with.

The journey—both ideological and physical—from "*A New England Tale*" to "*Life North and South*" transported Hale from rural New Hampshire to Boston and transformed her from charitable object to charitable benefactor. She recounts the journey's inception in *Northwood*'s 1852 preface:

Northwood was published in Boston, where I was not then personally known to a single individual. The MS. was sent to a stranger; in less than a month after the book appeared I had received many letters of congratulations and promises of friendly aid. Among these letters was one from a publishing firm in that city, proposing to establish a periodical for Ladies, and offering me the editorship, if I would remove to Boston. This proposal was accepted, and the "Ladies' Magazine" established, the first literary work exclusively devoted to women ever published in America.

(iii)⁸

In Boston, Hale seemed preoccupied with the fraught issue – at least for her – of "friendly aid." Her rejection of the millinery business in favor of editing may have had something to do with her predilection for writing and her scorn for sewing. But the many

⁸ As Patricia Okker points out, Hale is mistaken on this last point, since magazines directed to a female readership had existed as early as the late eighteenth century, and in 1828, Hale would share the distinction of editor of an American periodical with at least five other women (8).

years she spent teaching the wives and daughters of seamen to sew, and the fervor with which she encouraged them in this pursuit as their sole livelihood, suggests another possibility. Sewing may have seemed a “useful exertion” and means of “spiritual improvement” for the widowed seamen’s wives she wrote of in 1836, but her position as a woman of education and social class privilege made her unwilling to accept the same lot. Her desolate situation as a widowed mother in 1827 meant that she could scarcely spurn the “promises of friendly aid” that her fledgling literary career elicited. Not long after she accepted the editorship of the *Ladies’ Magazine*, however, she found a way to capitalize on her newfound professional and social status as a charitable manager who reinforced boundaries between the “friendly aid” offered to women of privilege and the “charity of wages” extended to the destitute wives and daughters of seamen. It was, she decided, only “poor women, who ought to [be] employed in needle-work” (“Extracts” 1836). She too might have relied on the charity of her husband’s colleagues and supported herself and her children as an industrious seamstress, but instead Hale leveraged her education and social class standing to procure an offer of “friendly aid” that would shift her to the more powerful side of that benevolent transaction.

“Where Was the Charity?”: The Seaman’s Aid Society as Profitable Business

As Hale learned after the first issue of the *Ladies’ Magazine* appeared in January 1828 and she relocated to Massachusetts within the year, women relying on charity to supplement seamen’s wages or to survive their long absences were far from remarkable in Boston, a city defined in almost every regard by its prominence as an international shipping center. Publishing was not the only industry to benefit from the circulation of

bodies, information, and commodities through the city's port; the thriving maritime economy supplied the pulse and lifeblood of the metropolis itself. Shipping provided the stimulus to transform Boston from the seaport town of the seventeenth century that Gary Nash describes as little more than an "overgrown village" to a major locus of manufacturing dedicated to the twin virtues of innovation and competition (*Urban* 1). While cities like Salem to the north and Plymouth to the south of Boston never fully recovered from the crippling Embargo Act of 1807, the centralization of overseas trade served to enhance the commercial eminence of Massachusetts's capital city, which flourished in spite of increased English competition (Brown 118). The flow of Boston's commerce was distinctly bidirectional, however, and the effects of the seaboard community's bustling trade were felt on its own shores as on shores around the world. As innovation pushed Boston's commodities onto global waterways and shores, the working conditions and compensation of workers producing and transporting the products reflected the harsh economic exigencies of industrial trade. While Hale took full advantage of the city's affluence and social networks as she published and promoted the first periodical intended exclusively for a female readership, she acknowledged the disparity between the prosperity of the city's port and the poverty of sailors, who were often poorly compensated compared to ships' captains, but whose labor was hardly less necessary to a robust maritime economy.

Hale was certainly not the first to take note of sailors' poverty. In fact, New England town patriarchs had long been forced to confront the problem of disabled, penniless, absent, or deceased sailors and—more problematic, if they had them—their wives and children. In a meticulous study of eighteenth-century town clerks' records in

fourteen Rhode Island towns, Ruth Herndon uncovers an intimate association between lives at sea and on shore that provides a possible history for organizations like Hale's Seaman's Aid Society. In these rigidly patriarchal societies, it fell to town fathers to accommodate or eradicate the fragments of a sailor's family left to grapple with his transience and poor remuneration for work fraught with physical danger. While he acquired a host of technical skills at sea and mastered a highly specialized body of knowledge related to the complex functions of a ship, the sailor found himself ill suited to function as a conventional economic provider firmly rooted in the land and labor of the community. Town leaders addressed the immediate needs of the sailor's family, but as Herndon notes, such assistance often took forms of control and paternalism that "brought a marginalized status long associated with servitude." Conditioned to labor within the exploitative hierarchies of the ship, sailors might elicit similar treatment from town leaders who viewed the sea as a "dumping ground for troublesome men" and believed that returning sailors lacked the capability and motivation to manage their affairs without rigorous supervision (61). And beyond the sailor's illness or disability, the ambiguous description "lost at sea" covered the diverse experiences that, in any case, robbed families of their technical "head of household" and so qualified them for the direct management of the town patriarchs, acting on their own behalf perhaps more frequently than in the best interest of the bereaved family.

By the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, the busiest of New England's maritime communities had advanced, at least in some respects, beyond the communitarian understanding of patriarchal coverture that regulated Rhode Island in the eighteenth century. Lisa Norling argues that by 1774, managing shipowners in Nantucket

recognized their role in a “kind of paternalism that supported the local maritime industries,” and so discharged an attendant obligation to supply food, clothing, and even cash or credit to families of absent whalers (28-29). Despite this, the ranks of Nantucket’s “dependent poor” swelled in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, which historian Edward Byers attributes to “expansion in whaling and merchant shipping” but Norling connects more pointedly to the fact that goods and credit extended to wives were “in no way sufficient to sustain households during the men’s absences” (Norling 34-35). Nearly a quarter of Nantucket’s adult women were widows by 1810, and it seems logical to assume that widows in Boston found themselves in similar straits when their husbands died or exhausted the limits of their creditworthiness. Where the town fathers of eighteenth-century Rhode Island once responded to the poverty of maritime communities, a seaman’s wife in the early nineteenth-century was encouraged to “contribute her mite” to the family finances by teaching school, keeping boarders, weaving, or taking in sewing or washing (38). Efforts by religious leaders might provide additional relief, and the town itself could be counted upon to step in whenever the behavior of the impoverished family members bordered on the criminal, as we saw in the late-eighteenth century case of Rachel Wall.

In 1828, when Sarah Hale moved to Boston, responses to poverty in maritime societies—including these efforts by shipowners, seamen’s wives, and religious leaders—were scattershot and only mildly effective.⁹ They tended to be primarily

⁹ Charity work geared specifically toward mariners during the 1820s and the first years of the 1830s was so loosely organized that few sources compare the individuals and local groups extending charitable aid in maritime communities or, indeed, describe their individual efforts in any detail. The first volume of *The Sailor’s Magazine, and Naval Journal*, published in 1829 by the American Seamen’s Friend Society in New York, mentions only three charitable organizations in its 376 pages: the Female Seamen’s Friend

religious in nature, initiatives that proposed to temporarily house the bodies of seamen the better to gain access to their decrepit souls. More than a dozen “seamen’s meetings” convened regularly in churches along the Eastern Seaboard, from Portland to Savannah, and despite their various sectarian affiliations, “all engaged as the heart of one man to promote the salvation of the sailor.” In 1830, a Western Seamen’s Friend Society was formed to attend to the watermen and boatmen navigating “the rivers, lakes, and canals in the western country,” but its chief concern was “the ingathering of souls,” not the amelioration of the physical condition of seamen or their families in communities on shore (“Seamen’s Meetings on the Atlantic Sea-Coast” 285-86).¹⁰ The American Seamen’s Friend Society of New York was designed to harness the efforts of local aid societies in Philadelphia, Charleston, Savannah, Portland, New Orleans, New Bedford, Norfolk, and the “western country”—all attending primarily to the spiritual welfare of sailors—into “one grand national chain of organizations, mutually auxiliary and co-operative” (“Chaplain Crane’s Address” 98). A group of New York City businessmen drafted a constitution for the society in January of 1826, but it was not formally organized until 1828. Although it sponsored more than forty chapters in geographically diverse

Society of Charleston, South Carolina; the American Bible Society; and the American Tract Society (see pp. 279 and 318). The latter two were only tangentially concerned with the affairs of seamen. The Female Seamen’s Friend Society of Charleston was an auxiliary of the American Seamen’s Friend Society in New York, and these women, who were entrusted to run a boarding house for sailors in Charleston, were managed by the male leaders of the New York organization.

¹⁰ The notion that the seaman needed religious instruction more than moral aid persisted in both the American North and South in the first decades of the nineteenth century. *The Sailor’s Magazine, and Naval Journal* (1834) records, “When the thought was first suggested, that something must be done for the promotion of religion among seamen, it was supposed that the only way to reach them was to hold meetings on shipboard, and perform a sort of missionary service round the wharves” (“Mariner’s Churches” 286). Sarah Pogson Smith doubtless heard of “floating churches” near her home in Charleston, and interest in the religious reform of the sailor had not cooled by the time she donated all the profits of the 1844 edition of *The Arabians* (first published in Charleston in 1814) to fund a seamen’s floating church near Philadelphia, where she lived for periods of her adult life (Wilcox 1). For more, see Kritzer 19.

American seaports, for many years its most significant contribution to the welfare of sailors was “sending its chaplains and sailor missionaries, with its ship libraries and religious periodicals, as heralds of salvation, around the globe” (98). It would not be equipped to provide more substantive forms of aid for several years. The charitable initiative with which it would become most closely identified, the Sailor’s Home near the East River, did not open until 1837.¹¹ In Massachusetts, the Reverend Edward Thompson Taylor established the Boston Port Society for the benefit of poor seamen in 1829, but he struggled to effectively administer charity without a clear organizational model or a network of charitable laborers to assist him. He ran the organization for only three years before, in ill health, he left America to seek respite in Europe.

In these early years of what would become organized maritime charity work, there was clearly an opportunity to consolidate economic, domestic, and moral responses into a streamlined charitable operation, and a successful effort stood to benefit not only needy seamen’s families, but also the individuals coordinating it. Hale seized this opportunity when she founded her Seaman’s Aid Society as an affiliate of the Boston Port Society in 1833. Her partners in this venture were other white, well-off women who shared her social network and interest in poor seamen’s wives and children, but her most important professional contact was Reverend Taylor, the “homespun sailors’ parson” (Reynolds 9). Edward Taylor’s prominence as an unconventional preacher but sincere philanthropist among the seamen of Boston made him the ideal figurehead for a

¹¹ The first Sailor’s Home opened in a leased building at 140 Cherry Street, close to the docks of the East River. A separate building for black seamen was opened several years later. In 1841-42, the American Seamen’s Friend Society built a new Sailor’s Home at 190 Cherry Street. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Hudson River, not the East, was the city’s most important commercial waterway. The Society responded to this development by moving the Home to a lot near the Hudson River at Jane and West Streets in 1908, in a building that is now the Jane Hotel.

charitable organization of a similarly unconventional bent. Raised in Richmond, Virginia, Taylor was especially attuned to the needs of sailors and their families by virtue of his post at sea as a privateersman in the War of 1812. Familiar with the negative externalities of expanding American naval and merchant fleets, Taylor could empathize with the seamen he labored among as evangelical minister of the Seaman's Bethel Church in Boston. The popular sermons that David Reynolds calls "explosive social texts" ignited the imaginations of Emerson, Whitman, and Melville (who used Taylor as the prototype for Father Maple in *Moby Dick*); they also fueled appeals to Taylor's "great hot heart" from parishioners suffering more acutely from material than spiritual want (20). Emerson called the minister "the Shakespeare of the sailor & the poor," but the eloquent preacher attempted to move beyond a strictly rhetorical role when he established his Boston Port Society (21). Although Taylor's charitable operation never commanded significant resources, it was one of the only organizations in Boston that extended aid specifically to mariners. When Taylor left for the salutary climes of Europe, the distressed seaman and his family were, figuratively speaking, set adrift. In desperation, they pestered Taylor's wife, for "those miserable sufferers . . . had no earthly friend but her husband, and knew not where to look for assistance in his absence" (Hale "Extracts" 1836). It was this dilemma, according to Hale, that prompted the establishment of the Seaman's Aid Society, a move that in one stroke benefitted Taylor and the charitable-minded women. The one-time seafarer could rest assured that his investment with the "miserable sufferers" of his Seaman's Bethel would be tended in his absence, and it was apparently this consideration for his livelihood and legacy that moved the women to fill the position of control he left open. Hale could thus market her intervention as a double-

edged sword, a model of organized benevolence that allowed the women of the Seaman's Aid Society and the minister of the Seaman's Bethel Church to enjoy a mutually-sustaining bond.

Taylor, recuperating in Europe, could not help Hale establish her Seaman's Aid Society, but Hale did not need his help; she needed his endorsement. Her affiliation with Taylor—which she stressed in almost every published account of her charitable enterprise—located her Society firmly within the legitimizing structures of patriarchal ecclesiastical leadership (*Boston* 1).¹² He was regarded as “one of Boston's celebrities,” known to be particularly adept at converting and rehabilitating morally and socially deviant seamen. “His conversation was in a tarpaulin hat and a sailor's jacket,” an early biography of Father Taylor put it. “His first sermons were to sailors; his prayers and preaching were full of the salt, salt sea” (*Life of Father Taylor* viii, 102). Drawing attention to the ill health of Reverend Taylor that forced him to Europe in hopes of

¹² The Seamen's Bethel began in October of 1828, when Taylor was asked by a group of Methodists in Boston to preach to the city's seamen in a vacant church. The groups that assembled to hear him preach consistently filled the chapel. According to his wife, “Mr. Taylor was in his element. Having been a sailor himself, his heart yearned for the conversion of his brethren of the sea; and his soul was cheered in seeing them come home to God.” The Methodists who had invited Taylor to preach, however, “did not feel able or sufficiently interested to sustain an institution for seamen. The house was to be sold; and Mr. Taylor went South and begged the money with which the house was purchased, thus establishing preaching for seamen” (qtd. in *Life of Father Taylor* 104). According to a 1904 biography of Taylor published by the Seaman's Aid Society, The Boston Port Society was established in 1828, “when a few members of the Methodist Episcopal Church met together in Boston, and formed themselves into a society ‘for the moral and religious instruction of seamen.’ This society they called the Port Society of the City of Boston and its Vicinity. In February, 1829, its managers, fifteen in number, chosen from the society at large, were incorporated by an act of the legislature.” The managers, I infer from this lengthy history, were all male, so Hale's society of women was innovative in its composition as well as its aggressive professional approach. Of Taylor's role in the Port Society, the 1904 history claims, “Rev. Edward Thompson Taylor, afterwards widely known as Father Taylor, having been a common sailor on a Spanish sloop of war, and also on a privateer against the British in 1812, became interested, on his conversion, in the religious welfare of sailors; and it was to enable him to preach and work among seamen that the Port Society was established.” Taylor was therefore put in charge of the Port Society, but was given no staff or funds with which to operate it. Its charitable scope was limited until it became affiliated with Hale's Seamen's Aid Society in 1836, and, by virtue of this association, was able to share credit for the impressive operations of the Boston Port and Seamen's Aid Society—almost totally in control of the women managing the Aid Society (*Life of Father Taylor* 447–48).

recovery and “the feeble state” of Mrs. Taylor, left alone to be “harassed and almost worn out, by applications from the miserable sufferers,” Hale records that “[i]t was under these circumstances, that the Seaman’s Aid Society was formed,—and hence its *name*” (“Extracts” 1836). In a deft rhetorical sleight of hand, Hale conflates the Society’s mission of “aid” with the needy Reverend Taylor and his “feeble” wife, directing attention to the Society’s role in bolstering religious authority and providing for its perpetuation in extenuating circumstances, rather than the physical and economic management of the seaman and his family, as their society’s *raison d’être*.

Hale’s first task as leader of the assembled group was indeed to settle on a name for the benevolent organization. Her assertion of her strong relationship to the travelling Taylor in the third annual report of the Seaman’s Aid Society ends on a note that seems odd (“—and hence its *name*”) unless one considers, as Hale must have done, how the name of the charity was a matter of social as well as legal and economic significance. Not only did it remind Bostonians of Rev. Taylor’s identity as a seaman and subtly suggest that he might be one recipient of the women’s aid—and the singular noun might have especially encouraged onlookers to think of a specific *seaman* rather than a group—the name “Seaman’s Aid Society” also tied the organization to the fortunes of the American Seamen’s Friend Society in New York. This could not have been coincidental. The Seamen’s Friend Society was, at that point, the largest maritime charity in the United States, and the only one with branches reaching far into the west and south of the nation. Hale had no intention of submitting to the authority of the Seamen’s Friend’s male administrators or working under their auspices, but she still aligned herself with its scope

and reputation in the public's imagination by inviting associations to the older organization with the name of her new society.

As it turned out, the name Hale selected paid rich dividends from the moment she established the Society in 1833 and for many years afterward. When Nathaniel Tucker of Norfolk died five years later, in 1838, his will stipulated that a gift of \$1000 be held in trust for the Seaman's Aid Society. Incensed by this sizable gift to a younger, perhaps derivative organization, the Seamen's Friend Society came before the Massachusetts Supreme Court to argue that the gift was in fact intended for the Seamen's *Friend* Society, and they were entitled to the legacy. A great deal of the oral argument hinges on whether the Boston women's organization was in fact the "Seaman's" aid society, since it was sometimes written "Seamen's" in various published reports (Metcalf 194-95). This must have confused Tucker's scrivener, the lawyers for the New York society argued, because why would Tucker have intentionally left such a sum to a group of women charity workers? "The character of this society," they held, "as an association of females, justly raises a doubt whether the testator intended to give the legacies to them, thereby imposing on them a duty and trust so unusual as the perpetual care of the property. Should the society decline the trust, it is certain no court of chancery would ever substitute a *similar* trustee" (196-97). The legal argument nicely illuminates the strategic position in which Hale situated her society vis-à-vis other maritime charities. Hale may well have intentionally connected the Boston Seaman's Aid Society to the purposes and credibility of the largest and most organized maritime charity, the Seamen's Friend Society, by gently echoing its name. But there, the similarities ended. The one comprised male professionals and politicians who donated a portion of their time and

resources to an aid society for seamen. The other was made up entirely of women—much more inclined, in the absence of abundant professional options, to treat charity work as an occupation rather than a benevolent avocation.

Hale recognized that she could benefit from the prominence and acclaim of the American Seamen’s Friend Society, but she differentiated herself from it crucially and immediately. The New York charity collected donations and distributed them to seamen, much as local ecclesiastical officials were already doing in maritime ports along the nation’s rivers and oceans. The country did not need another institution that simply gave alms to the poor, and Hale did not intend to offer one. Operating under a business model I will describe presently, her society would not provide alms to poor seamen and their families; it would provide wages. Hale’s innovative charity may have shared part of the Seamen’s Friend Society’s name, but it borrowed little else. To a certain degree, the legal representatives of the Seamen’s Friend Society were right: even in the first years of the Seaman’s Aid Society’s existence, Nathaniel Tucker could hardly have mistaken one organization for the other. And the differences between the two charities were amplified as the result of the court case. The court found no compelling evidence that the legacy could *not* have been left to Hale’s society, and ruled that the Seamen’s Friend Society had no claim to the gift.¹³ By 1862, the Seamen’s Friend Society, run as an avocation by businessmen, was shrouded in “a heavy debt” (“American Seamen’s Friend Society”). During the same years (difficult ones for any enterprise operating during a recession and then in a war-ravaged economy), the *Seaman’s Aid Society*, run by a group of women

¹³ For the details of this court case, see *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts*, pp. 188-210 and *A Treatise on Extrinsic Evidence in Aid of the Interpretation of Wills*, p. 276.

who approached charity as a transactional business, commanded real and personal property valued at more than \$150,000 (*Tenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities of Massachusetts* 29).

It was Hale's crucial professional decisions in the early days of her Society's operation that helped provide for this outcome three decades later. Despite her strategic nod toward the erstwhile sailor in the name of her charity, it was largely in Edward Taylor's absence that the Seaman's Aid Society determined the scope of its efforts and created an innovative business model. Under Taylor's original model, charity workers simply distributed "alms" indiscriminately and with no underlying impulse to effect moral reform. During the early days of the Seaman's Aid Society's existence, Hale and her associates limited themselves to this model, with unimpressive results. As Hale reported:

[W]e assembled monthly, while a work-basket, containing our stock of goods, was carried to our place of meeting, and there we passed the afternoon making coarse and common garments, to be given to the poor, when the greatest want of most of them was that of employment, and ready and *just* pay for their work. Probably not one of the recipients of our bounty was, at the end of the year, in any better situation, or at all improved in her condition by our zeal and exertions. ("Fourth Annual Report" 270)

Women who received alms from Taylor were, according to Hale, as "idle" and "wretched" after receiving aid as before ("Extracts" 1836). But under Hale's management, charity would not come free: it would participate in the same alliance between economic power and social control that shaped life on ship decks and in coastal cities.

To do this, Hale found it necessary to attach profits to her charitable activities. She and the co-managers of the Society thus created a clothing store for voyage-bound sailors, supplied and staffed by some fifty seamen's wives and daughters and equipped under the aggressive management of the Society to outperform the "slop-shop" proprietors working in league with boardinghouse landlords to sell cheap apparel to departing sailors. In just one year, the Society distributed more than fourteen hundred dollars in wages. "We have employed these poor females in the pleasant and womanly occupation of needlework," wrote Hale, "paying them a *just* compensation for the same, with which they can, with full employment, support themselves comfortably." Hale observed that in just over a year, the "work-basket" model had been "expanded into a well supplied "Clothing Store." The store was an immediate financial success. "[D]uring the year," Hale reported, "we have received upwards of five thousand dollars for garments sold, chiefly to seamen." Clearly, Taylor's charitable platform had not been merely "expanded" in his absence; it had been supplanted by a fundamentally different enterprise—a benevolent business that dealt in profits and wages, not in alms ("Fourth Annual Report" 270).

In May of 1836, Hale identified another labor market, and tapping into it, increased the store's already impressive revenues. That month, the Society began a school for the daughters of seamen. It taught "needlework, and oral instruction in the social, moral, and religious duties of females," but as Hale noted, "the novel feature in our plan was, that we furnished employment to these little girls, and, as soon as they could make a shirt, paid them the same price for their work that we paid their mothers. They soon learned to make plain gingham shirts for seamen, and were supplied with

work from the Store.” The young girls were an incredible bargain for the Society managers: “They whole sum paid our pupils for work amounts to about *seventeen dollars*; but we had distributed *seven hundred* among them in charity,” Hale reported. Parents who learned what their daughters were doing at school were justifiably filled with “incredulity or distrust,” for “[i]t was a method of benevolence they had never heard of.” It was not the parents’ lack of education that left them to wonder if the women “had some sinister design, in such a strange proceeding”; it was their keen awareness of the ways marginalized workers might be exploited by self-interested employers. It was precisely the “novelty” of the Aid Society that put them on their guard (“Fourth Annual Report” 270). Less than three years after she established her Society as an affiliate of Taylor’s Port Society, Hale had organized the Reverend’s impoverished supplicants into an organized body of laborers, churning healthy profits under the management of women who had discovered that well-run benevolence could yield more than spiritual rewards.

The Society store’s competitive advantage, Hale determined, would not be lower prices but rather higher quality goods, and a worker would be paid on a “graduated” scale according to the “diligence and neatness in her work.” This subjective appraisal of a woman’s or girl’s economic value extended into her home. “We have a committee of laborers,” Hale wrote, “who visit our workwomen as friends, to encourage their virtuous efforts.” These observers then reported back to the leadership of the Society, and as a “just scale of prices” was attached to the spectacle of their domestic lives, these seamen’s wives and daughters were understandably found to be almost invariably “busy and cheerful” (“Extracts” 1836). As a business manager, Hale was not on the lookout for signals of moral probity as much as hallmarks of a good employee. “They have

improved greatly in their sewing,” she found, “and in their habits of punctuality” (“Fourth Annual Report” 270). Hale may have been speaking of these “poor women” when she admitted, “Some persons have inquired, Where was the charity, though we do pay the highest price for making garments, while we insist on having these so well made?” Where was the charity, indeed. Under Hale’s direction, the Seaman’s Aid Society’s charity became indistinguishable from the for-profit ventures of shops selling inexpensive, ready-made clothing to frugal mariners. And although Hale did not profit personally from the proceeds of her own workroom, she derived a measure of social control exactly correlated to her workers’ reliance on her for a “charity of wages” (“Extracts” 1836). As she commanded the means of production and allocated the profits of the Seaman’s Aid Society’s clothing store, she yoked maritime charity work to the circuits of economic coercion ruling Atlantic waterways and the lands surrounding them.

The Society’s financial reports documented the success of its innovative business model. Just three years after its clothing store opened and one year after its school for girls began supplying young laborers to produce its merchandise, the Panic of 1837 and subsequent economic depression decimated the funds donated voluntarily to the Society—from \$2000 in 1836 to \$290 in 1837—but Hale had ensured that her organization could thrive without generous individuals’ one-sided donations. “Our Seaman’s Aid Society could not expect to enjoy great prosperity while the mercantile world was in ruins,” Hale wrote, “but we have not failed, and that is proof our plan of charity has a sure foundation in its own usefulness, as well as in the hearts of its friends.” In 1837, as the national economy foundered, the Society generated \$5,796.52 in cash from the sales of the clothing store. It paid the women workers of the store \$1,400 in

wages and spent about \$700 to maintain the store and the school, leaving the managers in possession of cash, goods, and saleable garments amounting to \$4,596 (“Seaman’s Aid Society” 167). The attendance of the school had grown to forty students, all busily making shirts for nominal wages, and it rejected “many applications for admittance” because the “school” room could not accommodate more pupils (“Fourth Annual Report” 271). From a purely economic standpoint, the Seaman’s Aid Society was an unprecedented success. It was more than self-sufficient; it was profitable, and Hale was encouraged. “Thus it will appear that our store can sustain itself on the present scale,” she announced. “But we wish to enlarge our business. We cannot supply the demand for work which our poor women are constantly urging, unless we are enabled to keep a larger stock of goods, or make larger and quicker sales of garments” (“Seaman’s Aid Society” 167). Building on the “sure foundation” of her profit-driven charity, Hale hired more poor women, and as they worked quicker, her share of commercial and social power in Boston’s port grew larger.

Hale may have used Taylor as a decorous figurehead for her venture, but her competitive enterprise entirely overshadowed his relatively rudimentary charitable platform. By 1840, Taylor had returned from Europe, but the relationship between his platform and Hale’s business had been completely inverted, with Hale’s clothing shop supporting Taylor’s charitable initiatives, modest and uninspired by comparison. In the annual report of 1840, she wrote, “we perceive that during the past year, [The Seaman’s Aid Society] has paid the females of seamen for needlework, \$1,644.59; to the women who cut and sell clothes, \$356. It has assisted Mr. Taylor, the eloquent advocate of seamen, in sustaining the mariner’s house, devoted to their benefit; it has dispensed in

bounties to sick and shipwrecked seamen, \$334.96, and to seamen's widows, \$134" ("Seventh Annual Report" 339). Hale could afford to give Taylor a few hundred dollars for the maintenance of his beloved Mariner's House, a relic of the days before she had transformed charity into a transactional business and put herself in control of five or six times the amount of funds at his disposal.¹⁴ Taylor may have been "eloquent"; Hale was innovative.

Throughout her tenure at the Seaman's Aid Society, Hale managed to explain this overhaul of Taylor's benevolent model, including her foray into the commercial marketplace, as an effort to get women back to, and not away from, their families and domestic duties. Hale described the creation of a highly competitive clothing store as the Seaman's Aid Society's successful attempt to reduce the amount of time charity work required the Society members to leave their homes and presented the protection of domestic tranquility as the motivating force behind this novel business venture. Under Taylor's model of charity, she noted, the women of the Society "left their families, gave up useful occupations, elegant pursuits, or improving studies, to assemble themselves together, and to make coarse garments, to be distributed gratuitously; while poor women,

¹⁴ Even the 1904 biography of Edward Taylor, a nearly 500-page paean to the Reverend, conceded that where charitable rather than strictly religious initiatives were concerned, he owed his influence on Boston's maritime communities to the women of the Seaman's Aid Society. The biography avers that Taylor was intent upon doing something to help poor sailors who returned from sea, but admits that his own efforts were inadequate to the task. "Fortunately, he was able to secure the co-operation of the ladies of the Seamen's Aid Society [note, as the legal council of the American Seamen's Friend Society argued, that published sources were not consistent in writing the name of Hale's *Seaman's Aid Society*] in his project; and that was the beginning of what has gradually developed into the present Mariners' House." In fact, as the biography goes on, it becomes less clear whether Taylor asked for this support or enterprising women simply seized a valuable professional opportunity. "As has been stated before," the biography goes on, "the members of the Aid Society took an early interest in Father Taylor's sailor boardinghouse, and finally assumed active management of it" (*Life of Father Taylor* 452). The phrasing there is apt, even if perhaps unintentional. The women of the Society took a literal economic interest in Taylor's boardinghouse—and the clothing store they appended to it (*Life of Father Taylor* 451-52).

who ought to have been employed in needle-work, and to whom, probably, these very garments were given, were spending their time in idle gossip, or vicious indulgences!” (“Extracts” 1836). Hale’s society, she reminded the public, addressed this problem by assigning the “needle-work” to the women whose control was tied up in her conception of domestic stability and whose “indulgences” undermined clerical and charitable efforts to manage the unwieldy social byproducts of the global shipping industry. Once the seaman’s wives and daughters were tied to the work of sewing clothing for a store created to move their wares, their (white) women benefactors could return home, confident that they had harnessed both “needle-work” and its creators into a project that would mitigate the challenge mariners’ widows, poor wives, disabled bodies, or untended children presented to middle-class American conceptions of domestic life as necessarily structured around a productive male head.

Hale’s Writings on Benevolence: The Literature of Inseparable Economies

In her active support of the Seaman’s Aid Society’s governing principle—“to find employment for the poor, paying them a just price for labor, is the only charity which will permanently improve their condition, and benefit society”—Hale and her associates stepped into a role remarkably similar to that of the town patriarchs once solely responsible for the care of indigent sailors and their neglected families (“Extracts” 1836). Her prominence as editor of a popular women’s magazine, however, allowed her to highlight the feminine nature and religious undertones of her benevolent organization, even if in reality she depended upon both her feminized professions—writer of sentimental literature and charity worker—to produce real profits in the commercial

marketplace. Time and again, she used her writing to remind her readers of the plight of the seaman who sustained their comfortable lifestyles with his poorly compensated labor, and to reassure the public of her modest ambitions—merely to promote morality among his poor wife and children. And indeed, Hale did use her growing social power to control the behavior of the women to whom she extended charitable aid. But as Hale published her own and other women's accounts of urban poverty and the virtues of maritime benevolence, both her readership and the operating budget of the Seaman's Aid Society grew steadily. By 1840, Hale had written constantly about the modest, feminine, Christian, and morally necessary nature of her charity work, but her professional success in both writing and charity shows how capital drove both—and bound the two professions together.

Hale's acumen as a literary professional allowed her to sanction the actions of women performing work that had long been carried out in American maritime communities by male religious and political leaders. For example, she considered indiscriminate charity potentially harmful to good character, and so, like the powerful and coercive town patriarchs who controlled charitable aid in eighteenth-century maritime towns, she extended charity only on certain terms and conditions. In part, this was due to her exacting views of feminine propriety and the virtue of industry. She used the *Ladies' Magazine* to inveigh against, among other things, untidiness in dress, manner, and speech (Finley 152), and even “boring the ears, in order to hang jewels therein,” which seemed to Hale a ghastly indication of the American woman's willingness “to be tortured for fashion's sake” and a practice better left “to savages who wear rings in their noses to match” (“First” 253-54). She expected poor women not only to work for their own and

their families' support, but also to exhibit the kind of good taste in dress and conduct that suggested they merited the Society's charitable attention. Her demands reinforced the socioeconomic divides between the managers of the Society and these benefactors. Of her organization, Hale affirmed, "Its members comprise the most respectable ladies of that city, whose sympathies are enlisted for the sailors, a noble and important, though somewhat improvident class of men" ("Seventh Annual Report" 339). Hale needed to concede, as a public figure reflecting on the value of maritime commerce, that seamen performed "noble and important" work for the national economy, but if Hale felt obligated to attach these redeeming qualities to their bodies at sea, she also felt justified in attaching "somewhat improvident" manifestations of their class and, in many cases, their race to the bodies of their poor wives and children on land.

Hale believed that moral improvements among the lower classes manifested themselves in the speech, behavior, and personal appearance of the reformed, and she and the Aid Society were ever on the watch for visible markers of repentance or recalcitrance. Like a few other organizations, she made demands on her charitable objects that could be measured empirically. The Portsmouth Seaman's Friends' Society required its supplicants to take temperance pledges that ignored the sailor's dependence on alcohol at sea as a fluid that kept far longer than stored drinking water.¹⁵ Seamen, realizing the

¹⁵ The Ladies' Seamen's Friend Society of Portsmouth was created in 1836 to provide a "home and abiding place" for a sailor "as he returns from the toils of the deep until he again embarks upon its waters." It operated on "the temperance plan," a much less aggressive business model than Hale's. In exchange for room and board during their sojourn in Portsmouth, sailors had only to offer their assurances that they would abstain from alcoholic beverage, at least for as long as they were under the care of the women of the Society. "[W]e hope the time is not far distant," reads their first annual report, "when Portsmouth will no longer be a *snare* but a *sanctuary* to the sailor." In comparison to Hale's innovative, profit-conscious operation, the Society's funds were paltry, and its members at the mercy of other societies and donors. "At one time we received \$75 from the Portsmouth Young Men's Tract Society," they reported, by way of accounting for their resources. "At another \$50 for our library, from the South Parish Domestic Missionary

choice before them, not only outwardly pledged temperance, but also vociferously affirmed their ideological complicity in the Society's aims. "Let me be remembered in your prayers," one "reformed" sailor wrote, "that I may be the instrument of leading my seafaring brethren to seek Christ" ("Annual" 1). All of this, in Hale's estimation, suited the sweep and moral imperative of a charitable organization. Accordingly, her Boston-based Seaman's Aid Society forbade "mendacity," "gossip," and laziness. It required sailor's wives to exhibit industry and modesty and always "think about *appearances*," and it supported only the "honest, faithful laborer[s]" among the ranks of the poor. Although she admitted that "the scrutiny, instituted into private history and all the proceedings of the individual who solicits relief, is almost sure to degrade the poor," she checked this sentiment with the more pervasive philosophy governing the Society's coercive "charity of wages": "We believe that those who are indifferent about good

Society. \$60 taken at a collection after Rev. Mr. Taylor had addressed the people of this place in behalf of our society . . . \$7 dollars from two benevolent ladies," and so on. Edward Taylor represents one connection between this society and Hale's, and there may be others, but in ideology, the societies were wholly distinct. The Portsmouth Society distributed its limited resources to sailors, and asked only that they pledge to abide by certain moral and social standards. Hale made a commitment to moral and social standards part of the system of labor and wages that provided the profits of a much more substantial and ambitious enterprise ("Report of the Ladies' Seamen's Friend Soc. Portsmouth" 288). The society was incorporated under the name "Portsmouth Seamen's Friend Society" in 1858. Under the terms of the act, it could acquire no more than fifty thousand dollars (including "real and personal estate") ("An Act to incorporate the Portsmouth Seamen's Friend Society" 2036). Of course, the Portsmouth group was only one of many temperance societies in the Northern United States during the 1830s, and not unique in specifically targeting sailors. Perhaps the most visible was the Marine Temperance Society of the Port of New York, founded by a half-dozen men in 1833. The Society would offer temporary shelter to impoverished seamen (and the use of a library of a few volumes) in exchange for seamen pledging to believe "the use of ardent spirits, as a drink, to be not only unnecessary but injurious to the social, civil, and religious interests of men" ("Marine Temperance Society" 219). Perhaps the pledge, published in the American Seamen's Friend Society's annual journal, inspired the women of the Portsmouth organization, but there was no shortage of concern for the inebriated sailor in American ports, and no dearth of rhetoric outlining the stakes of and possible solutions to the issue.

Although Hale would develop a profit-oriented model of charity that differed significantly from the practices of abolition and temperance reformers, she championed their underlying motives, both as an author who saw literary fodder in nineteenth-century reform movements and as social leader who could cast her maritime charity work as sharing at least some ideological space with these popular causes. Her society, however, was far more interested in the economic underpinnings of moral reform than the vast majority of temperance and abolition societies.

appearances, will soon be equally so about the reality of goodness.” As Hale’s “charity of wages” was extended under the assumption that “goodness” could be read upon the bodies of her workers, those employees had a monetary perhaps more than a moral incentive to heed Hale’s advice to “think about appearances” (“Extracts” 1836).

As the Society established its aims and implemented its ideological initiatives, Hale’s charitable actions took on the managerial tones of someone who recognized the same potential for profits in charity work that had long motivated literary enterprise. As a magazine editor, Hale had ample opportunity to exhibit the sophistication of her professional instincts. She determined the layout and content of each installment of the *Ladies’ Magazine*; she also finessed relationships with publishers and a reading public whose literary taste and blind adherence to European manners sometimes fell short of Hale’s high ideals for American women. Hale frequently held up her own modest dress and simple grooming as an example to women who seemed less resistant to the fashion industry’s siren call. But an astute businesswoman, Hale knew when to push her opinions and when to make concessions to her wider audience, as when she grudgingly allowed the *Ladies’ Magazine* and later *Godey Lady’s Book* to include illustrations depicting the latest in European fashion (Rogers 38). Hale was savvy enough to see that undiluted moral superiority might produce a published poem or two, or might fuel an isolated charitable gesture, but only consistent profits could sustain literary production and charity work as viable commercial enterprises.

Hale’s economic motivations created philosophical contradictions in both her literary and charity work, but Hale was apparently willing to countenance the contradictions as necessary byproducts of productive ventures. Certainly not impartially,

given her personal investment in the production of cheap apparel at the Aid Society's clothing store, Hale connected the market for luxurious apparel with the perils facing seamen in her writing, pointing out that sailors "brave danger, and often meet death" to ensure the homecoming of a vessel, "freighted, perhaps, with the rich silks and costly ornaments, that deck ladies in their hours of pride" ("Extracts" 1836). And yet, the November 1830 edition of the *Ladies' Magazine* includes the publication's first of many fashion plates: a woman shown from four angles models a mass of hair teased into two side buns and three knots, adorned with feathers, flowers, and ribbons, and standing some twelve inches off her head. During the late-eighteenth century as during Hale's tenure as editor, what Margaret Powell and Joseph Roach call "the economy of big hair" advertised not only "the wealth and indulgent largess" of the coif's financier, but also "the labor that is required to produce it and the leisure that is required to wear it" (83). This "performance of waste," or the gaudy "show that big hair stages" (84), was precisely the thing Hale condemned when she reminded her readers of a time "when to be industrious was to be respectable, and to be neatly dressed, fashionable" and anyone gazing on the "graceful and becoming" hairstyles of New England's daughters "would feel no regret that they were uninitiated in the fashionable mysteries of the toilet" (*Northwood* 64). The disconnect between her prescriptions regulating the manifestation of good taste and breeding on a woman's body and the fashion plate advertising big hair in the *Ladies' Magazine* illustrates Hale's acknowledgement that even moral standards must sometimes give room for the more capricious standards of financial profitability. To maintain her social power as a benefactress to seamen's families required her to acknowledge that Boston's economy and culture flourished in part *because* of the fashion industry's

reliance on feathers, whalebone, rich fabrics, and systems of trade and transportation. Rather than discredit the very circuits of exchange that justified her charity work in a maritime society, the *Ladies' Magazine's* editor was apparently willing to sacrifice the laudable for the lucrative.

Her willingness to accommodate popular tastes within her broader moral and intellectual project ensured a wide readership for her work, promoted the profitability of the periodical, and enabled Hale to influence her audience's views on education, art, morality, and patriotism. The professional skills that equipped Hale to become a successful editor were largely the same skills that allowed her to thrive as a charitable manager. As a writer, she could comprehend and describe the domestic cost of seafaring, and as a charity worker, she could position herself to respond to it. Five years after founding the society, Hale wrote a poem describing the loss of the *USS Peacock*, the sloop-of-war her son Horatio served aboard as official philologist for the United States Exploring Expedition. The ship carried members of the expedition around South America and as far as Fiji and Hawaii before sinking on the Columbia River, and although no life was lost, Hale imagines in her poem the danger facing the "steadfast men, that dauntless crew," and the "horrors of that long, long night" ("Wreck" 282-83). Her son's condition was not anomalous, and Hale did not confine herself to imagining only his ordeal. In her annual report of the Seaman's Aid Society's endeavors, she wrote, "When the heavens are dark with storms, and the furious winds are heaping up the waters like mountains, [sailors] are on the ocean, buffeting with the angry elements, that they may bring home the vessel." In rendering so poetically the hazards of seafaring, Hale does not shrink from the more mundane task of reminding her readers of another

difference between her charity work and the temperance movement: The seaman's family suffers not because of his moral failings, but because his honor and bravery incite him to fill the economic, political, and practical needs of the American people.

Not only did Hale write about her charitable project in terms of "market prices" and "fair wages," she also took pains to highlight these financial and emotional stakes of seafaring and figure its costs in terms of both monetary loss and the fear and helplessness of a sailor's family members. "They are a most useful class of people," she wrote, "and often meet death in the prosecution of voyages that enrich our merchants, and give prosperity and glory to our country." For the physical risks that offered such rich dividends to the nation whose ships the sailor manned, Hale felt he and his family deserved not only adulation, but also "a *just* scale of prices" attached to their labor. Hale's ability to organize a fair that netted over a thousand dollars for the Society in its first year, to see a need for gainful employment rather than alms among the seaman's family, and then to command a profitable clothing store as an executive ostensibly intent on meeting this need reveal a working knowledge of both economic theory and practice. Her report of the Society's activities corroborates this: "I am aware it is the creed of political economists, that trade must regulate itself; that the market price of labor is the just price," she wrote. "But I insist that a benevolent society has a right to establish a charity of wages" ("Extracts" 1836). The president of just such a society, Hale could realize this ideal and, by connecting these wages to the careful surveillance of her women workers, capitalize on the overlap of labor, wages, and social power underpinning her innovative maritime charity.

In order to position herself most advantageously in a seafaring economy that yielded this social control as a highly desirable byproduct of financial profitability, Hale strategically used her writing—including her annual reports of the Society’s activity—to appease those who insisted upon the bounded realm of female authority even as she moved her charity into positions of social power and control that far exceeded the perceived limits of a rather porous “domestic sphere.” Certainly, her management of the Seaman’s Aid Society demonstrated the degree to which an enterprising, white, and educated woman could manipulate and regulate behavior in ways traditionally accorded to patriarchal leaders. But, as her ideological distance from the more ambitious women leaders of temperance and abolition societies suggests, Hale tactfully respected certain boundaries around a reputable woman’s sphere of influence, and her achievement was rather in showing the extent to which the professionally inclined woman could execute patriarchal prerogatives within societal conventions than in crusading for women’s unbounded autonomy or authority. When she couched her sketch of the creation of the Seaman’s Aid Society in terms of the “need” of both Reverend Taylor and the seaman’s family, Hale could reasonably expect that the public face of her organization would benefit from the close association to the popular preacher and his already socially sanctioned charity work. Since the religious revivals of the first part of the century, New England’s churches were filled with “thousands of young, passionate, committed people, the majority of them women,” as Lori Ginzberg notes. “There, they embraced a theology that encouraged a profound urgency about their souls and about the moral condition of their society” (*Benevolence* 7). This urgency had a particular function in maritime communities, where, as Lisa Norling observes, seamen’s wives and mothers turned to

religious rituals “to make sense of their suffering and to structure their feelings about their family members absent at sea” (194). In this environment, Hale positioned herself rhetorically, in the articles she wrote and the publications she edited, under the church’s legitimizing authority and comforting doctrines while in reality, she increasingly carried out its charitable mandates under terms of her own innovation.

Even as she stepped into a role of management over the morality and industry of these seamen’s wives, Hale had no interest in stoking the controversy surrounding the nascent women’s right movement, and she neatly sidestepped it in her writing with a few well-chosen phrases. Her promise to never abuse her influence over her readers by encouraging women to “usurp station, or encroach on the prerogatives of men” (*Ladies’ Magazine* Jan. 1828) and her measured opposition to women’s suffrage seemed to comport with her assurances that the “Managers” of the Seaman’s Aid Society “forebode to undertake any experiment, till the return of Mr. Taylor, on whose assistance and counsel we felt we might rely” (“Extracts” 1836). In fact, the group devised a major overhaul of Taylor’s existing apparatus that would transform his charitable platform—and shift his power to the women now governing it—and her records detail initiatives launched at least partly in his absence. But Hale’s published accounts worked to advertise her fidelity to conventional social hierarchy that imagined commerce to be the purview of men, not women. Her reports of the Society’s affairs, which consistently called attention to Taylor as the organization’s sponsor, also marked her ideological distance from the women leaders of temperance and anti-slavery societies who stoked fears that such reform movements were merely fronts for a more insidious campaign for

women's equality.¹⁶ Displaying the mollifying potential of her well-exercised rhetorical skill, Hale revealed the advantage of publicly affirming ecclesiastical leadership and women's inherent suitability for administering aid under the church's watchful eye: Clerics and potential critics, reassured by Hale's (misleading) accounts of her organization's total reliance on Reverend Taylor's "assistance and counsel," turned their attention toward more visible threats, and left her unsupervised as the acting head of a charitable organization comprising a school for seamen's daughters, a lending library, a fundraising operation, and a clothing store with more than one hundred employees receiving wages at the discretion of the Aid Society's executive arm.

Hale explicitly invoked Christian texts, oft-quoted sources that set the tone for many of the pieces in the *Ladies' Magazine*, to further legitimize this sweeping expansion of an aid society run entirely by women. While it was true that she never expressly used the Seaman's Aid Society as a vehicle for the advancement of women the way her counterparts in temperance and anti-slavery societies did, the Society's clothing store offered highly novel professional and managerial opportunities for women as a byproduct of its charitable aims. By itself, this possibility would seem to have far more disruptive

¹⁶ Both abolition and temperance served as stepping-stones for women leaders to begin advocating for increased opportunities for women in education, industry, and politics. Lori Ginzberg credits the "public approval she received for speaking on behalf of temperance" for Susan B. Anthony's decision to "forge a political consciousness that would lead her into more radical causes" (*Antebellum* 38). Women agitating for abolition drew criticism, as Anthony would, for explicitly rejecting "the circumscribed limits with which corrupt custom and a perverted application of Scripture have encircled her," and moving, according to detractors, toward a subversive approach to their initially commendable agenda that rejected the political, social, and clerical authority of male leadership (qtd. in Ginzberg *Antebellum* 59). Hale herself levied similar criticism, including in her inaugural issue of the *Ladies' Magazine* a promise that husbands of her readers "may rest assured that nothing found on these pages" would encourage their wives to "usurp station, or encroach on the prerogatives of men" (Jan. 1828), and describing in *The Lectress* a brand of brazen female impropriety that actually proves fatal to the ambitious but misguided woman activist. Instead, Hale embraced the potential for women to effect real social change modeled by temperance and abolition organizations while eschewing the elements she deemed radical and deleterious to "the prerogatives of men," thereby conciliating her moderate literary and social disciples – and their apparently more moderate husbands.

potential than women presiding over temperance and antislavery meetings, but Hale's published descriptions of the Society located it not simply beneath church authority, but at the very center of Christian belief. Perhaps inspired by Reverend Taylor to see the connection between the sailor and the man of the cloth, Hale pushed the comparison still further. Directing her appeal to "the professed follower of Jesus," Hale implored newspaper readers to identify with the sailor as the modern embodiment of the prototypical Christian disciple. "[Jesus] chose his disciples from among fishermen, or from the tribe of Zebulun, who lived at the haven of ships, with the exception of one only, Judas Iscariot," she writes. Like Dante, Hale invokes the traitor Judas as the foil to the Christian wayfarer, but for another reason: "To what tribe he belonged, is not known; but we may be certain that the traitor was not a seaman; —money would not have tempted such an one to betray his master." In case anyone would still stoop to criticize the charitable efforts of women whose sympathies lie with the only class of laborers whose loyalty to Jesus is above suspicion, Hale equates the sufferings of the sailors with the suffering of Jesus himself. "Is it not strange that christians have so long neglected that order of men . . .? And not merely neglected them, but spurned them as a degraded caste, the offscouring of the human race?" ("Extracts" 1836). Hale reminds her contemporary audience that by historical Christian logic, so often on display in the pages of the *Ladies' Magazine* and later in *Godey's Lady's Book*—the seaman occupies a privileged spiritual status consistent with his destitute social status. Her paean to the sailor is both hyperbolic and strategic. It was his perceived inadequacies as a stable and independent provider that qualified his wife—whose ability to judiciously manage such limited funds was likewise questioned—for the coercive control of the Society's female

“Managers,” but Hale casts this charity as appropriate and even pious by identifying the mission of the Seaman’s Aid Society not only with religious institutions, but with the core of religious faith.

In effect, her strategic capitalization on the strong connections among the literary, the religious, the charitable, and the economic in maritime communities made Hale’s Seaman’s Aid Society such a successful vehicle for enterprising women. The poverty, unemployment, disease, and disability escalating in conjunction with Boston’s burgeoning shipping industry created unprecedented opportunities for the women who saw “feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked” as an antique injunction with distinctly modern advantages for the enterprising, white, educated, Protestant woman. Rather than breaking with patriarchal convention to stake a claim for women’s authority, Hale and her Aid Society rightly judged the permeability of nineteenth-century constraints around appropriate gendered behavior. Accordingly, as a successful writer, editor, and charity worker, Hale took advantage of the considerable overlap between “public” and “private” spaces and exercised her professional instincts well within the increasingly elastic parameters around respectable gendered behaviors. The Seaman’s Aid Society, motivated by a “feminine” sympathetic impulse and capitalizing on the domestic art of sewing, became a business venture generating thousands of dollars in profit annually. This successful melding of private and public spheres gave the lie to the assumed distinction between the two, a distinction seamen’s families had long demonstrated to be subject the vagaries of maritime existence. Extending the logic that encouraged wives of seamen to run businesses and develop trades during their husbands’ absence, Sarah J. Hale developed a charitable model that would harness their production to respond to the

various tragedies of maritime industry. In doing so, Hale carved out for herself a share of the economic power and social control rising and falling alongside the fortunes of nineteenth-century American shipping.

Conclusion:

The City of Brotherly Love in 1840: A Charitable Workplace Transformed

Sarah J. Hale's distinctive brand of charity attracted considerable attention during her tenure as manager of the Seaman's Aid Society. She was not the only author to report on the its innovations in the business of organized benevolence; soon after the Society established its clothing store, the first and one of the most prominent literary magazines in the United States, *The North American Review*, published its own account of Hale's organization.¹ "The charity they have bestowed has been in the most unexceptionable form; the furnishing of employment, for which good wages have been paid; the preserving the self-respect of the poor, and guarding their virtue by promoting their industry, while their wants are effectually supplied." The unnamed writer for *The North American Review* could not take exception to the conduct of the women running the Seaman's Aid Society, even if the writer clearly found their profit-conscious approach to charitable labor exceptional. "Many poor females, connected with seamen, have been employed by them in making sailors' clothes, for which a store has been provided," the article notes. "This answers the double purpose of giving employment to the women, for which they are well paid, and furnishing the sailors with a convenient mode of supplying themselves with well-made clothes, at a reasonable price, and safe from the harpies of the *slop-shops*" ("Reports of Seaman's Aid Societies" 538). Of course, the women required to work at the sewing tables and tills of the clothing store were not the only ones compensated for their labor. Hale's competence as an editor and

¹ The journalist Nathan Hale (not a relative of Sarah Hale), working in Boston, created the *North American Review* with a few other writers. Its first issue was released in 1815, and it was published continuously until 1940.

writer had already been noted by critics; now, a national literary magazine recognized Hale's abilities as a professional manager and diplomatic agent of social reform.

Managers of other traditional for-profit enterprises took notice. In 1837, Louis Antoine Godey, a Philadelphia editor eager to try his hand at publishing, offered Hale a job as editor of his new periodical *Godey's Lady's Book*. She accepted the position, and in doing so demonstrated an economic reality charitable laborers had long acknowledged: the profits of charity, material and non-material, moved in tandem with the fortunes of other industries, and profitability in one field could easily translate to profitability in another.

Hale left her post at the Seaman's Aid Society when she moved to Philadelphia in 1841, nearly four years after she began editing *Godey's* from Boston. During the nine years she managed the Seaman's Aid Society, charity workers in urban centers around the United States became more organized, more aggressive in their initiatives, and more concerned with securing compensation for their labor. Hale's Society was more profitable and profit-conscious than most charitable organizations, but it represented the kind of success in accruing social and economic power to which a number of women's organizations of the 1830s and 1840s aspired. This fundamental transformation was effected by women who were either inspired by Hale or independently saw the same connections she did between the strength of the American economy and the amount of funding available for charitable enterprise. Hale's Society was distinctive and, because of Hale's platform as editor, especially visible, and either pioneered or participated in many of the trends that transformed charity from a religious duty or avocation into a profit-conscious mid-nineteenth-century profession shaped disproportionately by the

energy and influence of women. These trends, which I have closely examined in the chapters of this dissertation, include a growing number of charitable initiatives geared toward mitigating the economic and social liabilities of disabled bodies in maritime communities; an expanding overlap between literary and charitable marketplaces; and charity work's increasing reliance, as a field of profitable labor, on a robust maritime economy. One consequence of these developments in the field of charity work was that even as American port cities became more strident about their ideological and economic differences in the decades leading up to the Civil War, inhabitants of maritime communities—wealthy and poor, white and non-white, disabled and able-bodied, Northern and Southern—remained connected across geographic and sociopolitical gulfs by circuits of charitable labor.

Early in its existence, Hale's Seaman's Aid Society capitalized on the overlap between populations of disabled people and populations of impoverished workers and their families in maritime communities. Hale helped organize a fair in 1833 to raise funds for her Society, and among the articles offered for sale were "a grass floor mat, and a pair of shoes, made by some of the pupils at Dr. Howe's institution for the blind, which were very ingeniously wrought" (qtd. in "Seamen's Aid Society's Fair" 218). Hale discovered, as Sarah Pogson Smith had, that strategically supporting institutions for disabled residents of maritime communities was an effective way for a woman writer to garner public approval. In her case, she did so to highlight the valuable social functions of her women's benevolent society even as it broke with convention and began operating according to a profit-and-loss model. Her strategy had the desired effect: publications including *The Evening Gazette* in Boston and *The Sailor's Magazine* in New York

accurately represented the fair as a huge economic success—more than one thousand dollars raised—but could not ignore the threads Hale had carefully woven between the patently economic and the legitimately charitable. No one could deny that her organization commanded significant resources, or that its method of administering aid through the wages of a profitable clothing store differentiated it fundamentally from conventional women’s charity groups, but because Hale provided useful employment for disabled students of a respected educator, no one could deride the women managing these successful operations for their ambition or financial success.

The journalists who would publicize her work, for example, could hardly help but arrive at the conclusions Hale suggested by aligning her organization with Dr. Samuel Howe’s New England Institution for the Blind, the first school for the blind in the United States.² “The blind then are at work for sailors,” they affirmed, “and . . . for their wives and children in their time of need” (“Seaman’s Aid Society Fair” 218). The whole venture was unconventional, but who could object? Howe had been the subject of considerable praise for his views that blind children should be more than “mere objects of pity,” and he then demonstrated the point by enlisting them to support the welfare of sailors, effectively transforming them from objects to agents of charity (qtd. in Marshall 263). In 1837, Howe began educating not only the blind but also the deaf, employing pedagogical methods already in practice at schools for the disabled including The New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in New York City. Hale

² Elizabeth Peabody, a member of Massachusetts’s illustrious Peabody family and the American educator responsible for the innovation of the English-speaking kindergarten, toured Howe’s school when it was only six months old, and wrote a glowing account of the “economy and self denial” she saw exhibited by the students under Howe’s tutelage. For more on the school and the ways its charitable agenda involved benevolent women, see Megan Marshall’s *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism* (qtd. in Marshall 264).

discovered only a few years after Pogson Smith that supporting the training of disabled individuals could be a savvy move for a single woman writer who hoped to enjoy social and financial security in maritime communities that suffered under the economic burden of disabled, impoverished, divorced, widowed, and otherwise marginalized inhabitants. At risk of losing their social and economic standing when they lost their husbands and being classified themselves as objects of pity, scorn, and manipulation, enterprising women like Hale and Pogson Smith found a way to prove their distinction—as American bodies and as American capitalists—by publically extending charity to the physically disabled.

Hale and Pogson Smith found that the dividends of charity work for the disabled extended beyond the geographic limits of a single port. As reports of their charitable initiatives moved through Atlantic seaports, both women followed suit, taking advantage of their renown to relocate and establish literary careers where they were already well regarded for their benevolence. Pogson Smith divided her time among Philadelphia, New York, and Charleston after her estranged husband's death in 1836. Hale lived in Philadelphia from 1841 until her death in 1879, where she exercised influence over *Godey's* burgeoning readership, a position of social and economic power she gained partially as a result of her conspicuous and efficient management of the Seaman's Aid Society. Philadelphia's benevolent economy had been transformed since a contingent of imperiled black laborers risked their lives to sustain the basic functions of the nation's capital during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. When these laborers had conflated economic and benevolent forms of labor, tending to the sick and dying in order to secure better social and professional positions in the city, their behavior was anomalous—a

response to an unprecedented public catastrophe—and their operations were ad-hoc. By the 1840s, when Pogson Smith and Hale moved to Philadelphia, that conflation had become the norm, and the foundation of a viable vocation. The line between “real” professions and charitable labor was no longer a divide to be crossed only in extenuating circumstances. Philadelphia’s Female Bethel Flag Society, founded (like the Seaman’s Aid Society) in 1833, was only one of several organizations that performed on a daily basis the functions the epidemic’s laborers had provisionally undertaken during a moment of crisis.³ According to one report, the women of Philadelphia’s Female Bethel Flag “clothed the naked, fed the hungry, and made many interesting visits to the bed of sickness,” the same duties that were the province of marginalized and imperiled laborers in 1793 (Porter 218). A half-century later, Pogson Smith and Hale found that such profit-conscious motivations, given full expression in women’s maritime charities organized in recent decades, had redefined the scope and nature of American benevolence. In Philadelphia, Smith and Hale did not have to choose between advancing their literary careers or their charitable careers. Because of the organized, calculated efforts of women charity workers in seaports including Charleston, New York, and Boston who saw the potential of charity work to produce real profits that could translate into profits in related markets, the two fields could be effectively blended into one profession: the charitable woman writer.

³ A note in *The Sailor’s Magazine* dated February 14, 1833 gives one of the few accounts of this society’s history: “With a desire to promote the cause of the tempest-tossed sons of the ocean,” wrote the Reverend Thomas Porter, “I steal a moment of time to give you some intelligence respecting our affairs in Philadelphia; and more especially in reference to a society recently formed in the city, under the appellation of *The Female Bethel Flag Society*, having for its object the assisting of seamen and their families in distress, as well as ministering unto them the consolations of the gospel of peace. This society bids fair to do a vast amount of good, if they are only sustained in their operations by a benevolent public” (Porter 218-19).

First in Boston, and then in Philadelphia, Hale saw her audience grow as she edited a publication that constantly considered the social, material, and moral products of maritime labor. Her poem imagining the “long, dark night” the crew of the *Peacock* endured in order to promote American “exploration” of South America and Hawaii is only one example. In 1849, she included a poem in *Godey’s Lady’s Book* by an author identified as “J.D.S.,” titled “Nil Desperandum.” It begins, “The gallant sailor midst the gale/ Ne’er flies the helm through fear,/ Nor yields his beauteous hounding sail/ To rocks and breakers near” (351). Hale’s careful arrangement of submissions encouraged her readers to blame the negative externalities of the shipping industry, not the gallant sailor, for the poverty that beset maritime communities. By the same stroke, it encouraged readers to laud the efforts of the women who worked to mitigate the suffering perpetuated by an exploitative trade. In the “Editors’ Table” feature of the February 1840 issue of *Godey’s*, immediately following Lydia Sigourney’s poem about a benevolent woman titled “Kind Neighbor,” Hale admonished her readers to think of the vast disparities of wealth that plagued maritime communities:

Now, the pleasures of the season . . . are scarcely enjoyed by one who reflects on the scenes of suffering, from the want of all these blessings, which are to be found in the same city, it may be one the same street with the prosperous. There is the picture of the desolate widow, laying on her last chip of wood, while her shivering children are crying for the bread which she has not to give; the ‘houseless wanderer,’ the shipwrecked sailor, whose life the tempest spared only, as it would seem, to bitterer sufferings than death—the cold contempt of his fellow men. (95)

Hale edited the 1840 issue from Boston, and the 1849 issue from Philadelphia, but her interest in shoring up sympathy for benevolent efforts directed toward hapless seamen and unhappy widows moved with her through urban seaports. Like Sarah Pogson Smith,

who wrote from New York to support the vocational training of deaf children in maritime communities and then from Philadelphia to raise funds for a “seamen’s floating church,” Hale found that profitable charitable labor complemented rather than competed with literary work, and both professions could thrive in any prosperous urban seaport (Kritzer 19).

As the number of organizations allowing women to labor in the field of charity grew, so did the opportunities to link this work to publishing. In November 1836, women in Nancy Prince’s birthplace of Newburyport, Massachusetts organized the Female Bethel Society of Newburyport, an aid society affiliated with the American Seamen’s Friend Society “in its charitable and philanthropic work” (Currier 142). The Female Bethel Flag Society of Princeton, New Jersey and the Norfolk Female Seamen’s Aid Society also worked under the auspices of the American Seamen’s Friend Society, but as organizations managed at a local level by women, these societies could—as Hale had shown—be operated as for-profit businesses and provide rare opportunities for professional women. Few of the societies rose to the standard of sophistication or efficiency that Hale set as manager of the Seaman’s Aid Society. As I noted, Hale’s society had an operating budget of close to \$150,000 by the 1860s, while the Norfolk Female Aid Society was appropriated only \$150 annually by the American Seamen’s Friend Society to run a boarding house for sailors. The New Jersey Female Bethel Flag Society raised \$170 at a fair the same year the Seaman’s Aid Society raised \$1008.35 (“Chaplain Crane’s Address” 100, “Ladies Fair at Princeton” 218). Still, even the relatively modest funds these women’s organizations raised for maritime charity work represented their forays into the management of profit-generating enterprise and garnered

public attention; one periodical especially praised the “flourishing” Female Bethel Society in Newburyport for its efficient responses to maritime poverty (“The Seamen’s Meetings” 285). Certainly such enterprises in Nancy Prince’s hometown helped establish the field of organized benevolence that would allow her to travel to labor as a mobile charity worker in the Caribbean five years after the Female Bethel Society of Newburyport’s founding, and then to write about her experience, incentivized by both material and spiritual rewards.

In the preface to *Arthur Mervyn*, Charles Brockden Brown hypothesized that the events of 1793 would revolutionize the nature of urban benevolence. “The evils of pestilence by which this city has lately been afflicted will probably form an era in its history,” the preface begins. “The schemes of reformation and improvement to which they will give birth, or, if no efforts of human wisdom can avail to avert the periodical visitations of this calamity, the change in manners and population which they will produce, will be, in the highest degree, memorable.” His predication proved accurate, but not in the way he described. He imagined this change growing out of the beneficent sensibilities of his own ilk: male, white, moneyed, educated classes whose social obligations, it would seem, included providing for the welfare of the less exceptional. “It is every one’s duty to profit by all opportunities of inculcating on mankind the lessons of justice and humanity,” Brown writes. “Every one” refers to the people with the education, leisure time, and resources to obtain and read his book; “mankind” must then refer to the ones his book cannot reach, the ones who must be inculcated. He goes on, “Men only require to be made acquainted with distress for their compassion and their charity to be awakened. He that depicts, in lively colours, the evils of disease and

poverty, performs an eminent service to the sufferers, by calling forth benevolence in those who are able to afford relief; and he who portrays examples of disinterestedness and intrepidity confers on virtue the notoriety and homage that are due to it, and rouses in the spectators the spirit of salutary emulation” (vii). Brown did not recognize, like most observers, that the most intrepid service offered to sufferers during the epidemic did not come from the city’s elite; it came from the great mass of “mankind,” more familiar with the brutal lessons of justice and humanity than Brown could appreciate. The charity performed during the yellow fever epidemic did indeed give birth to new “schemes” of reformation and improvement, but not because the city’s wealthy citizens impressed moral lessons on the unwashed masses. Instead, women, people of color, and laborers marginalized by socioeconomic status or disability demonstrated that benevolent responses to maritime crises could be extraordinarily efficient when there were practical incentives to extend such aid. These laborers demonstrated a crucial connection between viable charitable enterprises and real profits. Their ingenuity and their aggressive, profit-conscious approach to benevolent activities laid the groundwork for a professional field that followed the fortunes of the national economy, bolstered by the profits of maritime commerce.

Organized charity work did not grow up alongside the American maritime industry; it grew up as part of it. The brisk rhythms of transatlantic shipping created surpluses of wealth that became the incentives for emerging organizations of benevolent laborers who in many cases also worked or travelled on ships; these rhythms also gave birth to sprawling populations of disabled and otherwise disenfranchised people brought low by the Atlantic’s unforgiving commerce. As the negative externalities of the

shipping industry created potentially devastating inequities of wealth along the Atlantic's shores, some of those disenfranchised by gender, race, class, and physical ability found an innovative way to extricate themselves from the ranks of the poor in urban seaports. They saw that benevolence extended to impoverished inhabitants of maritime communities had more than social value; it had economic value. By attaching charitable aid to material—although not always financial—incentives, these charity workers positioned themselves to reap a portion of the profits generated by the water trades. The same women who, as widows or abandoned wives, saw writing as a way to stave off the poverty that blighted America's major costal cities presciently identified charity work as an equally profitable form of labor, and one that might work in concert with their literary pursuits to elevate their social as well as economic standing. Their successful efforts to discipline charitable initiatives by adapting them to viable business models transformed charity work from a moral injunction into a thriving vocation comprising donors, managers, and a vast network of laborers, all compelled or coerced by potential profits to ply a charity of wages in seaports blessed and blighted by the ships plying the routes of the Atlantic Ocean.

Bibliography

- “An Act to Incorporate and Endow the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb.” *Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Philadelphia*. Harrisburg: C. Gaeim, 1821. 30-33. Print.
- An Act To Incorporate Members of the New-York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. Passed April 15, 1819. To Which is Added, the By-Laws, and the Names and Residence of the Officers and Directors. Also, the Directors Arranged into Committees, and a List of the Pupils*. New York: E. Conrad, 1819. Print.
- Adams, John. “John Adams to Benjamin Rush.” Letter. 1807. *Digital History*. Web. 27 Feb. 2012.
- . “John Adams to Benjamin Rush.” Letter. 1809. *Digital History*. Web. 27 Feb. 2012.
- Akerly, Samuel. *Address Delivered at Washington Hall, in the City of New-York, on the 30th May, 1826, As Introductory to the Exercises of the Pupils of the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, with an account of the Exercise, and Notes and Documents, in Relation to the Subject*. New York: E. Conrad, 1826. Print.
- . *Observation and Correspondence on the Nature and Cure of Deafness, and other Diseases of the Ears*. New York: E. Conrad, 1824. Print.
- Allen, Richard. *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen*. Philadelphia: Martin & Boden, 1833. *Google Books*. Web. 3 Feb. 2010.
- The American Missionary*. 22.1 (Dec. 1858): 1. New York: American Missionary Association, 1858. *Google Books*. Web. 23 Feb. 2010.
- “The American Seamen's Friend Society; Interesting Speeches-Prosperous Report.” *The New York Times* 9 May 1865. *The New York Times Online Archive*. Web. 1 Dec. 2012.
- The Annual Report of the Female Association in the City of New-York*. New York: Mahlon Day, 1824. Print.
- “Annual Report of the Seaman's Friends' Society.” *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics* 52:35 (28 Aug. 1841): 1. *Google Books*. Web. 12 Sept. 2011.
- Arnebeck, Bob. “Yellow Fever in New York City, 1791-1799.” 26th Conference on New York State History. New York State Archives Partnership Trust Cultural Education Center, Suite 9C49. Albany. 9-11 Jun. 2005. Conference Presentation.

- Barnard, Philip and Stephen Shapiro. Introduction. *Arthur Mervyn; or Memoirs of the Year 1793. 1798-1801*. Eds. Barnard and Shapiro. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2008. ix-xlv. Print.
- Baynton, Douglas C. *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign Against Sign Language*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996. Print.
- Beapler, Paul Michel. *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999. Print.
- Beck, Theodric Romeyn. *Beck on the Statistics of the Deaf and Dumb: Statistics of the Deaf and Dumb in the State of New-York, the United States, and in various countries of Europe*. New York: [Publisher Unknown], 1837. Print.
- Bellows, Barbara L. *Benevolence Among Slaveholders: Assisting the Poor in Charleston, 1670-1860*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1993. Print.
- Bendixen, Alfred and Judith Hamera, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.
- Bergman, Jill, and Debra Bernardi, eds. *Our Sisters' Keepers: Nineteenth-Century Benevolence Literature by American Women*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2005. Print.
- Biddle, Henry D., ed. *Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker, from 1759 to 1807*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1889. Print.
- Biographical Sketch of Harvey Prindle Peet, LL.D., President of the New York Institution for the Deaf and Dumb; With a History of the Institution*. New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1857. Print.
- Bossard, John Jacob, ed. *C. G. A. Oldenorp's History of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John*. Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, 1987. 280. Print.
- Boston Port and Seaman's Aid Society*. 2004 Mariners House. Web. 19 Nov. 2008.
- "The Boston Port and Seamen's Aid Society." *The Tenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities of Massachusetts, to Which are Added the Reports of Its Several Officers* 10.1 (Jan. 1874): 29-30. *Google Books*. Web. 20 Jan. 2012.
- Bradley, Eliza. "An Authentic Narrative of the Shipwreck and Sufferings of Mrs. Eliza Bradley." 1820. *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*. Ed. Paul Baepler. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999. 247-83. Print.

- Bragg, Lois, ed. *Deaf World: A Historical Reader and Primary Sourcebook*. New York: New York U P, 2001. Print.
- Branson, Susan and Leslie Patrick. "Étrangers dans un Pays Étrange: Saint-Domingan Refugees of Color in Philadelphia." *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*. Ed. David Geggus. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2001. 193-208. Print.
- Brodhead, Richard H. "Sparing the Rod: Discipline and Fiction in Antebellum America." *Representations* 21 (Winter, 1998): 67-96. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 Mar. 2012.
- Brown, Charles Brockden. *Arthur Mervyn; or Memoirs of the Year 1793*. 1798-1801. Eds. Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2008. Print.
- Brown, Richard D. and Jack Tager. *Massachusetts: A Concise History*. Boston: U of Massachusetts P, 2000. Print.
- Brueggemann, Brenda Jo. *Lend Me Your Ear: Rhetorical Constructions of Deafness*. Washington D.C.: Gallaudet UP, 1999. Print.
- Buchanan, Robert M. *Illusions of Equality: Deaf Americans in School and Factory, 1850-1950*. Washington D.C.: Gallaudet UP, 2002. Print.
- By-Laws of the Directors of the New-York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb; with the Act of Incorporation, and Other Legislative Acts*. New York: E. Curtis Brown, 1831. Print.
- By-Laws of the New-York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, Together With the Several Laws of the State of New-York, in Relation to Deaf Mutes*. New York: E. Conrad, 1829. Print.
- Campbell, James T. *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1998. Print.
- Carey, Mathew. *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia: with a statement of the proceedings that took place on the subject, in different parts of the United States, to which are added, accounts of the plague in London and Marseilles; and a list of the dead, From August 1, to the middle of December, 1793*. 4th ed. Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1794. *Harvard University Library Open Collections Program*. Web. 3 Mar. 2010.
- . *Address of M. Carey to the Public*. Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1794. *Harvard University Library Open Collections Program*. Web. 3 Mar. 2010.
- Chaney, Charles L. *The Birth of Missions in America*. South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1976. Print.

- “Chaplain Crane's Address.” *The Sailors' Magazine and Seamen's Friend* 47.1 (Dec. 1875): 98-104. *Google Books*. Web. 8 Sept. 2011.
- Christian, John T. “The Rise of Foreign Missions Among American Baptists.” “A History of the Baptists of the United States From the First Settlement of the Country to the Year 1845.” 1845. *National Humanities Center*. Web. 30 Dec. 2011.
- Circular of the President and Directors of the Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. And the Petition to the Mayor, Alderman and Commonalty of the City of New-York, with their Favorable Report and Patronage, &c.* New York: E. Conrad, 1818. Print.
- Clark, John, W. Dendy, and J.M. Phillip. *The Voice of Jubilee: A Narrative of the Baptist Mission, Jamaica, From Its Commencement; with biographical notices of its fathers and founders*. London: John Snow, 1865. *Google Books*. Web. 20 Jun. 2010.
- Cohen, Daniel A., ed. *The Female Marine and Related Works: Narratives of Cross-Dressing and Urban Vice in America's Early Republic*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1997. Print.
- College of Physicians of Philadelphia. *Proceedings of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Relative to the Prevention of the Introduction and Spreading of Contagious Diseases*. Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1798. *Harvard University Library Open Collections Program*. Web. 12 Jan. 2010.
- Cornford, Philip Henry. *Missionary Reminiscences; or Jamaica Retraced*. Leeds: J. Heaton, 1856. *Google Books*. Web. 23 Nov. 2011.
- Cox, F.A. *History of the Baptist Missionary Society, From 1792 to 1842*. London: T. Ward and G.&J. Dyer, 1842. *Google Books*. Web. 22 Nov. 2011.
- Crane, Elaine Forman, Ed. *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*. Vol. I. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1991. 3 vols. Print.
- Crenson, Matthew A. *Building the Invisible Orphanage: A Prehistory of the American Welfare System*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001. Print.
- Crosby, Molly Caldwell. *The American Plague: The Untold Story of Yellow Fever, the Epidemic That Shaped Our History*. New York: Berkley, 2006. Print.
- Crouch, Barry A. and Brian H. Greenwald. “Hearing With the Eye: The Rise of Deaf Education in the United States.” *The Deaf History Reader*. Ed. John Vickrey Van Cleve. Washington D.C.: Gallaudet UP, 2007. 24-46. Print.

- Currie, William. *A Description of the Malignant, Infectious Fever Prevailing at Present in Philadelphia With an Account of the Means to Prevent Infection, and the Remedies and Method of Treatment, Which Have Been Found Most Successful*. Philadelphia: T. Dobson, 1793. *Harvard University Library Open Collections Program*. Web. 22 Feb. 2010.
- Currier, John J. "Newburyport Bethel Society." *History of Newburyport, Mass. 1764-1909*. Vol 2. Newburyport: John J. Currier, 1909. 142-43. 2 vols. Print.
- Cutts, Lucia Beverly, ed. *Memoirs and Letters of Dolly Madison, Wife of James Madison, President of the United States, Edited by Her Grand-niece*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1886. *Google Books*. Web. 14 May 2010.
- Davis, Leonard. "Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century." *The Disability Studies Reader*. Ed. Davis. London: Routledge, 1997. 9-28. Print.
- , ed. *The Disability Studies Reader*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" (1793). *The Constitutions and Other Select Documents Illustrative of the History of France, 1789-1901*. Ed. Frank Maloy Anderson. Minneapolis: H.W. Wilson, 1904. *Google Books*. Web. 4 Mar. 2010.
- Devèze, Jean. *An Enquiry into, and Observations upon the Causes and Effects of the Epidemic Disease, Which Raged in Philadelphia from the Month of August till towards the Middle of December, 1793*. Philadelphia: Parent, 1794. *Harvard University Library Open Collections Program*. Web. 22 Feb. 2010.
- Dillon, Elizabeth Maddock. "The Secret History of the Early American Novel: Leonora Sansay and Revolution in Saint Domingue." *Novel* 40.1-2 (Fall 2006/Spring 2007): 77-103. *JSTOR*. Web. 2 Feb. 2010.
- Dobson, Joanne and Sandra A. Zagarell. "Women Writing in the Early Republic." *A History of the Book in America, Volume 2: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840*. Eds. Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2010. 364-84. 5 vols. Print.
- Drexler, Michael J. Introduction. *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo and Laura*. Ed. Drexler. Buffalo: Broadview, 2007. 1-23. Print.
- Druett, Joan. *Petticoat Whalers: Whaling Wives at Sea, 1820-1920*. Auckland: Collins, 1991. Print.
- Drysdale, Thomas. *An Account of the Yellow Fever in Baltimore, in 1794*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Medical Museum, 1805. Print.

- Edwards, Jonathan. "Christian Charity: or, the Duty of Charity to the Poor, Explained and Enforced." 1732. *The Works of President Edwards, in Eight Volumes*. Vol. 5. London: James Black and Son, 1817. 395-429. *Google Books*. Web. 20 May 2009.
- Entrikin, Isabelle Webb. *Sarah Josepha Hale and Godey's Lady's Book*. Philadelphia: Lancaster, 1946. Print.
- Estes, J. Worth. "Introduction: The Yellow Fever Syndrome and Its Treatment in Philadelphia, 1793." *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*. Ed. J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith. Philadelphia: Science History Publications, 1997. 1-18. Print.
- , and Billy G. Smith. *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Yellow Fever Epidemic*. Philadelphia: Science History Publications, 1997. Print.
- The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 19.1 (June 1841): 290. London: Thomas Ward, 1841. *Google Books*. Web. 24 May 2011.
- Fairchild, James Harris. *Oberlin: The Colony and the College, 1833-1883*. Oberlin: E.J. Goodrich, 1883. *Google Books*. Web. 15 May 2011.
- Faulkner, Carol. *Lucretia Mott's Heresy: Abolition and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2011. Print.
- Finley, Ruth E. *The Lady of Godey's: Sarah Josepha Hale*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1931. Print.
- Foster, Hannah W. *The Coquette*. 1797. New York: Oxford UP, 1986. Print.
- Fish, Cheryl J. *Black and White Women's Travel Narratives: Antebellum Explorations*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2004. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon, 1977. Print.
- Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988. Print.
- Freneau, Philip Morin. *The Poems of Philip Freneau: Poet of the American Revolution*. 3 vols. Princeton: The University Library, 1907. *Google Books*. Web. 3 Feb. 2010.
- . "Pestilence: Written During the Prevalence of a Yellow Fever." 1793. *Poems, Written and Published During the American Revolutionary War, and Now Republished from the Original Manuscripts, Interspersed with Translations from*

the Ancients, and Other Pieces Not Heretofore in Print. Vol 2. Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1809. 2 vols. *Google Books*. Web. 23 Oct. 2010.

Frey, Sylvia R. and Betty Wood. *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1998. Print.

Friedman, Lawrence Jacob, and Mark Douglas McGarvie, eds. *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.

Geggus, David Patrick, ed. *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2001. Print.

---. "Yellow Fever in the 1790's: The British Army in Occupied Saint Domingue." *Medical History* Jan. 1979, 23.1. 38-58. Print.

Genovese, Eugene D. *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1979. Print.

---. *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. New York: Pantheon, 1974. Print.

Gibson, Edmund. *Two Letters of the Lord Bishop of London: The FIRST, to the Masters and Mistresses of Families in the English PLANTATIONS abroad; Exhorting them to Encourage and Promote the Instruction of their NEGROES in the Christian Faith. The SECOND, To the MISSIONARIES there: Directing them to distribute the said Letter, and Exhorting them to give their Assistance toward the Instruction of the Negroes within their Several Parishes, to both of which is prefix'd An Address to Serious Christians among Our Selves to assist the Society for Propagating the Gospel in carrying on this work*. London: J. Downing, 1727. Print.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993. Print.

Ginzberg, Lori D. *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1990. Print.

---. *Women in Antebellum Reform*. Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, 2000. Print.

Glenn, Myra C. *Jack Tar's Story: The Autobiographies and Memoirs of Sailors in Antebellum America*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010. Print.

Gordon, Shirley C. *Our Cause For His Glory: Christianisation and Emancipation in Jamaica*. Kingston: U of the West Indies P, 1998. Print.

- Gosselink, Charles G., ed. *Letters From Jamaica 1858-1866: Thornton Bigelow Penfield and Sarah Ingraham Penfield*. Silver Bay: Boat House Books, 2005. Web. 5 Jun. 2011.
- Gould, Philip B. *Covenant and Republic: Historical Romance and the Politics of Puritanism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.
- Griffin, Farah J. and Cheryl J. Fish, eds. *A Stranger in the Village: Two Centuries of African-American Travel Writing*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998. Print.
- Griffith, Sally F. "A Total Dissolution of the Bonds of Society": Community Death and Regeneration in Mathew Carey's Short Account of the Malignant Fever." *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*. Ed. J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith. Philadelphia: Science History Publications, 1997. 45-60. Print.
- Groce, Nora Ellen. *Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language: Hereditary Deafness on Martha's Vineyard*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1985. Print.
- Gross, Robert A. "Introduction: An Extensive Republic." *A History of the Book in America, Volume 2: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840*. Eds. Gross and Mary Kelley. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2010. 1-52. 5 vols. Print.
- Gunning, Sandra. "Nancy Prince and the Politics of Mobility, Home and Diasporic (Mis)Identification." *American Quarterly* 53:1 (2001): 32-69. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 May 2011.
- , Tera W. Hunter, and Michele Mitchell, eds. *Dialogues of Dispersal: Gender, Sexuality, and African Diasporas*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. Print.
- Gustafson, Sandra M. *Eloquence Is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000. Print.
- Hale, Sarah Josepha, ed. *The American Ladies' Magazine*. Boston: James B. Dow, 1834-1836. Microfilm.
- . "Editors' Table." *Godey's Lady's Book* (Feb. 1840): 95. *NYPL.com*. Web. 2 Mar. 2011.
- . "Extracts from the Annual Report of the Ladies Seaman's Aid Society, Boston." *New Bedford Mercury* 29:42 (15 April 1836): 4. *Google Books*. Web. 10 Dec. 2009.
- . *My Cousin Mary: or The Inebriate*. Boston: Whipple and Damrell, 1839. Print.
- . "The First Ear-rings." *Godey's Lady's Book* June 1843: 253-54. Print.

- . "Fourth Annual Report of the Managers of the Seaman's Aid Society, of the City of Boston." *The Christian Examiner and General Review* 23.3 (1838): 269-72. *Google Books*. Web. 3 May 2010.
- . *The Ladies' Magazine*. Boston: Putnam and Hunt, 1828-1830. Print.
- . *The Ladies' Wreath; a Selection from the Female Poetic Writers of England and America*. Boston: Marsh, Capen & Lyon: 1837. *Google Books*. Web. 6 Feb. 2009.
- . *The Lecturess, or, Woman's Sphere*. Boston, Whipple and Damrell, 1839. Microfilm.
- . *Northwood; or, Life North and South: Showing the True Character of Both*. New York, H. Long & Brother, 1852. *Google Books*. Web. 5 Oct. 2009.
- . "Seaman's Aid Society, Boston." *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics, published as The Portsmouth & Great-Falls Journal of Literature & Politics* 48:9 (4 Mar. 1837): 1. *Google Books*. Web. 3 Jan 2010.
- . "Seventh Annual Report of the Seaman's Aid Society of the city of Boston." *The Merchants' Magazine, and Commercial Review* 3.1 (1840): 339. *Google Books*. Web. 6 May 2010.
- . *Woman's Record: or, Sketches of All Distinguished Women*. New York: Harper, 1853. *Google Books*. Web. 2 Dec. 2008.
- . "The Wreck of the Peacock." *Godey's Lady's Book* May 1842: 282-83. *NYPL.com*. Web. 2 Mar. 2011.
- Hamilton, John Taylor and Kenneth Gardiner Hamilton. *History of the Moravian Church: the Renewed Unitas Fratrum, 1722-1957*. Bethlehem: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education, 1967. Print.
- Harris, Sharon M. "Sarah Pogson (1774-1870)." *Women's Early American Historical Narratives*. Ed. Harris. New York: Penguin, 2003. 167-68. Print.
- Hart, Isabel. Introduction. *Historical Sketches of Womans' Missionary Societies in American and England*. By Mrs. L.H. Daggett. Boston: Mrs. L.H. Daggett: 1879. 7-12. *Google Books*. Web. 5 Mar. 2010.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter: A Romance*. 1850. New York: Bantam, 2003. Print.
- Heller, Thomas C., Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery, eds. *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986. Print.

- Helmuth, J. Henry C. "Journal of 18 Sept. 1793." Journal entry. *Bobarnebeck.com*. Web. 27 Feb. 2012.
- Herndon, Ruth Wallis. "The Domestic Cost of Seafaring: Town Leaders and Seamen's Families in Eighteenth-Century Rhode Island." *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*. Ed. Margaret Creighton and Lisa Norling. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996. Print.
- Hinton, John Howard. *Memoir of William Knibb, Missionary in Jamaica*. London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1849. Print.
- A History of the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. [A Free School for all Deaf Children of the State Over the Age of Five Years.]* New York: New York Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, 1893. Print.
- Holt, Thomas Cleveland. "The Essence of the Contract: The Articulation of Race, Gender, and Political Economy in British Emancipation Policy, 1838-1866." *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies*. Eds. Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca J. Scott. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000. 33-60. Print.
- . *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992. Print.
- Horrocks, Thomas A. and John C. Van Horne. "Foreword." *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*. Ed. J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith. Philadelphia: Science History Publications, 1997. vii-xii. Print.
- Imbarrato, Susan Clair. *Traveling Women: Narrative Visions of Early America*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2006. Print.
- Jefferson, Thomas. "The Haitian Revolution." Letter. 1793. *Digital History*. Web. 27 Feb. 2012.
- . "Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Rush." Letter. 21 Apr. 1803. *Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. Vol. 10. Ed. Albert Ellery Bergh. Washington D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1907. 19 vols. 379. *Google Books*. Web. 13 Jan. 2010.
- Jewett, Sarah Orne. *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. 1910. Buffalo: Broadview, 2010. Print.
- Johnson, Melissa. "The Jamaica Movement." *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*. Eds. Douglas A. Foster, Anthony L. Dunnivant, Paul M. Blowers, and D. Newell Williams. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004. 422-23. Print.

- Johnston, Geoffrey. "Anderson, Louisa (Peterswald)." *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*. Ed. Gerald H. Anderson. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999. 20. Print.
- Jones, Absalom, and Richard Allen. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, during the late awful calamity in Philadelphia, in the year 1793: and a Refutation of some of the Censures, Thrown upon them in some late Publications*. Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1794. *Harvard University Library Open Collections Program*. Web. 2 Jun. 2010.
- Joyner, Hannah. *From Pity to Pride: Growing Up Deaf in the Old South*. Washington D.C.: Gallaudet UP, 2004. Print.
- Kelley, Mary. "Introduction: Genres of Print." *A History of the Book in America, Volume 2: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840*. Eds. Robert A. Gross and Kelley. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2010. 385-87. 5 vols. Print.
- Kenny, Gale L. *Contentious Liberties: American Abolitionists in Post-Emancipation Jamaica, 1834-1866*. Athens: U of Georgia Press, 2010. Print.
- Klepp, Susan E. "How Many Precious Souls Are Fled?": The Magnitude of the 1793 Yellow Fever Epidemic." *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*. Ed. J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith. Philadelphia: Science History Publications, 1997. 163-82. Print.
- Knowles, James D. *Life of Mrs. Ann H. Judson, Late Missionary to Burmah; with an account of the American Baptist mission to that empire*. Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1830. Print.
- Komter, Aafke E. "Gifts and Social Relations: The Mechanisms of Reciprocity." *International Sociology* 22.1 (2007): 93-107. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 May 2009.
- Kopperman, Paul E. "Venerate the Lancet!": Benjamin Rush's Yellow Fever Therapy in Context." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 78.1 (2004): 539-74. *PubMed*. Web. 2 Jul. 2010.
- Krentz, Christopher. *Writing Deafness: The Hearing Line in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2007. Print.
- Kritzer, Amelia Howe. *Plays by Early American Women: 1775-1850*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1995. Print.
- Kuhn, Adam. "Putrid Fever-Extract of a Letter." 7 Sept. 1793. *Bobarnebeck.com*. Web. 27 Feb. 2012.

- “Ladies Fair at Princeton.” *The Sailor's Magazine, and Naval Journal* 5.1 (Aug. 1833): 218. *Google Books*. Web. 7 Nov. 2009.
- Lane, Harlan. *When the Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf*. New York: Random House, 1989. Print.
- , Robert Hoffmeister, and Benjamin J. Bahan. *A Journey into the Deaf-World*. San Diego: Dawn Sign P, 1996. Print.
- Lang, Harry G. “Genesis of a Community: The American Deaf Experience in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.” *The Deaf History Reader*. Ed. John Vickrey Van Cleve. Washington D.C.: Gallaudet UP, 2007. 1-23. Print.
- Lapsansky, Phillip. “Abigail, a Negress': The Role and the Legacy of African Americans in the Yellow Fever Epidemic.” *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*. Ed. J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith. Philadelphia: Science History Publications, 1997. 61-78. Print.
- Lee, Jessica. “Family Matters: Female Dynamics Within Deaf Schools.” *Women and Deafness: Double Visions*. Eds. Brenda Jo Brueggemann and Susan Burch. Washington D.C.: Gallaudet UP, 2006. 5-20. Print.
- Levy, Janey. *The Erie Canal: A Primary Source History of the Canal That Changed America*. New York: Rosen, 2003. Print.
- Liele, George. “Letter from Kingston, Jamaica.” *The Baptist Annual Register, for 1790, 1791, 1792, and Part of 1793*. Ed. John Rippon. London: Dilly, Button, and Thomas, 1793. 332-37. *Google Books*. Web. 2 Nov. 2011.
- Life of Father Taylor the Sailor Preacher*. Boston: The Boston Port and Seamen's Aid Society, 1904. *Google Books*. Web. 3 Jul. 2009.
- Linebaugh, Peter and Marcus Rediker. *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*. London: Verso, 2000. Print.
- Livingstone, David. *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa: including a sketch of sixteen years' residence in the interior of Africa, and a journey from the Cape of Good Hope to Loanda on the West Coast: thence across the continent, down the river Zambesi, to the Eastern Ocean*. New York: Harper, 1858. *Google Books*. Web. 5 May 2010.
- Lockley, Timothy James. *Welfare and Charity in the Antebellum South*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2009. Print.

- “The London Missionary Society.” *Handbook of Jamaica for 1893: Published by Authority, comprising Historical, Statistical, and General Information Concerning the Island* 13.1 (June 1893): 355. London: Edward Standford, 1893. *Google Books*. Web. 4 Mar. 2010.
- Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*. 1847. London: David Bogue, 1850. *Google Books*. Web. 4 Aug. 2011.
- MacHaffie, Barbara J. *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006. Print.
- “Marine Temperance Society of the Port of New York.” *The Sailor's Magazine, and Naval Journal* 5.1 (Aug. 1833): 219. Print.
- “Mariner's Churches.” *The Sailor's Magazine, and Naval Journal* 6.1 (Aug. 1834): 286. Print.
- Marshall, Megan. *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006. Print.
- Martin, Maria. “History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin.” 1807. *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*. Ed. Paul Baepler. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999. 149-57. Print.
- Marwick, William, and William Anderson. *William and Louisa Anderson: A Record of Their Life and Work in Jamaica and Old Calabar*. Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1897. *Google Books*. Web. 24 Jun. 2011.
- Matteson, Esther, ed. “Comparative Studies in Amerindian Languages.” *Junua Linguarum series practica* 127. 1 (1972): 251. *Google Books*. Web. 23 Sept. 2011.
- Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. 1950. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- McCurry, Stephanie. *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997. Print.
- McMahon, Michal. “Beyond Therapeutics: Technology and the Question of Public Health in Late-Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia.” *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*. Ed. J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith. Philadelphia: Science History Publications, 1997. 97-118. Print.

- Metcalf, Theron. *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts*. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851. *Google Books*. Web. 18 Dec. 2011.
- Miller, Jacquelyn C. "Passions and Politics: The Multiple Meanings of Benjamin Rush's Treatment for Yellow Fever." *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*. Ed. J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith. Philadelphia: Science History Publications, 1997. 79-96. Print.
- Miller, Julie. *Abandoned: Foundlings in Nineteenth-Century New York City*. New York: New York University P, 2008. Print.
- Miller, Silvanus. *An Address Delivered in Behalf of the New-York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, Before the New York Forum, at the conclusion of a volunteer debate for the benefit of said institution, December 24, 1818*. New York: E. Conrad, 1819. Print.
- The Missionary Herald, Containing the Proceedings of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions; with a view of other benevolent operations, for the year 1871* 67.1 (1871): 366-67. Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1871. *Google Books*. Web. 3 Apr. 2011.
- Mitchill, Samuel L. *A Discourse Pronounced by Request of the Society for Instructing the Deaf and Dumb, at the City Hall in the City of New-York, on the 24th day of March, 1818*. New York: E. Conrad, 1818. Print.
- Morris, Margaret. "Two Letters of Margaret Morris Sent From Philadelphia During the 1793 Epidemic." 25 Sept. and 10 Oct. 1793. *Bobarnebeck.com*. Web. 27 Feb. 2012.
- Nash, Gary B. *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988. Print.
- . "Reverberations of Haiti in the American North: Black Saint Dominguan in Philadelphia." *Pennsylvania History* 65 (1998): 44-73. *JSTOR*. Web. 2 Jan. 2010.
- . *The Urban Crucible*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1979. Print.
- , and Jean R. Soderlund. *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and its Aftermath*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991. Print.
- Newman, Richard, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky, eds. *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African-American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*. London: Psychology Press, 2001. Print.

- Nord, David Paul. "Readership as Citizenship in Late-Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia." *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*. Ed. J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith. Philadelphia: Science History Publications, 1997. 19-44. Print.
- Norling, Lisa. *Captain Ahab Had a Wife: New England Women and the Whaleshery, 1720–1870*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000. Print.
- O'Hara, John P. *A Treatise on Extrinsic Evidence in Aid of the Interpretation of Wills, by Sir James Wigram, Late Vice Chancellor. With Extensive Additions to the Text, and Copious References to American Cases*. New York: Baker, Voorhis & Co., 1872. *Google Books*. Web. 7 May 2010.
- Okker, Patricia. *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth-Century American Women Editors*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1995. Print.
- Padden, Carol and Tom Humphries. *Deaf in America: Voices From a Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988. Print.
- Paravisini-Gebert, Lizabeth and Ivette Romero-Cesareo, eds. *Women at Sea: Travel Writing and the Margins of Caribbean Discourse*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Print.
- Pease, William Henry and Jane H. Pease. *The Web of Progress: Private Values and Public Styles in Boston and Charleston, 1828-1843*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985. Print.
- Peet, Harvey Prindle. "Notions of the Deaf and Dumb Before Instruction, Especially in Regard to Religious Subjects." *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb* 8.1 (1856): 1-44. Print.
- Penn, William. *Fruits of Solitude: In Reflections and Maxims Relating to the Conduct of Human Life*. 1682. Philadelphia: Benjamin Johnson, 1792. *Google Books*. Web. 4 Jul. 2010.
- The Poor Laws of the State of New-York; to which is added an act requiring the overseers of the poor to furnish the superintendent of common schools with a list of the deaf and dumb persons of their respective towns-and also the instruction of the superintendent to the overseers, in relation to the execution of said act*. Albany: Crosswell, Van Benthuyzen and Burt, 1832. Print.
- Porter, Thomas. "Philadelphia, Feb 14th, 1833." *The Sailor's Magazine, and Naval Journal* 5.1 (Aug. 1833): 218-19. *Google Books*. Web. 3 May 2009.
- Powell, John Harvey. *Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793*. 1949. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1993. Print.

- Powell, Margaret K. and Joseph R. Roach. "Big Hair." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38.1 (2004): 79-99. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 Nov. 2008.
- Prince, Nancy. *A Black Woman's Odyssey Through Russia and Jamaica: The Narrative of Nancy Prince*. 1850. New York: Markus Wiener, 1990. Print.
- Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, 1825-26*. London: R. Watts, 1826. *Google Books*. Web. 4 Sept. 2010.
- Proceedings of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, relative to the introduction and spreading of contagious diseases*. Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1798. *Harvard University Library Open Collections Program*. Web. 2 Nov. 2010.
- Rediker, Marcus. *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989. Print.
- Report of the Boston Female Anti Slavery Society; With a Concise Statement of Events, previous and subsequent to the Annual Meeting of 1835*. Boston: Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1836. *Google Books*. Web. 2 Jun. 2010.
- "Report of the Ladies' Seamen's Friend Soc. Portsmouth, N.H." *The Sailor's Magazine, and Naval Journal* 8.1 (Aug. 1836): 288. *Google Books*. Web. 9 Jul. 2010.
- Report of the Secretary of State, in Relation to the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, in the City of New-York. Made to the Senate, April 14, 1828*. Albany: Crosswell and Van Benthuyzen, 1828. Print.
- "Reports of Seaman's Aid Societies." *The North American Review* 43.1 (1836): 537-38. *Google Books*. Web. 15 May. 2010.
- Reynolds, David S. *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988. Print.
- Roach, Joseph R. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996. Print.
- Rogers, Sherbrooke. *Sarah Josepha Hale: A New England Pioneer, 1788-1878*. Grantham: Tompson & Rutter, 1985. Print.
- Rossiter, William, ed. *Days and Ways of Old Boston*. Boston: R.H. Sterns, 1914. *Google Books*. Web. 3 Apr. 2009.
- Rowson, Susanna. *Slaves in Algiers; or, a Struggle for Freedom*. 1794. Eds. Jennifer Margulis and Karen Poremski. New York: Copley, 2000. Print.

- Rush, Benjamin. *An Account of the Bilious Remitting Yellow Fever, as it appeared in the city of Philadelphia, in the year 1793*. Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1794. *Harvard University Library Open Collections Program*. Web. 2 Jan. 2010.
- . "Benjamin Rush to His Sister Polly Stockton." Letter. 1790. *Digital History*. Web. 27 Feb. 2012.
- . "Benjamin Rush to Julia Rush." Letter. 25 Sept. 1793. *Letters of Benjamin Rush*. Vol. 2. Ed. L.H. Butterfield. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1951. 2 vols. 684. Print.
- . "Dr. Rush's Directions for Curing and Preventing the Yellow Fever." Letter. 10 Sept. 1793. *Bobarnebeck.com*. Web. 27 Feb. 2012.
- . *Observations Upon the Origin of the Malignant Bilious, or Yellow Fever in Philadelphia, and Upon the Means of Preventing It: Addressed to the Citizens of Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: Budd and Bartram for T. Dobson, 1799. *Harvard University Library Open Collections Program*. Web. 2 Jan. 2010.
- Ryan, Susan M. *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003. Print.
- The Sailor's Magazine, and Naval Journal; Published by the American Seamen's Friend Society* 1.1 (Aug. 1829). New York: J. Seymour, 1829. *Google Books*. Web. 16 Aug. 2011.
- Sansay, Leonora. *Secret History, or, The Horrors of St. Domingo: and, Laura*. 1808. Ed. Michael J. Drexler. Buffalo: Broadview, 2007. Print.
- Schiebinger, Londa. "The Atlantic World Medical Complex: The Circulation of Knowledge." The Atlantic World Workshop Anson G. Phelps Lecture. New York University, New York City. 22 Feb. 2011. Speech.
- Scott, Anne Firor. *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History*. Champaign: U of Illinois P, 1992. Print.
- . *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1995. Print.
- Seacole, Mary. *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands*. London: James Blackwood, 1857. *UPenn Digital Library*. Web. 30 Dec. 2011.
- "Seaman's Aid Society." *Army and Navy Chronicle* 6.1 (Jan.-June 1838): 167. *Google Books*. Web. 19 Dec. 2009.
- "Seaman's Aid Society Fair." *The Sailor's Magazine, and Naval Journal* 5.1 (Aug. 1833): 218. Print.

- “The Seamen's Meetings on the Atlantic Sea-Coast.” *The Sailor's Magazine and Naval Journal* 6.1 (Aug. 1834): 285-86. Print.
- Sernett, Milton C., ed. *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*. Durham: Duke UP, 1999. Print.
- Shapiro, Stephen. *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World-System*. University Park: Penn State P, 2008. Print.
- Shulman, Holly Cowan, and David B. Mattern, eds. *Dolley Madison: Her Life, Letters, and Legacy*. New York: Rosen, 2003. Print.
- Sinclair, A.C. and Laurence R. Fyfe. *The Handbook of Jamaica for 1886-87: Comprising Historical, Statistical and General Information Concerning the Island Compiled From Official and Other Reliable Records*. London: Edward Stanford, 1886. *Google Books*. Web. 3 May 2011.
- Smith, Billy G. “Comment: Disease and Community.” *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*. Ed. J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith. Philadelphia: Science History Publications, 1997. 147-62. Print.
- . *The “Lower Sort”: Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994. Print.
- Smith, John. *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles with the names of the Adventurers, Planters and Governours from their first beginning in 1584 to this present 1624*. 1624. Vol. 1. Bedford: Applewood, 2006. 6 vols. Print.
- Smith, Mrs. John James. *William Knibb: Missionary in Jamaica, a Memoir*. London: Alexander & Shephard, 1896. *Google Books*. Web. 2 May 2011.
- Smith, Sarah Pogson. *Daughters of Eve*. Schenectady: G. Ritchie, Jr., 1826. *Google Books*. Web. 5 Aug. 2011.
- . [Misattributed to Maria H. Pinckney] *Essays Religious, Moral, Dramatic and Poetical*. Charleston: V. Hoff, 1818. *Google Books*. Web. 4 Aug. 2011.
- . Personal Letters. In the Gerrit Smith Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library. Syracuse: Syracuse University. Print.
- . [Misattributed to Maria H. Pinckney] *The Young Carolinians; or, Americans in Algiers*. Charleston: Archibald E. Miller, 1818. Print.
- Soderlund, Jean R. *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988. Print.

- Spruill, Marjorie Julian, Valinda W. Littlefield, and Joan Marie Johnson, eds. *South Carolina Women: Their Lives and Times*. Vol. 1. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2009. 3 vols. Print.
- Stansell, Christine. *Women of the Laboring Poor in New York City, 1820-1860*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1981. Print.
- Steadman, Jennifer Bernhardt. *Traveling Economies: American Women's Travel Writing*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2007. Print.
- Stearns, Samuel. *An Account of the Terrible Effects of the Pestilential Infection in the City of Philadelphia; With an Elegy on the Deaths of the People; also, A Song of Praise and Thanksgiving, Composed for Those Who Have Recovered, After Having Been Smitten with that Dreadful Contagion*. Providence: William Child, 1793. *Harvard University Library Open Collections Program*. Web. 23 Jan. 2011.
- Stevens, Edward. "For the General Advertiser, From Dr. E. Stevens to Dr. John Redman." Letter. 1793. *Bobarnebeck.com*. Web. 27 Feb 2012.
- Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life Among the Lowly*. 1852. Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: Norton, 1994. Print.
- Summerfield, John. *A Sermon, Preached in the Reformed Dutch Church in Nassau-Street, in behalf of The New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. To Which is Added, an Appendix, with Information Relative to the Institution*. New York: J. Seymour, 1822. Print.
- Tappan, Lewis. *History of the American Missionary Association: Its Constitution and Principles*. New York: American Missionary Association, 1855. *Google Books*. Web. 5 Apr. 2011.
- Tenth Annual Report of the Board of State Charities of Massachusetts, to which are added the reports of its several officers*. Boston: Wright & Potter, 1874. *Google Books*. Web. 17 May 2011.
- Tillinghast Letters. In the Tillinghast Family Papers, Manuscript Department, Perkins Library. Durham: Duke University. Print.
- Tonkovich, Nicole. *Domesticity with a Difference: The Nonfiction of Catharine Beecher, Sarah J. Hale, Fanny Fern, Margaret Fuller*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1997. Print.
- Turner, Mary. *Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787-1834*. Kingston: U of the West Indies P, 1998. Print.

- Van Cleve, John Vickrey and Barry A. Crouch. *A Place of Their Own: Creating the Deaf Community in America*. Washington D.C.: Gallaudet UP, 1989. Print.
- Van Cleve, John Vickrey, ed. *Deaf History Unveiled: Interpretations from the New Scholarship*. Washington D.C.: Gallaudet UP, 1999. Print.
- Vickers, Daniel, with Vincent Walsh. *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2005. Print.
- Vietto, Angela. *Women and Authorship in Revolutionary America*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2005. Print.
- [Wall, Rachel]. "Life, Last words, and Dying Confession of Rachel Wall." *Pillars of Salt: An Anthology of Early American Criminal Narratives*. Ed. Daniel E. Williams. Madison: Madison House, 1993. 282-87. Print.
- Walters, Ronald G. Introduction. *In A Black Woman's Odyssey Through Russia and Jamaica: The Narrative of Nancy Prince*. 1850. New York: Markus Wiener, 1990. ix-xxii. Print.
- Washington, George. "George Washington to Gouverneur Morris." Letter. 1793. *Digital History*. Web. 27 Feb. 2012.
- . "Letter of 1786." *Digital History*. Web. 27 Feb. 2012.
- Wax, Donald D. "Quaker Merchants and the Slave Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania." *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 86.2 (Apr. 1962): 143-59. *JSTOR*. Web. 2 Jan. 2010.
- Wayland, Francis. *Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson*. Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Company, 1853. *Google Books*. Web. 5 Aug. 2011.
- Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151-74. *JSTOR*. Web. 2 Nov. 2008.
- Whatley Smith, Virginia. "African American Travel Literature." *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*. Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera, eds. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. 197-213. Print.
- White, Shane and Graham J. White. *Stylin': African American Expressive Culture From Its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998. Print.
- Wilcox, Kirstin. "Sarah Pogson Smith." *Dictionary of Literary Biography: American Women Prose Writers to 1820*. Vol. 200 (Nov. 1998): 3-12. Web. 5 Jul. 2011.
- Will, Thomas E. "Liberalism, Republicanism, and Philadelphia's Black Elite in the Early Republic: The Social Thought of Absalom Jones and Richard Allen."

Pennsylvania History 69.4 (Autumn 2002): 558-76. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 Aug. 2011.