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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Exceptional Vengeance:
Revenge and the Rule of Law in Nineteenth-Century American Literature

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

in

Literature

by

Lisa M. Thomas

Committee in charge:

Professor Nicole Tonkovich, Chair
Professor John Blanco
Professor Michael Davidson
Professor Rachel Klein
Professor Shelley Streeby

2012

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2012

DEDICATION

To my family, friends, and committee for their endless encouragement, support, and patience. Whatever happens next, thanks for coming along (and putting up) with me.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to my committee for their untiring support. Not only did they provide me with the first seeds of this project during the qualifying phase of my Ph.D. studies, but they also helped me plan, research for, write, revise . . . revise . . . and revise this dissertation. My gratitude goes out especially to my chair, Dr. Nicole Tonkovich, for balancing her many other obligations with the pretty thankless task of being my chair. She's the reason I came to UCSD, is responsible for much of my professionalization as a graduate student and editor, is one of the very best teachers and mentors I have ever had, and is the primary reason why I have been able to polish and finish this work. I've been more fortunate than words can express to have her as my chair and to have my other committee members in my corner, both for this dissertation and as a teacher- and scholar-in-training.

Second, thanks to UCSD's Literature department for awarding me a year-long fellowship, which has allowed me to finish my degree in normative time. I was also fortunate to receive a summer research award that allowed me to travel to Texas Christian University to use some of their microfilm materials for my third chapter. I appreciate the library staff at TCU for helping me acquire those materials. Access to funds and physical texts is of course vital even though it keeps disappearing, and I appreciate any state-level, university-level, and departmental efforts to keep such resources extant and circulating.

Last but certainly not least, thanks so much to my family and friends for your unwavering support. You've kept me grounded and about as sane as possible through this process. Thanks for letting me work but also encouraging me to play. I couldn't have done either without you all.

VITA

2001-2005	Bachelor of Arts in English, Texas Christian University
2005-2007	Master of Arts in English, Texas Christian University
2007-2012	Doctor of Philosophy in Literature, University of California, San Diego

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

“Looking Back at George Kennedy . . . To Look Forward. A Rhetoric Re-View.” Co-authored with Richard Leo Enos. *Rhetoric Review*, 2006.

“Prayer and Preaching: Female Religious Agency in Cooper, Apess, and Warner.” Master of Arts Thesis. Texas Christian University, 2007.

The Rhetoric of St. Augustine of Hippo: De Doctrina Christiana and the Search for a Distinctly Christian Rhetoric. Co-edited with Richard Leo Enos, et al. Waco: Baylor UP, 2008.

“Book Review: Anne E. Boyd’s *Writing for Immortality: Women and the Emergence of High Literary Culture in America.*” *Women’s Studies*, 2011.

“*Godey’s Lady’s Book.*” *The Encyclopedia of Women and Popular Culture.* Ed. Gina Misiroglu. New York: Facts on File, 2011.

“Wharton, Edith.” *The Encyclopedia of Women and Popular Culture.* Ed. Gina Misiroglu. New York: Facts on File, 2011.

“Book Review: Lynette D. Myles’s *Female Subjectivity in African American Women’s Narratives of Enslavement: Beyond Borders.*” *Women’s Studies*, 2012.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Exceptional Vengeance:
Revenge and the Rule of Law in Nineteenth-Century American Literature

by

Lisa M. Thomas

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2012

Professor Nicole Tonkovich, Chair

People often characterize revenge as unlawful and undesirable because it challenges the primacy of mercy, forgiveness, proportionality, and deterrence. Relying in part on the theories of Giorgio Agamben, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Carl Schmitt, and Walter Benjamin, I examine how nineteenth-century authors in the Americas treat revenge as a potentially law-making, law-preserving, and law-challenging form of violence. Specifically, the texts I analyze from the 1830s to 1850s employ the notion of exceptionalism to suggest that revenge is justified and even sometimes necessary for purportedly heroic protagonists when established law is in flux, is absent, or is unreliable—especially in borderlands or frontier spaces and during wartime. The authors have their individual protagonists rewrite law and act as sovereigns, blending biblical interpretations, natural law, *lex talionis*, and other beliefs to impose particular

kinds of order on these exceptional locations and moments. In Chapter 1, I examine William Gilmore Simms's *The Yemassee* and how frontier romance authors generally depict Natives as vengeful, untrustworthy savages and whites as defenders of self and nation. In Chapter 2, I discuss how retellings of Hannah Duston's captivity and Robert Montgomery Bird's *Nick of the Woods* celebrate the acts of unlikely, feminized heroes as they kill and mutilate Native Americans. Chapter 3 focuses on the Parker captivities in Texas and George Lippard's *'Bel of Prairie Eden*, wherein white, male Texans are depicted as defenders of white women's virtue and go on vengeful quests against the Comanche and Mexicans (respectively), ultimately exhibiting some ambivalence about whether revenge is fulfilling and justified. Finally, in Chapter 4 I analyze Maxwell Philip's *Emmanuel Appadocca*, the story of a black, Trinidadian pirate who challenges the rule of law and readers' ability to accept a mixed-race hero who uses his pirate ship and the space of the ocean to write revenge into law. This study informs scholarship on law and justice, race and gender, and American exceptionalism by linking literary studies to legal and political philosophy and considering revenge as a specific kind of violence that, when justified by individual authors and their protagonists, has had great effects on past and present politics.

Introduction: Revenge, Justice, and Exceptionalist Rhetoric in the Nineteenth-Century United States

Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well disposed are daily made agents of injustice. (Thoreau, "Civil" 50)

A murky continuum of justice, retribution, and revenge permeates US culture. Only a handful of legal and film scholars note just how pervasive and problematic this continuum is in the nation's discourse, and particularly in the realm of literature, my area of interest. While legal and film scholars such as Susan Jacoby and Terry K. Aladjem have argued at length that US popular culture evinces an obsession with revenge stories despite widespread teachings and philosophies that humans should resist revenge and/or leave it to a higher authority such as God, the paucity of scholarship that engages with revenge in literature focuses on Greek tragedy and Shakespeare. Jacoby provides one of the more extensive studies of revenge in her book *Wild Justice*, wherein she argues, "The diminution of literary interest in revenge may be a relatively new phenomenon" (18). While I focus on nineteenth-century texts, part of my aim is to assert that revenge in (US)American literature is ongoing and in need of study rather than diminished or obsolete. Furthermore, while Jacoby states that Greek tragedies had "a highly deterministic view of vengeance as a constant in the moral universe" and saw revenge "not as a choice but as a moral imperative, a divine command to restore order when order has been violated" (21), I wish to extend this notion to my reading of texts in the Americas.

In *Regeneration through Violence*, Richard Slotkin has noted the importance of literature to how authors imagine and try to solve problems, as they often repeat the same topics while the nation works through them (19-20). Revenge is one topic with which authors repeatedly engage as they imagine its role in American legal discourse and practice. The texts I analyze address the idea that revenge is—in certain, supposedly exceptional contexts—“a moral imperative” and “divine command” but also call into question (or at least may cause readers to question) how imperative revenge may actually be. A focus on revenge in literature allows us to examine justifications for and logics behind vengeance in specific contexts, as well as craft theories about how revenge is represented in art and life and what those representations communicate about humanity and law. These representations are particularly important because the nineteenth-century issues I study have affected legal and political actions and rhetoric to the present day. While the literature I study not only captures nineteenth-century debates but also frames them for readers in order to advance particular viewpoints, the literature has also affected ongoing debates and inequalities regarding property, race, gender, and the notions of law, justice, and civilization.

Political philosophers often discuss how law and governments create and sanction violence (not justice), particularly in certain circumstances. For scholars such as Carl Schmitt, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Walter Benjamin, and Giorgio Agamben, law and justice are not the same thing, though attempts to realize justice can (and should) have an effect on law. These scholars point especially to the sovereign as the person with the right to create and sanction that violence, and their discussions of the state of exception focus on that kind of exceptional status as a powerful and positive tool for

government officials because it allows them to acquire and/or maintain control and wield violence to achieve that control. Governments pretend such exceptions are positive for the people because they are necessary, yet the general populace suffers under such “exceptional” circumstances because of how governments manipulate law and often suspend human rights.

Rather than focus on the state of exception as these scholars have done, though, I focus more on how individuals claim the rights of sovereigns in supposedly exceptional spaces in order to sanction various kinds of violence, particularly revenge. Specifically, the authors I examine use their protagonists as models and mouthpieces in order to react to historical moments—such as past wars or conflicts—and then frame these moments in ways that support various political stances in their contemporary time periods. These protagonists suggest that they can and should become individual lawmakers in supposedly exceptional moments and then determine what kinds of violence are necessary in order for justice to be realized. Particularly in the case of revenge, these individuals are able to focus on a specific kind of violence that, for all its controversy, is so often justified through the idea that a wrong has been committed and that, especially in purportedly exceptional spaces, the wrong deserves to be righted by any means “necessary.” Frontier spaces on land and sea—spaces imagined as lawless borderlands, such as contested territories in the American West or international waters—are particular spaces that authors imagine as exceptional. Protagonists often contend that, because of the supposedly exceptional status of these spaces, revenge is a necessary means of ushering in various versions of law and order. These imagined frontiers pose challenges in that they do not appear to have government authorities to whom people can turn, or

they have systems of justice that are in some way flawed. But these supposedly exceptional spaces are also rendered positively because they allow for individual sovereignty and for the use of extreme violence.

This study pushes for recognition of the power of the individual in these moments to turn revenge into something not maligned but allowed for. These individuals then reserve the right to use the violence they have justified or not use it, and they are not always successful or celebrated. But what these authors are commenting on is the role of individuals in these moments and places to define the power of certain people to make, enforce, and challenge law. They also engage in cross-textual debates about how those people who are already represented in government when *not* in the exceptional space can extend the reach of government through violence that may be outside the purview of law but that they still define as justice. Furthermore, some of the authors I analyze imagine how those people who are already excepted from certain laws and rights—or who are targeted by other laws, particularly because of their race—can potentially do the same: can use vengeful violence that is unlawful but justified. Laws are indeed made and maintained through force and violence, but they can also be challenged through force and violence. The particular kind of violence I examine is revenge because, whether establishing, upholding, or challenging law, when one can rely on the notion of exceptionalism to justify revenge, it becomes a particularly powerful kind of violence. It turns selfish, bloody, mercenary vengeance into a celebration of individual power, defense of the self, defense of the nation, and the idea of spreading civilization. These depictions of revenge thus tap into values such as honor, redress, and deterrence and, through the rhetoric of exceptionalism, can erase the negative connotations associated

with revenge. Exceptionalist rhetoric that engages particularly with race and gender politics is some of the most impactful and under-studied rhetoric that illuminates the power of vengeance to establish, uphold, and even challenge law, and this dissertation will illustrate why such rhetoric is so powerful and has shaped so much of American politics and history.

A focus on literature and a cross-genre approach exemplify just how pervasive is the topic of vengeance. Part of the significance of this project is to call attention to this topic and also bring together fields that trace revenge through the US legal system, our national history, and art forms, including literature. Considering the frontier romance, captivity narratives, the periodical press, sensational literature, and novels yields an argument about revenge and exceptionalist rhetoric that is not isolated to one genre. Each of my chapters illustrates how, across multiple kinds of texts that consider different spaces and contexts in the Americas, authors present the potential for certain kinds of revenge to both uphold and challenge common notions about justice and civilization. Together, my chapters also tie studies of empire, race, and gender together in new ways, focusing on texts and stories that have never been put in conversation with each other and that lack much contemporary scholarship. I start with an 1830s frontier romance (which is a subgenre of the historical romance) by William Gilmore Simms that is a fictionalization of an actual war in the contentious frontier space of eighteenth-century Carolina. I start with this text not only because its publication is earlier than most of my other texts, but also because Simms helps take us through a particular trajectory in this dissertation as I move from representations wherein protagonists resist and displace revenge, then celebrate it in certain situations, and finally question its efficacy.

Despite my cross-genre approach, all of the texts I analyze deal in some way with supposedly exceptional spaces on land and sea, with race and gender relations, and with particular framings of the historical past to show the protagonists as victims. Many of the texts contain instances of captivity wherein authors largely erase the role that white settlers have played regarding European imperialism in the Americas. In captivity narratives as well as frontier romances, the gentle and often female or feminized captives are able to either claim that their uses of violence are necessary in order to escape from supposed savages, or the families of captives argue for the same necessity as they reclaim captive bodies—and reclaim the right to populate the land and spread civilization. Elements of sensationalism also often appear in the texts I examine, as authors frequently imagine elaborate revenge plots that can seem exaggerated and, thus, perhaps benign. However, they make crucial arguments about violence, race and gender relations, and empire. As much as some scholars have pushed these texts largely out of the canon of (US)American literature, such texts have helped reflect as well as shape perceptions of (US)American identity, history, and politics in the Americas and abroad.

Therefore, by using the word “sensational” in this dissertation—which connotes a sense of the unrealistic, low-brow, and dismissible—I do not mean to downplay the importance of works that are labeled with this term. While the word can suggest that such works were and are not to be taken seriously, scholars have noted the popularity and influence of such literature. For instance, Mary Noel argues that popular, sensational fiction flourished in the 1830s and that much of this literature was “concerned with the direct, personal, uninhibited violence of crime, of vengeance, of unlicensed Indian warfare.” Some of the most celebrated texts “combined the sweetest of sentiment with

the blow of the well directed [sic] fist” (1). David S. Reynolds argues that readers were hungry for sensational texts “in all societies and periods” but that “early-nineteenth-century America was unique” because “freedom of the press” and “improvements in print technology and book distribution facilitated the publication of various kinds of racy literature that reflected the tastes of working-class and frontier readers” (169).

Sensational texts in the United States had a reputation for “special nastiness and grossness,” and the texts—which flooded the market in the 1830s and 1840s—included penny papers, crime pamphlets, trial reports, romantic adventures, subversive political fiction, almanacs, and pornography (172, 171). These kinds of literature were linked to a larger “culture of sensation” that, as Shelley Streeby notes, should not be dismissed, since it affected not just literature but also politics, class, race, and gender (*American* 27).

Besides linking genres and styles in this dissertation, examining ideologies about revenge and the rule of law may be one way of also bridging the gap between early American and USAmerican (post-1835) studies—a gap that Sandra Gustafson and others have pointed to as problematic (pars. 1-2). For instance, many of the texts I analyze look to pre-nineteenth-century events to comment on issues occurring in the 1830s to 1850s, when these texts were written. Furthermore, the issues of US empire and race and gender relations occurring after the 1850s were informed by the issues and events on which these authors are commenting. Scholars should not isolate what these authors are saying from the events that inform these texts and events that came later, as though they are not tied together across time as well as space. I also include the Americas in this discussion more broadly because the settings of the texts I examine range from British colonies (including Trinidad), to US states, to Mexican territories.

Finally, my chapters also bring race and gender studies to the fore as I consider how these authors' critiques of law, justice, and violence hinge on race and gender politics that help the authors justify their various positions and their visions of future legal practices and human rights. For instance, the subject of miscegenation appears in many of these texts, as retribution and revenge make up a veiled racist discourse through the theme of going savage. Authors either critique literal mixing with racial others through contact with their communities or figurative mixing by those who turn supposedly savage through unrestrained violence. As scholars such as Philip Joseph Deloria and Shari M. Huhndorf have recently focused attention on the idea of "going Native," my work joins that conversation, as well, as figures and characters navigate practicing restraint versus spiraling into violence that Native figures and characters model in some of these texts and that racial, national, and ethnic others more generally illustrate.

In this Introduction, I will begin by providing a brief historical backdrop of the period on which I focus. Knowing the general history of territorial expansion; Native American, African American, and women's rights; and debates about punishment and liberal democracy is necessary for approaching the literature of this period and how authors responded to and informed these issues. Authors not only commented on their contemporary moments from the 1830s to 1850s in the texts I examine but also often set their texts in earlier periods in order to imagine and suggest how their contemporary issues might be resolved. After providing this brief historical background information, I then link the importance of my study for literary scholars to its importance in the fields of political and legal philosophy because the texts I analyze respond to as well as inform debates about politics, law, and justice in the nineteenth-century Americas that resonate

today. I start with a discussion of the definitions of justice, retribution, and revenge to foreground the importance of recognizing how and why scholars typically distinguish justice from revenge in theory while noting that they are often conflated in life as well as in artistic representations. Then, I analyze how the state of exception and more general rhetoric of exceptionalism complicate the definitions of justice, retribution, and revenge. Specifically, in moments and spaces that authors argue are exceptional—due to (for instance) war and territorial expansion in “frontier” spaces, with all of their ramifications regarding race, gender, and rights under the law—revenge and justice can become linked. I explore the importance of this link to, particularly, US politics as authors who make a case for justifying revenge promote not just any sort of “law-making violence,” to borrow from scholars such as Benjamin. The ability to promote the power of certain individuals to exact revenge in the name of honor, self-defense, and necessity highlights the power of authors across multiple genres to frame nineteenth-century policies on claims to property (in land and bodies), Indian genocide and removal, slavery, and notions of American exceptionalism more broadly.

The Political and Legal Landscape of the Early Nineteenth Century

The period I study in this dissertation was rife with volatile debates as well as legal and extralegal violence, and understanding the period gives scholars a sense of what literary authors across many genres were responding to, framing, and informing through their texts. I have chosen works of literature that span (primarily) the 1830s through the 1850s, focusing on the expansion of territory in the United States through violent confrontations with non-white populations and related debates in the Americas about the

abolition of slavery; this period includes such events as numerous Amerindian wars (including the Black Hawk War and Second Seminole War), Indian removal (including the 1830 Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears), the Nat Turner Rebellion, the 1833 British Slavery Abolition Act, the Battle of the Alamo, the admittance of Florida and Texas into the Union, and the Dred Scott Decision. This timespan illuminates a particular preoccupation with definitions of sovereignty and with national expansion at a time when authors in the young US Republic, in particular, were using the country's violent past in order to confront two main questions about US identity: First, how did individuals in the United States imagine the nation's expanding borders and relations with racial and ethnic others while attempting to apply law and order to the imagined untamed frontiers in the south and west? Second, who constituted a citizen covered by and ascribing to the rule of law versus the rules of vengeance?

In this study, I join scholars such as Amy Kaplan and Ezra Tawil in arguing that pairing Native and African American studies is imperative. Specifically, Kaplan notes that focusing exclusively on relations between whites and Natives during westward expansion is an approach "that overlooks how intimately the issues of slavery and emancipation and relations between blacks and whites were intertwined with each stage of U.S. imperial expansion" (*Anarchy* 68). Furthermore, Tawil asserts that "white-Indian warfare . . . raised the specter of 'race war,' a fear that haunted nineteenth-century debates about slavery. It is easy to imagine how the dispossessed and potentially vengeful Indian of frontier fiction may have evoked the slave insurrections of the opening decades of the nineteenth century" (6). In Tawil's analysis, "the vengeful Indian of frontier fiction presents a potential analogy to the historical possibility of slave rebellion"

that may be only recognized by readers on an “unspoken semantic level” but that must still be recognized (7). I link expansion, warfare with racial others, and slavery to consider representations of revenge and the rule of law in ways that help scholars consider what those links mean regarding studies of empire, violence, race, and gender.

Besides specific laws that determined how individuals would be treated in the contexts of warfare, territorial expansion, and slavery, the landscape of the nineteenth-century United States was also consumed with debates regarding punishment. Foucault has argued that the spectacle of the criminal being punished publicly essentially disappeared in western Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century (*Discipline* 8). However, two competing US prison systems during this period accompanied conflicting arguments about how prisoners should be punished, particularly as the rise of urbanization required more systematic modes of imprisonment and/or rehabilitation: the Philadelphia model, which emphasized the isolation of prisoners, and the Auburn model, which emphasized public labor such as the use of chain gangs. These late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century systems became models for European prisons, as seen particularly in the 1831 visitations and subsequent scholarship of Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont, who judged the systems for use in France (Dumm 113).

Rather than suggest that the punishment of US criminals was largely erased as a public spectacle during the nineteenth century, because these arguments about imprisonment and rehabilitation were ongoing, I argue that people accused of crimes were on various public stages at this time. Those accused of being criminals of one kind or another were of course on display in the texts I examine in this dissertation, which should remind scholars of the importance of examining how the ways that people render

or represent criminalized bodies is part of the process of making spectacles of individuals or groups.¹ In addition, though, US history also points to how accused criminals were still on display in this century: through the studies of criminals under different prison systems, the labor of prisoners in public (such as in chain gangs), ongoing debates about the death penalty (which was limited to violent crimes and treason in many states by the late 1840s), the rise of urban police forces beginning in the 1830s (particularly in response to urban riots of the 1830s through 50s), and the popularity of dueling in the South, which reached its zenith in the 1830s despite laws against it.² All of these arguments about law and punishment in the first half of the nineteenth century make the time span of my study particularly rich because numerous authors speak directly to tensions surrounding changing beliefs about criminal justice in the Americas.

Although these issues and others led many to believe that the eventual establishment of a set penitentiary system would make punishment democratic and equal for all, the fact that the rule of law did not affect people equally is a central focus of my study because of how it affects the role of revenge. Montesquieu, Voltaire, Bacon, Bentham, and others believed punishment could move from “lash, stocks, and dungeon” to “carefully measured laws and punishments” based on reason (Ayers 37). In theory, “[t]he penitentiary appealed to the early advocates of republicanism because it could measure, in the universally valued and universally owned units of years, months, and

¹ See Susan Sontag’s *Regarding the Pain of Others* for the importance of considering such renderings of pain and punishment in photographs, as well. Elaine Scarry also famously examines renderings of pain and punishment through tangible representations as well as language (labeling and naming practices) in her work *The Body in Pain*. Franny Nudelman’s scholarship on the artwork and photographs of John Brown’s trial and hanging also speak to the issues of spectacle and punishment, particularly in the context of tensions surrounding race and the outbreak of war.

² On the history of different US prison systems and modes of punishment, especially from the late eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries, see in particular Monkkonen, Hall, Jacoby, Ayers, Dumm, and Friedman.

days, the precise amount a criminal owed others in the society.” Penitentiaries reinforced the value of freedom and were meant to suggest “a single standard of behavior” that would help avoid anarchy (40). The penitentiary was simultaneously “liberal because the entire force of its operations was designed to reconstruct the psychology of individual persons” and “democratic because the same operations applied to each individual” (Dumm 95). These kinds of developments in the criminal justice system seemed to advance natural law, or law that is set “by some intrinsic standard” by logical human beings and used so those beings could “live peacefully in society” (Watson 94). Natural law was thus supposedly aligned with the rule of law, or law that was on the books, but differing views on what natural law actually is are another important focus of this dissertation as some protagonists justify revenge as part of natural law under certain, supposedly exceptional, circumstances.

These hopes for the justness of the penitentiary were not lived out in practice, and accused criminals who were othered in some way—often due to race, ethnicity, and nationality—were targeted within and without the penitentiary system to be more gravely punished under national, local, and even individual law. For instance, Thomas L. Dumm notes that “a disproportionate number of inmates in the prisons of the United States during the 1820s and 1830s were foreign born or first-generation U.S. citizens” (107). Also, as my dissertation will show, racial others were systematically targeted by some laws and excepted from other legal rights. Thus, as Derrida and others have argued, force and violence uphold the law, yet I will show too how the law upholds and allows for various kinds of violence. This held true in locales wherein there were penitentiaries and police forces as well as in places wherein justice officials were not as readily found, such

as in more remote “frontier” spaces. As Joy James has asserted, Foucault’s theory about the great decline in public executions and punishments in the nineteenth century does not adequately take race into account because it erases the specific bodies that are punished (*Resisting* 24-25). She argues that, in the post-emancipation United States, “the specter of lynching appears as the expression of American rage and retribution,” and she calls attention to the private executions and tortures that are “shielded from the view of the citizenry but projected into its consciousness” all the same (*Resisting* 29, 35).

Furthermore, as numerous scholars and activists have shown, many lynchings in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were advertised, drew large crowds, and were memorialized in print and art.³ By examining the issue of who is represented in this era and who is not, particularly in the contexts of law and punishment and through the rhetoric and legal ramifications of exceptionalism, scholars can come to a fuller understanding of the roles of revenge and the spectacle of violence when considering legal and extralegal modes of punishment.

These arguments about punishment are linked to larger debates in the nineteenth-century United States that also inform this study. As legal philosophers argued about the roles and responsibilities of the individual in US and European societies,⁴ nineteenth-century American authors often depicted heroic individuals taking the law into their own hands in exceptional, “frontier” spaces on land and sea, presenting the Americas as a unique space for imagining confrontations between civilization and savagery. For

³ See for instance many of Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s works, including *Southern Horrors*, on lynching in the post-bellum period. Currently, Ken Gonzalez-Day’s photos of lynch mobs and lynching trees also call attention to the spectatorship around lynching.

⁴ See Koenraad W. Swart on the rise and use of the term “individualism” in the first half of the nineteenth century, including how the notion of individualism was feared and celebrated in France, England, Germany, Spain, Italy, and the United States.

instance, Frederick Jackson Turner wrote that “the most important effect of the frontier has been in the promotion of democracy here and in Europe. . . . [T]he frontier is productive of individualism” (15). Typically, “law sees violence in the hands of individuals as a danger undermining the legal system” (Benjamin 280). Yet supposedly exceptional times and spaces allow individuals to justify taking action against perceived wrongdoers. At a time in the nineteenth century when debates in the sphere of law dealt with the rights of individuals and groups—particularly regarding race, as in the Cherokee Nation (1831) and Dred Scott cases (1857)⁵—Jacksonian democrats argued for more localized authority in the hands of white patriarchs. Though liberal democracy promoted a turn from nature and savagery while it also promoted “the independence of men” (Rogin 8), supposedly exceptional spaces such as frontiers allowed individuals to temporarily “go savage” when necessity dictated they must. It is in this period that scholars see the term “lynch law” increasingly used, and mob violence and dueling reached their zeniths by the 1830s.⁶ Debates about popular sovereignty and the power of *certain* individuals in *certain* circumstances to exact extralegal “justice” make this period particularly important when considering revenge as an especially individualized form of violence that authors so often malign as well as celebrate and justify.

⁵ See in particular chapter one of Priscilla Wald on how these two cases challenged notions of citizenship and inclusion for racial others as well as whites, and men as well as women.

⁶ See Christopher Waldrep for an in-depth study of the history of lynch law and its relation to the frontier.

The Continuum: Justice, Retribution, and Revenge in Political and Legal

Philosophy

Scholars such as Derrida, Benjamin, and Agamben discuss the violence and force behind law but do not consider revenge in any detail as a specific kind of violence. I will argue throughout this dissertation that authors who condone revenge under certain circumstances as necessary and as synonymous with justice disrupt ideals of what justice is supposed to be, subjective as its definitions are. If, according to Derrida, it is an act of justice to deconstruct the law, it is an act of justice to deconstruct the problematic rhetoric regarding definitions of justice in the first place—definitions that people encounter in various contexts, including in literature. As I will discuss in this section, definitions of justice, retribution, and revenge by political philosophers challenge literary representations that confront and reframe these concepts in ways that, specifically in nineteenth-century US American politics, have justified legal and extralegal forms of violence that have not previously been examined in US literary studies. Even studies of literature that engage with race and gender largely ignore the topic of revenge despite the fact that vengeful violence is often framed and impacted by issues regarding race and gender that help explain and justify that violence.

In order to understand revenge and how authors represent it in the texts I examine, it is important to understand justice and retribution, particularly as all three terms are often used synonymously. Contemporary scholars such as Terry K. Aladjem, Susan Jacoby, Pietro Marongiu and Graeme Newman, and Peter A. French all discuss definitions of justice, retribution, and revenge from the stance of, primarily, legal philosophy as they rely on such figures as Aristotle, Bacon, Locke, Hume, and Kant. On

the one hand, people often malign revenge as a kind of base instinct that should be avoided because it seems antithetical to rational and impartial justice. On the other hand, individuals often condone revenge under certain circumstances, arguing that it takes on the form of justice when the police or courts of law are not present or fail to exact justice. In political philosophy, establishing the rule of law is ideally meant to make justice quantifiable and achievable and to provide systems of redress that satisfy victims so they do not resort to morally questionable acts of retribution or revenge. Civilization, with the laws that supposedly come with it, is supposed to “protect men against nature and to adjust their mutual relations” (Freud, *Civilization* 49). For scholars such as Hume and Foucault, civilized governments provide security for their people, particularly where property or ownership are concerned.⁷ As Jiwei Ci argues, Hume prioritizes the notion of property by positing that “the *object* of justice . . . is property, and the *role* of justice is to regulate the disposition of property” (Ci 68).

Though Ci argues that Hume perhaps overemphasizes the role of property in justice, I will examine various kinds of ownership or property relations throughout this dissertation to interrogate the economic aspects of revenge. Owning and colonizing different people’s lands and bodies is central throughout this study and is a key component of considering how revenge is often characterized and justified, particularly as we think of how people do and do not “pay” for their crimes. In the period that I examine from the 1830s to 1850s, the United States was in many ways consumed by imperialistic, expansionist impulses—how to claim more property in land, goods, and bodies. With each justification for claiming more land came questions about how best to

⁷ See, in particular, Foucault’s “Governmentality” and Hume’s *Enquiry*.

claim it through legal and extralegal kinds of violence (including retributive and vengeful violence) and how ideologies about property would make various geographies highly contentious spaces and places: How would property in slave bodies and labor become an issue when colonizing new territories and when determining the personhood and property rights (or non-rights) of racial others? How could whites dispel Native Americans' claims to property and sovereignty when settler colonists peopled those lands and argued variously for Native enslavement, extermination, removal, and assimilation? What roles would women play, particularly as objects to own, as conquests, and as potential repositories of goodness who needed to be defended and avenged? As authors imagined these debates regarding property and the violence that emerged from these debates, they framed their politics through the acts of individual, heroic, and even mythical protagonists. The nineteenth-century authors I examine vested their protagonists with a justified right to use violence in times of supposed necessity, and they all examine the role of vengeance as a potent form of violence that, when justified out of necessity and to provide redress for past injustices, is a powerful and problematic tool through which individual and collective rights—and even laws—can be defined and upheld. To begin to understand this complex relationship between justice and vengeance, I will briefly overview what I describe as a continuum among the notions of justice, retribution, and revenge.

Justice is generally figured as impartial or unbiased judgments grounded in concepts of right versus wrong, morality, mercy, equitability, reciprocity, and deterrence, and it is supposed to be reflected in a civilization's legal system. We imagine that systems of justice remove emotions such as anger and sorrow from decision-making

processes in order to ensure the punishment fits the crime (Aladjem 32-33). Thus, justice under the law—under the purview of the leaders of a state or nation who are expected to turn private revenge into public justice—is meant to diminish the importance of the individual in favor of examining motives, crimes, and punishments based on an impartial system; this system must avoid individualizing the victim too much because of the threat that emotion can pose to impartiality and must assign guilt and a sentence to a person who is reduced to his or her crime (Aladjem 12; Jacoby 10, 116, 291-92). Thus, a *system* of justice assumes a state or nation that (in theory) removes the need for individual action or retaliation against injustice. Because punishing someone is supposed to yield no positive emotion even though “[i]t is ugly to be punishable,” justice establishes a “double system of protection . . . between itself and the punishment it imposes” (Foucault, *Discipline* 10). Furthermore, the rule of law “propose[s] to make all persons equal before a neutral and impartial authority. . . . Social position, governmental office, family of birth, wealth, and race ideally had nothing to do with the dispensation of justice. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the very notion of justice had become an abstraction” (Hall 6). This abstraction makes justice difficult to define and makes it hard to determine what a just punishment is, but the concepts of proportionality and the guidance of precedent are supposed to help impartial authority figures reach just conclusions in order to contain violence.⁸

Often used synonymously with justice, retribution also relies largely on the concept of proportionality, or determining exactly what a particular crime is worth in

⁸ See, in particular, chapter one of Girard on this notion of containing violence under the parameters of public justice systems and ritual sacrifice.

terms of punishment or reparations. However, this retributive punishment or reparation results (in theory) in an eye-for-an-eye judgment that, unlike broad notions of justice, is often highly individualized as opposed to being part of a larger system wherein a person may be wronged but impartial authorities are in charge of determining guilt and rectifying that wrong. In other words, people often tie specific acts of retribution to individuals who have been wronged and are justified in correcting a perceived imbalance by attacking another specific, wrongdoing individual versus relying on judges, juries, or other legal practitioners who are removed from the original crime (Aladjem 15, 19; Jacoby 4, 6).⁹ Justice is retributive in the sense that it is supposed to seek proportional punishment, reciprocity for a wrong someone has committed, and deterrence of future crimes. Yet retribution is often imagined as something that individuals or groups seek outside of a court of law and that is more closely linked to emotions such as resentment, which is why people may hesitate to use the term synonymously with justice when imagining conforming to the rule of law in a court setting.

While proportionality is seen as a kind of “mandate” for punishments under retributive acts, the concept of proportionality is also understood as a tool for limiting revenge. This limitation is supposed to help a just rule of law uphold a system wherein punishment “is severe enough to reflect society’s estimation of the seriousness of a crime,

⁹ Just as I cannot provide exhaustive definitions of justice, a fuller discussion of retribution is outside the scope of this project, as scholars have defined several types of retribution for different situations. Robert Nozick argues that, with retribution, one need not be directly affected by a perceived crime to seek redress and, unlike an avenger, does not need to witness the criminal’s suffering; he also describes retribution as more emotionless than revenge. While he has a more positive view of retribution than some scholars, he does agree with other theorists that retribution limits violence more so than revenge, that it is not as impassioned as acts of revenge, and that individuals can have mixed feelings between retribution and revenge, particularly because they “share a common structure” (368). For additional details and definitions, see French for a discussion of multiple kinds of retribution and how they function, as well as Nozick 363-97.

but not so harsh or excessive as to exceed the harm done by the offense” (Jacoby 129). Proportionality is also often called “fit” or “desert,” and all are terms that are used to measure whether revenge is justified (French 34). French argues that revenge is even more personal than retribution, as anyone can potentially desire that retribution be carried out against someone while revenge is desired by injured parties or those who are closely linked to injured parties in some way (68). I argue, though, that the idea of who is actually *linked* to injured parties deserves more scrutiny, because scholars such as French seem to assume that perhaps only family members, close friends, or direct witnesses of a terribly unjust act desire revenge because of its personal nature. Actually, people who are linked to the injured person and who thus might seek revenge constitute a potentially broad category of people, particularly when we consider race and ethnicity—such as white settlers generally who seek revenge against an entire Native tribe (or even all Native peoples) for a violent raid on a white family’s home, which is a type I examine specifically in Chapter 2. Furthermore, this broad sense of who can seek revenge lends itself toward a broad sense of what constitutes a crime that deserves vengeful retaliation. French notes that, while Robert Nozick contends that revenge may be about addressing “an injury or a harm or a slight” and retribution is concerned more with actual wrongs, the notion of what is a wrong may be subjective (67). Still, while it is true that the idea of a wrong can be quite subjective, the consensus is that vengeful retaliation often consists of even more subjective views of what constitutes a wrong or a crime.

The main points to note about revenge, though, are its highly personal nature and the fact that it usually goes beyond an-eye-for-an-eye retribution because avengers want to exceed the violence of the original crime, as though a kind of compounded interest

needs to be attached to the vengeful act in order to truly rectify the original wrong and restore balance. Because revenge often exceeds the violence of the original crime, though, it also often results in a cycle; different sides repeatedly seek revenge against each other because the violence is heightened in each round, and each side rewrites who is at fault (Girard 14-15). Revenge is usually linked to trauma, is figured as unrestrained, and is tied to a desire to both control interpretations of the past and turn potential past defeats into present victories through vengeful acts that succeed in punishing supposed wrongdoers (Aladjem 22-23, 41-46, 137; Jacoby 9, 12-13). According to Terence Martin, in stories about revenge, there are three standard motifs: the sacrifice of innocent victims, antagonists who represent social outcasts, and avenging relatives (usually fathers) (2). Though not all avengers are relatives of the victims, as I have already suggested, these motifs outline who is the undeserving victim and who is deserving of punishment (partly for committing a crime and partly, I would argue, for being a social outcast or other). As Freud argues, though, “[N]eurotic acts of revenge can be directed against the wrong people . . . Punishment must be exacted even if it does not fall upon the guilty” (*The Ego* 62). These views on revenge exemplify why people are often taught to resist feelings of revenge. As Jacoby notes, “Justice is a legitimate concept in the modern code of civilized behavior. Vengeance is not” (1). Laws cannot remove people’s desire for revenge, but they are theoretically meant to contain it (5).

However, numerous political and legal philosophers have noted that people often make room for revenge under certain circumstances and even argue that justice *is* revenge. Therefore, scholars do not altogether malign revenge even when they maintain that vengeance and denying justice for certain people conflict with the ideal of a just

society. Perhaps French highlights this point in the most succinct way when he argues, “Revenge is morally permissible if the avenues of civil redress of serious grievances are blocked” (34). The texts I analyze posit that the usual “avenues of civil redress . . . are blocked” because places and peoples have been, for various reasons, excepted from modes of seeking impartial, swift justice. Justice is still necessary, though, and the absence of civil redress necessitates that what is usually morally impermissible—personal revenge—may be sanctioned *if* its proponents can justify the vengeful acts. This justification is what the nineteenth-century authors I examine engage with and, in some cases, call into question.

I will examine the ideas of necessity and exceptionalism in greater detail shortly, but I want to emphasize that scholars have generally noted and even defended this view that revenge has a place in society when the criminal is particularly terrible or the situation forestalls ordinary recourse for justice. This idea links to Kant’s arguments about the unjust enemy, or the idea that some criminals are simply undeserving of various legal and natural rights.¹⁰ Especially when one’s honor has been assaulted and the perceived victim is then restoring that honor through an act of revenge, “vengeance . . . can be seen as progressing from violence and sacrifice *through* honor and *into* justice” (Aladjem 34; see also French 34). I contend that this sense of lost and restored honor holds true for every hero that audiences are meant to see, accept, and respect as vengeful yet justified. The violent and, especially, vengeful hero-protagonists I examine must be

¹⁰ See Kant’s essay “To Perpetual Peace” and Part 1 of *Metaphysical Elements of Justice* on the just versus unjust enemy and his view on the lamentable necessity of labeling some people undeserving of rights and representation that other criminals may be given in a court of law. Unjust enemies could include people such as traitors, pirates, and terrorists—types of people whom I discuss at various points in this dissertation as being excepted from certain rights.

framed as virtuous figures—or at least more virtuous than their enemies—who reinforce their positive virtues even if they temporarily commit acts of vengeful violence. This notion of temporary vengeance is also key to ultimately accepting these heroes as still honorable and civilized people who rectify wrongs and (ideally) deter future wrongs in the process.

Controlled vengeance can thus be seen as a way of filling the gaps that justice leaves behind when it fails to do its duty, and in this way revenge speaks to how often people are frustrated with the justice system when they think it fails to punish offenders properly (Aladjem 46-47). Despite the long-lasting effects of these vengeful acts, which take lives and help set the tone for future relations regarding people and/as property, the authors of these texts still maintain that the vengeful acts are temporary and controlled, which is the best way to justify those acts as acceptable means to the ends of (imagined) justice and peace. The idea that such violence is temporary and controlled may be a fiction, as is the rhetoric of exceptionalism when any of these spaces, moments, and policies may be challenged as norms versus exceptions. Yet the fiction is necessary if such violence is to be accepted and even defended.

Thus, there is a common contradiction wherein people often differentiate revenge from justice but also often conflate the two as essentially the same, at least in practice. As Jacoby notes, “The powerful appeal of the revenge theme in mass entertainment is simply one more manifestation of the gap between private feelings about revenge and the public pretense that justice and vengeance have nothing, perish the uncivilized thought, to do with each other” (8). People often heroicize avengers in life and art because they can identify with the avengers’ pain and cheer them on to victory, even if people also label

their support a kind of innocent escapism or argue that—particularly when the avenger is a historically real person—the circumstances were abnormal and required a brand of revenge-as-justice that one would typically not condone. Hume argues that “the rules of equity or justice depend entirely on the particular state and condition, in which men are placed” (24), and this statement gets at the heart of what I and the authors I examine are interrogating.

In sum, justice, retribution, and revenge all involve a perceived antagonist and the quest to discover the best way to punish people for their crimes, but retribution and certainly revenge are generally perceived as being fueled by individuals’ emotions, violence, and fear and are believed to be vulnerable to overuse or excessive violence. Aladjem’s note that “[v]engeance insists on its own righteousness—no matter what” (xiv) is a reminder of how justice and revenge are often conflated because establishing and enforcing laws are not objective acts even if they aim to be in an imagined, ideal, and “civilized” society. Though Bacon maligned revenge because it “putteth the law out of office” and assumes to put an avenger in the position of a prince, he labeled it “a wild kind of justice” (72), suggesting that some people will define vengeance as justice even if it runs contrary to impartial, equitable systems of law.

The Rhetoric of Exceptionalism

With an understanding of the complex relationship among the concepts of justice, retribution, and revenge, scholars can begin to understand the circumstances under which people may defend and even champion revenge. Specifically, I build on Giorgio Agamben’s theories about the state of exception to think both of exceptionalist legal

practices at the nation-state level during times of crisis—which Agamben discusses—and the notion of exceptionalism more broadly, wherein people may imagine contexts, spaces, and bodies that are excepted from the rule of law. As my focus is the Americas in the nineteenth century, and particularly in the United States, I will first discuss the notion of exceptionalism generally and then apply its use to the concepts of territorial expansion, frontiers, and sovereignty. Together these concepts provide a framework for reading resistance to and justifications of violence and revenge in the literature that I focus on in my chapters.

In *State of Exception*, Agamben examines how national leaders, primarily in the twentieth century, have declared a state of exception or a state of emergency when the conditions seemed to call for such a declaration. When in a state of exception, such as during times of war or great civil strife, authorities suspend and rewrite laws in order to maintain order. The laws (or suspension of laws) may challenge people's freedoms, but the people largely accept or acquiesce to this environment as temporary and necessary because leaders frame the creation of some laws and the cessation of others as a way of maintaining order and safety in difficult times. As mentioned previously, in Agamben's words, "necessity has no law" in the state of exception (86). Yet, depending on the authority figures, a state of exception can easily be taken advantage of because acts committed while in a state of exception "seem[] to escape all legal definition" since "they are neither transgressive, executive, or legislative" and thus "seem to be situated in an absolute non-place with respect to the law" (51). Because a state of exception is so nebulous and can violate people's freedoms in violent fashion, Agamben particularly fears that "the state of exception has by now become the rule" (9; see also 57). When this

happens, “the juridico-political system transforms itself into a killing machine” (86).

This is, of course, a central concern for scholars such as Schmitt, Agamben, Derrida, and Benjamin, who all examine how the state of exception becomes the rule and how law is both established and maintained through violent force, often justified by people claiming sovereign authority and through the problematic rhetoric of necessity.

Through considering such descriptions of the state of exception, I examine contexts wherein locations are in a state of exception in the Agambian sense, such as when a governor suspends the usual rule of law during a time of war, which occurs in Chapter 1 through my analysis of the Yemassee War and later wars with Native peoples. However, I also broaden the notion of legal exceptionalism to analyze less nationally based declarations of exceptions; in other words, I posit that individuals and groups can declare exceptions because they feel they can justify such exercises of power due to the supposedly exceptional positions in which they find (or have put) themselves. The specific positions I will examine involve territorial expansion, warfare, and slavery, though this theory could apply to any situation or space that one argues is exceptional. Furthermore, I argue that individuals claim this power to define the exception through a complex process that literary studies help illuminate. Specifically, authors frame how readers should interpret history and memory so their protagonists may be perceived as victims. They then work to link the individual to the greater good so these individuals act not as selfish dictators of justice or even law but as heroes with whom audiences are meant to connect through their supposedly necessary and temporary acts of violence. Finally, with this status as victims and backing through the notion of the greater good, these individuals become arbiters of (at least supposed) justice and create a space for

seeing revenge as justified and even potentially lawful under the circumstances. Before outlining how each of my chapters confronts all of these notions, I want to discuss in greater detail the contexts of territorial expansion, warfare, and slavery in relation to exceptionalism, as well as how authors present their protagonists as victims and then sovereigns.

Territorial expansion, warfare, and civil unrest generally are all contexts wherein governments and individuals may argue that law needs to be changed or established because it is either unable to address current issues or supposedly does not exist at all. Particularly when imagining “frontier” spaces that settlers were trying to control or that had nebulous borders and laws (on land and sea), authors presented these spaces as fertile ground for considering how such spaces could necessitate and/or allow for traditionally controversial stances on revenge and how it could be somehow justified. In a period of territorial expansion, the rule of law is meant to usher territories into statehood so institutions of justice can be established since they supposedly do not exist yet, or at least not in a “proper” form. Yet warfare often accompanies such expansion, and states of war and widespread violence frequently result in “the suspension of all laws of justice, from their absolute inutility, [as] a necessary and infallible consequence” (Hume 25). Because people’s safety is then imperiled under such circumstances, safety becomes “the supreme law: All other particular laws are subordinate to it, and dependent on it” (29). The argument for safety, though, usually labels some people as worthy of protection and others as worthy of punishment. During disputes, individuals who may be othered or labeled as somehow savage are often excepted from legal protections and targeted for violent treatment because they (in theory) deserve exceptional punishment.

Traditionally, supposedly savage peoples have been assumed to lack civilized laws or an understanding of right and wrong, so they often fall outside of the protection of the rule of law.¹¹ These “savage” people’s purported lack of legal and moral understanding, as well as a sense of equitable justice, results in a common practice wherein authors describe supposedly savage peoples as naturally vengeful. As Jacoby notes, “the projection of vengeful impulses onto more primitive peoples and cultures has always been a literary commonplace” (18). I explore this commonplace particularly in Chapter 1, but then I also argue that the rhetoric of exceptionalism allows authors to assert that “vengeful impulses” are not too “primitive” to be momentarily embraced by heroic figures who can justify their actions in certain contexts by employing exceptionalist rhetoric, which is particularly apparent when authors write about imagined “frontier” spaces.

The location of the frontier provides a rich space in which to examine such exceptionalist rhetoric because frontier spaces are imagined to be outside the purview of established law and in need of taming so that (supposedly equitable) justice systems can be established. Throughout this dissertation, I use the word “frontier” to describe how authors represent many of the spaces they describe. Partly as a challenge to Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis, scholars such as Jack D. Forbes have preferred to think of a “frontier complex” as a way of avoiding an oversimplification of the many exchanges that take place in imagined frontier spaces that involve multidirectional contact. Mary Louise Pratt has also advanced the idea of “contact zones” to consider

¹¹ As I will discuss in my first chapter, savagery was at first linked to this idea of a lack of civilization versus being a racial category. See Tawil 61 and Morgan vi.

multiple intersections among peoples. Yet I purposely use the word “frontier” because of its rhetorical import for authors who want to imagine various spaces as void of civilization—void of established or at least *just* laws. Imagining open and border spaces wherein law has yet to be established or needs to be rewritten is a major factor when considering justifications for revenge as it is written into (at least temporary and personal/private) law for the protagonists of these texts. Turner imagined the Americas as exceptional because colonists confronted and were “master[ed] by the wilderness,” which turned the colonist from a European into a kind of savage who then ushered civilization into that wilderness to form “a composite nationality” (2, 11). Frontiers exist on land and on the ocean in the works that I examine, and these supposedly liminal spaces and places allow room for individuals to imagine themselves as much-needed sovereigns and, thus, lawmakers.

In order to establish some kind of even temporary law in these spaces, one must establish him or herself as a kind of sovereign in that space because there either is no central authority figure able to maintain justice or that figure is unreliable or traitorous in the eyes of the protagonists. As Peter A. French argues, the idea of a justice system in much western political philosophy is the idea that the power of making and enforcing laws is given to the state (33). Yet people can become sovereigns “when they can make laws and are not subject to the wills of other people.” Kant notes, though, that a sovereign “cannot . . . hold the position of sovereign merely by the maxims of his will but only in the case he is a completely independent being” (41). However, I argue that, through authors’ use of exceptionalist rhetoric, their virtuous and heroic protagonists often make themselves out to be temporary sovereigns—to sometimes preserve various

laws and sometimes contest them through the argument that new laws about property and race should hold sway. Because “[s]overeign is he who decides on the exception” and “what must be done to eliminate” the “extreme emergency” (Schmitt 5, 7), violent protagonists posit through their actions that they should be invested with the authority to determine what kinds of violence are necessary in certain situations; that violence typically includes vengeful retaliation even though revenge is, as I have argued, often seen as an affront to justice even if it pretends to be just. Furthermore, as Achille Mbembe notes, “the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (11). Mbembe points out that “the state of exception and the relation of enmity have become the *normative* basis of the right to kill. In such instances, power (and not necessarily state power) continuously refers and appeals to exception, emergency, and a fictionalized notion of the enemy” (16, emphasis added). Mbembe may be talking about “modern states” here (17), but this applies to the authors I examine, too, as they imagine exceptional moments that allow individuals to claim power over life and death. This tension regarding how the violent exception can become the violent norm is a point I will return to throughout. Yet I would add that the goal these authors and protagonists advance is the return to a perceived state of normalcy wherein revenge is unnecessary or to even establish a better state than before, which is how one can justify the exception in the first place; it is a temporary means to a purportedly positive end.

Of course, I interrogate what that end looks like, as fears about revenge and the state of exception suggest that violent “exceptions” can become norms wherein certain individuals are more permanently excluded from human rights or wherein cycles of

vengeful retaliation will continue endlessly. Scholars such as Benjamin, in his essay “Critique of Violence,” are more interested in examining the violent means through which people establish and maintain law, versus the ends of that violence. While I examine revenge as a powerful and under-studied means of bringing about various political ends, I argue for the importance of considering the legacy of that brand of violence and the ends that the authors I examine promote. Because the vengeful means in these texts are *not* actually exceptional because they appear again and again in literature and life, the ends in these texts link to a longer legacy regarding empire, race, gender, and American exceptionalism. In his discussion of means, though, Benjamin does engage with how people may defend unjust means in the service of supposedly just ends. The authors I examine defend revenge as a means that is usually controversial at best, if not unjust by many people’s standards (for the reasons outlined above). If they imagine the ends to encompass the notions of order and peace, then they might justify means such as murder, removal, and slavery to reach those ends, particularly when those ends benefit white interests. By examining literary texts such as those in this dissertation, scholars can analyze some of the nineteenth-century voices that provide a space for potentially justified revenge and that promote ends that remain impactful in USAmerican politics.

Often the heroic avengers in these texts are presented as vigilantes with mythic qualities, and they often reclaim what was lost through reclaiming bodies or taking trophies from their victims in the form of body parts or other objects. Thus vigilantism, heroism, and property are key concepts that appear at several points in my study. Vigilance committees are popular in western literature and also frequently appeared in the form of lynch mobs in the post-Reconstruction South, and they often imagined they

were upholding the status quo “in the context of a weak policing system that was perceived as illegitimate or corrupt” (Waters 47). I argue that they also often operated under the idea that their actions were necessary when other policing systems were absent in supposedly exceptional spaces, even if the policing systems were actually present and even complicit in the acts of vigilante groups. My focus involves groups of vigilantes as well as individuals whom authors frame as heroes because of their necessary, violent feats. They are character types that are often repeated in literature, and particularly in Chapter 2 I discuss the mythic qualities of such figures by building on Slotkin’s scholarship in *Regeneration through Violence*. Vigilantes are not necessarily vengeful by definition, but the vigilantes I examine are driven at least in part by vengeful impulses and stake a claim to land and bodies. Heroes and villains in these stories imagine power and justice in the forms of controlling others’ land, bodies, and blood, which readers see through acts such as settlement on others’ property, rape, enslavement, blood-drinking, bodily mutilation, and scalping. Particularly since the body is “a receptacle of memory” (Sturken 12), claiming control over bodies can be a way of rectifying past wrongs and reclaiming authority so that one no longer needs to feel like a powerless victim. If “[v]igilantism . . . is a constant social struggle to contain victimization” (Culbertson 8), it relies on committing some sort of violence against others that could turn those others into victims if readers are critical of the vengeful vigilante’s methods. Thus authors who heroicize vigilantes who are motivated by revenge grapple with how to represent such violence as necessary, rational, justified, and temporary—and not all authors seem willing to do this without in some way problematizing how someone can take the law into his or her own hands, commit acts of extreme violence, and emerge unscathed.

In sum, people often justify revenge under circumstances such as those outlined above: when law is in flux during states of warfare, in territories wherein people argue there is no established law, and when people argue atrocities have been committed that must be rectified even if the rule of law condones those purported crimes. Kant notes that, when we wish to establish a law, we should ask if it holds true as a “universal law of nature.” However, we often want laws to be objectively universal yet “allow exceptions” when we personally would benefit from an exception (*Groundwork* 31, 34). I examine this idea, as well as what happens when protagonists argue that certain laws are simply unlawful by higher standards. Many scholars have asserted that laws on the books are often unjust, arguing that “a rule, which, in speculation, may seem the most advantageous to society, may yet be found, in practice, totally pernicious and destructive” (Hume 27; see also the epigraph to this Introduction). Individuals who believe an established rule or law is “pernicious and destructive,” such as laws that target racial others for unfair treatment, may establish their own laws or rules to counter established justice systems that have proven to be unjust. Through the chapters in this dissertation, I engage with this conflict between desiring certain laws that will follow natural, moral, and religious standards but also desiring enough room to ignore those laws when some individuals subjectively determine it is necessary. I will also engage with the argument that exceptions must be made in order to counter established laws that are unjust by certain individuals’ natural, moral, and/or religious standards.

Chapter Synopses

In my first chapter, “Reluctant Warriors: Community and Conflict in William Gilmore Simms’s *The Yemassee*,” I examine a frontier romance wherein Simms imagines the 1715-1717 Yemassee War in his 1835 novel as a war wrought from the self-destructive tendencies of Native peoples. He frames the Yemassee War as an exceptional moment even while responding to debates about ongoing war, Indian removal, and slavery in his own time. Though whites encroach on their territory, it is the Yemassee who destroy each other’s bodies and seek revenge on seemingly innocent whites, making a spectacle of their supposed brand of violent “justice.” Simms characterizes only traitorous whites as vengeful while the rest act in self-defense, declaring and using the state of exception and the supposedly exceptional status of their situation on the imagined frontier to first take advantage of the Yemassee and then destroy them.

The rhetoric of exceptionalism around this war also ties to the backdrop of the Seminole Wars and Indian removal against which Simms was writing. Because of this, I argue that his frontier romance represents not only a vision of South Carolina’s past, but also reflects Simms’s views on wars against Natives. Specifically, he uses his vision of the past to suggest that removal of Natives is better than warfare, to posit that they must be removed because they are too naturally vengeful to be assimilated, and to assure his readers that African American slaves are more malleable and are fit to be enslaved, despite ongoing fears of slave revolts and partnerships between Natives and runaway African American slaves during the Seminole Wars. The fact that the issues surrounding the Yemassee War were not isolated to that moment or space in the eighteenth-century Carolinas exposes the fiction of exceptionalism and its strategic use.

Ultimately, Simms reveals some uneasiness about the role of revenge in so-called civilization because, though his heroic figures feel a desire for what would be justified vengeance and violence based on Simms's version of history, the heroes seem all the more heroic for denying that desire. Furthermore, Simms suggests that revenge leads to imbalances in gender roles, as this atmosphere of violence turns men into savage beasts and unsexes women entirely. However, a failure to act as warriors against Natives—even as reluctant warriors who are not normally violent—feminizes men to an extreme that imperils white civilization. Thus, Simms engages with how to strike a balance between violence and timidity, and his theories are informed by the nexus of revenge, race, and gender. Reading his text in relation to this nexus can inform scholars about the tensions regarding defining revenge as a potentially civilized trait under certain circumstances, as not all of the authors I examine in this dissertation seem prepared to fully condone revenge as civil and without consequence. However, this does not mean that Simms promotes non-violent policies. While suggesting that heroic whites deny revenge and through displacing violence onto racial others, traitors (including pirates), and even Indian-catching dogs so that his white heroes need not bloody their hands, Simms erases much of the violence of white settlers. His version of events masks both physical violence that settlers perpetrated and the violence brought on by their laws, as they claimed sovereign authority to except Native peoples from the right to contest European policies regarding property and trade. Thus, my argument is not that heroes who resist revenge are necessarily more attuned to justice; rather, resisting revenge can be a rhetorical tool for effacing other kinds of law-creating, law-maintaining, and law-challenging violence.

In Chapter 2, “Unlikely Killers: Justifying Violence against Natives through Hannah Duston’s Captivity and *Nick of the Woods*,” I analyze how imaginings of Duston’s captivity in periodicals from the 1830s, paired with Robert Montgomery Bird’s frontier novel *Nick* (1837), suggest that, in supposedly exceptional spaces on the imagined American frontier, feminized white heroes can call on past violence against their families in order to codify vengeance as national defense. This differs from frontier romance writers such as Simms, who displace revenge onto racial others and traitors and who appear to be more cautious about allowing heroic white protagonists to be vengeful, however exceptional or temporary that revenge may be. For the authors in this chapter, though, claiming and physically carving up the bodies of Amerindians whom the authors portray as incapable of understanding justice allows US readers to justify violence against and removal of Native Americans in the nineteenth century as they imagine racial others as the instigators of past warfare. Both sets of texts look to past events involving white-Native contact and depict heroes whom I label “unlikely killers” because Duston is a mother and Nathan Slaughter (otherwise known as Nick of the Woods or the Jibbenainosay) is a pacifist Quaker. Beyond being supposedly unlikely killers, though, these figures are also reluctant avengers because they are framed as needing to use violence to protect themselves and others. By using the United States’ bloody past regarding Amerindian wars and relations, the historically true story of Duston and the fictional story of Nick/Nathan are used to glorify vengeance in the name of western expansion and in light of increasing discussions about Indian assimilation and removal in the nineteenth century. A sampling of nineteenth-century texts regarding Duston’s story, paired with *Nick of the Woods*, illustrates how white Americans justified killing Natives

because of longstanding views of Native savagery, which in turn justified further wrongs committed against Natives (imagined as retribution for Native aggression, often taking the form of “going Native/savage”).

Specifically, these texts are able to glorify vengeance not just by othering Natives but also by arguing for the exceptional statuses of Duston’s and Nick/Nathan’s moments. The authors in these texts frequently highlight the idea that Duston and Nick/Nathan were engaged in wars without rules, in supposedly exceptional spaces—“supposedly” because such wars were ongoing and pervasive. This rhetoric of exceptionalism allowed most critics to celebrate these figures’ actions when they may otherwise be seen as unsettlingly bloody, particularly for Duston because she was a woman (and, indeed, not all nineteenth-century authors supported her actions). In both texts, the protagonists engage with violent forms of reclaiming control through taking scalps from the dead and, in the case of Nick/Nathan, carving crosses into the bodies of the Shawnee Indians he kills. While authors of frontier romances often represent savage peoples taking scalps, mutilating corpses, and engaging in cannibalistic acts, the authors of Duston’s and Nick/Nathan’s stories use the rhetoric of exceptionalism to allow these avengers to commit such acts as a way of reclaiming control from the *real* savages who have supposedly taken from whites and must now give back with their bodies and blood.

Furthermore, the status of Natives as a monolithic group that could be excepted from US legal protections also allowed Duston and Nick to lash out at Natives generally, thus breaking a purportedly cardinal rule of revenge. As French argues, “For vengeance to be successful, the target must understand that he or she is suffering injury or being killed as a penalty for his or her actions that triggered the revenge behavior of the

avenger” (34). One of the contributions of my own study is a challenge to this notion in that I argue that revenge against racial or ethnic others can move from revenge against a specific perpetrator of violence—which people often see and justify in politics, in art, and in popular culture—to revenge against an entire group of people who represent something “other.” In Duston’s and Nick’s cases, killing any Native is supposedly justified because any of them can represent the specific Natives who killed their families. The ability to make this leap and still justify revenge is one factor that makes revenge complicated and important if we are to better understand its relationship to justice and the law.

In the end, this chapter will illustrate the ways that history can be revised in order to justify acts of aggression that form our national identity and past, as well as the ways we move into the future. Both Duston and the fictional Nick/Nathan experience attacks against their families and are represented as individuals standing in for the larger nation—Duston as a US foremother and Nick/Nathan as the protector of the forest. Their status as supposedly unlikely avengers also adds to the richness of the rhetoric of exceptionalism and vengeance because critics are more accepting of avengers who not only suggest their revenge is temporary, but also suggest it is undesired, largely selfless, and absolutely necessary. However, scholars can also see how the heroes in our national history can change as contemporary critics are less likely to readily embrace the figures of Duston and Nick/Nathan because of their violence, indicating that one person’s or period’s definition of justice can be seen as another person’s or period’s definition of unjustified revenge.

For Chapter 3, “Revenge and Regret on the Texas Frontier: Negotiating Women’s Bodies and Threats to White Settlement in the Parker Captivities and *’Bel of Prairie*

Eden,” I analyze how authors continue to embrace vengeful acts but leave behind a residue of ambivalence about the utility and justness of revenge. While Puritan captivity narratives of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have been receiving increased attention—such as Mary Rowlandson’s narrative and even Duston’s story—later captivities are understudied. This is perhaps because of the misconception that captivities and warfare between whites and Native Americans had dropped off by the end of the eighteenth century. Additionally, many people believe that the genre drastically changed in the nineteenth century when the context was no longer the same (New England expansion under a colonial model depicting English captives versus later narratives about expansion under a national model). Many of the nineteenth-century narratives, such as the three I examine about Parker family members in Texas, contain similar styles, arguments about expansion, and discussions of threats to white Christians. These later captivity narratives also still engage with how white protagonists mediate their desires for revenge with their belief in Providential justice. In addition, attention to sensational fiction such as George Lippard’s *Bel of Prairie Eden* (1848) allows scholars to examine the definitions and roles of sensational literature that have impacted US politics, including issues surrounding territorial expansion, race, and gender, as Jesse Alemán and Shelley Streeby have argued. Rather than dismiss such texts as escapist literature or as too unrealistic to take seriously, scholars should pay more attention to these stories that were widely consumed and that both reflected and proposed often highly controversial views on US American history, identity, and policy.

Furthermore, I assert that scholars should pay more attention to conflicts regarding expansion outside of the northeastern United States, which is where most

scholarship regarding conflicts with Natives and land disputes is focused. Scholars such as Streeby call attention to the years surrounding the US-Mexico War in order to expand scholars' notions of when and where US empire has taken shape. The Texas-Mexico border in the nineteenth century provided supposedly exceptional spaces wherein whites claimed land and often brought their slaves, challenging Mexican and US lawmakers in the process. Texans then responded to Mexico's move toward declaring a state of exception by justifying their revolution from 1835-1836. When imagining the revolution, white authors often invoke the memory of places such as the Alamo and Goliad as locations wherein heroic whites were victimized by villainous Mexicans, and white heroes must thus honor the victims from these places by turning narratives about defeat into narratives about triumph wherein whites eventually rout Mexicans and take control of land and law. As with earlier stories about settlement in the Americas, these stories about Texas erase the imperialistic actions of settler colonists in the region and instead imagine them as nonviolent victims who must claim sovereign authority to take the law into their own hands if they hope to get justice against Mexicans and Native Americans.

In the Parker captivity narratives and Lippard's *'Bel*, when racial, ethnic, and national others—the Comanche, Spaniards, and Mexicans, in these cases—claim the bodies of idealized white women, masculine white heroes embrace revenge as the lawful means of protecting self and nation, as well as link revenge to westward expansion. Taking control over women's bodies during quests for vengeance also sends messages about property and exchange, as women are used and abused to illustrate male power. For instance, in the story of Cynthia Ann Parker, she is like Duston in that other individuals tell her story. Unlike Duston, though, Parker spent almost twenty-five years

in captivity and was essentially recaptured by the Texas Rangers and held under lock and key by her white relatives. In the case of *'Bel*, the Spaniard Don Antonio Marin is othered through his status as a traitor to the United States, his dark features, and his link to Mexico and the Black Legend (which I discuss in the chapter). When he rapes the white, angelic Isabel, her brother John seduces Marin's sister as part of his elaborate revenge plot, illustrating how women are often figured as people (and pawns) to defend, avenge, and control as property and trophies.

Ambivalent endings to and receptions of these texts, though, suggest that revenge may be too selfish, bloody, and mercenary to equate with justice. Reactions to Cynthia Ann Parker's captivity and redemption as well as Lippard's display of ambivalence at the end of his text point to how people may embrace individual acts of revenge and retribution but later question these methods of seeking justice. This is particularly true in cases such as those of the men who sought to recapture and assimilate Cynthia Ann Parker, as well as the case of Lippard's protagonist, John Grywin. Regarding the treatment of women and racial others, these figures' actions appear to uphold violent norms versus exceptions. Furthermore, their desires to control property, including the bodies of women and slaves, potentially detract from the total defensibility of these purported heroes' vengeful actions. Lippard particularly calls revenge into question through the ambivalence at the end of his text, and the novel I discuss in Chapter 4 illustrates a similar uneasiness about the utility of vengeance. Thus, unlike Simms's *The Yemassee* and other frontier romances discussed in Chapter 1, and similar to the texts in Chapter 2, the authors I examine in this chapter allow white protagonists to exact revenge and work diligently to justify revenge along the lines of race and in regards to protecting

white families on the imagined frontier. Like Chapter 1, though, the authors here often frame justice in masculine terms as white men are typically in the position of rescuing (or avenging) weaker and often female or feminized family members. However, although revenge framed as justice is defended in these texts, the authors here leave more of a sense of discomfort or ambivalence than I have examined thus far. Lippard, in particular, calls readers to eventually question the utility of revenge when seeking justice.

Finally, in Chapter 4, “The Slave’s Dilemma: Writing Revenge into Law in Maxwell Philip’s *Emmanuel Appadocca*,” I examine a challenge to the previously examined cases wherein those in power (US whites in these texts) use the state of exception and/or the rhetoric of exceptionalism to (re)fashion law. Specifically, in Maxwell Philip’s *Emmanuel Appadocca* (1854), Philip presents a Trinidadian mixed-race pirate who seeks revenge against his white father. This controversial protagonist calls readers to accept that a mixed-race man must embrace revenge in a location wherein established law does not recognize his rights, even after Britain had abolished slavery in its colonies. Relying largely on his own brand of natural law, Appadocca uses the ocean and pirate ship as exceptional spaces wherein he can enact his law with sovereign authority. Simultaneously, Philip critiques the practice of excepting people of African descent from certain laws while harshly applying other laws only to them. Depredations against racial others become less the exception than the rule, though lawmakers employ the rhetoric of exceptionalism to provide a space for nefarious activities that fall under the established rule of law. This argument that the written law does not always uphold actual justice is reflected in the spirit of Thoreau’s quote from the epigraph to this Introduction.

Besides engaging with the problem of accepting and applauding such a controversial protagonist as a hero because of his race, his status as a pirate, and his open acceptance of revenge, I am also drawn to this text for its transnational focus. Philip used this novel to indict US slavery and also comment on the treatment of people of African descent in the West Indies, making it a useful text for thinking more broadly about race relations and law in the Americas. Not only is the text understudied and therefore in need of such recovery work, but it also addresses numerous issues that put it in conversation with better-known works such as Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* and Martin R. Delany's *Blake*. By engaging with slavery and slave law more explicitly than I have done in the other chapters, and by examining maritime law and spaces that complicate the treatment of pirates that is represented in other texts in this dissertation, I am able to engage with texts such as Philip's to broaden our understanding of transnational American literatures and debates, as well as the role of revenge within additional, specific contexts.

My reading of this novel ultimately shows that, despite Philip's work to justify Appadocca's acts through descriptions of his troubled past and positive character, the novel's ending suggests that revenge is an unfortunate recourse and would be unnecessary if racial others were better represented under the rule of law. Regardless of his justifications for vengeance, Appadocca is still a reluctant avenger because he does not live up to his promise to kill his half-brother in a duel (showing mercy instead) and does not savagely kill his father; rather, his inability to kill his father on the spot (both at the beginning and at the end of the text) results in his father's eventual and accidental death by drowning. To end the cycle of revenge and perhaps indicate that the father's

death is ultimately unfulfilling, Philip closes his novel with Appadocca's suicide. By the end of the text, Philip suggests that the rule of law must account for race (and gender, ethnic, and class) equality. In this case, the need for representation exists for two main reasons: 1) because slaves—and the oppressed more generally—must have some legal recourse that makes unsatisfying acts of revenge unnecessary, and 2) because the fear of slave revolt and revenge was so great in the aftermath of such events as the Haitian Revolution and the Nat Turner Rebellion, and that fear often spurred violent legal and physical action against African Americans across decades and geographies.

Together, the authors I examine in this study frame versions of national history and memory (either distant or recent) wherein those who are deemed victimized in some way try—often obsessively—to close their stories with the sense that they have become active agents more than passive victims. Authors must present the violent acts of protagonist “victims” as justified in contrast to the unjustified violence of antagonists. In each of these texts, protagonists engage in struggles regarding ownership of land, bodies, and/or identities. Typically, whites label their antagonists as primitive and savage or inherently unjust because of their lifeways while they represent white protagonists as victimized for being agents of events that are beyond their control—such as supposedly predestined westward expansion, the means by which the eradication of Native peoples would come about, or the laws of slavery. Ultimately, the victims answer the violence they have experienced with other forms of violence that stand on the brink of or spiral into revenge.

While it is beyond the scope of this project to immerse these texts in psychoanalytic theory about formations of trauma and memory, it is important to explore more generally how and why history is reworked as a means of dealing with trauma, victimization, and memory, including the roles of justice, retribution, and revenge in crafting those histories. Just as Avery F. Gordon, in *Ghostly Matters*, explores the hidden power relations and hauntings in textual and visual histories through the concepts of complex personhood, transference, and the uncanny, I too am examining how history and memory are shaped and reshaped through moments of conflict or crisis—moments that are linked specifically with struggles to justify or not justify certain types of violence. Gordon also engages with how revisiting and rewriting history can be seen as an attempt to “offer [ghosts] a hospitable memory *out of a concern for justice*. Out of a concern for justice would be the only reason one would bother” (64, emphasis original). My focus on these texts is partially motivated by a concern for what we term justice and for questioning the particular versions of history and justice that these texts present as a means of perhaps bringing justice to the racial others who are often vilified in these works. However, I will explore how fictional and nonfictional works that are informed by past history may be concerned with justice but are not always trying to honor the ghosts as I am attempting in part to do here. As Marita Sturken notes, “The degree to which memories are ‘faithful’ to original experience is difficult to ascertain. What we remember is highly selective, and how we retrieve it says as much about desire and denial as it does about remembrance” (7). This is because “the forgetting of the past in a culture is often highly organized and strategic” (8). I analyze the strategies for remembering the past, framing moments as exceptional, and presenting certain individuals as victims even

if that means erasing questionable or controversial aspects of their character. Often, when bloody violence and revenge are central in texts, authors struggle with whom to honor, how to honor them, and if they deserve honor at all.

These authors ultimately attempt to justify violence by using fictional and nonfictional figures to stand for the greater good. Furthermore, alongside the literal figure or character, the individual's family and that family's peril also stand in for the nation and its need for protection. In order to avoid the stigma that revenge is self-serving, as mentioned above, protagonists as they are constructed in these texts must represent the greater national good and are often figures who defend their broken and bloodied families—families that represent the social economy of the nation that, as Foucault discusses in “Governmentality,” must be sustained in order to establish a continuity in government between the people and the state. This disruption in continuity, I argue, helps establish a state or sense of exceptionalism that both helps justify violence *and* poses a threat to the future development of the nation. Thus, the ways that the individual and the family unit are framed in these fictional and nonfictional (though mediated) histories correspond to the larger dilemma of defending certain kinds of punishment and violence that fall along the continuum of justice, retribution, and revenge. Using the individual and the family to confront this dilemma helps justify the history of violent race relations and expansion that applies not just to the individual (a selfish pursuit) but to the notion of the greater good. In addition, this has applications not just to past atrocities about which some of these authors write but also to conflicts in the 1830s through the 1850s, as well as later periods. In regards to representing the greater good, female and mixed-race avengers are often unsettling because of expectations and

stereotypes. Women are supposed to be nonviolent and in need of male protection while mixed-race avengers pose a threat to white, patriarchal authority. Authors who imagine female and mixed-race avengers may thus have to work harder to defend these figures' actions as representative of the greater good.¹² For all of the authors I examine, the protagonists must be described as heroic, particularly in relation to their enemies, in order to justify their (supposedly temporary) violence.

Finally, as Amy Kaplan notes that one kind of dominant narrative about US empire frames Americans as “reluctant imperialists” (“Violent” par. 10), I argue that, when fighting foes in these supposedly exceptional moments and spaces, heroic protagonists are often depicted as what I term “reluctant avengers” who must fight evil powers until good can be introduced or restored. These authors seek to justify violence in atmospheres that the authors deem exceptional and wherein revenge is considered a possibly justified answer to and deterrent of future violence. This view turns individuals into interpreters and makers of law in supposedly untamed frontiers (including the ocean and pirate ships). These characters contrast with perpetrators of supposedly unjustified violence who have no laws that the protagonists recognize as just and/or who lack consciences or guilt to make them abide by higher laws (civil, natural, and/or religious).

¹² Jacoby argues that women are not often imagined as avengers: “The glorification of vengeance in mass entertainment is frequently accompanied by hymns to the old sexual order in which men protect their women and women know their place” (175). French also notes, “In ancient cultures male vengeance was generally regarded as having a higher moral status than vengeance performed by females. Feminine vengeance was morally suspect” (34). Gender is one theme I focus on in this dissertation, and it is only briefly mentioned in statements such as Jacoby’s and French’s. Race is theorized about even less. Jacoby has mentioned how supposedly “primitive peoples” are often represented as more vengeful versus just (18), and today we often link arguments about supposedly savage and primitive peoples to race and ethnicity. Yet, overall, the link between racial others and vengeance is often glossed over, mentioned in passing when scholars note that Native and African Americans have often been described as violent and desirous of revenge against whites.

The rights of individuals to exact revenge are often weighed against the Christian precept that revenge belongs to God. On this precept, Jacoby notes that “private vengeance was a mortal sin not because of its human consequences but because it usurped the divine prerogative. The divine right of kings was a public doctrine, encompassing the official role of monarchs believed to derive their authority from God himself.” However, even kings “could be guilty of the mortal sin of private vengeance if they acted from personal rather than divinely authorized public motives” (35). When people argue that they are momentarily a kind of sovereign who writes revenge into law, though, they allow themselves to act on behalf of what they see as a higher authority or imperative—whether they posit that they act on behalf of God or of natural law, which is not for all people linked to theology (see Watson 94-95).

In sum, the main focus of this dissertation is how the rhetoric of exceptionalism opens up a space for revenge as a particularly powerful form of law-making, law-preserving, and even law-challenging violence. On the one hand, the exception poses a problem—if a moment, space, or even person is imagined as exceptional and is thus outside the usual purview of law, no path to justice seems to be outlined or readily available. However, the exception also provides solutions in that it can allow individuals to argue for supposedly unconventional forms of redress to assure that some form of justice is sought out when an acknowledged sovereign or court of law is either not present or is ineffective. Of course, because the rhetoric of exceptionalism is often strategic and is often actually characterizing a norm, scholars should view authors such as those I examine as using and even responding to a rhetoric (versus a reality) of exceptionalism. By noting the exceptional statuses of their protagonists, authors can

argue for moments when revenge is justified. Revenge may appear on the surface to be necessary, unselfish, and for the greater good of the nation because of the exception, and the assumption is that heroic protagonists can be temporarily vengeful sovereigns who must react to injustices on their own terms. Studying literature specifically allows scholars to examine this rhetoric and how protagonists in the nineteenth century, in particular, were responding to and framing debates about war, territorial expansion, slavery, and issues that generally impact race and gender studies. The texts I have chosen are exemplary because they represent many genres of both popular and understudied literature and provide various stances on revenge as justice in exceptional, frontier spaces. Whether resisting, celebrating, or allowing for but then questioning revenge, all of these authors help inform scholars' understanding of how justifying revenge under the rhetoric of exceptionalism is perhaps the most powerful and dangerous form of violence in its relation to law and justice. Political and legal scholars have long examined and criticized the uses of force and violence to create and uphold law. Analyzing the role of revenge as it is represented in literature allows for a richer understanding of a specific kind of violence that has shaped and continues to shape notions regarding the law, justice, property, warfare, race and gender relations, and American exceptionalism past and present.

Chapter 1:

Reluctant Warriors: Community and Conflict in William Gilmore Simms's *The Yemassee*

[W]hat security have the people, that you, unknown to them as you are, may not employ the same arm to do them injustice, while proposing justice for yourself? (Simms 123)

Blood makes the taste for blood—we teach the hound to hunt the victim, for whose entrails he acquires an appetite. We acquire such tastes ourselves from like indulgences. There is a sort of intoxicating restlessness in crime that seldom suffers it to stop at a solitary excess. It craves repetition—and the relish so expands with indulgence, that exaggeration becomes essential to make it a stimulant. Until we have created this appetite, we sicken at its bare contemplation. But once created, it is impatient of employment, and it is wonderful to note its progress. (Simms 231)

When William Gilmore Simms wrote his 1835 frontier romance *The Yemassee*, he racialized revenge in ways that have been common in (US)American culture but that are largely ignored in scholarship. As I mentioned in my Introduction, scholars rarely examine how racial others or so-called savage people are often represented in literature as the main perpetrators of violent, unjustified revenge (see Jacoby 18). Simms's text is one example wherein a nineteenth-century author retrospectively imagines the history of the Yemassee¹ War of 1715-1717 as one that Native peoples perpetrated against largely defenseless whites. Perhaps a more objective scholar of the war would counter Simms's rendering to argue that the Yemassee were acting in self-defense against British colonists who ignited war through their encroachments, enslavement of Native peoples, and merciless trading practices. Rather than represent the war in this way, though, Simms

¹ The name of the Yemassee is variously spelled, with most scholars spelling the tribe's name "Yamasee." However, to avoid confusion, I have chosen to use the spelling that Simms employs.

presents the Natives as pawns of the Spanish, relying on the supposedly vengeful nature of Native Americans who pray to war gods and lack political cohesion. For Simms, the demise of these “noble savages” is a bit lamentable but is destined, and the war they wage only brings about their destruction sooner. While Simms acknowledges that British traders have broken laws and aggravated relations with various Native populations, he elides how often whites excepted themselves from many of their own laws while simultaneously denying racial others various rights. The setting is the supposedly exceptional space of the eighteenth-century frontier during a time of expansion and sporadic warfare—a setting characterized by conflicts regarding property (in land and bodies) through the period in which Simms wrote the text.

While other authors and artists represent and justify revenge at the hands of their white protagonists, Simms instead exhibits more uneasiness about allowing his heroic white characters to use revenge; self-defense is in the purview of whites while revenge is still in the purview of God, except for rogues who attempt to exact revenge and then fail. Reading Simms’s romanticized account of this war exposes how displacing acts of vengeance onto racial others is a powerful tool for masking and justifying the violence of whites who are represented as peaceful defenders of their homes rather than law-breaking conquerors. Seeing locations such as eighteenth-century Carolina as exceptional, frontier spaces allows authors to imagine moments wherein imperiled white settlers had few options for protecting themselves against supposedly savage peoples. Yet these spaces also allow authors such as Simms to explore what happens when whites take advantage of exceptions, as his white heroes ultimately do use and condone various kinds of violence (often framed as self-defense) while not quite giving in to *vengeful* violence.

In literary representations such as Simms's wherein revenge is a key plot element, white authors are invested in upholding a commonly taught message about revenge—that it is antithetical to justice, that it is never fully justified (even if it is a potentially natural impulse), and that only non-whites or traitorous whites commit acts of vengeance (and are then punished). Though Francis Bacon famously argued that “[r]evenge is a wild kind of justice” (72), these authors suggest that it only masquerades as justice in the hands of savage individuals and groups. They align themselves more with Bacon's conclusion that “the more man's nature runs to [revenge], the more ought law to weed it out” (72). The laws that many nineteenth-century white authors promote, though, are laws that favor white land-owning interests. Ultimately, these authors present heroic white men as rejecters of vengeance, which they frame as largely unwarranted violence due to its bloodiness and its reliance on subterfuge.

These kinds of representations that resist heroicized interpretations of revenge are commonly seen in frontier romances wherein Native Americans are looked back upon as already vanished. Native peoples are romanticized to the extent that they are “noble savages” but are made all the more savage for their vengeful practices and their reluctance to recognize that they are vanishing as part of a supposedly natural and preordained process. Though, again, frontier romance authors like Simms do provide some explanations for why Native Americans are aggrieved, they also often highlight discordance among and within tribes to suggest that Native aggression and tendencies toward violent revenge brought about tribal destruction more so than the acts of white settlers. This allows them to build sympathy for the heroic white men and helpless white women who take the brunt of much of the violence in these stories. Representing

vengeful violence at the hands of racial others versus whites permits Simms to erase the violence that whites committed as they ignored some laws and created others in order to advance their imperialistic desires in the fluctuating space of the colonial South.

These representations also allow authors such as Simms to comment on the civilized versus savage divide, as I mentioned in my Introduction. Though Simms's Natives have a natural propensity for revenge, it is not so much because of their race as it is because they have not reached the height of civilization that whites supposedly have. Uncivilized whites *and* Natives are capable of unjustified vengeance in Simms's text, as he is reluctant to allow a space for civilized acts of vengeance, unlike other authors I will examine. Savagery does not automatically denote non-whiteness, as Ezra Tawil notes, "We often forget that the term 'savage' itself is derived from a term meaning 'forest dweller' . . . and hence operates on the semantic axis civilized/uncivilized, rather than within a properly racial system of white/nonwhite" (61). Furthermore, Louis Henry Morgan suggested in his widely read 1877 work, *Ancient Society*, that groups of people have moved from savagery to barbarism to civilization with varying degrees of success (vi). His theories informed how his contemporaries and those in later generations thought about human progress, including progress in regards to government. Morgan sounds as though he is of the same mind as Simms decades earlier when he argues, "The ethnic life of the Indian tribes is declining under the influence of American civilization, their arts and languages are disappearing, and their institutions are dissolving" (viii). Since their political organization "belongs to ancient society" because it is founded on tribal relations versus "the township, the county, and the state" (62), the political organization of a tribe like the Yemassee was seen as savage (or, at most, barbaric) in comparison to that of the

British settlers of the Carolinas. These long-extant ideas about savage, barbaric, and civilized societies informed Morgan's work as well as Simms's earlier treatment of the Yemassee. In addition, they informed Simms's representations of African Americans (who supposedly lack the capacity to subsist on their own) and white characters who commit unjust acts (including vengeful ones).

By framing history and notions about civilization in this way, frontier romance authors do three key things that are central to this chapter. First, they racialize revenge as a trait of supposedly savage and traitorous peoples, thus upholding the view that a different (Anglo) brand of justice is needed to civilize these lands and peoples. White figures whom authors have presented as heroic protagonists exhibit violence only in self-defense and frame it as exceptional rather than ordinary or natural. Second, they gender revenge and violence by suggesting that hyper-masculinized men and women disrupt social order and lack the temperance that is needed to be just and civilized. Meanwhile, hyper-feminized figures imperil (US)American property and legal control by lacking the resolve necessary to defend themselves against violent, vengeful "savages." This gendered juxtaposition thus results in a view of equitable justice that is both raced and gendered in ways that can fruitfully be examined in relation to one another. Third, these authors use and reframe the historical past in these raced and gendered ways in order to comment on their own contemporary moments and justify further violence against racial others who have not been vanished or happily enslaved. Specifically, nineteenth-century frontier romances often represent eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century wars and territorial expansion to comment on conflicts with and about Native and African Americans in the nineteenth century; these include conflicts and events such as the

Seminole Wars, the Indian Removal Act, and the outbreak of the Civil War. This link between past and present evinces how authors can frame specific acts of white violence as exceptional—as only necessitated and used in extreme instances—when in fact such acts are ongoing and often perpetrated by whites.

To examine these three points, I rely on and extend scholarship about the frontier romance and about revenge, particularly examining the roles of race and gender when considering how authors represent vengeance in particular ways. In *The Making of Racial Sentiment*, Tawil argues that romances about frontier spaces constituted “an enormously popular genre of American fiction born in the 1820s [and] helped to redefine ‘race’ for an emerging national culture.” Authors such as Simms imagined the histories in such spaces and reframed them in ways that shaped race relations in their contemporary moments. The idea that these texts were romances suggested that the authors were not attempting to write historically accurate texts, which for some critics detracted from the fact that these romances had serious effects on people’s views of US American history, identity, and politics during this era.² Furthermore, Tawil posits that scientific discourse in this period held that “the realm of feeling [was] the most important locus of racial difference” (2). I build on Tawil’s study to argue that feelings of revenge were one way that white authors of frontier romances differentiated between supposedly savage and civilized peoples. Authors such as Simms displaced these emotions onto racial others as well as white figures who were traitorous, thus linking revenge to race and the nation in ways that scholars have not yet articulated. I have

² As Tawil notes, the frontier romance is a subgenre of the historical romance because they both imagine, frame, and romanticize past events—often wars—that (in this subgenre) are set in “frontier” spaces that are often associated with territorial expansion in the Americas. I classify Simms’s *The Yemassee* as a frontier romance, and Simms wrote much fiction under the broader genre of the historical romance, as well.

mentioned in my Introduction that scholars such as Terry K. Aladjem, Susan Jacoby, and Peter A. French provide some of the clearest, most comprehensive studies of revenge and cultural representations of it. However, while they briefly touch on the role that gender plays in their observations, they fall short of considering more complex roles that gender plays in revenge stories, how race plays a role in determining who is seen as a victim and/or an avenger whose acts may or may not be justified, and representations of revenge in US literature. My reading of Simms sheds light on these issues by focusing on the frontier romance and considering how authors such as Simms reflected on past conflicts—such as the Yemassee War—to comment on their present-day politics—such as the Seminole Wars—by using the intersections of race, gender, geography, economics, and violence to frame their politics.

In this chapter, I will trace how Simms accomplishes these three tasks by examining how he represents Native Americans generally, African American slaves, and Native and white women as a means of ultimately representing an ideal of heroic white manhood that rejects revenge while justifying male violence as defense of self, nation, and property (including women and slaves). I will begin by contextualizing what was occurring in the Carolina colonies leading up to the Yemassee War in order to show how Simms could represent this as a frontier space that allowed for contested territorial boundaries and a fractured legal system. I will also briefly overview Simms's life and demonstrate how he used the frontier romance to represent some historically real figures but rewrote the story of the war. In the end, he seemingly laments the downfall of the Yemassee and their chief, Sanutee, while he also justifies the acts of white settlers under

Governor Craven *as well as* white settlers in his own nineteenth-century context as they were engaging in the Second Seminole War.

After establishing the historical and political backdrop, I will examine how Simms takes the trait of vengeance and represents it as a natural but unjustified characteristic of Native peoples so he can vilify them while defending the character traits of his white heroes. Next, I argue that, while showing some trepidation about the supposedly vengeful nature of Natives and the need to remove them, Simms uses African American slaves as a foil to the Yemassee. At a time in the nineteenth century when runaway slaves were fighting alongside descendants of the Yemassee during the Seminole Wars, Simms imagines an eighteenth-century setting wherein slaves reject freedom and fear being taken captive by the Yemassee and their compatriots, the Spanish. If Native peoples are violent and vengeful, African Americans are loyal and pliable, and Simms creates these characterizations to promote his own politics about race relations in the United States and the changes occurring in the nineteenth century when Indian warfare and slave revolts were ongoing. Finally, I analyze how Simms represents revenge as a disruptor of gender norms, which he does to promote the argument that, under ideal circumstances, women should be passive while men should be temperate with their anger but suspicious enough of their enemies to be diligent protectors of all they control (or should control). Native men and women lack these abilities in Simms's text. However, once they are caught off guard by the Yemassee, Simms's white men and women are better poised to successfully inhabit and control the Carolinas—and, by extension, anything else they want.

Examining frontier romances with these elements in mind allows scholars to critically analyze why revenge is often represented as savage and unjustified. It is not actually to decry violence and argue for better legal representation and more equitable justice as a means of avoiding revenge-fueled conflicts. Rather, it is to racialize and politicize revenge in ways that mask white aggression and justify past and present legal and extralegal treatment of racial others. Ultimately, when Simms punishes white figures who act out of raced and gendered character and presents heroic white men as reluctant warriors who only act violently due to their supposedly exceptional circumstances, he ends up using the theme of revenge as a powerful tool for rewriting history and championing for specific norms in his own time.

In sum, Simms's text ties together a number of disciplines and a body of scholarship in ways that are instructive for scholars who want to consider understudied areas of US history and empire, critical race and gender studies, the frontier romance, and political and legal studies. Most scholars contend that frontier romances such as Simms's represent events in ways that are situated in South Carolina's past—albeit in highly problematic terms that romanticize the so-called vanishing Indian and suggest that African Americans are fit for slavery. However, I argue that Simms's text also reacts and responds to his contemporary moment, particularly regarding Indian removal, the Seminole Wars, and ongoing debates about extending slavery. Revenge plays a key role in how Simms represents the Yemassee and their reasons for going to war, as tribal leaders fight against themselves and their British friends in a war that Simms frames as conspiratorial, fueled largely by bloodlust, and doomed from the outset. Simms provides a useful text for examining how acts of violent vengeance are often displaced onto hyper-

masculine (sometimes unsexed) racial others and traitors in order to justify the acts of white protagonists in the past as well as the present. Though I will examine how some authors also create heroes who are celebrated for their supposedly justified acts of vengeance, examining *The Yemassee* provides for further discussion of how and when vengeance is allowed and celebrated versus maligned and displaced onto others. While Simms suggests that his white protagonists follow just laws versus the dictates of vengeance, he ultimately fails to adequately acknowledge how the law itself is nefarious regarding relations with Native and African American peoples, particularly when notions of law and justice collide with exceptionalist rhetoric.

History and Romance: The Text and Context of *The Yemassee*

Simms opens his text at a moment of unrest on the eve of the 1715-1717 Yemassee War. The colonists in his story (as in reality) are in the Carolinas at a time when it had contested borders, was far away from British authority, was engaged in frequent warfare, and was adjusting to the British empire's transition after Queen Anne's death. These factors made this location a precarious colony wherein established law was tenuous and open to conflict. Traders, missionaries, and government officials often took advantage of the disordered atmosphere to suspend, create, and amend laws, which Native Americans would eventually react to during the Yemassee War. Simms elides many of the particulars regarding the settlers' crimes because they might justify the actions of the Yemassee. He does acknowledge that whites—especially traders—have encroached on Native lands and over-hunted. However, these acts do not justify the betrayal Simms represents wherein Yemassee chiefs agree to give more land to the

British, igniting inner turmoil for the tribe and a string of vengeful actions. Simms suggests that the war in which whites must engage is an exceptional kind of war even though, as I will argue, the events Simms portrays were commonplace. The rhetoric of exceptionalism, though, allows for Simms to heighten the victim status of his protagonists and defend their brand of justice.

Because the text is rarely read today, a brief overview of the plot may be useful for understanding how Simms represents the war by using historical figures (Sanutee, Governor Craven, and the commission of Indian agents) and creating others who loosely represent the population at the time (traders, pirates, missionaries, their families, and the Yemassee population at their capital, Pocota-ligo). At the beginning of Simms's rendition, the beloved Yemassee chief Sanutee has formed an alliance with the warrior chief Ishiagaska and with a British pirate, Chorley, who represents Spanish interests in controlling land, trade, and slave bodies. When the other chiefs agree to give the whites more land, Sanutee's protest against this trade is the perfect moment to enact a conspiracy that he has spearheaded for some time. He gains popular support to have the other chiefs (including his son, Occonestoga) banished from the tribe—a fate worse than death. Though Occonestoga escapes for a time, he is eventually brought to trial as a supposed slave of the whites who will do whatever the settlers want in exchange for liquor. The fact that the Yemassee attack their own tribesmen and then the whites who have actually (as Simms presents them) treated the Yemassee well undercuts any potential reading of Yemassee actions as justified. Before Occonestoga can be banished by having his tribal tattoo removed, his mother, Matiwan, intervenes and kills him as a show of mercy. The heroic white figure, Gabriel Harrison—who is actually the historical

figure and southern hero Governor Craven in disguise—hears of this unrest and directs the townspeople to remove to the nearby Block House.³ After being captured while spying on the Yemassee and then released with the help of Matiwan, Harrison helps the townspeople defeat the Yemassee, saves his fiancé from captivity at the hands of Chorley, and leads a successful campaign to Charleston to rout the remaining Yemassee. As Sanutee dies in battle and the whites kindly take Matiwan away, Simms employs the vanishing Indian myth to suggest that the supposed disappearance of Native peoples is lamentable but unavoidable unless they are controlled, removed, and Christianized.

By writing a frontier romance, which is a subgenre of the historical romance, Simms borrows from the lives of historical figures in an actual war and claims that his story was historically accurate. Of course, he went beyond the historical record, embroidering onto it by focusing on the actions of a select group of characters, heightening the role of Craven by making him a settler in disguise, and injecting his own political stances on race and gender relations. This kind of embroidering points to how a great deal of scholarship on historical and frontier romances is outdated in suggesting that these texts are apolitical. Though Simms noted in a letter to Professor Samuel Henry Dickson that his text was historically accurate, which suggests he did not inject his own politics into the story (“To Professor” 6), he also stated that writing a romance versus a novel allowed him more latitude when composing his story (4-5). Scholarship on the frontier romance is key when examining Simms’s novel because understanding the uses

³ C. Hugh Holman speculates that Simms may have gotten the idea to put his hero in disguise from Cooper’s *The Spy*, wherein George Washington “masquerade[s]” as Mr. Harper (xi). Because Governor Craven was British, argues literary historian Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Simms had to create his American counterpart, Harrison, to espouse “a great many of the attitudes and opinions of Simms himself. . . . To be Lord Craven was not sufficient; it was necessary to be Gabriel Harrison” because he is “a *middle-class American*, a frontier hero” (115).

of this subgenre allows scholars to understand how Simms blends history, romance, and the space of the imagined frontier to deliver a political message even though some scholars deny the presence of politics in Simms's text.⁴ Such romances frame history in particular ways that, I argue, help condone past and present (and possibly future) violence against racial others; in addition, authors of such texts romanticize and justify westward expansion and uphold gender binaries. However, scholars such as Ernest E. Leisy argue that, while "the historian looks back to the past in the light of the present," writers of historically based fiction are "concerned more with re-creating something akin to the actual experience [in the past] than with appraising it in light of what happened later" (7). Yet I contend that, by viewing and legitimating what happened in the past in romanticized terms, Simms's text affected how readers viewed continual violence against racial others and territorial expansion in the nineteenth century. By defining what was supposedly necessary in exceptional, frontier spaces regarding law and different kinds of violence, authors such as Simms echoed as well as framed ideas about the functions of law and violence, including revenge, outside of these imagined, exceptional spaces.

Because of this view of how political Simms's writing is, I am more in line with Robert Clark, who argues that Simms's way of romanticizing history rather than striving for "historical objectivity" allows him to project the ideals of the United States during a period of continued expansion onto a plot that is actually about a British colony in the early 1700s (46). According to Clark, Simms and his contemporary James Fenimore

⁴ Scholars such as David Moltke-Hansen, Molly Boyd, Steven Frye, Verner W. Crane, Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Robert Clark, and Ernest E. Leisy mention Simms and his treatment of history, including his views on Manifest Destiny as he imagines vanishing Indians and the heroics of his white hero, Gabriel Harrison/Governor Craven. All, to varying degrees, acknowledge that Simms's politics sometimes entered his texts, but many deny that *The Yemassee* is a very political work.

Cooper believed they had a “duty . . . to provide an affirmative vision which assisted the becoming of the American individual and of the American nation” (48). The effects that historical and frontier romances have on politics and ideologies are clearly articulated by Tawil, as I mentioned previously. Just as Tawil argues that, in this period, “American fiction-writers turned to the past in order to make sense of the present” (3), I argue that more attention must be paid to representations of the past and present that scholars find in texts such as *The Yemassee*. Such attention will allow scholars to understand how his characterization of revenge represents one particular ideology about vengeance that is understudied but that affected nineteenth-century debates about race, gender, and governance—an ideology that is still pervasive today.

Similar to other writers in this genre—most notably Cooper—Simms chose a particular war and focused on tensions regarding the question of trust: Even though white, male protagonists had put trust in the Yemassee as their neighbors and trading partners, could the Yemassee ever be trusted as civilized community members? Many white authors during this period created Native American characters who embrace revenge and excessive violence as a cultural trait that even the whites who are close to them do not understand. Such plot devices and characterizations result in the infamous scene from *Last of the Mohicans* (1826) wherein the Mingoes/Mohawks attack civilians as they leave Fort William Henry, drinking their blood in glee (198-99) or the scene wherein Chingachgook scalps a French man, an act that disgusts Natty Bumppo (156).⁵

⁵ Drinking blood is a common image in *The Yemassee*, as well, reflecting how these romances often picked up on common themes from captivity narratives and ethnographies of Native peoples, wherein descriptions of cannibalism and blood-drinking abound. Richard VanDerBeets argues that cannibalism is a principal trope in captivity narratives and that “the imagery of cannibalism is seen to involve images of torture and

Similarly, in Anna Snelling's *Kabaosa* (1842), as the white US American hero is about to slay the evil British commander during the War of 1812, it is the friendly but vengeful Shawnee, Kabaosa, who lunges into the fray to do the honors lest the American hero soil his hands (308-09). These authors of frontier romances exhibit reservations about allowing their white heroes to express a desire for revenge and, worse yet, to act upon it. Traitors, such as the French or the British after US independence, are most likely to desire revenge but are foiled, and Native Americans exhibit revenge as a natural, cultural trait, but these are also the cultures that are destined to vanish. Thus, to make this a romance versus a bloody sensational novel such as Robert Montgomery Bird's *Nick of the Woods* (which I discuss in the next chapter), Simms's white characters must resist revenge so the authors of these texts do not have to struggle to justify it even as they justify other kinds of violence against racial others.

Though Simms relied on these particular trends and stereotypes, he was also very invested in the factual history of South Carolina, his primary home, and was a popular and prolific author across multiple genres. Simms was a Jacksonian whose grandmother raised him while his father went "west to recoup his fortunes" (Cowie x). Travelling through Mississippi territory, he was exposed to a diverse group of backwoodsmen, Natives, slaves, farmers, and outcasts, among others, and readers saw reflections of these characters in his border romances (xi). Scholars who have studied his life argue that, when Simms returned to the territory later, he saw "the startling changes that had occurred." He apparently became "convinced . . . that the Indian degenerates in contact

mutilation" (550). Furthermore, he argues, "Blood-drinking was among many tribes considered generally salutary and often specifically medicinal" (552).

with the white man's civilization, losing his admirable savage traits and not gaining any of the white man's virtues" (Holman, Introduction xiii). Such assertions about Simms's ideologies, paired with his own writing, indicate that he subscribed to the myths of the noble as well as the vanishing Indian. Like Cooper, Simms "believed that indirectly fiction should serve higher purposes than mere entertainment, but his first concern was to create interest" and "arrive at 'moral truth'" (Cowie xix, xx). Yet scholars today recognize that the "moral truth" Simms champions in *The Yemassee* reflects his biased view of how South Carolina was settled and what its politics should be.

While Alexander Cowie argues that Simms "did not allow his opinions to intrude on his fiction" (xxvi), in *The Yemassee* Simms makes it clear that he supports enslaving African Americans and removing Native peoples by making the Yemassee untrustworthy villains. He also ridicules Puritanism and champions beliefs in natural law. A slaveowner himself, he came to hate the Union once it threatened the South's agrarian economy through the abolition of slavery, and he upheld the supposed beneficence of slavery because it saved slaves from themselves (Hoefler 124). In contrast to African Americans, Native Americans for Simms were noble savages, but they "could never live with their conquerors except in the capacity of bondsmen," so removing them was a preferable policy (Cowie xxix). Indeed, in *The Yemassee* he contrasts Natives with African American slaves to show how difficult it would be to keep Native peoples in bonds and trust them to stay true to their masters. Though the Yemassee's desire for freedom and their fighting spirit may be admirable to a degree, I argue against Cowie and others who state that Simms had "a somewhat higher [opinion of Natives] than that of Cooper" as "[h]e makes the most of their virtues" and shows "sympathy for the[ir]

condition” (Cowie xxvii, xxviii; Hofer 128). Though Simms renders Sanutee’s grievances sympathetically, he puts a barrier between Sanutee and readers in his representation of the Yemassee chief’s all-consuming desire for vengeance.

Furthermore, the threat that the Yemassee pose because of their violence against seemingly defenseless settlers and their broken promises ultimately make them the villains of the text. Contrasting with Sanutee and his compatriots, the white hero, Governor Craven/Gabriel Harrison, preserves the homes of Carolinians and resists violence until he has enough evidence that he must protect the white settlers against their former Yemassee friends. As John P. McWilliams notes, Simms ultimately presents Harrison as the “white hero who, in spite of his friendship with Sanutee, must exterminate the Yemassee” (148).⁶ In Harrison, “Simms provides the myth of a self-less, serviceable life that must sacrifice its energies in order for the species to survive” (Boyd par. 24). Simms believed in the importance of the home, where virtue lay, and also in popular justice as he worshipped folk heroes such as Craven/Harrison.⁷ He believed that established law was often inadequate for the protection of injured persons, and in texts such as *Beauchampe* he condoned individuals arbitrating justice themselves versus relying on courts or higher authorities (xxxix)—which perhaps helps explain how he could hate despotic rule even while he championed Craven’s heavy-handedness. Under the

⁶ See McWilliams Chapter 5, “Red Achilles, Red Satan,” for an interesting comparison of *Last of the Mohicans* and *The Yemassee*, wherein McWilliams compares and contrasts the white heroic figures, the characterization of allied and non-allied Natives, and the role of the dying Native son that readers get with both Uncas in *Mohicans* and Oconestoga in *The Yemassee*.

⁷ Writing about Craven in 1929, historian Verner W. Crane echoes Simms’s admiration of the Governor when he notes, “That South Carolina escaped complete ruin was due to the energy of a gallant governor” (170). On Craven’s actions, Crane employs the passive voice, which detracts from the sense that Craven led with a firm hand: “Alarm cannons were fired, martial law proclaimed. An attack on the camp was defeated and an advance hastily improvised” (170). Craven was a popular hero for many figures writing about the South’s history, particularly because of his dealings with Native peoples.

right, supposedly exceptional circumstances, heroic figures could uphold the natural laws of right and wrong better than established law could—even though, as the Governor in disguise, Craven also embodies established law.

Ultimately, the history of the Yemassee War became a useful tool for Simms to use. He was not only able to write about the Carolinas, which were one of his favorite topics, but he could also use the subject of that war in 1715-1717 in order to justify Indian expulsion in his own time, in the wake of the 1830 Indian Removal Act, as well as reflect on the Second Seminole War, which began in 1835. For many people, the Yemassee War is a forgotten war, partly because of the great numbers of conflicts that occurred in the colonies amongst the British, French, Spanish, Dutch, Germans, and various Native tribes. The Yemassee War followed closely on the heels of Queen Anne's War (1702-1713) and the Tuscarora War (1711-1715). According to Michael D. Green and Theda Purdue, though, the Yemassee War “reshaped economic and political relations between the tribes and Carolina, ended the Indian slave trade, and led to the collapse of proprietary government and the splitting of the colony into North and South” (xi). By the time peace had largely returned to the region in 1718, more than four hundred colonists had died “and an untold number of Native American warriors had perished, making the conflict a serious candidate for America's bloodiest war in proportion to the populations involved. . . . [I]t led directly to the collapse of South Carolina's proprietary government in 1719” (Ramsey 2). Furthermore, the British then established Georgia in 1733 as a buffer colony to protect the southern border of Carolina (3). William L. Ramsey also argues that, because the Carolinians had to raise an army composed of whites, African slaves, and friendly Natives, the war “became an early exercise in ‘racial profiling’ and

ultimately a testing ground for new racial definitions, boundaries, and policies that set the tone for the colony's emerging plantation regime" (160). In sum, the war had sweeping consequences in the colonies and greatly contributed to racial tensions in the South and policies regarding trade with Native Americans of bodies, rum, deerskins, and other goods.

The continual changes in leadership, boundaries, and trade law in this region from before the war to after it made it a middle ground or changing location we might characterize as an exceptional space. The control that various officials from governors to Indian commissioners took exemplifies the state of exception and made it easier for those in power to dictate what the region's inhabitants would be able to do, but this exceptional status also made the region a powder keg. Though establishing a state of exception is an attempt to take control of a region in turmoil, it can result in other kinds of turmoil as individuals vie for more power and the general populace shows resistance. For years, trade between whites and Native peoples had forced both parties to adapt to each other, and the metaphor for the region became that of a "middle ground" of "hybrid concepts that [sometimes] created more problems than they solved" (Ramsey 5, 23). At first, "Carolina's action was not unilateral and arbitrary. It was, rather, responsive and deferential to indigenous decisions and testimony" (31). However, warfare and tensions regarding trade challenged alliances and bred suspicion.

When representing the outbreak of the war, Simms does briefly highlight some of the reasons why the Yemassee were aggrieved in the early 1700s, though he ultimately does not frame the ensuing actions of the seemingly broken tribe as necessary or entirely justified. Specifically, he suggests that white encroachment on Yemassee lands, over-

hunting of deer, and the sale of alcohol made the Yemassee angry at the white settlers outside of Pocotaligo, the Yemassee tribal headquarters. Through Sanutee's continual references to how the whites expect his people to be slaves, Simms comments on tense trade relations that became untenable. Despite this, though, Simms does not divulge enough details for his readers to perhaps understand the dire situation almost a century after the war, particularly for readers not from the Carolinas and potentially less familiar with the region's history. Leading up to the war, the Commons House of Assembly passed the "Act for Regulating the Indian Trade" in 1707, creating a board of commissioners to supervise trade and the actions of the newly created office, that of Indian agent (Ramsey 80-81). Scholars generally agree that new legislation during this period helped spark the war by not addressing the abuses that traders committed, focusing on "control" versus "justice or fair play" (81). Despite Simms's great love of history, he does not detail these kinds of relations between traders and Natives and instead merely suggests that some traders were rascals.

In addition to unlawful trading practices, tensions among Indian agents regarding legal protection of Yemassee rights also destroyed white-Native relations. Simms, though, portrays the white settlers and government as a more cohesive group than the supposedly self-destructive Yemassee who have purportedly torn themselves apart over whether to trade with the British. Before the outbreak of the war, rival Indian commissioners Thomas Nairne and John Wright vied for power and "dissolve[d] the colony's reputation utterly" (Ramsey 90). Already seeing that diplomacy was failing because of these internal battles, the Yemassee were further alarmed when the British erected a fort at Port Royal, with no explanation from officials in Charlestown (93). The

final blow occurred in 1715 as traders quickly and violently entered Yemassee villages to collect on past debts now that the Yemassee were no longer needed in battles against the Spanish. Even Simms notes that the attitudes of the settlers changed, and they stopped giving the Yemassee gifts when they “had ceased to be necessary to the Carolinians” (11). In the midst of this climate, the Creeks issued a warning for the violent traders to show more mercy, “an effort, born of desperation, to break through the diplomatic pall that had fallen over the colony and to elicit some sort of official response” (94). Ramsey argues that the legislators’ response was “schizophrenic” in that they claimed to value peace with their Native neighbors even as they continued to ignore the traders’ depredations, which included violence against women, stealing Natives’ goods, and enslaving Indian allies (97, 18, 20, 26). The silence of legislators aggravated tensions, especially when paired with the ideologies of the Indian agents. For instance, Nairne “expressed hopes that the slave trade would ‘in some few years . . . reduce these barbarians to a farr less number’” (37). These are sentiments that Simms excludes from his text as his agents and traders may be greedy but try to gain Yemassee support by communicating with them about the trade of land and goods.

Due to this environment wherein Carolinian leaders made more demands of their Native neighbors while ignoring their pleas for justice, tribes such as the Yemassee and Ochese who had been loyal to the British began to express anger. To a certain extent, Simms acknowledges that this anger is partially justified, though he simplifies the reasons for it and the reactions of British officials who were desperate to maintain authority. In reality, it was at this point that the British became interested in two censuses—measurements of those tribes that were loyal to them and those that were not.

They were surprised to find that the non-loyal tribes greatly outnumbered the loyal ones (Oatis 112-13). The attitude of the Ochese, in particular, suggested a potential uprising was afoot though they were located farther from the white settlements than the Yemassee, so white commissioners visited the Yemassee to ask what they knew about a potential Ochese uprising. Simms presents this meeting as one wherein commissioners were coming to trade for more land from the Yemassee; however, it was actually a meeting that indicated whites were uneasy about how the tribes were communicating about their displeasure but did not see the Yemassee as major players. Yet, because of this meeting, rumor spread among the Carolina tribes that the British were suspicious and would crack down even more on the Yemassee, signifying that the meeting was really a kind of overbearing paternal gesture warning the unruly Natives to behave. As a result of this perception, some Yemassee warriors killed the visiting commissioners, reportedly tortured Nairne to death, and became the first to strike the British (126; Ramsey 95).

Why Simms presents this meeting as a purchase of more land is unclear;⁸ such a purchase does remind readers that the British had encroached on Yemassee lands, perhaps making the British seem like the wrongdoers, but the fact that the head chiefs in the text have a majority vote to sell the land also suggests that the tribe was not in agreement and started the war because of their own broken government versus through any fault of the British. Rather than have the Yemassee kill the commissioners that night, Simms depicts Sanutee getting the land back when Moll Granger, the wife of the main trader in Simms's text, defuses the situation: She nullifies the sale of land by returning a

⁸ It is clear, though, that Simms knew the actual history of the war and the true occurrences during the commissioners' meeting with the Yemassee because he had written about it in periodicals such as the *Boston News-Letter*. See Simms, "The Yemassee Uprising."

pouch full of dirt from the sold parcel—a symbol of the transaction. This instance of tension between Sanutee and the commissioners may indicate that the Yemassee just want their land back and will not do further harm, but readers have seen throughout the text up to this point that Sanutee is actually waiting for the best moment to strike; while he says he will spare the commissioners, he is actually lying or speaking with a “forked-tongue”—a serpentine characterization that Simms draws on again and again in this text. If, according to Andrew Jackson in 1794, peace talks with Native peoples “answer no other Purpose than opening an Easy door for the Indians to pass through to Butcher our citizens” (qtd. in Rogin 121), Simms’s story illustrates this point in the context of the Yemassee War and ongoing disputes with various tribes. In sum, by rewriting the outbreak of the war in this way, Simms portrays the encroachment of the whites as primarily the fault of Yemassee chiefs who accept gifts in exchange for the land despite the wishes of their own people. The disputes over land are thus not *with* the tribe but *within* the tribe.

By the time Simms plays out the events of the war once Sanutee raises an army to attack the settlers, he perhaps accomplishes his most impressive feat by representing a two-year-long war as one that seems to have lasted only one night. This reflects a common practice wherein whites imagined that disputes with Natives would be short-lived because of whites’ supposed military superiority, and government officials use this rhetoric today when they imagine their military forces can crush opposition in a matter of hours or days. Despite his interest in retelling history and in light of his personal philosophies, Simms employs fiction to describe this particular war as one between whites and several tribes of Native peoples who quickly banded together and were just as

quickly defeated. However, his version elides the fact that whites had help from Indian militiamen and that the Yemassee had tenuous relations with tribes that entered and exited the war at various times.⁹

Ultimately, Simms's version of these historical events sold well, as he was an author who rivaled Cooper in popularity. In 1835, shortly after the novel was published, the Bowery Theatre in New York staged a version (Cowie xxxivn104). The complicated web of events that led to the war made for an exciting novel about violent Natives who challenged the authority of white, Christian settlers. Due to the history of the actual war and representations of it such as Simms's, "[t]he conflict has traditionally been cast in moral terms as a righteous effort on the part of Native Americans to exact vengeance against unscrupulous and abusive Europeans" (Ramsey 3). Representations such as these spoke to many readers' interests in past and ongoing warfare with Native peoples over lands that seemed to constantly be in flux and over laws and treaties that legislators constantly rewrote and reframed, making Simms's text about more than a war that has been largely forgotten today.

Specifically, Simms's text may have been successful because he draws connections to the Second Seminole War, whose outbreak occurred the same year that *The Yemassee* was published. Just as the Seminole Wars engaged with the issues of territorial expansion and fear regarding African American and Native American collusion, Simms engages with the causes and effects of expansion, justifies the

⁹ Specifically, Ramsey notes that "the Catawbas, Cherokees, Upper Creeks, and Choctaws delayed their entry into the war for weeks or even months after the first shots were fired. In addition, various groups appear to have pursued distinctive military and diplomatic objectives that set them apart from other participants" (101). Many Native alliances "shattered" over the course of the war (152), particularly as the settlers reached their own alliance with the Cherokee in 1716 (Oatis 147).

enslavement of African Americans who supposedly do not wish to take or accept freedom, and, again, accuses Native Americans of being duplicitous and violent. Importantly, during the Yemassee War, the Yemassee “were joined by the numerous other small tribes of the region, and after the disastrous conclusion of the war, their remnants fled to Florida and were ultimately merged into a heterogeneous group called the Seminoles” (Holman xxi). The Yemassee operated as allies of the Spanish in Florida, reflecting Simms’s supposition that the Yemassee were really motivated by the Spanish to fight the Yemassee War and reflecting concerns about Spanish Cuban and British Bahamian collusion with Natives during the Seminole Wars.¹⁰ Spain ceded Florida to Great Britain in 1763 but then, after the Seminoles aided the British in the Revolutionary War, Spain regained control of Florida in 1783. However, the United States, believing it should control at least part of Florida due to the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, incited rebellions so that citizens in Louisiana and Georgia would forcibly take control of West and then East Florida. As the War of 1812 began to occupy the minds of the US military, the Seminoles—as allies of Spain—began to strike back in Florida, making it an area of constant concern for the United States regardless of other concurrent hostilities elsewhere.¹¹

The events of the Second Seminole War largely parallel the events in Simms’s text, though he is invested in relaying a particular history of the Yemassee War from more than a century earlier. As US officials apologized for their actions during the First Seminole War, which lasted from about 1814-1815 and was an attempt to control Florida,

¹⁰ See John Missall and Mary Lou Missall 111 on beliefs that Natives must have had European support or puppeteers.

¹¹ See Missall and Missall as well as John K. Mahon for histories of Florida leading up to and including the Seminole Wars.

they ultimately took possession of the land in 1821 (Missall and Missall 21, 52). This began debates about whether any Natives in the state had control over any of its land, resulting in reservation treaties and Native resistance, largely due to poor reservation policies wherein, for instance, Seminoles who had initially removed to a reservation in central Florida under the Treaty of Moultrie Creek in 1823 were starving to death (66-72). Arguments that the Seminoles were harboring runaway slaves and should be moved west of the Mississippi spurred an increasing troop presence in Florida to address fears of violence and also intimidate local populations. Andrew Jackson was already a national hero for his military action during the 1813-1814 Creek War as well as the First Seminole War, and his presidency became famous for his harsh policies toward Native Americans (which I will return to in the next chapter). His election as President in 1828, followed by the 1830 Indian Removal Act, spurred the Treaty of Payne's Landing in 1834, which gave the Seminoles three years to move west of the Mississippi, starting retroactively in 1832 (79-87). When some Seminole chiefs refused to move by 1835, the US government levied sanctions, argued that the chiefs should be removed from their positions of power, and arrested chiefs who resisted and who argued that the whites were trying to enslave them (88-91).¹² The US military prepared for war as the Seminoles attacked civilian homes. After years of fighting, the war ended in 1842 with the Seminoles placed on a

¹² Osceola became the key figure of resistance. Like Sanutee, he was not a head chief but was widely respected by his people and was a figure who evinced that there was much disagreement within Native societies about whether or not to remove to the west. Both Osceola and Simms's imagined Sanutee acted out their own forms of justice on whites and their own tribesmen. Under the orders of Maj. Gen. Thomas S. Jesup, Brig. Gen. Joseph Hernandez agreed to meet "Osceola and another influential chief, Coa Hadjo, . . . for a parley" but captured and imprisoned the men despite flying a white flag. Osceola died in prison three months later (Missall and Missall 134).

reservation in Florida and the Armed Occupation Act offering settlers free land in Florida in exchange for fighting off further Indian resistance (208-10).

Many details tie Simms's text about the historical past to the time when he was writing: the rhetoric of enslaving Natives, debates about trade with Natives, fears about joint African American and Native American revolt, justifications for moving Natives from a local reservation to more distant lands, accusations that those in opposition to USAmericans were lawless pirates, and even the use of bloodhounds to track down Native peoples. By writing about these details, Simms could glorify the violence of the past to suggest that it was still necessary in his time. History seemed to be repeating itself, and for Simms the ultimate solution was continued removal of Native peoples further westward because the historical record, for Simms and many of his contemporaries, had shown that whites and Native Americans could not coexist peacefully. Simms suggested, too, that African Americans, by contrast, could be controlled under slavery, and he was also in this respect responding to contemporary debates about the abolition of slavery. By framing history as he did in *The Yemassee*, Simms implies that Native Americans are naturally violent and vengeful and will not stop their destructive quest for blood unless whites defend themselves. He posits that whites' need for self-defense is unfortunate, though, because he does in some respects represent Native Americans as noble savages who are, lamentably, destined to vanish if they are not removed. Thus removal becomes as much about protecting white civilians as it is about protecting Native Americans.¹³ Yet the ultimate goal is not to protect Native rights

¹³ This notion parallels Andrew Jackson's rationale for removal as set forth in his first annual message in 1829. Many whites saw removal as the easiest solution to conflicts over sovereignty among Indian nations. Speaking specifically about the Cherokees, Jackson argued that removal would save the tribe from further

or even to justify their vengeful violence, whether that violence is brought on by whites or is simply a natural trait of Native peoples that they cannot help. Rather, the continued displacement of violence onto Native peoples and the notion that these “exceptional” wars call white (US) Americans to defend life, liberty, and land—even while acquiring new land—are ways of linking these not-so-exceptional wars and legal movements.

“There must be blood”: Natural Yet Unjustified Revenge

Like his more famous counterpart, Cooper, Simms believed that Native peoples had traits natural to them and largely romanticized them; however, revenge—as a trait of supposedly savage people—was not a trait that Simms or Cooper admired or equated with justice. As Simms introduces the chief Sanutee, readers see that the Yemassee are slipping into uncontrollable violence. Simms writes, “He moved and looked as one with a mind filled to overflowing with restless thought, whose spirit, crowded with impetuous feelings, kept up constant warfare with the more deliberate and controlling reason” (16). For Simms, revenge becomes a disease that cannot be cured and a hunger that must be fed, and racial others—as well as traitorous people of any race—seem more prone to contracting this disease. When the particularly violent chief Ishiagaska argues that “[t]here must be blood,” Sanutee lamentably agrees and goes on the warpath (68), calling into question whether there really *must* be bloodshed and who is the aggressor. Simms ultimately suggests that the Yemassee are to blame for their fruitless and overly violent efforts as he argues that the “primitive Indians” declare war when they are impassioned,

mistreatment and suffering. See Perdue 59-60. I will return to this argument about the supposed benevolence of removal in Chapter 2.

not reasoning (231). With the help of the white hero, Harrison, whites with their rational thought and greater fighting ability (in Simms's estimation regarding white people's natural gifts) can recognize and combat the natural vengefulness of their Native counterparts. Meanwhile, Native peoples will essentially destroy themselves by not recognizing their proper, inferior place in the social order. Thus, in this section I will argue that, although Simms may seem to partially justify and explain where the Yemassee's revenge comes from, he ends up blaming Native peoples for what he imagines is their vanished state by displacing vengeful violence—as well as intemperance and inconsistency—onto them, not onto the white settlers and their government.

Importantly, if Native peoples are already untrustworthy because of their vengeful and crafty natures, alcohol heightens these traits. Laws that failed to control the sale of alcohol conveniently allowed whites to dismiss laws that might impede their trade and expansion even as they upheld and used other laws as violent weapons against racial others. Alcohol is important in this text because it allows Simms to borrow from a common stereotype regarding Native peoples. This borrowing, wherein Natives become degraded, violent, and untrustworthy because they supposedly lack self-restraint, allows Simms to suggest that Natives must be controlled through harsh means because they are apt to be out of control. Simms illustrates this argument most clearly in his characterization of Oconestoga, Sanutee's fugitive son. As mentioned earlier, British authorities had tried to limit the sale of alcohol to neighboring tribes, but it remained a pervasive practice. In Sanutee's view, alcohol has blinded his own son and tied him to the British, and Simms himself "was shocked by the bestial level to which drunkenness

could lower the Indian” (Holman xiii). Sanutee tells his wife, “Oconestoga is a dog, Matiwan; he hunts the slaves of the English in the swamps for strong drink. He is a slave himself—he has long ears for their lies—he believes in their forked tongues, and he has two voices for his own people” (17). Oconestoga’s supposed slave status causes Sanutee to disown him, and readers do see that Oconestoga sides with the British and readily accepts alcohol from them. Oconestoga becomes a figure whose loyalties oscillate, though, showing how he is incapable of remaining true to either side. By being both a slave to the British and helping them capture African and Native slaves in the swamp,¹⁴ he has a complicated relationship to these supposed allies of the Yemassee. As a slave to his supposedly weak and inferior nature, though, Oconestoga may be a figure who deserves more sympathy than condemnation. Thus, Simms casts Oconestoga’s suffering at the hands of his father in a negative light that potentially vilifies Sanutee while showing how both men cannot acculturate to white civilization.

As Simms uses Oconestoga’s drunkenness and oscillating loyalties as a catalyst to suggest that whites and Natives cannot peacefully coexist forever because of what Simms sees as the relative superiority of the whites, he does suggest that white authorities have wrongfully excepted Natives from rights regarding trade, property, and legal representation. For instance, he critiques the actions of certain whites who have used

¹⁴ Though I will elaborate on slavery shortly, it is important to note that, while the Carolinians were active in the African slave trade, they also traded with various Native groups, paying (for instance) the Yemassee and Lower Creeks to capture and sell Natives from other, non-allied tribes into slavery. The Yemassee became famous for their slave-catching abilities as they captured fugitives going from Carolina to Florida. However, some plantation owners could not distinguish between the Yemassee and other Natives, leading to such key conflicts as the accidental enslavement of the son of chief Altamaha, a close ally of the British. Yet their incursions into Spanish Florida to catch slaves also made the British wary that the Yemassee might be working with Spanish spies, whom the British blamed for luring their slaves into Florida. See Ramsey 26 and 36-37, in particular, as well as Oatis 33-38. For a broader discussion of the Indian slave trade in this region, see Alan Gallay.

tools like alcohol and trade law against their Yemassee neighbors. Furthermore, like other authors who romanticize Native peoples, Simms does note that whites have encroached on Native territory, which could partially justify the Yemassee's anger and retaliation. The whites have essentially taken advantage of their powerful position in Carolina because they feel they can get away with mistreating their Yemassee neighbors, creating laws and choosing which ones to uphold—essentially determining when they can exempt the Yemassee from legal processes and rights, including the right to outlaw the sale of liquor. In this way, the settlers are able to use the law as a violent tool against their Native neighbors—a tool that appears more justified than exacting physical violence because the laws emanate from supposedly civilized authority figures who (in theory) want order and peace. However, the laws still subordinate Natives and make it acceptable to destroy them with legal yet damaging trade policies. Hannah Arendt argues in *On Violence* that “[v]iolence, we must remember, does not depend on numbers or opinions, but on implements, and the implements of violence . . . like all other tools, increase and multiply human strength” (53). While she suggests that the tools of violence are traditional weapons that maim and kill, I argue that the law is a less tangible tool of violence that people can simultaneously use and hide behind in order to justify how they act or do not act. As I mentioned in my Introduction, scholars such as Benjamin and Derrida point to the violent force behind law, but law can also condone and justify violence. In this regard, Simms slightly critiques the white settlers for upholding laws that strain the Yemassee and also for deciding which laws to ignore because they can.

The beginning of the text is where Simms comments the most on how the white settlers are not acting like good neighbors but have rather rationalized and justified their

violence under the laws they have created. This sets the scene for Simms to justify how the Yemassee have raised complaints, even if he does not justify their violent reactions. In the early chapters, the Yemassee are hard pressed to find advocates who will not use and abuse the law. For instance, Simms argues the following:

[I]t soon grew apparent to the Yemassees, that, while proposing treaties for the purchase of their lands, the whites were never so well satisfied, as when, by one subtlety or another, they contrived to overreach them. Nor was it always that even the show of justice and fair bargaining was preserved by the new comer to his dusky brother. The irresponsible adventurer, removed from the immediate *surveillance* of society, committed numberless petty injuries upon the property, and sometimes upon the person of his wandering neighbor, without being often subject to the penalties awarded by his own people for the punishment of such offences. (*The Yemassee* 20, emphasis original)

Clearly, the whites have taken advantage of their power and their ability to use the law as a violent tool that strips people of their property, their livelihood, and their personhood, “overreach[ing]” with their authority to take more land than they have obtained through treaty negotiations—which, as Simms shows, are also not necessarily peaceful negotiations wherein all Native peoples in a given tribe agree to sign over land. Simms seems to blame individuals and the courts for these occurrences. Specifically, he blames individuals who act unjustly because they are outside of “the immediate *surveillance* of society,” taking advantage of the exceptional status of the region as a frontier space without continual oversight. Furthermore, he blames society at large for not making such criminals “subject to . . . penalties,” suggesting that the government does not exercise justice to protect Native peoples.

With this kind of legal backdrop, Sanutee himself recognizes the bias of the justice system in Carolina and tries at first to find a nonviolent solution to land disputes

between the Yemassee and the settlers, again making the early chapters the place wherein Native peoples are more sympathetically portrayed. Simms thus suggests initially that Sanutee is not uncontrollably vengeful when he writes, “With the sagacity and intelligence, such as are seldom to be found among any uncivilized people, he discussed with himself every possible form of remedy for the evils and dangers of his race, which could be conceived by a resolute and thinking spirit, warmed by patriotism and desirous of justice” (21). Sanutee stands out from other Natives in his quest for nonviolent justice, and in this moment Simms evinces some sympathy for the Yemassee and their sense of hopelessness. On the white settlers who have encroached onto the Yemassee reservation, as Simms calls it, he writes, “All of these were trespassers, therefore, and in a trial of right would have been soon dispossessed; but in the event of such an effort, no treaty would have been necessary to yield sufficient sanction to the adventurers for a defence by arms of their possessions” (22-23). Even trying to draw up a treaty to get these lands back or at least obtain money for them seems futile, as the Yemassee are increasingly powerless—the law is the tool of the settlers, not of racial others. This characterization of settler law and practice might have called Simms’s readers to question policies toward Native Americans as scholars such as Anthony Dyer Hoefler have noted that “Sanutee and the Yemassee are lionized for enacting Patrick Henry’s call to ‘Give me liberty, or give me death,’ that is, for displaying what Simms’s audience would certainly recognize as a distinctly American form of heroism” (130).

Yet Simms elides any sense of true guilt on the part of whites because, he suggests, it is inevitable that the inferior Native Americans, if they choose war and vengeance, will not be able to survive against their betters. But it is also because they are

a supposedly different, inferior population that they, I would argue, cannot so easily be compared to Patrick Henry. This is particularly true in the case of the majority of the Yemassee whom Simms portrays as savage cannibals, such as Sanutee's warrior compatriot Ishiagaska. The Yemassee do receive death and not liberty, so this story is not a heroic Revolutionary equivalent. Rather, Simms suggests that Native Americans as well as the white citizenry and legislature would be better served by accepting a restricted kind of liberty for Native peoples—removal—because death actually is the alternative.

Furthermore, Simms quickly shows how Sanutee's attitude devolves into violence, and even Sanutee's status as a figure who is exceptional because of his sagacity makes him abnormal; in other words, by being more sage and intelligent than other "uncivilized people," Sanutee is the chief of a more rash and violent population, which readers particularly see in his friendship with the bloodthirsty Ishiagaska. Simms continually describes the Yemassee as inferior and aware of their inferiority, thus characterizing their vengeance as a kind of infantile and primitive retaliation against the settlers, who are largely peaceful. In describing the initial attack of the Yemassee against the white agents who negotiated for more land, Simms is not alone in suggesting that whites met the Yemassee in peace and were greeted with premeditated violence. Ramsey argues that numerous accounts represent Indian agent Nairne's message to the Yemassee as peaceful when he met them regarding concerns of an uprising. These accounts present the meeting "followed by the harrowing massacre of the English delegates at dawn on Good Friday. In the traditional version, the attack is generally taken as proof that the Yamasees had already committed themselves to war and that Nairne had little chance of changing their minds. The friendly goodnight thus became a sinister façade, masking the

Yamasees' deadly intentions" (95). Simms represents this kind of plotting attitude as a vengeful and ill-managed response by the Yemassee, who have finally realized that they are inferior to their European counterparts, rather than as a demand to be treated as human as well as legal equals because they *are* equals.

Simms captures this devolution of relations between the groups and the looming sense of war, representing the settlers as having grown better at surviving in this land while the Natives continue to live in the ways of the past until their inferior status sneaks up on their collective consciousness. Simms writes,

[A] stronger ground for jealous dislike arose necessarily in their minds with the gradual approach of that consciousness of their inferiority which, while the colony was dependent and weak, they had not so readily perceived. But, when they saw with what facility the new comers could convert even the elements, not less than themselves, into slaves and agents, under the guidance of the strong will and the overseeing judgment, the gloom of their habit swelled into ferocity, and their minds were busied with those subtle schemes and stratagems with which, in his nakedness, the savage usually seeks to neutralize the superiority of European armour. (12)

Though the whites might use and enslave the Yemassee, Simms frames this as conversion—something the Yemassee acquiesce to until they suddenly realize they do not want to continue down that path. Presenting events in this way allows Simms to suggest that the whites are largely blameless because they cannot help being, in his estimation, naturally superior and capable of success because of “strong will and . . . overseeing judgment” whereas Natives resort to “subtle schemes and stratagems” as they transition from “gloom” to “ferocity.”

Furthermore, as Simms describes the system of government amongst the Yemassee, he suggests that rifts in their own community are to blame for the outbreak of

war, which makes the Yemassee ultimately more at fault than the settlers and allows them to bring violence into the normally peaceful space of their capital, Pocota-ligo. The Yemassee collectively elect their chiefs, who are “accountable to the nation” but sometimes overstep their bounds, which results in their people severely punishing them or even engaging in civil war (75). In Simms’s text, the chiefs under Huspah are jealous of Sanutee’s popularity with the people, and since Sanutee dislikes the British and the other chiefs dislike Sanutee, they side with the British (75-76). Even Sanutee’s son, Oconestoga, votes in favor of trading more land, and Sanutee attempts to brain him with a hatchet before one of the white commissioners stops the attempted murder. Until this moment, Pocota-ligo has been a place that is “*tabooed* to the pursuer and the avenger. The furies had to remain without. The murderer was safe so long as he kept within the marked circuit. But he might never venture forth with hope to elude his enemy. The vengeance of the red man never sleeps, and is never satisfied while there is still a victim” (14). It is because their vengeance does not sleep that, in this moment, violence erupts in the tabooed space, wherein Sanutee rallies his compatriots to attack the white commissioners and punish the other chiefs, including his son, though they have voted by a majority margin to trade together.

Simms suggests that this flawed government and the weak nature of the Yemassee are what cause the Yemassee to seek revenge, implying that the whites are not wrong to offer gifts in exchange for land because the head chiefs willingly sign it over. Although the white men return the land before being killed, the Yemassee under Sanutee and Ishiagaska pretend all is now well when they actually plot a more extensive attack. Sanutee is able to gather around him not just “the most influential and fearless of the

Yemassee” but also “[t]he rash, the thoughtless, the ignorant” (Simms 84). This characterization of the Yemassee is less than flattering, as those who choose to fight—though brave—seem to be too easily pliable and misguided. Simms calls their measures “extreme” as they converge on the chiefs. First they intend to kill them; then they decide to cast them out of the tribe by cutting the tattoos from their shoulders—a fate worse than death and one that will enslave them in the afterlife to the war god, Opitchi-Manneyto (85-88). Simms describes this god as an “evil demon, whom they invoked with as much, if not more earnestness than the good” (89), implying that the Yemassee worship evil and violent gods more often than benevolent ones. While scholars such as Terry K. Aladjem argue that revenge in American contexts “always seemed to concern murder” (xiii), this example of denying death to one’s victims shows how, for the Yemassee in Simms’s text, revenge was about something considered even worse. As the chiefs beg for mercy in the form of death but are denied it, Simms presents a stark image of Yemassee men and women who are calculating and bloodthirsty rather than merciful and just (91).

Simms further maligns revenge in the hands of supposedly unscrupulous racial others by showing how it blinds people when it operates under the dangerous philosophy that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” Under this rule, Sanutee allies with a pirate, Chorley, who has killed Sanutee’s dog and then tries to kill Sanutee. The white hero and governor in disguise, Harrison, saves Sanutee’s life in this early moment in the text, but Sanutee rejects Harrison to league with Chorley and the Spanish. As a pirate, Chorley operates under no law but his own mercenary one, and Simms suggests that the Spanish are using the Yemassee only for their own mercenary ends—namely, so they can acquire the black slaves and other goods belonging to the British. The Yemassee had previously

allied themselves with the British to war against the Spanish, which Simms describes to argue that the British and Yemassee were allies and brothers (11). In light of this past, Simms presents the Yemassee as particularly traitorous and naïve. Chorley says to Sanutee, his supposed ally, “Ay, blast you, but you’re all alike. There’s but one way to make sure of a redskin, and that is, to slit his gills whenever there’s a chance. I know you’d cut mine soon enough, and that’s all I want to know to make me cut yours” (30). Harrison stands in contrast to Chorley when he defends the honor of Sanutee and asks how Chorley has not recognized “the great chief of the Yemassee . . . the best friend of the English” (32). Chorley’s attitude toward Native Americans in comparison to Harrison’s reminds readers that Sanutee is betraying British settlers who know and supposedly respect him. Chorley ends up having an attitude toward the Yemassee that Harrison and other settlers should have—they should be wary of getting their throats cut by their Yemassee neighbors, but Harrison has not yet learned to be appropriately cautious.

In addition to indicting the Yemassee for their propensity to back-stab and their lack of self-control, at times Simms describes the growth of the white settlers’ towns as existing in harmony with the Yemassee around Pocota-lico. Simms writes that the growth of the white population was gradual, saying that “the adventurers grew daily more numerous, for their friends and relatives soon followed them across the ocean. They, too, had lands assigned them in turn, by the improvident savage.” Thus, it was Native Americans who gave land to the whites rather than being forced to cede territory to the settlers. Simms continues, “[I]ncreasing intimacies, with uninterrupted security, day by day, won the former still more deeply into the bosom of the forests, and more

immediately in connexion with their wild possessors” (10). Relations between whites and Natives are harmonious, filial, and secure, and “[h]amlets grew into existence, as it were by magic” (11). The settlements seem to appear out of the earth itself, growing magically and suggesting that whites have a claim to the land because they did not apparently take it through coercion or outright violence and that such growth is natural. This furthers the sense that Sanutee’s plot is unjustified and that Natives’ supposedly natural propensity for violence goes against whites’ natural, peaceful, and rightful existence on the land.

Furthermore, while the white settlers do slowly encroach on Yemassee land, they do not physically assault the Yemassee in this text until they are defending themselves toward the end; by contrast, the Yemassee violently attack whites on British soil when they attack the Block House, which also allows Simms to present the settlers as civilians who are defending their homes and families. When Simms depicts the Yemassee invading the settlers’ homes versus the Block House, he is unclear about whether these homes are technically on Yemassee property, as he notes many whites crossed official borders to settle. However, he does write, “The Block House marked the rightful boundary of the whites upon the river” (22). As the Block House is a “rightful boundary,” Simms does not codify the violence of the Yemassee as defense of their territory. Furthermore, even if the whites whom the Yemassee attacked in their homes were technically on Yemassee land, Simms again suggests that the Yemassee let these settlements occur with little or no protest. Many settlers “had gone considerably beyond the limit [into Yemassee property], and suffered no interruption. . . . [M]any of the borderers so obtruding were of a class to whom the contiguity of the Indians was quite as

grateful, and probably as safe, as that of their own colour” (22-23). Granted, the whites have taken advantage of the exceptional status of this colony as a place whose boundaries are in flux, as noted before. However, the grievances of the Yemassee do not seem to justify the murders of civilians, whom Simms describes as innocent victims, “defenceless cotters” (258). Reading the Yemassee’s attempts to invade the Block House and the settlers’ homes is interesting in light of Amy Kaplan’s arguments about domestic spaces, wherein “men and women become national allies against the alien.” As “we think of domesticity not as a static condition but as the process of domestication, which entails conquering and taming the wild, the natural, and the alien” (582), these scenes in *The Yemassee* appear to be part of the attempt to both preserve white sanctums but also critique the ability to tame the racial others who are attempting to invade these spaces. This, of course, relies on reading the Yemassee as the real invaders in this text and not the white settlers.

It is descriptions of how the Yemassee dupe “defenceless cotters” that leads to Simms’s argument that revenge is not justified, even if Natives may be supposedly vengeful by nature and not by choice. Even Harrison, who is most knowledgeable about the Yemassee plot and warns the settlers,¹⁵ is entirely ignorant at first, and his dealings with Sanutee heighten the sense of betrayal on the part of the Yemassee who would attack their English brothers. Harrison tells Sanutee, “I know your pride, and that of your

¹⁵ Simms invests Harrison with heroics that history divided amongst others. For instance, Ramsey argues that “Captain Borage’s warning had given the settlers time to evacuate most of the island and board a ship that, fortunately for them, lay at anchor in the Port Royal River (probably Beaufort River)” (113). Thus, Simms conflates Governor Craven’s actions with those of other townspeople and traders who raised various alarms at the outbreak of the war.

people; and because I know it, if you have had wrong from our young men, I would have justice done you” (37). Though, as mentioned before, whites used and abused the law to ignore cries for justice, Harrison continually offers to help the chief and is continually rebuffed. Sanutee responds, “He begs no justice from the English, and their braves may go to the far lands in their ships, or they may hold fast to the land which is the Yemassee’s” (37). Sanutee seems to shut down any conversation toward reconciliation here, puzzling Harrison with his anger and not providing concrete requests for justice. As the whites are determined to “hold fast to the land,” they continue to do that until Sanutee can raise his army and surprise them.

Of course, Harrison’s tendency to condescend to the Yemassee and any of his other potential enemies illustrates the sense of superiority that the English felt, which helps build Sanutee’s case that the British are wrongfully subordinating his people. When Sanutee asks who his brother is, Harrison responds: “The governor—you have never seen him, and he would like to see you. If you go not to see him, he will think you love him not and that you lie on the same blanket with his enemies” (33). Harrison himself is the historical figure Governor Craven in disguise—a disguise he casts off by the end but that scholars mock as “one of the most poorly maintained secrets in the American novel” (Holman xi). Speaking of the Governor’s wish for the Yemassee to declare their love and insinuating that the Governor will suspect duplicity, Harrison treats Sanutee like a child who needs to be chastised. Harrison also tries to make Sanutee feel guilty by asking, “Sanutee, do you really mean that you would not see me at Pocota-ligo. Is your lodge shut against your friend. Is there no smoking venison which will be put before me when I come to the lodge of Matiwan. Why is this? I meant to go home with

you this very night” (35). Importantly, the first set of statements are and are not questions—Harrison asks if he is no longer welcome at Pocota-ligo, but Simms does not use question marks to frame Harrison’s words. Harrison expects that he should be welcome and indicates that he intends to show up at Sanutee’s home that night as though he can freely traipse across borders. Through Harrison’s language, then, Simms does at least suggest that Sanutee might have reason to be displeased with how the British view and treat his people.

In sum, Simms does some preliminary work early in his story to show how and why the Yemassee are poised for war. However, the natural vengeance and poor judgment of the Yemassee, the failings of their own community, and the victim status of the specific white protagonists all signify that Sanutee and his people are launching a desperate attack against a superior force rather than acquiescing, changing their lifeways, and perhaps removing from Carolina. Sanutee’s lack of mercy toward the other chiefs and his son further illustrates how sympathy for Sanutee may turn into rejection of his methods of seeking justice and restoring community through revenge. The only response the British can take, then, is one of self-defense, as Simms can more easily justify the actions of whites—however problematic—if he can position his characters as reluctant warriors.

Slaves and Dogs: Bondage and Freedom, Acquiescence and Violence

As a prolific author and historian, Simms was invested in the history of South Carolina and in debates about Native and African Americans, and his investments are reflected in *The Yemassee*. Scholars such as Alexander Cowie, who introduced the 1937

edition of the text, argue that Simms was “too wise an artist to allow slavery to become an open issue in a romance set in the year 1715” even though he notes that Simms supported slavery. Cowie does concede that when Harrison’s slave, Hector, refuses freedom, this “is only a slightly veiled bit of propaganda,” but he also notes that Simms only overtly discussed slavery in his later texts (xxix). I contend that slavery is in many ways at the heart of Simms’s novel when considering references to Native *and* African American slavery; this is also true when considering the contexts of the Yemassee War and the Seminole Wars. The role of slavery is vital to analyzing the novel in relation to debates about violence and ownership, including the rhetoric of exceptionalism and the rule of law as applied to the enslavement of both Native and African Americans.

Hoefler provides the best discussion of the role of slavery in Simms’s text. Hoefler notes how Simms suggests that African Americans are fit for slavery while Natives are admirable because they will die for freedom, and the Yemassee War allows Simms to use the vanishing Indian myth to suggest that Natives were destined to disappear while still romanticizing their existence. I extend Hoefler’s study by closely reading Simms’s treatment of slavery as a motivator for fruitless vengeance and by linking the issue to the politics of Indian removal in the nineteenth century. While he argues that “Simms prematurely confines Native Americans to a place in past history, neatly escaping the question of contemporary US politics” (130), I have already noted that Simms’s contemporary politics are very much at play in the text, including the politics of slavery. Specifically, Simms upholds the notion that African Americans can be enslaved while Natives cannot and that African Americans are largely loyal and will not revolt to join Natives. This was a move to dispel fears of widespread revolt even as slaves were

joining the Seminoles in Simms's time. Furthermore, as I will discuss in this section, representing slaves like Hector as loyal followers of their masters allows Simms to displace violence onto slaves, who were conscripted to fight alongside whites during the Yemassee War. Specifically, when Simms presents Hector as the handler of the Indian-catching dog, Dugdale, and as a man who is eager to fight against the Yemassee in battle, Simms bloodies the hands of racial others to preserve his white heroes from appearing overly violent.

Throughout his text, Simms largely frames the natural and unbridled desire for revenge on the part of the Yemassee as resistance to being enslaved by whites. For Simms, the condition of enslavement was acceptable for African Americans but not for Native Americans (Hoefler 116). Sanutee's most common complaint against the white settlers is that his son and other chiefs have enslaved themselves to whites in exchange for liquor and cheap gifts. Simms elides the fact that European settlers had long made pacts with Native tribes to trade slave labor and instead focuses on the notion that Natives are naturally inferior to whites, even if they are not meant for slavery. By contrast, African Americans such as Harrison's slave, Hector, accept their even more profoundly inferior status and will not take their freedom even when their masters offer it. By discussing slavery in this nineteenth-century context rather than reflecting on the actual slave trade in Native bodies during the time of the Yemassee War, Simms is able to allay fears surrounding African American revolt in his own time while he simultaneously supports the Indian Removal Act as an alternative to trying to enslave or annihilate Native Americans.

Simms likely felt the import of upholding the supposed merits of African American slavery in his own time period—in the years prior to the Civil War—because of his own role as a slaveholder and staunch supporter of South Carolina’s rights as a state. Richard Drinnon notes that, because Simms benefitted directly from slavery, “he defended the institution with rising stridency, arguing with John C. Calhoun that it was a positive good . . . By frequently identifying himself so fully and so vehemently with the peculiar institution, Simms became the leading literary symbol of the Old South” (144). His own reliance on slavery likely caused him to seek personal and public justification for slavery, particularly in light of fears surrounding potential revolt, escape, and emancipation.

By using the character of Hector and by representing the Spanish as slave stealers, Simms highlights the importance of “protecting” US slaves from being stolen, which was a pervasive fear in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as slaves were transported across borders in British, Spanish, and French territories. Additionally, they fled of their own accord, often seeking asylum with Native groups. The specter of Native and African Americans working together to overthrow European powers during the Seminole Wars, combined with fears in the wake of such events as the 1791 Haitian Revolution and Nat Turner’s 1831 rebellion, may have shaped Simms’s apparent need to present solutions to such violence. These solutions, of course, included distrusting the Spanish, maintaining African American slavery, and stamping out Indian resistance. Importantly for Simms, in his figuration of the Yemassee War, the Spanish use the aid of Chorley, who has to steal slaves because they will not otherwise come with him. In this version of history, the Carolinians must fight against the Spanish and various Native groups—predominantly the

Yemassee and Coosaw—in order to protect both themselves and their threatened slaves, who may be slain in the war if they resist being taken to Florida (65).

Fears of a multi-level, multiracial conspiracy against US whites are evident in Simms's argument that the Spanish goaded the Yemassee into war and that the Yemassee formed sweeping alliances with numerous tribes in order to attack the friendly white settlers. These fears also appear in his depiction of the torture of laborer Teddy Macnamara, an Irishman who asks no mercy of the Yemassee "red nagers" as they torture him (234). Just as Rebecca Blevins Faery argues that twentieth-century Western films used the phrase "red niggers" to reflect on fears of "the prospect of racial integration" (213), Macnamara's defiance displays his superior masculine strength in the face of racial others figured as black and/or Native. Richard Drinnon comments on this tense atmosphere as he notes that Simms "had a color-haunted imagination, haunted by 'the black race within our bosom' and 'the red on our borders.'" In an important sense the 'border' romances were Simms's attempts to work out in fiction the baffling problem of the latter, while paying passing attention to the former" (140). The phrase "red nigger" and fears regarding Native and black resistance were prevalent throughout the first half of the nineteenth-century, in particular, including during the Second Seminole War.¹⁶

Simms attempted to allay fears of African American conspiracy by promoting the supposed benevolence of African American slavery, as slaves such as Hector are not only incapable of leading productive lives as free people but also recognize that by refusing freedom. Thus, Simms does not displace revenge onto all racial others but only those

¹⁶ See Sara Johnson 74 for one reference to this phrase during the Second Seminole War and the use of dogs to subdue combatants. Johnson quotes from an 1848 lithograph about the war, whose caption says, in part, "[L]et not a red nigger escape, show no mercy, exterminate them" (qtd. in Johnson 74).

whom he argues must be controlled with violence, if necessary. To imagine South Carolina as a place wherein black slaves can coexist peacefully with their white masters but wherein Natives, by contrast, cannot is to imagine a particular social order for the nineteenth-century South. Simms contrasts African Americans with Natives through the use of Hector who, with his loyalty, serves as a foil to Natives, who should be distrusted. Simms first illustrates this argument when Hector leaves the white settlements to try to find and help Harrison; in this moment he fears Harrison will return first and think he has run away, which is the most shameful thing Hector can imagine (283). Second, Harrison later tries to free Hector but cannot since Hector vehemently refuses emancipation. Hector responds to the offer of freedom and money, “I d—n to h—ll, maussa, ef I guine to be free! . . . I can’t loss you company, and who de debble Dugdale [Harrison’s dog] guine let feed him like Hector? ’Tis onpossible, maussa, and dere’s no use for talk ’bout it.” Hector’s first line of argument emphasizes the importance of his companionship with his master and his usefulness to Harrison. Then he argues, “De ting ain’t right; and enty I know wha’ kind of ting freedom is wid black man? Ha! you make Hector free, he turn wuss more nor poor buckrah—he tief out of de shop—he git drunk and lie in de ditch—den, if sick come, he roll, he toss in de wet grass of de stable. You come in de morning, Hector dead.” Hector then argues that he would not take his medicine or listen to parsons, suggesting that the devil would find him before anyone else could (356). Hector’s litany of reasons in support of his enslavement allows Simms to show a slave figuratively refusing to take off his shackles, which is a more convincing pro-slavery argument than had Harrison delivered this rationale for keeping Hector in bondage.

Harrison's relationship with Hector is one of the strongest modes of building the virtuous character of Harrison; it allows Simms to suggest that Harrison is not a violent racist but a man who supposedly tries to do right by others, which includes enslaving people for their own good. This characterization of slavery is in line with Simms's overall philosophies, as he wrote the following in the *Southern Quarterly Review* in 1852: "We beg, once for all, to say to our Northern readers, writers, and publishers, that, in the South, we hold slavery to be an especially and wisely devised institution of heaven, devised for the benefit, improvement, and safety, morally, socially, and physically, of a barbarous and inferior race, who would otherwise perish by famine or by filth, by the sword, by disease, by waste, and destinies forever gnawing, consuming, and finally destroying" (qtd. in Cowie xxx). This quote aligns exactly with Hector's response to being offered his freedom, as he recognizes his "barbarous and inferior" status and, unlike the Yemassee, knows that what is best for him is to remain enslaved. As Eugene D. Genovese notes, "Simms, one of the Old South's most prestigious literary figures, proclaimed the slaveholders had no moral right to free their slaves unless absolutely sure they could take care of themselves" (77). Although Harrison clearly treats Hector like property, the love that Hector has for Harrison suggests that the white protagonist is a virtuous man and that slavery benefits slaves by saving them from themselves.

Hector's presence as a loyal slave not only allows Simms to support the notion that African Americans can be enslaved while Native Americans cannot and that African Americans will not defect in droves to join Natives. It also allows Simms to filter the settlers' violence through the medium of Hector and the Indian-catching dog he guides through much of the violent contact with the Yemassee. Sara Johnson examines the role

of dogs in combat “during the Haitian Revolution (1791-1803), the Second Maroon War in Jamaica (1795-1796), and the Second Seminole War in Territorial Florida (1835-1842), the three largest-scale conflicts pitting colonial states against African and indigenous combatants from the 1790s to the 1840s” (66). She argues that, in these cases, “the use of dogs as a torture mechanism showcased the legal nonpersonhood and subhuman status of the colonized” (67). The dogs became part of a spectacle involving the torture of racial others, trained with effigies so they could hunt down escaped slaves as well as Native and black combatants (73). As I have argued in my Introduction, it is important to consider the role that “spectacle” still played in the nineteenth century (and still plays today) regarding justice, though Michel Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* that the public spectacle of capital punishment was waning by the nineteenth century. Depending on the body being punished and the political reasons for the punishment, spectacle in real life and in art—such as the use of dogs to publicly destroy Native and black bodies—remains a vital notion to consider as we continue to study punishment and torture. By using these dogs, whites not only asserted their authority and personhood but also displaced violence onto the animals and framed the violence as self-defense.¹⁷

In *The Yemassee*, readers see this kind of displacement of violence onto Dugdale and through the conduit of Hector so that Harrison does not have to bloody his own hands. This lessens the sense that Harrison is violent because readers do not see Harrison on the attack but only in defensive positions. Thus, while other authors I examine in this dissertation present their heroic protagonists as justifiably violent in supposedly

¹⁷ See Johnson 74 and 81-82 on this notion of displacing the violence of whites onto dogs.

exceptional circumstances, Simms does not go so far. Though Simms spends much of the text justifying settlers' need to defend themselves and even retaliate against the untrustworthy Yemassee, displacing violence onto slaves and dogs allows him to neatly avoid some of the issues around celebrating revenge that the other texts I examine engage with. Dugdale, like Harrison, is renowned for his ability to kill Coosaws because of his previous battles with the Coosaw Indians, wherein he and the Yemassee fought side by side. It is Hector, though, who trains Dugdale with effigies of Native Americans, covered in meat, and takes him through the forest on a leash. While Harrison remains stoic when he comes across the bodies of slain civilians (307), it is Dugdale who howls in animalistic fury, a "cry of thirst and anger" (309). In these moments, Dugdale resembles the Yemassee, who also strike at an effigy they call "English" and constantly reference drinking the blood of their enemies to heighten their appetite for more killing, even likening their preparations for war to those of dogs (230, 221). By comparing the dog, handled by Hector, to the Yemassee and in contrast to Harrison, Simms is able to deflect Harrison's violence onto someone and something else. This allows Simms to highlight how slaves such as Hector do not support the actions of Native Americans and how white soldiers resist animalistic fury, defending themselves against the bloodlust of Native Americans.

Just as Dugdale acts on behalf of the whites and potentially takes some of the blame from them, Sanutee's son Oconestoga has, in Sanutee's estimation, become a dog of the English. In this way, another non-white character does the dirty work of the white settlers, suggesting the settlers are more crafty than overtly violent. Besides unleashing Dugdale on the Yemassee, Harrison sends Oconestoga to spy on his own people, using

him in the way that Sanutee describes to Matiwan—as both a slave and a dog to the English who “bite[s] the heels of the Yemassee” (17). As mentioned earlier, manipulation through alcohol is the primary means of turning Occonestoga into a dog of the English, as the trader Grayson helps convince Occonestoga to spy on his people by giving him some liquor. Simms then writes that Occonestoga’s “preparatio[n]s were soon completed, and when the night had fairly set in, the fugitive was on the scent, and again within the boundary lines of his nation, and cautiously threading his way, with all the skill and cunning of an Indian, among the paths of the people whom he had so grievously incensed” (157). In this instance, Occonestoga is literally likened to a dog on the scent of his own people. Though Occonestoga spies on his tribe seemingly by choice and can thus be another character onto whom Simms can displace nefarious activities, the role of white characters in this cannot be ignored. Their ability to use dogs and subordinate people to do their dirty work potentially tarnishes their standing as heroic defenders or reluctant warriors in the text.¹⁸

However, Simms ultimately justifies this use of Occonestoga because of the threatened position of the white settlers, indicating his desire to constantly defend the actions of the white settlers even if some of their tactics are unfortunate. Because of the settlers’ “exposed situation,” it became “essential” and “absolutely necessary” for Harrison to send a spy into the Yemassee capital, “particularly as the capricious nature of savage affections makes it doubtful whether they can, for any length of time, continue in

¹⁸ Indeed, just as Sanutee distrusts the British for using his son as a dog, he distrusts any dog of the English. When Chorley kills Sanutee’s dog at the beginning of the novel and Harrison offers Sanutee a new dog, Sanutee contends, “The dog of the English hunts after the dark-skin of my people” (33). While Harrison argues that English dogs have only killed enemies of the English, such as the Savannahs and Westoes, Sanutee disagrees. Harrison leaves the scene in confusion, but his promise to “myself bring to Pocota-ligo, the dog that I promise you” takes on new meaning as the text unfolds (34).

peace and friendship. How far Oconestoga may stand excused for the part which he had taken against his countrymen, whatever may have been the character of their cause, is a question not necessary for our consideration here” (158). While Simms says engaging with this question of Oconestoga’s part in defying his people is unnecessary, though, his argument about the necessity of spying on the Yemassee and not implicitly trusting them suggests that Oconestoga (and, by extension, the settlers) is pardonable for his actions. Furthermore, when Sanutee moves to cut the tattoo from his son’s body, even the other Yemassee are about to relent after catching Oconestoga, “the victim,” until Sanutee refuels their vengeful ire (174). By showing how Matiwan steps into the fray to kill her son in mercy before the tribe can cast him out forever (181), Simms sympathetically portrays Oconestoga as a character torn between cultures—a man who has saved Harrison’s fiancé, the angelic Bess Matthews, from a snake and engaged in friendly relations with traders and with Harrison (144).

In the end, while it is whites who are accused of wanting to enslave the Yemassee and even make dogs out of them by making them pliable with liquor and willing to do the settlers’ dirty work, they and their allies are the ones who show mercy and a need to defend themselves in the face of Natives who would actually enslave the white settlers. Throughout the text, Simms undercuts the Yemassee’s fears of enslavement by whites through showing how they wish to cultivate white souls to enslave in the name of their war god, Opitchi-Manneyto. The two greatest desires of the Yemassee, as Ishiagaska proclaims, are to drink the blood of whites and cast them into slavery (68). Whereas Simms largely elides any sense of spectacle regarding the atrocities whites have committed against the Yemassee, he lingers on spectacles of Yemassee violence such as

the torture of Macnamara and the punishment of the Yemassee chiefs who have given or sold land to the whites. As the Yemassee cultivate souls for their war god, they become the true enslavers who wish to reduce whites to slavery not just in this world but in the next. In the face of this threat—which cannot be remedied through logic since the Yemassee supposedly must sate a natural thirst for violence—the settlers apparently have no choice but to defend themselves. Because of his view that the settlers found allies in black slaves and in Natives like Oconestoga, Simms made the settlers appear more justified and heroic, glossing over how the settlers relied on their powerful positions to pressure their racially othered allies to spy and kill for them.

Passivity, Victimization, and Feminization: Revenge as Disruption of Gender Norms

While Simms does not wish to countenance revenge because only the supposedly uncivilized Native Americans resort to violent emotion versus rational arbitration, he does suggest that whites must be ready to fight in defense of their homes and values rather than implicitly trust racial others. As mentioned previously, trust is a key engagement for Simms because the side that has more reason to feel distrustful has more reason to defend itself and can more easily justify its actions, however questionable they may be under less exceptional circumstances. Taking up revenge as a tool actually unsexes Native women and turns Native men into animals, but being too passive and trusting feminizes white men. The atmosphere Simms creates by using the Yemassee War as a backdrop highlights how these extremes cause gendered imbalances that can only be righted when white men are ready to defend their nation, answering violence with violence and placing trust in authorities such as Harrison/Craven.

As I have already suggested, the Yemassee's propensity for violence likens them to bloodthirsty animals that cannot control their emotions. Many of these characterizations apply to the male warriors whom Sanutee and Ishiagaska call to war, but they also apply to Simms's depictions of Native women when they embrace violence. As Yemassee women relish torture and bloodshed, Simms writes, "[W]hen we reflect upon the usual estimation placed upon women by all barbarous people, we shall not be surprised to know that, on the present occasion, the sex were by far the most noisy if not the most numerous. . . . [T]hey possessed all the passions of the one sex, without the possessions of their powers;—to have lost the gentle nature of the woman without acquiring the magnanimity of the man, which is the result of his consciousness of strength" (243). Simms paints a picture that is common to frontier romances as well as captivity narratives: Native women are prone to dance around white victims, mocking and beating them. As Simms explains, though, these women have become unsexed because they embrace violence; they are not "gentle" like women should be but also cannot reach the high status of men. In moments such as this, Simms characterizes these women as "demoniac," "unsexed tormenters" (237) because, for them, torture is a "game" and "sport" (236, 238). This is one of the many threats of revenge and bloodlust—it strips women of their natural, gentle impulses and propensity for good.

In contrast to these women, Matiwan becomes the ideal Native American woman because she is capable of showing mercy and working with the whites. When the Yemassee capture Harrison as he spies on them, Matiwan risks her life to save him, just as she risks being cast out of the tribe by mercifully killing Occonestoga. If she silently serves Sanutee through most of the novel, she eventually breaks her own bonds to aid the

white hero who “had been kind to her father” and had given her presents such as the crucifix she wears; though she does not understand the “symbolical associations” of the cross, it still marks her as more civilized than her counterparts and is a reminder of Harrison’s goodwill (247). Simms describes Matiwan’s conflicting emotions, saying she had “burning feelings in her bosom, at variance with reason—at variance with the limited duty which she owed to society—at variance with her own safety. But what of these? There is a holy instinct that helps us, sometimes, in the face of our common standards. Humanity is earlier in its origin, and holier in its claims than society. She felt the one, and forgot to obey the other” (248). Drinnon argues that “[w]oman [is seen as the] repository of ‘civilization’” (131), and Simms uses Matiwan to show how the Yemassee should act if they want to be brought into the fold of civilization. By rejecting Yemassee society and likening Harrison to her son, she stands for a larger sense of humanity that calls her to defend white society in this instance. Furthermore, she is a familiar type in literature and history, as she simultaneously resembles a Pocahontas figure, Magawisca from Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* (1827), Onona from *Kabaosa*, and Milly Francis, who became a legend for saving a white man from execution by her Red Stick tribesmen.¹⁹ Though Sanutee dies at the end of the text along with his warriors, Matiwan is preserved, crying over her husband’s body until the whites “b[ear] her tenderly away” (369). With her people supposedly annihilated, she will either be brought into the fold of white civilization or “tenderly” removed with other Native peoples, and Simms suggests

¹⁹ See Missall and Missall for a brief mention of Milly Francis, whose father (“Prophet” Josiah Francis), was captured and hanged by Andrew Jackson in St. Marks after being lured, with the chief Homathlemico, onto “an American naval vessel that had been flying the British Union Jack” (41). See also Ethan Allen Hitchcock, pages 102-04 and 189, for a more contemporaneous account as he writes in his journal of meeting Francis, which includes editor Grant Foreman’s discussion of Francis in an extensive note (104-07n59).

that the plight of her people would not have been necessary if they had acted more like her.²⁰

Matiwan even helps Harrison avoid seeking revenge when she helps him escape, reminding readers that whites should only strike in self-defense and not harm an incapacitated foe. Matiwan's womanly goodness allows her to dispel the vengeance that builds up in Harrison when he is held captive. In this moment, he thinks of flames engulfing his people and of blood gushing "in streams that spoke to him appealingly, at least for vengeance" (251). However, when Matiwan saves him, he thanks her as well as Providence, dashing from the Yemassee's makeshift prison. Simms writes that Harrison had to kick one Yemassee guard in the face and would have struck the man with his knife next, "but his arm was held back by Matiwan. Her instinct was gentler and wiser. In broken English, she bad[e] him fly for his life. His own sense taught him in an instant the propriety of this course" (254). With this reminder from Matiwan, Harrison comes to his senses and remembers that he should choose to flee for safety when he can rather than linger to take vengeance. Indeed, Harrison has a higher calling than vengeance—he must save the imperiled white settlers.

Of course, Harrison would not have to protect the settlers if they had been more cautious and had not allowed themselves to be feminized by the duplicitous Sanutee. The sense that the too-trusting settlers are about to be murdered by the Yemassee they have befriended turns this text into a cautionary tale. Simms frames Carolina's past in a way that justifies the acts of whites by going to war but also justifies actions against Natives in

²⁰ This language of being born "tenderly away" links to Laura Wexler's notion of "tender violence," wherein whites promote and represent violent acts—such as removal, in this case—as benevolent despite their imperialistic intentions.

the nineteenth century. As passive settlers, the white inhabitants of Simms's South Carolina are so peaceful that, though they have a garrison to protect themselves (never, apparently, to attack), they have let it rot because they feel totally secure. If the settlers have made a mistake, then, it is not that they have been violent with the Yemassee; it is that they do not know when to fear for their lives. If, as I have noted in my Introduction, one critique of revenge generally is that avengers may harm anyone who is distantly associated with the original act of violence, *The Yemassee* illustrates this critique: Sanutee leads his people in a fight against all of the white settlers who have supposedly been his friends rather than just attacking the land commissioners or corrupt traders. Simms reminds readers of Sanutee's duplicity in quotes such as the following: "'Sanutee is a friend of the English,' was the soothing assurance of the wily chief. 'The wise men of the English will soon go to their own people. The Yemassee will do them no hurt'" (95). In general, the settlers believe Sanutee and will not listen to Harrison's warnings until it is almost too late. While this helps Simms characterize the settlers as fighters only in self-defense, it also reminds readers of the supposed risk that whites take when they are too trusting of racial others, and particularly of Native Americans because they are naturally "wily."

If the white men have feminized themselves by not exercising enough caution, Simms heightens their feminization by showing how a white woman, Moll Granger, is more prepared than they are. It is Moll Granger, the trader's wife, who returns the Yemassee land to successfully (if perhaps temporarily) preserve the lives of the commissioners, and it is she who volunteers for some of the most dangerous duties in defense of her people. She not only keeps the secret of Harrison's true identity and takes

care of important papers that Harrison has given her absent-minded husband (204, 356), but she also informs Harrison about the Yemassee's relationship with Chorley's pirate ship, tries to go on a special military mission for Harrison, and defends the upper floor of the Block House (202, 206, 319-21). It is significant that this woman defies both the Yemassee and the white men who try to treat with them, pointing to the feminization of the white men who are caught off guard as well as the Yemassee who are so inferior that they cannot win out over a woman.²¹ Sitting in the Block House, despite "the defencelessness of their condition" (318), Granger acts as "a woman with a man's spirit" (319). She is able to manipulate the men around her, making suggestions to Wat Grayson about how to defend the Block House, "[k]nowing that any direct suggestion from a woman, and under circumstances of strife and trial, would necessarily offend the *amour propre* of the nobler animal, and provoke his derision." Because she does not want to offend the men, she makes her suggestions in such a way that Grayson "took it for granted, all the while, that the ideas were properly his own" (299). Thus, aware that she will be ignored because she is a woman, she has learned how to manipulate the men because they are unable to act as proper men in this moment.

Because Granger does not ascribe to accepted gender roles, though, Simms masculinizes her; she is not unsexed like the vengeful Yemassee women, but her status does indicate how the white men's unpreparedness has created a gender imbalance that they must correct by defeating the Yemassee in battle. Simms describes Granger as "a tall, masculine, and well-made woman" with "hair black as coal and cut short like that of

²¹ Indeed, as mentioned earlier, even Matiwan risks her life to free Harrison from her tribesmen. Not only can the Yemassee not succeed against white women—failing to maintain control over Bess Matthews and kill Moll Granger—but a woman of their own tribe also spoils their plans.

a man. There was a stern something in her glance which repelled,” and even though she could be “gentle and . . . humble in her usual speech, there were moments when her tone was that of reckless defiance, and when her manner was any thing but conciliatory. Her look was always grave, even sombre, and no one saw her smile.” With this personality, Granger “commanded the respect of others, in a sphere of life to which respect, even in very moderate degree, is not often conceded” (128-29). Simms exhibits some respect for this character’s strength, but she is not the idealized figure of Bess Matthews—the minister’s daughter who is fought over by various white and Native American men.²² For Simms, this moment of defensive warfare is an exceptional moment wherein a white woman can masculinize herself when white manhood has failed.

However, because this is a supposedly exceptional moment, Granger must shrink back into submissiveness once the fighting is over. Granger may sit, Hannah Duston-like, with her arm resting on a hatchet, but this is a “strange association” that is reversed when she succeeds in repelling the Yemassee from the Block House window, sending a warrior crashing to the earth (301, 321). Simms writes of this moment after her struggle, “The effort of her soul was over—a strange sickness came upon her; and she was just conscious of a crashing fall of the heavy body among the branches of the tree at the foot of the window, when she staggered back fainting into the arms of her husband, who just

²² Simms even seemed to masculinize Granger by mistake in this moment at the Block House when he wrote the following: “We may add that the wife of the trader, who had descended to the lower apartment in the meantime, and had contrived to busy [herself] in one corner with some of the wares of her husband, was present throughout the debate.” The editor’s note at the bottom of this page states, “This reading is that of the second edition; the Revised Edition reads ‘himself,’ which is obviously an error” (301). In other words, when writing about Granger’s work in the Block House, Simms wrote “himself” in reference to the woman—a suggestive error in light of how he masculinizes her elsewhere in the text.

at that moment ascended to her relief” (321). The exceptional gendered status of women such as Granger in this moment allows her to take on roles she normally would not take, but once her battle is over, she gives her power back to her husband. He appears, “ascend[ing]” just in time to relieve a woman who, although admirable for her actions, should not have had to take on such a masculine (though temporary) role.

It is at this moment, too, that Harrison comes to the settlers’ aid, gathering a party to rescue Bess Matthews from Chorley and then pursue the Yemassee. In other words, as the gender imbalance is being rectified in the Block House with Moll Granger’s collapse, Harrison returns from captivity to lead the formerly feminized men into battle.

Throughout the entire text, Harrison has been the cautious figure, rightfully wary of the Yemassee while the feminized men around him shrink from confrontation or remain blind. Harrison argues fairly early on “that [the settlers] refuse to believe any evidence short of actual demonstration, and every day finds them thrusting their heads and shoulders farther and farther into the mouth of the enemy” (97). Among these feminized men—chief of whom is the Puritan reverend, John Matthews—Harrison emerges as the hyper-masculine white hero and model of leadership. Because of Harrison’s ability to be a true man in this text, he is able to preserve both the whites’ domestic settlements and white women who have been victimized by bloodthirsty Native warriors. Ramsey argues that one of the goals of the Yemassee during the war was to “put a public end to the life of the [white settlements]” by “destroying the trappings of domestic life” (114).

Furthermore, accounts of the war included stories about Natives “splitting open the women’s young children before their eyes, whom they tormented and roasting [sic] them and making the mother eat a part of it” (qtd. in Ramsey 160). It is unclear how much of

this is true and how much is “wartime propaganda,” but the white settlers were invested in presenting themselves as victims in this conflict (Ramsey 161). Harrison becomes the conduit through which homes, women, and children can be protected, but only if the white men around him will fight alongside him.

The protection of Bess Matthews once the battle escalates becomes justification enough for all-out war and a call for white men to exert their masculinity rather than be feminized through fear. As I will discuss in Chapter 3, protecting—or owning or controlling—women’s bodies is a common theme in revenge stories. Harrison exhibits this sense of ownership when he calls Bess various versions of “my beauty” and “child” (47, 48). Furthermore, Harrison tells Bess’s father that he will reveal his true identity and life history eventually and will take Bess for his wife: “[W]hen I have safely performed other duties, I shall come to possess myself of my bride—and, as I shall give you up my secret, I shall look to have her at your hands” (57). Under the law of coverture, Harrison expects the Reverend Matthews to deliver up his daughter like a piece of property. This transference of Bess from the Reverend to Harrison would also transfer her from a feminized man who is unable to protect her to Simms’s masculine hero—a man who is justified in his desire to save the most idealized and imperiled woman in the text.

Importantly, more than Bess’s life is in danger during the Yemassee attack on Matthews’s home, as the Yemassee and Chorley also threaten her virtue. This threat is yet another justification for the settlers’ actions, as Simms elides the fact that settlers were abusing Yemassee women leading up to the actual war and instead highlights his fictional villains’ attempts to molest pure, angelic Bess. The night of the attack, the “wily” Ishiagaska “crawl[s] on like a serpent” as he sneaks into Bess’s chamber (284).

Simms mentions how her “dress had fallen low from her neck” and calls attention to “her bosom” and “long tresses,” highlighting her “snowy whiteness” (286). When Bess awakes, she calls for mercy and asks God to be her avenger (286-87). It is only in this moment that Bess and her father display violence, as they strike out in self-defense and argue that they are “fight[ing] in the service of God” (288). Like other arbiters of justice, they have justified taking on God’s role as the great avenger due to the circumstances, letting God’s vengeance flow through them in the face of otherwise certain death—much as Cotton Mather characterized Hannah Duston’s violence as stemming less from her own agency than from God’s. However, the Matthews family is subdued and again asks for “pity,” but they “spoke to unwilling ears, and to senses that, scorning any such appeals in their own cases, looked upon them with sovereign contempt when made by others” (289). Examining such examples as this moment illustrates how whites never have to be shown giving mercy to Natives because the Natives never ask for it. Bess and her mother end up briefly winning mercy by bribing one Native with some jewels, linking Native *mercy* with *mercenary* desires (290). However, Ishiagaska determines at this point to kill the family. Chorley’s intercession is the only reason they are spared for a time, but being at the mercy of Chorley is hardly an improvement, as Bess recognizes his “licentious glance” and all that it suggests (296). As Chorley molests Bess with his eyes and takes her to his pirate ship, Harrison arrives to save her when her father could not. It is fitting that the paragon of masculine white heroism should win the idealized white woman by protecting her from pirates and Native Americans whose suggestive glances toward her threaten physical violence as well as miscegenation.

In sum, while Simms seems to avoid suggesting that the settlers should embrace revenge or happily take up violence, he does suggest that whites should be wary of Natives and should protect delicate gendered balances. White women should not be masculinized, nor should their virtue be threatened by outsiders who would violate them. Men must be more like Harrison—not quick to distrust and wage war but wary enough to recognize a plot brewing. Simms represents these gendered threats and imbalances as one more way of justifying the violence of whites, which he presents as self-defense, both to frame the position of settlers during the Yemassee War and during other conflicts such as the Seminole Wars. Removal seems like the best way to maintain order and avoid being taken off guard.

The Revenge of Whites and Exceptionalist Legal Theories

Despite the fact that Simms focuses much of his effort on representing the ever-escalating violence of the Yemassee, two white characters—the pirate Chorley and the jealous settler Hugh Grayson—are also openly vengeful in *The Yemassee*, signifying that it is not only Native peoples who have a claim on revenge.²³ However, Simms presents

²³ Though Chorley is partly motivated by his own greed to turn pirate and aid the Spanish, readers learn that he also has a personal vendetta against the British, including Reverend Matthews. When Chorley was a boy, he knew Matthews, who did not help him when he was frequently beaten by his schoolmaster. Chorley suggests that he seeks redress from society at large because the schoolmaster and the system beat him down and also broke his mother's heart, sending her to her grave early (106). Meanwhile, Hugh Grayson—the other vengeful white character—cowardly attempts to kill Harrison out of jealousy because Bess Matthews loves Harrison; like all vengeful characters, though, Grayson does not succeed. Grayson often complains about the “cruelty” and “injustice” of being unnoticed and poor as he argues with his family that he does not want to be a farmer. Essentially, he is denying a life that Simms feels is “a foundation of civilization” (Moltke-Hansen 135)—the life of an agrarian farmer that Thomas Jefferson extolled. Sounding like the Yemassee, he says to Harrison upon attacking him by surprise, “I would have thy blood. I would drink it!” Holding Harrison down, he says, “I am revenged,” but then “the guardian conscience” returns and causes Hugh to relent. Honoring Hugh's cries for “mercy,” Harrison does not ask why Hugh has attempted to kill him (217). Harrison is too good of a man to retaliate but instead lets Hugh live even though Hugh asks Harrison to kill him as a favor (218). Ultimately, unlike Chorley, Hugh can be

these white characters as traitors because they threaten the white settlers/victims and especially Harrison. Furthermore, Simms suggests that these men's methods are not justified because they are not successful in their endeavors—just as the Yemassee are not. Thus, rather than celebrate revenge as necessary in certain situations, Simms continually debunks that notion by suggesting that irrational, violent, and inferior people take up revenge as a tool and always eventually have to be subdued in some way, perhaps converted to the right path or perhaps cast out or killed because they are incapable of being converted. Representing revenge as a purportedly savage trait, then, sets Simms apart from the authors I examine in other chapters, as they attempt to justify revenge under exceptional circumstances and argue that one can still be “civilized” if exacting revenge for noble purposes.

In Simms's estimation, for Harrison to be heroic, he has to avoid openly embracing revenge, even when Chorley and Hugh Grayson lash out at him; however, when passing judgment on Chorley for kidnapping Hector, Harrison does embrace his own rule of law to punish the pirate. Harrison argues with the Reverend Matthews that he is justified because of this exceptional moment, on the brink of war, and also because of the character of his antagonist. Matthews initially protests, “Captain Harrison . . . this violence in my house—.” Harrison breaks in, “I deeply regret, Mr. Matthews . . . but it is here necessary.” Matthews protests, “It is taking the laws into your own hands, sir.” Harrison does not deny this point but claims, “I know it, sir, and will answer to the laws for taking Hector from the unlawful hands of this kidnapper” (117). Importantly,

converted and saved through Harrison's mercy, and Harrison even puts Hugh in charge of a regiment of men as they travel north to face the Yemassee at Charleston (357).

Chorley does not submit or beg for mercy but instead raises his sword to strike Harrison when the blacksmith, Dick Grimstead, stops him (118). Chorley's obstinate stance only further justifies Harrison's course of action. Harrison's threats of violence against Chorley work, as the pirate grudgingly writes a note to his men to secure Hector's release. Harrison then allows Chorley to leave once Hector returns—but only after mocking Chorley's masculinity, which Harrison often does, by remarking that he “is really not Hercules, after all.” Chorley exits at this moment, “[s]wearing vengeance” and looking for an “opportunity [that] should offer for revenge” (120). His double vow for revenge reminds readers of this man's character in the face of mercy, as Harrison has delivered necessary threats in order to secure Hector but does not pursue Chorley's execution.

When Chorley is initially subject to Harrison's judgment, it is because the cowardly and highly feminized Doctor Nichols has subdued the pirate. Simms has Nichols capture the pirate to show how even Nichols realizes the necessity of subduing and punishing the dangerous pirate because he has kidnapped a member of their community. When making his long-winded speech about the action he has just taken in subduing Chorley, Nichols describes how the government must work for “the good of the people” against “these evil-minded men, who, without the fear of God in their eyes, and instigated by the devil, have feloniously kidnapped and entrapped and are about to carry away one of the lawful subjects of our king” (119). Nichols thus argues that Hector, though a slave, is still subject to the King, bringing him into the fold of those who must be protected against the lawless. Throughout his harangue, Nichols echoes Harrison's belief that the wicked must be brought to trial but must not be dealt with too violently,

such as by being hanged (122). Though not hanging Chorley does free the pirate up to rejoin the Yemassee in battle, Harrison's measured approach to dealing with Chorley is still superior to Matthews's because the reverend is too merciful and feminized to deal with criminals.

Until Matthews has to act against the Yemassee when they raid his house, his approach to the law is too lax for the exceptional space in which he lives, and Simms uses him as a point of contrast to heighten the sense that Harrison's course of action is better than Matthews's. When Matthews argues that Chorley must be dealt with according to the rule of law, which would take precious time, Harrison responds, "Mr. Matthews, you talk of laws, as if that pirate fellow could be brought to justice by a sheriff" (123). The current situation, with no support from Port Royal or from Charleston, necessitates their own "manœuvring" with Chorley (123). Harrison sums up his stance: "No, no. I shall always hold and recover my property by the strong arm, when other means are wanting" (123). Importantly, though Harrison describes Hector as "my property" in this moment, he does argue here that he considers "other means" and only uses force when he can justify its necessity. Matthews asks if the people can be assured that Harrison will not do injustice to them and simply define it as justice (see the first headnote to this chapter). Though Harrison admits that "all power is subject to abuse" and that people must face this reality often, he argues again that he "only employ[s force] in a last necessity" (123-24). Readers may recognize that Matthews does not trust Harrison largely because Harrison is seeking the hand of the reverend's daughter though the reverend does not know who this mysterious man is—he has not identified himself as the Governor. Yet through Harrison's actions in the text, he proves first to readers and then to Matthews that

he is heroic and just, the only man capable of defending the white colonists. Particularly in a supposedly exceptional space, individuals such as Harrison recognize their potentially helpless positions but then take advantage of the exception. As I have argued in my Introduction, the rhetorically framed exception allows for instances of individual sovereignty wherein various forms of (in this case regarding piracy) law-*maintaining* violence can be justified as necessary.

Besides this moment of conflict regarding theories on justice, Harrison exhibits his belief in the necessity of occasional violence when he enacts his own authoritarian laws, eventually taking command of the settlement. This moment draws on the actual history of the Yemassee War when officials, headed by Governor Craven, used their sovereign authority to declare a state of exception. Ramsey argues that South Carolina was at this point “[o]perating under severe martial law,” “augment[ing] their forces in 1715 by moving ‘to press several of the inhabitants and several slaves’ into involuntary military service” (163). Officials also “sought to preserve the colony’s white population by requiring a passport for those wishing to evacuate. That emergency measure was immediately followed by legislation in 1716 to augment the white population by encouraging ‘the importation of white Servants.’” They continued this policy in each succeeding year, as “the Assembly passed new legislation . . . offering special ‘Privileges, Exemptions, and Encouragements’ to entice white (and preferably Protestant) settlers into the colony.” This included trying to appropriate Yemassee lands in 1716 for white settlement, but the Lords Proprietors disallowed it because they wanted to guard their own supposed rights over that land (168). These are just some of the measures meant to

control people's movements and draft enough men—white, black, and Native—to fight off the Yemassee forces.

Though these measures seem extreme, Simms suggests that, as the masculine hero, only Harrison is fit to completely override and augment Carolinian law and become a kind of dictator, taking drastic actions that Simms justifies given the exceptional status of this space. Harrison has already notified readers of the necessity of acting against the Yemassee through the hero's debates with Matthews. He also argues that whites and Natives "can never form the one community for which" Matthews prays, as "the seductions of [the Natives'] mode of life will always baffle the approach of civilization among the Indians" as long as they have enough land to foster their lifestyle (124-25). Even Hugh Grayson—who is initially Harrison's nemesis and is antithetical to him in many ways—talks about the impossibility of whites and Natives living together. As Drinnon notes regarding Simms's contemporary moment, "This was pretty powerful stuff in 1835 on the eve of the Trail of Tears" (145). While Harrison has been a friend of the Yemassee long enough to know more about them than Matthews does, he now knows that the time for friendship has ended. Declaring a state of exception is truly about self-defense under this rationale, as Harrison argues the settlers are literally trying to save their scalps against people whose moral compass is characterized by deceit and indiscriminate slaughter.

Furthermore, Simms justifies the colony's extreme legal measures by depicting the people's willingness to fight, suggesting that the Carolinians do not need extreme laws to make them want to defend the colony and, thus, do not feel angry with the government. He states that the army "pressed on, their numbers greatly increased by the

presence of several slaves, who, volunteering even against the will of their masters, had armed themselves with knives or clubs, and, by their greater numbers, held forth a prospect of ultimately hemming in the smaller force of their enemy” (339). By positing that the slaves gladly fought, even “against the will of their masters,” Simms downplays the effects of the military draft. He contrasts these conditions with those of the Spanish, who “[know] no other principle in their own domestic government than that of fear” and who “had miscalculated greatly when they addressed their bribes and promises to the negroes, as well as to the Indians of Carolina. But few joined them—the greater number, volunteering for their owners, were taken actually into the employment of the colony, and subsequently rewarded in proportion to their services and merits” (339-40). The British thus have a more just system than the Spanish, and people of various races in Carolina are quick to fight in favor of the British.

The slaves who fight for Carolina are so active, in fact, that they overshadow the violence of the whites as they help subdue the Yemassee. Simms again uses the violence of racial others to downplay the violence of his white characters and their historically real counterparts. In this instance, he describes the slaves “scouring the field of battle with their huge clubs and hatchets, knocking upon the head of all the Indians who yet exhibited any signs of life. As wild almost as the savages, they luxuriated in a pursuit to them so very novel . . . sparing none, whether they fought or pleaded, and frequently inflicting the most unnecessary blows, even upon the dying and the dead” (368). In this moment, Simms is able to display extreme violence on the settlers’ side but again does it through the slaves so that the whites do not appear to be bloodying their hands or striking their already-subdued foes. This is similar to how Simms displaces Harrison’s violence

onto Hector and Dugdale so the white hero does not bloody his own hands. Thus, any sympathy readers may feel for the Yemassee because of these final, “unnecessary” blows does not stain the reputation of the white characters because they do not deliver these blows.

Ultimately, as Harrison escapes with the help of Matiwan, saves the settlers at the Block House, rescues Bess Matthews, and helps defeat the Yemassee before they can sack Charleston, Simms suggests that those with vengeful purposes will not be successful. This is especially true when they face the masculine, white, supposedly virtuous Harrison who is far too cunning and brave for his foes. Importantly, he has laid out his legal theories through his dealings with Matthews, Chorley, and Hugh Grayson and has proven himself to only reluctantly fight when friendship is impossible. On his dealings with Chorley, he asks Matthews the following question: “[A]sk your own good sense whether that violence exceeded in degree the amount necessary to secure the restoration of my slave? I did only what I thought essential to that end, though something provoked to more” (126). This question seems to extend beyond the case of Hector’s captivity and is directed to people beyond Matthews. Harrison indicates that anyone with “good sense” can determine that he has not acted beyond what was necessary, even if his emotions might have called him to be more severe. Only through expounding upon these kinds of justifications again and again can Harrison justify his actions in the town (as Harrison) and in the larger government (as Governor Craven) when he eventually declares a state of exception.

Conclusion: The Rhetoric of Exceptionalism and Reluctant Warfare

The Yemassee War had lasting effects on the region, changing its economy, borders, relationship to slavery, and attitudes toward Native Americans. The links between traders and the acquisition of Native slaves resulted in a decline of Native slavery amongst the white population, “effectively end[ing] South Carolina’s experimentation with a multiracial labor force and commit[ing] white planters thereafter to an increasing reliance on African slaves” (Ramsey 181). Furthermore, Carolinians began more concerted efforts to keep African and Native Americans apart to avoid potential uprisings (181). This sentiment after the Yemassee War was prophetic, as the same fears characterized the Seminole Wars. Because debates about the law, borders, and race relations were key in the Yemassee War and in Simms’s own time, Simms both extolled the history of South Carolina by looking to 1715 and suggested a course of action for US officials in the 1830s.

Of course, even as Simms must have been aware of the ongoing conflicts in Florida, he still largely figures the Yemassee and Natives generally as already vanishing in the 1700s. For instance, as Chorley makes his deals with the Yemassee, he hears Sanutee and Ishiagaska talk in what is “a dead language to him” (Simms 62). Even Sanutee knows that his people and culture are vanishing. Simms notes that Sanutee “was a philosopher not less than a patriot, and saw, while he deplored, the destiny which awaited his people. He well knew that the superior must necessarily be the ruin of the race which is inferior—that the one must either sink its existence in with that of the other, or it must perish” (20). However, Native peoples would not vanish and would certainly not do so without a fight, as many refused to remove unless forced. The notion that they

are destined to ultimately vanish, though, helps strip whites of blame because they merely facilitate a process that must eventually come to pass. As the elderly Mrs. Grayson sings that “[t]he Lord doth fight the foe for us, / And smite the heathen down” (Simms 330), Simms urges his readers to see that God is on the settlers’ side, aiding them as they supposedly do His work and act as arbiters of justice on His behalf.

By imagining and rewriting the Yemassee War, Simms carves out a space for white, masculine heroics that can take charge in exceptional times and places and establish the laws of the future United States. For Simms, this notion of exceptionalism does not, though, allow heroic figures to use revenge as a necessary tool. He seems unwilling to allow white protagonists to give in to that degree of violence. Rather, he reserves revenge for figures who are destined to be defeated, suggesting that they are flawed and savage and may even be incapable of conversion and salvation. He exemplifies this resistance to revenge through framing Sanutee as a sympathetic but doomed figure. Matiwan stands out as the Native figure who is most fit for salvation because she aids Harrison and even helps him avoid acting out in revenge. Though Harrison struggles with how to approach each situation in this frontier space, he is ultimately wiser than the feminized men around him and, through his actions, restores balance in the Carolinas.

However, as I have argued, people may invoke the notion of exceptionalism to justify violence and questionable, extreme, or, indeed, unjust legal practices even if those moments are not actually exceptions to the norm. It is clear that events such as enslavement of racial others and Indian warfare were “not exceptional” because they were so pervasive (Johnson 88). However, the rhetoric surrounding these events often

frames them as exceptional in order to justify them, as Johnson argues that authorities would “invoke” a “state of exception . . . for combat against nonwhite others” (81). Mistreatment of Native peoples was of course commonplace around the time of the Yemassee War and would continue beyond the publication of *The Yemassee*. However, by focusing on this one moment in the history of the Americas from 1715-1717, Simms championed new legal and social orders at that time that would justify the same kinds of actions in his own time. When Simms mentions that traders take advantage of the Yemassee and that settlers encroach on their land, he hints at how common these practices are. Yet, determined to uphold the policies of whites, Simms imagines a different norm—wherein Harrison and the other colonists lived in peace with the Yemassee, considered Sanutee a brother, and were ultimately betrayed by their Yemassee “friends.”

The supposedly exceptional moment that triggers a necessary war and state of exception occurs when Sanutee’s own community collapses and the desperate Yemassee bring about their own end through embracing futile revenge. Framing these events as exceptional thus places the blame on racial and political others who are not truly powerless individuals challenging oppressive authority figures. Instead, these others become active agents in their own destruction, giving idyllic white characters no choice but to be reluctant warriors. Simms thus presents his white, heroic characters as hopeful that they can reestablish the supposed norm of peaceful, communal relations through only fighting as a last, exceptional resort. Hoefler argues, “Simms presents conquering as a natural act undertaken by any capable group in order to preserve its own liberty from external forces. Moreover, by linking the Yemassee to the Romans, Simms prematurely

confines Native Americans to a place in past history, neatly escaping the question of contemporary US politics” (130). Indeed, Simms does employ the vanishing Indian myth to suggest that the Yemassee are relics of the past, but his stance on removal in his own life and in this text are reminders that he knew Native Americans had not actually vanished from the face of the earth. He is very much invested in contemporary US politics, not “neatly escaping” them, and he is invested in finding ways to frame the legal treatment of racial others as lamentable but necessary. Adhering to laws—ones that, of course, protect white interests and seek to either except or excessively control racial others—supposedly becomes a way to avoid bloodshed, versus allowing for and condoning bloodshed.

Chapter 2:

Unlikely Killers: Justifying Violence against Native Americans through

Hannah Duston's Captivity and *Nick of the Woods*

When we figure to ourselves our beloved wives and little, prattling infants, butchered, mangled, murdered, and torn to pieces by savage bloodhounds and wallowing in their gore, you can judge of our feelings. (Andrew Jackson, qtd. in Rogin 47)

[O]ne can try to re-create the world, to build up in its stead another world in which its most unbearable features are eliminated and replaced by others that are in conformity with one's own wishes. But whoever, in desperate defiance, sets out upon this path to happiness will as a rule attain nothing. Reality is too strong for him. He becomes a madman, who for the most part finds no one to help him in carrying through his delusion. (Freud, *Civilization* 31)

In the 1830s, two mythic heroes were unveiled against the backdrop of America's largely imagined past—Hannah Duston and Nick of the Woods.¹ Duston's real-life story is set in 1697 while *Nick of the Woods* (1837), a fiction, is set in 1782, but despite this near century of distance between the two figures, they were both used throughout the nineteenth century to bolster a sense of America's heroic beginnings both before and after the Revolution. Their families attacked by the Abenaki and Shawnee Indians respectively, both Duston and Nick epitomized American culture on the so-called frontier—a frontier that was deemed remote and violent because of the white settlers'

¹ I build off of Richard Slotkin's discussion of mythical figures in *Regeneration through Violence*. He argues that myths include "a protagonist or hero with whom the human audience is presumed to identify in some way; a universe in which the hero may act, which is presumably a reflection of the audience's conception of the world and the gods; and a narrative, in which the interaction of the hero and universe is described" (8). I focus on mythical heroes on the frontier and examine how they distort their circumstances as they argue that they are only fighting in order to "[open] the forest to higher cultivation" as a mode of survival (563). Such figures seem to exist only in their own time and under their own specific circumstances, but this is an illusion masking how "a closely woven chain of time and consequence binds their world to ours" (565). Myths are invoked in order to respond to events, and Slotkin focuses on the violent responses of American heroes that upheld "the myth of regeneration through violence [that] became the structuring metaphor of the American experience" (562, 5).

proximity to “savage” peoples, as well as because of settlers’ internal disagreements about public policy, political allegiance, and issues related to sovereignty.² Both the real Duston and the fictional Nick saw their families and friends killed and were taken captive themselves, only to use their states of captivity as a pretext or justification for seeking vengeance; in the stories of Duston—the quintessential wife and mother—and Nick—the pacifist Quaker, husband, and father—shedding Native blood is both justified and deemed heroic, regardless of who the Natives are and why they, too, inhabited the land.

The issues of portraying and defending violent acts in the nineteenth century—specifically against Native Americans—will be my central focus and the focus that will bring these two stories together: the told and retold story of Hannah Duston’s³ captivity and Robert Montgomery Bird’s novel *Nick of the Woods*. I will analyze nineteenth-century, periodical versions of Hannah Duston’s captivity narrative in conjunction with *Nick of the Woods* in order to examine why, in this historical moment, supposedly nonviolent members of American society—women/mothers and Quakers—are portrayed as violent and even crazed individuals while, simultaneously, writers seemingly must justify, explain, and condone these figures’ violent acts. The fact that Duston and Nick are from supposedly nonviolent sectors of society acts as proof that, if *they* could act violently, then surely their enemies—racial others—were deserving of death and bodily mutilation. In the context of the 1830s to 1850s, when Duston’s story was frequently

² See Teresa A. Toulouse for historical background on the liminal status of Massachusetts in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (2-3), as well as the status of Haverhill, Massachusetts, as “a settlement which the General Court of Massachusetts designated a ‘frontier town’ in 1695” (90). Toulouse argues that captivities such as Duston’s “write in gendered terms fears about the instability of the ‘frontier’ in New England” (91).

³ Writers variously spell Duston’s name “Dustin,” “Dustan,” and “Durston.” For this paper, I have used the most common spelling, but researchers should be aware of the inconsistency as it can aid in finding additional sources on Duston that might be overlooked simply due to spelling.

retold and when the first and second editions of *Nick* were published, the United States was still in the process of justifying violent actions against Natives. Looking to the past and envisioning Natives as aggressors who had to be killed, writers, readers, and legislators could draw connections to nineteenth-century forms of violence.

Besides the ongoing removal of Natives in the nineteenth century, the tellings of Duston's captivity and Nick's tale are contemporaneous with numerous acts involving whites and American Indians, from the bloody to the relatively bloodless. For instance, the Black Hawk War of 1832 was fought in Illinois and Michigan Territory after Black Hawk, a chief of the Sauk tribe, protested a treaty that ceded Sauk and Fox land to the United States; after some victories that shocked the US militia, the Natives eventually lost and Black Hawk was imprisoned. He dictated his bestselling autobiography, *Autobiography of Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak, or Black Hawk*, in 1833, in which the war is described at length. Contemporaneous with the book's publication, another less bloody event helped shape the nineteenth century: the Mashpee Revolt of 1833-1834. In response to nullification, the Mashpee protested in an effort to gain self-governance in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Whites had leased out land and woodlot rights, kept out free blacks that the Mashpee had welcomed to their community, and installed the Reverend Phineas Fish as minister—a man who was dismissive of the Mashpee's desires. The Mashpee presented written proclamations demanding the right to rule themselves and their land, and after the Governor threatened to put down the insurrection with troops, the Mashpee succeeded in gaining self-governance and eventually had Fish removed. While all parties involved publicly praised this nonviolent resolution, the revolt was ultimately a loss and an embarrassment for the US government (O'Connell

xxxv-xxxvii). Also contemporaneous with both the Black Hawk War and the Mashpee Revolt was the career of William Apess, a Pequot writer and orator. He aided the Mashpee with their revolt and proclamations; chronicled the experiences of the Pequot tribe and the hypocrisy of white Christians who insulted, killed, and stole from Natives; and twice delivered his *Eulogy on King Philip* in Boston in 1836 to indict white culture regarding the treatment of Natives.⁴

In light of these events and others—including those outlined in the first chapter of this dissertation—it should come as no surprise that readers were attracted to stories of pacific protagonists pushed to violence by Native aggressors, as well as stories that showcased white victory. These kinds of stories reflected on past conflicts as well as those that were ongoing in this period. They also presented these events in ways that reassured white readers that their actions were justified and that they would ultimately triumph over their Native foes. Furthermore, captivity offers Duston and Nick the unique opportunity of exacting revenge against their “savage” counterparts, which further highlights the justification of violence, as these white individuals are not only traditionally nonviolent but are also imagined as correcting the wrongs that Natives have done to them and their families. The most important mode of correcting injustices is to mutilate and scalp the bodies of Native peoples—acts that occur in moments of captivity and that signify ownership and power for both Duston and Nick (as well as white society at large), making a spectacle of the corpses of racial others.

⁴ See *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot* (1992, edited by Barry O’Connell) on Apess’s major works and activities.

These two stories—one fictionalized but based on fact and the other a fiction based on visions of eighteenth-century America—have strikingly similar agendas and deserve to be put into conversation with each other for the first time. Many comparisons can be drawn between the two texts, but I will follow two related threads that can inform scholars about USAmerican ideologies regarding violence and Native peoples, primarily in the nineteenth century. The first thread considers how, for both Duston and Nick, readers must confront USAmerican notions of the frontier as a supposedly exceptional site for wars without rules; in such a cultural context, expectations might bend, including the expectations for women and pacifists. Warring with Native peoples refashioned the ways USAmericans thought about war, land, and retribution, and we can trace these ideologies through Duston's and Nick's stories. The second and related thread regards how the bodily mutilation of Natives became a reclamation of the white land, power, and supremacy that was in flux during this war (or wars) without set rules regarding who and how to kill. Even the voiceless and feminized could claim such power, and mythologized figures such as Duston and Nick exemplify how Native scalps and bodies were metaphors for the land; the ability to carve into bodies and take scalps—including reclaiming white scalps—allowed whites to enact a kind of one-upmanship on Native peoples. I will begin with a brief overview of the historical context in which Duston's retold story and the publication of *Nick of the Woods* took place in order to highlight the characteristics of the supposedly exceptional war without rules; then I will move into close readings of both stories in order to trace the importance of justified violence and mutilation in white-Native relations.

Both stories depict purportedly unlikely killers—white women, nursing mothers, and pacifists. These supposedly civilized, gentle people, though, are so antagonized by Natives that they, as innocent victims, have no choice but to kill Native peoples in order to survive. Authors do not present these figures as colonists who support violent theft of Native lands but as families peacefully occupying land that seems, through silence regarding the historical record, to simply belong to them. As Wayne Franklin notes, captives—particularly women—were strategically represented as “pitiable victim[s] whose presence in ‘Indian territory’ did not raise doubts about the political context of Indian violence.” A “passive, innocent mother/captive” such as Duston “reinforce[d] white values” and “represent[ed] the pacific pretensions of white society as a whole,” serving as a decoy to deflect attention on the militarism of white colonists (112). While Simms, as I noted in Chapter 1, at least hints at how the settlers have taken advantage of corrupt legal practices in their dealings with property in the Carolinas, Bird and the authors who wrote about Duston describe these locations as dangerous frontiers but efface white settlers’ roles in occupying Native lands, either through extralegal means or through technically legal but highly problematic means.

The authors of these texts follow the stories of protagonists whom Native peoples victimize, which then causes the white heroes to act as avengers out of necessity and as a way of restoring (or ushering in) justice and balance to American frontiers. Duston’s story begins with her captivity at the hands of Abenaki Indians in 1697 during King William’s War and climaxes with her killing ten of her twelve captors while they sleep. Afterward, Duston returns in glory to her husband and children in Boston with the scalps of the Abenakis. *Nick*, set in Kentucky in 1782, follows the exploits of settlers who must

engage in guerilla warfare with the Shawnee who attack frontier settlements. Nathan Slaughter, his family killed by the Shawnee, becomes the protector of the forest as he kills Native warriors throughout the text before finally being captured, murdering the Shawnee chief, and escaping as a hero with the chief's scalp. These stories, set in different locations and time periods, are part of an ongoing discussion from early America through the nineteenth century about the necessity for civilized whites to defend themselves against supposed savages—even if they must temporarily cast off “civilized” actions in order to wage small-scale conflicts as well as large-scale wars without rules that Natives have purportedly made necessary. If Natives attack white settlers in clandestine and abhorrent ways, whites are justified in seeking retribution by literally taking Indian lands and figuratively reclaiming power by marking and destroying the bodies of Native peoples. Duston, the wife and mother, and her counterpart Nick, the pacifist Quaker, exemplify the supposed necessity for all white Americans to confront threats from Natives. This necessity is apparent whether those confrontations take the form of bloody wars or less bloody removal, which—as I argued in Chapter 1 on *The Yemassee*—were ongoing, violent occurrences both within the historical and fictive settings of Duston's and Nick's stories *and* the nineteenth-century settings in which these stories were told.

Warring Nations: Relations between Whites and Native Americans

The soil of the Americas has been drenched in the blood of warring sides, all claiming and reclaiming the right to own, tame, and cultivate the land as they saw fit. Facing continual and unique kinds of violence against Native populations who seemed

alien and heathenish, Puritan settlers quickly became acclimated to bloodshed, fear, and Native modes of warfare. As Jill Lepore notes, “Spilled blood . . . signaled God’s judgment. Most colonists would have agreed with the English anatomist who wrote that the body was the very ‘*Book of God*.’ . . . Among the many symbolic functions of the body was its role as God’s writing tablet, on which He might write with ‘bloody characters.’ . . . Spilled blood, then, told not only of slaughter but also of judgment” (100). Colonists could become the arbiters of God’s justice by spilling the blood of Native peoples in His name, which included literally writing on and dismembering the bodies of their victims. This kind of violence seems to be, depending on the audience, both mythical and divine, to use Walter Benjamin’s terminology, as “[m]ythical violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake, [while] divine violence [is] pure power over all life for the sake of the living” (297). For modern scholars, the violence seems mythical in its proportions, a kind of meaningless bloodletting ceremony to consecrate the earth—violence for the sake of power. To Duston’s and Nick’s contemporaries, the violence would appear to be more divine—displaying power over life, in the name of God, for the sake of deserving Christians.

One mode of spilling blood that is central to both Duston’s and Nick’s stories is through scalping, which in both texts is a ritualistic way of claiming the right to life and territory. Though some readers were apparently shocked to see these white characters scalping Native bodies, they should not have been surprised to see such a common practice play out in literature. Though such actions within literary texts may have gone against the assumption that whites—especially women and feminized pacifists—would be too morally restrained to scalp their foes, scalping is an ancient and pervasive practice

of countless peoples, white and non-white. Though it has been commonly linked to Amerindians, scholars such as Mary Gloyne Byler note that “scalping was not a widespread custom among American Indian tribes. Scalping was practiced by the ancient Scythians as long ago as the fifth century B.C.” Furthermore, “research shows that it was not a very old practice on the American continent, and was originally confined to an area limited to the eastern United States and the lower St. Lawrence region, excluding New England and much of the Atlantic Coast region” (Byler 52). Early on, white settlers paid bounties for Indian scalps, and the French and English even offered rewards for white scalps; non-whites were known to supplement their incomes by collecting these scalp bounties (52). While bodily dismemberment might seem contrary to the rules of war and human decency, it too has been commonly practiced across the globe and is particularly applicable to situations on colonial frontiers when rules were often bent or suspended. Taking corporeal trophies and souvenirs such as scalps, heads, hands, teeth, noses, and even whole, living children was common in battles against Native peoples as the shedding of blood *on* the battlefield reclaimed that place for whites and transporting parts *off* the battlefield staked an even greater claim to ownership over the land and Native bodies.⁵

⁵ Richard J. Chacon and David H. Dye provide a fascinating study of scalping and mutilation. They argue that “the earliest evidence for scalping in the Americas comes from precontact sites possibly as early as ~485 BC” (6). However, “[t]he indigenous peoples of the Americas were by no means the inventors of the practice of taking and displaying disarticulated human body parts, nor did they hold a monopoly on this custom. Modification, use, and public exhibition of severed sections of human anatomy have been longstanding traditions throughout the Old World beginning as far back as possibly the Pleistocene, through the Middle Ages, and continuing into the modern era” (8). During the final battle of the Creek War (1813-1814), Andrew Jackson’s men took the noses of 557 fallen Creek warriors so the dead could be more easily counted, and then the flesh from the dead bodies was skinned and tanned to convert the dead into trinkets and souvenirs such as bridle reins. However, the most famous instance of such mutilation occurred at the Sand Creek Massacre when hundreds of men, women, and children were killed and mutilated, including the removal of scalps and ears. After the massacre, “one soldier cut the scrotum off one of the

Constant bloody skirmishes on lands that white settlers had not charted, as well as the Natives' use of guerilla tactics—particularly attacking people at night and killing survivors (including women and children)—caused whites to reevaluate their traditional methods of warfare. After King Phillip's War (1675-1676), the colonial army's minister justified violent colonial actions because war had three causes: for defense, to recover what was taken, and to punish others for injuries done (Lepore 186). Furthermore, two other central beliefs are important in this context: the belief by many colonists that Indians were not truly like themselves (“humans, possessed of both reason and the knowledge of God”) (198) and the belief by many that “the Indians' manifold violations of the laws of civil nations and, even, of nature, meant that their fighting ought not to be dignified by being classed with European conflicts” (201). Adding these causes to the doctrine that wars with Natives were holy wars meant to destroy sinners by any means necessary (192), this ideology essentially laid down such open-ended rules of warfare that battles became wars with, of course, specific purposes but *without* rules—as long as white Christians were warring against supposedly savage Indians. These whites were not concerned with determining if they were using just means to reach just ends, as Walter Benjamin cautions us to do in his “Critique of Violence.” The question of justness was

corpses declaring that he was in need of a new tobacco pouch.” Later, at the Denver Opera House, the minister who led the attack—John Chivington—took the stage to recount the battle and “display . . . over 100 Indian scalps, including the pubic hairs of Indian women which evoked the cheers of throngs.” Just as the handkerchief that Duston used to carry the scalps she took was passed down from generation to generation, apparently the scrotum pouch was also passed down, appearing as a candy container in the 1980s in the hands of a boastful member of the Colorado legislature (22). Besides taking scalps, Duston also intended to take an Abenaki boy back with her to Boston, which is a mode of adoption (or captivity) that we may also see as trophy taking.

no question at all when one could combine sanction from God with the blurred lines of justice that occurred in such supposedly exceptional circumstances.

This ideology falls in line with Giorgio Agamben's state of exception, albeit in a different context than he discusses. As I have noted, in the state of exception, "necessity has no law." Waging war against Native peoples was deemed necessary because of self-defense and God's will. Therefore, normal laws or rules of war could be suspended or refashioned for this new context. Of course, as Agamben notes, and as I have mentioned in the Introduction, the danger of such lawlessness that spirals into violence is that it can "[become] the rule, [and] then the juridico-political system transforms itself into a killing machine" (86). This is characteristic of political relations with Native peoples, as the killing machine was not only sanctioned by the law but, in some ways, became the law; necessity dictated that the war without rules was just. Though Lawrence M. Friedman argues that "[n]ecessity was the supreme lawmaker" in the colonial Americas (33), law was also constantly in flux and "modified in the light of current conditions" (31); indeed, necessity could make law but also dictate when laws should be ignored or changed to benefit specific groups of people, as I have illustrated in Chapter 1.

Furthermore, in the context of Duston's and Nick's stories—as well as the stories of others, in which mourning for lost family members takes center stage—the state of exception takes on even more power. On mourning, Agamben notes, "Just as, during periods of anomie and crisis, normal social structures can collapse and social functions and roles break down to the point where culturally conditioned behaviors and customs are completely overturned, so are periods of mourning usually characterized by a suspension and alteration of all social relations" (65). The crisis in the Americas and, later, in the

United States regarding loss of human life and land resulted in a widespread state of mourning that spiraled into anger and fueled war; this large-scale sorrow and anger is embodied and was fueled by the specific stories of Duston and Nick as readers experience, through these figures, specific acts of violence against whites and the retributive actions of mourners who suspend any rules of war both because of necessity—their own survival—and because they have license to enact godly, “an-eye-for-an-eye” retribution as a means of coping with mourning and reclaiming their status as victors rather than victims. This is particularly the case in supposedly exceptional spaces on the frontier as authors imagine that, to receive any kind of justice, victimized individuals must become arbiters of natural law, however (temporarily) violent.⁶

With Duston and Nick, readers encounter vigilante heroes whom authors present as laudable figures. Though Benjamin notes that “law sees violence in the hands of individuals as a danger undermining the legal system” (280), the individual vigilante becomes heroic during combat on the frontier, wherein the individual is often isolated from central forms of government, including standing armies. This vigilante action is even more necessary in the context of Indian captivity, when the white individual is outside the purview of allies.⁷ The white vigilante’s brand of violence ultimately upholds the law of the war without rules and helps him or her aid the nation in reclaiming lands and bodies for the nation state. As Benjamin notes, “in the exercise of violence over life and death more than in any other legal act, law reaffirms itself” (286). The war without

⁶ See Breitweiser on tensions regarding mourning, grief, and loss in Puritan society.

⁷ While captivity narratives have been studied in great detail, this aspect of vigilantism has, to my knowledge, not been explored in the context of Indian captivity.

rules still has purposes and goals, and Duston and Nick preserve the laws of the nation through sanctioned acts of what we might label today is cruel *lawlessness*.

Even a cursory understanding of white settlers' and politicians' views of Native peoples reveals the prevailing reasons why the murder of Natives would not be seen as criminal. As Michael Paul Rogin notes,

By the eighteenth century, *philosophes* had developed a systematic notion of the primitive mind, negative of the rational, enlightenment consciousness, and located it in savages, peasants, children, and lunatics. . . . [P]rimitivism had its greatest continuing force as applied against peoples of color. It developed into a full-blown, racist theory during the nineteenth century, deriving national identity from racial superiority and justifying on racist grounds the right of one group to exploit, displace, and exterminate another. (xv)

Even Duston's story, on the cusp of the eighteenth century, evinces similar notions regarding the primitive minds of the Abenakis, and this primitivism is echoed across countless fictional and nonfictional narratives of Indian captivity and culture, including later tellings of Duston's narrative. Duston's story is one of the earlier examples of captivity narratives in which whites have settled on what was then a rather desolate frontier in Massachusetts, bordering the woods and protected by a garrison run by local men. By 1782, in *Nick of the Woods* white settlers have been pushing tribes such as the Shawnee out of Pennsylvania and Kentucky. In the 1830s, when these stories became culturally resonant, these ideas were once more at the fore, especially in the case of Cherokee removal. These narratives that depict the brutal captivity and slaughter of whites are a means of imagining "Indians as children of nature, expelled from paradise by their exterminatory violence and requiring paternal control," which "rationalized Indian removal from their land." Ultimately, justifying such violence and removal helped white

populations defend themselves against internal doubts about these methods and created a “personal and national identity” (Rogin xix). As genocidal war and “legal” removals supplemented expropriation by settlers, stories such as these—which include *The Yemassee*, as well—could be called upon to justify current actions, and after the removal was largely accomplished in the nineteenth century, these stories continued to be called upon in order to justify the nation’s bloody past.

The imagined frontier became a place in which to stake out a uniquely American identity that was supposedly in opposition to yet also tied up with and reliant on Native cultures. Creating this identity was in many ways achieved through recounting histories of the nation’s birth and the heroic acts of white American figures. Noting that Americans were faced with the necessity to form and fortify a sense of national identity, Rogin points out that “[a]trocious stories, exaggerated and universalized, provided a horrifying and tempting cultural symbol. Personal projections shared in, and powered, the cultural stereotype” (120). Slotkin notes that “[p]rinted literature has been from the first the most important vehicle of myth in America, which sets it apart from the mythologies of the past. The colonies were founded in an age of printing, in large part by Puritans” who wrote and published a massive number of texts in order to create “elaborate metaphors proving the righteousness of their proceedings.” As Slotkin and other scholars have noted, (US)Americans often turned to written texts for guidance, as authors both reflected politics in their works and framed them for readers. Slotkin states that “literature became the primary vehicle for the communication of mythic material, with the briefest gaps between the inception of an oral legend and its being fixed in the public print” (19).

I refer to Duston's and Nick's stories as having mythical qualities because of how these figures were imagined within and without their texts. Duston became a phenom who was resurrected in numerous texts and across multiple genres and was used to promote ideologies varying from religious to racial to gendered. Meanwhile, Nick—as Nathan Slaughter's double—takes on mythic qualities as a ghostlike or devilish figure who appears to punish the Shawnee, and his disappearance at the end of the text leaves him a spectral figure who supposedly protects the frontier. These figures helped defend the “myth of regeneration through violence” that Slotkin examines as “the structuring metaphor of the American experience” (5). Authors may imply that they are writing about a mythical past—distancing themselves from their present experience—but these mythical experiences repeat (20). Thinking of figures as mythical is, I argue, another way of thinking of them as exceptional, which is another way of trying to mask how the actions of these figures repeat and continually reinforce violent policies against, in these cases, racial others.

In the stories of Duston and Nick, nineteenth-century writers expected their readers to look to the historical/literary figures' acts as models of frontier fortitude that could translate to their own post-frontier contexts. Authors have frequently extolled Duston as a model American foremother while Bird defended his versions of frontier heroism and Native savagery as opposed to James Fenimore Cooper's more sympathetic renditions. In his preface to the first edition of *Nick*, Bird extols his versions of Kentucky's white settlers as “illustrat[ors] of the efficacy of the republican principle in enlarging the mind and awakening the energies” as they “wrested from the savage the garden-land of his domain, and secured to their conquest all the benefits of civil

government and laws” (28, 27). Bird states that readers should excuse some of the rougher aspects of his white characters because they were living unrefined lives on the frontier; they are heroes who contrast with Natives whom Bird saw as savage in the past as well as his own day, as “the North American savage . . . wages war—systematic war—upon beings incapable of resistance or defence” (28-29). While one would not wish to be in the specific situations of Duston or the fictional Nick/Nathan—situations that became less likely as Natives were killed and/or removed—writers could continually use Duston’s captivity and call on Nick’s story as models of the strength of early Americans whose successors were the readers themselves. Like Gabriel Harrison/Governor Craven in *The Yemassee*, they could be recalled as mythic heroes; unlike him, though, they exhibit bloody acts of vengeance that their proponents justify through literature.

After Duston’s captivity and the initial push westward, the setting of *Nick* captured an ongoing discussion about America’s forebears in a land that bordered so-called savagery and civilization. Andrew Jackson was one such forebear who acted contemporaneously with the character of Nick and, as noted before, who believed peace talks with Native peoples were futile and resulted in the slaughter of whites (Rogin 121). Like *The Yemassee*, Bird’s *Nick* illustrates the consequences of initiating such peace talks on a smaller scale—that of the pro/antagonist Nathan/Nick attempting to seek peace with the Shawnee only to see his family, as Jackson foretold, “butchered” (qtd. in Rogin 147). The Quaker Nathan turns into a veritable Andrew Jackson in the wake of his family’s death. Comparing Nathan to Jackson becomes easy upon reading Rogin’s descriptions of Jackson’s ideologies, such as the following:

To make the “butchered, mangled” infants and naked, brutalized mothers “our own,” wrote Jackson, would rouse the “brave sons of Tennessee” to “pant for vengeance.” Jackson threatened to “penetrate the creek Towns” on his own authority “and think myself Justifiable, in laying waste their villages, burning their houses, killing their warriors and leading into Captivity their wives and children, untill [sic] I do obtain a surrender of the Captive, and the Captors.” (Rogin 147)

Indeed, the butchered families in Bird’s novel “rouse the ‘brave sons of’” *Kentucky* in acts of justified vengeance that are blind to distinctions among warriors, women, children, and the elderly. Showing weakness toward Native peoples would, in the minds of early Puritan settlers, mean their own “defeat and possibly extermination.” This Puritan notion translated to the frontier in later years. Though New England’s “total war” (Slotkin 145) against Natives was weakening by the time Bird wrote *Nick of the Woods* (to be replaced by other, less bloody means of interacting with Natives, albeit with similar ends), readers were still, according to scholars, largely supportive of his racist, violent text, as evinced by the reprints and adaptations of the novel, as well as the outpouring of positive reader reviews.⁸ I argue that this is partly because *Nick* is a fictional story set in colonial America’s past, so some readers could and did declare that the story was both of another time and romanticized; in other words, this allowed readers to pretend that the story was exaggerated and to believe that the Natives were already gone, after all—the inevitable vanishing (or vanished) Indians. In addition, many USAmericans who read *Nick* in the 1830s may have favored the final acts of removal against Native peoples who were very much alive and protesting removal during the

⁸ See Dahl for a chronicle of positive reviews of the text in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The text “has been one of the most popular, widely read novels about the western frontier,” placed Bird as one of the front-ranking American novelists, and was called “an important social document” (7, 8). See also Katherine Wilson on the “repeated stagings” of various versions of *Nick* in England and the United States (153).

years surrounding the novel's publication. Such readers could accept or reject the violence in Bird's text but would ultimately side with Bird's view that Natives were uncivilized, as even the supposedly more sympathetic author Simms promoted Indian removal even though he romanticized Native peoples more than Bird did or condoned. Finally, any readers who favored genocidal acts against Native peoples in the past and during the nineteenth century found more of a compatriot in Bird than in authors such as Cooper and Simms.

Against the backdrop of this briefly painted history, these two quite different texts illustrate similar ideologies regarding Native peoples. Both are essentially stories of revenge that are justified because the avengers are initially gentle white settlers who, by necessity, must save themselves and other white Christians from the savage heathens who seek to disrupt the very fabric of American life as it *should* and *must* be. Duston's captivity and Nick's tale both employ standard revenge narrative motifs that Terence Martin notes and that I have enumerated in my Introduction: the sacrifice of innocent victims, antagonists who represent social outcasts, and avenging relatives—usually fathers (2). However, Duston's story is one of the supposedly infrequent instances of a *mother* seeking revenge; indeed, both stories play with notions of gender. Duston is the white, Puritan wife and mother (and, therefore, the supposedly pious and domestic nurturer) and Nick, though a father, is now a family-less man who is feminized because he is a Quaker who refuses to fight. I will examine the role that gender plays in these stories as I argue that feminine/feminized individuals actually enhance the justification of revenge killings because even these supposedly unlikely heroes recognize the necessity of action without remorse during these moments that authors imagine as exceptional and

beyond the scope of the usual, purportedly civilized rules of war. By adhering to these motifs, individuals such as Duston and Nathan/Nick join a coterie of individuals whose violent actions are justified, particularly when the imagined nation is at stake.

Hannah Duston: The Pride of Boston

Hannah Duston's infamy began in 1697 when Cotton Mather preached about her trials in a sermon, *Humiliations follow'd with deliverances*. After the sermon's 1697 publication, followed by two more Mather sermons and more than a century of relative silence regarding her exploits, Duston's tale appeared in numerous newspaper articles, especially from 1830 to the 1880s.⁹ In general, writers have told the same story that Mather told, but some altered or added to his version of events. The sheer number of references to Duston exemplifies how important she was to colonial American and US American history and a sense of female heroism; unlike Mary Rowlandson's popular (and slightly earlier) captivity narrative, which stayed in print more or less continuously, Duston's story was resurrected for more specific rhetorical purposes. In particular, her revival in the nineteenth century seems to reflect an increased interest in the roles of women after the American Revolution, when Duston became a woman whom US wives,

⁹ I can only speculate about why there was such a long silence regarding Duston. Firstly, there was a generic shift in this time. As Slotkin notes, "It was symptomatic of the shift . . . that the captivity narratives no longer preempted the literary marketplace, as they had from 1680 to 1716. After 1725, even the revivalistic preachers turned to narratives of battle for their material, employing accounts of victories and defeats as they had employed the captivities: as a scourge to the back of sinful New England" (181). Secondly, technology was likely a factor. Mather was able to print and sell his sermons, which were widely read; in the 1700s and beyond, people appear to have relied mostly on Mather's versions of Duston's story. Later print technology improvements in the United States seem to correspond with the revised versions of Duston's story in print across an ever-growing number of periodicals—a story that, before, was probably largely spread orally and from Mather's texts. Finally, Duston's story may not have fit the rhetorical purposes of this interim period between the eras of her popularity.

mothers, suffragists, and workers could look to as a model of female American fortitude.¹⁰

The original telling and revisions of this tale are important to our understanding of the ways USAmericans imagined the frontier, contact with Native peoples, the spread west, and women's roles. I will begin with a discussion of Mather's original 1697 telling and then examine the importance of Duston's revival in the nineteenth century, as well as the importance of the many revisions through which her story went from approximately the 1830s to 1850s. In Mather's sermon, after a long lecture about Christ and the Bible,¹¹ Mather notes that, on March 15, 1697, in Haverhill, Massachusetts, Indians came to Duston's home. Her husband, Thomas, left her; the nurse, Mary Neff; and his newborn child in order to protect his seven other children. He fired at the Abenaki warriors and led his children to the nearest garrison (42). Meanwhile, the Abenaki took Duston, Neff, the infant, and several other captives after burning and looting their houses. The infant and several captives were killed shortly before Duston, Neff, and Samuel Lennardson—a boy who had been a captive for eighteen months—settled in with twelve Catholic Natives, Duston believing they had traveled about 150 miles by that point (43). Mather describes the Catholic Natives as idolatrous persecutors, which further justifies the actions that Duston takes against them (44).¹² Threatened with running the gauntlet once

¹⁰ Though Duston's story was again largely forgotten, it was revised in Helen R. Mann's novel, *Gallant Warrior*, in 1954 and, even more recently, in Richard W. Pyne's *The Trial of Hannah Duston* in 2002 and Sybil Smith's *Hannah Duston's Sister* in 2005. The American cultural imaginings of Duston's tale have remained a cause for inquiry into the oft-revised representation of a colonist who, unlike her contemporaries, survived Indian captivity by killing her captors.

¹¹ Before preaching about Duston's captivity, Mather specifically discusses several Bible verses, focusing most of his attention on Acts, the second Chronicles, the first and second Corinthians, Isaiah, Judges, Leviticus, the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, and the Psalms.

¹² This anti-Catholic reference was of vital importance for Mather and his audience as it reflected the ongoing tensions between Catholics and Puritans in the New (and Old) World. Native peoples were

they reached their destination, the three captives each took hatchets and killed the Natives in their sleep. One old woman escaped, as well as one boy whom the captives meant to keep alive and take with them to Boston. They took the scalps of the ten dead Indians and returned to white civilization, receiving fifty pounds and other gifts (46-48).

Franklin states that these were “exceptional reward[s] for an extraordinary deed” and that they “came with broad popular support” (111), but I have argued and will continue to argue that such rewards and deeds were, in reality, far from “exceptional” or “extraordinary.”

The time of Duston’s captivity was one of fear, when the responsibilities of the fledgling colonies were made difficult by the lack of order, understanding, and precedent. In these so-called Indian wars, white, Puritan settlers felt they had a particular duty to hold their own on the brink of the wilderness and, later, move into and tame that wilderness. Duston embodied these duties as an ideal settler, with a husband working in the nearby garrison and a slew of children to continue their parents’ legacy. Once captured, she had the duty to escape rather than be killed or, what was worse, converted or acculturated. Taking retribution against her captors by killing and scalping them would have been deemed heroic and made possible through faith in God and white civilization, all wrapped up in exceptionalist rhetoric regarding the war without rules. Overall, Mather and his contemporaries used Duston’s story as proof of God’s power and will. By helping Duston succeed in the killings, “God demonstrated His desire to sustain

dangerous enough, but Catholic Natives were even worse. This detail disappears from later tellings of Duston’s story as these anti-Catholic tensions lessened; indeed, the detail that Duston kills the Natives who say grace with her over the evening fire could detract from Duston’s heroism because it suggests that these are friendly Natives who pose no physical threat. For Mather, though, the spiritual threat in this moment is of paramount importance. Nathaniel Hawthorne unearthed this detail in his nineteenth-century telling of Duston’s story (which I will discuss shortly), and he only uses it to criticize Mather for being intolerant.

the American Israel even though many of Israel's children had abandoned Him. Duston became a killer because the moral order around her had broken down. Moving into a vacuum created by war, she did individually what New England had been unable to do collectively" (Ulrich 169). As Laurel Thatcher Ulrich comments on Mather's words, she notes that "Duston's heroism imitated 'the action of Jael upon Sisera.' . . . In Jael, Mather found a model which both justified and elevated Hannah Duston's deed. As recounted in Judges, chapter 4, . . . Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, welcomed the enemy of Sisera into her tent, fed him, lulled him to sleep, and then murdered him by driving a tent peg through his head." This story "became a narrative and poetic masterpiece, carefully exploiting the contrasting images of the woman as nurturer and killer" (168). Following in the footsteps of her foremother, Jael, Duston was able to strike this balance between white, motherly nurturer and Indian killer—the kind of killer who was righteous because God was working through her to protect the chosen people. As Ulrich notes, "Little matter that six of those scalps [that Duston took] were of children. Boston claimed her a heroine" (167).

After Mather told and retold Hannah Duston's story, the tale would be revived in the nineteenth century with greater emphasis on her individual power.¹³ Writings about Duston became most frequent in the 1800s, having virtually disappeared in the eighteenth century until she could be unearthed for purposes that I argue are particular to the nineteenth-century United States; these purposes began with using Duston to highlight

¹³ In Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* of 1702, Mather repeats Duston's story almost verbatim in a section titled "A Notable Exploit; *Dux Faemina Facti*" from the seventh book of his text. At this time, "[n]arratives were most often used . . . as testimony of man's utter dependence on God. Otherwise, captives who escaped from the Indians by strength or cunning might suggest that man could rely on his own strength for salvation" (Slotkin 114). Later tellings, which I here discuss, emphasize Duston's individual power with much less (if any) emphasis on God.

the historic and geographic qualities of the northeastern United States but quickly shifted to emphasize her heroism as settlers increasingly moved west—out of the specific setting of Duston’s story but still grappling with Native peoples. The earlier shift in genre/focus away from captivity narratives shifted back in the nineteenth century; narratives of battle and captivity were often wrapped together in novels such as James Fenimore Cooper’s and in the revision of narratives such as Duston’s.¹⁴

For most writers in the nineteenth century, the mythical Duston was transformed into a print-culture icon. Authors called on Duston’s mythical heroism to glorify war against Natives and expound upon the strength of Americans who survived such bloody origins. This allowed them to highlight the specifically feminine heroism of a woman who could exhibit incredible strength while remaining wifely and motherly. Many newspapers printed stories about Duston’s courage, in particular, turning her into an exemplar for other women. In 1830, *The Ariel and Lady’s Book* printed Duston’s story as told by Samuel L. Knapp in his lectures on American literature.¹⁵ In this article, “Female Courage and Fortitude,” Knapp advocates Duston’s actions and mostly conforms to Mather’s version. Two details are interesting in regard to myth making, though. First, Knapp states that Thomas Duston left the scene of the raid because Hannah Duston advised him to do so; this suggests that not only was Thomas present and ready to help his family (as a man should be), but also that Hannah was so selfless and courageous that she actually asked her husband to leave her and attend to the lives of

¹⁴ See note 9 on Slotkin regarding genre shift.

¹⁵ Knapp appears to have been the editor of the *Boston Monthly Magazine*, writing the magazine’s prospectus as its editor in 1825 (see Knapp, “Prospectus”). He also wrote several “sketches” of famous historical figures and writers for *The New-York Mirror*, *The Philadelphia Album and Ladies’ Literary Portfolio*, *The Knickerbocker*, *The Literary Gazette*, *The Family Magazine*, *Christian Watchman*, and *The Catholic Telegraph* in the 1820s and 30s.

their other children. No one knows for sure whether Thomas spoke to Hannah as the raid was taking place, but Knapp's interpretation simultaneously builds up Hannah's character while protecting Thomas's; furthermore, the context of the war without rules—or the exceptional status of the moment—frees Thomas to leave his wife and newborn child, which would otherwise seem unmanly.

Second, Knapp also states that Duston did not kill one Indian boy, “for the avenger of blood was a woman, and a mother, and could not deal a death blow upon a helpless child” (198). Interestingly, yet expectedly in the context of myth- and icon-making, Knapp says nothing about the other children whom Duston kills. To properly heroicize a woman in America, one must highlight the savagery of the Natives to then justify (and even glorify) the woman's actions in killing them and/or highlight the motherly qualities of the woman as she refuses to kill a “helpless child,” glossing over the other killings; Knapp emphasizes the second point in order to craft his version of events. He then describes Duston returning to scalp the Natives so her story would be believed, though he elides the gory details. Rather, he ends the text by saying Duston was awarded with fifty pounds and presents, which were much deserved. Overall, this text describes Duston as a heroine in the line of Spartan warriors and wives; importantly, though, she is still a wife and mother even as she is scalping Indians. Knapp's story was reprinted almost verbatim in other newspapers in 1834 and 1836, always highlighting both her bravery and her femininity. John Greenleaf Whittier famously wrote “The Mother's Revenge” (1831) in a similar vein, highlighting Duston's trials, describing the desire for revenge that consumed her, and justifying her actions. As he imagines her feelings upon the death of her baby, during the act of sparing one Abenaki boy, and while taking the

scalps as proof of her exploits, Whittier pulls back from characterizing Duston as a monster and instead props her up as a heroine in an understandably delicate and dangerous situation. Writers such as Knapp and Whittier had to walk the delicate line between creating a heroic and bloody demigoddess and reinforcing female and motherly virtue—two tasks that could be difficult to consolidate but that were made easier through the idea of exceptionalism.

In building up a positive version of Duston's exploits and character, authors in the 1830s particularly highlight two aspects of her story—the minute details of her hardships and her Christian virtues. Numerous small details differ from text to text, and some authors call attention to specific details that are skipped over in other writings. Many of the details punctuate the fact that this was a war without rules, highlighting the inhumanity of the Natives as a precursor to Duston's acts. For instance, some articles claim that Duston was holding her infant when the baby was killed,¹⁶ while some writers say Neff was carrying the infant at the time; emphasizing that Duston was holding her baby heightens the sense of trauma when the Abenaki warrior strips the baby from her mother's arms and kills her. However, most articles simply state that the infant's brains were "dashed out" shortly after Duston's capture, which is still traumatic regardless of who was actually holding the baby at the time. Furthermore, this allowed some license for readers to fill in the gory details for themselves, which was a standard rhetorical trope in captivity narratives. In addition, many articles dispute the number of miles Duston

¹⁶ See "Female Courage and Fortitude" (1830 and 1840) and "A Heroine" (1830).

traveled, saying she walked anywhere from 75 to 150 miles.¹⁷ The most convincing articles refer to geographical landmarks to state that she traveled about 100 miles.¹⁸ These minute details emphasize the sense of Duston's suffering, which can be used in an ongoing justification of Duston's actions as someone who had just given birth and was treated so inhumanely, walking dozens of miles through the snow and witnessing the gruesome death of her infant. These articles have little space in which to convey their messages and portray Duston as a heroine, yet they spend the time to capture these details as further evidence of Duston's trials and, thus, necessary retributive actions.

While most authors in the nineteenth century followed Mather's lead by justifying and even glorifying Duston's acts as a mythical and heroic US American in a *pre-US* world of savages and saints, two men stand out as harsh critics of the murders of sleeping Indian children. As the editor of *The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*, Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote the article "The Duston Family" in 1836. Using Mather's texts, Hawthorne describes Goodman Duston (Thomas) as a heroic character who cared about the safety of his children. Meanwhile, Hawthorne imagines Hannah deteriorating into a demonic figure. Hawthorne's language is, at first, sympathetic toward Hannah, but he immediately indicates that he favors Thomas Duston. Thomas saw that he could not help his wife as the Indians approached, and Hawthorne suggests he knew his wife would be able to take care of herself "even in a contest with a whole tribe of Indians" (2). This suggests that there is something unique about Hannah that her husband recognizes, which presents her as a person who stands out when compared to

¹⁷ See Knapp "Female Courage and Fortitude" (1830 and 1840) and "Female Biography: Sketches of American Women" (1834). See also both versions of "Hannah Duston" (1836), which borrow from Knapp and may have been authored by him.

¹⁸ See "The Duston Family" (1836) and "Escape of the Duston Family" (1843).

trembling, helpless women—but Hawthorne pictures a more grotesque woman/heroine than other writers.

Hawthorne spends a few paragraphs describing the fear and love of Thomas before returning to Hannah's story. Going into greater detail than Mather at some points, Hawthorne describes the death of Hannah's infant, saying, "In an instant, an Indian seized it by the heels, swung it in the air, dashed out its brains against the trunk of the nearest tree, and threw the little corpse at the mother's feet" (9). At this point readers see some implied compassion for Hannah and, again, see the details of what a war without rules looks like as even infants can be slaughtered. When Hawthorne describes how the group of Indians and captives was divided, he comments on Mather's thoughts about the Catholic Indians by stating the following: "Mather, like an old hard-hearted, pedantic bigot, as he was, seems trebly to exult in the destruction of these poor wretches, on account of their Popish superstitions. Yet what can be more touching than to think of these wild Indians, in their loneliness and their wanderings, wherever they went among the dark, mysterious woods, still keeping up domestic worship, with all the regularity of a household at its peaceful fireside" (9). This marks the turning point of the narrative as the Abenakis who killed and pillaged in Haverhill are Christianized and made docile. Hawthorne then describes how the Natives made a fire and shared food with their captives, "as if they had all been the children of one wigwam, and had grown up together on the margin of the same river within the shadow of the forest" (9). These Indians may be Catholics, but they are not savages who threaten their captives.

The most dramatic scene occurs when Duston's violent actions occur, indicating Hawthorne's discomfort with violent female figures; though the setting is, as I have

argued, imagined as an exceptional space, Hawthorne cannot separate this moment in 1697 from his own set of rules for women. As Ulrich notes, “For Hawthorne, female aggression was simply contrary to nature. He could not sustain the juxtaposition of qualities inherent in the Biblical and in the colonial myth of Jael” (171). At this violent turn in Hawthorne’s text, the Natives are sleeping soundly when Duston wakes Neff and Lennardson, and the three grab tomahawks. Hawthorne writes,

Hark! that low moan, as of one in a troubled dream—it told a warrior’s death pang! Another!—Another!—and the third half-uttered groan was from a woman’s lips. But, Oh, the children! Their skins were red; yet spare them, Hannah Duston; spare those seven little ones, for the sake of the seven that have fed at your own breast. ‘Seven,’ quoth Mrs. Duston to herself. ‘Eight children have I borne—and where are the seven, and where is the eighth!’ The thought nerved her arm; and the copper coloured babes slept the same dead sleep with their Indian mothers. Of all that family, only one woman escaped, dreadfully wounded, and fled shrieking into the wilderness! and a boy, whom, it is said, Mrs. Duston had meant to save alive. But he did well to flee from the raging tigress! There was little safety for a red skin, when Hannah Duston’s blood was up. (9)

Hawthorne then describes how Duston “laid hold of the long black hair of the warriors, and the women, and the children, and took their ten scalps.” The river she subsequently rides down “should be accursed” because of Duston’s deed, and he wishes “the bloody old hag” had drowned or committed suicide on that river, to be buried until “summoned forth to confront her victims at the Day of Judgment; or that she had gone astray and been starved to death in the forest, and nothing ever seen of her again, save her skeleton, with the ten scalps twisted round it for a girdle!” Instead of these outcomes, Duston returned home and was rewarded (9). Whereas shedding blood and taking scalps was largely seen as a reclamation of the land for white, Christian settlers, Hawthorne sees the shed blood as a curse on the land; Judgment Day will result in the Natives’ chance to, in a way,

reclaim their land and blood as they get the opportunity to confront Duston. As a final statement, Hawthorne declares, “This awful woman, and that tender hearted, yet valiant man, her husband, will be remembered as long as the deeds of old times are told round a New England fireside. But how different is her renown from his!” (9). While Hawthorne’s story contains some sympathy for Hannah because the Abenakis kill her baby, his language quickly spirals into a contemptuous tone for her actions, painting a vivid and bloody picture of her exploits. The husband is untainted because he was smart to realize that he could save his children by escorting them with his rifle to the nearest garrison. The wife, on the other hand, has lost her virtue because she overstepped the bounds of propriety and sought revenge, regardless of the social context of this purportedly exceptional space without rules.

Not long after Hawthorne’s text was reprinted, in his 1849 *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, Henry David Thoreau reflects on traveling down the same river on which Duston traveled during her escape. While not as critical as Hawthorne, Thoreau ends up damning Duston just the same. Thoreau notes a detail of the story that is often not mentioned—that Duston had Lennardson ask one of the Abenaki men how to kill and scalp a person (127). Armed with this knowledge, Duston was able to kill her captors. Thoreau also notes that the captives set all of the canoes loose except for the one in which they traveled in order to avoid being followed. He states that they canoed a short distance before turning back for the scalps as evidence of their actions. Thoreau describes how he imagines the trio must have felt, fearful of Natives watching them from the riverbanks. Finally, he suggests that Duston’s story is a permanent part of the world’s history, and he alludes to the apple tree from which Eve

first ate, effectually tying Duston to original sin (127-28). In this telling, Duston is cool and calculating, which strays from the typical versions wherein Duston, though certainly enterprising, is also afraid for her life and feeling a deep sense of loss for her dead baby—sentiments that justify her murderous actions more so than the image of the calculating murderess who premeditates her revenge. Finally, the allusion to original sin punctuates Thoreau’s message about Duston, which could otherwise seem a bit ambiguous. While other authors picture Duston as a goddess, Thoreau pictures Duston as the original *fallen* goddess—a woman who has broken God’s rules for her position and sex.

While Duston takes on the image of the threatening Amazon in Hawthorne’s telling and that of a fallen woman in Thoreau’s version, most authors are able to downplay these images by contrasting Duston—one of their own white, American victims—to the real wilderness savages—the violent, Catholic, depraved Abenaki warriors and hags, and their spawn. Thus, although Ulrich suggests that Duston’s story largely caused “discomfort” by the mid-nineteenth century because she challenged gender norms (172), I see in the vast majority of periodical pieces admiration for Duston and justification of how she defied commonplace standards of behavior. Duston is the kind of Amazon who only turns into a warrior out of necessity; she has been touched by God and must act to save her life, the lives of her fellow captives, and the figurative life of American whites facing wars with Native peoples over land and resource rights and, later—during the time that many of these nineteenth-century articles were written—removal. And Duston was not entirely alone; Ulrich notes that even Mary Rowlandson “was neither passive nor helpless. Though she showed no inclination to repair birchbark

canoes or engage in hand-to-hand combat with invading Indians, she had her own kind of courage, exemplifying not just heroic faith but a practical ability to survive by placing her huswifery skills at the service of her captors” (177).¹⁹ Both the precarious times—living on the supposed border of white civilization and Native savagery—and the lifestyles of American colonists were violent, and not in only “exceptional” circumstances. As Ulrich notes, “From the whipping post on the town common to the pudding stick in the hand of a mother, colonial Americans accepted *authoritarian violence* as essential to social order” (187, emphasis original). Furthermore, as deputy husbands, women could use “defensive violence” to “protect their families or property against an intruder, using any means at their disposal” (189). In the context of this purportedly exceptional space during a war without rules, Duston expressed the authoritarian violence of the white populace and also her own individual defensive violence to protect herself both for her own sake and for the sake of her family and nation. With this reading, her actions are not vengeful in the negative, selfish, emotionally driven sense and are, thus, easily justified for readers who see Duston’s historical context through the lenses of self-defense and exceptionalism.

At the time of Duston’s escape, she seems to have been hailed as a heroine. In the 1800s, her story was revived in countless articles, and she was still largely regarded as a

¹⁹ Rowlandson (captured in 1675) was famously rendered as a heroic figure when reprints of her captivity narrative in 1773 and 1791 included a woodcut of a woman (not actually Rowlandson but associated with her and her story) standing in the doorway of her house with a rifle pointed at four encroaching Natives who have rifles and hatchets raised. One 1770 edition includes a woodcut of a Revolutionary War-like figure—a woman with a tri-corner hat holding a musket and powder horn while standing near a garrison. Ulrich also mentions “‘Molly Pitcher,’ the legendary water-carrier of the Revolutionary War, who fired a cannon in the pressure of a battle” and other women who “learned to shoot in these first French and Indian Wars. In describing an assault on Wells in King William’s War, Cotton Mather praised the women of the garrison who ‘took up the Amazonian Stroke, and not only brought Ammunition to the Men, but also with a Manly Resolution fired several Times upon the Enemy’” (178). Their “Manly Resolution” was permissible in these supposedly exceptional times and places, particularly as long as they retreated into stereotypical femininity afterward, as I have examined in Chapter 1.

heroine. However, some critics wrote that Duston acted inhumanely and regarded Thomas Duston as the true hero. Franklin argues that the hatchet Duston used to kill and scalp her captors “threaten[ed] to destroy the very pretense to innocent suffering that the female captive embodied” (113), and certainly some nineteenth-century readers hesitated to frame Duston as an entirely innocent victim whose acts were justified. As noted, Hawthorne’s views on appropriate behavior for women—views that were not uncommon in his era—clashed with Duston’s actions, as did the sentimental depiction of the children whom Duston killed. Such a depiction may reflect the fact that whites in New England were becoming increasingly separated from head-on violence with Natives as incessant wars were replaced by removal in the push westward. Indeed, depicting Duston as a violent demon may be a rhetorical move in favor of the turn toward removal; compared to the bloody portrayal of Duston, removal may seem more humane and appropriate than all-out war, thus justifying nineteenth-century acts and echoing what Simms suggests in *The Yemassee*.

Today, rather than viewing Duston as a bloodthirsty animal, the general consensus is that she was temporarily insane when she decided to kill and scalp her captors. However, in the contexts of exceptionalism, the war without rules, and the need to reclaim land and pride for the white populace, there was nothing insane about Duston’s actions. The imagined exception allowed Duston to temporarily go savage, carving up Natives’ bodies and subsequently receiving a reward for her acts. Authors framed her as a victim, heroine, and exemplar of Puritan values at the time of her captivity rather than as a colonist occupying contested land in Massachusetts. When she more clearly aligns herself with colonial powers by claiming violent control over Native bodies, this violence

is imagined as a necessary and impermanent defense of self and nation that, much like *Nick*, frames notions of civilization/savagery and victim/aggressor through rhetorics of exceptionalism that erase how pervasive and purposeful murder and trophy taking were at the hands of whites. If revenge is normally maligned, in these cases that play out in literature, someone such as Duston was imagined as having a duty to exact revenge in the names of defense and justice when other means were supposedly wanting. Under these circumstances, the majority of authors saw revenge as a useful tool for motivating this (theoretically) unlikely killer to take frontier law into her own hands before returning to Boston, where her husband took over in claiming the money for the scalps she took and where men such as Cotton Mather told her story for her.

Nick of the Woods: The Killer Quaker

Like Hannah Duston, the fictional Nick from Robert Montgomery Bird's *Nick of the Woods* was rendered as a vigilante hero in a supposedly exceptional time and space, carving the bodies of enemies and scalping them as he took the frontier back from the Shawnee. Bird wrote *Nick of the Woods* in 1837 to largely positive reviews, as it approached the romantic, historical fiction genre in, for some, a more realistic and exciting way than Cooper or Simms were doing at the same time. As R. W. B. Lewis notes, "Bird lived in Philadelphia and Delaware, practiced medicine for a couple of years, wrote a series of moderately successful plays, and three other novels (hardly worth remembering) before *Nick of the Woods* in 1837. In his later years he became depressed by ill health and a belief that he was unappreciated" (107). Indeed, the popularity of *Nick* has declined over the years, but its story remains compelling for contemporary readers,

especially those seeking a window into nineteenth-century views on America's historical and imagined past, as well as race relations and violence.

As a precursor to this discussion about *Nick of the Woods*, I should note that very little scholarship has examined the novel. Perhaps the most in-depth treatment of the text occurs in R. W. B. Lewis's *The American Adam*, which was written in 1959 and is discussed in virtually every other piece of scholarship on *Nick* written after it. Lewis argues that, through violence, "Nathan has become the outraged Adam, hurled out of Eden by a visitation of the devil, venting his outrage in a ferocity of revenge with the extravagant emotion that only the original native illusion could engender" (109). Lewis imagines Nick as the original child/creation of God, and the Natives are the devils who disrupt his heavenly existence; for the Shawnee, though, Nick is the devil stalking the forest, destroying their Edenic existence.²⁰ Nathan's private question for revenge is actually a public message for Bird's readers about the justification of violence in America's past and the continued justification into the future should Native peoples refuse to cooperate with the nation's strides westward. Going beyond readings such as Lewis's, I look to the larger cultural implications of *Nick* as a text that, though relatively understudied, speaks to larger issues of nineteenth-century imperial expansion. Like the resurgence of Duston's narrative from the 1830s to 1850s, *Nick* is a story about the past that speaks to nineteenth-century justifications of continued violence—including revenge—against Native peoples, moving from Nick's personal reclamation of land and

²⁰ In addition, Lewis argues that *Nick* can be seen as a precursor to Melville's *Moby Dick*, "[f]or, like Ahab, Nathan is a member of the gentle Quaker sect who has been wounded beyond all physical and psychological endurance, who has been scorched by experience, and who returns from death to a private mission of revenge—a revenge similarly conceived as a salvation of that little world which simultaneously rejects him" (109). Unlike Ahab, though, Nathan succeeds in killing his white whale, which I will discuss shortly.

bodies through bloodletting and scalping to the larger nation's reclamation of land through removal, continual treaty-making and warring, and the ubiquitous rhetoric of white superiority.

The text is set in Kentucky in 1782 as cousins Roland and Edith Forrester—two of the protagonists—head to a station on the frontier after having been apparently disowned by their uncle. The friendly Colonel Tom Bruce welcomes them to the station and recalls his exploits with the deceased Major Forrester, as they fought “red niggers” together, likely in the French and Indian War (though Bruce is not specific) (48). Bruce regales the newcomers with stories about the hardships of Kentucky and other frontier settlements, where the Natives have “made a dinner of” white settlers (56).²¹ Roland nonchalantly remarks that he has come to Kentucky from Virginia “to locate lands under proclamation-warrants and bounty-grants, to fell trees, raise corn, shoot bisons and Indians” (58). Through the course of the story, readers discover that the antagonists—the Forresters' Virginia lawyer, Richard Braxley, and Braxley's associate, Atkinson (a.k.a. Abel Doe amongst the Shawnee, with whom he now lives)—have changed the old Major Forrester's will, withholding the authentic will that leaves the Forrester fortune to Edith. Then Braxley and Atkinson join the Shawnee in Kentucky, plot to kidnap and marry Edith to Braxley in order to obtain her soon-to-be-inherited wealth, and use Atkinson's daughter, Telie Doe, to lead the Forresters into the wilderness so they can be captured. Meanwhile, as the Forresters arrive in Kentucky, they soon hear from Tom Bruce about Nick of the Woods, also known as the Jibbenainosay, who kills Natives, scalps them, and

²¹ In instances such as those I have quoted above, Bird repeats common language that Simms also uses and that I discussed in my first chapter. Specifically, Native peoples are linked to African Americans as racial others (and as potential and actual slaves) and are also imagined as cannibals.

marks them with “a knife-cut, or a brace of ’em, over the ribs in the shape of a cross” (64). He is regarded as “neither man nor beast, but a great ghost or devil that knife cannot harm nor bullet touch” (65), and he guards the whites from any Natives “that ar’ onlucky enough to come in his way” (64). As the story unfolds, readers must find out, as the characters do, the true identity of Nick—though this mystery often takes a back seat to the immediate peril in which the protagonists (particularly Roland, Edith, and the Quaker, Nathan Slaughter) find themselves.

Bird’s text fits nicely into the conversation amongst writers of romantic historical and frontier fiction, such as Cooper and Simms, but his work is a reaction to these authors’ works as he includes the figure of the Indian killer. With Nick/Nathan, Bird suggests that Native peoples need to be represented more as savages whom heroic white individuals have rightfully defeated by any means necessary on the frontier he imagines. Bird believed that “[t]he Indian is an unprincipled, revengeful, often drunken barbarian who glories in murdering women and exults in displaying the scalps of butchered children” (Dahl 10). In his preface to *Nick*, Bird acknowledges his dark portrayal of Native peoples, though, saying he “owe[s] perhaps, some apology for the hues we have thrown around the Indian portraits in our picture,—hues darker than are usually employed by the painters of such figures.” Yet, what initially reads like a partial apology disappears as Bird indicates that he has nothing to apologize for since “the North American savage” is not “gallant and heroic,” as other authors have presented Natives, but is systematically warlike and merciless (29). He remarks, continuing his third-person preface, “He drew them [Indians] as, in his judgment, they existed—and as, according to all observation, they still exist wherever not softened by cultivation,—ignorant, violent,

debased, brutal: he drew them, too, as they appeared, and still appear, in war—or the scalp-hunt” (32). In exceptional spaces, the war without rules may be tragic as he acknowledges “some few . . . cruel acts of butchery” that whites committed (31), but he posits that Natives have brought the tragedy upon themselves. Ultimately, he makes a similar statement as Simms but allows his protagonist, Nick/Nathan, to embrace revenge and violence because of the assumedly merciless violence of Native peoples that requires whites to defend themselves.

Scholars in the modern era have been quick to note Bird’s particularly brutal depiction of Native peoples but have still pointed out the supposedly realistic features of Bird’s tale. Many critics see Nick’s tale as representative of historical American moments, disregarding alternate histories (such as Native viewpoints). For instance, Dahl posits that the novel is a “realistic picture” of American history and an “important social document that accurately portrays both the heroism and the ordinary life” of frontier Kentucky (8). However, some nineteenth-century readers criticized Bird’s text for its violent depictions of white frontiersmen *and* Native peoples—a critique that existed in earlier periods and exists today, especially in regards to the portrayal of bloodthirsty “savages.”²² Bird felt the need to reaffirm the supposedly barbaric status of Native peoples in his preface to the 1853 edition of *Nick* as a response to critics (Dahl 10); however, readers should (and sometimes do) recognize that such texts and depictions of

²² See brief criticisms of this nature in Harrison Ainsworth’s introduction to the 1837 edition of *Nick*, as well as in Richardson and Trent. W. D. Gallagher, editor of the *Hesperian*, wrote that he was a fan of Byrd’s work, “[b]ut he grievously offended us . . . when we met him last, in ‘Nick of the Woods, or the Jibbenainosay;’—(a most heathenish christening of a most unchristian nondescript!)—and we well remember with what a hearty good will we consigned him to the tender mercies of his Kentucky readers, and his book to perdition. . . . ‘Nick of the Woods’ is already buried in the dust of the West” (qtd. in Williams 324). Through Gallagher’s critique, we see how Bird could be criticized regarding realism on several grounds—for his depictions of Natives and frontiersmen but also for his treatment of Quakerism through the character of Nathan.

Native peoples could be used to justify past, present, and future violence against Natives, just as Duston's story could be used, both in 1697 and around the time that the first (1837) and revised (1853) editions of *Nick* were published.

In Bird's Duston-esque tale, the Indian killer is not a mother but, rather, the Quaker widower and father, Nathan Slaughter. His status as a feminized pacifist makes him seem like an unlikely killer to the other characters in the text, and the fact that he can kill and mutilate Natives suggests they must have done something to deserve it. Early on, Slaughter approaches the settlement, and everyone starts mocking the great "Bloody Nathan" who travels with worn-out clothing, knife, and rifle and a small dark-haired dog always at his heels (72). Roland notices that this man seems to have a "merciful temper, scarce compatible with the qualities of a man of war and contention" (73). Even the mild-mannered dog indicates the character of the man—the dog that "was evidently a coward, creeping along . . . and seeming to supplicate with his tail, which now dragged in the mud, and now attempting a timid wag, that his fellow-curs of the Station should not be rude and inhospitable to a peaceable stranger" (73). Looking at Nathan, Roland "scarce knew whether to pity him, or to join in the laugh with which the young men of the settlement greeted his approach" (73). Bruce tells Roland, "We call him Bloody Nathan . . . because he's the only man in all Kentucky that *won't fight!* . . . [H]e's nothing more than a poor Pennsylvania Quaker" who came to Kentucky for unknown reasons (74). From the onset, then, Nathan fits the mold of the pacifist Quaker who is out of place in the brutal Kentucky landscape because of his refusal to fight.

Nathan spends the majority of the text avoiding violence, even in defense of himself and the helpless Edith Forrester, suggesting that only the most exceptional

circumstances can push him to act violently. When facing Natives in the woods, Roland begs Nathan to fight, but Nathan refuses, “unless we were wicked men of the world and fighting men, and would wage battle with them!” (135). Roland responds, “Why not meet the villains in their own way? . . . [W]e will charge them,—cut them to pieces, and so rid the wood of them! Four strong men like us, fighting, too, in defence of women.” Nathan rejoins, “Thee should remember, friend, that I am a follower of peaceful doctrines, a man of peace and amity” (136). Initially, while avoiding Natives in the forest, Nathan acts as a decoy to lead the Natives away from Roland and his small party, refusing to shoot at them; eventually, though, Nathan grapples with and accidentally kills one Shawnee warrior (161). Readers see that Nathan has the physical strength to kill someone, but he seems to feel nothing but remorse for this accidental deed; importantly, Bird paints Nathan not as a boasting killer but as a modest man who is simply caught up in the moment—just as Duston is painted as the modest woman who does what she has to do versus seeking vengeance. This reinforces the idea that, in these spaces, Natives are the aggressors, not the modest whites who are forced under supposedly exceptional circumstances to meet the Natives on their own footing.

Eventually, though, Roland and readers get a sense of Nathan’s past, which explains his motives for being a loner and, as we discover later, for being a killer whose acts Bird justifies through the frontier setting and the need for defenseless white victims to seek whatever form of justice they can against supposed savages. Nathan hints at his checkered past as he says he will give himself up to die since he has “no one to fight for,—wife or child, parent or kinsman” (136). It is not long before readers get a clearer sense of Nathan’s past confrontations with the Shawnee in a scene that is reminiscent of

the Abenaki attack on Haverhill in Duston's captivity story. Some years prior to the setting of *Nick*, Nathan finds out that Indians are heading to his neighbors', the Ashburns', house; the Ashburns scorn Nathan and do not believe him, so Nathan goes to the station and tells Bruce, who also does not believe him and takes his gun away. When Nathan returns to the Ashburn residence, the Natives are in the process of killing everyone. Without his gun, all Nathan can do is rush in, grab the bleeding Ashburn baby, and flee to the forest, where the baby dies in his arms. Though it is too late to save the dead at this point, the soldiers at the station track down and kill all but one of the fourteen Natives who have taken part in the attack (147-51). Nathan seems to think that nothing can truly avenge the deaths of the Ashburns, as he will not exactly call "killing the killers avenging" (150). This suggests that Nathan feels a sense of helplessness regarding such tragedies; retaliation against the Natives does not heal the wounds. However, Bird represents the Natives engaging in a war without rules as they slaughter the peaceful Ashburns. Tracking down and killing the guilty Shawnee warriors seems like a form of justice when imagining those fourteen Natives killing other frontier families and laying claim to land that the whites "own" and have settled on. Taking back ownership of the land requires shedding the blood of those fourteen Natives, both as retribution for the Ashburns and as a warning to other Natives, and particularly the Shawnee, who refused to recognize white control. Tracking down the specific perpetrators of the murders, in this time and space, takes the form of proportional, justified retribution.

While this story about avenged murder gives readers a clearer sense of who Nathan is, his true identity only manifests itself in full once Roland is captured and must be saved. Roland is given to "the old Piankeshaw" and told that he will be made "to run

the gauntlet through every village of the nation, and then to [be] burn[t] . . . alive, for the satisfaction of the women and children” (213). This is reminiscent of the threat that Duston faces of running the gauntlet, and the tie to Duston continues as the narrator notes that Roland “had heard, and read, of escapes made by captives like himself, from Indians, when encamped at night in the woods—nay, of escapes made when the number of captors and the feebleness of the captives (for even women and boys had thus obtained their deliverance)” (216). Perhaps he (or, rather, Robert Montgomery Bird) is familiar with Duston’s own story of escape, but Roland does not realize this exact kind of escape; instead, Nathan comes to the rescue and does the killing and scalping. In the night, Roland hears the axe of Nathan fall on the Shawnee who are sleeping (217). After Nathan releases Roland, readers see the dual personality of Nathan as Bird describes “the strange medley of self-accusing and exculpatory expressions, the shame-faced, conscience-stricken looks, alternating with gleams of military fire and self-complacency, with which the man of peace recounted his bloody exploit” to Roland (225). According to Rogin, “Frontier conflict . . . seems to connect nature, violence, and difficulties with speech” (42). In moments such as these—and when Nathan is first introduced—readers often see his inability to express himself because of the turmoil he feels inside and the double life he leads; furthermore, Bird shows his protagonist’s complete lack of speech ability during the epileptic fits he has. This inability to speak the horrors of his life marks him both as a victim and a perpetrator of frontier violence.²³ Such silence also marks

²³ Silence also marks Nathan as a Quaker, as the religion’s two most important tenets are silence and witness (Birkel 15). Quakers are urged to speak with caution because “[t]he impulse to speak might come from a need for attention, or the urge to please others, or a desire to appear brilliant. Indulging a fragile ego and attempting to bolster a poor self-image result in messages that tire rather than edify the others present” (49). Silence marks Duston, as well, in that she does not tell her own story.

Duston, and this silence links to the modesty that is requisite for the frontier hero—someone who necessarily takes action in exceptional times and places but who does not revel in it quite like the supposed savages do.

At this point, Nathan's split personality is completely revealed when he tells Roland the full story of his past, which justifies his actions as an avenging vigilante. Some years before, the Shawnee came to Nathan's home, and Nathan handed over his rifle as a sign of friendship; with Nathan's gun, the Shawnee shot down his children, wife, and mother (234). This story seems to explain everything, and Bird's drawn-out telling of Nathan's past suggests that he has every reason to seek revenge against the specific Natives who killed his family—including the Shawnee chief, Wenonga, whose name means "Black Vulture." And while, as Gary Hoppenstand notes, "Nick" is "one of the devil's many names" (57), Jibbenainosay means "Dead Man Who Walks" (Lewis 107)—in which case it makes perfect sense that the vulture and the dead man will be linked in this narrative until one of them triumphs.

As Nathan concludes his story, readers discover that the mutilation of his own body at the hands of the Shawnee has taught him the lesson that living on the frontier necessitates the ability to be preemptively violent and to lay claim to Native property (including body parts) with force before the Natives destroy white civilization. Nathan reveals his fragile state of body and mind when he collapses in an epileptic seizure "brought on by overpowering agitation of mind." Falling down and losing his hat, Nathan exposes his head, which is horribly scarred from an Indian scalping knife (235). As Hoppenstand notes, "The implication in Nathan's tale is that when confronted with unreasoning violence, peace becomes self-destructive. Instead of giving his weapons to

his enemies as a gesture of peace, Nathan should have used them for self-defense” (57). Through this story of Nathan’s past, Bird demonstrates how violence against Natives was justified in the past because they were deceptive; the only way to avoid tragedy in the white household was to be prepared for violence and beat the Natives at their own game, much as Gabriel Harrison is eventually able to do in *The Yemassee*, albeit in different fashion than Nathan. In *Nick*, even Roland, the exemplary white, heroic figure, sides with Nathan. Terence Martin notes, “As a gentleman from Virginia, Roland Forrester represents the acme of civilization in *Nick of the Woods*. Therefore, when Roland says he would have killed the natives, too, if they had killed his family as they did Nathan’s, the Virginia gentleman and the Quaker Indian-hater are one in spirit” (2-3). Nathan, as a Quaker, has learned the lesson of preemptive violence too late, but revenge becomes a means of restoring a perceived imbalance regarding justice.

In this text, Quakerism comes under fire because people like Nathan had, according to Bird, naively believed that they could live safely amongst the Natives, just like the settlers in *The Yemassee* believed their Native neighbors were friendly.²⁴ Cotton Mather “equate[d] [Quakers] with the Indians, partly because of their opposition to English usurpation of Indian lands, but primarily because of their doctrine of human

²⁴ One of Quakerism’s tenets is equality among all sexes and races, and one of William Penn’s particular goals for his “holy experiment” was to preach spiritual equality and justice with regards to Native peoples (Birkel 110). Quakers and Natives also shared the belief in the power of dreams; Quakers recorded Native dream visions and remarked that their own dreams about Natives “underscored their friendly nature, tending to defuse fear of the supposedly savage and unchristian Natives” (Gerona 42). While Quakers and Indians did have disputes, the Quakers have been widely recognized for their work with Native-white relations, the abolition of slavery, and women’s rights, as well as their influence regarding the justice system in the early Republic. Dumm notes that the “Quaker project” aimed “to establish an order in which the exercise of coercion would be displaced by what might be called an exercise of persuasion. Central to the Quaker mission was a radical modification of the system of criminal punishment. Through their criminal laws, they attempted to establish institutions which would redeem rather than torture. They wanted to reconcile the conflict between freedom of conscience and the exercise of power” (65).

freedom and the inner light—their tenet that Christ is contained within each man and that pure introspection, without inhibition by books and creeds, can yield personal revelation” (Slotkin 130). Believing in the goodness of Native peoples was a challenge to the belief that Natives largely could not be converted to more “civilized” ways and must, therefore, be killed or removed. Originally, *Nick of the Woods* “was to be called *The Fighting Quaker*” (Williams 322). However, Nathan is forced to relinquish his status as a true Quaker once he kills Natives; he masquerades as one in front of the white settlers, but he has ceased to live up to the religion’s tenets—though only out of necessity in exceptional moments, as Bird suggests.

Of course, as with so many stories—including Mather’s telling of Duston’s captivity—Bird ignores the reasons why the Shawnee would have killed the Ashburns and Nathan’s family in the first place. Such a history runs counter to the objectives of writers such as Bird, who do not take into account Native perspectives both because they would challenge whites’ versions—particularly the idea that bloody attacks on Natives occurred in exceptional, justified moments—*and* because Native perspectives supposedly did not matter. The text is part of “an ideological apparatus which serves to displace the historical culpability of the culture of the writer” (Nelson, *The Word* 39), and Bird elides white culpability more so than his contemporary Simms. Dana D. Nelson argues that Nathan’s personal history “seeks to implicate its readers in its drive for revenge precisely by absolving them of complicity in political and historical circumstance. Instead, it offers them a reason to hate Indians that arises from a sense of innocent personal loss.” As a Quaker, Nathan lived a peaceful life; however, his story “omits any historical

consideration of why the Shawnees were in the area marauding local inhabitants” (Nelson 44). Nelson gives a bit of this historical background as she explains the following:

[I]n order to enjoy a peaceful life under the benevolent auspices of Quaker William Penn, a band of Shawnees had joined the Delawares in the Susquehanna valley of Pennsylvania in the early eighteenth century. By mid-century, however, . . . frontier families, eager to acquire and cultivate the fertile lands of the region, were becoming increasingly hostile and aggressive toward the native population. Finally, to clear the land completely for agrarian expansion, Pennsylvanian statesmen coerced Iroquois leaders to force the Delawares and Shawnees to leave the valley. This dispossession would have taken place twenty to thirty years before the action of the story. (44)

Nathan perhaps lived amongst the Shawnee in Pennsylvania, but readers encounter him in Kentucky. From trusting the Shawnee in his surroundings, he turns into a hunter, tracking them through the state as an active killer. While other frontier families were greedy to acquire Indian lands and, thus, displayed violence against Native peoples, Bird does not include this history in his story; such a history would undercut the notion that Natives had started the violence, unprovoked by whites. Furthermore, Nathan is not tied to the land and does not appear to perpetrate violence out of greed for the land; instead his violence is framed as retributive, which makes it somehow more palatable. Nevertheless, as I have argued, by shedding blood, carving bodies, and taking scalps, Nathan is very much invested in the land as he helps whites claim it from the Natives he attacks.

Of course, for Bird’s contemporaries, any act that results in the deaths of Natives—whether for land or revenge or both—is justified because of the Natives’ violent past and present actions against white settlers, including the innocent, Christian travelers, Roland and Edith Forrester. As Hoppenstand argues, “If we follow Bird’s

formulaic line-of-reasoning, that the Indians are devils who prey upon the Christian settlers, then Nick's retribution is indeed just, being as it is a type of exorcism. The cross overcomes evil here. It is an apt symbol and an effective narrative device" (59). Nick, though often compared to a devil by the white settlers and the Natives, is actually expelling the devils—the Shawnee—from the earth; anyone who is not evil will not be harmed and, if you are the white, Christian, angelic Forresters and need help when facing the Natives, Nick will even come to your rescue. Nathan/Nick is not un-religious but just un-Quaker, and kindness and compassion are stereotypically feminine traits that do not translate well into times of war, as evinced in *The Yemassee*. Feminine/feminized characters such as wives/mothers (Duston) and pacifist Quakers (Nathan) must overcome these emotions when they are faced with enemies whom whites deem heartless.²⁵ The Quaker religion has left Nathan open to "weakness" and "disaster," but a more "conservative religious ideology" that accounts for an-eye-for-an-eye retribution is the answer to the settlers' problems (59).

This ideology that is seen in the early nineteenth century persisted into later moments, as well, and was a useful rhetorical tool for justifying white aggression in particular (though pervasive) instances. This stance appears, for example, as part of

²⁵ Indeed, feminized characters lack soldierly qualities and have to do a lot of work to become soldiers. Compassionate religious views often result in military weakness, as is perhaps best illustrated in the character of David Gamut, the psalmist from Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. Hawk-eye berates Gamut for being a singer and reasons that he must have "fallen into the hands of some silly woman" to have been raised as a singer instead of as a woodsman, learning in and from the forest (254). He says Gamut "might be better employed" (67) and refers to him as "the weak soul, who passes his days in singing" (72). Hawk-eye later advises Gamut to sell his tuning pipe and buy a gun (132). Perhaps the most intriguing way that Gamut is feminized is when he is subtracted from the number of men in his group on two occasions. First, as Magua flees from them in the beginning and Hawk-eye is only able to wound him, Heyward suggests they follow Magua. He reasons, "We are four able bodies, to one wounded man!" (52). The "able bodies" include Heyward, Hawk-eye, Chingachgook, and Uncas; Gamut and the women are excluded. Second, as the group tries to escape the Mingoes toward the end of the novel, Hawk-eye says, "What shall we do with the Mingoes at the door! They count six, and this singer is as good as nothing" (307).

journalist Henry Elliot Mott's argument in 1887 about a monument that was erected in Hannah Duston's honor, on which Duston has a determined countenance. Mott notes that, though Duston lacked much refinement, she had to act as she did because "a delicate over-nicety would have been less influential with her captors than a certain expressive zeal" (2). Therefore, the menacing face of the statue seems justified to Mott, though not very feminine. Femininity and pacifism have no place in these exceptional spaces because the Natives supposedly have no mercy for the compassionate or weak of heart. Furthermore, as I have suggested before, defining these spaces and moments as exceptional allows figures to break traditional gender norms without being seen as subversive.

Late in the story, Roland, Nathan, and Stackpole make plans jointly to rescue Edith from the Shawnee camp, which is the climax of the story and the moment of greatest retribution and reclamation for the whites. Captured while trying to rescue Edith, Nathan quickly succumbs to an epileptic fit and is revered as a magician or conjuror amongst the Shawnee (299). With this power, he gets an audience with Wenonga and slays him. Bird writes, "Nathan, leaving the shattered skull, dashed the tomahawk into the Indian's chest, snatched the scalping-knife from the belt, and with one girding sweep of the blade, and one fierce jerk of his arm, the gray scalp-lock of the warrior was torn from the dishonored head" (323). Interestingly, in the midst of active verbs that paint the ferocity of Nathan in this moment, Bird ends with a passive action as the scalp "[is] torn" from Wenonga; in effect, this lessens the agency of Nathan and the sense of savagery that he might embody. Indeed, this is the only moment when readers

actually see Nathan committing physical violence against Natives, as Bird traditionally presents readers with only the aftermath of Nathan's/Nick's violence.

Despite the use of passive voice, Nathan is still able to dominate the Shawnee chief and take his scalp as a trophy and as retribution for the scalps taken from Nathan's family members. The revenge and reclamation are not complete, though, until Nathan marks Wenonga's carcass with a cross, "dividing skin, cartilage, and even bone" (323). Importantly, Bird seems to justify this brutal killing because of not only who the Shawnee are, but also because of who Wenonga is. The old Shawnee chief "had killed abundance of white people, men, women and children, whose scalps had, for thirty years or more, been hanging in the smoke of his Shawnee lodge . . . [H]e was very brave, and loved a white man's blood better than whiskey, and . . . he never spared it out of pity . . . [,] seeming well pleased that he could boast a deficiency so well befitting a warrior, that he 'had *no heart*'" (204). The heartlessness is not simply a lamentable fact of nature; it is something of which the Natives are actually proud. Furthermore, their cannibalism (which is alluded to throughout the story and is discussed here as the drinking of white blood) poses an additional threat to whiteness because Natives will not only claim power by killing whites, but also by actually consuming them; again, treatment of the human body becomes a metaphor for one's power and ownership. According to Bird, Native peoples are the worst kinds of killers and torturers, for they feel no remorse for their victims, unlike even soldiers during the Inquisition or bloodthirsty pirates (329). Their particular brand of savagery has brought about this kind of total war, which requires behavior from whites that may seem contrary to white, Christian laws but is all part of this theoretically exceptional environment.

The final scenes of the novel depict perhaps the most brutal violence against Natives as both Nathan and the Kentucky settlers in general attack the Shawnee camp, but the Shawnee have invited this violence into their domestic space by bringing white captives there. As Wilson notes, though, “The novel appears uncomfortable . . . with so blunt a moral sanction of violence against the helpless. Wenonga’s elderly wife dies in the fire she herself kindled, a fire designed to roast Roaring Ralph, providing at least the cover of rough frontier justice rather than simply the bludgeoning immolation of an ancient grandmother by the white horse-thief” (141). In the scenes leading up to the death of Wenonga’s wife, Bird presents the woman as a stereotypical old Indian hag who ridicules her prey—in this case, Stackpole, who is tied up and ready to be burned alive. Though Wenonga’s wife ends up burning in the fire while Stackpole escapes (330), this scene is both predictable and not particularly lamentable.²⁶ Bird does acknowledge that this final scene is, perhaps, overly cruel as he notes, “the triumph was not completed until the village, with its fields of standing corn, had been entirely destroyed—a work of cruel vengeance.” However, this statement is immediately tempered by his argument that these acts are “not so much of vengeance as of policy; since the destruction of their crops, by driving the savages to seek a winter’s subsistence for their families in the forest, necessarily prevented their making warlike inroads upon their white neighbors during that season” (340). Bird masks the anger and thirst for revenge within his white characters as he downplays this destruction as a matter of rational policy. Once again,

²⁶ In addition, as Stackpole’s feet are free and he kicks the wife towards the fire, she falls “stunned and apparently lifeless” into the flames—not screaming and writhing in agony (330).

the exceptional status of this moment has, for Bird, forced the whites to rethink traditional acts of war out of necessity.

In the very end, Bird suggests that Nathan is perhaps too much of an exceptionally violent figure to relocate in a more settled area, though his violence is apparently temporary and he is still a heroicized protector of the forest. After the final battle, Roland asks Nathan to come back to Virginia with him, but Nathan says he has shamed the people of his faith too much to return to the settlements (344-45); nature must be his home, much like Cooper's Natty Bumppo and unlike the real-life Hannah Duston who, as a wife and mother and someone who did not make a name for herself as a violent forest dweller, returns to Boston. Bird ends his novel as follows: "From that moment, the Jibbenainosay ceased to frequent his accustomed haunts in the forest; the phantom Nick of the Woods was never more beheld stalking through the gloom; nor was his fearful cross ever again seen traced on the breast of a slaughtered Indian" (349). This sense of temporary violence adds to how Bird justifies Nathan's actions, as he is not naturally violent and ceases to appear once he has killed those directly responsible for his family members' deaths. He has satiated his thirst for blood and vengeance and, thus, poses no additional threat; and, of course, he never posed a threat to the white settlers in the first place. As Michael T. Wilson notes, "The only white men who appear to have lost their self-control do so because of contact with the Indians, whether they react by becoming obsessed with killing Indians or by devolving into near-Indian racial traitors themselves" (140). Thus, Nathan's initial spiral into depravity is not his fault but, rather, is due to his contact with Native peoples; furthermore, the white antagonists—Braxley and

Atkinson—both die in the final conflict because of their traitorous association with the “savages.”

Overall, despite *Nick*'s more violent twist on the backwoodsman character, the book fits into a larger discourse during the nineteenth century regarding the justification of violence against Native peoples and the rhetoric of frontier exceptionalism as it relates to justice. Michael T. Wilson, like other critics, puts *Nick* in conversation with Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) and Simms's *The Yemassee* (1835), noting, “Each of these three novels performs a similar function, not only in terms of manhood but also for ethnicity, ‘testing’ white and Indian manhood in order both to explain and to justify the violent expansion of the Indian frontier” (133). Bird takes his story a bit farther than Cooper or Simms, but the overall messages remain the same: Both Natives and whites are violent, but while Native violence is chaotic and hellish, white violence is necessary, rational, and controlled. None of the Natives in *Nick* deserve salvation because of their relentless violence, whereas even the seemingly relentless Nick has enough restraint to keep him from becoming totally savage, in that he only acts out of retribution and ceases killing once his nemesis is dead and he has reclaimed his family members' scalps. This characterization of the violence of Nick and his cohorts serves to “obscure, rationalize, and evade white culpability for that violence. If Bird's desire was to de-romanticize Cooper's Indians, he substantially de-romanticized the settlers as well” (143). I argue that the frontier settlers are still somewhat romanticized in this text, but the reduced romanticism as compared with Cooper demonstrates the harshness of a frontier setting that calls for violent action on the part of all whites—including pacifist Quakers like

Nathan—and extends the earlier frontier surrounding Duston, wherein she had to join in on the violence during a supposedly exceptional moment.

Ultimately, one may ask if Nathan ends up better than he started and, thus, if the nation ends up better. Though not spiraling into complete savagery, Nathan still does not return to civilization with the Forresters. While James C. Bryant argues that “Nathan is unsuccessful even in, as Joan Hall puts it, ‘partially expiating his guilt,’ for his condition is presumably worse at the end than ever before” (363), I argue that Nathan seems to have reached a sense of closure. Even as a peaceful Quaker, he never truly belongs in the settlements, as the Kentuckians berate him for his pacifism and push him to the margins of their association. Now that he has avenged the deaths of his family members, he can disappear in the woods, where he belongs. His story ends once he receives the accolades of the public, just as Duston’s story ends at that moment. Unlike the historical Duston, though, who can return to Boston, the fictional Nathan is unfit to go with Roland to civilization. Such a tortured character likely cannot assimilate in the way that he would have to assimilate in order to be accepted as a proper citizen; similarly, he cannot return to a Quaker civilization because of the violence he has perpetrated. Though he has not completely “gone Indian” with his savage behavior, his actions are violent enough to stain his reputation as a “civilized” man. After all, whereas Duston killed for immediate freedom from captivity, Nathan (as Nick of the Woods) often killed by actively seeking out Native bodies to mutilate. Furthermore, unlike Duston, Nathan has no wife or children to return to—no familial role to fulfill and no one to claim or “cover” him. Thus he does not face the same societal pressures and knows from experience that he can live on his own, subsisting as he has for years on hunting and trapping. This vigilante must

take “solitude [as] his strength,” which is characteristic of many vigilante heroes (Hoppenstand 59).

Besides the fact that Nathan is a loner, though, perhaps the most important reason why Bird lets Nathan disappear into the forest is because Nathan, as a mythic hero, is then forever allowed to haunt the frontier as a constant threat to Natives and protector of innocent whites. He is the symbol of US American Manifest Destiny guarding the people. The solitude of this fictional hero does not erase his actions and the ways that those actions spoke to the novel’s readers, though. While most individuals would not end up killing and carving up Natives as Nathan did, his character symbolizes the ideology that violence—in its many forms—can establish and maintain the welfare of the new and expanding nation. The passivity of the Quaker life was not and will not be the answer as white US readers remembered their nation’s past and continued to grapple with how to deal with Native peoples. The novel is not about one man’s life as a killer of Indians so much as it is about the life of the nation, and Nathan appropriately disappears into the forest as a stand-in for and protector of the expanding frontier—a frontier whose land has been possessed by being soaked in Indian blood and through fetishizing the scalps and bodies of Native peoples, making a spectacle of the racialized carnage.

Conclusion: The Necessary Vengeance of Supposedly Unlikely Avengers

In the end, the two disparate figures of Hannah Duston and Nathan Slaughter are unified under the Anglocentric, constructed category of heroic white (US) Americans who had the strength to do what was supposedly necessary, given the historical context of Indian raids and captivity. As mentioned previously in the context of myth- and hero-

making, the authors of these stories wanted readers to identify with and applaud these larger-than-life individuals—with Duston, the historical figure who was fictionalized, and with Nick, the fictional character whom Bird manages to propel off of his novel's pages and into our sense of a cultural reality. In the majority of these texts, Native peoples deserved to be killed for two primary reasons. First, they were deemed savages who, in the cultural imagination, always attacked whites first—and often attacked white women and children. Because of their purportedly violent nature, Natives “had by their own primitive violence given up their right to inhabit Eden” (Rogin 118) and had forced the nation into an exceptional status. This authorized violence that was imagined as a response to Indian savagery ultimately resulted in an ongoing war without rules that was less the exception than the norm. However, the rhetoric of exceptionalism is necessary in order to bring acts of revenge and spectacle-making closer to acts of justice or at least justified retribution. Second, Native peoples were purportedly destined to die because of God's mandate for whites to inhabit the Americas and because Natives were unfit for survival in a so-called civilized world. In addition to Native American deaths due to disease and warfare, Rogin notes, “As the whites invaded Indian land, killed their game, and destroyed their crops, Indians began to starve in large numbers. This was taken as a sign of their improvidence; their alleged failure to use government rations frugally was further evidence” (117). Whites believed they had a God-given right to the land, and they evinced this right by literally claiming the land through settlements and figuratively claiming the land by claiming the bodies of Natives.

Duston and Nick bring both of these reasons for Native deaths to light as they foreground the supposedly savage violence of Natives who invade lands that the whites

claim to own *and* as they depict the ultimate inability of Natives to withstand the intelligence and strength of even a mother who has just given birth (Duston) and a gentle Quaker (Nathan). These two rationalizations for the extermination and/or removal of Native peoples trump any arguments that Duston and Nick were not justified in their actions; even the acts of killing Native children are justified because 1) Native children are just savages in training and 2) because all Natives are savage “children of the forest,” distinctions among male warriors, women, children, and the elderly are blurred and largely disappear. As Rogin notes, “Indians . . . were children, not fathers, in the American imagination” (166). Even “Presidents called Indians their children. So did frontier governors, Indian agents, treaty commissioners, generals, Secretaries of War, and Superintendents of Indian Affairs” (188). Bird himself notes, “It is only among children (we mean, of course, *bad* ones) and savages, who are but grown children, after all, that we find malice and mirth go hand in hand,—the will to create misery and the power to see it invested in ludicrous colors” (209). As children, Indians could either be molded into civilized human beings or, as was the case in Duston’s and Nick’s tales, killed as not-to-be-trusted hellhounds who resisted being molded into something better than savages.

Of course, not all white figures (and heroes) in the nineteenth century helped illustrate how Natives were supposedly non-human devils. As the nineteenth century progressed, Richard Slotkin notes, the image of the (US)American “as a captive or a destroyer of Indians” changed to the (US)American as “growing closer to the Indian and the wild land. New versions of the hero emerged, characters whose role was that of mediating between civilization and savagery, white and red” (15). Yet there was no

smooth transition from one heroic type to the next; the Natty Bumppo who was closer to Native culture was played off of his contemporary alter egos—the “destroyer of Indians” Nathan Slaughter and the imagined nineteenth-century Duston—and the intermediate Gabriel Harrison from *The Yemassee*. Imaginings of these heroes’ lives, set in the United States’ historical past, could be used as cover stories for the ongoing violent policies of imperial conquest. From Duston’s time through the nineteenth century, “[t]he ‘Indian’ is fixed timelessly in his role as enemy; the author, the reader, and their shared (dominant) culture are relieved of responsibility and guilt” for the death and/or removal of these enemies (Nelson, *The Word* 44). In sum, justifying the violent acts of whites against Natives that occurred before the nineteenth century spoke to justifications of anti-Indian violence, in its various forms, during later periods when readers consumed stories such as Duston’s and Nathan’s.

In the cases of Hannah Duston, Nathan Slaughter, and so many frontier “heroes,” violent actions were justified because the heroes killed supposed savages and, in the cases of *Nick* and *The Yemassee*, even the white cohorts of savages. Furthermore, these figures purportedly end their violence once the vengeance has been achieved, as authors frame these figures’ violence as exceptional and limited to acts of revenge that are akin to retributive justice and that do not reflect the permanence of their victims’ deaths.²⁷

Duston returned to Boston as a hero, resumed her duties as a wife and mother, and had

²⁷ By this I mean that these figures apparently stop killing Native peoples. As Benjamin notes, violence has many forms; even without directly killing Natives the structures of making power were (and are) always “an immediate manifestation of violence” (295). This includes making contracts as acts of lawmaking violence both within the contract itself and because contractual arrangements often lead to fraud “for fear of the violence that [they] might unleash in the defrauded party” (288, 290). This notion resonates with Laura Wexler’s characterization of Indian education as “tender violence.” Also see Chapter 1, note 20, in this dissertation on Wexler.

two statues erected in her honor in the nineteenth century. The fictitious Nathan does not return to civilization, but he never really belonged there; instead, he fades into the forest, and, although his alter ego is never heard of again by white or Native societies, his mythical existence still protects the land. While some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century individuals claimed that people like Andrew Jackson “were also as violent and barbaric as Indians[. f]rontier leaders rejected this identification. They admitted their own violence only as a temporary response to Indian violence” (Rogin 119). For frontiersmen and women, the ability to cease violent action was what separated these white heroes from their savage counterparts. This ability was also what allowed the rhetoric of exceptionalism to have so much power in allaying the stigmatization of white violence and vengeance.

Significantly, Duston’s story was revived in the 1830s just as Bird and his contemporaries were writing their historical fictions about the frontier and white relations with Native peoples. As I have discussed, this may seem like a late period in which to discuss Indian raids and frontier wars with so-called savages but was “the definitive era of ‘Indian Removal’” and was the period when white USAmericans “were giving voice to a powerful new chapter in their superiority narrative which both justified and fueled their progress across the continent: Manifest Destiny” (Nelson, *The Word* 41). The movement westward played on America’s imagined past, which served as a precursor to and justification for continued westward expansion. Nelson argues that stories about the frontier and westward expansion “offered a certain perspective and encouraged reader identification with the characters, who embodied a particular kind of ‘successful’ national tradition.” Whatever the reading of these white characters and their Native

counterparts—whether the deaths of Natives was supposedly inevitable, as in the Leatherstocking Tales and *The Yemassee*, or necessary, as with Duston and *Nick*—“the end result was an acceptance of a historical *and* ongoing policy toward living Native Americans, as though it were ‘natural’ and already graven in (tomb)stone” (*The Word* 41). This policy continued even until the end of the nineteenth century, as Shari M. Huhndorf notes that “the Wounded Knee massacre of 1890 usually signals the end of the military conquest of Native America. At Wounded Knee, a reconstituted Seventh Cavalry avenged Custer’s 1876 defeat by slaughtering around three hundred unarmed Lakota Sioux, mostly women, children, and old people” (21).²⁸ At this same moment when whites were continuing to fight and expel Native peoples, the United States was forming its self-identity not just through written texts such as Duston’s revival and *Nick*, but also through centennial celebrations. Upon approaching the centennial, the government and people of the United States realized even more fully that the country had not adequately recognized its own history, despite the mythologizing of certain people and events. Historical displays and commemorations, such as the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876 and the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, were attempts to remedy this issue (Huhndorf 23-24). Narratives of captivity and Indian wars are part of this larger culture of creating an identity that white USAmericans could embrace as unique from and better than European identities.

Studying these texts and the subsequent revisions and permutations reveals how they have been used again and again to not only justify the actions of individual

²⁸ See Deloria on recognizing that Wounded Knee was not the last Indian war and that violence against Natives endured into the twentieth century (21-22).

characters but also the actions of the nation as a whole. They do not simply speak to their historical moments—which would be fascinating enough—but continue to speak to people today as scholars are slowly revisiting the stories of Hannah Duston and Nathan Slaughter and what they say about imaginings and justifications of legal and extralegal violence against racial others. The ebb and flow of recovery work has brought Duston’s story to our attention, in particular, as she has been further scrutinized and even fictionalized at the beginning of the twenty-first century.²⁹ Whereas these stories were used to make a fictional American past seem more real and justified, scholars today can critique how these texts have been used to glorify a lamentable past through individual moments that were far from exceptional.

²⁹ Beyond the great revival of Duston’s story in the 1830s, retellings of her captivity after that point deserve further scrutiny for the ways that they continued to speak to white-Native relations in the nineteenth century. Besides Thoreau’s post-1830s version, which I have already discussed, authors in the periodical press continued to unearth Duston’s story, largely to glorify her actions as a kind of proto-feminist and to demand that statues be erected in her honor. Many of these versions rehash earlier ones, borrowing from their language to heroicize Duston and marvel at the actions of a mother who simultaneously resisted revenge even as she killed and scalped sleeping men, women, and children. For instance, Kate Sanborn’s article “Our Foremothers” from 1886 claims that Duston is an even more admirable US American foremother than Abigail Adams or Martha Washington. Some authors, such as Benson J. Lossing in 1875, also reprinted works that worshipped Thomas Duston, such as Sarah Josepha Hale’s 1827 poem “The Father’s Choice” (41). By the time of the controversial Dawes Act of 1887 and debates about allotting Indian lands, Duston had been memorialized in books and articles on the geography of the Northeast, poems, obituaries of her descendants, and articles describing the artifacts that memorialize her captivity, including the handkerchief or towel she used to wrap up the Abenaki scalps, the tankard she received from the Governor of Massachusetts, and her statues. There are too many texts to mention here, but the following are a sampling of articles on various topics regarding Duston: See “Hannah Dustan” by P. for an 1836 poem about Duston; Brown on linking Duston’s story to the geography of the Northeast; “Mrs. Hannah Dustin” and Lossing on the tankard Duston received; “Historic Relic” on Duston’s handkerchief/towel with a partial reprint of Hale’s poem; “Notes and Queries,” “Current Notes,” “The Monument to Hannah Dustin and Mary Corliss Neff,” Mott, and H. S. T. on Duston’s statues; and Scott for another extensive article on Duston’s heroism that was published in the later nineteenth century. In 1915, her story was even used (and rewritten) so the Reverend Russell H. Conwell could argue, “Every baby can be trusted to show you the way home.” He argues that, when Duston was “captured the first time by the Indians,” she had a young son with her who led them home (107). Also see note 10 for more contemporary renderings of Duston’s story.

Chapter 3:

Revenge and Regret on the Texas Frontier: Negotiating Women's Bodies and Threats to White Settlement in the Parker Captivities and *'Bel of Prairie Eden*

The government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it. Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively few individuals using the standing government as their tool. (Thoreau, "Civil" 49)

I shall next speak of the manners and customs of the Indians, and in this I shall be brief— as their habits are so ridiculous that this would be of but little interest to any. . . . They have rigid laws, and rigorously enforce them when violated. They know no such thing as mercy. They have no language to express gratitude, only to say I am glad. (Plummer 355-56)

By the time Comanche warriors captured members of the Parker family on 19 May 1836, the Republic of Texas had just declared its independence and was vying for annexation to the United States.¹ The captivity narratives about the Parkers, which were addressed to white, Christian audiences, called on the same conventions that previous authors of captivity narratives used. They painted a picture of Texas as a place that was generally dangerous but ready for further colonization, which would help establish a form of government that favored and protected white interests. Besides captivity narratives, such as the three that I examine about the Parker family, sensational fiction about Texas also presented the image of an untamed frontier that white settlers were struggling to colonize. George Lippard's sensational novella *'Bel of Prairie Eden* (1848) is one such text. Lippard imagines white settlers colonizing a space from which Native peoples have

¹ March 1836 saw the battles of the Alamo and Goliad, followed by Santa Anna's loss at San Jacinto in April. This loss led to Texas's independence and Santa Anna's exile to Cuba before the US-Mexico War of 1846-1848 (Alemán and Streeby n8).

vanished but wherein the settlers must contend with Mexicans for control over property and law. Both sets of texts imagine, in particular, white men as avengers who treat Texas as an exceptional space to exact their brand of vigilante justice, though that brand is viewed ambivalently in the end by either the authors of these texts or some of their readers.

The texts I analyze in this chapter imagine white settler colonists who try to establish their own forms of justice as they build homes in Texas. As Lorenzo Veracini argues, “Settlers are *founders* of political orders and carry their sovereignty with them” (3). Though they hide behind other colonizers and migrants—claiming to enter now-empty lands wherein Native inhabitants have vanished, all to sustain their families—they are actually “obscure[ing] the conditions of [their] own production” and do act as sovereigns who claim agency over the land and the right to establish new laws (14). As the protagonists of these texts show, settler societies “can . . . be seen as a fantasy where a perception of a constant struggle is juxtaposed against an ideal of ‘peace’ that can never be reached.” Thus, “settler projects embrace and reject violence *at the same time*” (77). I will examine how the authors of the texts in this chapter imagine whites as victims who are simply trying to settle on lands they have been encouraged to populate. When faced with violence at the hands of Natives and Mexicans, and with apparently no recourse for rectifying the wrongs committed against them, these heroic white figures turn to their individual understandings of justice. Specifically, they defend their pursuits of vengeance in supposedly exceptional moments and spaces, but white, male protagonists’ violent control over land and bodies—which authors depicted across multiple genres and

that has had a long legacy in the United States—is ultimately a questionable kind of control.

As I have mentioned in my Introduction, scholars have paid increasing attention to Puritan captivity narratives of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—specifically the narrative of Mary Rowlandson. Yet they have left later captivities understudied even though these narratives maintain much of the same style, rhetoric about expansion, and perceived threats to whiteness and Christianity. Captivity narratives exhibit internal tensions for white protagonists who must mediate feelings of anger and a desire for revenge with a belief in the power of Providence to restore justice. Furthermore, as I have also noted, more attention must be paid to conflicts regarding expansion outside of the northeastern United States, as scholars often focus on wars and writings surrounding major events on the East Coast even as other major events were taking place elsewhere. Texts such as the Parker family captivity narratives and sensational fiction about Texas and Mexico—including Lippard’s *’Bel*—evidence how authors framed this constantly fluctuating geographical location as a violent space wherein only the vengeful violence of whites could tame Mexican and Native American others. They portray the goals of this violence as necessary in order to turn a supposedly exceptional space into a republic and then a state with local control but federal oversight, complete with garrisons and militia to maintain order and make revenge killings unnecessary. A reading of literature about the environment in Texas during this time period reveals the importance of revenge to westward expansion—both literally in that revenge (such as “remembering the Alamo”) fueled a desire for conquest and in art as, for instance, writers framed sensationalized

stories about this supposedly untamed wilderness.² Remembering and reframing the past in order to justify violence is a key theme in this dissertation, as are the links between early- and nineteenth-century events and their effects on ongoing issues in the Americas.

A triangle of white-Mexican-Native (specifically Comanche) relations reveals the importance of justifying violence for white settlers who were determined to start new lives in Texas. These historically real and fictional settlers spread religious ideologies (in the case of the ministers of the Parker family) and ideologies about self-made success and economic ventures (in the case of the father in *'Bel*, who also brings his slaves to aid in his hoped-for success). These sensationalized and romanticized texts are intertwined with the theme of revenge as whites frame themselves as civilized heroes who are capable of (temporarily) going savage in order to help tame the wilderness. Focusing on the Comanche in this chapter versus other Native tribes is important because of how the Comanche, with their own empire overlapping other territories that Mexicans and whites claimed, often became the subjects of texts and conversations regarding savagery, violence, law, and property in land, bodies, and goods in the Southwest. In the texts I study, white settlers face dual but often conflated enemies, as “the difference between Mexicans and Comanches was a real question. . . . [M]any Anglo-Americans could not tell them apart, and others imagined that the two groups were joined together in a virtual conspiracy against the state” (Marez 285). Writers present revenge as a tool for

² On the Alamo, specifically, Richard R. Flores argues as I do that “[m]yths, and cultural memories more generally, are not stratospheric tales but deeply grounded narratives through which communities express their heartfelt convictions” (xv). The Alamo is a site of specific importance for its “continued effect on racial identities” and because “the cultural memory of the Alamo provides semantic justification for slotting Mexicans and Anglos into an emerging social order brought forth by the material and ideological forces that gripped Texas between 1880 and 1920” (xiv, xvii).

combating this perceived conspiracy, even if some interpreters lamented the use of such a tool.

The authors of the Parker captivities and *'Bel of Prairie Eden* portray revenge as motivated entirely by the violence of racial others, largely against the bodies of white women; masculine white heroes respond to such violence, and then individuals subsequently question the violence of those white heroic men, as they see revenge as potentially just but also potentially excessive, mercenary, and unfulfilling. In the Parker captivities, controlling women's bodies and protecting the primacy of whiteness are key actions as, in the nineteenth century, such texts "repeatedly insist on the desirability of whiteness by making it the source and sign of both the captive women's being cherished by their Indian husbands and white culture's grief over their loss. Above all and always, their whiteness is dramatically visible" (Faery 172). I would add that Lippard's novella functions in much the same way, as control over lily-white women becomes the main vehicle for seeking revenge. Thus I scrutinize how male figures capture, reclaim, trade, and use women's bodies, which calls into question whether these stories are about justice for (particularly white) women or are about owning and controlling them. Individuals could confront an "unstable American identity" (154) in a supposedly exceptional place such as Texas by reasserting their claims over lands and bodies and declaring that they seek justice against lawless racial others. I examine how white authors frame the history of Texas and race relations therein in such a way that labels Mexicans and Native Americans as aggressors against peaceful whites who have settled lawfully in Texas. Representing the historical past, both sets of texts that I analyze often insist that their readers treat the works as unadulterated truth, however sensational and one sided they

are.³ Ultimately, the lines between justice and revenge blur as authors often describe heroes (sometimes themselves) who obsessively plot to track down and kill anyone who might be connected to the supposedly “original” acts of violence—attacks on family members.

To begin this chapter, I will first outline the historical context around Texas in the nineteenth century, particularly examining relations among the Comanche, Mexicans, and immigrants to Texas. I then analyze first- and second-hand narratives as well as the sensational novella *'Bel* to illustrate one of the claims in my Introduction: that arguments about the justification of violence and revenge using exceptionalist rhetoric span different genres and pose similar questions about and solutions to conflicts regarding territory, race, gender, and justice. Specifically, I analyze three narratives regarding the captivities of Parker family members—James W. Parker’s narrative about his life in Texas and search for his captive family members; his daughter Rachel Plummer’s narrative about her six-month captivity amongst the Comanche; and James T. DeShields’s narrative of the captivity of Cynthia Ann Parker, who was James W. Parker’s niece and was captured and then adopted by the Comanche, spending about twenty-five years with them and never publishing her own story in her own words. I examine these narratives to consider the roles of violence and vengeance in their stories, particularly their views on Comanche

³ For instance, the title page of James T. DeShields’s version of Cynthia Ann Parker’s story states in large letters, “Truth is Stranger than Fiction.” He says Parker’s story contains “plain, unvarnished facts” (v), and he assures readers that they are “not reading fiction, but facts” (vi). Parker’s cousin, Rachel Plummer, writes in her narrative, “I further assure you, my reader, that I have not written one word but what is fact” (348). Plummer’s father, James W. Parker, makes a number of such statements in his narrative (see in particular pages 3 and 81). Lippard employs similar tactics to make his text seem more truthful, using invented epigraphs that sound like real manuscripts (Alemán and Streeby n1) and making such statements as, “I write this scene, first of all because it is true” (158). Later on, he states that “critics will be the first to attack my story and pronounce it a combination of improbabilities, when from first to last it is founded on published facts, which I have varied, to avoid the imputation of an unjustifiable personality” (185).

lifeways and justice; the roles of sympathy, sentiment, and masculinity in the texts; and the objectification of Cynthia Ann Parker, otherwise known as Nadua. Finally, I turn to Lippard's *'Bel* to examine how his fictional characters establish their status as victims of the Mexican army. The masculine heroism of the main protagonist, John Grywin, is established when he defends the honor of his family (especially his sister) by destroying a Spanish officer and his family, particularly by seducing the officer's sister. Embracing revenge through destroying families and women's virtue is central for both the antagonists and protagonists of the novella, though these acts do not ultimately bring peace to anyone involved.

While these texts build sympathy for their white heroes and victims, they also contain troubling moments wherein the heroes' violence seems excessive, their credibility and character are suspect, and the outcomes of their vengeful quests lack purpose or emotional fulfillment. Though the protagonists suggest that they act violently only for short periods—or exceptional moments—in order to exact justice and then retreat back to white civility, the residue of violence and restlessness pervades their stories from beginning to end. Ultimately, these texts complicate how one can equate revenge with justice and also exhibit the many ulterior motives for revenge when bodies and lands are available for control and consumption, often labeled as exceptional geographies and contexts.

The Triangulation of Conflict on the Texas Frontier

Because of Mexican, Anglo, and Native claims to the land, control over Texas was particularly contentious in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was Mexican

territory that was open to immigrants (mostly from the United States) and was simultaneously heavily populated by Natives, such as the Comanche and Apache. Through the 1824 National Colonization Law, Mexican officials encouraged immigrants to pour into the Mexican state of Coahuila y Tejas in the hope that populating northern Mexico would create a buffer against, particularly, Comanche raiding parties. Streeby notes that the new Mexican laws of the 1820s “allow[ed] foreigners to buy land in Texas more cheaply than it could be purchased in the United States. For the next two decades . . . emigrants from the southern United States, especially, but also from eastern U.S. cities, Ireland, Germany, and other parts of Europe flocked to the area” (*American* 73). Though Mexico’s Constitution of 1824 prohibited slavery, the government granted Texans a reprieve for five years and then extended the reprieve under the influence of Stephen F. Austin (Libura et al. 185). While some settlers were legal residents, others lacked documentation and snuck into the country to claim land and capture horses in Texas to sell in the United States (185; Kavanagh 162). Scholars largely agree that Mexico’s policy toward Texas immigrants was generous, as they “[gave] out land—at first for free, later at extremely low prices—[and] . . . exempted the settlers from customs duties and allowed them to maintain their own judicial institutions.” The settlers had agreed to convert to Catholicism, but instead “they retained their Protestant churches, as well as their language and business connections with the neighboring populations of the United States, especially in the port of New Orleans. Throughout, they held firm to the idea of turning Texas into a free and sovereign state” (Libura et al. 187). Therefore, the government made some temporary exceptions for settlers that would, from the beginning of this colonization process, label Texas a potentially exceptional space wherein laws

could be bent, suspended, or created anew. Meanwhile, the Comanche challenged Mexicans' and white Texans' control over land that largely overlapped with Comanchería territory and served as a zone for hunting and raiding.

The Comanche in Comanchería territory had their own practices and rules even as the settlers in the same territory established other rules, making the space both a Comanche empire and a zone with contending beliefs and acts. Comanchería territory constituted a vast and fluctuating area in the Southern Plains that included much of Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Kansas, as well as northern Mexico. Curtis Marez notes, "Starting shortly after the Pueblo Revolts of 1680 and the Spanish reconquest in 1692, Comanches severely challenged Spanish authority in New Mexico" (271). The Comanche frequently negotiated for peace in the late 1700s and the 1800s, trading gifts with Mexico and the United States. They controlled numerous trade markets and prospered from the 1780s into the beginning of the nineteenth century, overseeing what Pekka Hämäläinen calls an empire fueled by trade (of horses, buffalo, slaves, captives, and other goods) as well as almost constant warfare.⁴ As Marez notes, the 1836 Texas Revolution resulted in more Comanche raids in northern Mexico because an independent Texas provided a region to which the Comanche could escape from authorities after raiding in Mexico (275). Scholars often ignore these Comanche activities and influences because the Texas Revolutionary battles tend to "[obscure] the fact that between 1836 and 1845 far more Texans were killed or captured by the Comanche than by the Mexican Army" (Miles vii). Thus, Comanchería territory had its

⁴ See Hämäläinen as well as Thomas W. Kavanagh for more detailed scholarship on Comanche lifeways, political organization, and history.

own set of practices and rules that often conflicted with how Mexican and European settlers in the region argued they should be treated and that also conflicted with the rules the settlers established.

This history is a reminder of the triangulation of fluctuating peace and violence among white settlers, the Mexican population, and the Comanche that all shaped relations in Texas. This history reminds us, too, of the potentially exceptional status of this territory as a region with many and often-changing regulations and ideologies. For instance, the Texas Rangers were created by Stephen F. Austin in 1823, shortly after Mexico's independence from Spain, as a law enforcement group to protect the interests of white settlers in the region. This group could seem like an unauthorized or vigilante group to Mexican officials but a necessary and lawful group to white settlers.⁵ As Texans fought for independence from Mexico in 1835, the Rangers were more officially constituted by Daniel Parker, brother of James W. Parker (whose narrative and life as a kind of vigilante I will discuss shortly). The Rangers existed largely because of the perception that white settlers needed their own protection since Mexico would not provide it, and the Rangers often attacked Mexicans and Natives during the war for Texas's independence and afterward, as retribution for the war. Even as the Rangers

⁵ Austin was awarded a land grant in Mexico that his father, Moses Austin, had acquired shortly before his death in 1821. Stephen F. Austin led settlers into Texas later that year, negotiated the land grant to establish its validity after Mexico's independence from Spain, and developed a "colony" in 1823. As the owner of a large tract of land on which white emigrants had settled, Austin created the Texas Rangers; "founded the first capital of Texas at San Felipe de Austin in what is now Austin County; and . . . wrote a set of civil and criminal statutes that remained in effect until 1828" (Hendrickson 6).

protected settlers against robbers and killers, then, they also helped white settlers establish their own law force in opposition to Mexican and Native authorities.⁶

Though many people framed Texas as a land inhabited by bloodthirsty Natives, outlaws, and rejects from the United States, stories about Texas in the popular press fueled interest in settlement, particularly for whites who wished to own land. Texans worked to paint themselves positively, and even heroically, through the vast amount of literature they produced, representing themselves as moral and the land as ripe with incentives for settlement. The “print revolution of the late 1830s and 1840s” served as a medium through which “a heterogeneous assortment of people imagined themselves a nation, staging their unity against the imagined disunity of Mexico, which was repeatedly called a ‘false nation’ in the penny press” (Streeby, *American 2*). Anglo Texans largely imagined themselves a Republic or a nation independent from Mexico and with its own sense of sovereignty. They represented themselves as peaceful farmers who were able to maintain order without jails or prisons (Libura et al. 184), even as stories of Comanche raids saturated the press and Texans had to justify why they left the United States to settle in Texas. For instance, in Cynthia Ann Parker’s narrative, James T. DeShields writes, “These families were truly the advance guard of civilization,” living “a life of Arcadian simplicity, virtue, and contentment” (12). Descriptions like this are echoed in Lippard’s choice to name the home of his protagonists, the Grywins, Prairie Eden. Streeby notes that this kind of language that glorifies Texas was not unique to Lippard. In an attempt to encourage individuals from the United States and Europe to settle in Texas, “land

⁶ See Part I of Jo Ella Powell Exley’s book for more information on Daniel Parker and the early operations of the Texas Rangers. See also Robert M. Utley for a longer history of the Rangers that discusses how their numbers waxed and waned through Texas’s statehood and numerous unsuccessful attempts to federalize the group into the twentieth century.

companies and speculators represented the region as a utopia for the landless, an Edenic place where settlers could escape the class constraints of Europe and the United States and establish equality and independence through land ownership” (*American* 73). As Streeby notes, Texas was a “volatile” place with “shifting national sentiments” wherein Texans were often divided regarding how they might negotiate with Mexico, how they might form a Republic, and how they might solicit support from the United States once they did vie for independence (*American* 74). Yet authors often suggested that, once the people emerged from that exceptional moment and established law and order not corrupted by Mexican officials, the land would realize its destiny. For instance, James W. Parker writes about “industrious, moral people, who have erected several houses of religious worship, and established good schools” in Texas (59). He appears paranoid about how his readers will perceive Texans and expresses anger against those who criticize the character of Texans. He is so angry about these allegations and the fact that he must address them that he notes, “I hope my readers will excuse my inadvertence in stooping to notice such filth” (84). To make Texas a prosperous and independent republic, Parker and others had to defend the honor of white Texans if they wanted support from their readers and from the United States.

Before long, the new settlers in Texas greatly outnumbered the population of natural-born Mexican inhabitants, and Texas started vying for independence for reasons that were mostly tied to local control.⁷ Many Mexican officials viewed the Texas immigrants as unruly makers of their own laws. In a report by General Manuel Mier y

⁷ In 1821, the USAmerican settlers in Texas totaled 2,500 people, but by 1836 their population was 40,000 people (Libura et al. 187).

Terán to the President of the Republic of Guadalupe Victoria in 1828, the general noted, “They all carry their constitution in their pockets and claim the rights and the authorit[y] . . . that it promises.⁸ Most of them own slaves and the slaves, having already sensed the favorable intent of Mexican laws regarding their pitiful state, are anxious to throw off their yoke, while the owners think they can keep it on them by making it all the heavier” (qtd. in Libura et al. 25). Austin acknowledged in 1828 that the settlers could not understand Castilian and did not have copies of Mexican laws in translation; they were not aware of procedures for trials, and Austin had little instruction on how to maintain justice (Libura et al. 182). Texas was an exceptional place in the eyes of the settlers who ignored Mexican law in favor of their own codes. With the authority he was given as a landowner and developer, Austin started administering his own laws, as immigrants to Texas wanted to distance themselves from centralized Mexican authority. While the 1824 Constitution of Mexico granted equal representation to Mexico’s nineteen states and allowed for Texans to exercise quite a bit of autonomy, Mexican officials revised their magna carta in 1835 to restrict local sovereignty and establish centralized power. Fearing the losses of power, local protection, and rights of citizenship in an isolated frontier, “[t]he Texans used this change as a pretext to rebel against [the] central government” (30). Because the settlers lacked military experience, soldier and politician Samuel Houston recruited volunteers from the United States and promised them land

⁸ While it is unclear to which constitution the general is referring, Texans were notorious for bringing US documents with them and claiming rights they had in the United States, particularly regarding slavery and freedom of religion. They also demanded the continuation of rights and exceptions for immigrants that the Mexican government gave them under Mexico’s 1824 constitution. Finally, settlers even drew up their own constitutions while traveling westward, which links to ideas about individual sovereignty and subjectivity regarding the rule of law, particularly in spaces that are imagined as frontiers or as exceptional. See Libura et al. 30 and 185, Uteley 21, and Waldrep 50.

(eight hundred acres), money (twenty-four dollars), and citizenship for their service in the settler militia (190)—presuming he had the authority to raise a military and make such promises in what was still Mexican territory.⁹

The Texas Revolution lasted from 1835 to 1836 and is something about which James W. Parker and George Lippard write, as they attempt to represent the activities of nefarious Mexican soldiers who oppress peaceful white settlers and kill them without mercy. Parker in particular suggests that Mexico was already torn apart by a revolution “in which Texas took no part” and that Antonio López de Santa Anna, who promised to declare “a more republican form of government,” instead became a despot; Parker argues that Santa Anna essentially declared a state of exception by taking citizens’ rifles, keeping a standing army to secure his power, and levying enormous taxes to support that army and “his indolent priesthood” (87). Invoking the events at Goliad and the Alamo, as well as more general depredations of the Mexican army under Santa Anna, allowed these authors to frame white Texans as victims of repressive Mexican laws and extralegal violence during a state of warfare into which Mexicans had supposedly forced the white settlers. As I will illustrate in greater detail through close readings of these texts, Parker and Lippard, in particular, present the masculine white heroes of Texas as ultimately able to overcome the Mexican forces, whom they often characterize as cowardly, feminized, lazy, and barbaric, even as they are still formidable foes. When these heroic Texas men

⁹ Houston became famous in the War of 1812 and later became the governor of Tennessee. After immigrating to Texas while it was under Mexican rule, he led the Texas Revolution, beat Austin to be elected the first president of the Republic of Texas, supported annexation to the United States, and became governor. He was also known for being adopted into the Creek tribe and for his many altercations with other politicians for his views and personality. See Utley 21-23 and Hendrickson 9. There are also numerous biographies of Houston and collections of his works, and Parker frequently mentions (and defends) Houston in his narrative.

fight to protect their homes and families and establish a Republic in the end, they then quickly suggest that they espouse US American values and should be folded into the United States, particularly as US soldiers helped Texans with their revolution and as Texans often compared their war with the US Revolution against Britain (Miles vii).

Seeing an opportunity to annex Texas because its population was largely made of immigrants from the United States, its stability and treasury was minimal, and its lands were vast, the United States entered serious negotiations in 1844 to make the republic the twenty-eighth US state in 1845.¹⁰ In fact, many people in the United States already thought Texas was rightfully theirs from the time of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Because Spain once owned the land in Louisiana Territory, US Americans believed other Spanish land extending through Texas to the Rio Grande was part of the purchase. Spain agreed to cede Florida if the United States renounced its claim to Texas, but many people still had their sights on the land (Libura et al. 46). Furthermore, supporters of slavery believed bringing another slave state into the Union could maintain a balance that they argued was crumbling. John C. Calhoun stated,

[T]he day that the balance between the two sections of the country—the slaveholding states and the non-slaveholding states—is destroyed, is a day that will not be far removed from political revolution, anarchy, civil war, and wide-spread disaster. The balance of this system is in the slaveholding states. They are the conservative portion—always have been the conservative portion—always will be the conservative portion; and with a due balance on their part may, for generations to come, uphold this glorious Union of ours. (43)

The Senate, desiring to expand US territory, approved annexation on 1 March 1845 even though the Mexican government had indicated annexation “would be considered a

¹⁰ Many people in the Republic of Texas wanted annexation since the time Texas declared itself independent from Mexico, but Texas’s 1844 presidential election of Anson Jones resulted in a more concerted effort to seek annexation.

provocation leading to war.” In May 1845, Mexico did try to offer Texas “diplomatic recognition in return for a promise not to become part of or subject to any other country,” but the negotiations failed as Texas was officially annexed on July 4th (Libura et al. 39). Texas was an independent republic for only nine years, and the vast majority of white Texans were favorable to annexation because of Texas’s vulnerability and poverty, the fact that so many of the immigrants were originally from the United States, and the fact that many of them espoused US political beliefs. These beliefs included the practice of slaveholding; desires for local sovereignty, territorial expansion, and expulsion of Native peoples; and the ways that the rhetoric surrounding Texas’s independence echoed the rhetoric surrounding the American Revolution. This rhetoric indicates ideological continuity regarding the need for hardworking citizens to cast off the yoke of supposedly ruthless, corrupt imperial powers.

Shortly after the annexation of Texas in 1845, the US-Mexico War was fought from 1846-1848, which ushered in a large amount of propaganda wherein US authors and politicians promoted war against Mexico as justified revenge or retribution. Mexico, weakened considerably by Comanche raids in the north, blamed the United States for its imperial desires while US Americans claimed just revenge against Mexico for its monetary debts to the United States and for the memory of Texan and US American deaths during the previous years’ battles.¹¹ Many states’ delegations individually condemned Mexico and called for war. For instance, “In February, 1847, the Virginia House of Delegates declared that the war had been ‘most unrighteously provoked . . . by

¹¹ Members of the US House of Representatives specifically claimed that a principal cause of the war was to obtain money Mexico owed the United States because Mexico “was indebted to [the United States] some ten or twenty millions for former spoliations on American property” (House 36).

a long series of acts of injustice and outrage towards the United States,' and this was only one of almost countless expressions, which no doubt were fairly sincere" (Smith 2).

Senator H. V. Johnson succinctly encapsulates the rhetoric regarding the view of Mexican aggression, the necessity for the United States to enter the war, and the rewards of such a war:

I would not force the adoption of our form of Government upon any people by the sword. But if war is forced upon us, as this has been, and the increase of our territory, and consequently the extension of the area of human liberty and happiness, shall be one of the incidents of such a contest, I believe we should be recreant to our noble mission, if we refused acquiescence in the high purposes of a wise Providence. War has its evils. . . . [But] it has also been made, by the Allwise Dispenser of events, the instrumentality of accomplishing the great end of human elevation and human happiness. . . . It is in this view, that I subscribe to the doctrine of "manifest destiny." (qtd. in Weinberg 65)

In this description, war is a necessary evil that even God sanctions because it is in the cause of self-defense—defense against what has been "forced upon us"—and is necessary in order to uphold "manifest destiny." The majority of people in the United States called on such images as "the apparent cowardice of Santa Anna and his army in the Texan war of independence," the notion that Mexico was "a nest of poisonous reptiles, fit only to be stamped upon" (Smith 1), and the need to "Remember the Alamo," which "became an American battle cry to show no mercy" (Libura et al. 31).

Others in the United States, however, did denounce the war for a number of reasons (see Thoreau in this chapter's epigraph, for example). Some people did have religious and pacifist beliefs that caused them to denounce the war effort. Many feared that the war would extend slavery further to the South while supporters of slavery, such as Calhoun, feared slavery would not prosper in a place such as Mexico where it had

been abolished and that the war might, thus, increase abolitionist power. Still others feared “it might mean incorporating large numbers of Catholics and nonwhites into the republic” (Streeby, *American* 20). The stories of the Parkers and the Grywins in *Bel* revolve around this context of fear, war, and expansion and indicate their authors’ ideologies regarding the sacrifices settlers make in order to own land that they deem is theirs—even if they must fight Mexicans and the Comanche for it, taking up the mantle of vengeance.

The Parkers: The Economics of Revenge and (Re)Claiming White Women’s Bodies

There are numerous sensational texts about Texas and the US-Mexico War, and these texts often framed settlers from the United States as victims of Mexicans as well as Natives, particularly the Comanche. The goal of much of this literature was to endorse settlement in Texas by highlighting its potential as a place that white settlers could control and profit from. Captivity stories about the region-turned-republic frequently highlighted the lives of abused white women and savage Native men, along with even more savage Native women, as James W. Parker’s daughter, Rachel Plummer, shows in her narrative. These narratives relied on the tropes of sentimental literature that were already established in frontier romances such as *The Yemassee* to build sympathy for white victims and deliver the ultimate message that the Comanche were unfit for civilization. White figures in these texts often do retaliate in some way against their Native foes but only in supposedly exceptional moments that highlight how whites typically show mercy to their antagonists and are divinely ordained to be free and continue the settlement of Texas (and potentially regions beyond).

The early-nineteenth-century narratives of James W. Parker and Rachel Plummer were published during the years leading up to and including the US-Mexico War. Cynthia Ann Parker's later narrative, written and published by James T. DeShields in 1886, imagines these earlier years and traces Parker's life and death through the Civil War. All three narratives present a family story of hardship, death, and Providential redemption. Brothers James and Silas Parker built Fort Parker in 1835 (VanDerBeets 334 n1), and they declared the fort "a place of defence" rather than something that the Native populations might see as a threat of violence.¹² In the narrative of Cynthia Ann Parker's life, DeShields frames Cynthia Ann's story for readers, including the perception of Natives as violent aggressors. As a Texas historian and collector who lived from 1861 to 1948, he wrote for numerous periodicals to chronicle the settlement of Texas, publishing Cynthia Ann Parker's narrative about ten years after the Comanche under her son, Quanah, had settled on reservations and Quanah began asking for information about his mother. The narrative's publication came also about six years after Quanah released an advertisement to obtain a picture of his mother (Hacker, *Cynthia* 38); two years after Quanah had arranged for Comanche reservation land to be leased to ranchers after heated debates that lasted from 1880 to 1884 (Gwynne 298); and on the eve of the adoption of the Dawes Act in 1887, which promoted assimilation of Native peoples partly through individual ownership of land allotments. In his biased account, DeShields presents the Parkers as peaceful but cautious by stating, "As the Indian mode of warfare was an indiscriminate slaughter of all ages, and both sexes, it was as requisite to provide for the

¹² Native peoples had cause to feel threatened since, as mentioned before, the Mexican government encouraged such settlements in Texas by US citizens and others to provide a buffer zone against Natives, particularly the Comanche. Numerous tribes, such as the Caddos, lived in the area, and the region around Fort Parker also overlapped with the easternmost portion of Comancheria territory.

safety of the women and children as for that of the men” (10n1). Perhaps the Comanche perceived the fort as a threat or as a declaration that the Parkers had simply taken the land for themselves; perhaps they were retaliating against a white family for the ongoing fights between whites and Native peoples; or perhaps they were on a routine raid for captives and goods. Whatever the case, Comanche warriors approached the fort on 19 May 1836, following the Battle of San Jacinto, under a white flag—and then they attacked the fort (VanDerBeets 333). Rachel Plummer, a Parker relative and captive, wrote in the first version of her narrative that there were six to seven hundred warriors from various tribes: “Tywaconies, Cadoes, Keacheys, Wakos, Towash, some Beadies, and I have but little knowledge how many others” (qtd. in Exley 53). In a slightly later version of her story, she mentions only Comanche and Kichai warriors, writing that they “number[ed] something not far from eight hundred” (Plummer 335).¹³ Five inhabitants of the fort were killed, one was wounded, and five were taken captive and later redeemed, “rescued,” or “recaptured” (including Rachel Plummer and Cynthia Ann Parker). Their stories are told and retold in nineteenth-century texts as well as present-day books and

¹³ It is difficult to say how Plummer identified the members of different tribes in her narrative. Perhaps she discovered during or after her captivity which tribes were involved, perhaps she generalized based on which tribes were in the area, or perhaps she was able to distinguish among the appearances of various members of the raiding party if she were quite knowledgeable of tribal attire. S. C. Gwynne suggests that Plummer may have named so many tribes in her original captivity narrative “wishfully” because they were more peaceful, “sedentary bands of central Texas” (16), but this argument about wishfulness falls flat in light of her revised narrative, wherein she seems to more accurately name the tribes involved; if she were writing about whom she wished the tribes were, her narrative would be worded entirely differently and would not have been revised later to change the names of the tribes that were actually involved. However, mentioning all of these tribes in her story might have made her seem like more of an authority on Texas tribes and might have also made the seemingly united tribes seem all the more threatening to white settlers. Whatever the case, and whatever her reasons for changing the description of which tribes were involved, she does not explain this knowledge in either version of her narrative and focuses the rest of her story on the Comanche. In this chapter, I cite page numbers from the 1839 version that is reprinted in VanDerBeets, *Held*.

websites devoted to the family's stories.¹⁴ Plummer's narrative was first published in 1838 and was also paired with James W. Parker's narrative in 1844. Because Cynthia Ann Parker lived with the Comanche for almost twenty-five years, her narrative authored by DeShields did not appear until 1886, which was nearly twenty years after her death.

The narratives produced as a result of the captivity and restoration of the captives are meant to satisfy white readers' hunger for sensational stories about Texas, as well as to support the notion of white superiority and the US government's argument that the Comanche needed to be removed if not exterminated because of their power in the region and the almost-constant violence between the Comanche and Mexicans, whites, and other Natives regarding trade and property (in goods, land, livestock, and bodies).

Furthermore, these stories are meant to provoke sympathy so white audiences would buy the texts and, thus, help James W. Parker raise enough money to redeem other captives. Specifically, James sought for years to reclaim the longest-held and most famous captive of the Parker family, his niece Cynthia Ann. In his narrative, he notes that he is trying to reach "sympathising [sic] hearts" as "he hopes to be able to realize, from the proceeds of the sale of this narrative, a sufficient sum to enable him to [sic] successfully prosecute his exertions to release her [Cynthia Ann Parker] also" (3-4). The Parker narratives join a large number of such stories about the Southwest, many of which are understudied and even lost. In his critical introduction to the captivity narrative of another Texas captive, Dolly Webster, George Miles notes, "Most early Texas captivities were brief pamphlets,

¹⁴ Besides the nineteenth-century narratives, the Parkers' stories and pictures were printed widely in the popular press. For some more contemporary renderings, see, for instance, Margaret Schmidt Hacker's short history of Cynthia Ann Parker from 1990, Carolyn Meyer's 1992 novelization of Cynthia Ann's story (which I mention shortly), and Gwynne's bestselling 2011 text on Quanah Parker. Websites include the oft-referenced *Handbook of Texas Online* through the Texas State Historical Association (see Hacker, "Parker") and countless others that include photographs of Cynthia Ann along with her story.

printed in small quantities by small-town newspaper publishers for consumption by local audiences. Today they are among the rarest of American imprints” (viii).¹⁵ The Parker stories are known widely in Texas because of the prominence of the family, who were recognized in religious circles from their migration through numerous US states and were also known for their political ties in Texas, particularly because many members were active in Texas military campaigns and became more active in politics when searching for their captive relatives. Cynthia Ann Parker became especially famous for being among the Comanche so long and for marrying a chief, Peta Nocona, whom white soldiers had long tried to kill because of his military prowess. The Parkers’ stories were published in multiple narratives and were covered in the popular press before and after family members were redeemed. Furthermore, the element of miscegenation is likely key to their notoriety, as Cynthia Ann Parker became famous both for her marriage to Peta Nocona and for being the mother of Comanche chiefs—most notably Quanah Parker, whom many people recognize as the last Comanche chief. The stories are retold today in books that are required reading for Texans in elementary and middle school, and these texts often focus on the celebrity status that Cynthia Ann acquired, ambivalence about how she was redeemed, and the fate of her son Quanah.

¹⁵ Some publishers hastily threw these stories together for consumption. For instance, though Dolly Webster’s 1843 narrative about her captivity amongst the Comanche was published three years after she escaped—giving plenty of time to put together a pamphlet—Miles describes the text as “[r]ife with misspellings, grammatical errors and typographical mistakes.” The spacing is “clumsy” and “erratic,” and “[n]ine lines on page 16 are upside down.” He continues, “On the final page, the type size is abruptly reduced in mid-paragraph in what appears to be a last-minute effort to avoid printing another page. . . . Words are omitted, the names ascribed to the men in Mrs. Webster’s party are inconsistent and the date of the massacre, which clearly should be October 1, is rendered October 13” (ix). This sloppy construction perhaps indicates a desire to make money quickly with little labor and also unfortunately results in errors that obscure historical accuracy.

James W. Parker's narrative, published in 1844, has many rhetorical purposes, as he hopes to tell the history of Texas, extol his family's virtues, fascinate readers with his stories about captivity and restoration, and convince more (white) people to immigrate to Texas. In order to explain why his family is in Texas in the first place, he does not neglect to include in his narrative a glorious picture of Texas's independence from Mexico but says little about his family's more specific reasons for settling there. This history presents Texans as masculine, brave, white protectors of a land framed as female and in need of protection. He begins this historical section by arguing that Santa Anna started a revolution in Mexico and then set his sights on "wag[ing] a war of extermination against Texas," and he uses the examples of the Alamo and Goliad to illustrate this claim (88). He recounts how the Texans were then easily able to subdue the Mexican forces, butchering them only because they were exasperated by years of Mexican depredations, particularly at the hands of Santa Anna (90).¹⁶ Parker laments the poverty of Texas but imagines that Providence will bring blessings once the white settlers acquire liberty (92). He enjoys these blessings himself but believes that the twin threats of Native hostility and opposition from Mexico still need to be overcome. He also speculates that bloodshed will not be necessary to remedy these issues: "That permanent and honorable treaties will soon be formed with the former, and that the latter will ere long acknowledge her independence, there is no doubt" (93). Just as those who died at "Goliad, San Antonio,

¹⁶ Interestingly, he also notes that the depredations of Mexicans largely apply to the government and military and not to everyday citizens of Mexico. The Mexican citizens "forebore [sic] until forbearance ceased to be a virtue" because "[t]he Mexican laws were such, that the least insult offered one of her military officers was considered treason, and punished by death" (86). He frames Texas's fight against Mexico's government as beneficial for Mexican citizens because it protects their rights against despotic rule.

and San Jacinto” have “whiten[ed]” the land “with their bones” (93), Parker presents a picture of Texas as destined for white colonization through, eventually, peaceful and lawful means.

While Parker presents a long history of Texas’s independence and his hopes for the future, he spends a great deal of time ingratiating himself with his readers by extolling his family’s virtues and decrying the acts of Mexicans and Natives. This allows him to justify collective violence to achieve Texas’s independence and his own personal violence against Natives, which I will discuss shortly. In his narrative, he explains that his family “determined to remove to Texas” from 1830-1831 because the land in Illinois, where his family was most recently residing, “was sickly” (6). The character of the Parkers—Baptists who wanted to spread the word of God in unholy lands—is entirely unblemished as “the wilderness—the home of the Savage and the wild beasts of the forest—[was] made vocal with hymns of praise to the most high God, by this pilgrim band of christians [sic]” (7). The threat of attack is immediately apparent, though, as he notes that Native Americans, “instigated by the Mexicans, had commenced hostilities, and . . . [were] committing many depredations” (8). He imagines a conspiracy between Mexicans and Natives and, while arguing that a treaty might be made with the Native peoples, also says, “I contended that such a thing as a treaty being formed with hostile Indians until they were whipped, and well whipped, had never been known; and the more thorough the chastisement, the more lasting the treaty” (17). Thus, though he in one place imagines that bloodshed is unnecessary when treating with Natives, he elsewhere argues for its necessity by presenting white settlers such as himself as righteous victims.

The need to “whip” the indigenous populations was not only seen as necessary after his relatives were captured, though, but was a much earlier vengeful desire for Parker, indicating that his quest for vengeance was not fueled by momentary passion but was longstanding and premeditated. Explaining his long-felt desire for revenge, he notes the following about the death of his brother in Missouri at the hands of Delaware Indians as the War of 1812 began:

This awakened in me, feelings of the most bitter hostility towards the Indians, and I firmly resolved upon, and impatiently awaited for an opportunity to avenge his death. This, however, was never afforded me; for soon after my arrival in that country, peace was declared, and I was thereby deprived of satiating that revenge my soul panted for, whenever I met an Indian. I say, this engendered in my heart a deadly hostility towards this race of God’s creatures, which, my subsequent sufferings and heart-rending privations, produced by these blood-thirsty savages, . . . has assisted, in no wise, to diminish. This feeling, I hope, however, is not nurtured by me to such an extent as to do violence to that holy precept of my Divine Master, who says, “vengeance is mine, and I will repay it.” Though I may despise their treachery, pity their ignorance, and mourn the wrongs I have received at their hands; yet, I pray God to enable me to forgive them, and to sincerely pray for the speedy civilization and christianization [sic] of their whole race. But to return to my story. (6)

As much as he professes to desire a forgiving heart, he “impatiently await[s]” the moments when he can wreak vengeance on Native peoples. His statement “But to return to my story” suggests that these details are merely a side note, but they are important to understanding Parker’s mindset and his view of revenge. Furthermore, his story includes very little of his personal history and its significance regarding his character and the role of revenge in his life. Understanding his history, just like understanding the history of any avenger, potentially calls into question whether Parker is heroic and justified in his actions. Specifically, he went to Texas because he was seeking protection from vigilantes who were trying people for crimes such as counterfeiting and horse thievery—crimes of

which he was accused (Exley 97). He was also accused of conducting “unscrupulous dealings” with Native Americans that included the murder of a white woman (98, 100), was excommunicated from the Baptist church (128), and was more than once denied aid in finding his captured family because people such as Sam Houston suspected he was seeking personal revenge rather than unbiased justice (Parker 24, 29). While he professes to leave vengeance to God, he never does seem to end his personal quest for it, especially when the law is absent or, in his mind, inadequate to redress perceived wrongs.

For James W. Parker, the desire to reclaim and re-acculturate adult and adolescent relatives fuels the vengeful acts that consumed many years of his life. Part of what fueled whites’ desire for revenge was the perception that Comanche men physically abused female captives, and some recent studies read silences in these narratives on the part of women captives as evidence of rape that cannot be discussed. Though there are accounts of the Comanche raping white female captives, historians have also revealed that the Comanche captive system was much more complex than some authors have suggested or assumed.¹⁷ For instance, George Miles points out that Dolly Webster, in her captivity

¹⁷ Gwynne is one scholar who argues that the Comanche routinely gang raped their female captives, though he does not cite any secondary sources. He reads Plummer’s silence on this point as evidence she was gang raped and says she and her relative Elizabeth Kellogg “were raped repeatedly in full view of the bound children,” Cynthia Ann and her brother John (22). Plummer does not describe in its entirety the “barbarous treatment” she received (Plummer 339), which leaves scholars such as Gwynne to read her silence regarding potential sexual abuse in very specific ways. Plummer does, though, describe the moment when Kellogg, Cynthia Ann, and John are brought near her and all are stomped on nearly to death before the captors begin screaming and dancing around the scalps they have claimed (338). It is this moment in the text that Gwynne reads as the time when a sexual assault occurred in view of the children. See also Exley. She often uses captivity narratives as scholarship on Comanche practices. She argues, “The women who lived on the frontier knew what happened to female captives the first night of their capture—torture, gang rape, and perhaps slow, terrible death as the warriors danced around the campfire” (57). Though Plummer does not mention rape, saying only that some events are painful to discuss, Exley frames the silence as follows: “Rachel does not describe the sexual abuse that she and Elizabeth endured that night or in the months following.” Exley assumes they did endure sexual abuse and argues, “Few female captives lived more than a few years after their rescue, their health broken by physical and psychological abuse,” only citing Plummer’s narrative as her proof of this (58).

narrative, “offers no hint that she was sexually abused and indicates that she suffered more at the hands of Comanche women than from mistreatment by men. Although Webster may have omitted incidents out of embarrassment, it may be that scholars should reconsider the standard view of the way the Comanche treated captives” (x). One can read the silences in these texts in a number of ways, but certainly the agenda surrounding the Parkers was to read relations between white captives and Comanche captors as wholly violent. This is most evident in Cynthia Ann’s narrative, which I will discuss shortly, wherein her marriage to a Comanche chief and the birth of their three children are perceived with incredulity. While people such as Cynthia Ann’s relatives viewed the treatment of female captives as necessarily violent, scholars such as Pekka Hämäläinen describe how women, in particular, as well as adolescents were frequently adopted into Comanche society; indeed, the Comanche relied on adopting captives to supplement their workforce (250-53). Yet the idea of adoption that would be favorable to a white captive seemed impossible to many white people familiar with the story of Cynthia Ann and other former captives, and James W. Parker was not imagining Cynthia Ann as a potentially happy member of a Comanche family when he sought for years to reclaim her.

While some argued that Comanche men were the primary abusers of captive women, many authors of captivity narratives argued that Native women were particularly violent. As Simms does in *The Yemassee*, these authors showcase threats not just from violent, cannibalistic male warriors, but also from unsexed and unmerciful Native women who stand in opposition to virtuous white women. For instance, Plummer (like Dolly Webster) represents Comanche women as the cruelest captors, and she is able to contrast

the virtues of white women with the petty violence of her Comanche mistresses. She frames much of this violence as potentially a backlash against the power Comanche women seem to lack—a kind of revenge that transfers anger at Comanche men onto the bodies of white captives. Plummer writes of the attack on Fort Parker, “There were two Comanche women with them, [their battles are always brought on by a woman,] one of whom came to me and struck me several times with a whip. I suppose it was to make me quit crying” (337, brackets original). She portrays Comanche women as always contentious, since they not only apparently bring on battles but also seem to pick fights with Plummer over labor. She describes Comanche society in general as confused regarding gender roles, as “[t]he women do all the work, except killing the meat. They herd the horses, saddle and pack them, build the houses, dress the skins, meat, &c. The men dance every night, during which, the women wait on them with water” (355). While women do all the work, though, they are imagined as powerless, not allowed to council with the men and even killed for being poor servants (355-56). White authors often portrayed women in Native societies as nothing but laborers for their supposedly lazy husbands. While Comanche women did labor strenuously and were, according to Hämäläinen, increasingly seen as workers rather than companions as the Comanche economy changed, whites tended to project their cultural expectations onto Native societies—including the expectation that women should be “cloistered and protected.” Furthermore, “since they typically recorded only what was visible to the naked eye, white observers rarely wrote about the more veiled domestic sphere where women exerted considerable moral authority” (Hämäläinen 249). Plummer certainly does this kind of

biased or partial reporting as she describes the poor statuses and mindsets of every Comanche woman around her.

Through portraying both Comanche men and women as violent and backwards regarding their politics and general lifeways, authors of such texts try to make a case for legal and justified violence against peoples who (supposedly) deserve to be excepted from rights that white individuals claim for themselves. Plummer's ultimate message is that the Comanche are little fit for civilization because of their supposed infantile qualities and ignorance, which places Natives in opposition to civilized white settlers. She even almost mockingly points out how, during the raid on Fort Parker, some warriors looted pulverized arsenic from the fort and killed themselves by "dissolving it in their saliva" to paint their bodies (337n4). In this moment, Plummer highlights the warriors' supposed savage ignorance, as they also destroy books and medicine that perhaps they could have used if they valued materials that white audiences would see as edifying and scientific (337). Paired with their alleged ignorance is a merciless temperament and a lack of acceptable legal practices— notions that, when Plummer presents them, again place her work in the larger tradition of extolling white or US American virtues and ideologies regarding justice by vilifying Natives. In her narrative, Plummer argues, "They enforce their laws most rigorously, even among themselves. They are strangers to any thing like mercy or sympathy, unless it is in war" (359). In war, supposedly their favorite pastime, they reward bloodthirstiness and tend to punish like hellish cannibals, according to the authors of such narratives. Plummer describes how, in one battle, "the Cumanches got hold of several of the Osages that were killed, and brought their bodies to the town. They cut them up, broiled and boiled and ate them. . . . They appear to be very

fond of human flesh” (360). Her description of how the Comanche supposedly matter-of-factly ingest the bodies of their enemies suggests they feel little for suffering humans, much as Simms portrays the Yemassee as they gleefully torture whites and sing about drinking their blood. For Plummer, the Comanche are not wholly human because they act “as if they were mere beasts” (360). Plummer’s wording suggests that the people she has described are perhaps not people at all and that they may be incapable of becoming civilized; the implication is that they can only be treated with as much savagery as they appear to show everyone else. These descriptions are part of a larger conversation about how Native peoples needed to be civilized or, if failing that, removed or killed, as I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

To urge her readers to see the inherent differences between the Comanche and whites, Plummer calls on Christian values and the virtues of white motherhood, pleading for her white audience’s sympathy by writing in the sentimental tradition. She makes her anticipated readership clear as she appeals to them, “I now ask you, my christian [sic] reader, to pause. You who are living secure from danger—you who have read the sacred scriptures of truth—who have been raised in a land boasting of christian [sic] philanthropy—I say, I now ask you to form some idea of what my feelings were.” She thinks of her young son, James Pratt, and asks God to help her forgive a group of people whom she believes do not understand the concept of forgiveness, writing, “[M]ay God grant me a heart to pray for them, for ‘they know not what they do’” (338). As Simms does in *The Yemassee*, Plummer describes Native peoples as prone to violence and revenge whereas whites are prone to forgiveness, forbearance, mercy, and sympathy—

following apparently Christian laws that are meant to reflect US notions of justice versus purportedly Native American laws of warfare and bloodshed.

Plummer particularly needs her sense of Christian mercy when a few warriors remove her son from her and then kill the next child she has (as she was pregnant when captured). In a gruesome scene, Plummer describes how a few warriors declared the infant was too much trouble because he disrupted her ability to work. She writes, “One of them caught hold of the child by the throat; and with his whole strength, and like an enraged lion actuated by its devouring nature, held on like the hungry vulture, until my child was to all appearance entirely dead. . . . They, by force, took [the child] from me, and threw it up in the air, and let it fall on the frozen ground, until it was apparently dead” (341). The perpetrator of this violence is simultaneously a predator (a lion) and a scavenger who feasts on the dead (a vulture), acting according to his supposed “devouring nature.” The warriors then take the still-breathing baby, tie a rope around his neck, throw him into a patch of prickly pears, and drag him with a horse until he is “torn to pieces” (342). This is the most brutal scene that any of the Parkers or their associates relate and is referenced in several versions of the captivities. However, Plummer ultimately turns her emotions over to Providence and sees the positive side of her son’s death, even praising the Comanche for allowing her to bury her child (342). If she describes the Comanche as threatening and potentially destroying white motherhood, she constantly reminds readers of her role as a mother and also as a Christian who can lean on God rather than vow revenge. This suggestion that revenge is in the purview of God and not humans, who should be forgiving, is similar to James W. Parker’s sentiments about revenge quoted at length earlier. However, these individuals still found a space for

vengeance in their lives even as they preached for forgiveness because they argued that revenge was ultimately justified and exceptional.

Espousing Christian values regarding forgiveness does not mean Plummer does not evince violent resistance and a desire for revenge; however, she is always able to justify this revenge by illustrating how Comanche women, in particular, start the violence and how she ultimately triumphs through Providential strength followed by mercy. Her descriptions of depraved Comanche women echo the descriptions of Simms, Bird, and others who make Native women savage and unsexed through their unflattering depictions of them. As mentioned in Chapter 1, these descriptions often stem from the perception that Native peoples had a skewed sense of proper gender roles. Marez notes, “Comanche women exercised a significant amount of power, including power over captives” (282), and the women in Plummer’s narrative try to exercise their control repeatedly. At one point, Plummer describes fighting with a despotic Comanche mistress and threatening to kill her (349). The scene illustrates Plummer’s ability to act violently, but she never portrays herself as starting the violence and always shows her restraint, as she argues that she wanted “to aggravate them to kill [her]” but always resisted killing anyone herself (353). When another mistress takes issue with her work, she is able to dodge the woman and strike blows of her own, noting that none of the other Comanche stop her but instead gather to watch. She says, “I had her past hurting me, and indeed, nearly past breathing, when she cried out for mercy. I let go my hold of her, and could but be amazed that not one of them attempted to arrest or kill me, or do the least thing for her. She was bleeding freely; for I had cut her head in several places to the skull. I raised her up and carried her to the camp” (353). Plummer initially sounds as though she has “gone savage” at this

moment, her act of cutting her mistress' head reading as a kind of near-scalping. Yet Plummer presents this fight as one conducted in self-defense that even her Comanche spectators do not attempt to stop, and she is then the only person who aids her wounded mistress. Specifically, Plummer washes the woman's face and gives her water, suggesting that her ire has a limit and dissolves into feelings of feminine, Christian mercy once she is no longer threatened.

In these instances of fighting and then aiding her antagonists, Plummer suggests that her civilized, Christian law is in opposition to savage, unmerciful Comanche law. After her last fight, Plummer says a chief approached and told her, "You are brave to fight—good to a fallen enemy—you are directed by the Great Spirit. Indians do not have pity on a fallen enemy. By our law you are clear. . . . She began with you, and you had a right to kill her. Your noble spirit forbade you. When Indians fight, the conqueror gives or takes the life of his antagonist—and they seldom spare them" (354). Plummer, supposedly called the "Fighting Squaw" (DeShields 25), is an anomaly in the village, but she stands out for her ability to show mercy in defiance of Comanche law. When Plummer is brought to trial for another fight that she says she did not start, she informs the all-male court that vengeance is in the hands of God: "I told the Court that they had mistreated me—they had not taken me honorably; that they had used the white flag to deceive us, by which they had killed my friends—that I had been faithful, and had served them from fear of death, and that I would now rather die than be treated as I had been. I said that the Great Spirit would reward them for their treachery and their abuse to me" (355). While Plummer shows defiance in addressing the tribunal in this way, she does not vow personal revenge because she believes the Comanche have violated the laws of

humanity, and God will punish them better than she can. In these words, there is a spirit of revenge, but it is deferred and serves as a marker for how different Plummer is from her captors. In other words, her acts of vengeance are akin to acts of self-defense and are exceptional moments that Plummer works hard to justify, though her readers are already likely biased in her favor.

Ultimately, Plummer shows some ambivalence about revenge, just as James W. Parker does. Both argue that vengeance belongs to God, but both also wish to strike back against the Comanche. Plummer in particular represents her violence as self-defense, just as Simms represents the actions of whites as defensive and lawful. There is a kind of spectatorship to Plummer's story as she regales readers with Hannah Duston-like images of herself fighting valiantly against Native women for survival, but she exhibits greater ambivalence about this violence by always reminding readers of the role of mercy. If she is an avenger, she describes herself as a reluctant one who only goes "savage" in exceptional moments and then retreats to Christian piety, femininity, and justice. Other figures also present themselves as reluctant avengers who are pushed to even more overt acts of vengeance than Plummer. They leave behind even more ambivalent records of their emotions about the justification of certain acts of revenge, as much as they describe those acts as equitable retribution or divine justice.

James and Cynthia Ann Parker: The Laws of Revenge and Reclamation

While the Comanche soon sold Plummer back to her family through a line of purchasers, Cynthia Ann had to wait longer, and the wait only intensified the desire her family had for revenge and the need to re-acculturate her. The feminized men who could

not save their families during the attack are later redeemed themselves as they “rescue” the captives or, lacking that ability (in the case of James W. Parker, especially, who failed to find Cynthia Ann himself), as they extol a more general kind of vengeful justice against Natives. While James W. Parker’s narrative establishes him as a kind of vigilante hero even as other Texans were wary of his tactics, James T. DeShields’s telling of Cynthia Ann Parker’s story promotes the idea that her relatives had to reclaim her from supposedly barbaric people, even after she had spent almost twenty-five years with the Comanche. As James Parker promotes his own prejudiced views and DeShields operates as a biased mouthpiece for Cynthia Ann, though, these stories ultimately lack a sense of closure. Specifically, just as readers at the time displayed ambivalence about James’s acts and Cynthia Ann’s “rescue,” readers today have suggested that the violence committed against the Comanche was potentially unjustified and was also unfulfilling for the white parties involved.

Though the Parker men are unable to protect their kin, they are characterized as masculine heroes who risk and, in some cases, sacrifice their lives in their attempts; furthermore, the white men who succeed in rescuing the women become national heroes who could redeem the failed manhood of the Parker men.¹⁸ The men—particularly General L. S. Ross—who rescue Cynthia Ann and redeem Plummer are represented as “brave and daring” “self-sacrificing patriots” who “left their defenseless homes and

¹⁸ The Parker men apparently felt a sense of shame regarding their inability to protect their women from capture and death. For instance, Plummer defends her uncle Silas as a man who plunged into the fray against the Comanche (336) versus G. E. Dwight who allegedly ran from the fort to save his own family while Silas pleaded, “Good Lord, Dwight, you are not going to run? Stand and fight like a man, and if we have to die we will sell our lives as dearly as we can” (qtd. in Exley 54). Similarly, in DeShields’s text on Cynthia Ann’s captivity, he describes a dispute about L. D. Nixon (one of James W. Parker’s brothers-in-law) and whether he fought during the siege of Fort Parker or made a “cowardly flight” (see 18-19 and 19n4).

families to avenge the sufferings of the frontier people” (DeShields 32, 47; qtd. in DeShields 61). Revenge in this case may seem rash because it leaves other settlers “defenseless,” but DeShields, as a historian who glorifies Texas’s past, represents it as noble and necessary. When Plummer is ransomed and enters Santa Fe, she extols the “manly” character of one of her rescuers and the transition from savagery to civilization, noting, “I found myself surrounded by sympathising [sic] Americans, clad in decent attire. I was soon conducted to Col. William Donoho’s residence. I found that it was him who had heard of the situation of myself and others, and being an American indeed, his manly and magnanimous bosom, heaved with sympathy characteristic of a Christian [sic], had devised the plan for our release” (362). While Donoho’s emotional display feminizes him, it marks him as different from her Comanche captors, whom she always characterizes as unnecessarily harsh. Furthermore, she still points out his manliness, presenting him as a sympathetic protector who has secured her rescue even as his characterization appeals to Christian, sentimentalist values.

Meanwhile, James W. Parker has to seek his vengeance wherever he can since he cannot find his relatives, potentially calling his character into question because of the way he describes his violence against defenseless Natives. For instance, he ends up running into a Native American man who may have been involved in the siege of Fort Parker. In a vague account of events, DeShields writes that, as James W. Parker and others headed to Fort Houston, “a hostile Indian was slightly wounded and temporarily disabled by a Mr. Smith. Mrs. Kellogg instantly recognized him as the savage who had scalped the patriarch, Elder John Parker, whereupon, without judge, jury or court-martial, or even dallying with ‘Judge Lynch,’ he was involuntarily [sic] hastened to the ‘happy hunting

grounds' of his fathers" (DeShields 23). It is unclear how and why Mr. Smith "wounded" and "disabled" this man, but James W. Parker immediately steps in as the executor of his personal law of revenge. As Parker writes in his own narrative, upon seeing the wounded Comanche who had shot and scalped his father—a man who supposedly had scars on each arm—he "found, with mingled feelings of joy, sorrow, and revenge, the scars as described:—joy at the opportunity of avenging the butchery of my father, and sorrow at the recollection of it. . . . What followed, it is unnecessary to relate—suffice it to say, that it was the unanimous opinion of the company, that he would never kill and scalp another white man" (18-19). Both DeShields and Parker elide the gruesome details, but they both exhibit happiness about this moment, and their tone is even mocking. As Parker examines the Indian man's body and apparently finds enough evidence there to convict him, he seems to happily murder a man even as he professes to feel some "sorrow" about it. Perhaps the law of the land would have been, in Parker's mind, too lenient with the man, and he does not even wait for the extralegal judgment of his imagined "Judge Lynch" or a potential mob of supporters.¹⁹ Leaving the scene without apparent protest from spectators, Parker does not seem to fear censure from his perhaps sympathetic white audience for taking matters into his own hands.

Parker, as a vigilante, acts as judge, jury, and executioner at least one other time as he describes another murder of a Native man, again calling on dark humor to describe

¹⁹ See Waldrep for the various potential origins of "Judge Lynch." Generally speaking, Judge Lynch and lynch mobs were supported by many people who promoted the "popular sovereignty" of white citizens and felt they had the right and duty to enforce their own laws "[w]hen the government failed to execute the popular will properly" (14). As I have suggested in my Introduction, groups such as lynch mobs acted under exceptionalist rhetoric both in that they excepted certain people from legal and natural rights and assumed they had authority in particular spaces and moments when they felt law enforcement authorities were either not present (in frontier spaces) or would not act in a speedy or appropriate manner (though, particularly in the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction South, authorities tacitly approved of the actions of white lynch mobs targeting African Americans).

the scene and suggesting that there is no established law that can stop or punish him. He notes that, during his travels, he ran into a Native man whom he was sure was wearing a vest Parker made that was taken during the raid on the fort. He writes,

I interrogated the Indian as to where he procured the vest, and he being unable to give me a definite account of it—the treacherous capture of Fort Parker—the inhuman butchery of my aged father and my affectionate brothers—the galling captivity and slavish bondage of my dear child and innocent and helpless grand-children and nieces—all, all rushed upon my mind at the same moment, and the firm belief that this was one of the authors of all my woe, kindled in my breast feelings that I leave the reader to imagine, for my pen cannot describe them. Every nerve of my system involuntarily trembled, and I felt it was necessary that I should leave the town; so directing my companions to start on, assuring them that I would soon follow *with all possible speed*, I mounted my horse, and taking a “last, fond look” at my vest—*with one eye through the sight of my trusty rifle*—I “turned and left the spot,” with the assurance that my vest *had got a new button hole!* (30)

The need for revenge seems emotionally overwhelming in this moment, but at first it appears as though Parker will ride away as he says “it was necessary that I should leave the town.” However, the vest represents for him the depredations that occurred at Fort Parker, and he assumes the man got his vest during the massacre instead of acquiring it from one of the Comanche warriors at a later date. In other words, he reads the man’s silence as a confession of guilt and, like many heroes in westerns, links stolen clothing to memories of victimization and loss. As with the previous account of killing a Comanche man, with only a brief inspection and no call for help from local magistrates, Parker fires from his horse and rides away before anyone can follow him to protest. His admission of murder in his own narrative suggests that he believes his revenge is just and that this murder is equitable retribution for at least part of his woes, indicated particularly through his use of italics. The fact that he rides away unpunished—though speedily—implies that

he is justified, at least in this purportedly exceptional place wherein Parker has not received aid from the white powers that be and seems to assume his readers will sympathize with his pain.

Time and again, Parker exhibits impatience regarding the wheels of justice under established law, implying that established law is inadequate in this somewhat liminal, post-independence place. His characterization of the young and ill-equipped Republic makes the imagined Texas frontier a location that is still supposedly exceptional enough for Parker to be a kind of vigilante—lamentably or not, given his apparent ambivalence regarding mercy versus revenge. For instance, the Congress of the Republic had determined at that time to strike a treaty for the release of white prisoners—a decision that denies Parker the “assistance” he seeks to track down his captive relatives and fills him with “sorrowful helplessness” (24). He even tries to raise his own company of men to fight the Comanche for their white captives, but General Houston tells him to stand down because, as Parker argues, “[h]e had been made to believe that I premeditated an attack upon some friendly and well-disposed Indian tribes near the frontier of Texas; which was entirely destitute of truth” (29). Parker has decided who is friendly and who is not and has vested himself with the right to form a *posse comitatus*—or local, armed militia gathered to exact, in this case, frontier “justice.” He believes he has the right, duty, and/or authority to kill Native Americans as he sees fit, either in defiance of the law or in the belief that the law (natural, Biblical, or as defined by the legislature) is on his side—which it appears to be, as he is never tried for his murders. Thus his individual law is often at odds with the Republic’s justice system, but he argues for the necessity of his individual power under the circumstances.

After exacting his own revenge during his travels, Parker all but gave up his search for Cynthia Ann when she was “rescued” more than two decades later in an 1860 attack by the Texas Rangers on the Comanche at Pease River that is remembered by some as a shameful massacre of women and children and by others as a heroic feat against Peta Nocona’s band of raiding warriors.²⁰ When Cynthia Ann avoided being shot because the Rangers recognized her as white, she and her young daughter, Topsannah/Prairie Flower, became prized possessions of not just the Parker family, but also of white Texans more generally. Cynthia Ann was passed around in the homes of various Parker relatives, becoming a woman in need of paternal control and retraining. She continually tried to escape and found herself under constant surveillance, learning womanly duties that were deemed appropriate for her as she was treated as a domestic object. Captivity narratives are often about the desire to control and exchange women’s bodies, and the Comanche “captive trade was part of the larger transcultural traffic in women” (Marez 269). White men also engaged in the control and use of women’s bodies when they treated women as objects who had to be reclaimed. Marez notes how, “[i]n New Mexico, Comanches tacitly agreed with Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. authorities to treat women and children as objects of exchange. . . . The commerce in captives continually reconstituted women as mediums of exchange between different groups.” Though “both female captives and Comanche women exercised considerable influence and power, . . . such demonstrations of female agency occurred within and against

²⁰ For various interpretations of what is widely called the Pease River Massacre, see for instance Hacker, *Cynthia* 21-30, Exley 145-64, Brashear 1-14, Hendrickson 113, and Utley 122. Utley in particular generalizes about what happened during the massacre and suggests that everyone supported Lawrence Sullivan “Sul” Ross, the Ranger captain in charge of the campaign and later governor of Texas. Hacker provides a more thorough analysis of Ross’s campaign and reactions to it, including negative ones.

competing patriarchies” (271). When Cynthia Ann is transported from one patriarchy to another, she is praised for learning “to spin, weave and to perform the domestic duties” (DeShields 71), which contrasts with her role as a Comanche wife. DeShields states that, while in captivity, Cynthia Ann “performed the menial offices of drudgery to which savage custom consigns women,—or practiced those little arts of coquetry maternal to the female heart, whether she be a belle of Madison Square, attired in the most elaborate toilet from the *elite* bazars [sic] of Paris, or the half naked savage with matted locks and claw-like nails” (31). Cynthia Ann is both a slave and a coquette, far removed from what she should be as a modest, Christian wife and in need of cultural reclamation and acculturation.

To present her as fit for meeting the desired expectations of her white readers and family members, some versions of Cynthia Ann’s story have her eagerly reclaiming her old identity once white society redeems her, thus further othering Native peoples by suggesting that whites will naturally embrace supposedly superior Anglo-American lifeways. Upon capturing Cynthia Ann, General L. S. Ross notes, “I then asked her to give me the history of her life with the Indians, and the circumstances attending her capture by them, which she promptly did in a very sensible manner” in Comanche to a Mexican interpreter (qtd. in DeShields 65). However, DeShields then notes that Cynthia Ann “had forgotten absolutely everything, apparently, at all connected with her family or past history” (70). Scholars today generally argue that Cynthia Ann had to be retrained, as it were, and that her family had to spur her to remember what happened at Fort Parker. Watching her constantly, her white relatives controlled her movements and her labor, making sure her body remained theirs so the Comanche could not reclaim her. Authors at

the time, though, described how she was eager to pick up her life where it left off before the Comanche captured her. DeShields would have readers believe her existence after her redemption was far superior to Comanche life, saying that upon recognizing her name as Cynthia Ann, “her countenance brightened with a pleasant smile in place of the sullen expression which habitually characterizes the looks of an Indian restrained of freedom” (70). Yet authors always undercut this sense of eagerness and happiness when they note “she sought every opportunity to escape, and had to be closely watched for some time” (71). Of course, they blame her displeasure on the idea that captives become unaccustomed to kindness when they are with the Comanche and thus do not know how to respond to it when they are recaptured.²¹ However, though her rescuers argued that she had been saved from persecution, their own system of surveilling and controlling Cynthia Ann was another kind of persecution, and they even made a spectacle of her body through displaying and photographing her alone and with her daughter, Topsannah/Prairie Flower.²²

²¹ For instance, James Parker argues that his grandson, Plummer’s son, runs away from him once he is redeemed because he is not used to kindness and familial affection after being with the Comanche (36). Even as Cynthia Ann repeatedly tried to escape from her uncle Isaac’s home and was only eventually convinced to stay because her family promised to return her to the Comanche after the Civil War, her uncle’s neighbor wrote in 1861, “She says she does not want to go back to the Indians because they whip too much” (qtd. in Exley 171). Cynthia Ann supposedly said this through an interpreter, which could mean the interpreter was mistaken or that Cynthia Ann’s feelings were simply ignored as her repeated attempts to escape do not suggest she felt the Comanche abused her.

²² Stopping in Fort Worth, Cynthia Ann was eventually “persuaded to have her picture taken with Prairie Flower” because they had become “celebrities” (Exley 169). Students were reported to have been let out of school to see Cynthia Ann and Topsannah/Prairie Flower. One student at the time described the scene: “She stood on a large wooden box, she was bound with rope, she was not dressed in Indian costume, but wore a torn calico dress. Her hair was bronzed by the sun. Her face was tanned, and she made a pathetic figure as she stood there, viewing the crowds that swarmed about her. The tears were streaming down her face, and she was muttering in the Indian language.’ The children asked the principal what she was saying, and he told them that she was asking to be taken back to her people” (qtd. in Exley 170-71).

One cause of the misreadings of Cynthia Ann's emotions was the fact that many of her contemporaries could not fathom why she would want to return to Comanchería, thus they represented their actions as justified and not as another form of captivity. They viewed her union with the Comanche chief Peta Nocona as unnatural and surely a source of displeasure for Cynthia Ann that kept her tied to Comanche lifeways rather than a willing participant in them.²³ For instance, DeShields seems unable to fully believe that Cynthia Ann loved her husband as he notes how she "became the bride of Pata [sic] Nocona, performing for her imperious lord all the slavish offices which savageism and Indian custom assigns as the duty of a wife. She bore him children, and we are assured *loved* him with a species of fierce passion, and wifely devotion" (31). He suggests through his use of passive voice and italics that Comanche love is a different kind of love, a "species" far removed from the truer, preferred kind found in white civilization. Cynthia Ann was reported to have only stayed with the Comanche because she could not leave her children or the purview of her "lazy buck" of a husband (qtd. in DeShields 32). The negative view of her relations with her husband reflects deep fear about interracial marriage between white women and Native American men. Margaret D. Jacobs notes that, "to a society that adhered to the feme covert [wherein a husband legally covered his wife], a white woman who married an Indian would become Indian. . . . White men would lose their patriarchal power over a white woman who married an Indian, and, in the process, Indian men would gain a power and a prerogative that many white men

²³ Margaret D. Jacobs describes this ideology as follows: "By the 1820s a notion had emerged that there was an essential biological difference between Indians and whites, and it made many whites recoil in disgust and dismay from such marriages. A white woman who preferred a 'savage' over one of her own 'blood' upset the supposedly natural racial order, that the 'civilized,' white conqueror maintained superiority over the 'savage red-skinned' Indian" (307).

believed should be theirs alone” (307).²⁴ Furthermore, Cynthia Ann’s union with Peta Nocona resulted in three children, and their children were curiosities—particularly her daughter, Topsannah/Prairie Flower, who was captured with Cynthia Ann, was photographed and educated by whites as much as possible, and died shortly thereafter.²⁵

Meanwhile, the military believed they had killed and scalped Peta Nocona, but most scholars believe he was mistaken for Nobah, who was either another chief or a servant to Peta Nocona.²⁶ His sons, Quanah and Peanuts/Pecos Parker, remained with the tribe. Quanah rose to great prominence as a chief who long refused to live on reservation land and vowed revenge against whites—though he famously disallowed his men to kill white women and children for fear they would be his mother and sister (Hacker, *Cynthia* 36).²⁷ Quanah was ultimately seen as the last Comanche chief, though, as he finally led his people onto a reservation in 1875 (Exley 261). Once the US military subdued him, authors admired him for seeming so civilized. DeShields notes, “Quanah speaks English, is considerably advanced in civilization, and owns a ranche [sic] with considerable live

²⁴ Beliefs changed in the second half of the nineteenth century as whites increasingly believed that Native men could be “uplifted and civilized” through marrying white women (Jacobs 308).

²⁵ DeShields seems unsure about how to discuss the mixed-race Topsannah and barely mentions Cynthia Ann’s “little ‘barbarian’” (72). This shows some discomfort with miscegenation and uncertainty about how both captives and their children who were born into (sometimes perceived versus actual) captivity can become “civilized” after being “barbaric” for so long.

²⁶ If reclaiming Cynthia Ann’s body was important, so was claiming Peta Nocona’s. Exley writes of the battle, “Just then two men ran up, each carrying half of Nocona’s scalp. They had scalped the corpse and then split the ‘trophy’ so that each would have a ‘souvenir’ to carry home” (159). Yet Hacker and Brashear argue that Peta Nocona was not killed, though the Spaniard Antonio Martinez did shoot the injured Comanche man Nobah out of revenge for the deaths of his family members by Peta Nocona’s warriors. Colonel Sul Ross then took souvenirs from Nobah’s body and believed he had defeated Peta Nocona, who likely was away from Pease River that day and died in the 1860s or 1870s, based on Quanah’s testimony and a paper trail that suggests he survived the attack (see Hacker, *Cynthia* 25-27 and Brashear 9). As I have argued in Chapter 2, taking souvenirs—including scalps—from enemies’ bodies was a way of claiming power and property and is seen frequently in life as well as art.

²⁷ When Quanah surrendered at Fort Sill in 1875, he “immediately made inquiries about his mother, hoping to be united with her.” In about 1880 he issued an advertisement in an attempt to obtain a picture of her (Hacker, *Cynthia* 38), and many scholars have reproduced the portrait he had made of himself, sitting next to a portrait of his mother. See Hacker, *Cynthia* 37 and the photograph pages in Gwynne.

stock and a small farm; wears a citizen's suit, and conforms to the customs of civilization—withal a fine-looking and dignified son of the plains" (75). Nineteenth-century stories about Quanah evince a complicated process of seeing him as a savage and as a potentially civilized white(ish) man. For instance, in the 1880s, an author for the Fort Worth *Gazette* wrote, "His general aspect, manners, bearing, education, natural intelligence, show plainly that white blood trickles through his veins" (qtd. in DeShields 80). His life is an example of how Native peoples were seen as noble savages once whites declared they were defeated. Ultimately authors and historians read Quanah's revenge and his life as doomed because he was half Comanche by blood and full Comanche in terms of his ideologies.

Together, these narratives depict terrible violence but call for the settlement of Texas and argue for progress, particularly by extoling the potential of the land and, in later years, through presenting examples like the "civilizing" of Quanah Parker.²⁸ For instance, though Plummer notes that some portions of Texas may never be inhabited because of their violence and desolation, she does suggest that much of the land is fit for settlement (359, 348). James W. Parker, in particular, spends the majority of his narrative cataloguing every detail he can about Texas in order to induce people to move there and tame the wilderness (39). His vision of the land is one that calls for despoiling its natural beauty to build levees, drain bodies of water, mine natural resources, and plant crops that will compete with the agricultural economies of neighboring states. The ability to transform the land of course calls for *something* to happen to Native peoples, but

²⁸ Quanah Parker adopted his mother's surname once he started reservation negotiations with whites. He embraced much white culture, except monogamy and Protestantism (Hagan 37). He was known as a savvy leader who could operate between Comanche and white cultures (127).

Parker is largely silent on this. According to him, towns “are fast springing up,” with “farms being opened daily” (44) and land “becom[ing] settled” (46). His continual use of the passive voice suggests the disappearance of Native peoples by some unseen hand or by marriage with Choctaw Indians, who “boast that they have never shed the blood of a white man” (94). For Parker, Texas has arisen as a thriving land not because of violence but because of a kind of divine fate and because Native peoples lost control of it naturally; the Cherokee have broken contracts with whites due to their own internal disagreements (50), and the white settlers seem to have appeared after the Natives were somehow removed. His language is much like Simms’s, though he writes of this nineteenth-century landscape as more void of Native peoples than Simms’s eighteenth-century setting. Towns “hav[e] sprung up as by magic” (48) and through “destiny”—a word Parker invokes time and again. Parker even notes where every “seat of justice” is throughout the final thirty pages of his narrative to suggest that this exceptional republic is becoming increasingly controllable, and he even includes an “Emigrant’s Guide” at the end to encourage new settlers.

In the end, Parker finally admits that he would personally profit from other people (presumably white Christians) settling in Texas, hinting at the mercenary desires that permeate the story of Cynthia Ann Parker and potentially heighten a sense of ambivalence around Parker’s actions and Cynthia Ann’s redemption. He notes, “All my earthly interests lie in Texas, and my own prosperity is inseparably connected with the prosperity of that country; which finally depends upon its speedy settlement and improvement” (83). As he sells the merits of the land and its many churches, schools, and mansions, such mercenary desires complicate the redemption of Cynthia Ann Parker

as her story becomes inseparable from fame, land, and money, and these complications illustrate how revenge can be tied to economics—a desire for various kinds of ownership at least as much as a desire for justice. As white men recaptured Cynthia Ann and her family fought over her property—which included a land grant and money from the government (Exley 174-75)²⁹, as well as Comanche horses and other property that she refused to take (162)—readers now often question the motives for Cynthia Ann’s redemption and whether she was better off with the captors who became her adopted family. Even at the time, “Some of the men begged Ross to turn her loose and let her return to her adopted people” (Exley 158). Later, in 1935, journalist Tom Champion wrote in the *Crowell Index*, “I don’t think she ever knew but that her sons were killed and to hear her tell of the happy days of the Indian dances and see the excitement and pure joy which shown on her face, [with] the memory of it, I am convinced that the white people did more harm by keeping her away from them than the Indians did by taking her at first” (qtd. in Exley 179). Popular interpretations of her death in 1870—after watching Topsannah die and never seeing the many promises to take her back to the Comanche fulfilled—state that she died of a broken heart.³⁰ Her story is one figuration of revenge

²⁹ Cynthia Ann was taken to Austin to be introduced to secessionists during a meeting and, though she tried to run from the assembly, “[s]he was granted a pension of one hundred dollars a year for the next five years, . . . as well as a league of land,” which her cousin Isaac Parker applied for as a reward for her sufferings and an attempt to reestablish her within the white community (Exley 173-74). Exley notes, “Duke [Isaac] Parker and Benjamin Parker were given title to the proposed land grant, which was ‘to be located, surveyed and patented as other land certificates upon any of the vacant and unappropriated public land of the state of Texas,’ to hold in trust for her since they were in effect considered to be guardians of a ‘minor’” (175), though she was in her mid-thirties. The fact that her male relatives applied for and then controlled her property on her behalf again highlights the ties among Cynthia Ann Parker, gender, and property, even though scholars dispute whether Cynthia Ann received all of the money and land that the government promised her.

³⁰ Interestingly, even decades after her death, Cynthia Ann was again transported. Bashear notes that, in 1957, the US government needed to expand the artillery range at Post Oak, where she was buried with Quannah. Their remains “were removed with much ceremony to the Military Cemetery at Fort Sill,

wherein authors depict whites as embracing it—unlike Simms’s whites and like Hannah Duston and Nathan Slaughter—but also question its efficacy and justness. Though George Lippard, whose text is my next subject, wrote a sensational novella focused more on peoples of Spanish and Mexican heritage as villains (versus Native peoples), his story also engages with ambivalence about justice, vengeance, and property (in land and bodies) in the space of early-nineteenth-century Texas. Using this setting, Lippard presents a similar critique of vengeance in *'Bel of Prairie Eden*, although with an even stronger critique of revenge in the end.

'Bel of Prairie Eden: Embracing Personal Revenge as Nationally Necessary

George Lippard is known for the 1845 novel *The Quaker City* (serialized in 1844), mysteries-of-the-city novels, and legends about the American Revolution, and he became “a popular and controversial radical celebrity” (Jablonski 33). Ending his ministry education early, he worked as a legal assistant from 1838-1841 but was “appalled by the hypocrisy and injustices that legal staff face daily” (34). By the time Lippard published *'Bel of Prairie Eden* in 1848, the US-Mexico War was ending, and Lippard figured Native peoples as long vanished from Texas. He draws on the history of the war, though, to make the menace in his text the Spanish and Mexican soldiers and their allies who betray Texas settlers and must be pursued in Mexico in order to be punished. Lippard’s work was quite popular in the 1840s and 1850s, and he wrote

Oklahoma, where they remain today, under impressive monuments” (209; see also Hacker, *Cynthia* 39). Topsannah’s remains were also brought there in 1965 (Hacker, *Cynthia* 40). These acts of removal and relocation are significant in light of these figures’ histories, particularly as they were moved from one military post to another in order to make room for the expansion of a military site for guided missile testing. Also of significance, Fort Sill is where Quanah had surrendered to the US military in 1875 (207).

numerous texts “to promote the interests of the white working class and the cause of land reform in his weekly story paper, the *Quaker City*, and in his many novels.” He believed that westward expansion would allow the middle class to settle their own land, but he was also fearful that the US-Mexico War would extend slavery (Alemán and Streeby 107). Furthermore, he demonized the Catholic Church and “imagine[d] a form of union [after the war] in which Mexicans continue[d] to be ruled by white Americans” (Streeby, *American* 51, 55). Streeby argues that Lippard’s “vision of a united, more inclusive, white American race defined through a hierarchical relationship to Mexico is entirely consonant with the politics of Manifest Destiny, as Lippard himself makes clear: ‘Our lineage is from that God, who bade us go forth, from the old world, and smiled us into an Empire of Men’” (*American* 55). In *’Bel of Prairie Eden*, a sensational revenge novella, he vilifies the Mexicans, glorifies the Aztec past, and applauds white, masculine heroism. While his white protagonist, John Grywin, undertakes a vengeful quest on behalf of his father, sister, and brother, though, Lippard’s celebration of white, masculine heroics has its limits. Specifically, revenge provides for an enthralling plot but is ultimately unsatisfying for the text’s protagonists. As in the Parker captivities, the disproportional violence and vehement emotions of the avengers prevent a real sense of closure, regardless of whether the avengers operate in exceptional spaces and times. This sense of ambivalence speaks to larger conversations at the time, as well as ongoing conversations, about the roles of revenge and exceptionalist rhetoric within and without the justice and legal systems, particularly where race, gender, and property are concerned.

Unlike the Parkers’ narratives—which describe land occupied by both Natives and whites in a tenuous struggle—Lippard opens his text by describing Texas as virgin

territory with no clear legal ownership. A nameless Native American fades away, signifying that the soon-to-be settlement at Prairie Eden is supposedly not claimed through conquest and bloodshed. Lippard writes, “A lone Indian, leaning on his rifle, . . . stood on the summit of a green island, in the center of that boundless prairie” (118). Lippard describes much of this land as an “island,” suggesting a lack of contact with anyone; furthermore, the absence of boundaries denotes that this land is little known and not owned. Scholars note that the colonization policy of Texas “completely excluded Indians even though they made up sixty percent of the population—in fact, they were considered an obstacle to progress” (Libura et al. 19).³¹ The “lone Indian” in Lippard’s novella removes himself as an obstacle, though, as he says, “My fathers dwelt here, when these giant trees were saplings, not higher than my rifle, Where [sic] are they now? Before this knoll itself was reared, as the grave of warriors, Red Men were upon this soil, the Kings, the Prophets of their people. Where are they now? The bones of the mighty men rest in the bosom of this knoll—but their children, where are they? Look for them far away by the great Salt Lake, in the land of the setting sun!” (119). From this point, he says, “I depart forever!,” and he “went on his way toward the west and came back no more” (119). Lippard picks up on the familiar vanishing Indian myth to suggest that the few Native Americans in the West were long gone before white settlers came. Indeed, “[t]en years pass” before the Grywins come from Philadelphia to settle on this land (119). Their mansion home does not remain an island, though, nor is their arrival without controversy.

³¹ Krystyna Libura et al. even note, “On his map [of Mexican and American colonies in Texas, Stephen F.] Austin did not record a single Indian tribe, indicating instead regions of wild horses and buffalo—which is where the Indians who depended on those animals resided” (20).

Before continuing further, a plot synopsis of this text will help introduce my analysis of the novella, which is somewhat obscure today. The plot takes place in Texas around the time of the Texas Revolution. The story revolves around the Grywins and their former associates from Philadelphia: Ewen McGregor and, especially, Don Antonio Marin—a Mexican military officer of Spanish descent. Because McGregor is upset about his business dealings with the Grywin patriarch, Jacob, and Marin is upset that Jacob's daughter, Isabel, has scorned his advances, McGregor and Marin raid the Grywin home while the sons, John and Harry, have gone toward San Antonio with the Volunteers of Prairie Eden to heed the "proclamation of the president of Texas" and fight against the invading Mexican military (112). The villains enlist military support to hang Jacob, and Marin rapes Isabel. When John and Harry come home to find their father dead and Isabel insane, they have little time to cope before being drawn into the revolution. Marin has the chance to spearhead one more atrocity against the Grywin family by having Harry executed after the Mier campaign. When the revolution ends and Marin has apparently repented and is living a monastic life, John plots to destroy McGregor and Marin by killing Marin's father, seducing his sister, Isadora, and killing both Marin and McGregor in an elaborate plot wherein he enlists the help of Isabel and ensnares both men in an Aztec cave near Vera Cruz during the US-Mexico War. Though the revenge plot seems successful as John moves back to Philadelphia with Isabel and his bride, Isadora, Lippard ends his story not with a sense of triumph for Texas and the individual heroes therein, but rather with a sense of regret because the protagonists' private vengeance has resulted in lies and carnage that seemingly do nothing to rectify the past, including the violent

history of the imagined frontier in Texas and issues surrounding the ownership of land and women's bodies.

Much like the Parkers, Jacob Grywin comes to Texas under mysterious circumstances that could complicate the lines between heroes and villains in this text and, thus, complicate understandings and justifications of exceptional vengeance in the text. Early on, Lippard notes that Grywin has imported slaves into Texas, as his group of settlers consists of “some civilized people from the states, other German emigrants—and ten black slaves” (112). The Germans and slaves are not included in the number of “civilized people” even though Mexico had outlawed slavery in 1829. Furthermore, the family never mentions the name of Philadelphia in their new home because of some hidden disgrace (114). The father, Jacob Grywin, is described as “suddenly erect[ing] his home in the wilderness” in 1840 “after the young Texas had struggled into Independence, through the bloody clouds of Goliad, the Alamo, and San Jacinto” (120). It is through the settler Ewen McGregor that readers learn more about Grywin, as McGregor calls him a “traitor to the Republic of Mexico” and a “broken bank director of Philadelphia, who turned traitor to the trust of some thousand widows and orphans, and then fled the city, seeking refuge for his guilty wealth in the prairie of Texas” (125). Though McGregor's character is suspect because he changes sides a number of times in the novella, Jacob Grywin does not protest the allegations and seems to fit the stereotype of Texans that I discussed previously—a disgraced man who snuck into Texas with his slaves at the earliest opportunity, building Prairie Eden as a fresh start.

Despite the mystery surrounding the Grywins and the patriarch's questionable character, though, Lippard is able to frame the Mexican officer, Marin, as the villain

because his past business with the Grywins does not justify his later violence; specifically, the first act of violence that readers encounter occurs when Marin rapes Isabel Grywin and kills her father because she had previously scorned Marin's offer of marriage (127). Regardless of the lack of details regarding Isabel's rejection of Marin, his characterization as a political, national, and racial other justifies Isabel's refusal, particularly for white, USAmerican readers.³² Furthermore, despite his qualities as an other, his revenge against the Grywins is never fully justified in the text because it falls well outside the boundaries of eye-for-an-eye retribution. Marin and McGregor seem to combine their vengeful desires as Marin drugs and rapes Isabel and both men have the Mexican soldiers hang her father. While, as mentioned before, Grywin's character is suspect, Isabel is presented as the most innocent and pure of victims. As McGregor enters Isabel's bedroom, where her bed is "so pure, so white, so spotless"—just like her—the narrator asks, "Who is this ruffian that dares intrude upon the sanctity of a maiden's bed chamber?" (123). McGregor laughs and is compared to a snake who makes Isabel turn "as though a viper had bit her heel" (125). Though Isabel cries for mercy

³² Although Marin is of Spanish ancestry and may be raced white, I argue that he is racially othered in this text. As I will mention shortly, Marin is often described with dark features and is a traitor who leaves the United States and the Grywins to league with Mexico. Tomás Almaguer argues that "Spanish colonization of the Southwest had conferred upon Mexicans a 'white' racial status" that made them "generally perceived as worthy of at least partial integration and assimilation" into white USAmerican society (4). However, the Spanish were still characterized negatively through the Black Legend, which supports anti-Catholic sentiment and the villainy of supposedly avaricious Spaniards (Streeby, *American* 58). Furthermore, there was a "widespread belief that Mexicans were an inferior people. Indians, half-breeds, blacks—wasn't that what six out of seven Mexicans were? And the other seventh—degenerate Spaniards" (Meltzer 85). Mexicans were often compared to the slaves of the US South, were seen as a "mongrel population that was innately inferior to the vigorous and enterprising Anglo-Saxon," and were seen as "but degenerate Spaniards, inheriting few of the virtues and exaggerating the vices of their ancestry" (Johannsen 23, 167, 260). For many politicians, authors, and everyday US citizens, "[US]America had a sacred duty to regenerate the unfortunate Mexicans by absorbing them into our great democracy" (Meltzer 225). In sum, although Marin's Spanish heritage may align him closer to the white, USAmerican settlers in the text, his link to Mexico and status as a traitor other him in ways that make violence and vengeance against him seem potentially more justified, particularly for a white readership.

from Marin, he says, “I . . . love you with a love that is merciless in its every pulsation. I . . . adore you so much that I will wreck every moment of your existence unless you consent to become mine!” (129). “[U]ndying vengeance” is in his eyes as Lippard again notes her “bare” and “naked” feet, “white” skin, and “virgin bed” the next morning, after she has been drugged and raped, her father killed and her sanity gone (130).

As the foil to Marin, Isabel’s brother John Grywin emerges as the white hero who could not save his father and sister before they were harmed and must therefore seek vengeance framed as justice. Unlike his father, John is (at least initially) represented as wholly virtuous and as a man who, along with defending his father, defends the honor of siblings whom Lippard describes as equally virtuous and innocent. John’s motivation is amplified by the fact that he was unable to defend his family because he was away from Prairie Eden, helping the Texans fight the Mexicans. He can only witness the aftermath as he and his younger brother, Harry, ride up to the house as Isabel emerges, laughing maniacally while looking at her father, her mind apparently destroyed (131). Unlike the threat of black slaves or Native men who might assault the feeble white woman, there is a different other in Lippard’s text who has violated his sister’s honor—the Hispanic man, Marin, with his “olive skin” and “jet black hair” that contrasts with Isabel’s ever-present whiteness (125). As Dana D. Nelson notes, “Lippard locates questions of civic order in women’s mysterious interiors. Men’s criminal dramas are mapped across female bodies” (*National* 151). Order, law, and justice—already tenuous on the Texas frontier—collapse as Marin violates Isabel’s body, threatening US expansion, whiteness, and women’s virtue. Streeby notes that, in moments such as these, “Lippard blames Mexico for the war and encourages readers to feel for white settlers on the Texas borderlands.”

Furthermore, “By making Ewen and the Mexican soldiers a threat to the white family and the homestead in Texas, Lippard mobilizes sensations of fear and horror in behalf of the Texas colonizers that may override his representation of the colonization of Texas as a morally tainted enterprise” (*American* 75). Texas needs to be tamed not just so John can have justice and his home can live up to its Edenic name, but also so Mexicans can be halted in their supposedly unprovoked attacks against Texas’s sovereignty and the United States’ hopes of annexing the republic—a republic that the Mexicans are unjustly ravaging.

However, rather than allow John to exact his vengeance immediately, Lippard implies there is another reason to support John—the murder of his feminized younger brother, Harry, who is (in a way) killed twice. Throughout the text, Lippard describes Harry as “girlish,” especially as he is contrasted to John, with his “broad chest and muscular form” (111). This likens him to Isabel and highlights how Harry is an innocent victim, just a boy trying in vain to be manly. The fact that Harry is twice believed to be dead accentuates the extreme violence of the Mexican antagonists: Even though they have two chances to spare the boy’s life, they shoot him both times. First, the Mexican soldiers capture the Texans during the attack on Mier and deny them the rights of prisoners of war. Lippard draws on actual events as he enumerates Santa Anna’s verdict against the Texans through a Mexican colonel. He states the Texans have been “declared pirates and robbers, out of the pale of all international law, and stripped of all the rights of civilized communities.”³³ Though Santa Anna has determined that they deserve death,

³³ Libura et al. note, “When the Mexican government learned that American mercenaries and volunteers were enlisting to support the Texas rebellion, it issued a decree on December 30, 1835, defining those foreigners as ‘pirates,’ meaning that they were criminals who lacked a country of citizenship and a flag.

he has decided to show “mercy” by sentencing to death “only one out of every ten men.” Lippard suggests that this claim of showing mercy is empty and that even the Mexican colonel knows it because he reads the decree with a “convulsive movement” and “choked . . . voice” (132, 133). Furthermore, Lippard has described the white Texans as brave and manly—not lawless pirates who fall outside the purview of the rule of law.

Due to this decree and the denial of mercy, though, the Texans must pull beans from a jar and will live if they pull a white bean and die if the bean is black (133). This seemingly arbitrary way of deciding who lives and who dies suggests that Mexico’s wartime laws are essentially unlawful in terms of moral and natural law, which is a point that can justify John’s later acts of vengeance. Lippard’s appeal to sympathy through sentimentalist rhetoric, as well as his claim that Mexican soldiers showed no mercy, also helps justify John’s retaliatory violence. Lippard tells readers how to respond upon reading this scene, encouraging them to feel for “these heroes of Mier, who had mothers, wives, sisters in the sunny land which they had bought with their blood—the beautiful land of Texas” (133). Harry pulls a black bean—apparently on purpose, sacrificing himself. With his “girlish form,” he defiantly announces his name to the soldiers (134). Ten Texans say they will take his place because he is just a boy, essentially asking for mercy. To Harry’s joy, Marin appears, but he will not help the men he has wronged and whom he knew in Philadelphia (135). Only Marin is unmoved when Harry is shot, as even the other Mexican soldiers cry because the “girlish boy” is “butchered . . . in cold

According to the rules of war at the time, ‘pirates’ could be put to death” (31). As supposed pirates, they become exceptions to the usual rule of law, but Lippard’s characterization of the Mexicans suggests that they choose to violate laws regarding taking prisoners of war, regardless of who those prisoners are. Like Simms does in *The Yemassee* and Maxwell Philip does in *Emmanuel Appadocca*—the subject of my next chapter—Lippard engages with how the label “pirate” affects one’s access to various legal and natural rights.

blood” (153). This is the first instance when Harry is killed, but his body is not among the dead. Harry turns up two months later at a festival in Saltillo, dressed in rags and screaming for bread and water before the soldiers shoot him, Marin looking on with a smile (153). Given another chance to show mercy to the boy, the Mexican army again denies it. Lippard uses Harry’s story, which is based on the real-life story of James L. Shepherd, to add authenticity to his sensational novella (Alemán and Streeby 294 n23); he calls on an event well known to Texans to remind readers of how Texans were denied justice as well as mercy. This builds sympathy for Harry and, by extension, the avenger, John—an avenger who is, again, unable to help his family.

Furthermore, with the scene at Mier, Lippard transforms the usually girlish Harry into a masculine figure, which heightens the way that Mexicans are mocked as cowardly and, thus, unmanly. Rather than deserving respect and lawful treatment, the feminized Mexico (and her inhabitants) supposedly needs masculine USAmerican revitalization. The press often characterized Mexico as feeble and lifeless—easily conquered. For instance, one author wrote in the *United States Democratic Review*, “Mexico is in a state of suspended animation. She is in fact dead. She must have resurrection. She must be electrified—restored. This American Republic is strong enough to do anything that requires strength. It is vital enough to inject life even into the dead” (qtd. in Weinberg 68). Such a lifeless nation hardly required men to conquer it, and when McGregor remarks on the large number of “Mexican devils” the Texans are facing, John responds, “Fifty white men of Texas are equivalent to one thousand Mexicans, any day” (113). As the US soldiers arrive in Vera Cruz in 1847, a city Lippard describes with the words “black” and “blackness” (142-43)—perhaps to highlight its otherness as well as its near-

death state—Lippard writes that “there is a doom upon the land, the hardy children of the North are here, the soldiers of the new crusade throng the waters and the shore, at least twelve thousand strong, and there is not one Mexican to meet them on the beach with the warm welcome of a warrior’s steel” (144). The Mexican forces are either already dead or are too cowardly to meet the US soldiers; either way, Lippard frames the war as easily winnable. In fact, the US administration believed the war would only last ninety to 120 days and that major military efforts would not be required (Sellers 19). Though the war lasted longer, scholars such as Hämäläinen note the war was “so one-sided that Ulysses S. Grant called it ‘one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation’” (233). To counter the notion that the war is entirely one-sided and even unjust, Lippard highlights the aggressive violence of his Mexican antagonists, suggesting that they started the conflicts with Texas but were not manly enough to finish them.³⁴

With the events surrounding the execution of Harry and other Texans, Lippard joins a host of US authors who blamed Mexico for the war, using Harry to claim sympathy from his audience and link John’s personal revenge to a larger, more easily justified public revenge. John’s personal revenge is delayed, however, because of the fighting between Mexicans and Texans leading up to the US-Mexico War. Lippard recalls an 1842 proclamation calling Texans to the west to defend “the young state from a threatened invasion.—Mexico was, of course, known to be the invader, and the impulse

³⁴ As already suggested, the notions of masculinity and chivalry were prominently discussed around the time of Texas’s annexation and the US-Mexico War. As Amy S. Greenberg notes, “During the presidential campaign of 1844, Democratic supporters of annexation pictured Texas as a vulnerable European maiden, and they cast their Whig opponents as unmanly moralizers unwilling to help a damsel in distress. In other words, Democrats cloaked their aggressivity in the language of chivalry.” Popular literature of the period typically represented Mexican women as attractive and Mexican men as effeminate, and these images “helped to justify aggression against Mexico” (23).

of the invasion, Santa Anna” (121). Lippard uses Santa Anna to contrast the United States’ supposed practice of showing mercy with Mexican mercilessness, writing that Santa Anna “had not forgiven the Texans for sparing his life” (122). The press framed Mexico as the aggressor and highlighted the need for the United States to seek justified revenge to stop further depredations. On the day the Senate passed the war bill, one Georgian remarked, “The blood of her citizens has been spilt on her own soil. It appeals to us for vengeance” (qtd. in Sellers 15). Importantly, many politicians in the United States described themselves as non-aggressive but desirous of war. Journalists and historians at the time described President Polk and his Cabinet as “men of peace, with objects to be accomplished by means of war; so that war was a necessity and an indispensability to their purpose; but they wanted no more of it than would answer their purposes” (qtd. in Sellers 19). Even Walt Whitman weighed in to argue that Mexicans were like children who “must be thoroughly chastised!—We have reached a point in our intercourse with that country, when prompt and effectual demonstrations of force are enjoined upon us by every dictate of right and policy” (47). The passive voice in this statement—and many others—figures Mexicans as violent actors and the US military and government as responders who have a duty to defeat Mexico (even for its own good). Streeby notes that the Spanish conquest of Mexico, though it brought Christianity to the New World, was described in the United States as flawed because Spaniards practiced Catholicism versus Protestantism and “because Spaniards as a people were said to be characterized by superstition, avarice, cruelty, and tyranny; because they were not considered racially pure, but rather were disposed to mix with conquered peoples; and because they were not the chosen people who, according to millennialists, were destined

to lead the world to the utopia at the end of history” (“American” 14-15). The United States could mask its own aggression by highlighting the supposed savagery of Mexicans, ultimately gaining huge tracts of land in the West and Southwest. Lippard believed that expansion in the West would benefit USAmericans by offering opportunities for more individuals to own land, but, like other writers, he had to blame Mexico for the war to justify such expansion (Alemán and Streeby 107).

As the war continues and the revenge plot reaches its zenith, with John luring Marin and the traitorous McGregor into an abandoned Aztec stronghold, Isabel comes to represent the figure of La Malinche but one who reverses history. Controlling Isadora’s body not only serves as revenge for Marin’s rape of Isabel but also is an attempt to rectify the conquest of Spain over the Aztecs. By transforming Isadora’s body, in the Aztec cave, into a USAmerican versus a Mexican possession, John’s revenge plot takes on larger importance as she is whitened through her union with John and removed north to Philadelphia. La Malinche, a native of Mexico who was traded between Mexican men and Spanish conquerors, became Hernán Cortés’s translator in 1519 and bore him a son, recognized by many people as the first mestizo (Cypess 9).³⁵ Scholars all make a similar argument that “[v]ery few Mexicans before the modern period were willing to accept her as anything other than a prostitute or a traitor” because she helped Cortés defeat the

³⁵ Though little is known about her early life, La Malinche is thought to have been born in the early 1500s in Coatzacoalcos, a pre-Columbian Mexican province. She “is believed to have originally been named Malinal after ‘Malinalli,’ the day of her birth, as was the custom at that time. As daughter of an Aztec *cacique*, or chief, she was a member of a privileged, educated class.” After her father’s death, her mother gave her away to itinerant traders in order to control her inheritance. She was “eventually sold . . . to the ruling *cacique* of Tabasco, a province situated on the Yucatán coast. She lived in Tabasco until Cortés arrived there in 1519. Because of her background in these widely separated provinces, Malinal knew both Nahuátl, the language of the Aztecs, and the Mayan dialects of her adopted people, the natives of Tabasco” (Candelaria 3).

Aztecs and other Native peoples (2).³⁶ Lippard writes that La Malinche, “[t]he child of the heathen people, . . . has forsaken home and altar for the Christian” and “held over the dark hair of Cortes a crown of orange blossoms, with a single blood-red flower in the center” (151). While Isadora somewhat represents the Virgin of Guadalupe, who “embodies the most virtuous feminine attributes: forgiveness, succor, piety, virginity, [and] saintly submissiveness,” through being seduced by the white US American, John, she more closely resembles La Malinche, “the Mexican Eve, the tainted sex” (Cypess 6). Sandra Messinger Cypess notes how La Malinche came “to signify the traitor to national goals; the one who conforms to her paradigm is labeled *malinchista*, the individual who sells out to the foreigner, who devalues national identity in favor of imported benefits” (7). While La Malinche is “both the snake and the Mexican Eve, the traitor and temptress, the rationalization for the Amerindian failure to overcome the Europeans” (9), the similar role that Isadora plays is potentially more celebratory. Whereas Lippard laments the fall of the Aztecs³⁷ and may, thus, blame La Malinche in part for that, Isadora

³⁶ For instance, La Malinche is linked to the Black Legend—a negative view of Spain as duplicitous and savage that, as Streeby notes, was often invoked (by Lippard and others) to malign Spain and Mexico (*American* 58). Sandra Messinger Cypess notes that in the second letter of Cortés’s *Letters*, he “mentions [La Malinche] in relation to the discovery of the conspiracy in Cholula and the events leading up to the massacre of the Cholulans, an exploit of great significance for the success of the conquest and for contributing to the so-called Black Legend of Spain’s role in the New World.” Because La Malinche was, “according to the accounts of Cortés, Gómara, and Bernal Díaz del Castillo, . . . the key source of information regarding the planned ambush of the Spaniards,” La Malinche came to embody much of the Black Legend (27).

³⁷ Streeby notes, “Lippard tries to represent the US-Mexican War as a just retribution for the atrocities committed during the Spanish conquest of Mexico” (“American” 23), illustrating how Lippard romanticized the Aztecs. While the US ship *Princeton* glides onto the Mexican coast with a head like “a huge serpent trailing its sinuous way over the calm waters” and Winfield Scott is in command, following “in the Footsteps of Cortes,” the US military is represented as reversing Cortés’s malignant influence (145). On the Aztecs, Lippard writes, “a wondrous people dwelt in this land, amid gorgeous cities, or in the silence of the beautiful valleys, their dusky faces, glowing with the same passions that fill our bosoms now, the fury of war, the avaricious lust of traffic, the magnetic tenderness of love” (147). He celebrates their belief in war and a “stern Messiah” (148). No match for Cortes and La Malinche, though, the Aztecs are remembered as vanished, much like the Native peoples of Texas. Streeby notes that Lippard “evokes a

reverses the legacy by sleeping with the “right” man—the white American versus the Spaniard. Her body is the conduit through which John can exact his revenge. Instead of representing “all the evils and misfortunes that Americans suffer when they accept European ways” (Cypess 45), Isadora’s union with John punishes the Spanish and represents the whitening of Mexico. Streeby notes, “the romance plots of a good deal of cheap war fiction were echoed by contemporary calls to conquer Mexico by ‘whitening’ it through transnational heterosexual unions” (Streeby, *American* 64). As Lippard writes nostalgically about the Aztec past and blames La Malinche in part for bringing about the fall of the empire, Isadora emerges as a Mexican woman whose body can be used as revenge for both the Aztecs and the United States, giving John’s personal revenge larger importance and utility.

John and Isabel’s Regret: The Futility of Eye-for-an-Eye Retribution

While the death of Harry—added to Isabel’s rape and Jacob’s murder—is what finally ignites eye-for-an-eye retribution that Lippard has worked hard to justify, ultimately this brand of retribution that spirals into malicious revenge points out the futility of trying to exact equitable justice; then as today, the notion of absolute equitability seems subjective at best and potentially nonexistent. Lippard hints at the view that exact punishment, or just desert, is tantamount to justice, but the schemes John has to craft show how absurd this is. Furthermore, Lippard sometimes blatantly labels

certain amount of sympathy for Mexican Indians by placing them in a position that is symbolically similar to that of aggrieved groups within the US” (“American” 21). However, “though Lippard extends some sympathy to Mexican Indians, he never represents them as equals. Instead, he tends to identify them with the dead past, so that his largely Prescott-derived pictures of Indian enclaves have a ‘land-that-time-forgot’ feel to them; they also recall James Fenimore Cooper’s ‘vanishing Americans’ in novels such as *The Last of the Mohicans*” (*American* 64).

John's actions as merciless revenge, with all of its negative connotations. When readers find John in Vera Cruz after having killed Marin's father and preparing to seduce Isadora, the Marin home is called "the awful theater of revenge" (137). Though John does call his plan to seduce Isadora a "pursuit of justice" (155), Lippard characterizes John as increasingly disturbed rather than heroic. In addition, Marin is now a monk, repentant after he declares the murder of his father "a vengeance dealt by . . . supernatural hands" (156). Now it is John who denies mercy and is described as someone with "a smile that was almost Satanic" (152). Instead of allowing God to exact His own "supernatural" justice, John has apparently sided with the devil to override God's declaration, "Vengeance is mine" (Romans 12:19). Just as Marin notes that it was "the devil who urged [him] to [his] revenge" and who has "br[ought] home to [him] the poison which [he] distilled for others," John is linked to the devil's work. Though John may be operating in a wartime state of exception wherein seeking justice under the rule of law seems impossible, his obsession with destroying Marin through destroying those around him seems hardly justified.

The main problem with John's decision to punish Marin's father and sister in this revenge plot is that they were not involved in John's suffering, which is where Lippard's critique of revenge becomes apparent. Isadora, in particular, is a character who invites sympathy because of her position as an ignorant pawn in John's revenge plot. Though Isadora does scorn a soldier of her own race and nationality to be with John—suggesting that, unlike Isabel, she has made a choice regarding whom to give her virginity to—readers know that John is actually plotting the entire time. This likens John's seduction to rape, and Lippard wrote in the 1849 author's preface to *Quaker City* "[t]hat the

seduction of a poor and innocent girl, is a deed altogether as criminal as deliberate murder. It is worse than the murder of the body, for it is the assassination of the soul. If the murderer deserves death by the gallows, then the assassin of chastity and maidenhood is worthy of death by the hands of any man, and in any place” (qtd. in Nelson, *National* 151). Isadora may be Mexican and the sister of the enemy, but she is quite similar to Isabel in name and appearance, which makes her seduction all the more problematic even if her likeness to Isabel convinces John of the equitable justice or retribution of his actions. Lippard repeatedly notes Isadora’s whiteness and virginal innocence, prompting Marin to ask the understandable question, “My sister, she is pure, what harm has she done?” (156). While, as Streeby notes, “writers fantasized about heterosexual union between a feminized Mexico and a masculinized US” that would “turn force into consent and conquest into international romance,” distinguishing “between a rapacious Spanish conquest and an idealized, peaceful, and nonaggressive US relationship to Mexico” (Streeby, “American” 22), it is difficult to view John’s seduction of Isadora as benign.³⁸ John would perhaps rape and abandon her if he did not have bigger plans for her—using her to destroy her brother and only (apparently) accidentally falling in love with her later.

Through this elaborate scheme, both John and Isabel are eventually able to oversee the murder of Marin, using McGregor as a pawn so they do not have to bloody their own hands. Despite the fact that they do not plunge the knife into Marin’s heart

³⁸ Of course, there were concerns about how such a romance between Mexico and the United States could truly acculturate Mexicans to white, Christian, USAmerican lifeways. As Amy Kaplan notes, “visions of imperial expansion as marital union carried within them the specter of marriage as racial amalgamation.” She argues that “popular fiction about the Mexican War portrayed brave American men rescuing and marrying Mexican women of Spanish descent” even as “political debates over the annexation of Mexico hinged on what was agreed to be the impossibility of incorporating a foreign people marked by their racial intermixing into a domestic nation imagined as Anglo-Saxon” (*Anarchy* 585).

themselves, though, they still plan and relish in the murder even as Marin cries for mercy. Their role as gleeful avengers who deny mercy—versus reluctant avengers such as Hannah Duston and Nathan Slaughter—further complicates or challenges the sense that John and Isabel are the ultimate heroes of the text. For instance, while Marin is forced to view the seduction of his sister in the Aztec cave, Isabel stands emotionless beside him, her form “resembling a marble image of vengeance, veiled” (174). He yells at her, “Pity—mercy—not for my sake, but for hers!” (174). She simply invokes the name of her family’s home, “*Prairie Eden!*,” and then the location wherein the Mier prisoners were sentenced and Harry was executed the first time, “*Rancho Salado!*” (174). By mentioning these places, Isabel recalls Marin’s past violence against her family to justify present events.³⁹ John is invested with “Satanic beauty” and an expression that is “infernal” as he looks at his “wretched victim,” Marin. Though Marin is the “victim” here, John distances himself from the actual murder by telling Marin, “It was Red Ewen that stabbed you. Ungrateful dog, to turn his fangs against his master” (179). Yet readers know that John’s hand has guided Ewen McGregor as he poisoned McGregor and covered the face of Marin so his identity would not be known as the knife fell. Similar to how Simms attempts to transfer justified violence onto others (such as loyal Natives, slaves, and dogs) so his white heroes will seem less bloodthirsty, Lippard attempts to displace this act of killing Marin onto McGregor. However, in both authors’ texts, white

³⁹ This invocation of a place name is much like other common references to Goliad or the Alamo that Lippard, James W. Parker, and others make. As suggested previously, such markers of past violence allow people to continually justify present violence and vengeance because they can pinpoint for themselves a crime that must be punished and victims who must be avenged, whether through legal or extralegal means. See Sturken on the importance of investing places with memories that, as she argues in her introduction and I have argued in my own, may not be “faithful” but are powerful in regards to remembrance and forgetting (7).

protagonists orchestrate the violence overall. John's final act of revenge is to tell Marin that Isadora will marry him and that he has realized his "vengeance on the murderer of the father and the brother; eternal vengeance on the betrayer of the sister" (180). The "eternal" nature of this vengeance is a reminder of how far John has gone to seek his brand of bloody justice and how he cannot turn back once Marin and McGregor are both dying and he has slept with Isadora. The final images readers have of John and Isabel in the cave are images of satanic glee that call the figures' heroism into question.

Reinforcing this ambivalence, John declares his own ambivalence and regret at the end of the novella, particularly through his relationships with the women in the text. John actually falls in love with Isadora and must hide her brother's death from her indefinitely, though he witnesses her sorrow about not hearing from Marin. Even the raped Isabel has forgiven Marin and wants to be buried with him in Pennsylvania, where the text closes. Her forgiving remarks may seem empty because Lippard suggests she is insane after her rape, but her sentiments are still suggestive in that even she exhibits a desire to show mercy. Even in the Aztec cave, Isabel's feelings waver as Lippard writes, "[T]he cold, remorseless vengeance of the dishonored woman fails her at once." While she remembers the terrible things Marin has done, she notes his sister did no wrong, and she flees from Marin's side while he watches John seduce Isadora (175). In the end, Isabel demands that Marin's body be brought to Philadelphia to be buried next to hers, arguing that too much blood has been shed. She says on her deathbed, "*The blessed God forgave his murderers even on the Cross!* John, there has been too much bloodshed—too much too much. *Vengeance is mine, and I will repay*, was spoken by God himself, and we John, have taken from God his own time and manner of justice—we have done much

wrong; let us now forgive” (194-95). John acquiesces to her demands, saying at Isabel’s grave, “I, your brother, feel *remorse* for the revenge which I hurled upon his dying hour—*remorse*” (193) and cries, “*I forgive him!*” in reference to Marin (194). Remorse replaces vengeance at the end of the text, but by this point it is too late. Vengeance does not comfort a single character in the text, and Isadora lives and dies in ignorance, lamenting the absence of her brother because John can never reveal the truth to her. While one of Lippard’s main strategies “is to unify the US nation-people by repeatedly sketching pictures of endangered, mutilated, or destroyed US bodies” (Streeby, “American” 17), the ruined bodies and minds of both Mexicans and USAmericans suggest ambivalence about the ideologies around which USAmericans should unite; the ideology that revenge is unjust when Mexicans commit it and just when USAmericans commit it is suspect and under interrogation here.

Furthermore, in addition to being reminded of Marin’s murder because of his proximity to Isabel and Isadora, John is reminded of how he killed McGregor because of McGregor’s orphaned son, who steals John’s wallet because he is starving (189, 196). Earlier, as McGregor dies in the cave, he says, “A bad man, John—I’ve been. *In Philadelphia—my boy!—have mercy on him!*” (182). As McGregor dies, a “sudden paleness cross[es] the face of the Avenger.” Lippard notes, “John of Prairie Eden, so remorseless in his Satanic revenge, felt a sudden shudder pervade his form, a horrible gulf, black, fathomless, yawned before his eyes; he trembled and sank on his knees, his face buried in the bosom of Isora [Isadora]” (182). When John moves to Philadelphia with Isadora and Isabel, Lippard gives John his chance to finally show mercy to someone. John is told that the person who stole his wallet has been caught and that Judge Cant will

punish him.⁴⁰ The police indicate that McGregor is the boy's father and that the mother has starved to death (198). Rather than seek revenge or even justice in a court of law when the police catch the boy, John adopts him and promises to give him a good home. This is perhaps a kind of retribution for John that allows him to make up for his own wrongs. However, while John may have learned compassion at the end of the text, it cannot erase the vengeance he has exacted and the secrets he must keep. Lippard represents John as a penitent who must spend the rest of life figuring out how to repent for his own revenge. Interestingly, John and Isadora do not seem to have children together. Lippard denies miscegenation in this instance, not allowing Isadora to resemble La Malinche in this respect. Perhaps this is a way of killing off the Grywin and Marin lines—lines of corrupt, vengeful, tragic individuals.⁴¹

The overall message of the novella points to Lippard's own potential uncertainty about how justice can be achieved without spiraling into unbounded revenge, particularly in places such as Texas that had fluctuating legal oversight before, during, and after independence. One solution for the Grywins is to remove themselves from Texas, returning to Philadelphia where so-called civilization is more established but where John still cannot escape or rewrite the past despite his attempts to do right by marrying Isadora and caring for McGregor's son. Lippard also leaves the figure of Isadora's scorned suitor, Don Augustin, to potentially return for his own revenge. Before entering the

⁴⁰ Lippard's choice to name the Judge "Cant" may signify a number of plays on words. For instance, "cant" means empty, uncritical, tilted, a movement that overturns something, and esoteric—all words that can be critiques of the justice system and the rule of law in various ways. "Cant" is also a common nineteenth-century word for describing the speech of sanctimonious preachers. See Kirkham 157, wherein the author, in 1834, critiques the cant of various Protestant and Catholic clergymen's speech as full of fashionable affect but void of actual religion.

⁴¹ This falls in line with how Bird represents Nathan Slaughter as a man who essentially vanishes at the end of *Nick*, leaving no bloodline. Heroic avengers often die at the end of such stories, as well, which is the case of the protagonist in my next chapter.

Aztec cave, Marin tells Augustin that he will look around the cave and, if he does not return within an hour, Augustin should “follow and avenge” (170). Augustin says that he will, “if need be, avenge you” (170). Just as the novella opens with a scorned suitor tracking down his wouldn’t-be lover, Augustin could be the second scorned suitor who tracks down his former lover to seek revenge. Then again, without her brother, Isadora’s health fades, and Lippard suggests that she will not live long (190). Streeby suggests that the text can be read “as an antiwar novel if one emphasizes the ending and interprets the escalating revenge plots as an allegory about the futility of the violence between the United States and Mexico” (*American* 76). Certainly this may be the case in the larger context of US-Mexico relations, but it may also be the case with instances of more personal revenge that fall outside of the events of the US-Mexico War. While living in a state of exception or a supposedly exceptional place may cause one to take matters into his or her own hands, Lippard suggests that revenge can easily spiral out of control and turn potential heroes into villains and villains into victims. His message thus has far-reaching potential for interrogating the tendency of revenge to escalate to the point that villains become, in some ways, characters who deserve sympathy and mercy—at which point the story cannot truly end positively for any party involved.

Ambivalent Endings

Historically, these vengeful quests of white settlers against the Comanche and Mexicans proved largely successful. In 1845, just before the US-Mexico War, the United States annexed Texas, and victory in the war yielded control of New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Upper California (which included Utah) (Libura et al. 46). At that point,

“American expansionists were concerned with the regeneration of California’s soil. John Quincy Adams had quoted the command of Genesis to ‘subdue the earth and replenish it’ as justification for the appropriation of Oregon lands” (Graebner 28). Meanwhile, the Comanche were able to avoid the reservation for some time and launched successful raids in Texas. However, most “were finally driven onto reservations by U.S. military measures that destroyed their economy and made reservation annuities the only means of avoiding starvation” (Marez 280). As David Montejano illustrates, the aftermath of the US-Mexico War also resulted in whites claiming Mexican livestock and homes as numerous Mexican residents in Texas were expelled, denied the vote, and subject to various other breaches of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (25-49). The United States’ sense of justified expansion and control over bodies and cultures was and continues to be a history of dueling opinions regarding justice.

Despite these successes regarding expansion, though, the details of both the Parker and Grywin stories point to how subjective justice can be, as the different sides of each conflict believe they are justified. This idea of the subjectivity of justice and the desire to codify vengeance as justified for purported victims exists across various genres, in stories centered on historically real figures and fictionalized ones, as I have discussed in my other chapters. For instance, the actual James W. Parker and the fictional Jacob Grywin moved to Texas under suspicious circumstances, which can affect their portrayal as unblemished, heroic figures since their ideas about justice are potentially flawed. In *’Bel*, Ewen McGregor believes Jacob Grywin has wronged him and tells Don Antonio Marin, “we have got a heap of justice to do, and little time to do it in” (Lippard 126). In this instance, McGregor imagines himself as the vigilante hero seeking justice.

Nineteenth-century authors even imagine Quanah Parker as a savage because of his opposition to whites and the simple fact that he is Comanche at the same time that he is celebrated and framed as the stereotypical *noble* savage. Finally, primary documents from the US-Mexico War reveal that both Mexican and US officials and citizens represented their actions as just, and both demanded justice as well as vengeance against their enemies.⁴²

Both sets of texts also illustrate how acts of vengeance can be concerned with mercenary issues, such as expanding land and general wealth, as well as concerned with controlling people's bodies—particularly women's bodies. They rewrite the historical past to present Native peoples and Mexicans as evildoers in order to pave the way for supposedly justified expansion and violence, presenting revenge as a positive tool whereas authors such as Simms tried to cloak and dispel the use of revenge by displacing it as a tool of savages and traitors. Yet the cases of Hannah Duston and Nathan Slaughter have already illustrated how some authors celebrate revenge as justified when land and white bodies are at stake. However, any sense of ambivalence about Duston's and Slaughter's actions is amplified in these texts, as more individuals have exhibited apprehensions about the Parkers' and Grywins' actions—both when these texts were published and today. Even Lippard himself questions the utility of personal revenge framed as national justice because it is so bloody and does not erase the past. Whereas

⁴² For instance, on Mexicans' view that they had been wronged, see the primary texts reprinted in Libura et al. As one example, the Decree of the Mexican Congress from 2 July 1846 notes in Article 1, "The government, based on our natural right to defend the nation, will repel the aggression initiated and sustained by the United States of America against the Mexican Republic, invading her and launching hostilities in several Departments of her territory" (qtd. in Libura et al. 60). Streeby also argues that "nineteenth-century *corridos* frequently valorize a violent masculine hero who steadfastly resists U.S. expansion and depredation, avenging a series of humiliations" (*American* 285).

Peter A. French argues that few people are strong enough to handle exacting revenge (34), reactions to these historically true and fictional stories suggest that perhaps no mortal person is fit to seek revenge and mold it into laudable justice or even equitable retribution.

Ultimately, as scholars and even characters/figures within these texts question people's motives and whether their actions actually help anybody, they provide reminders of how subjective justice can be. Settlers in Texas were able to use the supposedly exceptional status of the region to frame themselves as people with their own laws and the right to do as they wished, from owning slaves to refusing to convert to Catholicism. Their own subjective desires to frame themselves as God-fearing and morally upright individuals so they could control more lands and goods affected how they represented Native peoples and Mexican officials. Certain Texans and US officials may present themselves as only reluctantly vengeful, but they are also often gleefully so—just as James W. Parker and John Grywin seem to be. Seeking revenge against people who had some claim to Texas land and codifying that revenge as justice is, in the end, unconvincing for many people who approach these texts and histories. Stories and interpretations such as these inform us about the pitfalls of using revenge; trying to seek exactly equitable, eye-for-an-eye retribution; and defining justice and even natural law through selfish motives, particularly by employing exceptionalist rhetoric.

Chapter 4:

The Slave's Dilemma: Writing Revenge into Law in Maxwell Philip's *Emmanuel*

Appadocca

We love pirates most of all because they were rebels. They challenged, in one way or another, the conventions of class, race, gender, and nation. They were poor and in low circumstances, but they expressed high ideals. Exploited and often abused by merchant captains, they abolished the wage, established a different discipline, practiced their own kind of democracy and equality, and provided an alternative model for running the deep-sea ship. . . . Pirates opposed the high and mighty of their day and by their actions became the villains of all nations. (Rediker 176)

Passions, private aims, and the satisfaction of selfish desires, are . . . most effective springs of action. Their power lies in the fact that they respect none of the limitations which justice and morality would impose on them; and that these natural impulses have a more direct influence over man than the artificial and tedious discipline that tends to order self-restraint, law and morality. (Hegel, *Lectures* 162)

While authors such as George Lippard took a transnational approach in their engagements with violence and revenge by examining the Texas-Mexico border, Trinidadian lawyer, activist, and author Maxwell Philip used his home country as a setting wherein he could critique slavery and racism across the Caribbean and United States. Philip's *Emmanuel Appadocca, or Blighted Life: A Tale of the Boucaneers*, published in 1854, is the story of a mulatto man's quest for revenge against his white father and the systems of slavery and racism that ruined his mother. Readers follow Emmanuel Appadocca as he recalls being educated in England, nearly starving to death while unemployed, and receiving news of his mother's death; her death and his living conditions spur animosity against his father, Willmington, and cause him to go to sea as a pirate in order to confront his father, demand recognition as his mixed-race son, and

appeal for financial support, which Willmington gives to his white wife and children. This quest for revenge that Philip frames as justified eye-for-an-eye retribution constitutes the majority of the novel and allows readers to critique intersections of justice, revenge, race, and different kinds of exceptional statuses and spaces.

Though Philip sets his story on the island of Trinidad and the ocean surrounding it, the conflicts in the novel speak to debates about slavery and uprisings in the United States, as well as debates about US expansion into the Caribbean. Furthermore, the text engages with the operation of law on the ocean as the pirate Appadocca crafts a “hydrarchy,” to use the term of maritime historians. In this hydrarchy, he—like other figures I have studied in this dissertation—can act as the sovereign of his vessel and create a form of government that engages with codes of chivalry and a higher law doctrine that calls individuals to oppose established law when honor dictates they must. Furthermore, he relies on theories of punitive justice based on *lex talionis* (retaliatory law) and Old Testament revenge; appeals to sentiment and justice through mercy; and plays between public and private revenge. As discussed in previous chapters, arguments about one’s exceptional status allow for multiple views of justice and revenge to come together in ways that may differ for each figure or character. In the case of Appadocca, he explores exceptionalism through his maritime environment, the state of Trinidad as a nation between different ruling powers, and the plight of blacks who lack the legal protections given to whites. Applying this concept of exceptional legal practices to the ways that the nation reacts to slavery and anticipates resistance from racial others illuminates a different kind of exceptional state than Agamben explicitly discusses, as Agamben focuses more on issues such as civil and international warfare versus the use

and abuse of law in race-based conflicts. Thus, the reactions of racial others, including pirates such as Appadocca, enriches our understanding of how individuals speak back to and reframe the state of exception and notions of exceptionalism. By using the multiple contexts of Trinidadian history, race relations in the Americas, and the space of the ocean and pirate ship, Appadocca is able to articulate his own system of justice. In his vision, justice goes hand in hand with revenge as part of natural law because slavery and racism are unjust and mixed-race children should have a legal claim to their white parents' property and acknowledgement.

Emmanuel Appadocca has only recently been recovered, though scholars have composed a body of work on the famous black pirates in Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* (1855; revised 1856) and, to a lesser extent, Martin R. Delany's *Blake* (1859-62) and John Howison's "The Florida Pirate" (1821). In all four texts, whites show allegiance to money—sometimes ignoring the law to do so—while racial others become pirates to take their freedom and use ships and the sea to craft new codes of law and conduct. The plot of each text may remind readers (then and now) of the 1791 Haitian slave revolt or revolution, the 1831 Nat Turner Rebellion, the 1839 *Amistad* revolt and subsequent 1841 court case, Frederick Douglass's novella *The Heroic Slave* (1852) about the 1841 revolt aboard the *Creole*, and John Brown's exploits (the Pottawatomie Massacre of 1856 and raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859).¹ Each time a revolt occurred or was imagined in art, readers and audiences were reminded of past uprisings. For instance, on the effects of the Nat Turner Rebellion on memory, William E. Cain notes,

¹ *Benito Cereno* is also based on an actual 1805 revolt that one Captain Amasa Delano recorded in *A Narrative of Voyages and Travels* (Richardson 71).

“Not long afterward reports began to arrive of a massive slave revolt in Jamaica in December 1831, which evoked for many in the United States and abroad the terrors of the rebellion by black slaves in Saint Domingue (the western part of Haiti) in the Caribbean in August 1791, and the recollection of plans for insurrection in Virginia (1800), Louisiana (1811), and South Carolina (1822)” (xxxiv). Besides reminding readers of rebellions, the texts seem to speak to contemporaneous laws and cases such as trials and executions following the rebellions mentioned above, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, and the 1857 *Dred Scott* decision. Part of the threat underlying *Emmanuel Appadocca* and these other texts is that racial others whom the law has not represented may take the law into their own hands, using and creating exceptional spaces wherein they can justify murder and revolt. Recognized law is often depicted as corrupt and open to interpretation for and by whites; thus the rule of law becomes inconsistent from country to country, state to state, and person to person. Hence, black characters seize the opportunity to interpret law and justice in their own, often violent ways in the face of rampant subjectivity that favors white interests, as well as in the face of white characters who often do not anticipate such challenges to their authority.

Speaking to this kind of legal climate, Appadocca finds himself “excepted” from the rights legally given to his white relatives, but he is also in a position to use the exceptional space of the pirate ship on the open ocean to fashion his own law that upholds his vengeful retaliation against the father who has scorned him. As Selwyn R. Cudjoe notes, “In advancing his thesis of how social and religious life ought to be ordered and the appropriateness of the *lex talionis* within the context of the slave system (in this case, the relationship between a master-father and his slave-son), Philip intends a

broader indictment of Western civilization and colonialism” that Philip compares to a system of licensed thievery (263). This indictment becomes a thesis about the laws of nature that Appadocca’s father has betrayed. Appadocca is not Willmington’s slave but his son, and Appadocca relies on the argument that the Biblical law that a son must obey his father is void when the father denies his natural duty to provide for his son. Thus Appadocca challenges this Biblical law by relying on his own natural law as he argues that there is, naturally, a reciprocal relationship between parents and children that dictates parents must honor their children if children are to honor their parents.

While crafting this theory, though, Appadocca finds resistance from other characters and causes some discomfort for them because they sympathize with his plight but find his motives questionable.² His seeming disrespect for his father, his choice to become a pirate, his lack of remorse or mercy, and the threat he represents as a black man challenging white authority all mean that Philip has crafted a hero whose actions are at times difficult to reconcile with people’s general misgivings about the role of revenge in seeking justice. While other authors can more easily justify the acts of their characters to

² It is unclear exactly who Philip’s audience was for this text. Scholars note that the novel was quite well received in Trinidad, where Philip was well known. Scholars also argue that Philip was likely responding to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) by creating a black protagonist who, unlike Tom, resists the system that stripped him of his rights (Cain xliii). On the role of sympathy in abolitionist texts, Franny Nudelman argues, “Describing an encounter between the abused, black male body and the responsive female imagination as the source of her abolitionist fiction, Stowe maintains that narrated pain, transmitted through the vulnerable body of the sympathetic listener or reader, will produce a compassionate community” (19). As I have discussed in my Introduction, scholars contend that building sympathy with a perceived victim is problematic because it can make supposedly impartial legal systems biased, but sympathy for perceived victims is key to reconciling revenge and punishment against perceived criminals, particularly the bloodier the punishment is. Certainly the text attempts to narrate Appadocca’s pain to reach a compassionate community (both amongst characters in the text and with readers without) and would appeal to abolitionist audiences, whether they entirely agreed with Appadocca’s violence or not. Philip writes extensive exchanges between Appadocca and those who question his tactics, perhaps as a way of debating with the reactions of different readers; in other words, as I will discuss in greater detail shortly, he allows Appadocca to philosophize about his pro-revenge stance repeatedly, potentially anticipating his readers’ misgivings.

white audiences because the protagonists are white and face non-white antagonists in the midst of bloody skirmishes, wars, and captivities, Philip has considerably more work to do in order to justify his protagonist's vengeance. Furthermore, whereas other protagonists experience threats against their family members and argue that they must retaliate in the name of justice and even self-defense, Appadocca seeks vengeance against one family member to (at least in part) defend the honor of another family member, his deceased mother; thus, the family unit is being simultaneously protected and threatened.

However, like other protagonists and historical figures who seek vengeance, mercenary reasons for revenge are also key to Appadocca's acts; white individuals such as Duston and the Parkers seek money and land, and money also drives a bit of Appadocca's revenge as he resents how his father has left him to starve. Family honor and protection, as well as upholding individual honor and personhood, must overshadow these mercenary efforts in order for individuals to justify their violence—and particularly individuals such as Appadocca, who is a black pirate and, thus, unlikely to gain immediate sympathy even from an abolitionist audience.³ As William E. Cain notes in his introduction to the novel, Philip “confronts the meaning of *taking* liberty and the slave's right to resist and remedy the exploitation and oppression of black women and their offspring. . . . Many reformers and abolitionists clung to higher law doctrine, though they differed in their response to its implications,” some seeing the doctrine as akin to

³ Despite the fact that the protagonist's actions may seem unjust and unsettling, Cudjoe argues that evidence shows the book did well financially, as scholars note that the money made from the book aided Philip in difficult times and also allowed him to travel through Europe. Cudjoe continues, “Although some critics felt that the hero was too harsh on his father and treated him in a very unnatural manner, [L. B.] Tronchin noted that the novel ‘was well-received in the literary world’” (269). Tronchin, defending the novel, argued that Appadocca's methods could be justified because the protagonist had to seek his own justice when his father went untried for “an unheard crime” (qtd. in Cudjoe 269).

violent resistance while others saw it as nonviolent civil disobedience (xxix).

Appadocca's particular brand of "*taking* liberty" is bloody, and he and other characters overtly label his acts vengeful. His actions are a form of resistance that in this text is justified because white fathers, though protected by pro-slavery and racist laws, sin against nature. Natural law is a higher law that Appadocca defends because there are no exceptions to this law, whether based on time period, geographical location, class, or race. Philip faces the difficult task of defining his brand of natural law, though, and justifying it in the face of Trinidadian and American laws that would not recognize Appadocca's claim to vengeance.

In this chapter, I discuss in brief the context surrounding slave humanity and laws in the Americas, particularly in the United States and Caribbean, in order to highlight Appadocca's position as a character who has been excepted from legal rights. I then overview the context of post-slavery Trinidad wherein Appadocca still finds himself unacknowledged by his white father, who would sooner leave him to starve than treat him like he treats his "legitimate" children. While philosophizing about his legal rights and turning pirate in the process, Appadocca tries to transfer the law he has created on his ship to the world outside of his ship because he believes it is natural and higher than established law, which denies a mixed-race son's right to his father's property and, more importantly, acknowledgment and respect. I argue that, in order to justify the philosophy of a black pirate whose ideas contradict established law, Philip must present Appadocca as a hero in contrast to Willmington, and I trace how Philip accomplishes this. By including lengthy passages on Appadocca's theories as well as scenes wherein Willmington is depicted as a snake-like villain whom even other whites detest, Philip

calls readers to challenge long-held racist notions that precluded non-whites from legal protections and, thus, a sense of legitimacy and identity. Underlying this message is the threat that, if not recognized as legal equals to whites, racial others may refashion and fight for different legal codes, much as slaves did throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when they revolted against those who would limit their powers and destroy their bodies. I end, though, by noting Philip's seeming ambivalence about Appadocca's triumph over his father. As Willmington dies during a storm at sea and Appadocca flings himself into the ocean, the plot ends with a similar tone as Lippard's novella. While Appadocca succeeds in making his villainous father suffer and gains respect from several British officers, Philip suggests that revenge—though potentially just and sweet—ends up destroying everyone involved. If the rule of law were more equitable and did not except racial others from the rights given to whites, revenge would be unnecessary and the justice system could be truly just.

Race Relations in the Antebellum United States and Emancipation-Era Trinidad

While slavery had been abolished in Trinidad by 1833 because it was a British colony, Philip speaks to post-slavery concerns in Trinidad about race relations that left his protagonist, Emmanuel Appadocca, uncovered by laws that privileged whites such as Appadocca's wealthy father. Furthermore, in his preface Philip notes that he is speaking to concerns about US slavery, which was ongoing well after Trinidad had transitioned from slavery to apprenticeship to freedom for black laborers.⁴ He states,

⁴ This transition complicated the rule of law and is a context that I will discuss in greater detail shortly. Phillip was born in 1829 and died in 1888 (Cudjoe ix); thus he was born just before slavery was abolished and experienced the transitional stages after abolition—especially as a political activist and lawyer—as

This work has been written at a moment when the feelings of the Author are roused up to a high pitch of indignant excitement, by a statement of the cruel manner in which the slave holders of America deal with their slave-children. Not being able to imagine that even that dissolver of natural bonds—slavery—can shade over the hideousness of begetting children for the purpose of turning them out into the fields to labour at the lash's string, he has ventured to sketch out the line of conduct, which a high-spirited and sensitive person would probably follow, if he found himself picking cotton under the spurring encouragement of "Jimboes" or "Quimboes" on his own father's plantation. (6)

Plantations such as the one that Philip figures are spaces—like so many other spaces in the Americas—wherein slaves fall outside of usual legal protections given to whites. Achille Mbembe notes that slaves' humanity takes on the figure of a shadow because they are excepted from rights that are extended to whites. He argues, "[T]he slave condition results from a triple loss: loss of a 'home,' loss of rights over his or her body, and loss of political status. This triple loss is identical with absolute domination, natal alienation, and social death (expulsion from humanity altogether)" (21). Although Appadocca is a free man who does not have to toil on his father's plantation, he experiences harsh treatment from a father who more-or-less denies his existence and is not legally bound to acknowledge his son because Appadocca was born under his mother's status. He has to establish his personhood and his own rule of law through speech, though this speech is limited by the (un)willingness of people around him to listen to his story. In Philip's novel, revenge takes the form of Appadocca telling his

well as understood transnational debates about slavery and ongoing racism in Trinidad. Philip received a classical education in Scotland and then worked in Trinidad as a solicitor-in-law to prepare to study law in England; he was called to the bar in 1854 and, in this period in England, wrote *Emmanuel Appadocca*, "his one literary work" (xi). In his preface to the novel, Cudjoe argues that Philip "always rued the fact that he never received the recognition he deserved and would have received had he been white" (xii). Further, he notes in the afterword, "Philip and other Caribbean intellectuals worked in a climate that expected very little from them in terms of intellectual and philosophical thought" (250).

story as well as acting violently against his father, Willmington, and the system of oppression he represents.

The aim of Appadocca's speech (or Philip's writing) is to challenge specific laws that disenfranchise the mixed-race children of slaveowning white men and to bring honor to his mother, which helps make Appadocca's aims seem less selfish and, therefore, more justified.⁵ By tying his motives to reclaiming his mother's honor as well as his own, Philip anticipates W. E. B. Du Bois's "early doctrine of the talented tenth—his belief that it would be the exceptional, well-educated black men who would lead and elevate the masses—[and] his specific recommendations for the transition of the masses 'from . . . moral darkness to enlightenment,' all of which rest on increasing reverence for womanhood, marriage, and motherhood" (Gilman 240). In the nineteenth century, reforming families and marriage "was seen by some as the natural extension of abolishing slavery. Of course the destruction of marriages and families through slavery, at a time when the family had become the focus of attention as an instrument of both civilization and character formation, provided further ammunition for abolitionists" (Samuels 165). Appadocca wishes for Willmington to acknowledge his invisible mixed-

⁵ Indeed, it is important that his mother is not forgotten in this text. Scholars such as P. Gabrielle Foreman and bell hooks have lamented the erasure of black mothers in abolitionist texts and slave narratives. However, despite his ties to his mother, Appadocca still yearns for acknowledgement from his father—particularly when his mother dies and he has no other family who will recognize him. It is at this point that he experiences what Russ Castronovo describes as "a genealogical void" caused by "the absence of a recognized patriarchy." Slaves "issued forth not from a woman, but from a matrix of nonhistory, from a textual-sexual space that signified emptiness and absence, illegitimacy and silence" (qtd. in Foreman 507). The emphasis on Appadocca's father, though, does put Philip at risk of prioritizing the white man too much. As Patricia Williams notes of such texts/plots, "instead of black motherhood as the generative source for black people, master-cloaked white manhood became the generative source" (qtd. in Foreman 507). In Philip's text, though, it is important that Appadocca highlight the importance of his father as the authoritative figure who is protected by law and who denies Appadocca a livelihood and sense of self-worth. Appadocca's father represents the white, patriarchal legal system that Philip is challenging in the Americas broadly.

race family, as the practice wherein slave children took on the condition of the mother “suggest[ed] that slave children have invisible fathers, as though mothers were alone responsible for reproduction” (167).⁶ In this system, “the child does become, under the press of a patronymic, patrifocal, patrilineal, and patriarchal order, the man/woman on the boundary, whose human and familial status, by the very nature of the case, had yet to be defined” (Spillers 74). If established law denies Appadocca, as a black man, selfhood, an identity, and a sense of kin (as Hortense J. Spillers describes it) because he has no legal father, Appadocca rewrites this law to bring visibility and honor to his mother and himself while simultaneously challenging white, patriarchal law.

This search for visibility drives Appadocca to craft codes that he argues rely primarily on natural law but that also speak to codes of honor and God’s will, and these codes fly in the face of beliefs that would deny Appadocca a sense of selfhood. Orlando Patterson notes, “Because the slave had no socially recognized existence outside of his master, he became a social nonperson” (5). Even in post-slavery Trinidad, Appadocca’s social existence is still questionable, especially with no living kin who will recognize him. Particularly if he were born under slavery, “[a]lienated from all ‘rights’ or claims of birth, he ceased to belong in his own right to any legitimate social order. All slaves experienced, at the very least, a secular excommunication” (5). As a free man, Appadocca seems to appeal to “modern humanism” in Lisa Lowe’s terms—“the secular European tradition of liberal philosophy that narrates political emancipation through citizenship in the state, that declares economic freedom in the development of wage labor

⁶ Orlando Patterson notes that the most western and highly developed forms of slavery fell under this pattern, which he calls the Roman pattern; free people had a patrilineal parentage whereas the system was matrilineal for slaves (139).

and an exchange market, and that confers civilization to the human person educated in aesthetic and national culture,” identifying with “universal concepts of reason and community.” Lowe further argues that “ideas of race, gender, and family reproduction were central to this humanism, as well as to the modern constructions of freedom, civility, and justice that are its consequences” (192). Yet race limits Appadocca’s access to equality, humanity, and popular sovereignty, as many scholars have begun to argue that laws to abolish slavery in the British empire were at least partially “pragmatic attempts to stave off potential black revolution” rather than a response to abolitionists. Transitioning to free labor “included a range of intermediate forms of coercive labor—from rented slaves, share croppers, and convicts to day laborers, debt peonage, workers paid by task, and indentureship” (194). Under these conditions, Appadocca has to champion for his own sense of citizenship since he is too poor to own property in Trinidad and faces arrest and execution as soon as he steps foot on Trinidadian soil. He also feels unfit for a romantic relationship with Feliciano (a woman who is enamored with him) because of his quest and his pirate status, and he has no family to claim him since his mother is dead and Willmington denies him. As a pirate and an illegitimate mixed-race man, he must argue for his own “possibility of moral action” by somehow justifying his vengeful schemes through appeals to God’s will, natural law, and his own sense of personal honor (Hegel, *Phenomenology* 201).

Furthermore, as a mixed-race man, Appadocca also faces specifically gendered obstacles to identity formation and seeking respect. As Saidiya V. Hartman notes, “If equality was defined by similitude, then manhood was the question at issue in the debates. Friends and foes of the Negro alike assumed that the degradation of

enslavement made blacks less than men; thus this emergent manhood was anticipated, doubted, and feared. The infantile condition of the race both necessitated legislation on their behalf and justified black subordination” (178). In addition, as Spillers argues, “The notorious bastard . . . has no official female equivalent. Because the traditional rites and laws of inheritance rarely pertain to the female child, bastard status signals to those who need to know which son of the Father’s is the legitimate heir and which one the imposter. For that reason, property seems wholly the business of the male” (65). Thus, property is Appadocca’s business, but as an essentially illegitimate child whose legal identity is as a black man despite his mixed-race heritage, he faces the challenge of proving to his foes that Willmington’s property is rightfully a concern of his. In the end, Appadocca’s appeals to the codes of chivalry illustrate Philip’s desire to frame his protagonist as not only a man but a man of honor.

In sum, by critiquing the treatment of blacks, both slave and free, in the Americas, Philip challenges quite specific legal systems that disenfranchised, dehumanized, and sometimes made invisible racial others, even if they were the offspring of whites. He uses his mulatto protagonist, in particular, to object to the social and legal systems of Trinidad as well as the United States. As Cudjoe notes in his afterword to the novel, “When . . . we recognize that Philip not only wrote his book in solidarity with the African American liberation struggle but used it to denounce the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, his identification with the sufferings of the African American struggle becomes clearer” (252). Besides the specific Fugitive Slave Law, though, the general climate of the 1850s in the United States fueled protests for and against slavery leading up to the Civil War. William D. Richardson notes that this period was rife with “controversy over admitting

sections of the territories as either slave or free states” (70), as I have discussed in Chapter 3 regarding Texas. In light of these debates in the United States, slave revolts and disagreements regarding abolitionism across the Americas, and in the transitional state of Trinidad, Appadocca emerges as a man who speaks to these debates and contexts to address inequalities in nations wherein race relations are highly complicated, whether slavery is still legal or not. Appadocca champions for the necessity of retaliatory law, or *lex talionis*, as a means of correcting injustice and legal imbalance. Cudjoe argues that this law of retaliation originated as a law to manage the relationship between master and slave; while it was supposed to “achieve exact justice,” or an-eye-for-an-eye compensation, it allowed physical retaliation and vicarious punishment and did not accept the principle of equal justice for all but, rather, adjusted penalties according to social class (262n34). Appadocca finds himself stuck in a powerless class upon the death of his mother and thus seeks justice through a form of *lex talionis* that does not protect his father merely because of Willmington’s privileged position.

Transition and Flux: The State of Trinidad under British Rule

Knowing about the changing legal codes of Trinidad in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is important to understanding Appadocca’s condition as a free black man in the West Indies. Trinidad had supposedly better race relations and laws pre- and post-emancipation as compared to other nations in the Americas, but the ideas that Trinidad practiced a mild form of slavery and was egalitarian relative to other countries are ideas that Philip interrogates even while he opposes plantation slavery in the United States. For instance, although Appadocca’s father has had a relationship with his black

mother and may have provided for her as a *placée*—or a free woman of color who was the common-law wife of a white man—she seems to have died under mysterious circumstances, uncared for by Willmington and his new, white family. The focus of this section is the history of fluctuating law regarding race relations that was present in Trinidad before and during the time Philip was writing. This history provides a backdrop for some of the issues that Philip was protesting when he imagined individuals who were excepted from the rule of law when natural law would, he argues, protect them appropriately.

Legally, Trinidad had been in flux in the decades preceding the publication of *Emmanuel Appadocca* because of changes in colonial control and slave law that made the island a place wherein the Governor could rule with violence. In 1797, rule changed from Spanish to British, but Britain kept Spanish laws regarding slaves rather than rewrite them; these laws were said to be the most lenient laws in the colonies. Because of power disputes during this transitional period, local Trinidadian historians such as Carlton Ottley argue that every man became his own lawmaker (1).⁷ Governor Thomas Picton, who ruled as governor from 1797 to 1803,⁸ had absolute authority in the colony;

⁷ Although Trinidad was under British rule, “the transfer of Trinidad did not mean a transfer either to the British way of life or to British jurisprudence. The British colony now became a three-headed hydra—Spanish laws, French people, and British dictator. These three factors could find no common measure of unification, and, because of them there was utter confusion in the colony’s affairs” (Ottley 24). This reference to the many-headed hydra is poignant in relation to depictions of piracy as a many-headed hydra, which I will discuss shortly.

⁸ Interestingly, Picton’s rule ended because of a disagreement about how to interpret laws about torture in Trinidad. Picton was accused of torturing a young woman for information about her criminal lover, and “[t]he case brought against Picton hinged on the question as to whether or not Castillian laws which allowed the application of torture were in force in Trinidad at the time of the incident, and although Picton’s counsel brought evidence to prove that to have been so, to both judge and jury the paradoxical situation of British administration under Spanish laws, was so inconceivable that they held for the prosecution” (Ottley 30). Though Picton essentially declared a state of exception wherein his rule was law, he was ultimately not saved when he tortured a woman’s body.

Ottley notes, “The British governor in Trinidad held the same absolute powers [as a king] without even the semblance of a legislative assembly of any kind which could keep him in check” (6). Picton banished Spanish lawyers from the island as one of his first administrative acts and changed many Trinidadian laws because the white population wanted free blacks to have more restricted freedoms, reversing the policies of his predecessor, Governor José María Chacón (14-16). One result of this sentiment was that the *Code Noir* of 1789 was replaced in 1800 with stricter slave laws (John 101-02). The new laws prescribed harsher punishments for slave disobedience and maintained rigorous religious instruction for slaves, mostly in Catholicism.⁹ Overall, Picton headed a regime of violence that he justified under the principles of the state of exception, given the fact that the colony was in flux at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He argued that he was “morally justified by the exigencies of [his] situation” (qtd. in Ottley 21). His violence and rhetoric of exceptionalism, though, could not remedy the crisis due to the colony’s lack of adequate slaves to till its lands, fueled by legislation that outlawed slave trade and transport.

Because of Trinidad’s fertile lands, slaves became quite valuable, and even more so after the Atlantic slave trade was abolished in 1807 under the Slave Abolition Act

⁹ See John for appendices including the text of the *Code Noir* and the revisions made in 1800, as well as his analysis on pages 101-03. His text provides a useful overview of legal changes regarding slavery in Trinidad. The revisions that Picton’s regime made in 1800 were amended by Canning’s Order in Council in 1824, which “prohibited the unrestricted use of the whip or any instrument for enforcing labour. It limited the number of lashes that could be inflicted at all if the effects of a previous punishment had been uncured. It abolished the whipping of females altogether.” It also licensed clergy “to solemnize the marriage of slaves” and “forbade the separation of husband from wife or parent from child by sale.” It also gave slaves the right to own and dispose of property, established a bank for slaves, and “forbade the levy of any tax on manumission beyond a registration fee of twenty shillings.” Slaves could give evidence in court, and the man who held the position of Protector and Guardian of Slaves to the Governor had to submit an annual performance report about his work. Infringing on these clauses was punished by fining and, if repeated, the confiscation of slaves (Ottley 47-48). Whether these rules were routinely upheld, however, is unknown.

(John 44). Agriculture was booming in Trinidad at the same time that law forbade slaves from being brought across the Atlantic and, through the Slave Trade Consolidation Act, placed great restrictions on how many slaves could be transported between colonies in the West Indies (Ottley 37; John 44-45). Planters petitioned against the bill that outlawed the slave trade because they “regarded the new bill as one which would deny to them, just at the time they most needed it, the supply of Africans to further the economic interests of the young colony. In 1820 a visitor to the island speaks of hundreds of hogsheads of sugar unshipped in Port of Spain because of the inability of the owners to find hands to load them on to the ships” (Ottley 36-37).¹⁰ Both restrictions on importation and the high death rate of slaves made slavery untenable. Indentured servants from South America, in particular, supplemented the labor force until slavery was abolished in Britain and its colonies from 1833-1834 under the Abolition of Slavery Act. Slaves in Trinidad then entered what was called apprenticeship until 1838, when they were granted full freedom. However, indentured servitude persisted, bringing laborers from South America, China, India, and the United States (Ottley 39).¹¹

¹⁰ Ottley does note instances when limited numbers of slaves were still brought to Trinidad from other colonies. He states, “Many slaves were in fact shipped as domestics from the other islands and sold on their arrival in Trinidad. . . . Since there were no coastguards the more remote bays were used as disembarkation points. The plantation owners were so anxious for labour that they asked no questions as to the origin of the new arrivals.” Some slave owners coming to Trinidad claimed they needed their slaves for their own comfort, and the same slaves were later found divided up on various estates. Sugarcane land was failing in the Bahamas, so one planter was able to smuggle three hundred slaves with him when he settled in Trinidad. Others argued for humanitarian reasons that they needed to move their slaves from Barbados to Trinidad because the process of manuring soil was so hard on slaves that settling in Trinidad would allow them a “milder” existence wherein they would be better protected by the legislature of a crown colony (38). Overall, though, labor became so scarce that land was not assessed for its value based on the acreage but based “on the number of resident laborers attached to it” (39).

¹¹ Lowe argues that the first Chinese laborers were sent to Trinidad in 1807, when Britain abolished the Atlantic slave trade, and that Chinese emigration peaked from 1852 to 1866 (193), overlapping with the year that Philip published *Emmanuel Appadocca*. Lowe also quotes an 1803 “Secret Memorandum from the British Colonial Office to the Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India Company,” wherein an administrator argues that Chinese laborers would be useful for more than labor: They would provide

Philip perhaps wrote *Emmanuel Appadocca* in part as an indictment of Trinidadian slavery and race relations that scholars often romanticize when they compare this nation's practices to those of other countries. Ottley argues, for instance, that an "interesting feature of Trinidad's society which has influenced the type of life which Trinidadians live today was the considerable mildness of slavery, and the paucity of slaves in proportion to the number of free Africans and coloured people. There were also many mulatto slaves. Slaves were allowed to purchase and own their own slaves" (xvi).¹² Though Trinidad's slave codes were and, in many ways, are still seen as less harsh than the laws of other countries, the death rate suggests that none should underestimate the system's severity. While Ottley argues that slaves benefitted from the pervasiveness of Catholicism in the country (61), the laws and social habits that limited the amount that slaves could be punished (40-41, 47), and the relative lack of absentee plantation owners (61)—all of which resulted in few slave revolts¹³—A. Meredith John cites the high slave

"security" against a slave uprising and "the establishment of a Negro government" in the wake of St. Domingo, as the Chinese "could be kept distinct from the Negroes" and "would be inseparably attached to the European proprietors" (qtd. in Lowe 193).

¹² This statement may lead one to believe that there were more free blacks than enslaved, but this is not the case. Census records show, for instance, that in 1797 whites totaled 2,151 people, free blacks 4,474 people, and slaves 10,009 people. Only by 1834, when the colony was transitioning from slavery to apprenticeship, did the numbers of free versus enslaved blacks even out a bit, with 18,724 free blacks to 22,359 enslaved (versus 3,632 whites) (Ottley 152-53). John notes that free inhabitants did outnumber slaves during the early settlement of Trinidad, but in 1783 the Spanish crown tried to populate the island by offering land to any Catholic citizen of a nation friendly to Spain; the more slaves a settler brought, the more land he would receive (43). On the notion of mild slaves and owners, the protagonist of *Blake* (1859-62) by Martin R. Delany argues that "good masters" are actually the worst because they trick their slaves with kindnesses and promises of freedom. He argues, "A 'good master' is the very worst of masters. Were they all cruel and inhuman, or could the slaves be made to see their treatment aright, they would not endure their oppression for a single hour!" (127).

¹³ Ottley also argues that, because some free blacks owned black slaves, the system of slavery in Trinidad was based solely on economics and not on race (42, 49). Indeed, some free blacks in the United States also owned slaves, but this does not discount the role of race in slavery across the Americas (see Tindall and Shi 647; see also Delany's critique of mulatto slaveowners in *Blake*, pages 70-72), especially given that Ottley makes no mention of white slaves or white indentured servitude. Furthermore, while Ottley argues that revolts essentially did not occur in Trinidad, he does remark on some uprisings that contradict this

death rate as evidence that conditions in Trinidad were harsh, especially for children on the estates of Britons versus Frenchmen or Spaniards, slave boys living without their mothers, and slaves who worked on plantations (particularly sugar plantations) rather than in homes (116-118).¹⁴ Furthermore, Eugene D. Genovese notes that a lack of absentee farming could mean more surveillance from masters over slaves rather than a sense that masters respected and loved their slaves just because they ate at the same table (9). As Philip indicts slavery and racism in the Americas, he relies less on debates about religion, mortality, and absenteeism and instead suggests something more important: No matter how mildly a system of slavery may be represented, it reduces people to chattel, writes laws about them rather than for them, and denies them access to writing law and asserting their personhood. Depicting Trinidad as an exceptional (i.e., better) colony regarding race relations has erased the plight of Trinidadian slaves from most scholarship on Caribbean slavery.¹⁵

Building on his indictment of poor race relations and slavery generally, Appadocca's story serves as a specific outcry against white men who take advantage of black women, establishing "illegitimate" families that the fathers do not acknowledge or maintain. One stumbling block to Appadocca's claim to his father's support is the

argument. He also notes that fear of insurrection in Trinidad often led to mass killings of slaves who were suspected of plotting revolts (53-54).

¹⁴ John can unfortunately not prove that slave mortality was higher than white mortality because adequate records do not exist of white mortality (or fertility) rates. The harsh climate of Trinidad likely resulted in deaths across all sections of Trinidadian society (6), but the labor required of slaves, malnutrition of slaves, and lesser medical care for them likely resulted in higher mortality (103).

¹⁵ The presence of non-black slaves and laborers also deserves reiteration here, as statements on the mildness of Trinidadian slavery misrepresent the strictures the government placed on African laborers but also mixed-race, Native, Asian, and Central and South American laborers. Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. Du Bois are just two prominent authors who have exhibited solidarity with slaves and indentured servants cross-racially and transnationally (Lowe 204). Furthermore, as Genovese argues, "If harsh laws did not mean equally harsh practice, neither did mild laws mean equally mild justice." He cites Kentucky as a state with mild slave laws but high "personal violence and lynching" compared to other states (32).

ambiguous relationship between his mother and father, which is a relationship that may reflect the lack of power that a slave woman could have in her relations with a slave owner or may also represent the role of Appadocca's mother as a potential *plaçéé* of his father.¹⁶ Besides law in Trinidad being constantly in flux, the system of *plaçage* in the Caribbean and United States (particularly in Louisiana) challenged legitimacy. Writing about *plaçage* (a kind of common-law marriage) into the twentieth century in the Caribbean, William J. Goode notes that the practice was so pervasive that children who might be called "illegitimate" were at no disadvantage because they were still recognized as legitimate by blood (23). Ottley also argues that "illegitimacy was not only an accepted institution but many bequests were left to these children by their European fathers. The Spanish laws of inheritance made no distinction between children born in or out of wedlock" (63). However, Appadocca's father is married under the law to a white woman and, as a wealthy landowner, is likely concerned with appearances. Goode notes that common-law marriages were more easily broken than legal unions and that the middle and upper classes privileged legal marriages (25, 24). According to Goode, across the Caribbean "the unmarried mother or her child [did not] enjoy the same status as the married mother and her legitimate children" (27). Furthermore, not everyone accepted the practice of bequeathing inheritance to illegitimate children, as seen in a statement about the West Indies from Governor Woodford, who feared that allowing mixed-race illegitimate children to receive land would deprive their white siblings of property (Ottley 64).

¹⁶ Appadocca is identified as a quadroon (23); as his father is identified as white, we may assume his mother is mixed-race.

One reason why it is tempting to read Appadocca's mother as a *plaçéé* is because she has money to send Appadocca to school in Europe. Slaves in Trinidad were often hired out and could keep part of their wages, potentially buying their freedom, and Appadocca's mother would have been freed by 1833 or 1834 and perhaps earning her own wages through an undisclosed occupation. However, if she were in a common-law relationship with Appadocca's father, she may have received money from Willmington as his *plaçéé*. Appadocca suggests that his mother sent most of her money to him for his education and notes that, upon her death, the money no longer came. Perhaps Willmington felt obliged to send money to a *plaçéé* who was still living nearby but ignored the son he had with that *plaçéé*—a son who was grown and out of sight abroad. Whether Appadocca's mother is a former slave or a *plaçéé*, Appadocca has to fight to be recognized as legitimate from a white landowner who only admits his link to Appadocca in the face of torture and death and not because the law requires him to do so.¹⁷

Philip wrote his novel about a country whose laws had been in flux for decades and created a protagonist who argued for the necessity of his own individual law that reflected a higher form of justice largely based on the perceived natural right of a son to

¹⁷ Goode argues that many Caribbean families—and especially those that result from *plaçage*—are “matrifocal” and that this “is a product of an unstable family pattern, in which the mother or grandmother is often in power because no father is there. The courtship pattern is anonymous, so that the young girl must make the best bargain she can, which usually means that she must be willing to risk pregnancy in order to establish a basis for a more stable union” (30). Appadocca's parents do not end up entering a more legal union, and the mother's death results in the loss of the matriarch who links Appadocca and Willmington. However, another reading is that Appadocca's mother had some family wealth of her own, though Appadocca's educational expenses had gone through all of it. Philip writes that she had tried to keep Appadocca “on a level with the station which her ancestors had occupied” (99), but such references to high ancestral stations also appear in slave narratives when protagonists argue that they occupied high stations and/or descended from royalty in Africa. Whatever the case, marriage to Willmington can only tenuously be viewed as willful, as “‘consensual relations’ between colonizers and colonized [constitute] what Ann Laura Stoler has termed the ‘intimacies of empire.’” Lowe argues that “the colonial powers administered the enslaved and colonized and sought to indoctrinate the newly freed into forms of Christian marriage and family. The colonial management of sexuality, affect, marriage, and family among the colonized formed a central part of the microphysics of colonial rule” (195).

be protected by his father. If the novel is set around 1854—the year it was published—Appadocca, who is about twenty-five years old when the novel opens (23), would have been born just before slavery was abolished and seen the transition from slavery to apprenticeship to indenture. Despite the abolition of slavery, the character of Appadocca reflects deep dissatisfaction with the continued persecution of non-whites, represented in Willmington’s treatment of his son. Furthermore, the abolition of slavery in the British colonies did not mean abolition in the United States or global revisions of law that stamped out racism. Appadocca’s quest for revenge and use of the pirate ship are means of using a particular exceptional space—the ocean and pirate codes—in order to confront legal systems that excepted people such as Appadocca from legal coverage regarding honor, family, and property.

Appadocca’s Philosophy: Vengeance, the Laws of Nature, and the Pirate Ship

As mentioned previously, Philip’s text responds in part to characterizations of Trinidad as a West Indian melting pot since the protagonist’s white father shuns his mixed-race son in favor of his white and, therefore, “legitimate” family. Appadocca tries to consolidate the laws of nature regarding family with the status of the slave or former slave who has the right to defend the honor of whatever family will claim him—usually depicted in texts on slavery as the figure of the mother or wife who must, by natural law, be honored and redeemed (and if not redeemed through freedom then redeemed in a more religious context). In an anonymous 1859 story from the *Anglo-African Magazine* titled “Patrick Brown’s First Love,” the narrator, who promotes violent protection of slave wives by their husbands, argues that revolt for the purposes of defending black women

may soon come to pass. He states that “some black-bosomed Virginius, crazed at the sight of his deflowered daughter, or some flame-colored hero, maddened at the sight of the wife of his bosom outraged in his very presence, will raise his bloody arm, and kindle the wild revenge of the ten thousands, in like manner, maddened; and there will be a short and bloody end to slavery.” This brand of vengeance is written as justice that cannot be stopped by mortal men as the narrator asks, “What human power could resist them? What Northern bayonet could charge against them? What father, son, or brother could shoot them down—these men thrice armed in the eternal justice of their quarrel?” (“Patrick” 184). The sentiments of the narrator in this story are echoed in so many fictional and nonfictional tales—some of which I have analyzed—wherein women are protected with violence that is justified regardless of its bloodiness. Unlike protection for Hannah Duston, Nick’s family, the women settlers in *The Yemassee*, Cynthia Ann Parker, and Isabel of *’Bel of Prairie Eden*, though, the women protected in abolitionist texts are often not white.¹⁸ In this section, I will first examine how Philip presents Appadocca’s laws—laws that justify violence against whites for the protection of black women and families. To justify Appadocca’s philosophies and claims of sovereign authority on his ship, Philip must build sympathy for a mixed-race man whose deceased black mother cannot protect him because he has no legal rights to his white father’s protection or even acknowledgment. The pirate ship and open ocean, I argue, provide exceptional spaces

¹⁸ Of course, I should call attention to the well-known illustrations of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, wherein numerous artists represent the mixed-race Eliza as a whitened or Europeanized figure running to Tom or crossing the icy river toward the beginning of the text. Scholars such as Claire Parfait and Edwin Bruce Kirkham have argued for the significance of these images as potential appeals to white abolitionist audiences who may identify or sympathize with Eliza because of these representations.

wherein Appadocca can fashion his own law that contradicts British/Trinidadian legal codes, relying on both emotional and logical appeals to make his case.

Authors such as Philip must demonstrate that they can become part of this conversation about legal rights and wrongs; he fights against views that black authors and characters are inferior and that they should be voiceless in legal decisions while whites avoid censure for their potential crimes. Cain argues that this racist context “suggests that *Emmanuel Appadocca* is not only about a character of imposing strength of will, but also is itself, as a text, intended as an act of will against the claims that persons of African descent are incapable of authorship and lack the judgment, understanding, and talent to exercise command over the master’s language” (xlii). In the context of the Hegelian master-slave dynamic, perhaps Willmington fears seeing himself in the mixed-race son he has spurned as both realize a sense of self through the “life-and-death struggle” in which they take part (*Phenomenology* 114). By attacking the self-interested Willmington and asserting his own self-worth through his philosophies and his relations to communities around him, Appadocca rejects Hegel’s well-known statement that “[i]n Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence—as for example, God, or law—in which the interest of man’s volition is involved and in which he realizes his own being” (*Lectures* 196). Denouncing these ideologies, Appadocca does establish a rule of natural law consecrated, he feels, by God’s will. Furthermore, authors such as Philip argue that there is an unjust double standard wherein crime is punished along racial lines when it should be punished based on universal, colorblind rules regarding right versus wrong. For instance, William Lloyd Garrison critiqued this imbalance in *The Liberator* in 1831,

noting, “A white man, who kills a tyrant, is a hero, and deserves a monument. If a slave kills his master, he is a murderer, and deserves to be burnt” (qtd. in Cain xxxiv). Just as people still struggle to achieve an impartial, universal system of right and wrong in the contemporary moment, these authors joined that struggle by articulating specific imbalances wherein, for instance, violence against innocent slaves went unpunished while violence against tyrannical slaveowners was punishable by death. In *Emmanuel Appadocca*, Philip presents a story wherein avengers such as Appadocca are vilified while Willmington shirks his parental responsibilities without censure from Trinidadian authorities.

Since Appadocca has no protection under established Trinidadian law because of these double standards, he fashions his own through the use of the sea and the pirate ship.¹⁹ His ship’s inhabitants are a “motley crew” of Spaniards, Llaneros of South America, French, and English, which is a more mixed and egalitarian system than Trinidad seems to offer (Philip 27). Cudjoe argues that “organized piracy presumed its own values, bespoke a particular kind of autonomy on the part of the pirates, validated a sense of courage in the pirates’ undertakings, and cultivated a righteous indifference toward official society” (257). According to Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, “Pirates were class-conscious and justice-seeking, taking revenge against merchant captains who tyrannized the common seaman and against royal officials who upheld their prerogative to do so. Indeed, the ‘Distribution of Justice’ was a specific practice among

¹⁹ Interestingly, piracy was a main motivation for the Spanish to relinquish Trinidad to the British. As Ottley notes, “There was every reason for the inhabitants to fear a transfer of the island back to Spain, for the British forces had captured it in 1797 merely because of the fact that from its shores many privateers harassed British shipping in these parts. England had no intention at that time of colonizing the island, and it must be assumed that it was Picton’s influence and advice which prevented the island being returned to the Spanish Crown” (23).

pirates.” Pirates would inquire about the treatment of sailors on ships they had captured and mete out justice accordingly, occasionally beating and executing tyrannical captains while rewarding kind captains. One crew claimed “to be ‘Robbin Hoods Men’” (164), thus aligning themselves with vigilantes and bandits of lore who were celebrated for dispensing justice in the face of legally sanctioned institutions that failed to be just. Though part of an illegal system, pirates claimed certain natural rights, such as “their right to subsistence, the food and drink so often denied aboard the merchant or naval ship—the very shortage that led many sailors to go ‘upon the account’ in the first place” (164). A great number of these pirates claiming rights were black pirates, as the ship allowed people of African descent a different kind of social order. The laws across the Americas regulating free and enslaved blacks did not apply on the pirate ship; thus, “pirate ships themselves might be considered multiracial maroon communities, in which rebels used the high seas as others used the mountains and the jungles” (167).²⁰

Therefore, the pirate ship is a fitting location for Philip to use in order to imagine a space wherein the oppression found on land could be overthrown. As Cudjoe notes, “Because organized piracy inverted the notions of justice sanctioned by the civil state—that is, the purported respect for private property (which included slaves)—it offered Philip an apt metaphor to advance an alternative system of values that differed from that

²⁰ On the prevalence of black pirates, Linebaugh and Rediker note, “Even though a substantial minority of pirates had worked in the slave trade and had therefore been part of the machinery of enslavement and transportation, and even though pirate ships occasionally captured (and sold) cargo that included slaves, Africans and African Americans both free and enslaved were numerous and active on board pirate vessels,” and “only rarely did the many merchants and captains who commented on their presence call them slaves” (165). Some black pirates were free men who had mutinied while others were escaped slaves who fled to join pirates, causing some whites to fear the link between slave insurrection and piracy. Black pirates captured the attention of readers, as writers chronicled their exploits and likely picked up on the fear that some whites would have of black pirates terrorizing whites upon merchantmen and on land (166). While not all pirate vessels were necessarily hospitable to marooned Africans, Philip’s vision of this motley crew suggests a form of justice that is more inclusive than what Trinidad offers.

of the slave-owning class.” Specifically, “while the slave-owning class robbed Africans of their lives, as depicted by Philip, the pirates robbed the slave-owning class of its illusions about their system and themselves and sought to destroy them at any cost” (257). Through this practice of robbing the upper class, pirates represented a many-headed hydra that challenged established law and economies, and fugitive slaves were also represented as the hydra that threatened resistance to the state (Linebaugh and Rediker 4). Appadocca embodies both the resistance of the slave class and the pirate as the captain of his own pirate ship, forcing his father onto the ship to experience Appadocca’s form of justice.

On a ship on the open sea, one finds him or herself in a potentially exceptional space, beyond the reach of established law on the mainland—a space wherein laws and leaders could be in flux based on the whims of the crew. Maritime law already had an “exceptional character” because parties aboard ships “found themselves at great distance from one another and beyond the effective reach of local justice” (Vickers 220, 218). This is particularly true of pirate vessels wherein the pirates were not linked to specific nations and their laws. Appadocca makes this clear when, during his father’s trial on board his ship, he points to the black pirate flag, saying, “[W]hile that flies there, there is no law on board this schooner save mine and great Nature’s” (65). William Langewiesche notes that “the ocean is a realm that remains radically free” and that pirate ships “are possibly the most independent objects on earth, many of them without allegiances of any kind, frequently changing their identity and assuming whatever nationality—or ‘flag’—allows them to proceed as they please” (3, 4). Appadocca is

concerned with using the exceptional status of the ocean and the free allegiance of his ship to philosophize about law and sovereignty.

As Paul Gilroy has noted, being “both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness,” and ships also have a similar kind of in-between status or a status of simultaneity; the ship is “a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion” that blends laws and allegiances and also changes them at will (1, 4).

Appadocca finds himself simultaneously “European and black” without recognized law but with his own brand of piratical law that he deems natural. It was “natural law” that, in the 1600s, prodded the need to define international waters as “three nautical miles” from shore, “said to be cannon-shot distance from shore and therefore about as far as a nation without a strong coastal navy could expect to exercise control over foreign ships” (Langewiesche 36). The vast majority of the ocean, then, was not under any particular rule and was hard to patrol, anyway. While patrolling the seas did result in the capture of some pirates, patrols “are national tools best applied against nations, and they have little effect against ephemeral gangs on the open ocean” (44). This atmosphere allowed pirates to create their own identities and allegiances on their ships. As Rediker notes, “When pirates stitched together their black flag, the antinational symbol of a gang of proletarian outlaws, they ‘declared War against all the World.’ When hailed by another ship, pirates, who were multinational in origin, usually answered that they came ‘from the seas,’ not from any particular country” (8). Ultimately, the pirate ship seems—in Philip’s

representation of it—to be both a kind of utopian space and a highly useful space for Appadocca to use in order to exact his revenge.²¹

It is on the open ocean that Appadocca is least vulnerable, as seen when he is captured on land but able to escape by sea. As I have noted, the sea is a kind of exceptional, frontier space outside the scope of formalized law. It is during his capture and confinement on board a British vessel that readers learn of Appadocca's philosophies regarding revenge and justice, or justice through revenge. On his own pirate ship, he can enact his own laws, but on board a British vessel he is all too aware that his beliefs and actions conflict with the law of the land that this ship carries with it. Once Appadocca is captured and imprisoned on a British man-of-war and is subject to British laws instead of his own, he appeals to his listeners to see the validity of his brand of justice. Specifically, his old school friend Charles Hamilton seeks to understand him and urges him to avoid violence. Appadocca assures Hamilton that he is not normally a violent man, and he appeals to his friend's emotions to prove his point, as Philip simultaneously appeals to his readers' emotions. Appadocca relies on the story of a young woman and her child—whom the husband/father, though wealthy, has spurned—to introduce his theories and appeal to sentiment. In this story, Appadocca saves the woman from committing suicide and gives his last item of any worth—his shoe buckles—to her so she can feed her child (103-04). This marks Appadocca from the beginning of his lecture as a kindly hero and,

²¹ Of course, scholars such as Daniel Vickers have noted that ships generally were not utopian spaces even if (particularly) non-white sailors could attain some level of freedom there. He argues that, "if racism afloat did not match what African Americans experienced ashore, it hardly vanished," particularly in regards to black sailors' positions, pay, and levels of punishment (240). Appadocca, however, crafts a more egalitarian place as a pirate captain who is apparently quite close to and respected by his mates. As Jeffrey W. Bolster notes, "No accurate numbers of black buccaneers exist, although the impression is that they were more numerous than the proportion of black sailors in commercial or naval service at that time" (13). Though "sea robbers were not race-blind" (15), of course, Philip presents Appadocca's ship as perhaps exceptional to the typical pirate ship.

thus, affects the way that his philosophies are received. Appadocca's status as a kindly, heroic figure is a point I will return to shortly.

Yet Appadocca does not rely on sentiment alone as he also appeals to logic in order to sway his auditors to accept the rationale behind giving someone his or her just desert. Specifically, he frames a philosophy about natural laws and retribution for straying from those laws, arguing that “the browsing sheep that forgets its instinct, and feeds on poisonous herbs, dies. The scorpion, that turns his sting upon itself, also dies. The antelope, if it throws itself down on a rock must necessarily be dashed to pieces. In all these things you see law, and its safeguard—retribution. Man, as well as all other beings, is subject to it, and the penalty which its violation entails” (105). The penalty should be meted out in this world, not just because that seems fair—so that one cannot postpone punishment until the afterlife—but because the penalty serves a practical purpose, which is “the deterring from crimes” (105). As I mentioned in my Introduction, many of the legal systems around the globe rely on this principle of deterring crime, which lends practicality to law and also detracts from the negative connotation that justice is actually concerned with revenge—a more selfish pursuit than deterrence.

The practical necessity of deterring crime then necessitates that humans act as God's arbiters on Earth rather than wait for the afterlife and hope for judgment. While people are quick to punish those who take the life of another, they are slow to punish “him who makes the life of the living worse than death.” Appadocca declares, “[Him] you permit to roam, in his foulness, this beautiful earth, and only hope that the retribution which you yourselves ought to bring about, will be wrought by the very hand of the Being who operates here but by his created agents. And then, thou short-sighted,

impulse-ridden, and reason-limited mortal, complainest in loud and senseless terms against Heaven, while at thy own door lies the wrong. Know that man himself, by law, is the avenger, the retributionist on himself or others” (106). Using this broad philosophy, Appadocca is able to argue that his own father made his life miserable, leaving his child to die of hunger. Justice calls for Willmington to suffer the same pains and for there to be no delay, as Appadocca argues, “[T]his man, who may now be rolling in profusion while his child is dying of hunger, ought to be made to bear the stings of famine, too, and suffer the same misery which he has inflicted on others. . . . Yes: the only prevention of crime is to make its punishment follow immediately in its course” (106). Again calling on the principle of deterrence to prevent crime, Appadocca is able to make his revenge more palatable. Furthermore, the argument that Willmington should suffer the same pains as his son is more acceptable than arguing for a punishment in excess of the crime—in excess of an-eye-for-an-eye retribution. Finally, arguing that man is “retributionist on himself” also suggests that Appadocca is not safe from these laws and must hold himself accountable for what he does, implying that his pursuits are not hypocritical or selfish.

The main goal of Appadocca in his discussions with Charles is to prove that he has formulated his law through reason and not through raw emotion, giving himself over to rules that exist outside of himself even as he forms and shapes them into his philosophy. Thus, while his life story frames him as a sympathetic character, he still maintains a stoic attitude and often presents his theories as specifically logical and natural. He says, “What I do, I do from reason: and as long as I am under the domination of that power, you need not fear that I shall ever ‘cease.’ I have long buried impulse, and

I endeavour to act up to the dictates of the mind” (111). Appadocca argues in this statement that he cannot be acting through impulse because reason “dominat[es]” everything he does, suggesting that his law is not biased or self-serving but is something so true and natural that it overpowers him. In this way, Appadocca gives up some of his agency to his law because he cannot fight nature and would rather be its instrument. Furthermore, he argues that his acts are not contrary to God’s will; rather, Appadocca even surrenders his agency to God, calling himself “the mere tool of His justice” because He does not condone the tendency of people to look on such crimes and not act (112).

The main obstacle to his justification of his philosophy, though, is that he has attempted to commit patricide—one of the most egregious crimes under natural and moral law. As Peter A. French notes, philosophers and psychoanalysts have long argued “that patricide is the primal crime from which the moral law emerges. The primal patricide, at least for the ancient Greeks, was an act of revenge” (4). Yet Appadocca again counters the argument that his actions against his father are universally unlawful. When charged with attempted parricide, he turns the guilt onto his father, saying indignantly, “Parricide—hum! and what would you have called, perchance, the act of the father if the child had actually died of starvation? . . . You look only on the right of the parent and not on that of the child” (111). This specific attack on the supposed unjustness of parricide emphasizes that Appadocca is talking about one parent specifically—his father. His mother, though she presumably lacked much power due to her status as a mixed-race woman, had earned the right of respect because she provided for her son as best she could. Nature would recoil against matricide in this case because Appadocca’s mother had upheld natural law by caring for her son. By contrast, nature

does not automatically recoil against parricide but against injustice; thus, his goal is just because the parricide is acceptable when examined through the lens of injustice done to the son, who would have honored and obeyed his father if his father had loved and protected his son. Willmington has overthrown natural law in this instance, and Appadocca becomes the vessel through which the law can be redeemed or “vindicate[d]” (112).

As a final move to avoid being defined as self-serving through his implementation of *lex talionis*, Appadocca says that he is using his example to teach the entire world a lesson about justice, borrowing from what he argues is an African belief about retribution that has not been properly applied to the sanctioned legal system around him. On his quest to teach others, he notes, “I shall make it the end of my existence to prosecute the unworthy author of my days, until the world shall learn by a dire deed that it is contrary to justice to give life to a sentient being, then abandon it; and that all organised creatures are endowed with sensibility to make them feel, and spirit to make them resent injuries” (112). Again, Appadocca is a vessel for justice, entrusted with the task of teaching others and changing law on a larger scale than that which exists on his ship. He charges humans with understanding that their notions about nature and instinct are born of ignorance so that they can realize the promise of *lex talionis* (117), and he ties the practice of retaliatory law to Africa. Cudjoe argues that “the most intriguing aspect of Appadocca’s (and by extension Philip’s) interpretation of the *lex talionis* is his belief that this theological law was an integral part of ancient Africans’ philosophical and theological system (that is, ‘those who dwelt on the banks of the Nile of old’), even though Europeans came to associate it with Hebraic law.” The law seems to have been “applied

inadequately within the Judeo-Christian system” and can benefit from an understanding of African religious movements that challenged the status quo in order to remove injustice (263).

The Role of Memory: Justifying Violence through Recalling the Past

Besides laying out his philosophy for Charles Hamilton, Appadocca indicates that his understanding of his brand of law emerges through harsh experience and is recounted through his memories of past injustices. These remembrances punctuate how important memory is to formations of individual philosophies about justice; all of the texts discussed in this dissertation evince how authors’ or characters’ memories help define just and unjust acts. Philip indicates, though, that memory can also be deceptive, as Willmington advances his own arguments about the past, serving as one of many characters who question or challenge Appadocca’s claim to be a just individual. While Philip presents characters who challenge Appadocca, he allows the pirate a space in which to justify his actions by putting Willmington’s past actions on trial.

Willmington is the figure who most challenges Appadocca’s rendering of the past and their familial relationship, but Philip dashes any sense that Willmington’s version of events or characterization of his son is accurate. In one key instance, when Willmington tells the story of his association with Appadocca, Willmington’s white family is unsympathetic to their half-relative because Willmington characterizes Appadocca as a liar who is of no relation to them. Willmington’s eighteen-year-old-son says he wishes he could beat the insolence out of the lying Appadocca, to which Willmington responds as follows: “‘Yes, my children,’ he said at the end, with great solemnity, ‘there is one

above to punish evil doers.’” In this rendering, Willmington invests himself with knowledge of justice and God’s will. His own personal law is founded on false Christianity and selective memory as he relies on established laws to protect him because of his status as a rich, white landowner. However, Appadocca is able to step in and reveal that Willmington’s narrative is false and emerge as God’s instrument of justice, forcing Willmington to cower in fear and admit that Appadocca is his son (207). When threatened by Appadocca’s presence, he even stammers, “It was not that I wronged you. Forgetfulness, forgetfulness—I intended—I intended always—always to find you out” (208). Although in this scene Philip places two people’s laws at odds with one another and presents two versions or memories of the past, he privileges Appadocca’s memories and laws. Philip frames Appadocca as the hero of the text, has worked to explain and justify the pirate’s philosophies, and reveals in the cowering Willmington that the father’s law rests on convenient forgetting rather than repentance.

Of course, one is not always able to discount one person’s memory, reveal the truth, and realize justice. For example, Appadocca fears that Spaniards’ memories will rain vengeance on him for his piracy, as memories of pirates generally could affect how he is treated if discovered under the care of Feliciano, a woman who falls in love with him after he escapes from the British and is recovering. Philip writes, “Those atrocities could not be blotted out from the memory for centuries, and it was likely, that at the very name of pirate, the revenge of the Spaniards would break out as uncontrollably as fire in its favourite food.” Furthermore, “it was probable, that not stopping to consider whether he was actually what he was supposed to be, they would at once immolate him, to the memory of their slaughtered and plundered countrymen” (179). By noting this fear in

Appadocca, Philip indicates that memory can cloud one's sense of justice or even be used for the purposes of injustice. It is for this reason that scholars argue that trials with judges and juries are less biased and are supposedly fairer because they lack pre-constructed memories of the case at hand and will receive different versions from both parties to consider.

Because memory can be false and biased, Philip continually gives Appadocca opportunities to tell his story and spell out his philosophy in the face of resistant auditors; Feliciano in particular becomes the voice of potentially resistant readers who may question Appadocca's lifestyle. When nursing Appadocca back to health, Feliciano repeatedly beseeches Appadocca to abandon piracy because it is an affront to God. In an attempt to appeal pathetically to Appadocca, she asks if his mother, looking down from heaven, would sanction his vengeful thoughts and acts. Whereas Appadocca has relied on sentiment to urge characters such as Feliciano and Charles to condone his quest for justice for his dead mother, Feliciano uses the sentimental attachment of Appadocca to his mother to urge him to feel shame for his unmerciful actions. She says, "Picture her in the society of the saints and angels looking down upon you, at the head of your lawless and cruel men, red with the blood of your murdered victims, and rushing forward to plunder, and to spread misery around as you go" (178). However, despite this sentimental appeal, Appadocca has already demonstrated that he and his men are not "lawless" but that their law runs contrary to law that pretends to be in line with God's will. By upholding established law, Appadocca would be unable to honor his mother. In other words, rather than sentimentalize about how his mother would react to his violence, Appadocca imagines he must avenge his mother or else dishonor her memory, relying on

sentimental tactics that counter Feliciana's in order to make his revenge seem less personal and more invested in honoring a beloved and powerless mother. Though Feliciana imagines Appadocca's mother in a different light (though she does not know his mother and has no memory of his past sufferings) and is someone who claims she can never see justice in Appadocca's philosophy, even she falls in love with him and cannot comprehend how he can be a pirate. Philip perhaps anticipates that not everyone will champion or even condone his protagonist's methods, but he at least builds sympathy for Appadocca through his life story and his ability to articulate his philosophy in terms that appear rational and at times selfless.

The first method by which Appadocca puts his philosophy of justified vengeance to work is the scene when Appadocca captures Willmington and stages a trial on board the pirate ship, challenging Willmington to defend his past actions. Appadocca charges his father, in front of witnesses including other pirates and captives, as follows: "James Willmington, before God, and in the presence of these men, and in the name of Nature, I accuse you of having violated one of the most sacred and most binding of laws; of having abandoned your offspring; of having neglected the being whose existence sprang from yours, and for whom you were bound by a holy obligation to care and provide" (61-62). Willmington is allowed ten minutes to think about his defense, which he is assured will weigh in his favor because Appadocca will not punish a man who can justify himself (62). Appadocca also argues that emotion will be left out of the trial, because "as we are so apt to mistake habits for innate feelings, perhaps it will be better and safer, not to proceed on this one, however strong or indisputable it may appear. Let feeling, therefore, or instinct, be entirely eliminated, and let us appeal to Nature herself in her

manifestations—to Nature that never errs” (63). Again, Appadocca is framed as an impartial judge who will apply the law but will not allow emotion to overpower unbiased and natural justice.

Despite holding a trial, though, the judgment will likely be one-sided because the judge and jury are Appadocca and his pirates. Appadocca instructs Willmington that his men will be the judges and that he will determine the sentence, as well as execute it (62). Though he tells his father that he can try to defend himself, Appadocca does most of the talking as he charges Willmington with admitting he has abused his son, caring so little about him that he never inquired about his wellbeing. Appadocca invokes the Bible as he says Willmington cared nothing for “the blood of [his] blood, and the flesh of [his] flesh” (63). With these charges, all Willmington can say is that the accusations make him appear worse than he is and that “men are not punished in society for such offences, and I do not see why I should be ill-treated on its account, when others are not” (65). In this statement, Willmington points to how this trial would be impossible to convene on land because established law would not acknowledge that the father had committed a crime or that Appadocca has the right to be judge, jury, and executioner.

The law on land would also, in theory, not invest one man with so much authority over another (white) man’s life. Though sea captains supposedly “could not actually administer the law themselves,” they often “could dispense at sea a wide range of punishments” (Vickers 225, 224). As Daniel Vickers notes, “Where the maritime law did invest the master at sea with more authority than a master on land lay not in the character of offenses for which seamen might be punished but in the fact that sea captains combined in one person the practical authority of a master with at least some of the

power of a magistrate” (224). This was deemed necessary “simply because formal justice was out of reach, and it was felt that the perils of sea demanded summary justice” (225). Appadocca thus, as a captain in a space outside of the reach of the rule of law, claims the right of a sovereign to maintain his own brand of justice and order that any captain would be stripped of on land but that is even more available to him as a pirate captain. Furthermore, any jury on land would presumably be biased against Appadocca because of the supposed rights of the father that supersede the rights of his son, particularly a mixed-race pirate son. The exceptional space can thus be challenging because such spaces do not allow one to call on the usual rule of law for redress; yet, particularly when one can be the master of a pirate crew versus a dehumanized racial other who is excluded from many legal protections, the exceptional space also provides a solution. It offers Appadocca power he cannot realize anywhere else, making him a sovereign law-maker aboard his ship.

Willmington’s argument and the fact that this trial can only occur in a place wherein a pirate has crafted his own law exemplifies Appadocca’s complaint about accepted law—that certain men are not punished for crimes or even recognized as criminals, which thus does not deter others from committing the same crimes.

Willmington argues that “by the laws, a man cannot redress his own wrongs,” which causes the pirates to “sneer” as Appadocca informs his father that his law, bonded with natural law, reigns supreme on his ship (65). Appadocca thus indicates that his law trumps the law of the land, which calls the impartiality of his judgment into question. He argues that his “memory demands justice” and that he is protecting the honor of himself and his mother; as an “injured man,” he has the right to be the judge in this case (65).

Typically the figure of the judge is imagined as an impartial meter of justice who can be impartial because he is not a victim of the defendant, as victims are likely to allow emotions to encroach on their decisions and potentially corrupt justice. By again invoking the laws of nature, though, Appadocca attempts to discount the role of emotion in his judgment as he metes out his version of an-eye-for-an-eye retribution, wherein Willmington will be thrown into the ocean on a cask to die of hunger, thirst, and exposure, as his son nearly did (66).²² Though Willmington reminds his son of their status as kin and invokes the law—religious law written into the fabric of society: that a child must not raise his/her hand against his/her parent—Appadocca reminds his father of his own law that a father must protect his children or else risk facing his vengeful offspring in the future (67). Philip thus presents a lesson to both Willmington and his readers, as Appadocca’s law applies to cases outside of his own. The space and the necessity of revenge must thus be exceptional for such law to be acceptable, but the justice behind the pirate’s philosophies and acts must be touted as perpetually noble and justified rules from which people should never be excepted.

This trial is hasty and debatably one-sided in the sense that it appears Appadocca has made up his mind about his father before the deliberations begin. However, these deliberations are interestingly deemed more just than the treatment of pirates because at least a trial takes place. When Appadocca is captured for piracy and his first mate Lorenzo fears he is dead, Philip writes, “The brave officer [Lorenzo] feared, that annoyed by his inability to overtake [Appadocca’s] schooner, the commander of the ship might,

²² Later, when the British capture Appadocca, he frames his father’s punishment as strictly an-eye-for-an-eye, telling a British officer, “In vindication of the violated laws of nature, I, in my turn, abandoned him when he required my aid, and I cast him away from my vessel, when he required its use” (95).

perhaps, have immediately ordered the execution of his prisoner [Appadocca]; that Appadocca might, by that time, have been dealt with in the summary manner in which pirates were usually treated, and had been hanged on the yard-arm without accusation, hearing, or judgment” (152). Philip posits that a lack of any kind of trial is quite dangerous for the nation-state or colony as it fuels revenge. In the event that Appadocca has been hastily executed, Philip writes, “‘If so,’ cried Lorenzo, as this fear grew more and more upon him, ‘if so, I swear, by the living G-d, that I shall burn that large vessel to the very keel, and shall not spare one, not a single one of its numerous crew to tell the tale—cost what it may, by G-d, I’ll do it’” (152). The fear and anger over the thought that Appadocca has not been given a trial causes Lorenzo to promise vengeance, and the threat of a hasty execution of Appadocca stands in contrast to the trial that Willmington does receive, however hopeless his situation is.

In sum, by confronting people who challenge his memories and character, Appadocca is further able to enumerate the reasons why his father deserves punishment. Willmington’s disavowal of his shameful past further condemns him: Not only did he abuse natural law in the past, but he refuses to acknowledge and rectify it in the present. The trial that Appadocca convenes provides Willmington with a space to repent—a space that, despite its bias against Willmington, allows him a chance to defend himself whereas the pirate Appadocca is threatened with immediate execution if caught. Besides allowing Willmington a space to defend himself, though, the trial aboard Appadocca’s ship also provides the exposition of a past that very well may justify Appadocca’s quest for retribution or revenge framed as justice.

A Conflict of Character: Appadocca as Hero and Willmington as Villain

Philip provides Appadocca with quite a few instances wherein he outlines his philosophies and makes emotional and logical arguments. Appadocca's main goals are to honor the memory of his mother, protect his own interests, and challenge a patriarch who is unapologetic and has taken his power too far, excepting his son from purportedly universal, natural rights. Because his protagonist is a pirate and the illegitimate quadroon son of a white landowner, though, Philip initially introduces Appadocca as a mysterious figure who is linked to the unlawful practice of piracy, a potentially snake-like and wholly mercenary character who lacks mercy for anyone. However, Philip upholds Appadocca's character by arguing that this pirate is actually more attuned to justice than the British soldiers and landowners he struggles against, including his father. Appadocca actually takes a measured approach to maintaining order on his ship and seeking out his father's repentance. As I will show, by (problematically) contrasting Appadocca's gentlemanly and whitened figure with that of the black servant Jack Jimmy as well as the villainous Willmington, Philip presents Appadocca in a positive and sympathetic light. Furthermore, even the law-abiding Charles Hamilton eventually defends Appadocca as a heroic arbiter of justice who only reluctantly seeks revenge because established law is, in fact, unlawful.

As the leader of the many-headed hydra who has taken justice into his own hands, Appadocca takes on the serpentine characteristics that are so often used to characterize vengeful figures. This could taint Appadocca's status as a hero because the imagery of the serpent is invoked around Appadocca in the first part of the text, before readers know his name, his story, or his role as the heroic protagonist. For instance, Philip describes

the pirate ship as a black schooner whose slenderness “gave her the appearance of a large serpent.” Her head faces the Dragon’s Mouth, an opening in the waters around Trinidad that leads to the ocean (whereas the Serpent’s Mouth is the other outlet, characterizing the major outlets from Trinidad as serpentine), and the password to board the ship is “Scorpion” (18). These various descriptions of the ship and its position remind one of a snake-like, poisonous creature and, thus, potential evil. Appadocca himself is feminized but handsome, and “there was something in his large tropical eyes that seemed to possess the power of the basilisk” (23). This characterization of Appadocca, his ship, and his ship’s position—added to the mystery surrounding his motives for taking captives on the sea—challenges his status as a hero versus a villain. If he is potentially vilified through these characterizations, his brand of justice may be suspect. Thus Philip must work against stereotypes that paint pirates and non-white men as nefarious in order to promote the justness of Appadocca’s case against his father and of vengeance more broadly.

Another complication regarding the characterization of Appadocca is that he does not allow for mercy toward his father under his law, which may further align him with the malevolent serpent figure versus the Christ-like forgiver of sins. Before being cast onto the ocean, Willmington tells a captive priest on board the pirate ship that he should ask for mercy for Willmington. The priest throws himself at Appadocca’s feet, saying, “[M]ercy . . . that was the most acceptable offering to heaven” (69). Appadocca responds, “[I]f you can soothe the end of that wretched being, do so. But pray not to me, I never change” (69). Rather than respond to pleas for mercy, indifference characterizes Appadocca: “[I]ndifference, as cold and as icy as death, indifference, such as nature can admit but only when every fibre of feeling is burnt into hard callousness by the searing

iron of some deep unpardonable offence, had wrapped its clammy folds around his heart” (70). Appadocca is continually asked to show mercy to his father on Earth and allow God to mete out justice. The British Commander, for instance, tells Appadocca to “recollect. . . ‘Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord’” (95). Appadocca refuses to show mercy, arguing that the Commander would act just as Appadocca has if he were treated in such a way by his father (96). His stubbornness on this point and his cold indifference to his father and the priest are troubling but also show how Appadocca is a man of conviction who ascribes to his own law and disallows emotion from driving his judgment—including emotions linked to mercy, as it may impede justice and deterrence because it fails to punish.

A further complication to accepting Appadocca as a hero is the mercenary aspect of piracy that shades the collective acts of revenge of the pirate crew as they are driven by both vengeance and greed. Though trading vessels that transported slaves, promoted colonialism, and spoke to the mercenary desires of nations were similarly greedy and violent, pirates were stereotyped as particularly terroristic. From the very beginning, readers see Appadocca lead an attack on the ship that his father inhabits. Appadocca says to his men in preparation, “Associates, you have now another opportunity to revenge yourselves on the world. There . . . you have the wealth of some trader, that has neither capacity to enjoy it, nor heart to use it. Remember how frequently you have wanted the morsel which he could so easily have spared, but which you never found. Remember your wrongs and now redress them; take what the world would not afford you” (37). Philip writes that, once they attach the ship, “[r]evence direct[s] every blow” (40). This scene occurs before readers know what Appadocca’s real plan is regarding the ship—to

capture his father rather than simply plunder the vessel. However, this description of a vengeful fight regarding goods is a reminder that Appadocca and his men are pirates who, though they have suffered ills such as hunger, are going to transfer their ills onto a specific ship from which their personal experience is likely distanced. Rediker notes, “Pirates consciously used terror to accomplish their aims—to obtain money, to punish those who resisted them, to take vengeance against those they considered their enemies, and to instill fear in sailors, captains, merchants, and officials who might wish to attack or resist pirates. This they did in the name of a different social order . . . In truth, pirates were terrorists of a sort” (6). Pirates may not have considered “themselves ‘common Robbers, Opposers, and Violators of all Laws humane and divine,’ but they did think of themselves as people without a nation” (8). As such, they have their own laws that justify revenge by calling it a “Distribution of Justice” against any people they choose to attack or spare (qtd. in Rediker 86).

Despite the violence of these pirates, though, Philip attempts to justify Appadocca’s actions by suggesting that legally covered ships are similarly terroristic, their actions and representatives often unjust even though nations sanction their exploits. Appadocca feels he can justify robbing because of the larger system of robbery that exists across the globe and exploits the powerless. When captured, Appadocca converses with Charles about this philosophy, arguing, “[T]he whole of the civilized world turns, exists, and grows enormous on the licensed system of robbing and thieving, which you seem to criminate so much. . . . A fashion springs up at a certain time to have others to labour for our benefit, and to bear ‘the heat and burthen of the day’ in our stead.” Through this desire to make others labor, “a certain race” is chosen, and its shores are “lined with ships

of acquisitive voyagers, who kidnap and tear them away from the scenes that teem with the associations of their own and their fathers' happiness, load them with irons, throw them into the cruel ordeal of the 'middle passage,'" all to unmercifully test Africans' ability to survive and then labor, affixing their value as people to the amount of suffering they can endure (114). Appadocca reasons that if he can take from a merchant vessel, "whose property very likely consists of the accumulation of exorbitant and excessive profits, the sugar which by the vice of mortgages he wrings at a nominal price from the debt-ridden planter, who, in his turn, robs the unfortunate slave of his labour, I take what is ethically not his property, therefore, I commit no robbery" (115). This speech suggests that, though Appadocca has his sights set on punishing his father, he also has a larger agenda against slavery; robbing a merchant vessel is less about acquiring wealth and more about crippling a system of exploitation. As Rediker notes, "ministers, royal officials, wealthy men . . . in short, rulers . . . consciously used terror to accomplish their aims: to protect property, to punish those who resisted its law, to take vengeance against those they considered their enemies, and to instill fear in sailors who might wish to become pirates. This they did in the name of the social order" (5). The terror of pirate ships was merely used to "trump" the terror that merchantmen inflicted on people, forming a "dialectic of terror" wherein pirates' violence "was a terror of the weak against the strong" (6). In other words, Appadocca's pirate ship is no worse than the other, legally sanctioned shipping operations on the sea. Furthermore, while many pirates "sold captured slaves with the rest of their plunder" and "often forced themselves on slave women" (Bolster 15), Appadocca's men are not of this type. As a place that is an

exception to the laws on land, this ship is also apparently an exception to pirate ships, generally.

In addition, despite arguing that his brand of robbery is just, Appadocca does order his men to exercise restraint, punishes greed in his men, and avoids greed himself, reinforcing the idea that Appadocca is a rational man who exhibits selflessness and avoids hyper-violent behavior unchecked by reason. For instance, once the pirates capture the ship, Appadocca orders his men to stop the bloodshed and secure the prisoners. The response from his men is that “[e]very pirate gnashed his teeth because his vengeance was stopped—but who dared disobey?” (40). Appadocca keeps his men’s violence at bay and knows whom the personal target of his revenge is—Willmington and not the other prisoners. In this case, Philip paints personal revenge in a positive light because it spares the other prisoners who appear to be innocent bystanders. Appadocca’s personal vendetta is represented as specifically unmercenary when Willmington offers Appadocca gold to spare his life and Appadocca refuses to take money in exchange for his mission (41). Unlike others whose integrity can be bought, Appadocca will not exchange his legal philosophies for money. When the priest begs for the safety of the young lady who is also taken captive, Appadocca says, “Fear not, old man, . . . for the innocence and honor of any one on my account; I value my time much, and cannot spare a moment of it, either to blight the innocence or rob the honor of damsels;—continue your attention to the young lady” (42). Once Willmington is secure, the pirates turn their attention to the spoils of their battle, but Appadocca says he will give all of the money they found on board the vessel to his men and will “forego my own share until a day of better fortune” (46). He gives larger shares to the wounded and to the friends of people

who have died in the fight. This ideology makes sense in light of pirate codes; as Rediker explains, “Separated from loved ones and the rest of society for extended periods, the sailor developed a distinctive work culture with its own language, songs, rituals, and sense of brotherhood. Its core values were collectivism, anti-authoritarianism, and egalitarianism” (26). Appadocca may be the captain but, as a pirate captain, he must and does honor the rights of his men and is not a tyrant.

Though Appadocca, while denying himself money, does allow his men to profit from their spoils, he does not allow them to claim more than their fair share and instead preaches restraint. Specifically, when two men claim to be the best friend of the deceased pirate Francis and, therefore, claim his share of the spoils, Appadocca orders a duel to settle the disagreement (47). Upon hearing the confession that the man who is dying from the duel is not Francis’s friend after all, Philip writes, “to men of such dispositions, accustomed as they were to act openly and to hazard their lives boldly, such acts of calculating meanness were naturally disgusting” (57). In sum, Appadocca exercises restraint in his actions, both in the violence he will commit and the goods he will keep as a pirate. Though his men take their share of the goods they steal, even they are bound by certain ideologies about honor and the limits of greed. If honor demands that people take responsibility for their actions and only take their fair share, then the pirates stand in direct contrast to Willmington, who does not take responsibility for his son and is, thus, not an honorable man.

Besides rewarding his own men for their work, Appadocca exhibits generosity when he rewards the sailors he has captured instead of killing them, which is a reminder that he has a particular agenda to punish Willmington and not shed innocent blood. The

five surviving sailors from Willmington's ship come before Appadocca, and he gives them the wages they are owed (49)—a common practice, as mentioned before, of pirates who knew all too well the harsh lifestyle on board merchant and military vessels under tyrannical captains. Appadocca then instructs the men that they will land as soon as possible, and the men are free to go or stay with the crew; the only rule is that death is the penalty for "breach of discipline" (49). In this statement, Appadocca reminds his crew that his law on board is strict, but he gives them the option of joining a more democratic society than they had experienced on board the other vessel. Besides paying these sailors, Appadocca gives a fisherman he captured earlier some money for his time lost (50). Though all of the captives are bewildered because they have not expected such treatment, the pirate Jim Splice explains the disposition of Appadocca's crew. He knows that the captives "expected to be made to walk the plank" but notes, "We don't look for men's lives—what booty does that give? [W]e look for something better; and if you, or that stupid skipper of yours wasn't foolish enough to fire upon us, why, we would have taken your money and your ship, to be sure, but those comrades of yours, that have now gone to their reckoning, would be here now, to take a glass of grog with old Jim Splice" (53). Though this statement reveals the mercenary motives of the pirates, it also reveals that they do not find pleasure in shedding blood; furthermore, this statement suggests that the "stupid skipper" fired first, thus framing the attack as self-defense for the pirates. Finally, besides avoiding loss of life amongst the captured crew, Appadocca does not want to shed the blood of his father before his trial. He could kill him immediately but instead gives Willmington a chance to speak. Even later, after Willmington escapes and Appadocca eventually tracks him down at home with his white family, Appadocca does

not allow Willmington or his family to be bodily harmed. When a pirate draws his knife, Appadocca says, “Hold! . . . no blood” (210). This again demonstrates that Appadocca has a plan in mind that he defends through reason and nature rather than raw emotion that would demand immediate bloodshed.²³

Furthermore, as part of his exercise of restraint, Appadocca does not seek vengeance against his father without first trying to contact him and remedy the situation without having to put his violent law into action. When Appadocca’s mother dies and he learns that his father is still living, he tries to give Willmington the opportunity to fulfill his responsibilities. According to Appadocca, with the letter announcing his mother’s death, he found another letter in her casket. He says he had been led to believe his father was dead but found in the letter that Willmington was alive. His mother tells him in the letter to respect his father, but Appadocca’s feelings tell him that his “good mother had been treated with injustice, and vengeance was my first impulse” (100). Unfortunately, Philip does not give any more information but provides a general sense that one of Appadocca’s motives for vengeance is to protect his mother’s honor. Appadocca states that he looks to women as embodiments of goodness, so a man who dishonors a woman is disgusting (100-101). This philosophy appeals to the chivalrous sense that men are meant to protect the women in their lives, presenting Appadocca as a masculine hero who

²³ This is not to say that the pirates do not seek blood when it seems expedient to them. For instance, when Appadocca is captured the pirate crew tortures a midshipman to find out if Appadocca is still alive. The man cries out for mercy, saying, “Heaven save me,” but “[h]is executioners stood around immovable, calm, and fierce, as they always were, more like demons sucking in the pleasure of mortal’s pains, than men” (156-57). Yet the crew still exhibit restraint in that they do not want to kill the midshipman. A junior officer says, “We want not your life, what good is that to us? . . . [W]e wish only to hear about our captain, who may be at this moment undergoing the same pains as you” (157). This torture, then, is for the purposes of acquiring time-sensitive information and not for sadistic pleasure, which may make it somewhat more palatable. Furthermore, if the crew fears that Appadocca is being similarly tortured, then the midshipman’s pains may be defined as retributive. Importantly, Appadocca is not present during this torture and does not order it.

is not acting entirely out of self-interest. However, rather than immediately seek his father's blood, Appadocca decides to give Willmington a chance to remedy the wrong and repent. He writes to Willmington and asks for remuneration, but he gets no answer as he is dispossessed and starving in Europe (101). This suggests that Appadocca gives Willmington the benefit of the doubt at first, providing him the opportunity to repent in writing and later to repent during his shipboard trial. Willmington not only refuses to repent but depicts himself as the person who has been wronged as he seeks to have Appadocca caught and executed and is only apologetic in the face of violence.

While Appadocca is contrasted with his father throughout, his positive character is also problematically established through contrast with the character of Jack Jimmy, a comical black servant whom Philip likens to an ape. Contrasting Appadocca to Jack Jimmy allows Philip to show how a slave-like puppet can be transformed into an educated man with his own will and laws. However, though Appadocca is not servile like Jack Jimmy, he still depends on his father for support; as a man who is represented as far advanced beyond Jack Jimmy's traits, Appadocca is a whitened hero whose demands for justice are reinforced by his seemingly refined and heroic characteristics. Despite Philip's sardonic reference to "Jimboes" and "Quimboes" in his prefatory remarks, he represents Jack Jimmy as a Sambo-esque character who resembles "the ideal of a rolled up ouranoutan" (29). This image contrasts with how Philip has illustrated Appadocca's features when he uses the language of phrenology to describe Appadocca's intellect. He notes that "the shape of his head was what the most fastidious could but admire; his forehead rose in the fullness of beautiful proportions, while, at the same time, those skilled in reading others' skulls would have declared that, with his high intellectual

development, he did not lack those necessary moral accomplishments which the Creator, in his wisdom, has providently bestowed for the proper use and regulation of the former” (24). Appadocca is not only of high character on the inside but also the outside, as even his skull shows how God has touched him.

Meanwhile, Philip uses the figure of Jack Jimmy to draw a stark contrast between the darker man who is still a servant in Trinidad and the London-educated and fairer-skinned Appadocca, who can be a civilized defender of justice. He describes Jack Jimmy as follows:

If the appearance of the little man was calculated to raise laughter when he was crouching, it was much more so when he was standing up; and really there was something in him peculiarly comical. He was a little man of about four feet and a half, thickly set, and strong; his face was rounded at the mouth, and his long bony jaws projected to an extraordinary length in front. He seemed to have no brow, there was no distinction between his face and forehead; his huge large eyes looked like balls inserted into large holes, bored on an even surface, while what was intended for a nose, was miserably abbreviated [sic] and flat added the culminating point to an ugliness which was almost unique. To crown this extraordinary combination, a short crop of scattered hair grew on the top of his head, while the other parts were bare and shining, and now stained a dirty white with water. (30)

This man, who acts “like a dancing puppet” and is called “Sambo” by a sailor, acts like a puppet through much of the novel, following his first master, the fisherman, “like an automaton” with “movements . . . as brisk and as rapid as those of a monkey” and then latching onto the legs of Appadocca once he recognizes him as “his young master of old” (31, 50). Though Jack Jimmy’s back story is largely unknown, he is likely not a slave because—if the story is set approximately around the time the novel was published—slavery had been outlawed and apprenticeship had also ended. Given Ottley’s arguments, mentioned earlier, that in Trinidad not only whites owned slaves, that Appadocca (at

twenty-five years old) would have been a small child when slavery was abolished, and that his mother may have been a placeé of Willmington, Jack Jimmy may have been a family slave and servant to Appadocca, in particular, before the end of slavery.

Furthermore, he may have then maintained the station and mindset of a servant who lends problematic comical support to the novel and provides contrast to Appadocca's character.

Philip suggests that, if Jack Jimmy is the uncivilized puppet who follows the whims of others, Appadocca is the refined man who makes his own laws and points to the need for blacks to receive this kind of refinement lest they remain like Jack Jimmy.

Compared to Jack Jimmy, Appadocca seems gentlemanly and whitened, as evinced by the way other men treat and describe him. For instance, he is described as not being very dark when a merchant tells him, "You do not seem to have been much exposed to the sun" (89). This trusting merchant does not believe a man as refined as Appadocca can be a pirate, and neither do the British officers who immediately approach the pirate and merchant in conversation. One officer says to Willmington, "I fancy you are in some error: this gentleman does not appear to have ever left the land; besides, he seems too young to be what you say he is: you surely must have made a mistake" (91). Philip again notes "the natural paleness of [Appadocca's] complexion" as he is led away by the soldiers and meets his old friend, Charles Hamilton, who feels Appadocca cannot be a pirate because he studied math with him in Paris and often spoke fondly of him (92, 96). Even Feliciano, who hardly knows Appadocca, argues, "Nature could never have intended you for a pirate" (178). As the story continues and other characters as well as Philip describe Appadocca as "pale" (209, 223), Philip suggests that Appadocca has a superior character because of his light skin and calm, rational behavior—traits that are

only accentuated by the antics of the darker, more spastic Jack Jimmy who devotes himself to his old master.

Once Philip has established Appadocca's complaints and admirable qualities, the role of deceitful serpent must be transferred to the father in order for Appadocca to be heroicized and justified in his actions. Thus, not only is Appadocca compared to Jack Jimmy as a means of amplifying his positive traits, but he is placed in opposition to Willmington to show that he is not betraying a father so much as seeking justice against a tyrant. In the beginning, Willmington tries to leave Trinidad by ship through the Dragon's Mouth (26), aligning him with the image of a serpent-like creature. Once he is captured and finds himself on the deck of the pirate ship, Willmington is described as follows: "[H]is sharp, twinkling, cozening eyes, in particular, that shone from under a veil of shaggy eyebrows, that flew from object to object, that rested on no man for a moment, nor dared to meet the glances that they encountered, conveyed immediately an idea of the lack of that firm, unequivocating honor which is essentially necessary in the constitution of a proper character" (61). Philip's description of Willmington characterizes him as the enemy even before Philip tells readers Appadocca's full story and legal philosophies. Later, Willmington wants to realize revenge against his son and "smile[s] satanically" when he believes Appadocca has drowned while trying to escape from the British man-of-war. Philip further writes that, in that moment, "a diabolical smile played on the lips of that heartless and selfish man" (204). Eventually, when Appadocca again catches up to his father and Willmington grapples with a pirate, Philip further characterizes Willmington as a serpent: "The strong effort of the pirate, could not throw off Willmington, who clung to him with the tenacity of the serpent that tightens its

refolded coils around the triumphant tiger that still presses its paw on its bruised head” (210). Whereas Appadocca initially seems serpent-like when readers are first introduced to him, his father quickly takes over as the perceived evildoer, with Philip explicitly stating who the hero and the enemy are in his story.

Furthermore, as much as Appadocca decides during the trial that he will not show his father mercy, Willmington, once Appadocca is later captured, also denies mercy and says he does not care if killing his own son will bring dishonor on himself; thus, in contrast to Appadocca’s philosophy, Willmington’s views are based more on selfish desire than honor or natural obligation. The British captain Hamilton says there is “no reason why you should not [show mercy]: and you must recollect, he justified his harshness to you precisely on the same grounds as you now do yours. Besides, he may again, one day, justify any vengeance that he may be inclined to wreak upon you by your conduct to-day.” Willmington responds, “There will not be much chance left of his doing so, I warrant you.” Although Appadocca does not exhibit any positive emotion toward his father, Willmington is also characterized by coldness and unconcern about the logic of revenge that may come back to haunt him through its cyclical nature. Further justifying his stance and exhibiting his denial of the truth, Willmington rationalizes to Hamilton, “[B]esides, he is my son only of a sort” because “his mother was not Mrs. Willmington” (202). This reasoning demonstrates Willmington’s desire to excuse himself from his responsibilities by relying on problematic philosophies about legitimacy. Though, as mentioned previously through the example of *plaçage*, fathers often supported their so-called illegitimate family members, Willmington provides an example wherein a son finds himself unrecognized by his father and by any law that

would aid the abandoned son. Willmington takes advantage of this exception to the rule of law to convince himself that he has no natural or moral responsibility for his son because of his race.

Even the law-abiding Hamilton who detests piracy—and who represents the British rule of law that characterizes Trinidadian justice—challenges the justness of Willmington’s claim. He responds to Willmington, “You consider, therefore, that where the word of a priest has not been pronounced on your union, you are absolved from your honour, and from natural obligations?” When Willmington responds, “I do,” Philip maligns Willmington and his philosophies and has Hamilton echo this critique when he states, “If I were Appadocca, I should have hanged you outright, and not sent you with a philosophical scheme to float on a cask and to be picked up” (202). Hamilton even mocks the established rule of law as he tells Willmington, after Appadocca’s supposed drowning, “There, sir . . . your vengeance is satisfied: public justice and morality are vindicated.” Even Willmington is a bit dissatisfied with the rule of law as he responds, “Scarcely” (203), indicating that a person who feels wronged will find more satisfaction in taking part in revenge than letting someone privately die.²⁴ The characters feel ambivalent all around as Hamilton tells his father, the commander, “[T]he greatest misfortune is, that such characters as that Willmington, unluckily for humanity, make as many Appadoccas.” Hamilton senior responds, “True . . . it is a misfortune. I always thought I perceived much to be admired in that unfortunate Appadocca. I am rather glad,

²⁴ As I mentioned in my Introduction, Michel Foucault argues that from the nineteenth century on, executions became more private in order to make justice and punishment appear less like spectacles. However, he also notes throughout *Discipline and Punish* that crowds still called (and continue to call) for public punishment as a means of satiating society’s need to see justice done to criminals’ bodies. Depicting violent punishments in texts is one way of keeping punishment visible and feeding voyeuristic pleasure.

I must say, that he has drowned himself rather than permit himself to be dealt with by the executioner” (205). The Hamiltons know that Willmington’s sense of justice is flawed, as he sees guilt in everyone but himself. Nature, which seems to have ended Appadocca’s life, is a better alternative to the established law of Trinidad that would have seen Appadocca executed for piracy.

In the end, as Willmington begs for mercy from Appadocca shortly after maligning Appadocca in front of his white family, Philip strips away any potential sympathy for Willmington even as he begs; Philip has already established Willmington’s detestable character, so his begging rings hollow and comes too late. Just before Willmington meets Appadocca at the end of the novel, he has been telling his white family about Appadocca, characterizing him as a liar and of no relation to them. It is only when Appadocca appears to challenge him that he seems to repent, but this is more out of fear than actual remorse and parallels his earlier tendencies to malign his son and then beg for mercy in the face of violence. At this point, Willmington does not even have the courage to face his son, whom he at first believes is a ghost, as he admonishes, “Do not look at me . . . vanish, vanish, in the name of Heaven and all the saints. If you come from Hell—to haunt me—return, return.” He then attempts to justify his actions, blame others, and appear as though he is a loving father. As mentioned previously, he blames forgetfulness for his wrongs and stammers, “Your mother, aye, your—your mother loved me. Have mercy—mercy—on me,—the vessel—the vessel took me by—by chance to St. Thomas. I did not—I did ask him: no—no—I was sorry—sorry, when—when—you were drowned. Mercy—mercy” (208). Here, Willmington tries to manipulate his son, using multiple tactics to appeal to his emotions. This string of clumsily articulated

excuses is unconvincing, and Appadocca sees through his father's ruses. In this scene, Philip again juxtaposes the positive virtues of Appadocca, including self-restraint and courage, with Willmington's lack of positive virtues.

Despite his many virtues, though, Appadocca does lack prudence, which makes him a reluctant avenger and one who fails in the end. As I have established in previous chapters, the reluctant avenger is one behind whom people can stand because he/she shows restraint rather than gleeful bloodlust, but Appadocca's failure to realize his revenge and practice prudence may taint the notion that the novel ends happily—much as the endings of the Parker captivity stories and Lippard's *Bel of Prairie Eden* are less triumphant than rendered with some ambivalence about the roles of violent revenge and what the future holds. Appadocca's exhibition of prudence is lacking from the very beginning as he seeks an-eye-for-an-eye retribution, which causes him to leave his father adrift on the ocean; this gives his father the chance to free himself and retaliate, resulting in Appadocca's confinement on the British man-of-war. After escorting his father from his home toward the end of the novel, Appadocca also locks his father in the torture room of his ship instead of killing him right away, so he drowns during a storm as the crew abandons ship and seems to forget about Willmington until it is too late (234-42). Thus, though Willmington dies in the end rather than receiving mercy that he does not seem to deserve, Appadocca does not see the result of his quest for natural justice.

However, these failures to kill his father immediately suggest some reluctance on the part of Appadocca that allows Philip to celebrate his protagonist's status as a reluctant avenger, and this reluctance is further exemplified when Appadocca refuses to kill his half-brother in a duel upon confronting Willmington in his home (212-14). In this

instance and others, Appadocca exhibits the virtue of temperance and directs his anger at the man against whom he has spent the entire novel justifying his hatred. The virtue of temperance is the answer to the fear that revenge will spiral out of control and make martyrs of people who fall victim to Appadocca's law simply because they are in his path. As Cain notes, "The problem with the law of retaliation is how to bring vengeful deeds to closure and thereby prevent the specter of widespread death and destruction It is the need for limits that Aristotle and Bacon treat in their classic texts, and that other philosophers, however different their purposes, emphasize as well" (xlvi). Part of the negative connotation associated with revenge is the fear that it will become part of a never-ending cycle that is lawless and uncontrolled. Appadocca shows reluctance to allow his vengeance to affect innocent bystanders as he explains his stance to his half-brother and understands why he wishes to protect their father. Taking on the role of fair judge again, he says, "I am willing . . . to throw life and death on a hazard, and to afford you as fair a chance as possible of purchasing your father's deliverance by your valour and bravery. My sword, which I offer you, is of the finest metal, you may rely upon its fidelity. I challenge you to mortal combat" (212).²⁵ Even after Appadocca beats the young Willmington, he offers him his sword again, effectively breaking the rules of

²⁵ Ottley argues that duels were prevalent in Trinidad, especially during martial law under Picton. He notes, "Duelling was illegal during ordinary times and under civil law it was punishable with imprisonment; but when martial law was proclaimed the contestants (when caught, which was not often) were merely brought before a court-martial and as a rule dismissed with a warning to go and fight no more" (139). Thus, in a state of exception that emerges under martial law, the prohibition of dueling is ignored. Both men and women dueled, and despite an 1804 edict the sounds of swordplay and gunfire could be heard as individuals dueled for even the most trivial reasons (139-40). Ottley concludes, "At other times many contestants seeking to escape the law and carry out what they considered their moral obligations resorted to the practice of voyaging to the South American mainland and so restoring the lost honour" (140). Thus, as individuals resorted to dueling in the United States to protect their honor, a similar system prevailed in Trinidad despite its technical illegality. This is just one example of common practice clashing with the rule of law.

dueling. Yet Appadocca justifies himself through his own laws and not through the laws of the land, which included “the law of arms.” Arguing that he has not given young Willmington enough of a chance to beat him, he says, “I like to satisfy justice, sir” (213). Even after winning a second time, Appadocca offers to fight young Willmington with pistols, again exhibiting his reluctance to spill anyone’s blood but his father’s.

However, young Willmington will fight no longer, and, under the law of dueling, Appadocca could rightfully kill his half-brother. Yet his goal is to promote the idea that vengeance and violence do not need to spread and that, if the rule of law were actually just, such violence would be unnecessary. Furthermore, he does not conflate his half-brother’s identity with their father but instead aims his anger at the specific man who deserves it. Rather than kill his brother, Appadocca gags the boy and laments to his even younger half-siblings how “the sins of the fathers are visited on their children.” Appadocca seems to hope that his half-siblings can prevent a cycle of revenge by recalling these childhood memories and “this sad retribution” so society can understand that those who are scorned “possess feelings” and “claim the same measure of justice as is meted out to all” (215). Again, Appadocca indicates that his individual quest for vengeance speaks to a greater good and is, thus, not entirely self-serving. In this statement, he suggests that he imagines a world wherein revenge will no longer be necessary because people will abide by laws of mutual respect across race and class lines—laws that he argues are natural and should be easily recognizable and applied in Trinidad and elsewhere. This is a lofty vision wherein revenge and violence become the exceptions rather than the rules, as they will be unnecessary if established law coincides

with nature and therefore exacts justice for all people—black and white, fathers and sons, slave and free, rich and poor.

Appadocca's status as reluctant avenger is also upheld whenever Philip notes that nature drives Appadocca, who might despise violence and revenge if his father had not ruined him. Philip writes, "He wore the aspect of one whose resolution was taken to do a desperate deed, and whose nature still refused consent and revolted at the thought, like him who sacrifices to principle, and is doomed to drain a cup that makes humanity shudder" (36). This sense of being "revolted" and "doomed" suggests reluctance on the part of Appadocca, making him better than a protagonist who glorifies his role as a vigilante. To his half-siblings, Appadocca argues that it is Willmington's injustice that has driven him to his vow of revenge—a vow he would otherwise abandon. He asks, "How poisonously bitter are the cups that others season for our lips?" to suggest that Willmington has controlled his desire for vengeance by "season[ing]" a cup that would otherwise be repulsive (215). In these statements, Appadocca becomes more of a passive actor driven by his father's actions rather than by his own desires to be violent. Philip and his characters continually note how this lifestyle does not seem to fit Appadocca's nature and must be the result of someone else's wrongdoing.

In the end, as the natural world seems to kill Willmington and Appadocca commits suicide by flinging himself into the ocean, Philip may be suggesting that Appadocca cannot live on because his revenge was not completed or that, whether the revenge were completed or not, the world has no room for someone who has been so

tortured by vengeful thoughts.²⁶ Appadocca's quest has distanced him from himself as he tells Feliciano that he has "long banished away Emmanuel Appadocca from Emmanuel Appadocca . . . For a long time mental anguish and I have been companions, and from its constant proximity it has chased away the softer feelings, whose aspect is too cheerful to bear the approaching shadow of that demon. My heart is wasted and its tenderness gone" (182). By the end of the novel, he seems more dead than alive, as well as regretful and fearful about his mother's approval, as Philip writes, "How to wreak retribution now engrossed his whole intellect—retribution on the man whom that mother had once too fondly loved, and whose placid nature had, no doubt, long been forgiven. How could he be certain that her spirit now looked down upon him with pleasure, the spirit of her whose life was a speaking lesson of patient endurance" (226). Such a tortured character seems incapable of celebrating the realization of his vengeful mission and rejoining society, and Philip ends Appadocca's life, thus eliminating this possibility and the need to have society embrace or reject this potentially ambiguous figure.

Though Appadocca exhibits power and control by choosing when to die rather than wait for the representatives of established law to find and execute him, the overall feeling at the end is not one of triumph or even relief. The argument that all of the events in the text should be unnecessary because the rule of law should protect everyone equally ultimately halts any celebration surrounding Willmington's death. As mentioned previously, Peter A. French has argued that acting as an avenger takes a toll on that

²⁶ There is a sense that Appadocca may kill himself eventually but not quite so prematurely. He says in a letter to the Hamiltons that he will lead his men to a remote spot of land "and build them a city in which they may live happily, quietly, and far removed from the world, whose sympathy they cannot hope, and care not, to possess." This suggests that he has long-term plans, but he also writes, "For myself." Earlier he says, "The consummation of my existence is now fast approaching" (236), foreshadowing the end of his life before the novel concludes.

avenger that most people seem unable to handle (34). Not only is the toll perhaps too heavy for the purportedly good-natured Appadocca to bear, but the accidental drowning of Willmington also does not reverse Willmington's acts or materially alter Appadocca's condition as the poor, outlawed, mixed-race son of a father who despises him.

Whatever the meaning of the suicide itself, the circle seems to be complete as both father and son perish in the same waters, ending any potential cycle of revenge at the hands of Willmington's surviving family members. Revenge may not be sweet for Appadocca or benefit his life, but it corrects an imbalance in nature that established laws in the Americas could not right. The failure of the rule of law is a failure to allow Appadocca to realize his potential, as Cain notes that Appadocca is "a tragic figure, a man of heroic frame but wasted gifts, consumed by the quest for justice and imprisoned by it. As the subtitle to the novel indicates, this is a story of a 'blighted' life that is impaired and diseased. . . . 'Blighted' is an action that slavery imposes on Appadocca and that, as a consequence, he then imposes, self-destructively, on himself" (liii). As Philip notes, his "firmness of mind" and ability to lead others could have made Appadocca "a profound philosopher, if his talents had been turned otherwise" (194). In nature, a blight is a disease caused by an infectious agent, and the implication here is that, as blighted as Appadocca is, Willmington is the true cause or infectious agent who must be destroyed if further blights on humanity can be prevented. Though it is too late for Appadocca, his life becomes an example to others of how the rule of law can be flawed and, by necessity, rewritten. Appadocca's death may end the cycle of revenge in his own family, but his philosophy is the offering that Philip gives to readers.

Appadocca's Legacy

In *Emmanuel Appadocca*, as in texts such as *Benito Cereno*, *Blake*, and “The Florida Pirate,” control over people’s minds and bodies is of paramount importance regarding acts of revenge coded as justice. The black characters in these stories fight against whites who attempt to exert such control over them and justify their revenge because they must break this cycle of enslavement and dehumanization. Despite the successes of these black protagonists, though, the texts end with unfulfilled vengeance. Appadocca fails to exact his revenge in the end; Babo and his fellow slaves are caught and punished or executed in *Benito Cereno*; *Blake* ends abruptly, as the unfinished novel leaves readers not knowing whether or not Henry satisfies his mission; and the escaped-slaves-turned-pirates in “The Florida Pirate” ultimately mutiny against their formerly enslaved leader, Manuel, who is captured and executed in Charleston after “anticipat[ing] the law” that had always excepted him from human rights (531). The endings of these texts suggest that the protagonists are ultimately limited in their power, unable to truly reframe race relations and notions of justice. However, though the protagonists and authors are faced with the reality that their agency is limited, these texts serve as moving protest literature and stand as warnings to slaveholders of what might occur outside of the realm of fiction and with the help of multiple leaders who might model themselves after the vengeful characters. Relying on references to and remembrances of actual slave rebellions keeps the threat of further revolt or revolution in the foreground even in the face of these ambiguous literary finales. They further illustrate how the disenfranchised perch menacingly on the threshold of overthrowing established or recognized law, potentially re-codifying justice and its applications.

Part of the revenge that plays out in stories such as *Emmanuel Appadocca*, though, involves the attempt to control views of justice by telling and controlling the story, which includes control of sanctioned memory and history. Of course, Philip had to account for race biases, as well as negative views of piracy, as he framed his protagonist's character and grievances. In other texts in this dissertation, white voices have controlled the story that is told—through white authors and white characters/figures. Yet when black protagonists control the action and the story, they indict oppression in ways that—even if the rebellion fails—are vengeful in their exposure of a side of the story that condemns whites. When any of these voices control the story, they have the power to control and rewrite history, using textual posterity as a mode of vengeance to define right and wrong, hero and enemy. Philip frames Appadocca as the hero who enacts the “life-and-death struggle” for selfhood that Hegel describes, as Hegel notes that “it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won,” proving that one exists outside of the great expanse of life (*Phenomenology* 114). Appadocca believes that humans are free by nature—under natural law if not societal law—but realizes that, because society does not recognize his rights, he must seek and win his freedom. Appadocca ultimately believes that natural law is just and that established law, from which Willmington benefits, is more violent and inhuman than anything Appadocca can invent as the sovereign ruler on his ship. His story exposes how racial others have been excepted from the law—laws that were constantly in flux in Trinidad at the time, laws that whites frequently broke because the government made such exceptions, and laws that went against natural and moral justice by discounting the basic humanity of African Americans.

In the end, in order to make acceptable a black pirate whose ideas contradict the established rule of law, Philip must necessarily highlight the virtues of Appadocca while maligning Willmington. This process allows Philip to challenge racist ideologies and laws that denied non-whites legal protections and even legitimacy and a sense of identity. Relying on the context of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century slave revolts and revolutions, Philip suggests that, if racial others are not given legal equality, they may uproot and rewrite the law. Ultimately, pirates may be framed as either villains or Robin Hood-like heroes. Rediker reminds us of their “high ideals,” their status as “abused” laborers, and their system of egalitarianism, complicating a simple classification of all pirates as “villains” (176). Appadocca is a potential villain with good intentions, one who justifies his actions against an unsavory father who says and does nothing that can really defend his actions. Through the novel’s conclusion, it may seem that both Appadocca and his father are punished because of their mutual deaths. However, though Appadocca’s eventual death may signify lingering ambivalence about his vengeful actions and his fitness for life on land, his story highlights the role of maritime locations as exceptional spaces wherein individuals may reinterpret and rewrite legal theories in order to challenge the established rule of law and the sovereign authority of others. Foucault notes, “A convicted criminal could become after his death a sort of saint, his memory honoured and his grave respected” (67). These seem to be the sentiments of the surviving characters in the novel, and Philip urges his readers to view Appadocca as less of a legitimate criminal than a man whom the law wrongfully criminalized.

Conclusion: The Ongoing Legacy of Revenge Regarding Justice, the Law, and Punishment

Writing about the controversial topic of imprisonment in 2012, *The New Yorker*'s Adam Gopnik notes that "there are now more people under 'correctional supervision' in America—more than six million—than were in the Gulag Archipelago under Stalin at its height" (par. 3). Gopnik traces debates about present-day incarceration to the Enlightenment era and the two prison systems I discussed in my Introduction, which arose in attempts to make punishment less public (for some) and find alternatives in the forms of solitary confinement or hard labor. Yet, as I have argued in my Introduction and throughout this dissertation—in agreement with Joy James and others—punishment has not been entirely hidden from public view since the beginning of the nineteenth century (as Foucault contends), particularly when scholars consider who is excepted from certain rights and how vengeful violence puts certain people's suffering on display. Across all of the texts I have examined, authors have imagined the role that exceptionalism plays in cases wherein protagonists seek redress or justice. For every author, one individual or group claims to be justified in punishing other individuals or groups and uses revenge as a tool for exacting that punishment—though not every author condones this tool.

By starting with William Gilmore Simms's *The Yemassee*, I have followed an arc regarding representations of revenge that is not only roughly chronological but that, more importantly, illustrates how Simms—and other authors, many of whom wrote frontier romances—show some reluctance to embrace revenge as a laudable tool for exacting justice. Importantly, though, these authors do not, by denying revenge for their

protagonists, champion for equal rights for women and racial others. Rather, they extol the virtues of their white protagonists by justifying how these supposedly reluctant warriors might desire revenge but ultimately displace that oft-maligned desire onto supposedly savage antagonists. The rhetoric of exceptionalism they employ in frontier spaces in the Americas does not advance a vision of equitable justice so much as mask the violence of white settlers in the early Americas as well as the nineteenth century. While perhaps not embracing revenge, Simms still suggests that white men must be vigilant about distrusting Native peoples, that African Americans can be subordinated as slaves, and that Natives are naturally vengeful and should be removed—an act he represents as benevolent, civilized, and necessary.

Despite the negative connotations associated with revenge, though, not all authors displace it onto others in the way that Simms does, as the rest of my chapters have shown. Authors who wrote contemporaneously with Simms about Hannah Duston's captivity imagined her actions in 1697 in various ways that justified not only what she did in her own time but also justified ongoing violence against Native peoples. Robert Montgomery Bird similarly created a protagonist of mythic proportions to seek revenge against the Shawnee on the frontier of eighteenth-century Kentucky. Some of the authors I examined in Chapter 2 did comment negatively on the acts of the historical Duston and the fictional Nick/Nathan, particularly along the lines of gender and religion. Yet most writers and reviewers have extolled the acts of Duston and Nick/Nathan as justified due to the supposedly exceptional status of their surroundings and their relationship to captivity, when extreme but supposedly temporary means were defended as necessary. I have identified Duston and Nick/Nathan as purportedly unlikely killers because authors largely

frame them as feminine/feminized and passive, which in this context further justifies their actions because they can more easily be imagined as victims rather than inhabitants of lands that Native peoples claimed. Duston's and Nick/Nathan's acts of carving up bodies and taking scalps illustrate both their power as individuals in these supposedly exceptional moments and spaces outside the purview of recognized law and their claim to the land on behalf of white settlers.

Similar to Chapter 2, in Chapter 3 I have examined texts wherein authors largely justify white protagonists' acts of revenge. However, they also suggest to varying degrees that vigilante justice and bloody acts of revenge against individuals and groups is unfulfilling and not equivalent to justice. Reactions to Cynthia Ann Parker's recapture were largely positive but still a bit mixed, and James W. Parker's quest to reclaim his white relatives had Sam Houston and other Texas residents suspicious of his methods and motives. George Lippard, though, is even more ambivalent about the utility of revenge as he imagines atrocities playing out in the imagined frontier space of Texas during that former republic's revolution. In these texts, acts of violence against Native peoples generally (versus specific wrongdoers), control over women's bodies, and over-the-top revenge plots ultimately call into question who benefits from acts of revenge defined as justice. Such questions arise particularly when considering gender, property, and race relations, with a focus in this chapter on relations among white, Comanche, and Mexican figures. Issues such as control and mercenary motives play out in these texts, which all imagine the same space and historical period but in different genres. In the Parker captivity narratives and Lippard's sensational novella, the rhetoric of exceptionalism is employed to justify acts of revenge. However, these acts ultimately seem to fall short of

bringing about justice, closure, deterrence, or any other positive outcomes despite the tendency of many protagonists in such texts to attempt to frame revenge as selfless and for the good of the nation.

Finally, Maxwell Philip's *Emmanuel Appadocca* also ends ambivalently despite the work that Philip does to extol the virtues of his protagonist in relation to his father. As a mixed-race pirate, Appadocca is already a figure who seems distanced from the other protagonists in this dissertation, and Philip presents this troubled character as a kind of philosopher who rightfully—under natural law and *lex talionis*—seeks acknowledgement from the man who fathered him, dishonored his mother, and disowned him. Appadocca expresses his beliefs about racial equality in this abolitionist text set in Trinidad, and he imagines the sea and the pirate ship as spaces wherein he can enact his own laws and create a kind of utopic hydrarchy wherein he has sovereign authority. Yet when he ultimately fails to kill his father but instead helplessly watches him drown before a death sentence can be carried out, Appadocca flings himself into the ocean and suggests with this act of suicide that he has no real place in society. While the ending of the novel can be read in various ways, and while even the characters who malign revenge embrace Appadocca and see the merits of his philosophies, Philip ultimately suggests that it is unfortunate to feel compelled to use revenge as a tool for seeking justice. If Appadocca had not been excepted from various rights based on his race, he would not have had to craft such a dangerous, controversial, and ultimately unfulfilling brand of law.

Ultimately, all of these texts highlight the role of exceptionalist rhetoric when revenge is likened to justice. Whether antagonists or protagonists champion for the righteousness of revenge, they employ this rhetoric in an attempt to justify their actions—

even if they are ultimately unsuccessful. What these texts illuminate, then, is how arguments about exceptionalism overcome the contradictions that are so often apparent in representations of revenge; in other words, revenge is typically maligned as antithetical to justice yet also celebrated and likened to justice, and it is the notion that some moments, people, and places are exceptional that allows for this leap from cyclical, selfish, and mercenary tool to temporary, selfless, and necessary tool. Examining how this rhetoric has been employed in nineteenth-century literature illustrates the power of “exceptional vengeance” to allow for contentious acts of law-creating, law-maintaining, and law-challenging violence. At a time when debates about territorial expansion, Indian removal and warfare, and African American slavery were at the fore, literature during this era was particularly formative in both reflecting ideologies about revenge and justice and shaping these ideologies. Scholars such as Agamben, Benjamin, and Derrida have examined the state of exception on a national scale and how it allows for law to be suspended as well as used as a violent tool. However, the rhetoric of exceptionalism more broadly, when paired with imagined frontier spaces on land and sea, opens up a space for groups and individuals to claim authority over law. For the nineteenth-century authors I have examined, this kind of authority allowed heroic protagonists to debate about such issues as property (in land and bodies) and which policies were proper for mitigating disputes among people from different races, ethnicities, and nations. When these policies allow for revenge, and when these authors justify revenge, readers encounter a particularly powerful and, I would argue, harmful tool in relation to the law.

My goal in this dissertation has been to argue for the importance of literary studies when examining revenge because it is such an understudied area despite

literature's importance to reflecting and framing philosophies about vengeance. I have also sought to highlight the period from the 1830s to 1850s in the Americas—and particularly the United States—as a time when discussions about revenge and the rule of law were pervasive. Such discussions were prevalent largely because of the legal policies that were in place and that were being contested at the time, particularly due to debates surrounding modes of punishment, westward expansion, and the treatment of Native and African American peoples. The policies that were enacted, upheld, and challenged during this period impacted race and gender relations in the United States, as well as the status of the United States as an expanding empire.

Outside of focusing on this period and on literature, though, I have also attempted to highlight the importance of exceptionalist rhetoric to theories on vengeance more broadly and the importance of recognizing the spectacle of punishment into the nineteenth century, especially along the lines of race. When scholars such as Agamben discuss the state of exception and the law, they focus on national governments more than the power of smaller groups or individuals. Thinking about frontier spaces as exceptional spaces can broaden scholars' understanding of how suspending and introducing laws—in supposedly temporary and necessary ways and in moments and spaces that are imagined as exceptional—opens up the potential for additional scholarship on how the law, violence, and force are imagined. Furthermore, examining revenge as a specific kind of violence when operating under such “exceptional” circumstances focuses attention on a kind of violence that, when justified, deserves to be analyzed on its own because of how pervasively and powerfully it is rendered and defended despite how often it is maligned. In sum, the analysis of literature in my chapters should open up a space for broader

conversations about the relationship between the rhetoric of exceptionalism and vengeful violence.

I also want to highlight in brief how some important themes I have analyzed in this dissertation apply to other fields, albeit in different ways. While I do not wish to suggest that my theories are transhistorical and to undercut my focus on literature in the nineteenth-century Americas, I do wish to argue that scholars can continue this kind of analysis with more contemporary literature, art, and popular culture, particularly film, as I have suggested throughout this dissertation that the characterizations of revenge that I have examined are not specific to one genre or type of cultural production even if each type of production poses its own challenges regarding vengeance and exceptionalism. The practice of excepting othered individuals and groups and seeking revenge against them has remained a prevalent practice, as cases from lynching to removal to anti-immigration policies all in some way highlight the common (not exceptional) practice of promoting the supposed necessity of the government as well as individuals to target “others” for revenge framed as imperative, legalized—or least unpunished—violence. Furthermore, the theme of revenge remains commonplace in art and continues to speak to the notion of exceptionalism: Individuals and groups embrace revenge when legal recourse seems foreclosed to them and/or when justice in a court of law seems unsatisfying. These themes appear in texts spanning multiple genres, from short stories, to poetry, to graphic novels.

Beyond literature, film and television remain rich media through which to analyze the role of revenge and the characterizations of specific avengers, which perhaps explains why so many scholars who examine revenge look to the media of film and television,

particularly westerns. Revenge films and shows today still often center around familial protection and notions of exceptionalism as main justifications for revenge, even twisting the frontier space to fit almost any location wherein the protagonist perceives law and order as absent, ineffective, or corrupt. Such productions flirt with framing clear reasons for why the protagonists must seek revenge as the only kind of justice that is available but then often show the heroes returning to “normalcy” once they are successful. The heroes are still often, though not always, white men, and I would argue there has increasingly been a shift to portraying women and racial others as heroic avengers. But revenge is not always about killing, as scholars such as Aladjem suggest (xiii); it is also about calling out someone’s misdeeds and humiliating them in some way, making spectacles of them in their suffering. Scholars can do more to examine films, from westerns such as *The Searchers* (1956)—which many people note may have been inspired in part by Cynthia Ann Parker’s story—and more contemporary films and shows, including the plethora of new productions that feature and celebrate female avengers.

As literature, films, and television shows suggest, USAmerican audiences, in particular, continue to be obsessed with revenge even as they generally argue that it should not be embraced and equated with justice. It still holds true that the rhetoric around revenge is one of exceptionalism—vengeance seems necessary under certain circumstances but must then be abandoned. Often it is not fully celebrated because people frequently depict vengeance as lamentable, unsettling, and even dangerous, if supposedly necessary. Yet revenge stories still provide for captivating entertainment, whether they are made up or are based on actual events. George Orwell famously argued in “Revenge is Sour” that “the whole idea of revenge and punishment is a childish

daydream. Properly speaking, there is no such thing as revenge. Revenge is an act which you want to commit when you are powerless: as soon as the sense of impotence is removed, the desire evaporates also” (186). Such representations in art, as well as actual instances of revenge in life, prove Orwell’s theory wrong. The “desire” for revenge does not necessarily “evaporate[]” just because one has the opportunity to achieve it, as I have shown in this dissertation through historical figures such as Hannah Duston and James W. Parker, as well as fictional figures such as Nathan Slaughter and Emmanuel Appadocca.

Finally, I want to also emphasize how exceptionalist legal theories are rich areas of exploration from a transnational perspective and in the present moment. Issues such as vigilante justice and how best to interrogate, try, and treat the bodies of suspected terrorists frequently spur conversations about the role of revenge in US culture. Issues ranging from individual, state-level, and national sovereignty, to personal vendettas that erupt into violence, to legal exceptionalism that speaks particularly to issues around race, ethnicity, and nationality are all debates at the fore in the United States today. Present-day politics regarding overseas conflict, civil war, and punishments continue to indicate that governments and individuals are often more concerned with attacking “others” than with considering whether such attacks are legal and why they label such instances of breaking international law necessary and exceptional despite their prevalence. Such overseas landscapes are in many ways new frontiers wherein US authorities are still negotiating how individuals and groups should treat US and international law.

Though this has been a rather sweeping overview of some ongoing and contemporary debates regarding law, violence, revenge, and representation, it sheds light

some major issues with which this dissertation engages in one way or another, though my focus has been on a specific time period and through the lens of literary studies. Though, again, I do not wish to deemphasize the importance of the early-nineteenth-century US context that has dominated this dissertation, it is important to consider how some of the issues that were discussed and represented in that period exist outside of it in space and time. In other words, though I have studied texts published mostly from the 1830s to 1850s because of the importance of that period's legal, political, and literary landscape, these issues did not end after the 1850s. In many ways representations of revenge in the United States have not drastically changed, though people continually imagine new racial, ethnic, and national others and different justifications for revenge that rely on the politics of different periods and geographies.

To sum up and clarify what I have suggested regarding how revenge has been represented and in many ways continues to be represented, I would like to advance five points to consider when trying to loosely define revenge. Whereas legal philosopher Peter A. French advances a fifteen-point definition of revenge in *The Virtues of Vengeance* (33-34), these five statements cover the major aspects of revenge as the authors I have examined have represented them:

1. Revenge themes commonly emerge in the context of a supposedly exceptional status or location, wherein one feels he/she will not be satisfied because law enforcement is weak or absent in the location of the apparent crime (e.g., in the case of Nathan/Nick), because the avenger deems that law is too slow or forgiving to allow for the most satisfactory justice (e.g., in the case of James W. Parker), or because the avenger feels he/she will not have success by going to authorities

because of his/her identity (e.g., in the case of Emmanuel Appadocca).

Specifically, the issue of identity often entails being a racial or ethnic other, but it also encompasses additional identities that many scholars have studied: that of the person seeking revenge against the government itself or the “likeable criminal” figure seeking revenge against other, nefarious criminals. During and within exceptional states or statuses, avengers rely on what may generally be called higher law doctrine to justify their extralegal forms of justice. The idea of the frontier provides an especially useful frame for examining the representation of avengers as supposedly necessary and temporary sovereigns.

2. Revenge is a search for control that will supposedly bring about happiness, relief, and peace, and it will supposedly rectify the past by transferring power from the wrongdoer to the avenger, thus honoring a victim (the avenger, those close to him/her, or even the nation or community).
3. People frequently teach that revenge is wrong, and this is upheld in art wherein those presented as enemies are vengeful (as seen in texts such as *The Yemassee*). However, when someone presents a heroic protagonist as an avenger and gives enough backstory to cultivate sympathy for that hero and a sense of exceptionalism, audiences are often encouraged to celebrate revenge as an unfortunate but useful and necessary tool that is allied with justice. This is particularly true when an avenger appears reluctant and also seems to be an unselfish individual acting for the greater good versus out of mercenary interests or a desire for power, as the case of Nick/Nathan illustrates in *Nick of the Woods*.

4. Audiences, including scholars, typically see revenge as a masculine trait and as a quest to reclaim masculine authority, even if an avenger is female. The supposed victims are often feminized because of their subject positions and become increasingly masculinized as they retaliate violently. The masculine character of revenge helps explain why some critics have been surprised by and even recoil from the feminized and, thus, supposedly unlikely avengers Hannah Duston and Nathan Slaughter. Yet, as I have argued, the notion that even a feminized figure can seek revenge sometimes helps justify that revenge: The (purportedly) less likely one is to be violent, the more people may assume the violence, when it occurs, is justified and necessary.
5. Revenge is not necessarily an irrational, purely emotional impulse but should instead be analyzed for its rhetorical and strategic elements. Some scholars continue to employ outmoded language regarding violence and civilization versus savagery. For instance, William C. Culberson argues that societies with “more superficial . . . political structure[s]” resort to violence more readily in order to settle disputes. He further contends, “The same phenomenon is encompassed in the individual: the more superficial a person’s political education or experience in obtaining needs politically, the closer passion lies to the surface, and the more quickly violence is used or advocated as a solution to a pressing problem. . . . The use of force without reasoning, without warning, and without demands is the subjective equivalent of irrationality” (113). When discussing vengeance as a particular form of violence, scholars frequently fail to examine the utility and logic behind framing vengeance as justice under supposedly exceptional

circumstances, which turns revenge into a powerful tool. Not only do many people understand and relate to the desire for vengeance, but they also often condone it as a means of reclaiming honor, seeking redress, and deterring future crimes—erasing the negative aspects of revenge due to the circumstances.

Scholars may add to and challenge these definitions, but examining the rhetoric behind revenge stories continues to inform theorists about what constitutes justice and how people imagine it operating in various societies. Considering what I have termed “exceptional vengeance” may, in particular, help scholars understand why people so often malign and celebrate revenge simultaneously, codifying certain instances of revenge as justice. Because the exceptions seem to apply to different people—particularly as we consider race, gender, ethnicity, class, and nationality—scholars should examine the continuum of justice, retribution, and revenge if they wish to come to an understanding of how (and if) equitable justice can actually operate under the rule of law. Furthermore, scholars who are interested in studying how the law is created and maintained through violence should consider the role of revenge as a specific kind of violence. Literary studies allow those who are concerned about the prevalence of revenge stories in US art and life to examine how and why revenge has been and continues to be justified by certain individuals and groups with specific agendas—potentially positive *and* negative—that have been perhaps surprisingly consistent across space, time, and genre. When this highly individualized kind of violence is justified and transformed into something supposedly unselfish and unmercenary, authors, filmmakers, and politicians rewrite revenge from a largely maligned concept and act into a powerful

and devastating form of justified and supposedly exceptional violence. While scholars such as Derrida, Benjamin, and Agamben discuss the violence behind law in more general terms, a discussion of revenge as a specific kind of violence that establishes, maintains, and challenges law is useful because of the power of revenge to appeal to individual and collective desires.

Ultimately, two main problems are unaccounted for as white protagonists, in particular, follow the trajectory I discussed in my Introduction: from recalling past events to shaping them into narratives of justified versus unjustified revenge. First, the writers of these fictional and nonfictional texts promote the historical accuracy of their texts while simultaneously presenting protagonists who attempt to refashion history and memory through violence. However, they do not acknowledge that, if history and memory can be refashioned in this way to subjectively define who is right and who is wrong, then views of who is justified may be completely fabricated in this refashioning. Writing about violence, Toni Morrison notes that “definitions belong to the definers—not the defined” (qtd. in Kaplan, “Violent” par. 3), and this often holds true for definitions of legality and justice, as well, when considering power relations. Second, most authors do not acknowledge that enacting revenge is often more about experiencing power and pleasure for oneself than seeking democratic justice, no matter how much the individual protagonist is meant to stand for the greater good. Examining literary protagonists and their justifications for violence can help scholars recognize the role of selfish pleasure that may affect people’s readings of protagonists as justified heroes or potential villains. As mentioned previously, with revenge there is a tendency to go beyond eye-for-an-eye retribution to exact more pain on one’s enemy than he/she committed. This seems self-

serving and vindictive and can also lead to a cycle of revenge, as now the opposition has reason to believe he/she has been unfairly wronged. This outcome undercuts the notion that revenge is an effective deterrent of future violence and is a concept that has been taken up frequently by scholars who oppose capital punishment. The authors of my primary texts engage with these debates, sometimes taking clear-cut stances on violence and revenge and sometimes evincing ambivalence about them.

As I have noted, the problematic divisions and definitions regarding justice, retribution, and revenge that have preoccupied legal scholars have not yet been adequately traced in literature, though literature has certainly transmitted and shaped these varying definitions and fraught ideologies about legal and violent recourses. Literary authors enter the debate about what forms of governance are best, choosing and framing historical moments and memories to justify where the United States, in particular, has been and where it might go as a nation that prides itself on democracy, the rule of law, and an appropriate amount of mercy or clemency—all notions that are particularly contested when writers reflect on supposedly exceptional moments and spaces. Furthermore, revenge has often gone undefined because legal, psychological, and religious theorists deem vengeful emotions natural in humans; thus its justifications are often hard to pin down and its modes are often figured as overtly violent. As indicated earlier, Aladjem writes that, in pondering the question of what vengeance is, he “was reminded that the problem, at least as it surfaced in America, always seemed to concern murder—the punishment of death for the loss of a life” (xiii). Yet, while the texts I have examined certainly depict lives taken as revenge for lives lost, vengeful acts go far beyond this. As I have shown by examining these fictional and nonfictional works,

revenge is an often obsessive desire that can manifest itself as claiming and reclaiming captive bodies (in parts or wholes, such as scalps), as claiming land or other property, as seduction, and as managing history, which includes controlling narratives about who is justified and who is not, as well as who is pictured as a vengeful savage and who is pictured as a temperate, civilized individual who normally avoids revenge.

Perhaps the final and one of the most important conclusions that emerges from these depictions of the struggle regarding justified violence is that revenge—and particularly over-the-top, exceedingly violent revenge—is so often unfulfilling for heroic protagonists. Only one text in this collection—George Lippard’s *’Bel of Prairie Eden*—directly confronts this notion. Some authors suggest as much, mostly by showing how white protagonists resist revenge while Natives are unfulfilled by it or, in the case of *Emmanuel Appadocca*, by leaving revenge in many ways unrealized and unsatisfying. Still other authors go the other direction entirely, maintaining that violent revenge at the hands of whites is heroic as the authors end their stories with a seemingly unquestionable victory for their white protagonists. Film theorists who discuss the importance of revenge to protagonists in USAmerican cinema point to the importance of this issue in the contemporary moment: Audiences are led to make assumptions about who is heroic and who is villainous, and they see the ultimate triumph of the vengeful protagonist who seeks at least an-eye-for-an-eye retribution (if not even more violent revenge) that is celebrated as justified and deserved. Legal theorists recognize the importance of confronting revenge head-on because it is something that poses a challenge to the quest for justice as we imagine and would like to experience it—as something impartial and unquestionably fair. Such justice may be impossible to define and achieve because

notions of justice are still subjective in various ways and circumstances. However, scrutinizing the roles of violence and revenge in American texts that purport to be unbiased can aid scholars in understanding how people have grappled with instances of violence during, in particular, transitional states of exception and in supposedly exceptional places, spaces, and moments. Literary texts may also help scholars understand how these purportedly exceptional times and geographies have given us precedents for justifying aggression and even bloodshed as we imagine the past and present.

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