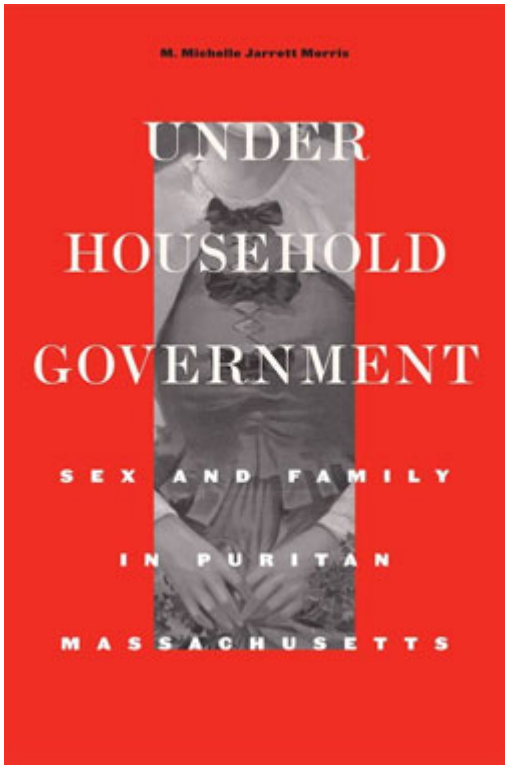
Under Household Government



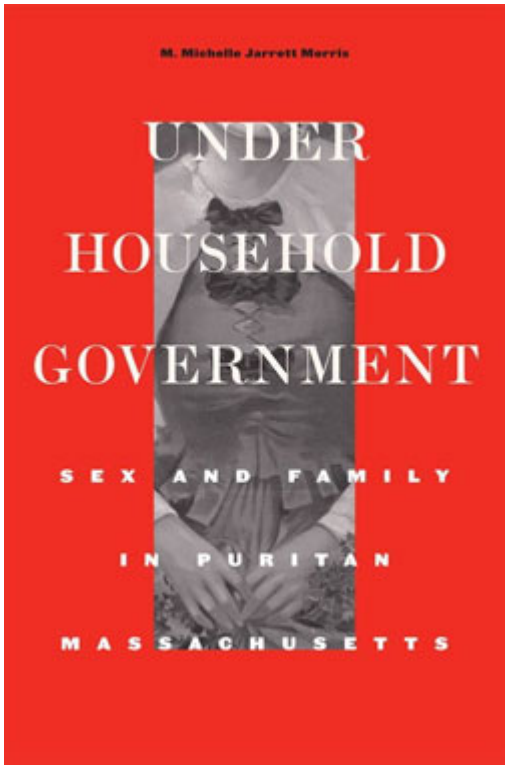
Sex and Family in Puritan Massachusetts

Common-place *asks Michelle Morris about her 2013 book,* Under Household Government: Sex and Family in Puritan Massachusetts, *and the role of family members in policing sexual conduct in early New England, which shows how ordinary colonists understood sexual, marital, and family relationships.*

One of the central arguments of your book is that the policing of sexual behavior (sexual offenses in particular) took place primarily within the bounds of family, and often resulted in contests between families. What led you to this conclusion, rather than seeing the phenomenon as one chiefly of community surveillance?

I came to that conclusion in a rather roundabout way. Indeed, the case that was initially crucial to my thinking never appears in the book. I had initially intended to focus my project on motherhood in colonial America, and had also wanted to take advantage of New England's rich cache of court records. I eventually realized that my topic and my source base did not work well together—motherhood, after all, is not a crime—but not before I came across the case of Mary Flood, a married woman who was accused of murdering her infant in 1686. When Goody Flood awoke at dawn to find that the child lying next to her was dead, her cries touched off a progression of visitors to her chamber until the final visitor notified the constable, who arrested Flood. I had been interested in the relationships between women giving birth and the women who attended them. Did women call personal friends, those who were known to be

especially gifted in aiding birthing mothers, or simply their nearest neighbors? With this case, I started with a similar question: whom do you call when you wake up in the morning to find your child dead? I mapped out the homes of those who responded to the infanticide and was surprised to find that they lived all over town. So much for nearest neighbors. And then I was stuck. The file papers were rich in detail about the scene in the Floods' home and Mary Flood's treatment of her infant, but they had little to say about why particular individuals were summoned or felt the need to visit the scene. I needed to get to know these visitors better. I needed clues.



I did become emotionally invested in a lot of the people in my book—in both positive and negative ways.

I turned to the New England Historical and Genealogical Society. Genealogies usually give brief summaries of whatever is known about their subjects, and New Englanders have been obsessed with their ancestors for centuries. I thought maybe I would find that one of the visitors was a midwife. Maybe the group was held together by some sort of craft organization. I piled mounds of genealogies on the long wooden tables, but it was not looking good. The people seemed to have nothing in common but their presence in Mary Flood's chamber. But then I started to notice something: I was seeing the same last names over and over as I flipped through to find the individuals I was looking for, and so I started to see if I could bring family connections together in a coherent way. Sure enough, although the first visitors had been co-workers of the Floods or people who shared the Flood house, the later visitors were all members of the same extended family. Each new visitor was related to the last, and each was of a slightly higher status than the one before. Only the very last, a woman married to a wealthy stonemason and landowner, seemed to have the clout to take control

of the situation and summon the constable.

As I transitioned to a project on illicit sexual activity, spurred by court records, I wondered if similar familial patterns might appear. I was quite surprised by what I found. I expected families to monitor, intervene, and testify about illicit sexual activities. It would have been odd if they had not done so. What I did not expect to find was that family relationships dominated and structured the trials. In nearly all of the cases I investigated, most (and sometimes all) of the deponents were either family members of those involved or had an identifiable personal stake in the outcome of the case. Given that our knowledge of family connections and personal quarrels is obviously incomplete, the consistency with which these connections appeared astounded me. What surprised me almost as much was the lack of non-familial intervention. Although neighbors sometimes testified in these cases, they usually testified about behavior they had observed; only very rarely did unrelated deponents claim to have tried to intervene in suspicious sexual behavior.

It did occur to me that what I was seeing might have as much to do with the density of family networks as it did with family members taking the lead in dealing with illicit sexual activity. After all, if almost everyone in a village was related to almost everyone else, then deponents and defendants could hardly help being related! Thank goodness for town genealogies. I tried several times to choose two people from the same town with different last names and make kinship connections. Although I could occasionally find a relationship that way, the vast majority of the pairs refused to connect. That really changed the way I thought about family and community in early New England. I had always envisioned a watchful society in which individuals considered their neighbors' sins to be community business. It was only then that I thought back to Edmund Morgan's work and his conclusion that "tribalism" (an intense and exclusive focus on the good of one's family) had undermined the Puritans' evangelical mission, and I realized that what I was seeing was another consequence of tribalism run amok.

As the introduction and conclusion make clear, Under Household Government *is in conversation with Edmund Morgan's now-canonical* The Puritan Family*. What does your book share with his book, and where does it build on or depart from it?*

Edmund Morgan's *The Puritan Family* mapped new ground when it was first published in the 1940s, and I do not think it is possible to write about the Puritan family today without building on Morgan's work. *The Puritan Family* and *Under Household Government* share two essential conclusions: that New England's Puritans believed families to be central to the way their society was organized, and that the Puritans' intense devotion to their families ultimately undermined important social goals.

But *Under Household Government* is not merely an updated version of Morgan's work. The books' approaches differ in important ways. Morgan focused primarily on how New Englanders expected their families to work. Although *The Puritan*

Family does include examples of family relationships gone wrong and familial duties unfulfilled, even these examples serve to explicate the ideal Puritan family. Morgan teaches us about the balance of order, hierarchy, and love the Puritans strove to achieve. My work, on the other hand, deals with families in crisis; it is more about how families actually worked than it is about how family members thought they should work. It might help to think about *Under Household Government* as the dark side of *The Puritan Family*. Morgan and I share a lot of the same type of sources, but the distribution of those sources is telling. Morgan's archetypical source is a sermon; mine is a deposition.

You have much to say about the power of patriarchy generally, and of specific patriarchs in particular. How do you think your book fits with historian Toby Ditz's rendering of the history of masculinity as one of power through access to women?

I think Ditz's primary concern—that histories of masculinity have the potential to simply re-inscribe a dominant male narrative by neglecting the ways in which masculine power has been predicated on the subjection of women—is particularly insightful. In my book, I build on Thomas Foster's work, which emphasizes the ways in which patriarchal status (the goal of fully developed adult manhood) depended directly and literally on access to women. As I explain in my book, the gateway to adulthood in seventeenth-century New England was built around marriage. Only by marrying and setting up independent households could men (and women) access the power that came with adulthood. Unmarried men, even those who were above what we consider the age of majority, were primarily sons or servants until they wed. Because most men in seventeenth-century New England married, the connection between marriage, adulthood, and patriarchy was not always obvious. We see it most clearly in cases in which men's right to marry was called into question because of an inability to perform sexually.

The best example of this from my book is the tale of "Goodman Mousall's Diabolical Erection" (chapter 3). In this 1663 case, John Foskett told John Mousall that "all that he [Mousall] had was the devil's for he stood by his bedside and caused his members [penis] to rise" and that "the devil would have him and all that he had at the last." The insult does not make much sense unless we understand the instinctive connection between masculine privilege and access to women. Foskett had reason to be insecure about his own masculine privilege. Although he was married, he lived with his wife's parents. When Mousall's wife, Elizabeth, challenged Foskett's authority over dependents in both of their households, Foskett physically and verbally attacked both of the Mousalls. Because the Mousalls had a daughter, Foskett did not simply accuse John Mousall of being impotent. Instead, he challenged Mousall's right to all of the trappings of patriarchal authority by claiming that his erections (a legal prerequisite for marriage) were not really his own.

Ditz, of course, also notes that the ways in which male power rests on access to women is not monolithic. It is complicated and historically specific. This is particularly true of marriage in early America. The ways in which men

accrued power by marrying women are obvious. Patriarchal status depended on a man's ability to marry and set up an independent household. The law of coverture gave a husband the right to all of the property and wages his wife had or might earn. A husband had a right to his wife's labor and her sexual service. Yet women married willingly. They did so for a number of reasons: a lack of economic options, the desire for sexual satisfaction and companionship, social expectations, etc. Just as importantly, women, like men, derived a measure of authority and independence by marrying. It is significant that John Foskett's attack on John Mousall was prompted by Elizabeth Mousall's assertion of authority. Elizabeth might have been second in command to her husband, but in his absence she had the right to direct and control access to dependents in her household. In that sense, women like Elizabeth Mousall actually had a stake in preserving a patriarchal system that ultimately relied on their subjection.

You open with the phrase "This is a story …" and many rich stories appear within the larger narrative. As you immersed yourself in the lives of seventeenth-century residents of New England, getting to know them (as far as possible) in the process, did you experience a particular affinity for any of them?

Edmund Parker. I think I fell in love with the crotchety old man from Lancaster, Massachusetts. Parker is a relatively peripheral character in the first chapter of my book. His daughter Elizabeth was a servant who engaged in intercourse with an enslaved black man and bore a child. Edmund took both his daughter and her mixed-race son into his household and, despite his own poverty, refused to allow either local or county officials to separate them. He did not have a lot to work with. He had neither wealth nor position, and the law was not on his side. The document that hooked me was a petition from the selectmen who had tried to remove Elizabeth and her son from Edmund's house. The selectmen complained that they "have had many froward peevish expressions from him, so that he hath wearied them out." I cannot help but imagine the old man standing on his own doorstep, telling the selectmen who wanted to take away his daughter and grandson precisely what they could do with themselves, and then slamming the door in their faces. That's my kind of grit.

I did become emotionally invested in a lot of the people in my book—in both positive and negative ways. I can hardly think about Jonathan Wade, who purchased Elizabeth Parker's enslaved partner, without my lip curling in disgust. If you want to know why, he's in chapter 1 as well. The procession of sexually abused children certainly got to me. Seventeenth-century court records tend to be emotionally unexpressive by modern standards, but once you become accustomed to the style of testimony, it's sometimes all too easy to pick up on the emotion behind the dry recitations. I remember working one day on the Elizabeth Pierce chapter and setting up the section on the rape of minors. I worked my way through the descriptions of the injuries wrought by actual and attempted rape. Then I came to the case of Scisely, an Indian child under the age of ten. The woman who examined her testified that Thomas Keeney had been unable to rape her because her body was too small. The woman testifying wrote

that Scisely was “as greatly wronged otherwise as is imaginable.” Seventeenth-century folk did not refer to imagination very often in court records. I put down my coffee, put my head in my hands, finally looked up and closed my laptop. It was before noon, but I found that I had had all the work I could take for that day.

If, however, by “affinity” you mean someone I could identify with, then the answer has to be Elizabeth Wells, who appears in the book’s final chapter. Elizabeth came to a bad end. She claimed rape but was prosecuted for fornication because she became pregnant. She landed in prison and then ended up on the streets. She had loudly proclaimed to all who would listen that if she ever became pregnant, she would name a rich man as the father of her child. She became pregnant, and she named her master’s son. But the reason I feel kinship with Elizabeth is that she was a teller of stories. Many of them were racy; several put her in a rather bad light; and I don’t think half of them were true, but I, too, love a good story.

To build on the issue of subjectivity and your relationship to your research: as you painstakingly reconstructed court cases, you must have formulated your own judgments about them. Sometimes you reveal those to the reader (as in the case of one free black servant woman’s infant, likely murdered by her mistress), and other times not (as in the case of the rape of Elizabeth Pierce). How did you decide when to disclose, even gingerly, your own “verdict” and when to remain more “neutral”?

My impulse is always to “solve the mystery.” The most important factor in sharing or withholding my own judgments was the evidence I had to work with. In most cases, if I thought I had enough evidence to figure out what happened, I shared my “verdict” with the reader and laid out my evidence so that readers could decide whether they agreed. In many cases, the evidence allowed for a pretty clear verdict. In others (particularly the premarital fornication cases, which turned on the physical descriptions of newly delivered infants) the evidence was so sparse or contradictory as to make any conclusions little more than guesswork. What drove me crazy were the cases in the middle. For example, did Edmund Pinson, the hopelessly obtuse suitor from chapter 3, marry his bride without her parents’ consent? In my mind, the question came down to the absence or presence of a nail the bride’s mother might have given Edmund so that he could post notice of his intention to marry on the meeting house door. I can imagine the case going either way, but I will never know if the nail was there. The answer is not important to the point of the story, but its absence bothers me nonetheless.

The stories about the rape of Elizabeth Pierce (chapter 4), and Zipporah, the free black servant accused of infanticide (chapter 6), are both special cases. Elizabeth Pierce accused Benjamin Simonds of rape, and in so doing set off a dramatic conflict between their two families that resulted in three legal trials. Here, the ambiguity in the story is part of the point. I want readers to understand that Elizabeth’s and Benjamin’s families engaged in extreme

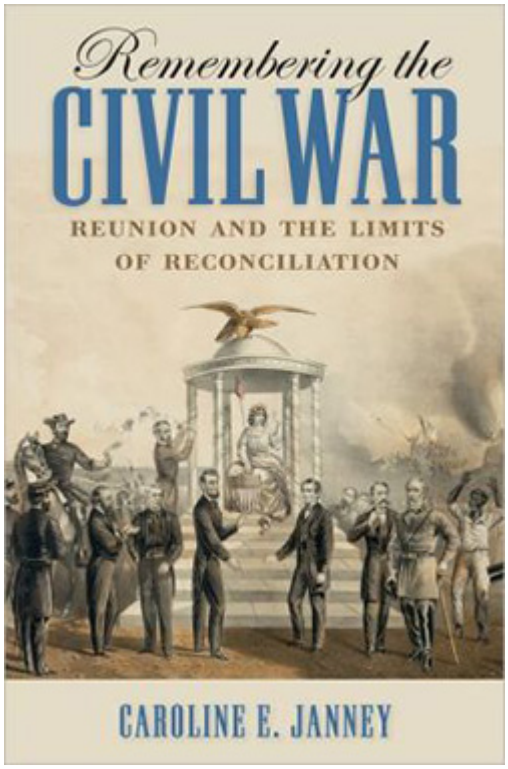
behaviors (including jury tampering) without actually knowing what happened between Elizabeth and Benjamin. In their ignorance of the truth, at least, the Pierce and Simonds families were in a position not dissimilar from that of the reader. In this case I do suspect more than I am telling, although my evidence is thin. I do think Benjamin raped Elizabeth, but I don't think either party was telling the whole truth. Even here, however, I could not resist burying a clue for my readers. If, in my mind, the Pinson case came down to a nail, details of the Pierce case come down to a horse (see footnote 110 for the details).

In the case of Zipporah, my "verdict" is crucial to making sense of the story. I struggled with this case for years. Even a cursory reading of the court documents on which the case is based suggests a dramatic story. A group of people walking along the shore in Boston encounter the corpse of a headless baby. Upon investigation, it turns out that a black servant's mistress had forced her to deliver her baby in secret and then bury the body of her stillborn child in the middle of the night. A colleague was kind enough to share with me supplementary documents she had located relating to the case, but I still could not put the pieces together. Yes, the outlines supported my larger argument about how families abandoned free servants who became pregnant out of wedlock. Zipporah's mistress planned to sell her as a slave in the Caribbean. The case bothered me because it was too pat. A secret delivery, a convenient stillbirth due to prematurity, a mistress, her mother, and a midwife willing to testify that no murder had been committed. No reason for the court to pay it any further mind. As I went over and over the evidence, I started to realize that what was really bothering me was that the case did not make sense. All of the legal evidence was there to acquit Zipporah of infanticide, but that was all that was there. None of the witnesses provided the reasoning on which they based their conclusions, which was extremely unusual. No one appears to have asked who the father of the child was. The more I looked at the evidence, the more it fell apart. I had approached the documents the same way I approached all my cases—assume everyone is telling the truth until there is reason to believe otherwise. Usually, the clue that someone lied comes from disparities among the depositions. In this case, the testimony was all consistent. When I turned my first assumption on its head, however, and assumed that all of the women in the birthing room were lying about the stillbirth, the pieces started to fall into place. No one asked who the father of the baby was because he was a member of the family, and that baby was neither premature nor stillborn. In this case, a cursory reading of the documents did illustrate the point I was making. Masters and mistresses did usually abandon free servants if they became embroiled in sexual scandal by, for example, getting pregnant. Enslaving a servant and shipping her off to Barbados was a rather extreme version of that pattern, but "solving the mystery" and sharing that with my readers allowed me to demonstrate just how dark the impulse to get rid of inconvenient servants and protect family members could be.

It is that inward-looking devotion to family that is really at the heart of my book. On the surface, it is hard to imagine how strong, caring families could

be problematic. In many cases, they were not. Parents and other family members watched over their sons and daughters, attempting to steer their children away from sexual sin and into strong, stable marriages. Those who lived under the watchful gaze of dense family networks may sometimes have resented prying eyes, but families were usually successful at steering younger members away from sexual crimes which could bring harsh legal consequences and damage marital prospects. Problems arose when families interacted with members of the community with whom they did not share ties of kinship. Sometimes, as was the case with Zipporah, these were servants within their own homes. Other times, such as in the Elizabeth Pierce case, those community members were part of other families. The early leaders of the Massachusetts Bay colony had gone to great lengths to set up a system of justice which would protect the rights of the accused and ensure both poor and wealthy access to impartial courts. Secular justice in the abstract was an important ideal in colonial Massachusetts. However, seventeenth-century communities lacked anything resembling a modern police force which might have played an investigative or mediating role, and the community at large was generally unwilling to fill the breach (at least in cases relating to sexual activity). The result was that court trials often played out as battles between competing families, and those families tended to put the needs of their own members before more abstract ideals of justice.

Reunion Without Reconciliation



In *Remembering the Civil War*, Purdue University historian Caroline Janney challenges the prevailing narrative of Civil War memory, which contends that turn-of-the-century whites in the North and South achieved a sincerely desired reconciliation by setting aside past antagonisms and embracing a racist memory of the war that omitted slavery and emancipation and extolled the white masculine virtues of battlefield courage and devotion to one's cause. In her skillful presentation that successfully synthesizes most of the recent literature on Civil War memory and delves deeply into personal papers, organizational records, government documents, and periodicals, Janney presents a Civil War generation unable to reconcile and unwilling to forget the causes for which they fought such a brutal and punishing war. Regarding the era as a pivotal moment in the history of the nation, the war generation feared that Americans born after the conflict would forget their sacrifice and worked tirelessly to shape the nation's memory of the Civil War through commemoration. Unwilling to sacrifice their cause to achieve reconciliation, the veterans and the women of the respective sections vigorously challenged any interpretation of the past seen as injurious to their cause. These efforts, she argues, inhibited any attempt at true reconciliation, a concept she finds troublingly elusive anyway, and too amorphous for the historian to accurately identify, define, and track.

The four primary legacies that Janney identifies as emerging after the Civil War are familiar. Among white southerners, the Lost Cause held sway, which banished slavery from the scene, defined the conflict as a constitutional crisis, and honored southern soldiers for their bravery and fidelity to the southern nation in the face of overwhelming Yankee manpower and materiel advantages. For white northerners, the war had been fought to preserve the Union, with emancipation thrown in as a positive byproduct designed to crush the rebellion and eliminate the root cause of sectional strife. For most Unionists, slavery and race remained distinct issues, and celebrations of slavery's demise did not imply a belief in racial equality or support for black civil rights. For African Americans and some northern whites, however, emancipation took center stage as the means by which the Union had been saved and the nation reborn in a true spirit of freedom. Lastly, the reconciliationist legacy—predicated on celebrating the American qualities of courage and loyal devotion to one's cause—emerged periodically and sporadically and gained the greatest traction with the generation of Americans born after the Civil War. Poignantly, Janney reminds us that these legacies, while useful generalizations, were never clear-cut or static. In fact, individual and collective memories of the war's meaning "were continually being created, negotiated, and renegotiated" (10). Furthermore, remembrances frequently incorporated aspects of two, three, or all four of the legacies simultaneously. Ultimately, there proved to be no compelling reason for either side to surrender its cause. Reunion—the North's principal war aim—had been accomplished when the Confederacy capitulated, and southerners never contested this outcome. But the war left deep feelings of bitterness and resentment on both sides, and a true desire for reconciliation never emerged during the war generation's lifetime, and certainly not by 1900. For them, reunion was enough.

Whatever appearance of reconciliation emerged around the turn of the century was constructed on the unspoken agreement to omit unresolved issues, such as the cause of the war, how the war was waged, or the treatment of prisoners of war.

Janney argues that true reconciliation required a shared memory of the war that both sides agreed on—and that this shared understanding simply never existed. She regards the outpourings of reconciliationist sentiment common at "Blue-Gray lovefests" (a term somewhat caustically applied to Union-Confederate gatherings) as having been overblown by a popular press looking for a good story, and hollow gestures at any rate. In probing the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century façade of reconciliation, she finds northerners and southerners feeling extremely wary of the other's intentions and steadfastly willing to rise and challenge any memorial, oration, or textbook that tarnished their memory of the Civil War and the cause for which they had fought. Whatever appearance of reconciliation emerged around the turn of the century was constructed on the unspoken agreement to omit unresolved issues, such as the cause of the war, how the war was waged, or the treatment of prisoners of war. "True, heartfelt reconciliation," she writes, "was rare indeed" (162).

If reconciliation proved difficult for the war veterans, Janney asserts that it proved impossible for women who lacked the shared experience of military service and the political or commercial incentives to at least appear to reconcile. She shows that northern and southern women—especially the latter, who remained the principal purveyors of the Lost Cause and Confederate history—proved especially hostile to the demonstrations of the brotherhood of war put on at the veterans' gatherings and actively sought to hinder them. Women of both sections adamantly and vociferously rejected any reconciliationist gesture as a cardinal violation of the memory of their sacrifice. Even when northern and southern women worked together on common causes, such as temperance, their alliances never demanded that they abandon their view of the Civil War. In fact, some southern reformers used their sectional identity to encourage other women from the South to join in social movements, arguing that they were in fact respectable outlets for women's energies. Interestingly, Janney's research reveals that northern and southern men often praised these women when they assumed aggressive stances against reconciliation, providing further indication that the Blue-Gray lovefests amounted to little more than show.

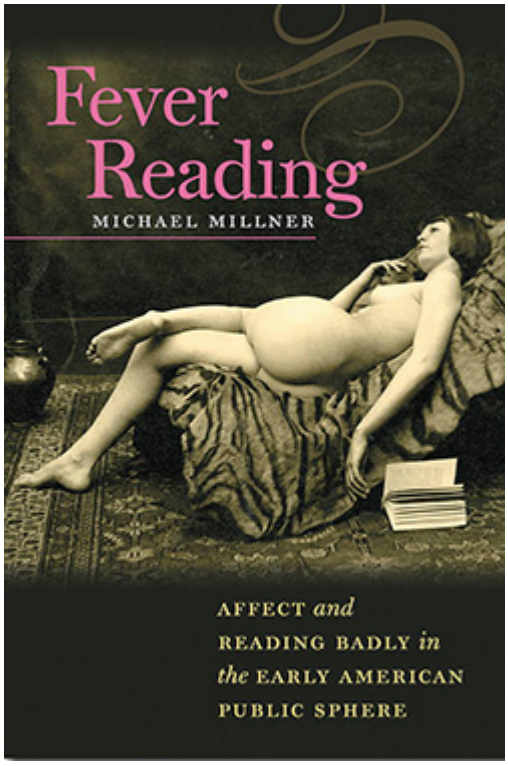
This book is a worthy addition to the growing body of literature concerning the formation and expression of Civil War memory. It also provides a useful synthesis of the current literature. Historians of the period will find important counterpoints offered on several major points of historiographical consensus. Among the most notable are her contentions that the fifteen years following Appomattox were not a period of hibernation, but a pivotal moment when memories of the war formed and took root in both sections; that white southerners did not view President Abraham Lincoln as a friend of the South and

did not lament his assassination; that President Andrew Johnson did not squander an opportunity to remake the South through his lenient reconstruction policies; that Confederate nationalism was a potent force that survived the war and served as the basis for the creation of a distinct regional identity; that white supremacy did not foster reconciliation, and that the Spanish-American War failed to accomplish a true reconciliation between the North and South. Her arguments are well supported in most cases, but she does tend to overstep her evidence when she asserts that Lincoln's murder "shaped the course of Reconstruction, paving the way for Radical Republicans and nurturing the rising momentum of Confederate memory" (42). There is no compelling evidence offered to draw this broad conclusion. Also, after repeatedly warning historians against conflating terms, she conflates "Liberal Republicanism" and "reconciliation" when she claims the former's failure to win the presidency in 1872 demonstrated a lack of feeling for the latter. While Liberal Republicanism certainly contained reconciliationist strains, this was not its primary message, and its electoral defeat should not be solely ascribed to a lack of feeling between the sections. Janney is correct in arguing that reconciliation is a difficult concept for historians to measure. For that matter, so also is its absence. This is a persuasively argued and well-written book that effectively challenges the traditional narrative of Civil War memory. However, without quantitative measurements, which are problematic in their own right, there is simply no way to know if the voices Janney brings to our attention represent the majority opinion, or simply express the intensely held views of a very vocal minority.

If a single vision of what the Civil War meant is the standard by which we should gauge reconciliation, then it appears that true reconciliation remains elusive even today. Janney argues that the Union cause became a victim of its own success; she is probably correct. The United States endured the challenge of civil war and emerged from this conflict a reunited country that stood on the doorstep of world power by the end of the nineteenth century. For the South, the former Confederate states were restored to the Union and white southerners embraced their American-ness at the same time that they used the memory of the Confederacy, divested of slavery, to carve out their own distinct regional identity. Unlike the Union, the Confederacy remains suspended in time, forever affixed to the Civil War. For many, both North and South, the "Confederacy *was* the Civil War" and remains so today (10). But no matter how hard the "heritage not hate" crowd may try, slavery cannot be erased from the Confederate past, just as the Confederacy cannot be separated from the war. For some the Confederate battle flag is an enduring symbol of southern distinctiveness and independence. But for others, the flag conjures memories of rebellion, racism, and injustice. The flag, like the war itself, is many things to many people, and will likely remain so for some time to come. In fact, Americans may never agree on what the war meant or how it should be properly remembered or even celebrated. If so, it seems that reconciliation, by Janney's standard, remains a long way off. Of course, even if Americans still cannot agree on what the war meant, those who lived through the war would probably be pleased to know that we care enough to remember and to continue to disagree

about what the Civil War was all about.

Bad Books, Good Citizens



Michael Millner's *Fever Reading* begins with the appealing idea that it "seeks to understand the meanings of reading badly" (xiii). This is a wonderful hook for an academic audience. Most of us have had to squelch feelings of being bad readers—we don't finish books, we prefer the sexy or the scandalous to the important, we struggle to stay awake for work we know to be theoretically interesting (in both senses). At the same time, we know what *good* reading is: critical, objective, knowing, questioning. Millner's examination of nineteenth-century American reading practices looks at texts that solicit emotional rather than rational responses, those devoured with feverish absorption. Such, alas, is not generally the problem with our academic practices, but the central question still appeals: can bad reading, in fact, be good political practice?

About readerly practices and their relationship to politics there is, as Millner demonstrates in this deeply researched study, much to tell and much to learn. Those of us who have engaged with histories of readership are well aware that our available scholarly models are insufficient. Theories of reading have often been a bit like theories of economics, in which rational actors respond in predictable ways to literary stimuli. More recently they have tended instead toward a model of resistance, as if every reader were always subverting

hegemony even while consuming its products. The former category emphasizes reading's role in what Jürgen Habermas called rational-critical discourse, while the latter privileges unruly, embodied emotions. Millner attempts a new structure of analysis that bridges these poles. To Habermasian public-sphere theory (in a nutshell, the idea that print culture enabled political progress via reasoned debate), Millner adds theories of affect. In particular, he engages William Reddy's theory of "emotives:" verbalized emotions that we use to navigate the varied stimuli of our lives. Millner argues that we need to understand readerly emotion as a critical reading practice in order to grasp what it meant and means to participate in the American public sphere.

Fever Reading is divided into two parts, with the first laying out the book's theoretical foundation and the second offering up archives for analysis. The first section gives an overview of classic public-sphere theory and some of its revisions, and deploys period texts to show that eighteenth-century authors agreed with Habermas that good reading is characterized by "critical distance (rather than the immersion and attachment characteristic of, say, popular forms of religious reading or pornographic reading)" (9). Less familiar to scholars of early America may be the review of scholarship on emotion—or "cogmotion," as some cognitive scientists apparently call the nexus of thinking and feeling. Where literary criticism tends to interpret emotion as always either "symptomatic" or "strategic," Millner says, the "experimental sciences" suggest that emotions "are a form of perception, even a form of critical thinking" (15-16). This is the theme to which Millner returns throughout the book: reading that looks thoughtless, indulgent, or prurient should be understood instead as potentially critical practice and as meaningful (if not necessarily effective) participation in the public sphere.

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The second part of the book addresses three categories of text that have typically, Millner claims, been excluded from public-sphere theory: the obscene, the scandalous, and the religious."What could be more antithetical to distanced, discussion-oriented, autonomy-creating, and reflective public-sphere reading than absorptive, addictive, and secretive pornographic reading?" he asks, ventriloquizing an imagined tribunal of public-sphere theorists (72). Millner's answer, based on readers' "double experience" of privacy and publicity, is not groundbreaking (72). Instead, as he freely acknowledges, his work joins an ongoing scholarly effort to revise the public sphere away from its rational-critical basis. Without such revision, Millner explains, "Habermasian public-sphere theory is not particularly helpful in understanding the public sensorium of modernity" (73). With it—if the "rational-critical public sphere" is understood instead as the "affective-critical public sphere"—we may develop a model that describes not only American history but also the global present, transcending Habermas's extremely narrow (Western,

middle class, implicitly white and male) formulation (144). “If there is an existing public sphere that extends beyond pockets and enclaves to reach something like a majority, it is characterized by sensation and emotion, not critical reason,” he concludes (146).

Millner’s substantive contribution toward this lofty goal is in assembling his three archives of marginalized literature. In his chapter on obscene literature, he carefully reconstructs what this category meant in nineteenth-century America by scrutinizing arrests for obscene publication. The titles mentioned in arrest reports lead him to two bodies of literature. The first, the “sporting press,” consisted of newspapers like the *National Police Gazette*, which ran from the 1840s through the 1870s, and shorter-lived but more expressively titled papers like the *Whip,* the *Flash,* and the*Broadway Belle*. These papers presented a veneer of public-mindedness while they reveled in “prostitution, celebrity, deformity, the criminal underworld, murder, and beautiful and battered bodies” (76).The other category, “obscene novelettes,” rose to prominence in the late 1840s and 1850s, as the newspapers cleaned up under official crackdowns. Millner offers examples from this genre that place public figures in compromising positions, as in the anonymous *The Amorous Intrigues and Adventures of Aaron Burr* (Millner labels it a “porno-bio” [88]) and a scene from George Thompson’s *The Countess* in which the heroine seduces Harry Rush, rakish son of Benjamin. By putting public life and obscenity into conversation (criminal or otherwise), this literature generated its own structure of reading. It focused on current events and political figures, emphasizing “a simultaneity of information and readership”; it also positioned readers as participants in an anonymous community (81). So far, the structure of reading matches that credited with creating publics in classic public-sphere theory. On the other hand, the politicians who appeared in these works were not debating policy but vomiting drunkenly or visiting brothels. The news “isn’t offered for analysis, interpretation, or critical reflection as much as it’s presented to elicit reactions we usually associate with the body: disgust, loathing, exhilaration, thrill, arousal” (81). The readers become observers and critics of society through their visceral reaction to texts.

Millner shows that his second archive, scandal texts, gained new importance in the mid-nineteenth century. While print has perhaps always been used to tell secrets and lies about people, it was in this period that scandal became “mediated.” It moved, as a concept, from society whispers into printed pages, and print became a creator (rather than a spreader) of intrigue. Scandal looks like “the public sphere gone bad”: “Instead of truth and agency, the scandal sphere seems to offer little more than highly manipulated spectacle meant for easy consumption; it is often perceived as a product of the culture industry masquerading as news and information” (95). This perception is more or less what Millner demonstrates in the course of the chapter. The highly popular *Awful Disclosures, by Maria Monk of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal*, for example, claimed to draw aside the pious veil of a religious institution to reveal an abusive brothel. It inspired a bevy of “refutations, refutations of refutations, sequels, and copycat books” (110) that, taken together, relegate

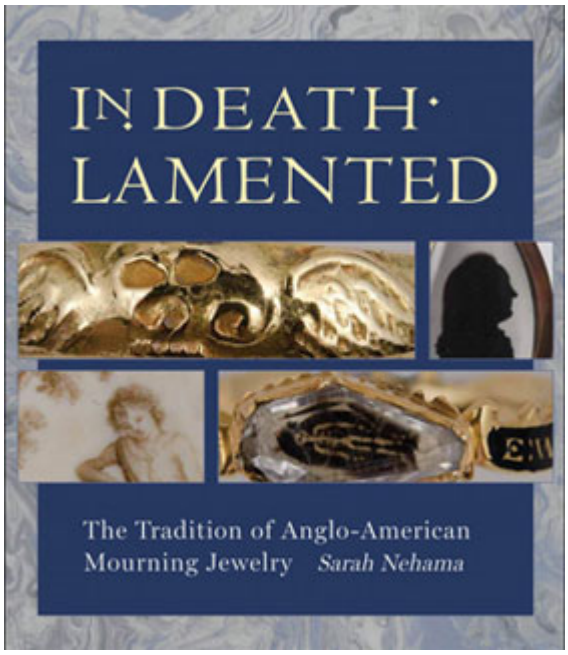
the concept of reliable narrative to the realm of naïve illusion. Scandal literature suggested secrets everywhere; it also represented the power of print media to create intrigue where there might have been none to discover. Participants in such a culture could hardly expect to weigh evidence objectively and come to rational conclusions. Instead, they had to feel their way between trust and mistrust. Here Millner notes that affective reading is not always a liberating alternative to the detached kind, and it might not yield political effectiveness. “This situation isn’t necessarily one to celebrate. It is simply a reality. In a society of complex decision-making processes, democracy is grounded, not on communicative reason, but on some of the most fundamental feelings of trust and mistrust that may be circulated through the media” (118-119). The conclusion is commonsensical, especially when we think about our own media culture, but it is nevertheless refreshing in a field that is often tempted to view non-normative public engagement as progress.

The final category is evangelical texts, designed to move the heart rather than engage rationality. The Second Great Awakening promoted images of embodied reaction, as converts wept, babbled, and collapsed under the influence of spiritual fervor. This doesn’t at first look like a rational-critical public sphere, but readers of these texts debated and questioned what they read according to public-sphere norms. Millner presents a fascinating archive of these practices: the notes of colporteurs who distributed Bibles and tracts in the New Jersey Pine Barrens in the 1840s. They recorded useful numbers—how many people had Bibles, how many read them, how many accepted tracts—as well as pithy anecdotes about cantankerous villagers (one “‘can scarce buy rum much less a bible'”) and, of course, much weeping (124). Tears produced by religious reading are, as Miller notes, a cliché of the genre, but he offers a compelling interpretation. Readers approach the texts as part of the public sphere, subjecting them to analysis and debate. At the same time, the religious works point to an absence: rituals and meaning lacking in secular life. The crying—the distillation of affective response—is a critical response to the public sphere itself.

The (good) reader who finishes Millner’s book is left convinced that emotional response is an element of public-sphere participation, and a necessary topic for further study. His evidence makes clear that when literary historians postulate either ideal or subversive readers, we miss the many more varied and complex responses solicited by texts, and so fail to understand the ways those texts operated in the world. The frustration with this kind of work is acknowledged by Millner: we can deduce structures of reading from texts, but the experience of the individual reader—the heart of the matter—will always elude us. (A few readers made records of their reading experiences, but these are vanishingly rare and by nature atypical.) Still, Millner’s careful analyses represent a significant step toward understanding reading cultures generally, that of nineteenth-century America in particular, and our own media moment. Perhaps the “experimental sciences” will one day offer tools that let scholars peer into the minds and brains of readers past. Millner shows what they have to

offer literary history in the present: a set of concepts that enables a scholar to revisit an outmoded construct, take up the trusty tools of archival research and close reading, and begin to rebuild it.

Baubles of Death



Sarah Nehama's catalogue *In Death Lamented* was published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name that she curated at the Massachusetts Historical Society. The topic is mourning jewelry—ornaments produced in honor of a deceased person—a genre that scholars have often overlooked for its macabre and maudlin associations. Nehama traces the changing forms and cultural uses of mourning jewelry in America from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. She draws her examples primarily from the holdings of the MHS, but supplements them with pieces from her own private collection.

Nehama brings the precise eye of a jeweler to the project. The strength of the catalogue lies in her exacting and detailed analyses of individual objects. These textual descriptions are well matched by the spectacular and copious photographs that allow readers to see Nehama's points clearly for themselves. From the twisting black enameled band of the rococo mourning ring, to the hair-infused ivory landscape of the neoclassical locket, to the paste and jet enhanced curls of the Gothic Revival brooch, mourning jewelry has never looked so good. Nehama's work as a jeweler may also have shaped her exploration of the changing materials used to create mourning jewelry and her detailed explanations of modes of manufacture. A fascinating sidebar in the catalogue, for example, shows the stages in the creation of a Georgian-style enameled

mourning ring, as completed by contemporary jeweler Will Francis. Thanks to this step-by-step explanation, these seemingly simple gold bands—embellished with enameled decoration that included the name and age of the deceased—prove to be surprisingly complex. The catalogue gives the viewer a sense of these bands' three-dimensionality and their luxury, elements that are difficult to convey without direct contact. This emphasis upon craftsmanship was complemented in the exhibition by the display of a hair braiding tool: a stool made into a loom upon which hair could be braided or twined. Such an apparatus makes clear exactly how intricate those patterns of hair commonly featured in nineteenth-century mourning jewelry, such as the lover's knot, actually were to produce.

Nehama organizes the catalogue chronologically. Each chapter begins with a brief historical essay and then breaks out to individual catalogue entries, a format that allows the author to fully elucidate stylistic trends in mourning jewelry. She is also attentive to developments in craft as a result of new manufacturing processes, as well as changing mourning traditions. Moving from the seventeenth century through the postbellum period, the author deftly draws connections between jewelry and the larger iconography of funerals, tombstones, and the etiquette of mourning. Mourning jewelry also clearly exhibits stylistic influences from other forms of jewelry and underwent significant alterations as new media penetrated the form. In particular, Nehama's arguments for the relationship between representation (portraiture and mourning scenes) and jewelry show the complex constellation of practices and influences that shaped mourning jewelry. Nehama explains how the portrait and mourning miniature's rise in popularity over the eighteenth century resulted in the growing size of mourning brooches and lockets, detailing that "In order to accommodate the size of these miniatures, jewelry settings—both the bezel and the band—had to change substantially" (44). Similarly, the rise of photography in the nineteenth century and the desire to incorporate the daguerreotype also shaped the appearance of mourning jewelry as "jewelry forms evolved to house photographs, making it possible for mourners to wear them" (74).

Not aberrant objects produced only for funerals or created for grieving widows, mourning rings, lockets, brooches, and a plethora of other forms were items of everyday life for elites and increasingly, by the nineteenth century, those in the middle classes.

Throughout the catalogue, Nehama shows how densely enmeshed mourning jewelry was in larger patterns of life. Not aberrant objects produced only for funerals or created for grieving widows, mourning rings, lockets, brooches, and a plethora of other forms were items of everyday life for elites and increasingly, by the nineteenth century, those in the middle classes. They exhibit the patina of age and the effects of being handled and worn. In fact, the catalogue so convincingly places these artifacts within the texture of everyday life that the designation of mourning jewelry becomes problematic. To what extent is the category of mourning jewelry a function of the current

collecting market that does not ultimately help to explain period practice? How separate were these items from regular jewelry and tokens of sentiment? Locks of hair snipped from a child's head as tokens of affection might all too soon be added to a mourning brooch so that parents could remember a lost toddler. Similarly, daguerreotypes exchanged by young lovers or husbands and wives and made into a locket could take on a memorial function after an untimely death. Is mourning jewelry not defined by the intended function at the time of manufacture, but rather by the use to which the owner put a piece of jewelry? Such slippages encourage us to wonder how separate these items were from "regular" jewelry. That mourning jewelry's styles paralleled shifts in other kinds of jewelry only complicates its position as a distinct form.

Although the author's painstaking genealogical research anchors individual artifacts in time and space, it would have made the catalogue stronger to have a firmer grounding in actual behaviors and the specific uses of mourning jewelry. Nehama seems to take for granted that these artifacts were always primarily intended to forge a personal and emotional connection between the wearer and the deceased. Certainly mourning jewelry fulfilled this memorial role, yet *how* exactly did it do so? Recent works on hair jewelry have started to explore hair's physical qualities and the symbolic associations that allowed hair to play a special role in sparking sentiment. These kinds of more metaphorical associations are missing in Nehama's analysis. Also overlooked are the potential multiple functions of mourning jewelry. As Nehama notes, but does not fully explore, these items indicated a wearer's status (as suggested by the fact that desire expanded over time to include those of the middle classes). They could also be used as tools of nation building—for example, those many mourning pieces that were created upon the deaths of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. The catalogue even traces the ways that mourning jewelry could function as a tool of international diplomacy, as in the ring for Tsar Alexander I and Empress Elizabeth of Russia that was presented to Louisa Catherine Adams, who had befriended the couple while her husband, John Quincy Adams, served as the U.S. Minister to Russia. What impact might these other uses have had upon the development of the form?

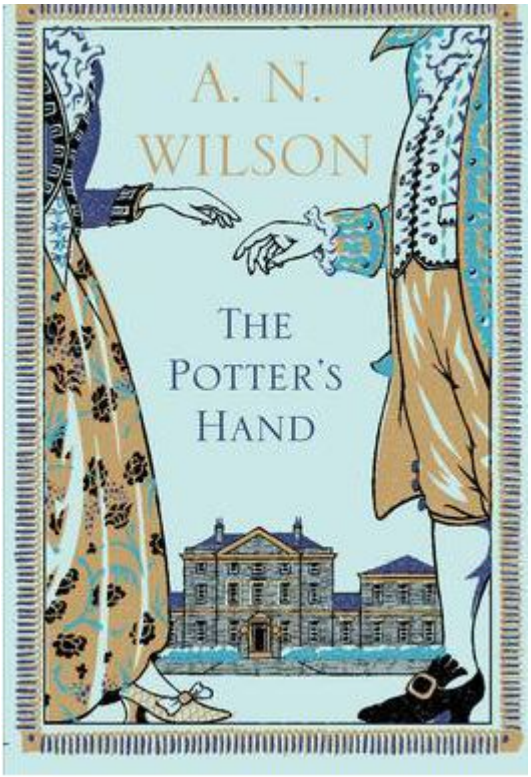
The catalogue also raises interesting questions about gender, demographics, and transatlantic connections. Nehama notes that by the nineteenth century, women were "regarded as the primary 'observers' of a family's grief," and the catalogue suggests, though it does not explicitly state, that women were the primary wearers and consumers of these objects (72). This gendered association is highlighted by the inclusion of a few pieces of jewelry specifically for men including a stickpin (tie pin) and cufflinks. Nehama mentions other forms of mourning jewelry that are "distinctly masculine," such as "watch fobs, and watch chains," yet these are the only examples she gives. Are these forms less common because men were less likely to wear mourning jewelry? Did mourning jewelry become associated with women because of women's growing role in the nineteenth century as keepers of the home and the family? The number of mourning rings made to commemorate young children and unmarried adults is a similar theme that emerges, but that is also never fully elucidated.

(Interestingly, these were composed of white rather than traditional black enamel in order to connote the deceased's innocence.) Do these examples point to a larger trend? Were mourning rings more commonly made to memorialize children than other deceased people? If so, does this suggest that mourning jewelry was intended in part to help those left behind to grieve during particularly emotionally devastating deaths?

Finally, the geographic parameters of the catalogue suggest possible questions of cross-cultural influence and the relatively limited audience for mourning jewelry. The designation "Anglo-American" is a loose one, and the catalogue interweaves rings produced in England with those of American manufacture without always distinguishing whether these items were made in England and used in North America, or if they are solely English examples. More careful attention to geographic location might have illuminated transatlantic connections as well as potential divergences between mourning jewelry made in England versus America. Considering the specific audience for these pieces might also have shed light on their function. What was it about this jewelry that appealed to Anglo-American elites and not Native Americans or African Americans? Was it solely expense that kept these groups from purchasing mourning jewelry (suggesting its importance in status definition), or was it related to divergences in burial practice and mourning traditions?

In Death Lamented raises many questions that I hope other scholars of early America will pursue. With its careful descriptions and seductive photographs, this catalogue should be a call to arms for museum professionals to put more mourning jewelry out on display and for scholars to give these artifacts greater attention. There is good reason to think that this will happen. The catalogue participates in two growing trends: works of American history that study how past peoples viewed and treated death, funeral rituals, and interments, and studies in art history and the decorative arts that take seriously jewelry, and more specifically hair jewelry. As scholars continue to pull apart the connections between mourning jewelry and the complex cultural practices that shaped it, the seeming conundrum of beautifully embellished rings becoming repositories of painful sentiment is one that promises to yield great historical insights.

Wedgwood Recast



In the afterword to *The Potter's Hand,* its author, A. N. Wilson, identifies the novel as a work of historical fiction, embellishing the life of Josiah Wedgwood, whom Wilson quite rightly asserts has largely been forgotten. The novel seeks to commemorate the work and life of Wedgwood by presenting a thoughtfully composed portrait of the man and his milieu. Wilson's family connection to Wedgwood emerges at strategic points in the novel, making the resulting work an impressive homage to an ancestor whom Wilson clearly respects and wishes to bring to wider renown among readers.

The novel consists of three substantial sections, each dedicated to a work of art. The first section, which concerns Wedgwood's production of the massive dinnerware service termed "The Frog Service" for Catherine the Great, constitutes the bulk of the novel. Subsequent sections document George Stubbs' production of the 1780 Wedgwood family portrait and Wedgwood's reproduction of the Portland Vase in 1790. Despite this organizational strategy, the works of art themselves play little role in the novel, with the tepid exception of the Portland Vase, which invokes Keatsian ruminations on the nature of life and death. The novel is more overtly interested in the lives of its artists and their coterie, specifically Wedgwood and his extensive network of British intellectual luminaries, including Sir Joshua Reynolds, James Watt, and Erasmus Darwin.

At its most compelling, *The Potter's Hand* explores the tenuous network of Atlantic commerce that enabled the production of Wedgwood's pottery. Wedgwood's Creamware, for instance, achieved its characteristic color through a mixture of

domestic clay, which fired to a grey hue, and imported clay, obtained from the Cherokee people of North America, which fired to a whitish hue. The conceit of the first section of the novel is Wedgwood's desire to obtain enough clay from the Cherokee to complete his Frog Service. Wilson accounts for the ways in which the complications of empire—most notably the American Revolution—kept Wedgwood from achieving his goal.


The power struggle that ensues between Wedgwood and Stubbs dramatizes the relationship between industrial and artistic production during the era.

The second section, framed by the Wedgwood family portrait, configures a lineage for the novel's vision of empire and its relationship to artistic production. The fictional Josiah Wedgwood commissions the portrait in an attempt to reject the rapidly changing social milieu of early nineteenth-century England. He requests that Stubbs paint his family in a classical manner, but soon finds that Stubbs' capricious artistic tendencies render any attempts to shape the style of the portrait ineffectual. The power struggle that ensues between Wedgwood and Stubbs dramatizes the relationship between industrial and artistic production during the era. As Wedgwood is quick to point out, Stubbs uses Wedgwood enamel tiles as canvases for smaller works, but Wedgwood is unable to profit from this economic arrangement when shaping the formal elements of the portrait itself. The portrait's production forces Wedgwood to reexamine the relationship between art and commerce, which comes to bear in the novel's final section.

Wilson's section dedicated to the Portland Vase expands the novel's interest in empire to the British removal of Greek and Roman antiquities and sharpens the novel's interest in trade dynamics as well. While Wedgwood's reproduction of the vase was initially commissioned for aesthetic value, Wedgwood saw the project as an opportunity to market his virtuosity as a potter and the versatility of his medium. As the novel recounts, reproductions of the vase served as salesman's samples for the Wedgwood line, which Wedgwood sought to expand into additional European markets. But Wedgwood's capitalist ambitions are undermined in the novel, and, at its conclusion, Wedgwood pottery is still coded as a thoroughly British production.

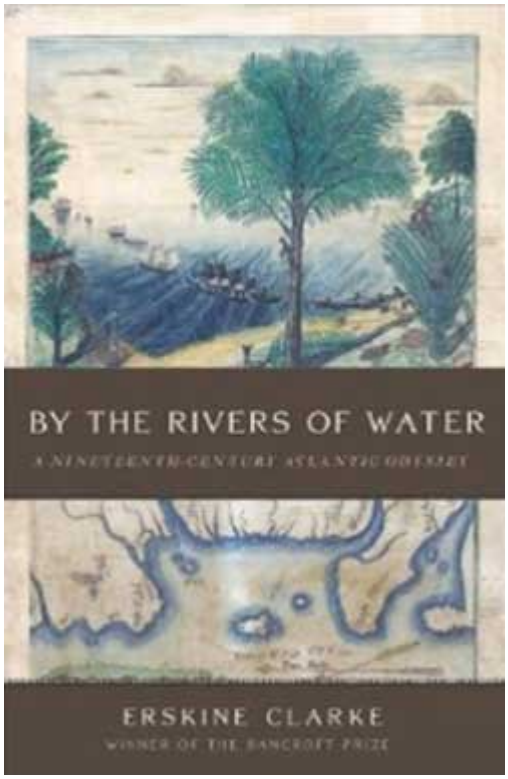
While the novel engages with the rapidly shifting dynamics of empire and its social and political vicissitudes, it is a book that is interested in human emotion first, and politics only subsequently. Its primary character, despite overtones otherwise, is not Josiah Wedgwood; while scenes focused on Wedgwood begin and end the novel, the bulk of the novel follows Tom Byerley, Wedgwood's young nephew and, early in life, the heir apparent to Wedgwood's pottery works, and Sukey Wedgwood, Josiah Wedgwood's daughter, who would ultimately be the mother of Charles Darwin. While Josiah Wedgwood is central to the novel, his character is never developed to the extent that the novel's younger protagonists are. Tom follows the path of any number of *bildungsromane*, first departing from his uncle's patronage to pursue an acting career in New York,

then setting out into the wilds of colonial America to help his uncle obtain the desired Cherokee-owned clay, finding himself entangled by chance in the American revolutionary cause, and ultimately returning to England and settling into marriage and career, now a chastened former artist. Tom's story enables changes of scene in the novel much more readily than other characters, chiefly because he is unhindered by the social and physical limitations of much of its cast of characters (for instance, Josiah Wedgwood himself has a wooden leg, a characteristic that the novel exploits). Sukey, only two years old at her first appearance in the novel, faces the challenges of being young, well-connected, and female in late eighteenth-century Britain, and her development is charted in terms of insights on the family's internal dynamics rather than adventures abroad. Wilson counts on Tom and Sukey to provoke in readers an emotional investment in Wedgwood's story and clearly prizes this connection above attachments to Wedgwood's art itself.

Aspects of Wilson's interest in Tom and Sukey do help to create momentum through the intricacies of Wedgwood's career, but other aspects, frankly, detract. Tom provides the basis for the novel's central love plot, which begins when he first encounters a young Cherokee woman when attempting to secure his uncle's clay. The woman, named Blue Squirrel, is beautiful, impetuous, and sexually adept: an assemblage of damning colonial stereotypes of Native women. Blue Squirrel does develop as a character, and by the end of the novel seems to be a representation of colonial hybridity, having achieved an identity independent from violent male control and a revered status in Wedgwood's pottery works. But Blue Squirrel, later renamed Merry, is always an object of sexual desire first and an artist second. The last scene in which readers encounter Blue Squirrel consists of her stripping naked to swim, and then having sex with a male companion who, like Tom, is "saved" through a sexual experience with her. Blue Squirrel is a character imported from colonial romances featuring Native peoples, as are Wilson's references to the Cherokee tribe more generally. While this novel certainly does not claim to be revolutionizing historical romance as a genre, and does feature better-developed portrayals of women, such as Sukey, the inclusion of a stereotypical Native maiden is disappointing.

The ideal reader for Wilson's novel has a general interest in the eighteenth-century British colonial moment and the economic workings of the Atlantic world, but should not approach the text seeking a meticulous account of the networks of cultural power during the era. As Wilson clearly articulates in his afterword, and as any observant reader will conclude in the early pages of this nearly 500-page work, it does not presume to be a historical account of the era. What it does accomplish is piquing the interest of readers in a neglected historical figure who provided an important connection between the economic and intellectual life of England. Wilson does so in a style that echoes authors such as Sir Walter Scott, a figure that Wilson has lauded in previous critical work. *The Potter's Hand* offers readers a chance to engage with Josiah Wedgwood in a familiar and well-developed literary form.

The Great Commission and the Constraints of Home



In the 1847 *Grammar of the Mpongwe Language,* principally authored by John Leighton Wilson, the American missionary to Gabon marveled at the flexibility of the central African language despite what he perceived to be the "contracted world" of the Mpongwe people themselves. Erskine Clarke's *By the Rivers of Water* narrates the Atlantic journeys of this gifted linguist and earnest minister, revisiting the places that broadened—and constrained—the white missionary's worldview. Despite his expansive and even global sense of Christian calling, the minister returned to his Southern homeland as his family, church, and nation divided over the issue of slavery; his world proved equally contracted.

The Presbyterian missionary, whom the author refers to as Leighton, is survived by an ample documentary record that warrants his central position in the narrative. Clarke approaches these sources with care and imagination to honor the journeys, struggles, and perspectives of less-chronicled others: enslaved Gullah people of the Carolina Lowcountry, the women of the American missionary movement, free or formerly enslaved American colonists, the Grebo people of

Liberia, and the Mpongwe of Gabon. He masterfully explores conflicted definitions of freedom and faith, the problems of slavery and racism, and the many human choices that shaped nineteenth-century America and the broader Atlantic World.


Clarke masterfully explores conflicted definitions of freedom and faith, the problems of slavery and racism, and the many human choices that shaped nineteenth-century America and the broader Atlantic World.

The book’s opening chapters provide vivid social and spatial contrast between the Gullah and the affluent white Presbyterian families that together populated the coastal lowcountry of South Carolina and Georgia in the early nineteenth century. As demonstrated by his 2006 Bancroft Prize-winning *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic,* Clarke adeptly mines genealogies and household records to reveal the intertwined relational networks of Southern plantation households and religious communities. Leighton and his future wife, Jane Bayard, both inherited slaves in their native states of South Carolina and Georgia. Extended stays among the Presbyterian elite of Philadelphia, however, stoked a passion for foreign missions in Jane and her sister Margaret. By 1832 the sisters were both engaged to aspiring young missionaries, and Jane looked forward to service with Leighton in West Africa.

The second part of the book follows Leighton and Jane Wilson to Cape Palmas, Liberia. Leighton first visited the site in 1832, and after their 1834 nuptials the young pair conducted their gospel labors among the Grebo and African American colonists. With the cooperation of these neighbors, the Wilsons worked to help erect new buildings, start schools, and combat the common threats of malaria and disease. The Wilsons maintained amicable relationships with the indigenous residents, and prominent Grebo not only chose Christianity, but also advanced the educational agenda of the mission. In a particularly fascinating chapter, Clarke illustrates the forms of accommodation and selective appropriation that characterized the conversion of the polygamous Grebo leader known both as William Davis and Mworeh Mah.

The missionaries rarely preached in Grebo, but worked tirelessly to translate and print the Bible. Of interest to scholars of print culture, African American printer B.V.R. James established a printing press at Cape Palmas, trained local apprentices, and with the Wilsons sent a young Grebo man to New York to study book binding. Christian texts were published both in Liberia and later in Gabon.

Leighton opposed Iberian slavers and the ongoing Atlantic trade. While still an owner of slaves in the U.S., the white minister disdained African American colonists who supplied the ships of slave traders. He also scorned the imperialistic sensibilities he perceived among some African American colonists and the racist deceptions of white promoters of the African colonization movement back in the U.S. In contrast to the amity and respect shared with his printer colleague, Leighton frequently contested the decisions and authority of

the African American governor of the colony, John Brown Russwurm. Clarke might be at times overly sympathetic to Leighton's point of view, but remains mindful of the white Southerner's racial biases. In his final analysis of these combatants, Clarke suggests both were shaped by and sought two different worlds with respect to race and justice.

Despite their work abroad, the bonds of slavery still tethered the Wilsons to the Southern worlds of their youth. Leighton was slow to emancipate his own two slaves that remained in South Carolina, in view of laws that demanded newly freed blacks leave the state. Eventually liberated, they declined Leighton's recommendation to relocate in the Northeast. They instead elected to keep their freedom quiet and illegally remain with their families in the South. The Wilsons emancipated Jane's slaves and encouraged their migration from Savannah to Liberia in 1838. A number accepted the Wilson's suggestion to leave Georgia and joined the American missionaries in West Africa. Even as they received the newly emancipated, the Wilsons harbored growing dissatisfaction with the colonization project at Cape Palmas.

In the 1840s the Wilsons explored alternate sites and relocated the mission hub to the Gabon estuary of the Como River. As in Liberia, most white Americans sent to the new mission quickly died of malaria. Jane and Leighton enjoyed their work among the Mpongwe people and labored alongside surviving whites and a group of mixed-culture black families. The educational attempts of the mission and Leighton's convictions sought to prove black intellectual capacity. Yet sadly, his anthropological correspondence to missionary publications and delivery of a gorilla's skull to American scientists inadvertently reinforced pseudo-scientific racism. Clarke notes the intended and unintended cultural imperialism of the missionaries, though Leighton decried other instances of imperial overreach, such as the U.S. removal of the Cherokee from Georgia, African American colonists' disrespect of the Grebo in Liberia, and French Catholic impositions on the native people of Gabon.

The final section of the book details the homecoming of Leighton and Jane after seventeen years abroad. In 1853 Leighton accepted an appointment as a secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions and moved to New York. Though he envisioned global Christian expansion and understood slavery to be a sin, Leighton believed the election of Lincoln an imperialist violation of Southern planters' moral exercise. Leighton and Jane said goodbye to friends and family and returned to the South by 1861. During and after the Civil War, the Wilsons kept busy. Leighton oversaw the chaplaincy needs of Confederate soldiers and led the missionary attempts of a newly formed Southern Presbyterian Church while Jane administered a boarding school for black children at their Old Homestead plantation.

Title page from A Grammar of the Mpongwe Language, with Vocabularies…, attributed to J. Leighton Wilson, New York, 1847. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

The titular allusion to Psalm 1:3 fits the book's riverside settings—alongside the swirling Black River, tidal waters of the Georgia Sea Islands, the Atlantic shore of Cape Palmas, and the broad Gabon Estuary. Furthermore, the psalmist's metaphor likens the human to a tree rooted at the river's edge. Despite the Wilsons proximity to the diverse cultural flows of the broader Atlantic, their roots ran deep into plantation soil and held to the slaveholding traditions of the white South. Near the end of his life Leighton reflected on the idolatry of homeland and church. Clarke suggests that Leighton's loyalty "to a history and people committed to maintaining slavery and its deep oppression … was both an act of deep love and the desertion of moral vision" (337).

By the Rivers of Water significantly contributes to the study of American religious history. Clarke proves the heuristic value of an Atlantic/world paradigm for the study of Christian missionaries and extends this conceptual framework deep into the nineteenth century. Beyond his extensive research in archives that directly pertain to the missionaries, Clarke uses anthropological and historical accounts of the African diaspora to honor the narratives and voices of African Americans and Africans on both sides of the Atlantic.

Counter to the paternalism and imperialism of the American missionary endeavors, Clarke asserts that subsequent generations of Grebo and Mpongwe people reinterpreted and reappropriated the African-language bibles and Christian traditions that the Wilsons left behind. West African Christians developed their own contextual theologies, new practices of faith, and independent African churches. The epilogue speaks to a shift in the "demographic center of Christianity … to the 'Global South,'" evidenced by numerous West African missionaries currently deployed to the U.S. and a white Episcopalian church in South Carolina that recently joined the Anglican Diocese of Rwanda (377-8). In these considerations, Clarke—a professor emeritus from Columbia Theological Seminary—brings to the monograph a keen awareness of historical and emergent developments in the world Christian movement.

Clarke brilliantly explores the contradictions between Leighton's expansive missionary travels and the limits of racial constructs and sectional divides. He succeeds in narrating the mysteries "of good intentions and cruel consequences, and the enigma of human freedom in the midst of slavery and the contingencies of human life" (xxii). Frequent reminders of characters' relationships to one another are at times repetitive, but understandable given the book's complex social networks. Effusive descriptions are most effective when advancing the narrative, though Clarke's lively pen will undoubtedly attract and satisfy a wide audience. Concluding with Leighton's reflections on the idolatry of home, Clarke occasions the humble reader to consider the moral constraints of one's own time and place.

Palimpsests

At this Point, a Confluence

Less enterprising men would have left the beautiful ruin of a city
to moulder away and decay, but the Sacramentans
could not be induced to forego the work of a decade
just for the disasters of a month.
Editorial, The Sacramento Bee, October 3,1865

Before rousting the American from its bed,
a century before sobering the Sacramento's snowmelt
with a catch and release schedule,
they stood in the park to watch two rivers mix:
one ran muddy from paddlewheels and boilers,
the other spooned the city
like a lazy morning lover.

Citizens feared
that an inconsolable river

would stumble home angry and drunk,
bring everyone down to its banks
for a baptism, wash away
the sins and signs
of order, civility.

It took twelve years for a sidewalk of dismantled steamships,
fraying even before it was finished,
to float the city on stilts
the river thickening
with silt from the mines
the mines that pushed
the railroad to Promontory
the railroad that promised
a passage east by way of the west.

A streetside frescoed Virgin of Guadalupe
watched over flocks of families spilling
between pushcarts and Pullman coaches
where the docks met the tracks
that obliterated time, space.

ADLUH

A thin slice of cinderblock, seven stories high
squares against the sky, a downtown silo
with what is left of the working wage. Harvest
rains within windowless walls of whitewashed
ads, which flash neon on and off again
in an Amen cadence slowed to pace the rails
and Congaree canals that once mapped coastal plains.
Reapers’ fruit goes crushing, grinding, gristing.
Who set it flowing, this nourishing dust
sitting in the middle of time, no plains, no past?
What talk was wrought in the wheat stalk fields?
And the dusk yields ADLUH ADLUH

Succession in Iowa

Contrails bend pink and north over Osceola,
hot trails dragging behind what makes them
roar, passing through other ragged clouds
tossed across the darkening sky.

A train whistle wails over rip rap
creek beds, calling to the grain towers

that huddle like rocket thrusters
on hills combed neat as heads of hair.

When those engines finish shouting hosanna,
echoing off the paved hills, their thunder
trickles through summer cottonwood branches,
where the noise could be mistaken for herds of buffalo.

Palimpsest

I.
Where black asphalt splits an ancient trail,
which fauna have not forgotten,
a tom fans royal feathers
for his brood,
who drip their gray drop bodies
from terra cotta roof tops
and swagger the asphalt’s
addresses even to odd,
stopping traffic with red, round authority.

Sidelit by the low sun, the crossing guard
folds up crimson feathers and marches over
to where, in a panic of wings,
the flock takes to the sky,
trailing molt like the stains
of scraped away ink on a map’s second draft.

II.
A hand-drawn map needs RE-visioning
when memory leaks through borders.
Black Mountain’s first campus
now tithes for the Scots’ god,
its Lee Hall rocking chairs answering
traditional on the valley-side porch.
The lower pasture of its second,
paradisal Eden fell back to being
just another exit before Bat Cave.

To stand on the open field
with the old tobacco barn
that never dried leaves, only paint,
speaks the difference between rhododendron
and mountain laurel: one
should never build a campfire
without telling them apart.
Is an uncured branch still poisonous without geography?

Departure means a separation from vitality.

III.
Black ink traces a communicative edge.
It is right to resist declension narratives,
it is just that location is never where we left it.

IV.
What the map can’t tell:
The time of year the night is as hot as the day.
That a bobcat’s cry sounds like a human baby.
How mating love bugs resemble Chinook helicopters.
Why redbuds bloom before dogwoods, and which is prettier.
Which granite face eroded to make this creek sand.
How to pedal past a timber rattlesnake.
Why dance moves look like domestic chores.
That when getting off a plane in sandals, humidity affects the feet first.

Dark Room

“Hannah Maynard Self-Portrait,” trick photograph, multiple exposure (ca. 1893). Image F-02852, courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, BC Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Tricks a Girl Can Do

Hannah Maynard (1834-1918) was a Canadian photographer who created surreal images after the death of her daughter; she was a proto-surrealist.

I will hang myself in picture frames
in drawing rooms where grief
is not allowed a wicker chair

then grimace back at this facade
from umbrella eyes
under a cage of silver hair.

Look! I've learned to slice myself in three
to sit politely at the table
with ginger punch and teacake;

offer thin-lipped graves
of pleasantries.I develop myself
in the pharmacist’s chemicals

three women I’m loathe to understand—
presences I sometimes cajole
into modern light and shadow;

we culminate in a gelatin scene—
a daughter birthed from a spiral shell,
a keyhole tall enough to strut through.

Endless Forms, More Beautiful

After a multiple exposure self-portrait of Hannah Maynard, c. 1894

So she keeps her herringbone hands busy with teacups and white flowers
and murmurs to no one what she will create. No nephew sawed in half

will interest her today, no devoted husband measuring buttes
but a suitcase of her own bright follies. The living room pulses on

and off with gunpowder expertly fitted for her flash. Or perhaps
the room becomes a kind of snowbound mausoleum exhibiting her grief

one winter afternoon. (It’s quite impossible to know but let’s presume.)
No more inner voices to wake her from sleep, no more fussy wives

who arrive with meat pies and then hurry their bosoms home
to living daughters. In the frame, Hannahs stand here, sit there, bend over

to brush a bouquet of lilies from other Hannah’s hair.
From house left and then house right solitary Hannahs float like smoke

rings into me. I should have known —the artful dodge, her concentric days,
unwavering dark-sky stare—recognized my own pathology.

Strange Symmetry of Past, of Present

after a self-portrait set in a keyhole: late 1890’s

Actually, the past does slip forward
through a keyhole,

alive, feeding on our half-
recounted facts and figures,

penny-farthing bicycles and pancake
breakfasts annually eaten.

How we learn to study it
in private (the past)

like reading the phrasing
of rare birds or fisherman

sweaters or scat; to unlock
the world in retrospect –

a human kind of heaven.

Take photography, for instance.
Here the 19th century returns

as Hannah poses herself
in crisp black and white;

she's made a negative space
on the threshold of a life-

sized paper cut-out: keyhole
fit for the movie sets

of Orson Welles (well before
Orson was born).

Her figure stands neither in
nor out of the century but floats.

She's her own avant-garde parade

a riddle, amulet, sunflower seed;
comic, crazy, genius woman

finding the multiplicity of things –

patterns of desire across a face:
two dead daughters, ghost light, and similar fates.

The Tangible, Intangible

after a photograph by Hannah Maynard
on the death of her child, c. 1884

Afterwards, she surveys the site:
the jostled cups, a buffalo rug

faded burlap of bookcase

overstuffed with tromp l’oeil painted spines.

The sound of the photograph
would be island rain
and the animal cry of the child gone—

In the darkroom she works alone

cajoles waterfalls, brings to light
the floating picture frame,
the doily’s difficult knowledge —

Commonplace days she survives
with a mirror trick, a few glass plates
that echo *don’t let go; let go.*

Hannah, Decanter, and Cloud

~self portrait at 74

Age is still decanters on the table
the size of small chandeliers
or cloud foam. You, remember,
are the one that is unmade
as of yet, unknown. Medium
merely to an image, a woman

studio-posed. Self-portrait
developed for the afterlife—
our ticker-tape world

of tableaus and combs
circling on. And. Then. Somehow
your barnacled vessel
lit from within like a carriage
clock or sea-washed amber stones.
Have you been taken?

the Victorians inquired; from flesh
into silver salts, into gaslight paper
or gold? Everyone becoming older.

Your gaze darts forward, lifts
beyond the mayor’s clapperboard
home, the dead dove, the séance, the bones.
One unknowable instant—

even as the aperture quietly
holds, even as the light

decants over gloved hands
that turn into clouds.
Don’t tell me this is only a story.

Tell me there’s more to our lives
than jigsaws and doorknobs,
more than tumbleweed, sediment or sex.
We live for the tunnel, the years signatured
together into the surreal, for our art
imperfect and striving.

Yellow Bird and the Thunder

On Finding the Earliest Known Poem by John Rollin Ridge, the First Native American Novelist

I sometimes think that I could recognize John Rollin Ridge’s voice anywhere. Considering he died in 1867—a widely hated California Copperhead newspaper editor, and the exiled scion of a once-powerful Cherokee family—this feeling is a bit uncanny. But, as many readers of *Common-place* can probably attest,

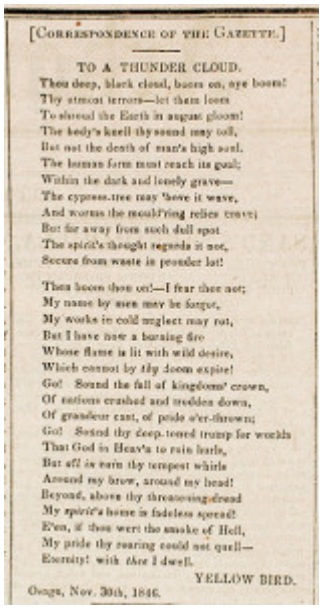
spending a great deal of time with the work of a particular writer has the effect of rendering him familiar as an old friend. One grows accustomed to his repeated patterns of thought, his recurring metaphors, until finally one is able to recognize the writer's voice as easily as that of a remembered classmate heard from across a crowded room. And it was this voice—by turns bombastic and anxious, deeply Christian and yet infused with the rhetoric of Romantic transcendence—that I recognized while flipping through a copy of the *Arkansas State Gazette* in the American Antiquarian Society's reading room last January.

If John Rollin Ridge is familiar at all today, it is likely as the author of *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta*, the first novel written by a Native American. Yet Ridge was a journalist for most of his career, and wrote throughout his life. I was visiting AAS to research Ridge's California newspaper editorials from the 1850s for a dissertation chapter dealing with Mexican resistance in California after the Mexican-American War. On a lark, I thought I might take a look at a few of the local newspapers from places where Ridge lived during his teenage years. I didn't expect to find much, but there it was: a previously unknown poem by a very young John Rollin Ridge, titled "To a Thunder Cloud." It was even signed with Ridge's pen name, Yellow Bird—an English translation of his Cherokee name, Cheesquatalawny. Even without the byline, though, I would have recognized that voice—dramatic, sing-song, redolent of violence—just about anywhere.

What was more, the poem appeared to be Ridge's earliest extant publication. Appended to the text was a composition date of November 1846, when Ridge was only nineteen. That date was earlier than any other known Ridge poem, including those that exist only in manuscript form. Scholars have had a hazy awareness that Ridge wrote poetry as a young man (biographer James W. Parins refers to, but does not identify, "several … poems, published under the pen name Yellowbird"), but much of this writing remains undiscovered. His earliest *identified* poem, "To a Mockingbird," was composed in May 1847, seven months after the composition of "To a Thunder Cloud," and not published until years later.

Much of this early poetry strikes readers as derivative and unconnected to Ridge's later complex politics. Take "Mockingbird," for example. The speaker of this poem addresses the bird of the title, which sits on a high perch. Below, human beings suffer. Above, the bird watches. Does the bird empathize with suffering people, the speaker wants to know, or does it instead exist in an immortal realm of "living thought," far removed from human concerns? Considering that another name for the Northern Mockingbird is the American Nightingale, it is perhaps unsurprising that the poem is reminiscent of John Keats's more famous ode, which also links birdsong to immortality. But Ridge's "Thunder Cloud," it seemed, *was* inflected by the politics of the moment, and in ways that revealed the political dimensions of his other poems, like "Mockingbird." In order to explain, I'll have to back up.

Although Ridge was occasionally composing poems in a Romantic mode by 1847, writing had not been his primary concern. The twenty-year-old's life had been lived at the center of a political maelstrom. At the age of twelve he watched a gang of assassins brutally murder his father just outside the family home. This murder was the culmination of a conflict that had gone on for nearly a decade. Just prior to the elder Ridge's death, there had been *two* Cherokee nations—one bordering Georgia and another just across the western border of Arkansas. The state government of Georgia, however, coveted the lands of the eastern Cherokee nation. White settlers had, over the years, attempted to seize portions of it. This resulted in a power struggle within the eastern Cherokee nation itself. On one side stood the Ridge family and their allies, who believed the eastern nation would eventually be lost and therefore supported a plan to sell it entirely in exchange for millions of dollars and lands in the West. Some compensation for this loss, they reasoned, would be better than nothing. On the other side were the supporters of John Ross, who wanted to stay and fight for their ancient rights.



[CORRESPONDENCE OF THE GAZETTE.]

TO A THUNDER CLOUD.

Thou deep, black cloud, boom on, aye boom!
Thy utmost terrors—let them loom
To shroud the Earth in august gloom!
The body's knell thy sound may toll,
But not the death of man's high soul.
The human form must reach its goal;
Within the dark and lonely grave—
The cypress-tree may 'bove it wave,
And worms the mould'ring relics crave;
But far away from such dull spot
The spirit's thought regards it not,
Secure from waste in yonder lot!

Then boom thou on!—I fear thee not;
My name by men may be forgot,
My works in cold neglect may rot,
But I have now a burning fire
Whose flame is lit with wild desire,
Which cannot by *thy* doom expire!
Go! Sound the fall of kingdoms' crown,
Of nations crushed and trodden down,
Of grandeur cast, of pride o'er-thrown;
Go! Sound thy deep-toned trump for wrecks
That God in Heav'n to ruin hurls,
But *all in vain* thy tempest whirls
Around my brow, around my head!
Beyond, above thy threatening dread
My *spirit's* home is fadeless spread!
E'en, if thou wert the snake of Hell,
My pride thy roaring could not quell—
Eternity! with *thee* I dwell.

YELLOW BIRD.

Osage, Nov. 30th, 1846.

1. A reproduction of the poem itself. Yellow Bird, "To a Thunder Cloud," Arkansas State Gazette, page 2 (January 9, 1847). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

In 1835, Rollin Ridge's father, John Ridge, signed the Treaty of New Echota, selling the entire eastern Cherokee nation in exchange for lands in the West and financial compensation to be distributed among the Cherokee people. This led to the infamous 1838 Trail of Tears—the militarily enforced expulsion of the Cherokee people from their nation in the east. Thousands died. From John Ridge's perspective, removal was the only option. He once compared it to the Exodus: a long march from slavery to freedom. But to John Ridge's enemies, the treaty and removal constituted a betrayal. And so, in 1839, supporters of John Ross surrounded the Ridge family's new settlement at Honey Creek, in the western Cherokee nation. They dragged John Ridge from his home and stabbed him

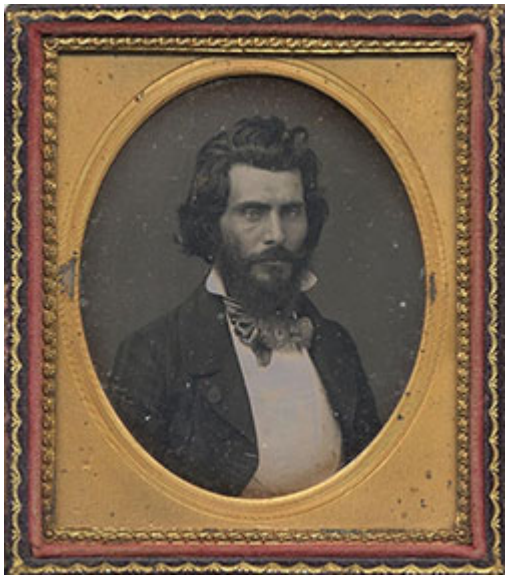
twenty-nine times, killing him. Fearing for their lives, the surviving members of the Ridge household left for Arkansas a week later.

The conflict within the Cherokee nation continued during John Rollin Ridge's teenage years, which he spent exiled in Arkansas. By 1845, the long-simmering feud between the "Treaty Party" (as the Ridge family and their allies came to be known) and the more powerful John Ross faction had broken out into widespread, sectarian violence. Ridge's biographer, James W. Parins, writes that we simply cannot know the degree to which the teenage John Rollin Ridge participated in or was affected by the violence marking this period of his life. What is clear, however, is that he wanted to be involved in some way. Ridge formed inchoate plans to murder John Ross. He wrote a letter to a cousin asking for a Bowie knife. He praised the guerrilla tactics of an anti-Ross fighter. When the United States government brokered a peaceful settlement to the violence in 1846, and ratified this settlement in August of that year, it marked an end, at least temporarily, to the fighting. But Ridge's letters from this period suggest that his mission to restore his family's position—and not his goal of becoming a poet and author—remained foremost in his mind.

And this restoration was precisely what Ridge set about accomplishing. He received reparations for his father's murder, as specified by the August 1846 treaty. He purchased the family farm at Honey Creek, near the Cherokee-Missouri border, which his mother had been forced to flee with her children nearly eight years before. And, in May 1847—the same month he wrote "To a Mockingbird"—Ridge married Elizabeth Wilson.

But the Cherokee nation was still riven by conflict. In 1849 Ridge murdered David Kell, a pro-Ross judge. (There is some evidence that Kell stole one of Ridge's stallions and castrated it in order to provoke a fight that would enable him to justifiably murder the heir-apparent to a marginalized but still threatening political faction. If this was Kell's plan, it proved to be something less than a complete success.) After this, the young poet was forced into exile, first in Missouri and then in California. It was then that he began to write professionally. At first he published articles about the California Gold Rush in newspapers and periodicals. Then, in 1854, Ridge published his first and only novel, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta*, a bacchanal of political violence set in U.S.-controlled California.

Or so goes the conventional account of Ridge's writing. But the text before me pushed the timeline of Ridge's authorship back by nearly a year. The poem I had encountered in the *Arkansas State Gazette*, "To a Thunder Cloud," had been published on January 9, 1847. More importantly, it was dated November 30, 1846. I was looking at an example of Ridge's poetry written not around the time of his marriage, but much earlier—only a few months after the U.S.-government brokered settlement between warring Cherokee factions.



2. “Portrait of John Rollin Ridge,” photograph: daguerreotype-V, sixth plate (visible image 2 3/4 x 2 1/4 in), ca. 1850. Courtesy of the California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, California.

3. A portrait of John Rollin Ridge’s father. “John Ridge,” lithograph, hand colored (image and text 21.5 x 15.5 cm.) after a painting by Charles Bird King painted in 1825. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

And the poem was written in that recognizably bombastic Ridge style. Organized into two stanzas, made up of four and six tercets, respectively, the poem reveals a steely-eyed speaker unafraid of violence, death, or upheaval. Ridge begins by addressing the thunder cloud of the title:

Thou deep, black cloud, boom on, aye boom!
Thy utmost terrors—let them loom
To shroud the Earth in august gloom!
The body’s knell thy sound may toll,
But not the death of man’s high soul.

The speaker's address offers a challenge to a malevolent natural order. Even the weather in the world of Ridge's poem is dangerous, looming overhead with its "utmost terrors," shrouding "the Earth in august gloom," and tolling a grim, funereal knell. From any other nineteen-year-old poet, we might read the talk of death as merely imitative Romanticism—all that chiaroscuro, those picturesque shades of darkness and light. And yet Ridge's early life had been defined by violence: the death of his father, the sectarian bloodshed in the Cherokee nation, and the senseless brutality of the Arkansas frontier, where, Ridge once wrote to an acquaintance, "the people sometimes fight with knives and pistols, and some men have been killed here, but the people do not seem to mind it much."

And yet the text isn't only inflected with Ridge's violent past. It is also heavily invested in a transcendent individuality. In addressing the thunder, the poem valorizes the unique power of an individual to confront a terrifying natural order. Ridge begins the second stanza:

Then boom thou on!—I fear thee not;
My name by men may be forgot,
My works in cold neglect may rot,
But I have now a burning fire
Whose flame is lit with wild desire,
Which cannot by *thy* doom expire!
Go! Sound the fall of kingdoms' crown,
Of nations crushed and trodden down,
Of grandeur cast, of pride o'er-thrown;
Go! Sound thy deep-toned trump for worlds
That God in Heav'n to ruin hurls,
But *all in vain* thy tempest whirls
Around my brow, around my head!
Beyond, above thy threatening dread
My *spirit's* home is fadeless spread!

There's a lot here. Ridge's speaker resolves to accept the vicissitudes of fortune, and yet this acceptance is a screen for his defiance. Yes, he suggests, history may forget him and his works—all that as-yet-unwritten literature. But, despite this, he will struggle on. Ridge's writing career would in fact be consumed by considerations of doomed struggle, particularly in the form of revolutionary bloodshed. His novel, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta*, considers a band of Mexican war veterans who wage a brutal conflict with white Americans, including U.S. soldiers. And Ridge's newspaper editorials, written in later years, equivocate about the U.S. Civil War by nominally defending the Union but nonetheless heaping criticism on President Lincoln and acknowledging the South's right of rebellion. The revolutionary perspective that defines these later texts is radically articulated even here, in a sing-song poem Ridge wrote when he was still a teenager. Acts of resistance, he suggests, are not to be measured by their potential for success. Kingdoms fall. Nations are crushed. And powerful factions—with their "grandeur"

and their “pride”—are usurped. But the poem’s speaker remains undaunted. Victory is less important, in this worldview, than fearlessness.

But, perhaps most interestingly, the poem offers a pair of interwoven beliefs animating this fearlessness. It ultimately argues that these powerful, natural forces remain ineffectual because a Christian God holds out a redemptive promise of salvation and grace. This perspective would remain with Ridge throughout much of his writing career, although it appears in no more than a few traces in his novel. But lurking behind this conventional message of Christian salvation is a veneration of the individual. Ridge’s poem is brash in its defiance of impossible odds. He writes: “E’en, if thou wert the smoke of Hell, | My pride thy roaring could not quell—.” And while he ends on a final note of salvation (“Eternity! with *thee* I dwell”), the poet nonetheless has given us a speaker who fears nothing—not the natural world, not the fall of nations, not “the smoke of Hell” itself. Ostensibly, it is his faith in salvation that gives him this strength—it is the “Eternity” of the final line. And yet, in the preceding line, Ridge provides another explanation: “pride,” which the thunder’s “roaring could not quell.” The speaker finds strength both in his faith and, more blasphemously, in his own pridefulness.

> Ridge’s poem, one might suspect, articulates his ambivalence about the new political order. It could also serve as a message to his enemies that he does not fear them.

Coming just a few short months after a treaty ostensibly settling the differences between warring Cherokee factions, Ridge’s poem, one might suspect, articulates his ambivalence about the new political order. It could also serve as a message to his enemies that he does not fear them. In late 1846 and early 1847, Ridge was putting into motion his return to the Cherokee nation: collecting reparations, re-purchasing the family settlement, moving into his family’s former home. Dated in late 1846, then, the poem becomes extraordinarily suggestive. If the poet does not fear the “smoke of Hell,” it is unlikely that he fears John Ross.

Ridge never stopped writing poetry. Yet during his lifetime he was known more as a Democratic newspaper editor than as a literary figure. Even his brief attempt to fashion himself as a novelist failed financially. After his death, his widow arranged for the publication of his collected poems. In an unsigned Preface, possibly written by Elizabeth Wilson Ridge herself, we learn that “Mr. Ridge lost in the excitement of political life his youthful ambition for literary fame.” The posthumous collection was an attempt to restore Ridge’s significance as a poet (the praise of the “Eastern … press” gets a mention), as well as to generate money for his widow. Interestingly, though, the collection does not include “To a Thunder Cloud,” either because the poem was lost or because it did not conform to the apolitical, literary version of John Rollin Ridge put forward by the preface.

The collection sold poorly, in any case, and Ridge was largely forgotten for over a century. In a 1979 article in *MELUS*, Thomas King identified Ridge's *Joaquín Murieta* as the first novel by a Native American writer, and in 1990 Ridge's writing was included in the *Heath Anthology of American Literature.* After that, interest in Ridge developed in more significant ways. Today, scholars like John Carlos Rowe and Mark Rifkin have done excellent work on Ridge, particularly in reconsidering his first and only novel. Despite this, there is much more to do. No complete scholarly collection of Ridge's writing exists, and most of his prose remains scattered in nineteenth-century newspapers and periodicals from Arkansas to Texas to California, many of them un-digitized. For nearly a century, Ridge's prediction that his "works in cold neglect may rot" seemed to have come to pass. Now, however, his voice—in all its bombast—is re-emerging.

Further Reading

While Ridge's complete writings are not yet collected, his novel and many of the articles and poems he wrote throughout his life are available in print. See John Rollin Ridge, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta, the Celebrated California Bandit,* ed. Joseph Henry Jackson (Norman, Okla., 1955); John Rollin Ridge, *Poems* (San Francisco, 1868); John Rollin Ridge, *A Trumpet of Our Own: Yellow Bird's Essays on the North American Indian,* eds. David Farmer and Rennard Strickland (San Francisco, 1981); and Edward Everett Dale and Gaston Litton, eds.*Cherokee Cavaliers: Forty Years of Cherokee History as Told in the Correspondence of the Ridge-Watie-Boudinot Family,* (Norman, Okla., and London, 1995).

The original manuscript of Ridge's "To a Mockingbird" is housed in the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. A published version can be found in Ridge's posthumous collection, *Poems*, from 1868. For the poem considered at length here, see Yellow Bird, "To a Thunder Cloud," *Arkansas State Gazette* 9:2 (January 1847).

For a biography of Ridge, see James W. Parins, *John Rollin Ridge: His Life and Works*. (Lincoln, Neb., and London, 2004).

For the establishment of Ridge as the first Native American novelist, see Thomas King, "Additions to 'A Bibliography of Native Novels.'" *MELUS* 6:4 (1979): 79.

For recent scholarship on Ridge, see especially John Carlos Rowe, "Highway Robbery: 'Indian Removal,' the Mexican-American War, and American Identity in *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta*," *NOVEL* 31:2 (1998): 149-173; Jesse Alemán, "Assimilation and the Decapitated Body Politic in *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta*," *Arizona Quarterly* 60:1 (2004): 71-98; and Mark Rifkin, "For the wrongs of our poor bleeding country': Sensation, Class, and Empire in Ridge's *Joaquín Murieta*," *Arizona Quarterly* 65:2 (2009): 27-56.

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Gordon Fraser is a PhD candidate in English at the University of Connecticut. Last January, he held a Jay and Deborah Last Fellowship at the American Antiquarian Society. His scholarship has appeared in *NOVEL*, *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, *The Henry James Review*, and *Victorian Literature and Culture*. His dissertation, "American Cosmologies: Race and Revolution in the Nineteenth Century," deals with the literatures of revolutionary violence across the long nineteenth century, from Black Nationalism to Cherokee Nationalism to the Hawaiian independence movement. He is currently a Draper Dissertation Fellow at the University of Connecticut Humanities Institute.

Making Slavery in New France

Indigenous and Atlantic Histories

Common-place sits down with Brett H. Rushforth to discuss his 2012 book, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France*, and the challenges of integrating Atlantic history, Native history, and continental history.

The enslavement of Native Americans in Canada is not usually high on the list of topics in early American and Atlantic history, or even the history of slavery. What led you to tell this particular story?

Between the 1660s and 1760s, the colonists of New France held thousands of American Indians as slaves, perhaps as many as ten thousand over the course of the century in a relatively small colony. Targeting hundreds of distinct Native peoples, the slave trade that supplied the colony reached across vast spans of geography, from Plains Apache villages on the southwestern Plains, to Sioux settlements in modern Minnesota, through Fox and Sauk communities near the Great Lakes, and into the St. Lawrence Valley. Enslaved Natives lived in every major settlement in New France, and many were shipped to French islands in the Caribbean. Unlike most North American colonies, in New France enslaved Indians remained the predominant form of unfree labor throughout the eighteenth century. Given the extent and scale of this slave system—and how profoundly it shaped both French-Native relations and social life in the St. Lawrence Valley—it is less remarkable that I stumbled onto the topic than that so little had been written about it before.

My initial question was fairly straightforward. I knew that French fur traders were relatively successful at forming alliances with Native peoples: they lived in Native villages, learned Native languages, and developed long-term intimate relationships with Native women. These bonds, mostly forged for the purposes of trade, also translated into important military alliances that protected the people of New France from their much more numerous British colonial neighbors. Yet French colonists also held a significant number of Indians as slaves. *Bonds of Alliance* began as a dissertation studying the nexus of these two colonial dynamics, assessing the relationship between alliance and slavery in French-Native relations.

As long as Native history is treated as a separate field of study, Native

peoples will likely remain marginal to serious discussion of “colonial America,” absurd as it might seem to discuss settler colonialism without accounting for the people who lived in the areas being colonized.

Although I did not realize it at first, this question forced me into a simultaneous exploration of two worlds that had been discussed more or less separately in earlier scholarship. Until very recently, historians of New France, like those studying other North American colonies, tended to focus either on colonial settlements and their Atlantic ties, or on the history of European-Native relations, but rarely both together. This made the slave trade hard to see because in each context only a small piece of the system was visible. Social historians came across enslaved Natives a few at a time in judicial, notarial, or Catholic parish records: a handful of Fox teenagers growing hemp, a few Sioux children working as domestics, and a string of individuals vaguely identified as “Panis/Pany” washing laundry or loading boats. Scholars of French-Native relations read Fox and Sioux complaints about French-sponsored slave raids. But it was impossible to evaluate the significance of these fragments in isolation. My starting question forced me to cross the usual regional divides because answering it required me to look at both French colonial towns and French-Native interactions. I had to search for enslaved people in the baptismal and burial records, notarized contracts and inventories, court dossiers, and institutional papers that had provided such rich material for social histories of the St. Lawrence Valley. But I also had to search for evidence of the slave trade in the official correspondence, missionary letters, and travel accounts that informed studies of Native history. Over time I began to see connections between shifting slave populations in French settlements and shifting geopolitics in the western region the French called the *pays d’en haut* (“the upper country,” roughly the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley). It also became clear that these connections spilled into the Atlantic. French ideas about the Niger River Valley influenced their reading of the Platte River Valley. Martinique’s struggle to get African slaves during Saint Domingue’s sugar boom facilitated slaving raids on the Great Plains. Freedom suits by enslaved Africans in Paris emboldened enslaved Indians in Montreal.

Although Atlantic and continental approaches to early America overlap in important ways, Atlantic histories have tended to overlook the centrality of American Indians to the shaping of colonial development, while continental histories have often underestimated the degree to which Europe and Africa influenced interior North America. As long as Native history is treated as a separate field of study, Native peoples will likely remain marginal to serious discussion of “colonial America,” absurd as it might seem to discuss settler colonialism without accounting for the people who lived in the areas being colonized. *Bonds of Alliance* links these two approaches, developing indigenous and Atlantic contexts with equal attention. By demonstrating the connections, and not just the distinctions, between these two worlds, I hope my work will inspire others to develop new ways of understanding early modern colonialism by fully reckoning with Native peoples as influential actors in the Atlantic

world.

One of the key distinctions you make is between the process of enslavement and the status of being a slave. Why was that so central to your argument?

Slavery has taken so many forms throughout human history that historians, anthropologists, and sociologists scarcely know how to define it. That is why some of the most important works on comparative slavery center on the narrow question: what is slavery? Many of these studies—most notably Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death* and Claude Meillasseux's *Anthropologie de l'esclavage (The Anthropology of Slavery)*—respond to this question by searching for abstract analytic frameworks that make slavery more universally comprehensible. Slavery, they insist, is X but not Y; it has these attributes but not those. Recognizing the wide variety of societies that practiced slavery, the goal of these works is to filter out the extraneous particulars in order to identify common denominators that define the essence of a complex and evolving institution.

Bonds of Alliance takes nearly the opposite approach, reconstructing slavery within its specific cultural, legal, economic, and political contexts rather than reducing it to a set of common characteristics. The Latin term for slave, *famulus/famula*, nicely captures slavery's historical connection to other institutions that regulate intimate expressions of power. And like many of those institutions—family, household, and property, for example—the meaning of slavery varied significantly across time and space. As I began this book, it seemed much more interesting and useful to emphasize particularity over commonality, to recreate (to the extent possible) the specific ways that people conceived of and attempted to shape the role of enslaved people within their communities. My approach was most influenced by an article I read during my second year of graduate school, written by James Watson, a historian of China. As he explains, slavery is best understood in relation to other institutions and statuses within a given society rather than in relation to slavery in other societies. "The relationship characterized by slavery is by no means universal," he argues, "but it is 'special' in the sense that, wherever and whenever it appears, slavery *is*distinguishable from other forms of exploitation in the same society."

As I worked to understand the particular expressions of slavery in both the Native communities of the *pays d'en haut* and the French communities of the Mediterranean and Caribbean, I was struck by just how different the logic of the two systems seemed to be. The usual commonalities were there: the violent alienation of outsiders, persons being owned like property, captive labor performing various tasks for another person or household. But, while slavery stood apart from other forms of subordination in each society, its essential purpose was quite different in Native and French minds.

One of the most marked of these differences was how each group understood *enslavement*: the process of making someone a slave. For Native people,

enslavement was the most important aspect of slavery, really its central purpose. Subordinating enemies demonstrated the slavers' strength and, they believed, captured the power of the victims. But the intent was not to create a perpetual underclass to labor for the captors. Instead, slavery in the indigenous *pays d'en haut* was incorporative, drawing outsiders in through a process of forced assimilation. Native people thus spent very little energy policing pathways out of slavery, and in many ways they encouraged such journeys, because the more an outsider assimilated, the more fully the purpose of enslavement would be realized.

French slavery, on the other hand, focused on perpetuating slaves' status, keeping them in bondage as long as possible so they could work to produce sellable commodities like tobacco and sugar. Unlike their indigenous counterparts, French thinkers drew a strict legal and moral distinction between the act of enslavement and the institution of slavery. To their minds, enslavement was so complete as to effectively end the life of the captive, and the captor's choice to spare the victim's life granted him unrestricted ownership of the spared captive. Rather than focus on entries into slavery, then, French efforts centered on closing down pathways out of slavery. This often meant creating narratives of exclusion that made it difficult for former slaves to assimilate into colonial society. It also facilitated a legally plural empire in which enslavement, slavery, and the merchant activities that depended on both could operate in separate legal spheres—insulating Caribbean planters from continental critiques of West African slaving and French sugar merchants from the moral hazards of profiting from slave labor.

When these two very different ways of understanding slavery came into prolonged conversation in the North American slave trade, their divergent approaches to enslavement became both a point of conflict and a site of creative adaptation. The French would have preferred, for example, to obscure the ethnic identity of captives and to ignore the circumstances of their capture. This made little sense to their Native allies, for whom the identity of their captives and the means of their subordination were of central importance. Similar tensions emerged over questions of how permanent and inescapable slave status should be, including what happened to enslaved enemies when their people reconciled and formed alliances with their Native captors or their French owners. Enslavement, then, provides a useful window onto both the cultural differences separating French and Native slaveries and the adaptations and innovations that grew out of their encounter.

The second chapter stands out in Bonds of Alliance *because it is primarily an intellectual history of French ideas about slavery in the Caribbean. When in the process of writing the book did you decide that you needed such a chapter, and can you expand a bit on the role of the Caribbean ideologically in Canadian slave practices?*

Chapter 2 ("The Most Ignoble and Scandalous Kind of Subjection") draws its title from the writings of the seventeenth-century legal philosopher Hugo

Grotius, whose 1626 book *De jure belli et pacis* (*The Rights of War and Peace*) both reflected and shaped French approaches to slavery. I had initially meant for this chapter to be a brief synthesis of existing literature on the emergence of slavery in the French Atlantic world. As it turned out, relatively little work had explored the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century origins of French slavery, and most work focused on the later eighteenth century. So I had to piece the narrative together using a wide range of manuscript and printed primary sources in French and Caribbean archives.

The story that emerged centers on how French laws and institutions responded to a resurgence of slavery in the sixteenth century in the Iberian Atlantic and, more urgently, in North Africa where thousands of French captives labored as slaves themselves. So there is a fair amount of legal history, including some purely intellectual history, in this early discussion of French slavery. But those ideas are not legible outside their social context, which is why much of the chapter focuses on the lived realities of slavery in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French world.

A related question would be to ask why it seems natural to characterize the study of European (but not Native American) ideas about slavery as "intellectual history." The book's first two chapters ask essentially the same questions of two different communities, exploring how each of them understood, explained, and practiced slavery in the decades preceding their North American encounter. Yet I think many, and possibly most, readers will draw a similar distinction between the two because of the sources on which they are based. I would hope no one believes that only Europeans had ideas about slavery (while Indians had timeless, unthinking traditions). Yet it would be hard to dispute that analyzing Algonquian insults ("I lift up her breechcloth, treat her like a slave," "[you are a] slave woman's worthless penis") feels quite different than reading Grotius. But as Michèle Duchet, Laurent Dubois, and Hilary Beckles have argued, we should not allow the scarcity of surviving sources to persuade us that non-Europeans existed, in Beckles's words, "in an atheoretical world which was devoid of ideas." Instead, our challenge is to find creative ways to see ideas where they can be seen, whether they were printed on a page or expressed in a ritual feast. Despite having access to quite different source bases, I have tried to take the ideas of each group seriously, and to see how they fit within a social world where slavery was only one of many subordinate statuses.

You argue that the slave trade empowered France's Indian allies in such a way that they were able to thwart French territorial expansion in the interior for decades. Can you explain how that process worked?

The North American slave trade did not operate with European aggressors on one side and victimized Indians on the other. Native peoples participated in the slave trade and often determined its contours to suit their evolving interests. Initially, slaves passed from Native to French hands in small-scale diplomatic ceremonies, where captive enemies were given as gifts to create or affirm alliances. Offering a captive to an ally signaled the giver's strength and

enjoined the receiver to accept the victim's people as a shared enemy. The Native peoples of the *pays d'en haut* used slavery as a way to assert their vision of alliance with colonial newcomers. By raiding a neighbor, then giving or selling the captives to the French, they marked the victims as outsiders and asked the French to do the same. When these raids succeeded—and they often did—they profoundly limited French options as they tried to extend their colonial reach.

For example, when French traders started moving into Sioux country in earnest around the beginning of the eighteenth century, their allies (who were at war with the Sioux) felt betrayed, fearing the strength the Sioux would draw from European weapons. French traders, they complained, "were carrying aid to their enemies." For the next four decades, each time French traders reached into Sioux country, their efforts were thwarted by strategic slave raiding that targeted Sioux villages and then sold the slaves to French buyers. Slave raids disrupted trade in the short term, and French colonists holding Sioux slaves predictably hurt longer-term efforts to develop a French-Sioux alliance.

Perhaps the best example of this occurred in 1742. After months of negotiations, a French trader convinced a large number of Sioux that the French could stop the slave raids and mediate a peace between them and their French-allied enemies. When Sioux delegates made the long trip to Montreal to formalize this relationship, they found Sioux children working as slaves in French households. Angry at this obvious evidence of French duplicity, the Sioux delegation left Montreal without concluding an agreement, forcing French traders out of Sioux country for the third time in as many decades. The success of this strategy allowed New France's Native allies to use the French demand for slaves as a weapon against French westward expansion, blocking attempted alliances west of the Mississippi River that would have drawn the French far deeper into the North American interior.

One of the key concepts over the past twenty years for understanding Native-French interactions in the interior, or pays d'en haut*, has been Richard White's "middle ground." It seems in* Bonds of Alliance *that you seek not only to revise the concept but also to transcend it (you cite White frequently, but rarely if ever use the phrase in your text). How did you come to decide to frame the book in that way?*

Richard White's *The Middle Ground* is an extraordinarily insightful book and has deservedly become one of the classics of twentieth-century American historiography. It would be difficult to overstate the book's significance in reorienting how historians discuss cultural encounters in early America, and French-Native relations in particular. Above all, White powerfully demonstrated that early American cultural relations were not a zero-sum game between two fully separate entities, with colonizers either eroding Native cultures or failing to do so in the face of Native resistance. In much of North America, colonizers and Native people could only obtain their objectives by adapting to what they perceived to be the cultural expectations of the other. Over time,

through thousands of small acts of accommodation, a new regional culture emerged that was neither fully Native nor European but a product of the colonial encounter. *Bonds of Alliance* follows this way of understanding colonial-Native relations, arguing that the Native slave trade itself was a product of exactly the kind of cultural adaptation and innovation that White had in mind. As I explain in the introduction, "Slavery reveals a somber dimension to cultural accommodation in the Pays d'en Haut, showing that its success was often founded on a shared commitment to violence. Yet even this violence was a product of mutual adaptation and produced new cultural forms that persisted for generations" (11).

However, I decided not to use the specific term "the middle ground" for two reasons. First, as a general rule I avoided all jargon or catch phrases that would mean something particular to scholars already familiar with them but that might be misread or not understood by students or general readers. Second, as White himself has noted, in the two decades since he published the book, the idea of "the middle ground" has taken on a life of its own, applied to such varied historical contexts that it has come to mean many things to many people. Rather than use a phrase carrying so much scholarly baggage, I chose to explain my interpretation on its own terms, leaving it to others to make what comparisons they found most useful.

Then, too, despite broad agreement on the general *process* of cultural encounter, *Bonds of Alliance*and *The Middle Ground* offer substantially different readings of certain historical dynamics that shaped French-Native relations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With over nine hundred pages of text between the two books, it would be impossible to explain every interpretive difference here. But there are several ways that, in my view, accounting for Native slavery invites a reconsideration of important aspects of both Native and French colonial histories. Ranging from the nature of the indigenous social world of the *pays d'en haut* to the forces checking French westward expansion, the slave trade provides a new lens through which to view questions that have interested scholars studying this region for decades. And because it linked the *pays d'en haut* to the broader dynamics of the early modern Atlantic, the Indian slave trade powerfully reveals that the Native people of the North American interior were simultaneously more connected to, and less overwhelmed by, early modern colonialism than previous studies have suggested.

Further reading:

For James Watson's comments on understanding slavery, see "Slavery as an Institution," in Watson, ed., *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Berkeley, 1980): 1-15. On the question of definitions of slavery, see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982); Claude Meillasseux, *Anthropologie de l'esclavage: le ventre de fer et d'argent* (Paris, 1986); Laurent Dubois, "An Enslaved Enlightenment: Rethinking the Intellectual History of the French Atlantic," *Social History* 31 (February 2006): 1-14. For

further perspectives on Native American and European interactions, see Paul Cohen, “Was there an Amerindian Atlantic?: Reflections on the Limitations of a Historiographical Concept,” *History of European Ideas* 34 (2008): 388-410; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, 1991).