Indigenous Networks: Rethinking Print Culture through Early American Media

Print has had great power, and not just for colonial domination, yet one doesn’t want to reduce all minority communications history to the same story.

Mapping the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Few of us who teach early American history can be unfamiliar with the monumental transatlantic slave trade database. Research on this scale is hard to imagine, most especially at the outset of such a daunting project, and also at the conclusion when one examines the results. It is based upon the work of dozens of scholars, made possible by a series of large research grants (from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Britain's Arts and Humanities Research Board, the W.E.B. DuBois Institute at Harvard, the Mellon Foundation, and Emory University), and it exists only because a small group of inspired scholars were able to see beyond dusty ledgers and records books in such libraries as the National Archives in Kew, and imagine the potential of the information on the pages before them.

The physical beauty of this book seems at odds with the brutality that it records, the full scale and savagery of the transatlantic slave trade reduced to attractive cartography.

The transatlantic slave trade database is founded upon one of the greatest collective historical research efforts of our age. Beginning with works such as Philip Curtin's *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*(1969), a widely disbursed group of scholars has spent almost half a century collecting and coding the records of the transatlantic slave voyages that brought tens of millions of Africans to the New World. David Eltis, Stephen Behrendt and David Richardson played leading roles in amalgamating this data, and then producing software that would make it accessible to students and researchers across the world. The

CD-ROM was published in 1999, with details of some 27,233 slaving voyages. Although a remarkable achievement, the creators of this resource were already at work seeking to remedy its deficiencies. Voyages to Latin America were seriously under-represented, and new data from Spain, Portugal, and indeed all of the slave-trading nations continued to accumulate, much of it donated by individual scholars rather than grant-funded researchers associated with the project. Launched in 2009, *Voyages: The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* (www.slavevoyages.org) is an online, freely available database encompassing records of almost 35,000 slaving voyages to the Americas.

I am humbled by this database, by the scholarly imagination that inspired it, by the scale of the work involved, and by the ways in which it substantiates one of the greatest human tragedies in modern history. I am also daunted by it. I bought the CD-ROM soon after it was issued, loaded it on my computer and perused the manual, but was never quite sure how best to employ it, either in teaching or research. I have been somewhat more adventurous with the online database, and I have begun to use some of my own calculations in research and publications. Yet it continues to overwhelm me. There is simply so much information, so many different kinds of information: ship construction, the recorded names of the enslaved, the ethnicity of ships' captains and crews, the prevalence of ship-board rebellions, mortality rates on the Middle Passage, African ethnicity—all these and much, much more can be found in the database. Where does one begin?

One begins with this book. Already it has received numerous prizes, including the Anisfield-Wolf Award: previously won by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., this prize honors written works that contribute to the understanding of race and human culture. At first glance, the *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* appears to be a coffee table book, lavishly illustrated with nearly two hundred maps and many contemporary engravings and paintings, virtually all of them in full color. The physical beauty of this book seems at odds with the brutality that it records, the full scale and savagery of the transatlantic slave trade reduced to attractive cartography. But the maps work, and even the most casual browser is likely to be astounded by the impressionistic power of these representations to inform one's understanding of the scale of this forced migration. For me, this book has been invaluable in helping me to understand the entire database, and all that it contains.

The authors have more data at their disposal than historians a generation ago could imagine, and they believe that the database of just under 35,000 documented slave voyages constitute just over 80 percent of all of the slaving voyages that set out for Africa. Often the data is incomplete: the intended destination of a slaving voyage may be recorded, but whether or not it arrived there-or anywhere else-may not be known. The number of slaves purchased and loaded onto a ship in West Africa may be known, but the number who survived the voyage and stepped ashore on the other side of the ocean may not. Based on their growing knowledge of the nefarious trade, the authors have added a dimension to the online database that was not present in the original CD-ROM,

including their highly informed calculations of the data that is missing from extant records, but also compiling a new function that seeks to estimate the contours and character of the entire transatlantic slave trade, including the 20 percent of voyages for which no records survive.

The maps and the calculations included in the book are based on the database as it existed one year before it went online, comprising some 34,934 voyages. Surviving data for these voyages varies widely, with complete and detailed records for some and less information for others. In some cases we do not know, for example, all the ports of call for all of these voyages (both in Africa, taking on slaves, and in the New World where the enslaved disembarked). In other cases we do not know how many slaves were on board, or we might not have information about survival rates. Using the patterns that have emerged in the huge amount of surviving data, the project authors have inferred places and imputed numbers, filling in the gaps in the records. A major gap remained, however, as the authors considered the question of what proportion of the total number of transatlantic slaving voyages is reflected in the records that have survived. The answer to this question is vital in any attempt to come to grips with the overall scale of the trade. The authors have been very creative in testing the data they have accumulated: for example, the summaries of French captains' reports of having spotted other French slave ships provided a random sampling of such voyages, and the authors concluded that over 95 percent of the ships mentioned in these reports appear in the database.

As new datasets appear and are processed, fewer and fewer previously unknown voyages have been discovered. Slave-trading voyages in the seventeenth century are, not surprisingly, less well documented, and so a somewhat higher proportion are missing, but less than 20 percent of all such voyages took place before 1700. The authors believe that the 34,934 voyages covered in this volume constitute "just over 80 percent of all the slave ventures that ever set out for Africa to obtain slaves from all locations around the Atlantic" (xxv). The online database and the vast majority of the maps in this volume are based not simply on the fleshed out records of these voyages, but on an "estimates" database which utilizes a compelling methodology to attempt to sketch out the shape and form of the likely total of all transatlantic slave voyages.

The maps in this volume are therefore intended to visually represent the scale and direction of the transatlantic slave trade in its entirety. The tables that accompany maps are very clear in showing whether they are based on surviving data, inferred data, or the relative proportions of documented and estimated Africans. Absolute precision is an impossible goal, but there are very good reasons to conclude that these maps, and the data upon which they rest, provide a more accurate portrayal of this great forced migration than most historians would have thought possible. Henry Louis Gates Jr. has described this atlas as the Rosetta Stone of the entire database, rendering a huge collection of information accessible and immediately, compellingly comprehensible. Virtually all aspects of the transatlantic slave trade are represented here: from the nationality of slave vessels; to the West African and New World regions of

trade for slave voyages outfitted in Rhode Island; the harrowing maps of slave mortality and voyage length; the gender and age of slaves, and their political and ethno-linguistic regions of origin; and the representations of the size of the slave populations arriving in New World locations.

Interspersed between the maps are a series of tables, pertinent extracts from seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century writers, and contemporary maps, illustrations, paintings and engravings. At first the reader who scans this volume may look upon it as definitive, the fruits of a half-century of collaborative research undertaken in many countries. The transatlantic slave trade appears to have been done, but the more I read, and the more I thought about the information presented in the maps and tables, the more eager I was to get back to the online database for my own research and teaching. Rather than depersonalizing this sad and savage history, these maps and this data allow us to consider the scale of the human experience of the trade. This is not the last word on the subject, and it was not the authors' intention that it should be. Their remarkable achievement has been to give us the data that enables us to ask more informed questions than it was possible to ask before. And most importantly of all, they have given us the means to answer the questions that we ask.

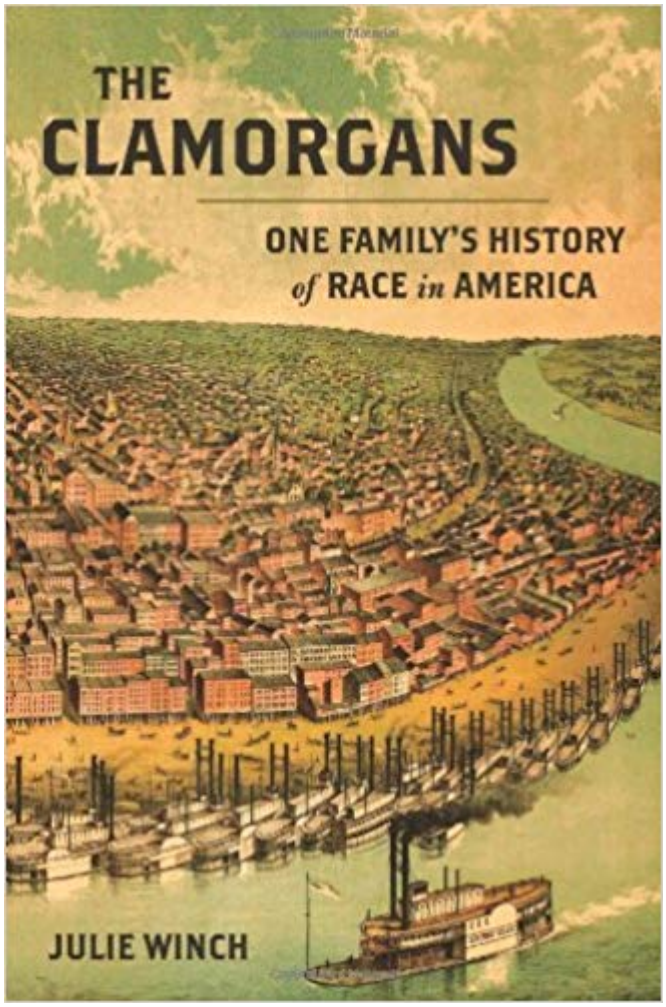
Jigsaw

Sinéad Morrissey pays homage to revolution and to pattern-breaking, considered through a jigsaw puzzle mapping North America.

Whitman’s Good Life

This breakthrough addition to Whitman’s corpus refocuses his personal, poetic, and political vision while enriching current debates over masculinity, disability, affect, and the medical-industrial complex.

The Law Could Make You Rich



By using legal knowledge as the central theme of the book, the author not only gives the reader guideposts that are easy to follow and remember, but also provides a blueprint for how some African Americans resisted racial degradation.

Sowing and Reaping: A ‘New’ Chapter from Frances Ellen Watkins Harper’s Second Novel

THE
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Poetry.

(From the Christian Register.)

AN AUTUMN LANDSCAPE.

BY EDWARD P. HAYWARD.

The reapers in the valley, the gleaners on the hills,
Mid grains and grasses bending in airs so soft and still;
The woods in purple distance, the silver-shining stream,
And haze that wraps about them the halo of a dream;

The sky far onward stretching, in reach on blue and vast,
While ships float silent o'er it with dreamy sail and mast,—
The aspirants of cloud and, that ply their ancient quest
To find the fleece golden in the bright and flaming west;

The fields, we patient waiting in the rail-ant noiseless sun,
Till crowned with fruitful garlands and wreaths as proudly won,—
Through forty days of summer, through bathing wind and rain,
They smile, and, peaceful, slumber in a dream of golden grain.

The homes, so calm and silent, the barns, with open doors,
And children, brown and mirthful, that pass upon the floors,
While matrons at the threshold, with low and pensive glance,
Look out upon the landscape as it they saw in trance;

The birds upon the uplands, the merry meadow birds,
That come like sweet-voiced prophets, with hopeful, cheering words,
That fill trees left to Summer, and lightly sing the way
From way side rocks and furzes, with ministrelsy so rare.

O birds that sing in orchards, in meadows and on hills,
That pipe to golden marriage in song that ever thrills,
Once more your voices echo through the chambers of my heart,
Where many a shadowy presence from the darkness seems to start,

Till bright once more the sunlight is play ing o'er the scene
Where I walk, gay and careless, with so long years between,
With throbbing heart of boyhood, the boundless hope of youth,
The vision large and gracious, the trust in God's great truth.

And is it dream, I wonder, this vision fair and free
In age more real than boyhood? and can it ever be
The best that has lived in us is not our-self to-day,
Though autumn pens and lingers, and the swift years flee away?

Communication.

(For the Christian Recorder.)

SOWING AND REAPING.

A TEMPERANCE STORY.

BY MRS. F. E. W. HARPER.

CHAPTER, V.

The society in which Mrs. Roland moved held in its large infusion of the "shoddy" element; it was principally composed of men and women whose wealth had outgrown their culture; or rather while their wealth had advanced their culture stood still. In the aggregate it possessed more wealth than many of the old families of the place, but it lacked their refinement and social culture. Mrs Gordon and her daughter Belle were new comers in the city of A. P., and their habits and principles were not in unison with the society which Mrs. Roland as her sister's Mrs Roland. Belle Gordon in her native town had been the centre of an intellectual and refined society, but here she was entirely out of her element, and the Mrs. Grundy of that circle soon found it out, and decreed that she was cold and queer. Society immediately took the cue and Belle was voted an outsider. Mrs. Grundy permitted her outcast to drink wine at her parties, and to carry their small flasks of liquor to her pic nics, and to such enjoyment in that sensuous form. Belle shrank with almost instinctive horror from the wine-cup, and its fatal allurements, and nothing could tempt her to give the least countenance to the convivial habits of society. Soon after Eel o had moved to A. P., one of the wealthiest members of that social circle died. He had been a free and easy liver, but perhaps had never done any more harm to society than Dives did, but his life had not been ennobled by any lofty purpose, nor distinguished by any deeds of high and holy worth. He had been hospitable and pleasant to his equals and his home had been a place where many of the young men of the place found an abundance of wine and good cheer. Belle had often thought that his table was a snare to those young men and that his influence was on the side of sensuality and materialism. After his death, Belle was requested to write an obituary, but feeling that to laud such a man was to help lower the moral tone of society, she firmly but politely refused to do so. She could speak nothing of the dead but truth, and the whole truth in this case was a very unpalatable thing. After this, Belle found herself coolly ignored. She was a fine conversationalist, bright, genial and entertaining, and among people of genuine culture was always welcome, but here she was made to feel the influence of social exclusions, and missing the stimulous of the pleasant circle in which she had moved, for a while she hardly felt the want of genial companionship But when she saw how little value there was in that social life—that ignorance and vice were prized if they pronounced themselves in the language of wealth that the glitter of gold stoned for the tinsel of character, she was content to stand alone; considering it far more complimentary to be forgotten than remembered in a social circle that worshiped wealth and hated culture Life was to her a thing of too exalted importance to be flittered away in petty ambitions and social rivalries And she often saw with intense pain that the stimulous was thrown on the side of weakness and frivolity, and not on that of worth and character

"Are you going to Mrs. Glossy's entertainment to-morrow evening?" said Charles Romaine to Jeanette Roland."

"[Con'; know; who is to be there?"

"You are to be there."

"Who else?"

"My worthy self."

"Is that all?"

"Why, is not that enough? am I not a host within myself?"

"A very small host," said Jeanette laughing, but do tell me, for I am very anxious to know"

"Have you seen the list?

"Yes.'

'Now Charlie don,t tease me; tell me who is to be there.'

'Well, in a word every body and his wife; it is to be the finest event of the season.'

'Has my cousin Belle been invited?

'No, I spoke to Mrs. Glossy about her, but she said she thought her quiet old, and different from every body else.'

'I know Belle is not popular; still I am sorry she is not invited. I hardly ever meet her any place now a days.'

"That," said Mr. Pollard Jeanette's uncle, who was quietly wiping his spectacles, "is because your society and social culture. Mrs Gordon and her daughter Belle were born in the city of A. P., and their habits and principles were not in unison with the society which existed as her sister's Mrs Roland. Belle Gordon in her native town had been the centre of an intellectual and refined society, but here she was entirely out of her element, and the Mrs. Grundy of that circle soon found it out, and decreed that she was cold and queer. Society immediately took the cue and Belle was voted an outsider. Mrs. Grundy permitted her outcast to drink wine at her parties, and to carry their small flasks of liquor to her pic nics, and to such enjoyment in that sensuous form. Belle shrank with almost instinctive horror from the wine-cup, and its fatal allurements, and nothing could tempt her to give the least countenance to the convivial habits of society. Soon after Eel o had moved to A. P., one of the wealthiest members of that social circle died. He had been a free and easy liver, but perhaps had never done any more harm to society than Dives did, but his life had not been ennobled by any lofty purpose, nor distinguished by any deeds of high and holy worth. He had been hospitable and pleasant to his equals and his home had been a place where many of the young men of the place found an abundance of wine and good cheer. Belle had often thought that his table was a snare to those young men and that his influence was on the side of sensuality and materialism. After his death, Belle was requested to write an obituary, but feeling that to laud such a man was to help lower the moral tone of society, she firmly but politely refused to do so. She could speak nothing of the dead but truth, and the whole truth in this case was a very unpalatable thing. After this, Belle found herself coolly ignored. She was a fine conversationalist, bright, genial and entertaining, and among people of genuine culture was always welcome, but here she was made to feel the influence of social exclusions, and missing the stimulous of the pleasant circle in which she had moved, for a while she hardly felt the want of genial companionship But when she saw how little value there was in that social life—that ignorance and vice were prized if they pronounced themselves in the language of wealth that the glitter of gold stoned for the tinsel of character, she was content to stand alone; considering it far more complimentary to be forgotten than remembered in a social circle that worshiped wealth and hated culture Life was to her a thing of too exalted importance to be flittered away in petty ambitions and social rivalries And she often saw with intense pain that the stimulous was thrown on the side of weakness and frivolity, and not on that of worth and character

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THE
CHRISTIAN RECORDER
"ETHIOPIA SHALL SOON STRETCH OUT HER HANDS UNTO GOD"

B. T. TANNER, D.D., Editor. | Organ of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. | *H. M. TURNER, LL.D.,* General Business Manager.

NEW SERIES. NO. 240. | PHILADELPHIA, PA., SEPTEMBER 14 1876. | VOL. XIV. NO. 36.

stones know. They may be fresher in the knowledge derived from school books and problems worked out on black board; but I think their memories have been cultivated at the expense of their reason and common sense. Last week when I was at my sister's, Mrs. Gladstone and her daughter called. When the bell rang, instead of letting them wait for the servant, I opened the door. Mrs. Gladstone spoke very politely but her eldest daughter marched past without even nodding her head, with as much supreme indifference as if I had been a door post. On the same day, my sister introduced her younger sister to a friend of hers who is stopping with her. At present her friend was in rather reduced circumstances, but my sister is very careful of her feelings, and as a mere matter of politeness, introduced her guest to Miss Mary Gladstone. She looked a moment at the humble dress of my sister's friend, made some irreverent reply, and never deigned to notice the introduction. My sister colored with mortification, but said nothing and Miss Gladstone seemed perfectly unconscious that she had given the least pain or been guilty of the most shameful rudeness. In mimicry I thought if you are a good mate from every college in the land, your education is unfinished until you learn good manners."

"Yes, Mary Gladstone is rather proud."

"Proud! She is not simply proud, but she is foolish and stuck up, and mistakes a haughty superciliousness for dignity of manner. There is a graciousness in true dignity that every one knows how to imitate."

"Oh, uncle you are too severe."

"I am no severer than the truth, and what you young people need is truth, more truth than flattery."

"Well uncle, I think you have given us a drastic dose of it this morning."

"And I hope it will do you good and I wish Miss Gladstone could have a portion of it. She ought to know how she mortified my sister and joined her guest. I always admired the beautiful sentiment of a writer who once said, 'I will not boast of my superior eyesight before the blind, I will moderate my steps before the lame.' Jeanette, I am heartily sick of this worldly pow erful life! are you not tired out with it?"

"No indeed, uncle, I feel as much at home in our set as a fish does in its native waters; but uncle do not be too severe on us young folks, or,

'You really persuade us soon,
You growing grave and old.'

"No Jeanette, I am not severe, if I am growing old fast I cannot see that contempt for our common humanity that vulgar worship of wealth and popularity, which is acting as a dry rot in your social life, without a feeling too deep for anger and profound enough for tears."

(For the Christian Recorder.)

A VOICE FROM THE SOUTH

"They have thrown down their altars, and slain their prophets, and I even I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away."

MR. EDITOR:—Permit me now to give you a sketch of my troubles in Georgia. At the rise of the Florida Conference on the forth of last March I was transferred to the South Georgia Conference, and stationed at Americus City. After bidding adieu to my many friends and acquaintance, I left the land of flowers—the Paradise of the United States, for the fiendish throne of Democracy. Let me state here that I fully realized Adams' fallen condition when turned out of Eden, but thank God I have got back, and that's what Adam never did. On my arrival I found the utmost confusion. Elder Bailey who had been stationed there, was removed on the rise of the Georgia Conference, and Elder Holmes appointed. Bailey refused to leave being I found a membership of some four hundred, with a congregation numbering eight or nine hundred, some for Bailey, and some for Holmes but very few for Christ. By taking precautionary steps however, I soon succeeded in reconciling them all, with the exception of Covington, a Local Deacon, and two or three others, whom I soon discovered had sinister motives in view. I however felt myself master of the situation, and went on preaching Jesus, and him crucified.

It was not long before I learned that this Covington was a Judas, and had covenanted with the Democrats to betray my church into their hands The devil having already entered here, he set about his diabolical work, in attempting to turn the church over to the Southern Methodists, telling the Democrats that all who joined it, would vote the Democrat ticket Bishop Rulsey was accordingly sent for, who came and effected an organization with about twenty members; most of whom I had expelled. This however brought on a law-suit for the property, it having been built before the war The old white trustees were applied to for a deed, some of whom had been dead for five years, they all however were resurrected, and signed a deed making the property over to this recent organization. The recently appointed Trustees waited on me and demanded the key. I refused of course, having prepared for a law-suit I then committed the Judge of the Court, who informed me according to the law of Georgia we could hold the property, having had possession over seven years, I had my meeting that night, and made all arrangements for the contest before us Just before day, the next morning the church was in flames The authorities made several arrests, all among my members, myself in the midst. We were all brought before "Pilate's Bar," and although two day's were consumed in hunting false witnesses, there could be none found. Some one however had to suffer, and three of the men were confined in prison until the October term of Court, without one thing being alleged against them. During the argument of the State Solicitor he said, "This African Church is a church that has been made up since the war out of the slaves who were set free, and a minister like the one just left the stand (referring to me) if left among this people can control them by a wave of his hand." This had the desired effect and in a few days I received a written notification to leave the place or I would be doomed to such the subplatic regions. I paid no attention to this cowardly threat, but rented a Hall, got my people together, and laid my plans for building, which was responded to by subscriptions upward of four hundred dollars. The Ku klux then publicly avowed that no Tabbo preacher should stay there beating the people as that they would not vote for them. consequently they made an attempt to take me out of the Parsonage by night, but having learned of their intention beforehand I took refuge elsewhere, and being well guarded to and from church and sleeping first one place and then another, they were disappointed in this attempt. Determined that they would not be disappointed, they proposed having me arrested, lodged in jail and then taken at night from thence to the place of execution. Discovering their plans just twelve hours before they were to go into execution, I took the train and left, asking God to settle my bill with them speedily.

Now Mr Editor, I have given you a brief statement of my reception in Georgia, and I ask in the name of a just God how long shall these things be tolerated. There is a worse system of slavery in Georgia to-day than there was thirteen years ago. The regular wages for farm hands is thirty cents per day and they board themselves, toward the last of the week they accuse them of stealing, and run them off without one cent. I heard Dr. Turner say in a letter, he would like to go to Africa and evangelize the natives, and become a fly Livingstone, but if the Doctor had travelled or even civilized the Ku klux of his own State, he would have been entitled to a greater name than ever Livingstone had.

I would love to write you something about the churches, schools and general affairs of Florida, but it would make my letter too prolix.

More anon.

N BARNUM SEABERRY.

Jacksonville, Fla., August 16, 1876.

(For the Christian Recorder.)

CENTENNIAL NEWSPAPER FUND.

BY L. G. MALONE.

Calling, not long ago, upon a friend who loved the cause of Christ, he consulted me about his will. He said that it was his intention to leave *three thousand dollars* for benevolent purposes. If this ; amount he had fully decided to set apart fifteen hundred dollars as a permanent fund, the interest of which, slowly dollars per annum, should be used year by year to aid some one preparing for the Christian ministry. He had also resolved to set apart one thousand dollars for the American Bible Union, to aid the translation and distribution of the Bible. Then he said; "I have five hundred dollars yet to appropriate. What would you advise me to do with it?" I replied, "You have always taken a religious paper yourself, and also paid for copies for ministers of the gospel and for missionaries in foreign lands. My advice is to set apart four hundred dollars as a permanent fund, and the interest will be twenty-four dollars every year, which will furnish twelve ministers in this country or missionaries in other lands with a good religious newspaper, each year, while the world stands." He approved of the suggestion and so fixed it in his will And the last one hundred dollars was set apart for the American Baptist Historical Society towards a fire-proof building for their valuable books and pamphlets.

We commend the example of this brother in forming a permanent fund, the interest of which shall be used to send the CHRISTIAN RECORDER to young men preparing for the ministry, to the widows of ministers, and to missionaries in Hayti and Africa. Do not wait. Begin now. What person or church or Sunday School will give the first hundred dollars, sending it the "Tanner Fund," or "Turner Fund," or "Allen Fund," or "Eddy Fund," or "Wayman Fund," or "Bethel Fund," or "South Carolina Fund." Every hundred dollars could thus receive a name and become an enduring monument better than marble. Colleges are endowed. Religious newspapers may be called homesick colleges.

(For the Christian Recorder.)

NEWS FROM PRATTSVILLE, ALA.

MR. EDITOR:—Knowing the deep and earnest interest you have always shown us regard to the progress of our church, I feel safe in sending to you this communication. A few days since walking down the street in Montgomery, feeling a strong desire to do my Master's work, I met a brother from Prattsville, who entreated me to come to the assistance of that small station of our Church—Rev. J. M. Henderson, who was there conducting a revival at that place.

With all my heart I went into the work before me—Our brother was praying for aid as I arrived and my coming was most cordially and warmly welcome to him. Old men with their venerable hairs, women of all ages and children professed religion, and were received into the church.

More than fifty have felt the good influence of a regenerated spirit and turned their eyes to a "land fairer than this." The revival was one of the most successful ones I have ever seen, and is largely due to Bro. Henderson, who is laboring not only day and night for religion, but for temperance also. His congregation numbers over five hundred and he is adding to it daily, his Sabbath-school is progressing finely and under his guiding hand, all is moving on finely and successfully.

I would that we had more servants of the Lord in the vineyard here, that the African Methodist Episcopal Church, might be seen in every hill and in every valley, that the words of love and peace might be preached to all.

Fraternally yours,
B. T. COALMAN.

For the Christian Recorder.

THANKS.

MR. EDITOR:—We are just now witnessing the closing labors of Rev. F. Myers, after three years' service as minister in charge of the A. M. E. Church of this city. Time will prove how faithfully he performed the responsible trust committed to his keeping. Yesterday being the last Sabbath here the regular exercises of the Sunday school were omitted, and the time employed in singing and delivering addresses, which I trust will leave a lasting and beneficial impression.

Appropriate remarks were made by Rev. Myers, J. Gladney, M. Jenkins, James Nutt, and J. J. Bird.

The following resolutions was unanimously passed and ordered to be published in your valuable paper:

Whereas the Rev. F. Myers, President of this school is about to take his departure from among us this being the last Sabbath of his pastoral charge over this branch of the Christian Church, therefore, resolved.

That it is with deep regret that we are called upon to witness the separation, and recognizing the valuable services he has rendered to the Church and to society, we invoke the blessings of God on his behalf, and trust that wherever he may be appointed to work in the "vineyard of the Lord," his labors may be crowned with abundant success.

Cairo, Ill., Sept. 4, 1876.

The newly recovered fifth chapter is critical to the development of both the novel’s plot and its themes.

Poems

Gunning Birds

She kept the Yankees from burning her home
by refusing to leave the bed, and when a few estates
over the gorgeous girl fainted how could even the least
gallant soldiers bear to do her harm?

Got a quarter if you bit into shot
in the Christmas goose. Maybe
a trip to the dentist. I have had

some good and high-priced wines in my day wrote Marius but nothing tasted finer than that cider from the carpenter’s shop on the island, fleeing Virginia with blockade runners on a leaky boat. Left his step-grandma the only

white person on the plantation surrounded by 160 slaves, and on the ship picked fights with Northern boys.

Columns, a chimney,
no house. Curtains of moss
but no walls. The Earl

of Marsh Mud
made them make his
living in a swamp.

Drinking juleps on the porch pretending we own land “as far as the eye can see” and that our neighbors work for us amuses the out-of-town guests. He told me he couldn’t even comprehend my mother her accent was so thick, and while I wanted to say fuck you I just said how interesting, she travels all over and no one else has ever had a problem.

Huck Caines guided Bernard Baruch’s trips at Hobcaw and told Grover Cleveland who missed an easy shot he wasn’t worth a damn. Today a Caines-carved mallard decoy with a snakey neck fetches over $150,000 at auction.

I’ve got a real polite horse, said June.
He always lets me go over the fence first.

At the Memphis Country Club your salad comes with a side salad of canned fruit and another of frozen tomatoes and everything’s covered in cream cheese towers or mayonnaise florets. Scraped the smokehouse floor for salt. Said I’ve never seen her house but my housekeeper taught me about shortening in pie crust and we understand each other, I love how she says “the mens.” In the backwoods scared of being attacked they lived in a pen. Don’t care what they wear so long as it’s fancy—feathers, lace, beads. For Fetchit, Stepin, see Perry, Lincoln.

The State With the Prettiest Name

William B. Hooker, Cattle King of Tampa, built
a second staircase for his second wife’s children
so they all could ascend their own ways. Picking

blackberries won’t save us from long-term
concerns, swapping the monocle for opera glasses
to gasp at the duchess’s decolletage in a golden

box while downstage someone’s dying, last year’s
preserves staining jars in the pantry. I put on
the past as a record spins a golden thread

beat thin, sons and stepsons bumping shoulders
in the hallway of the mansion turned
Orange Grove Hotel, named for land made

plantable when Hooker fought the second
the third Seminole Wars, desiring he wrote
for his children to sit under their own vine

and fig tree, unmolested, and none to make
them afraid. A plaque by the courthouse annex
where the hotel stood and in Tallahassee

FSU fans do the tomahawk chop though Seminoles
preferred flint spears, bows and arrows flying
as Sam Cooke sings what you sing to me, Cupid

draw back your bow and stay with me
here in our rented apartment. Older arias
drift up the stairs and will keep drifting

long after I’ve plucked what facts I will
like stitches from an appliqué, like the two
guitar strings William B. Hooker bought in Sept.

1860, the year James Butterfield
boarded, before the war ended and he set
George Washington Johnson’s poem for his

dead wife to music: *When You and I*
Were Young Maggie, when you and I grow old
but Leonard Warren collapsed before

Morir tremenda cosa, the first Mrs. Hooker
had cancer, Sam Cooke shot, Billy Bowlegs
King of the Everglades real name Halbutta Mico

Halpatter-Mico or Olactomico which mean
alligator chief, died in exile in Oklahoma
so Hooker could plant Triumph Grapefruits

and potatoes while his cattle grazed through
larger swathes of swamp with cracker cowboys
branded H with a heart around the H.

At least that’s how I picture “Heart H brand”

Valentine’s Day 2012 though it could’ve been
an H next to the heart or seared upon it

like Billy Bowlegs’s image on a photographic
plate, taken once he’d seen Generals
Taylor Scott and Harney in wax at a

museum in New Orleans en route by force
to Arkansas, stopping to arrange
his daughter’s marriage with a Yankee.

Purlow Party

    Enough mosquitoes clustered on the screen
    that you don’t know when it’s night and sleep
    for three days, can’t tell the color
    of your horse, wheelbarrows cart piles

of them away and cigar smoke staves off fever. I am of good stock, wrote
Marius, descended from men who occupied prominent and respectable
positions in their country. We roamed free as birds having
as playmates
the slave boys.

    Poured molasses
    on her ham and eggs.

    Coats in winter
    make a man weak.

My grandmother bounced my niece on her knee
singing Jump Jim Crow. The children

    of the wilderness moan
    for bread. Marius loved his wife

        and bought her so many jewels you’d confuse her with an electric
light display at the St. Louis Exposition. Keep clocks on a gallop, pretend
your food is fancier than it is so it’ll taste better.

    Or worse. Could grow potatoes in their ears.
    Left the jail open so the mob
    could get him. Our shoes were made

from leather tanned on the farm but the cloth for our shirts came from
Richmond.
The traveler said they danced as if they did not know they were in bondage.

Shirley Temple, the little militant, charms the whole plantation, sings I feed my pigs molasses yams/They should be sweeter than they really am.

    Find a patch of forlorn corn
    Rub two kernels on a knot
    Bury those two kernels
    The knot will disappear

We peel the meat/They give us skin.

    He don’t know my mind.

Collecting scuppernongs that pooled on the sides of the river. Sang Meet me dear little Lindy by the watermelon vine. He sat in a spare and bottomless chair, his knees up by his chin, and in his hunger for bacon and cornbread cared not. They named their dog Teddy but after Roosevelt invited Booker T. Washington to the White House they changed the dog’s name. We wanted to smell magnolias but we smelled sulfur. They say it quenches your thirst but I don’t intend to try it.

Statement of Poetic Research

Whipsawing

As Huck Finn found out after telling Jim they’d ride a raft to freedom, the Mississippi only flows in one direction: south. If a flatboatman sailed all the way to New Orleans in the early nineteenth-century, he’d need a new way to reach the rest of America. And if he’d blown most of his money on wine, women, and the sporting life, his best option might be to go in on the cost of a horse with a couple of friends and whipsaw his way home.

Whipsawers, named for the same two-manned handtool that must’ve cut the lumber for many a flatboat, made their way across the backroads of the South in a jagged collective. One man would ride a horse for a few hours, tie it to a tree, and start walking. When the second man walked his way to the horse, he’d climb on, ride a while, bypass the first man, and tie the horse to a tree for the third man. Barring selfishness or attacks by bandits, they kept on taking

turns.

Robert Frost gave American poets license to think of themselves as manual laborers—writing is like chopping wood and making hay!—but I like the idea of turning the hand tool of poetry into travel. Traveling alone can be isolating, but whipsawing guarantees companionship. Of course, your journeys won't quite match up: the field through which you amble may be one through which your buddy gallops. When you pass by a gnarled live oak and think of pinning sonnets to your beloved on its trunk, he might be wondering whether he can stomach another supper of spit-roasted squirrel.

In these poems, I try to get at something like those divergent but overlapping experiences of place, though if I really want the metaphor to hold, I should add something about the centuries of folks who have walked down the same Southern roads or who walked down similar roads in other places or down roads they wished were similar, or who wished they were walking down roads when they were actually sitting on a couch in California listening to mp3s of Caetano Veloso when they should probably be listening to 78s of Jimmie Rodgers yodeling so they could figure out how to emulate, in writing, his quick switches between somber chest-singing and high-flung notes from the throat, which, by the way, Sly and the Family Stone also do, in the song "Spaced Cowboy," with an odd, jaunty ghostliness.

My poems—which, like that parade of pedestrians, would-be pedestrians, and singers, yoke together different experiences, times, locations, and voices—have to do with how history builds up in place. They're set primarily in the South, both because it's the place I know best and because people generally think of it as the country's most "placed" place. Fifty years ago, C. Vann Woodward, in his essay "The Search for Southern Identity," argued that in spite of industrialization's homogenizing force, the South remained a distinct region—not necessarily because of its present particularities (though there were, and are, plenty of those) but because of its unchangeable history. This history, Woodward wrote, provided a vital counterweight to the myth of American exceptionalism: Southerners, who generally have less money and less education than the rest of the country, understand defeat. And beneath a ham and biscuit-scented haze of moonlight and magnolias, Southerners know, too intimately, America's great sins of slavery and racial violence.

Any place is a story people make up, sometimes together, and sometimes in spite of each other. But that doesn't make our experiences of place, or our stories, less powerful. Woodward also described a set of anxieties that may be even more familiar now than they were in 1960: "Has the Southern heritage become an old hunting jacket that one slips on comfortably while at home but discards when he ventures abroad in favor of some more conventional or modish garb? Or is it perhaps an attic full of ancestral wardrobes useful only in connection with costume balls and play acting—staged primarily in Washington, D.C.?" I've kept these concerns in mind too, though I'm less concerned than Woodward is with the authenticity of performance. Faux-backwoods politicians drive me crazy, but

sometimes the pap on pop-country radio makes me homesick.

I rummaged around my own ancestral attic (a filing cabinet in my San Francisco apartment) to find fodder for poems: unpublished memoirs by my great-uncle and great-great-grandfather, nineteenth-century legal documents, my grandparents' letters and diaries. I've also turned to travel narratives, history books both scholarly and chatty, broadcasts of the Grand Ole Opry, WPA oral histories, songs, films, and gossip from my life, the lives of people I know, and the lives of people I'll never meet. The poems proceed largely by association. It's how the mind works, and how cultural history, at some stage, gets written: you comb through the archive, looking for patterns.

History and poetry both provide records of experience, but they have different conventions. Prose promises causes, effects, plots and explanations, while poetry can thrive on gaps, cuts, and suggestion. I cull from both genres here, flirting with narrative and relying heavily on parataxis, which helps us see different pieces of place and time before they've been shaped into an orderly story. I'm interested in how the past feels—sometimes close, comforting, and explanatory, and sometimes alien, estranging, or altogether lost.

Ezra Pound famously called "a poem including history" an epic, but these poems, encountering history, are closer to lyric. Instead of trying to account for the grand march of time, I've explored how history haunts us. After all, poetry is a haunted genre. A sonnet can be about anything, but it can't help being about love, because of all the sonnets that came before it. Thanks to Dante, any set of tercets could make you think about journeying into the afterlife. And couplets, no matter your intention, will call attention to rhymes, doubling, correspondence, or a lack thereof. Haunting can be more literal, too: these poems are largely peopled by the dead. While some of them make repeat appearances, I've also included floating actions, ideas, and artifacts, because even a past that's been neglected or expunged can have an echo.

I feel a great debt to, and identification with, record-keepers and hoarders. I've tried to play the part of a hostess who has occasional access to a séance table or time machine, though I might be more like the old woman my father saw in his early days of social work who plastered her walls with society pages from the newspaper and talked about the Country Club set as if they were her closest friends, though she'd never met them. Some of these people had attended my parents' wedding.

Further reading

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Death of a Memory: Robert Booth’s Search for Salem’s Forgotten Commercial Past

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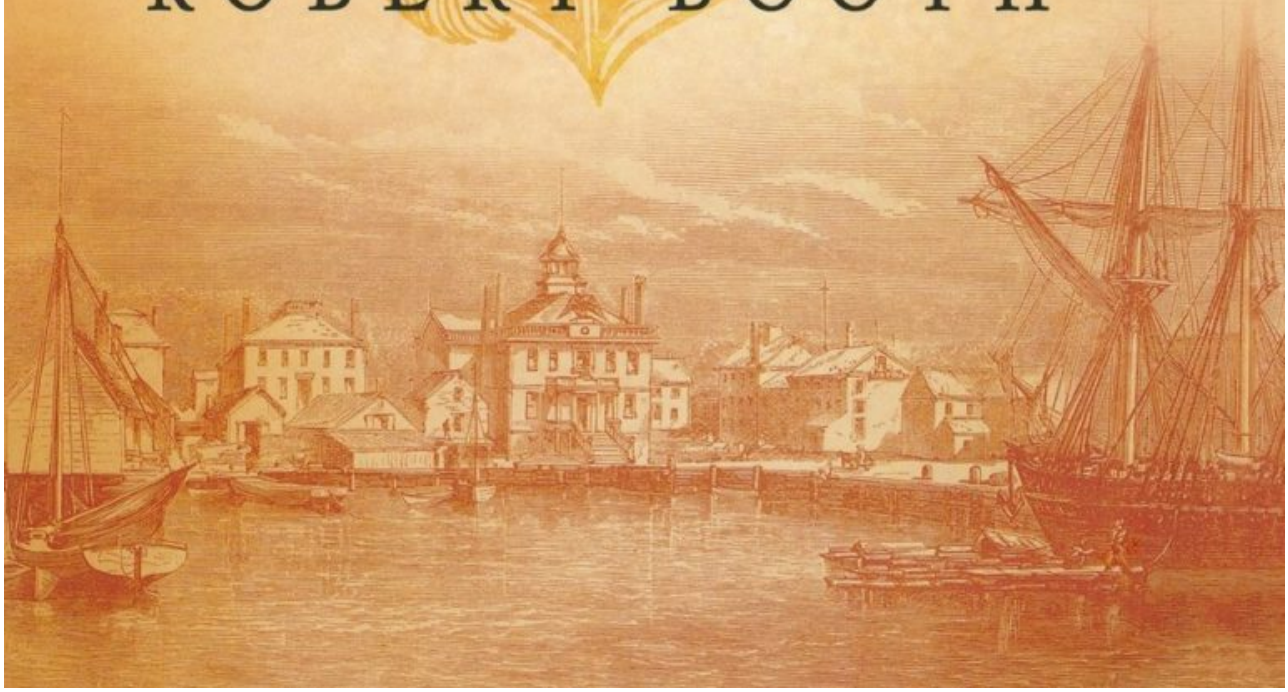
THE RISE AND MURDEROUS FALL OF SALEM, AMERICA'S RICHEST CITY

ROBERT BOOTH



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