

**THE COMPLETE CITIZEN: THE MARINER AS CITIZEN IN ANTEBELLUM U.S.  
LITERARY CULTURE**

by

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# **THE COMPLETE CITIZEN: THE MARINER AS CITIZEN IN ANTEBELLUM U.S.**

## **LITERARY CULTURE**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2014

Although much political discourse of the antebellum period characterized the mariner as a problem for the emerging nation and its body politic to solve, the era's literary culture adopted a position that contrasts the expressed ideas of early U.S. political figures in its more complicated perspective of the sailor. Ultimately fickle and variable, U.S. maritime literature published before the Civil War nevertheless demonstrates an intricate, nuanced understanding of what happens when citizenship finds itself unmoored and adrift in the currents of inter- and intranational aquatic spaces. In other words, antebellum literary culture rejects the postures of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. Authors like James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, and J. H. Ingraham value the variegated political significance and ideals attached to their fictional sailors. They present their mariners as contributing necessary and positive features to the body politic, either by reinforcing extant civic models or proposing new ones. Of course, the representation of the sailor as citizen also emerges as a complicated, vexed topic in the literature of the era. While the common sailor might find himself an idealized civic model, other maritime figures—the pirate and the riverman—appear ultimately beyond the ken of the body politic. What we find, then, in the antebellum treatment of the mariner-citizen are two uneven strands of development: On the one hand, authors like Cooper, Ingraham, and authors of pirate narratives stake out conservative positions regarding the sailor's civic fitness, recuperating the sailor as a political figure only by fitting him or her to extant models of citizenship and by removing the

revolutionary threats embodied by the historical sailors described in work by Peter Linebaugh, Marcus Rediker, and Leon Fink. On the other hand, authors like Melville, Emil Klauprecht, and the often anonymous authors of Mike Fink legends employ their maritime narratives to take more politically progressive positions—using the mariner to redefine civic ideals or underscoring the ways that rivermen, necessarily national, internal maritime figures offer a more problematic challenge to U.S. civic ideals than the socially and politically egalitarian seaman.

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## **1.0 THE PROBLEM OF THE MARINER AND THE MARINE IN U.S. ANTEBELLUM CULTURE**

Citizenship has long constituted a central concern in U.S. life. To whom the term applies, what the term grants, and the expectations facing those understood as citizens constitute subjects that have driven and continue to drive debates over public policy in the United States to say nothing of the effect that on-going, dynamic concepts of national belonging and rights have had on an understanding of American-ness as both an abstraction as well as something articulated through culture. The centrality of citizenship to conversations about U.S. life appears inarguable; the shift from British colony to sovereign nation marks as well a shift from subject to citizen. Nevertheless, the founding documents of the United States offer few answers to questions as central to U.S. civic life as who counts as a citizen, why, and what rights and privileges does such status afford them. In other words, if the Declaration of Independence and, later, the U.S. Constitution “created the status of ‘American citizen,’” as James Kettner argues, they did so ambiguously (10). That the Declaration of Independence has little to say about citizenship is perhaps to be expected of a document meant more as manifesto than official doctrine. On the other hand, that the Constitution “[says] little about citizenship” should surprise us, given its status as the means by which the emerging United States sought to define itself (Ricci 70). The document clearly deploys the term and outlines some ways in which the state and states should conduct themselves towards the nation’s political bodies. Yet the rights of the citizen appear as

the appended Bill of Rights—thereby understood as important but *additional* components of the document—and a definition of who qualifies for citizenship appears not at all.<sup>i</sup>

Given this reticence, it should come as little surprise that debates about the definitions and limits of citizenship played out within the various branches of the federal government throughout the antebellum period. The Alien and Sedition Acts (1798), the Naturalization Act of 1802, the Missouri Compromise (1820), on-going debates over coverture throughout the nineteenth century, *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), and the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) all underscore the importance of citizenship to U.S. governance, as well as its importance to the body politic. After all, *Dred Scott* and the Fourteenth Amendment had real and abrupt effects on the political lives of African Americans, categorizing them as non-citizens in the court case and asserting their citizenship in the amendment. That citizenship persists as a central concern should also be obvious: The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), the extension of the vote to women (1920), and the Defense of Marriage Act (1996) each speak to the ways in which political and civil privileges have been both augmented and circumscribed during the last century-and-a-half. The debates over citizenship seem endless and they appear so, in part at least, due to the on-going reliance of inclusion/exclusion as the matrix through which the nation defines citizenship. As Rogers Smith explains: “Through most of U.S. history, lawmakers pervasively and unapologetically structured U.S. citizenship in terms of illiberal and undemocratic ... hierarchies” (1).

The intersection between U.S. literature and citizenship has focused largely on this topic—what Smith calls “ascriptive inequality”—particularly in the nineteenth century (R. Smith 5). Most texts saw fit to chronicle an emerging and emerged sense of U.S. citizenship through a comparison of those who belong and have rights to those who find themselves outside the nation



even as they reside within its boundaries. Cathy Davidson's *The Revolution and the Word* (1986, 2004) in fact argues that due to the exclusion of various groups from the body politic imaginative literature and the novel in particular became sites for people to consider the relationship of those denied access or full access to the term citizen (9-10). Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* offer an excellent instance of this situation in their attention to Natty Bumppo's shift from colonial subject to U.S. citizen against the backdrop of non-citizen others in the form of both *Native Americans* and expatriated European settlers. The limited or non-civic status of women, African Americans, immigrants, children, etc. appears throughout nineteenth-century U.S. literature both directly and indirectly.

Much of the work that we now call literary citizenship studies has focused on these types of narratives—those that explore the circumscribed citizenship that women, children, and ethnic and racial minorities. Brook Thomas, Caroline Levander, Gregg Crane, and Priscilla Wald have all produced valuable work in the field of nineteenth-century U.S. literary citizenship studies.<sup>ii</sup> These authors have not only helped establish a connection between imaginative literature and citizenship; they have also provided invaluable insight into this relationship. Crane's emphasis on "the reciprocal relation between cultural, political, and legal deployments of higher law reasoning" in regard to the civic status of African Americans (5), or Levander's articulation of the way in which nineteenth-century literature "chart[s] the child's representations of self and state" in highly racialized terms underscore the ways in which literature employed various discursive and rhetorical strategies to, depending on the narrative's aims, help dismantle or codify civic norms (23).

As important as much of this work has been, it has focused on citizenship from a terrestrial perspective. In other words, for the authors of these texts, citizenship becomes a vexed

issue within the physical territory of a nation. They tie citizenship to soil. This dissertation adopts a different approach and asks the following questions: What happens when U.S. citizenship heads out to sea? Does the mariner occupy a civic position that is in tension with the civic norms of antebellum U.S. political culture in ways not totally dissimilar from the woman, child, African American, or immigrant? The contention here is that the mariner inhabits a similarly vexed civic category and finds herself or himself situated at the periphery of the body politic. How literature engages with this civic figure is the subject of this dissertation. In looking at the mariner as citizen in antebellum U.S. fiction, this dissertation will therefore uncouple citizenship and the land and thereby think of citizenship as something that has mobility—a mobility that affects the perception of it once the citizen has returned home. The work of Crane, Levander, Thomas, and Wald has done much to challenge the sense of U.S. citizenship in literature as monolithic; they have demonstrated that citizenships rather than citizenship circulates throughout nineteenth-century U.S. literature. This dissertation seeks to characterize literary citizenship as dynamic, mobile, and fluid as well—something that continued to matter outside the boundaries of the United States or, for that matter, outside the boundaries of any nation. Civic concerns do not disappear, this dissertation contends, when literary citizens head out to sea; these concerns are, instead, ever present.

That earlier critics working in literary citizenship studies overlook the debates over mariner's citizenship and civic practices is hardly surprising. The determination of citizenship has for a long time derived from *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis*, the right of soil and the right of blood. Both methods of establishing civic status rely on a relationship to the physical space of the nation; one becomes a citizen because they belong to either the blood or the land of the body

politic. The term citizenship itself speaks, from the Latin root, to the proximity of an individual to the city and therefore to the land.

This relationship between land and citizenship has been privileged over and against the relationship between the sea and citizenship throughout the history of this country, perhaps finding its most expression in Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893). Prepared for an address at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and in keeping with the general trends of a fair bent on reinforcing the host country's exceptional status, Turner's essay delineates the features of the United States that established its remarkable and particular successes as a nation state throughout its first century. Turner's articulation of his frontier thesis relies heavily upon a valorization of a landed horizon, but it also employs an implicit dismissal of the importance of an aquatic frontier. As he notes, "this perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West" (184). Through this rhetorical construction, in which a "true" perspective on U.S. history derives not from the ocean wastes but from the interior ones, Turner establishes a slightly paradoxical view of the United States: The unsettled but naturally productive inland regions provide the foundation for all U.S. achievement, while the nation's coastal territories—the physical locus of European social, cultural, and political foundations in North America—play a relatively insignificant role in the country's successes. Further reinforcing the paradoxical qualities of his characterization of U.S. social, political, and cultural development, Turner attributes an obviously aquatic term to the defining feature of American success—"fluidity." He thereby claims that the United States has attained its great stature

through the fluidity afforded by the continental landscape comprising it rather than the oceanic space surrounding it. Fluid does not give rise to fluidity, while solid land does. The effect here is obvious: Minimize the maritime and maximize the landed concerns and achievements of the nation at the expense of logic. Turner clearly uses “fluidity” here in a metaphorical sense, yet his employment of the term to characterize the soil in contradistinction to the water begs our attention and becomes emblematic of the lengths to which the nineteenth-century could go to reinforce the continental character of the United States against its substantial coasts, thriving fresh- and saltwater ports, and penetration by numerous, navigable rivers. Although no longer the governing theory of U.S. development, Turner’s frontier thesis remained an intellectual touchstone throughout the latter part of the twentieth century, as Richard Slotkin’s three-volume examination of the frontier mythos attests.

Yet, contrary to Turner’s contention in “The Significance of the Frontier,” and following later historians like Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, as part of the burgeoning Atlantic world, the British colonies in the North America and, later, the United States owe much of their economic and political prominence to maritime prowess. According to Linebaugh and Rediker, the Atlantic world was “essential to English expansion, commerce, and the mercantilist state” and, by the late eighteenth century, it had a similar importance for the revolting colonies (144, 214). Thus, the Atlantic world offered a significant boon to the nations that comprised it and seamen became “necessary instruments ... for the walls of the State could not subsist without them” (Linebaugh and Rediker 143). This was especially true in Great Britain’s revolting North American colonies, where “sailors were prime movers in the cycle of rebellion” by sparking riots in port towns and offering both valuable models of resistance in their “collective struggles over food, pay, work, and discipline” at sea, and a foundation for the formation of the United States

(Linebaugh and Rediker 214, 211). In this sense, the sea reinforced and held up the concept of governance that existed on the land. The connection between the U.S. and the sea was and is durable. After all, as Thomas Philbrick explains in his study of James Fenimore Cooper and U.S. sea narratives, the sea “represented the arena of past glories, the training ground of the national character, and the field on which wealth and power were to be won for the country” (*James Fenimore Cooper* 1).

Linebaugh and Rediker’s, as well as Philbrick’s, historical assessments of the relationship between the sea and seafaring and the economic and political underpinnings of the United States are essential for understanding the place of the mariner in antebellum U.S. politics, culture, and society. Nevertheless, the relationship between the sea and the nation is more complicated than the former’s merely providing a foundation on which the latter establishes itself, particularly when one takes into consideration the relationship between the sea and seafaring to U.S. citizenship. As Nathan Perl Rosenthal’s current work underscores, maritime experiences shaped the early understanding of U.S. national citizenship and often challenged the ideals of the same.

The work that has attended to the maritime dimensions of citizenship have largely been historical in nature and has, therefore, used literature as an index rather than an object of close scrutiny. This project privileges the literary culture as a site of civic analysis because the maritime literature of the antebellum period revels in this tension between the sailor and citizenship, teasing out the civic ramifications and political valences of seaborne labor. Although ultimately fickle and variable, the U.S. literature of the sea published before the Civil War—primarily between 1820 and 1860—nevertheless demonstrates a much more complicated understanding of what happens when citizenship finds itself unmoored and adrift in the currents of inter- and intranational aquatic spaces. In other words, antebellum literary culture does not

adopt the posture of Madison or Adams, rejecting outright the sailor as a desirable citizen. Authors like James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, and J. H. Ingraham value the variegated political significance and ideals attached to their fictional sailors. They present their mariners as contributing necessary and positive features to the body politic, either by reinforcing extant civic models or proposing new ones. Of course, the representation of the sailor as citizen also emerges as a complicated, vexed topic in the literature of the era: While the common sailor might find himself an idealized civic model, other maritime figures—the pirate and the riverman—appear ultimately beyond the ken of the body politic.

What we find, then, in the antebellum treatment of the mariner-citizen, I argue, are two uneven strands of development: On the one hand, authors like Cooper, Ingraham, and other authors of pirate narratives stake out reactionary positions regarding the sailor's civic fitness, recuperating the sailor as a political figure only by fitting them to extant models of citizenship and by removing the revolutionary threats embodied by the historical sailors described in work by Linebaugh, Rediker, and Leon Fink. On the other hand, authors like Melville, Emil Klauprecht, and the many, often anonymous authors of Mike Fink legends employ their maritime narratives to take more politically progressive positions—using the mariner to redefine civic ideals or underscoring the ways that rivermen, necessarily national, internal maritime figures, offer a more problematic challenge to U.S. civic ideals than the socially and politically egalitarian seaman.

This dissertation builds on the work of Hester Blum, Jennifer Schell, Margaret Cohen, and Jason Berger, as well as the maritime histories of Marcus Rediker, by looking to the literary representation of sailors as a means of understanding more fully the political and social texture of the antebellum U.S. Specifically, this dissertation aims at inserting itself into an existing gaps

in literary oceanic studies. To begin, much of the material about the antebellum maritime experience fails to explicitly concern itself with this connection between citizenship and maritime regions. It is, of course, implicit in Linebaugh and Rediker's work, as well as that of Paul Gilje, but those authors work primarily in field of history, and I consider this relationship through literary culture. As Hester Blum notes, "few scholars (Marcus Rediker is a notable exception) have taken up the questions of labor, citizenship, and nation in terms of seamen" ("The Prospect of Oceanic Studies" 671).

Perhaps the reason for this critical disregard for the civic dimensions of literary sailors finds its origin in the landed nationalism of the nineteenth-century embodied by the likes of Frederick Jackson Turner, or, perhaps, as Blum suggests, its origin derives from the nineteenth-century incomprehension of the sailor as citizen that figures like R. B. Forbes articulated. In his *An Appeal to the Merchants and Ship Owners on the Subject of Seamen* (1854), Forbes explains that "the seaman may be said to have no political existence" (6). Forbes does not blame the sailor's civic inactivity on any moral failings of the sailor but rather on his material existence: "He cannot vote because of his absence, or for the reason that when present near the polls, he may not have been there long enough to warrant the exercise of his right" (6). Regardless of the reason, literary critics have overlooked the way that antebellum maritime literature, in spite of the sailor's problematic status as a citizen, explores the mariner's civic dimensions. This project thereby takes seriously the connection between the sailor and the nation that someone like Forbes appears to reject.

In fact, in attending to the seaman as citizen and by locating the ways in which maritime literature constructs a more complex if uneven understanding of the antebellum understanding of the mariner as citizen in U.S. politics and culture, this dissertation challenges not only the views

of Turner or Forbes; rather it contradicts, more broadly, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century descriptions of ideal citizens found in the writings of figures central to the formation of U.S. political and cultural thought. Such early U.S. literary and political figures conceived of the defining features of the United States in similar ways, locating the potential for future success not in the fathomless depths off coastal communities but rather in the soil. For early U.S. political figures the ocean threatened not only literal shipwreck or tempest but also political shipwreck and tempest wrought by the mariners who traversed the seas. In other words, early U.S. political discourse framed the sailor in ambivalent terms at best.

As Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker explain, sailors played a central role during the Stamp Act (1765) protests. Although the legislation “affected all classes of people” and therefore “all were involved in the protests,” “sailors were singled out by many observers for their oppositional leadership and spirit” (229). These protests provided an early and arguably more radical harbinger of what developed a decade later—they were “critical to this half-decade [1761-1766]” during which “the dynamics of social and political relations in the colonies” changed, thereby setting “in motion currents of reformist sentiment with the force of a mountain wind” (Nash *Unknown* 44). They similarly spearheaded later riots in both New York City and Boston, the latter of which we refer to now as the Boston Massacre (Linebaugh and Rediker 231).

Yet toward the role played by sailors in these two key incidents of the inchoate U.S. Revolution, central revolutionary figures such as Thomas Jefferson and John Adams responded with ambivalence at best. The former acknowledged the mistreatment of sailors in the Declaration of Independence, characterizing the activities of press gangs upon the waterfront and the use of impressment upon the seas as “tak[ing] captive” the authors’ “fellow Citizens”



(Declaration of Independence 17). This passage, though, “Jefferson added ... as an afterthought, squeezing them into his rough draft of the Declaration” and, more than that, this particular protestation is, as Linebaugh and Rediker correctly characterize it, “awkward, confused ... [indecisive] about how to classify the sailor (citizen, friend, brother?)” (237).

Closer attention to this moment in the Declaration reinforces Linebaugh and Rediker’s contention that Jefferson and the other authors of the Declaration “tendentiously simplif[y the sailors’] history and role within the movement” (237). For example, the particular crime outlined, *vis à vis* the impressment of sailors into the Royal Navy reads as follows: “[King George III] has constrained our fellow citizens taken captive on the high seas to bear arms against their own country, to become executioners of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands” (Declaration of Independence 17). Not only does this passage lack “the graceful wording and lofty tone of the rest of the Declaration” (Linebaugh and Rediker 237), it also obscures who, exactly, the British crown wrongs and what, precisely, the crime is. Although I contend along with Linebaugh and Rediker that Jefferson and the other authors of the Declaration have the impressment of colonial Americans into naval service in mind, the passage itself refuses to actually employ any term—other than “high seas”—that would indicate that this is the primary concern. There is no mention of impressment or even of sailors. Those “fellow citizens taken captive” *might* be seamen, but they might also be passengers. There is little indication that the British then put them into naval service. To “bear arms against their country” speaks to conscription in the army as much as it does to impressment into the navy. Beyond the troublesome identity of the victimized here, though, we also encounter a conflation of crimes. After all, Jefferson et al do not speak only of impressment but also of men acting as “executioners of their friends and brothers.” The entire sentence is, therefore, a mess that, at first,

seems conciliatory towards the seamen and their grievances but ultimately becomes a muddle, underscoring how the likes of Jefferson little knew how to include mariners into the “revolutionary coalition” even if he knew that he should (Linebaugh and Rediker 237).

It is difficult to classify this halfhearted protest as, simply, the immature perspective of a young Jefferson. He further depreciated the value of U.S. seamen during the events preceding the War of 1812. In a letter to a former classmate and British subject, Jefferson acknowledged the centrality of nautical rights and the rights of seamen to the emerging conflict by noting that the impressment of sailors by the British navy legitimates a declaration of war, since “the first foundations of the social compact would be broken up, were we definitively to refuse its members the protection of their persons and property, while in their lawful pursuits,” by not instigating an official, sanctioned conflict with Great Britain (619). This moment certainly suggests the inclusion of seamen within the U.S. body politic. They have entered the social compact, and “their persons” warrant the protection of the U.S., as would that of any citizen. Paul Gilje has observed that seamen themselves understood the U.S. position in regard to impressment in this way. As he notes, “most Jack Tars believed that the United States went to war with Great Britain in 1812 to protect their freedom” (162).

However, Jefferson’s statements also imply that his concerns rest not so much with Jack Tar and the men before the mast but rather with the men on land investing in and reaping the benefits of global trade. Jefferson does not emphasize the additional grievance that impressment heaps upon poorly paid and physically imperiled sailors. He does not speak to defending the liberty of the sailors or their political rights as citizens of the United States. Jefferson instead suggests that the central insults of impressment lie in the loss of a “person’s”—not a “sailor’s”—property while engaged in the “lawful pursuits” of presumably intra- and international trade.

Importantly, this lost property was not, by and large, the meager holdings of the common seamen (their small collections of clothing and other goods). It was the ship's freight, which often found itself stuck in British ports, unable to be traded.<sup>iii</sup> Furthermore, given their limited investments in the cargo of the vessels they manned, common sailors were less likely to have weighed on Jefferson's conscience in this moment than the largely landed owners of the ship. Their loss of property and the infringement of U.S. economic sovereignty implicated in that loss represented the primary affronts, not the violation of the rights and privileges of individual seamen-citizens.<sup>iv</sup> As Leon Fink's recent historical and cultural survey of nineteenth- and twentieth-century maritime labor makes clear, "the impressment dispute was less about the rights of welfare of seamen than the prerogatives of government over its own citizens" and, I would add, its economic growth through international trade (16). Ships may have flown a banner proclaiming the need for "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights," but it was the former, threatened by the potential "transit duties" imposed by the British on ships crossing the Atlantic, that acted as the primary impetus to war (Gilje 170; Jefferson "Letter" 619).

Adams likewise reinforced the sense of the seaman as inconsequential and subordinate to loftier concerns and individuals even as he aimed to uphold the seaman as embodying ideals of civic virtue. In his diary, Adams writes of his experience on a French ship in 1779: "I never saw so much equality and leveling in any society whatever" as he did upon the ship's deck, where all trod with "footing of perfect equality" ("Diary" 224). Adams clearly reads into these mariners' shipboard lives an egalitarianism that, presumably, he admires, noting, for instance, that the equality aboard the ship is not to be found "in one of our country town meetings in America," let alone on British or American frigates ("Diary" 224). Yet what we characterize initially as Adams's admiration of continental egalitarianism is not only that. He also finds himself

surprised; the environment upon the French ship's quarter-deck does not provide an unqualified distinction between French and Anglo-American vessels but rather a "*strange contrast*" ("Diary" 224, emphasis added).

Adams's interest in and admiration of this "strange contrast" aboard the French naval vessel derives not so much from its potential use as a symbol for his country's political ideals, I would argue, but rather from what it might teach an embryonic United States about creating a hierarchy without class tension. In other words, the strangeness of the contrast is that the French have created not a maritime space in which hierarchies have dissolved but rather one in which the hierarchy operates as constant, unremarkable, and accepted presence. In this diary entry, for instance, Adams implicitly contradicts the "perfect equality" he claims to witness. The captain as well as the common sailor may walk upon the quarter-deck and they may all evince considerable "intimacy," but titles and the concomitant hierarchical structure remain: The common sailors, though they access the quarter-deck do not have cabin privileges, unless Adams fails to remark upon this ("Diary" 223).

Furthermore, Adams displays a keen interest in the discipline of the crew—a "constant subject of speculation" for him ("Diary" 223). This discipline, he notes, appears non-existent, as he saw no "punishments inflicted, no blows struck, nor heard scarcely an angry word from the captain to any of his officers, or from any of the officers to the men" ("Diary" 223). This absence of discipline, importantly, seems to give rise to his sense of equality on the ship. Yet this absence hardly indicates an egalitarian environment. Power and control and the absent discipline remain understood as unidirectional—should punishment arise it would come from the top down in the same way that orders aboard the vessel must. In other words, Adams does not witness the captain exchanging orders and criticisms with his officers or his common sailors on equal footing; he

merely sees no punishments and therefore no infractions of rules executed. The lack of punishment should not induce Adams to characterize the men as walking the quarter-deck with “footing of perfect equality,” since the common sailors and officers must do the captain’s bidding. What Adams witnesses and admires is not just equality but rather a hierarchical system in which a disciplinary system has inculcated subordinates in such a way as to render them compliant. What Adams witnesses and admires is, then, not dissimilar from what Foucault describes more generally as part of the eighteenth-century’s “machinery of power,” that could determine “how one may have a hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines” (*Discipline* 138).

As with Jefferson, then, the seaman gives Adams a figure upon whom he can absentmindedly hang his democratic ideals (equality here and individual liberty in the case of Jefferson). Yet the seaman remains a problem-figure for both men. Even as they inscribe the sailor with civic ideals they continue to deny those same seamen access to the same. Seamen and their rights, or the rights they supposedly embodied, were something to pay lip service to. They were not to be embraced as unequivocally beneficent members of the U.S. body politic. Jefferson and Adams may have understood the importance of the seaman to revolutionary and national projects, yet neither could allow themselves to adopt the more radical aspects of sailors’ political attitudes. They “acknowledged the motley crew but feared its challenge to [their] own vision of America’s future” (Linebaugh and Rediker 237). As such, during the colonial as well as the early republican period, mariners found themselves among the groups “least incorporated into the political body,” a situation due, I would argue, not only to their necessary disassociation from the nation but also from their tendency to both embrace individuals from myriad national

backgrounds and achieve a form of “self-organization ... from below” that frequently came into conflict with the desires of the state (Nash *Urban Crucible* 271; Linebaugh and Rediker 144).<sup>v</sup>

The political and social culture of the early republic though was not so simply ambivalent about the presence of the seaman in the body politic as the above suggests. Although men like Adams and Jefferson were capable of understanding the usefulness and necessity of defending the rights of seamen and incorporating them into the citizenry, they were equally capable of vilifying sailors and casting them as antagonists of the emerging civic and social order. For instance, as Linebaugh and Rediker note, Adams “defended the redcoats [in the Boston Massacre] and made an explicitly racist appeal in court, claiming that the looks of the Afro-Indian sailor Crispus Attucks ‘would be enough to terrify anyone,’” even as he later adopted the dead seaman’s name when signing letters outlining his political opinion (237). For Adams, the sailor does not simply represent a subordinate or even rightly subordinate member of society; the sailor becomes, rather, an embodied threat that deserves extermination. Adams is comfortable with invoking the Attucks as a revolutionary figure when he has been thoroughly neutered (in other words, dead), but alive Attucks is an ineluctable terror. The idea of the sailor might appeal to Adams but not the sailor himself, who effects a strange sympathy in Adams for the British martial apparatus whom he elsewhere maligns as “mobs of the worst sorts, with red coats” (*Novanglus* 40).

James Madison adopted even more explicit contempt for the seaman as member of the U.S. political, social, and cultural community, even if he did not demonstrate the suggested bloodlust of Adams. In his “Republican Distribution of Citizens” (1792), Madison provides his readers with a spectrum of professions for the emerging nation that extends from the husbandman to the sailor. The former sits at the apex of the citizenry, given their “competency,”

“virtue,” “liberty,” and remove from the “bridewells or the bedlams” of the city (“Republican Distribution of Citizens” 97-8). The rural laborer and landowner benefit the new nation; they are the ideal members of U.S. society. Crèvecoeur echoes such sentiments in his earlier *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) by portraying one’s status as a good farmer as a prerequisite for being a good citizen through his contention that he who “is a good farmer, [...] is a sober, peaceable, good citizen” (75). To this good farmer/citizen that both he and Crèvecoeur idolize, Madison opposes the seaman, who lacks virtually every signifier of good republican citizenship ascribed to the husbandman. From Madison’s perspective, the seaman is not simply, an unvirtuous member of society, but rather his status as a member of the nation is questionable to begin with. He writes:

His mind, like his body, is imprisoned within the bark that transports him. ... [H]e sees nothing but the same vague objects ..., the same monotonous occurrences in ports and docks; and at home in his vessel, what new ideas can shoot from the unvaried use of the ropes and the rudder, or from the society of comrades as ignorant as himself. (“Republican Distribution” 98)

For Madison, the seaman’s position as a member of the commonwealth is tenuous at best. He is not at home on land, tied physically to the people that compose the physical manifestation of the political concept of the United States, since he is only “at home in his vessel.” Moreover, the sailor is disconnected from the ongoing public discourse of the nation—public discourse that would inform his habits and positions and opinions as a citizen. From Madison’s perspective, the seaman does not enter into dialogue with men who might imbue him with political ideals or help him articulate his attitudes towards topics that would render him a significant member of political society. He exists in a sphere of his own, in a “society of comrades as ignorant as

himself.” The seaman’s labors do not lend him a cosmopolitan air. He may travel the globe and spend periods of time among European, Asian, African, etc. ports, but such laborious sojourns, in part because they are so laborious, give him none of the intelligence and “profound and comprehensive” knowledge that the husbandman can gather on land, which intelligence and knowledge helps the good farmer become a good citizen (“Republican Distribution of Citizens” 97). He might as well reside among one of those other groups of non-citizens—slaves or inmates—that Madison’s reliance upon the rhetoric of labor and captivity call to mind (the sailors are “imprisoned” in their ships and their work consists of the “monotonous occurrences” in port and the use of “the unvaried use” of the ship’s constituent elements).

The ambivalence and outright rejection of the figure of the good seaman-citizen that one sees in the writings of U.S. revolutionary and political leaders—men who not only offered guidance during the war with Great Britain but also occupied various positions in the executive branch of the new country’s government for the majority of its first three decades—had significant effects on the general public discourse surrounding the sailor in the early republic. Beginning more or less with the late eighteenth-century Quasi War with France, the seaman was frequently figured as a figure of suspect national allegiance. Such sentiments took a slightly different approach than Madison’s questioning of a seaman’s place within the social and political strata, but they were the same in spirit if not in letter.

Looking at Alexander Addison’s *Oration on the Rise and Progress of the United States* (1798), we see implicitly the proposal of the merchant seaman as a potentially treasonous member of the body politic. Much of Addison’s oration pertained to the supposedly duplicitous actions of Mr. Genet, a French diplomat, who stated publicly on his arrival in the United States that “it was not the wish or interest of France that America should engage in the war [between



France and Great Britain]” (7) but who nevertheless privately sought to foment civil conflict and demonstrations if not outright war by “dividing the people from our administration, and turning the efforts of the people against the efforts of the executive” (8) in such a way as to establish a “submission and even ardent devotion to the will of France” in the U.S. (7).

However, the specific actions taken on the part of Mr. Genet in order to effect this internal political division rely almost entirely upon the use of Philadelphia sailors. When Mr. Genet’s plea fell on the deaf ears of President Adams, for instance, the Frenchman “had recourse ... to other means. He fitted out privateers in our ports, he commissioned and engaged our citizens to enter on board those privateers. British ships were taken within our jurisdiction and sold in our ports” (7). Addison directs no blame towards the U.S. citizens participating in a mode of seafaring that runs contrary to the expressed wishes of the U.S. government, in this description. Nevertheless, his description of the means by which the French attempted to influence U.S. foreign policy in relation to Great Britain positions the seaman as the primary conduit through which the French could achieve their goals. The quotation above lists the first three of only four methods by which Genet fostered pro-French sentiment (the fourth is the establishment of associations about which he has little to say). Both the primacy within the list as well as the percentage of it taken up by these descriptions of maritime influence point to a notion of the seaman as a citizen easily persuaded into supporting causes that run contrary to the desires of those leading the country. The seaman is therefore a figure of fluid allegiances and willful disregard of his duties as a citizen.

According to Addison, Genet does not decide to foment discord first among the farmers in rural areas outside Philadelphia, nor does he stir up an anti-British throng among the clerks within the city. Instead, he heads to the waterfront and procures support from sailors, stevedores,

and other maritime laborers. To borrow Gary Nash's description of Bostonian Stamp Act rioters from a couple decades earlier, mariners and their affiliates were "by no means powerless operatives, frenzied with liquor and dancing like puppets on the leading strings of men above them" (*Urban Crucible* 296). As Marcus Rediker's work on his own and with Peter Linebaugh has shown, the seamen of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were politically conscious and acting from their own prerogatives, who ensure that they would become not only "an engine of capitalism in the wake of the bourgeois revolution in England" but also "a setting of resistance, a place to which and in which the ideas and practices of revolutionaries ... re-formed, circulated and persisted" (Linebaugh and Rediker 144-5).

This attitude towards seamen—that they were potentially disloyal and unproductive members of the citizenry—not only informed the public discourse of the early republic but also led to legislation that circumscribed peacetime behavior similar to that which Addison describes above as having occurred during the Quasi-War. In December 1811, for instance, the House of Representatives drafted a bill to "deprive ... of their American character" ships "taking a license from a foreign power, to ... trade with any foreign power" (United States Congress *A Bill to Deprive* 1). Such legislation reinforces the sense of the seaman's slippery national allegiance.

Of course, though pervasive, the belief that the sailor harmed the political and social order of the United States was hardly hegemonic and regard for the seaman from certain quarters was high. For example, Crèvecoeur has as much faith in the mariner as he does in the farmer. His letters about Nantucket and its inhabitants make a concerted effort to establish the island—"a great nursery of seamen, pilots, coasters, and bank-fishermen" (124)—as anything other than a hotbed of recalcitrant and refractory mariners whose confinement to ships makes them ill-bred for the life of a U.S. citizen. It is, instead, a space occupied by productive, law-abiding citizens.

The island has an extensive “apparatus of law,” he notes, but “its coercive powers are seldom wanted or required,” rendering the local jail little more than a faint reminder of discipline (124). Moreover, as Crèvecoeur describes them, the Nantucketers lack the disconnection from the physical space of the United States that Madison implied by referring to their ships as their homes. As he explains, the Nantucket whalers do not divest themselves from their communities, but rather exist as an essential part of a community: while “the greatest part of them are always at sea, pursuing the whale or raising the cod from the surface of the banks; some cultivate their little farms with the utmost diligence; [and] some are employed in exercising various trades” (125). The seaman—at least the Nantucket seaman—is not a completely deracinated, anti-citizen according to Crèvecoeur. Although his language is somewhat unclear, he suggests that some of the whalers maintain a connection to the physical and social space of the nation and exhibits the traits requisite of the good liberal or republican citizen. He capably serves his own interest while not forgetting the good of the general public, maintaining a “probably expectation of reasonable profits or of kindly assistance if they fail” (125).

Other prominent early U.S. American figures didn’t take as direct an approach to upholding the seaman as a figure of good citizenship, but they offered the waterfront world as an implicitly beneficial and important foundational space for the creation of good citizens. In Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography* (1793), the Philadelphian recalls youthful maritime experiences that he suggests instilled in him attributes necessary not simply for becoming a good citizen but rather a leader of good citizens. He writes: “I dislik’d the Trade [candle making] and had a strong Inclination for the Sea; but my Father declar’d against it; however, living near the Water, I was much in and about it, learned early to swim well, and to manage Boats, and when in a Boat or Canoe with other Boys I was commonly allow’d to govern” (6). Here Franklin doesn’t

simply learn how to direct ships or sail or manage them. He learns to govern them. Employing the language of public administration, Franklin retrospectively if implicitly situates the germ of his civic life—he does not employ the political rhetoric prior to this point in his narrative—in a boat. Elsewhere, he ties his emergence as a leader and public servant further to maritime activities:

I was generally a Leader among the Boys, and sometimes led them into scrapes of which I will mention one Instance, as it shows an early projecting public Spirit, tho' not then justly conducted. There was a Salt Marsh that Bounded part of the Mill Pond, on the Edge of which at Highwater, we us'd to stand to fish for Minnows. By much Trampling, we made it a mere Quagmire. My Proposal was to build a Wharf there. (7)

Echoing Defoe's sense of civic involvement ("projecting"), Franklin recalls a moment in which his public servitude—his subservience to the common wealth rather than his self-interest—manifested itself. Importantly, as with his first deployment of political language, the emergence of his civic involvement and his status as a good citizen occurs along the water.<sup>vi</sup> Granted, he does not tie his good citizenship to involvement with sailing or seamanship specifically. Still, he does tie the growth of his sense of public service to maritime activities—building a wharf that will both benefit himself and his friends and contribute to the greater good by diminishing the possibility that they would continue devastating the land around the pond. At least in part, Franklin seems to retrospectively understand the waterfront not as a place that sowed the seeds of vice and refractoriness but rather as a site that allowed him to develop a sense of leadership, governance, and the public spirit that the republican model of U.S. citizenship required.

It is worth recalling the centrality of the sea to his narrative. Born in Boston in the early-eighteenth century, Franklin exploited the maritime access that life in that port town offered him.

He travels by boat to New York, Philadelphia, and London by boat, with each stop meant to lead him closer and closer to success. His maritime travels may not always achieve their desired ends—his trip to London is particularly unsuccessful—but they do play key roles in offering him access to ultimately advantageous situations. Franklin and his *Autobiography* are certainly among the ur-texts for the U.S. myth of the self-made, self-reliant man. To place maritime pursuits or at the very least the use of aquatic spaces as a means of effecting one's self-made status stands in stark contrast to the ideals of various political and public figures during the antebellum U.S. mentioned above. The dissipation and decay of physical, moral, and civic sense supposedly rooted in maritime experience is lacking in Franklin. The sea does not lead to his banishment from U.S. civic life but rather serves as a component of his entry into it.

Franklin and Crèvecoeur give little indication as to why they and few others remain partial to the mariner, while most others looked upon the seaman with aversion during the early republic. They may have developed their interest in and affinity toward sailors due to prolonged exposure to them—Franklin claims to have spent much time upon the water as a youth and Crèvecoeur spent his youth in and near French port towns. Alternately, in the case of Franklin, there may have been class motivation, his background being less noble than Adams's, or, perhaps, as a later reviewer of C. F. Adams's *Richard Henry Dana* noted, he was taken by the sea like so many New England boys (Hill 482).

The sentiments of Crèvecoeur and Franklin, though, occupy a marginal status within the literary and political culture of the pre-Civil War era. Their implicit and explicit paeans to the sailor in their work hardly constitute a substantial body of pro-mariner sentiment. Even within their cited texts we see the maritime diminished in its presence: Crèvecoeur centers his narrative on the republican idol of the yeoman farmer—central to Jefferson's conceptualization of

citizenship and a proper body politic too—while Franklin takes up specifically landed and lettered pursuits to find his income and make his name.

Certainly, as Crevecoeur's and Franklin's interest in the sailor imply, antebellum society and culture did not reject *all* mariners. Jennifer Schell's recent *A Bold and Hardy Race of Men* (2013) argues convincingly for a consistent, sustained portrayal of the heroic whaleman in antebellum literary culture. Yet Schell takes pains to distinguish the idealized representation of the whaleman and the representations of naval and merchant sailors. The general tenor of the antebellum political culture therefore characterized the seaman as morally questionable to highly dubious. Outliers to this opinion appear, but, as Schell notes regarding the unidealized portraits of whalemens during this period, these outliers are precisely that—limit cases that reinforce the standard trope of the recalcitrant mariner unfit for the body politic.

Recent years have seen a significant increase in scholarly interest in the place of the sea in antebellum literary culture, which a text like Schell's epitomizes and which this project wends its way into. As Margaret Cohen has claimed “[D]espite the preeminence of maritime transport in making the modern world, literary scholars across the twentieth century passed over its impact with their gazes fixed on land,” arguably following the example of cultural historians like Turner (“Literary Studies” 657). This situation, she argues, effectively brought about critical hydrophasia, a “syndrome [that] is part of a pervasive twentieth-century attitude that the photographer and theorist Allan Sekula has called ‘forgetting the sea’” (“Literary Studies” 658). On the other hand, the early twenty-first century literary criticism has undergone a sea-change; “hydrophasia is starting to ebb” (Cohen “Literary Studies” 658). John Peck's *Maritime Fictions*, Hester Blum's *View from the Masthead* (2007), Cohen's own *The Novel and the Sea* (2010), Jason Berger's *Antebellum at Sea* (2012), and Jennifer Schell's *A Bold and Hardy Race of Men*

(2013) point to a body of work emerging from younger and established scholars that consider the dimensions and explore the depths of the ocean in antebellum literature.

Importantly, Hester Blum's claim in "The Prospect of Oceanic Studies" that "the sea is not a metaphor" appears as a mantra for much of the criticism emerging in what we now call oceanic studies (670). Drawing on multiple works by maritime historian Marcus Rediker; Roland, Bolster, and Keyssar's *The Way of the Ship* (2008); as well as the scholars compiled in Klein and Mackenthun's *Sea Changes* (2004), the focus of these recent texts remain on the material conditions of the ocean and not on its figurative possibilities.<sup>vii</sup> Whether through Blum's attention to reading practices of sailors aboard ships or Schell's focus on the cultural standing of the whaleman during the years before the Civil War, these works eschew looking at the maritime as something that serves as a platform for considering something else entirely, and my work follows this method and model, foregrounding the maritime and the mariner rather than seeing them as allegories, emblems, or fantasies of something else. This project adheres to the material and not the metaphysical or metaphorical.<sup>viii</sup> In other words, although this dissertation concerns itself with the civic dimensions, implications, and problematics of the sailor, I do not concern myself with a metaphor that could have great sway over this project—the ship of state.<sup>ix</sup> I do not wish to view the sailor as metaphorical citizen in literature; I wish to understand how literature shaped the understanding of the sailor as citizen.

I study this topic within the field of maritime literature specifically for a variety of reasons. Following Benedict Anderson's claim that print culture plays a significant role in the emergence of a sense of belonging to and taking part in the public life of a nation, I would suggest that citizenship is at least in part a literary phenomenon. More importantly, much of the material from which we construct our sense of the maritime past exists in a literary form. Not

only did fictional narratives of life at sea, often written by former sailors, proliferate during the antebellum period, so too did memoirs, travelogues, and expeditionary journals. When considering the ways in which the U.S. imagined the relationship between the parameters of its citizenship and maritime regions, then, literary representations of experiences in those regions prove fruitful.

Furthermore, recent, important work on maritime literature more or less overlooks this relationship entirely, engaging in a view of the literary relationship between maritime regions and the nation that I find ultimately unsatisfying. Margaret Cohen's *The Novel and the Sea* (2010), for instance, suggests that the maritime world provides movement away from the United States that ultimately results, in maritime literature, in a movement away from national concerns towards international or cosmopolitan ones. From her perspective, which in some ways echoes problematic ideas that Daniel Boorstin in *The Americans: The National Experience* (1965), the seas and oceans of U.S. literature have little bearing on the domestic political, economic, and theoretical concerns of the nation.<sup>x</sup> As she explains,

if virtue appears in sea fiction, it is as an afterthought ... . Rather than civic or liberal freedom, the ruling freedom in sea fiction is the amoral freedom of movement corresponding to the judicial notion of the 'freedom of the seas.' Wild terraqueous environments 'beyond the line' replace salons, city streets, and country taverns, and when the sea adventure novels unify the nation as an imagined community, it is always with an eye on the horizon of the globe. Rather than a centripetal pull inward toward the metropolis and closure, a centrifugal movement outward to the edges of the known world and beyond ... . (*Novel* 11)



Cohen's position here is valuable, particularly her contention that maritime literature opposes an enclosed, isolated sense of the nation. However, her idea that this genre always eschews the centripetal for the centrifugal seems thoroughly problematic to me. Her understanding of the relationship between nation and sea overlooks the impossibility of distinguishing between land and sea and, thus, the physical space of the nation and the waters that surround it. It appears easy to make this distinction between land/nation and water/unclaimed territory—after all, the supposed land/water dichotomy should represent a fairly clear binary with its associations with solidity on the one hand and fluidity on the other. Nevertheless, this view ignores at least two things. First, according to international law, nations do have claims over maritime regions in the world. True, most of the global waterways fall under the denomination “international waters” and thus become unbounded by national dictates. Yet the three miles of sea contiguous to any nation belong to that nation. Second, the concept of situating land/sea in contradistinction to one another as a means of establishing one as a national and the other as a non-national space finds little traction given the implications of the terminology associated with the supposed boundary between these two regions. The geological jargon for the point at which land/water meet—the littoral zone—refers to neither the land nor the water alone but rather to an area of both land and water beyond both the high watermark and the low watermark. The concept of maritime regions is similarly murky. While some use the term to refer to only those provinces submerged, others have a more liberal concept of the word, allowing maritime to mean not only aqueous environments but also “places, ‘bordering the sea’ or persons ‘living near or by the sea’” (Vickers and Walsh 2).

I largely build off this definition that Vickers and Walsh give of maritime. I only add to it other aquatic spaces, such as major rivers, that, while not exactly “seas,” play an essential role in

the maritime culture of the United States. I am thinking in particular of the Great Lakes or the Mississippi, Hudson, and Missouri Rivers. All of these aquatic spaces are not maritime in the traditional sense, but they are all, to varying degrees, inextricably linked to areas, such as major ports like New York or New Orleans, that would fall under Vickers and Walsh's definition. I also hasten to note that, working with their definition of maritime, does not limit my area of study to works on and about water and boats. This definition of maritime, importantly, takes into consideration the men and women who are connected to the maritime regions either directly, in the case of seamen, or indirectly, in the case of sailors' wives and families. As a result, Cohen's idea that maritime regions are fully distinguished and distinguishable from the land thereby scans a little problematic, and, it seems, she might recognize this: Her contribution to the May 2010 *PMLA* special section on oceanic studies attempts to reclaim the concept of the terraqueous as a key term in contemporary oceanic studies. Nevertheless, the notion that Cohen bases on this belief in the separation of land and sea in *The Novel and the Sea*—that the aquatic territories and literature that takes place there look away from national concerns as national concerns rather than part of a mosaic of international ones—requires attention that this dissertation aims to provide.

It is not, of course, only Cohen who does this. Other works of maritime criticism similarly separate maritime and national concerns. John Peck's *Maritime Fiction* (2001), for instance, claims that U.S. maritime fiction, like James Fenimore Cooper's, explores the possibilities offered by aquatic space over and against a national space. Such work, Peck notes, is often "biased against those who remain on shore" (96). Still others fail to acknowledge this relationship at all, such as the anthologies *Literature and Lore of the Sea* (1985) and *America*

*and the Sea* (1995), which focus on the historical development of the maritime narrative as well as the figurative uses of aquatic spaces in literature.

This disconnection between maritime and national concerns in maritime literary criticism stems, perhaps, from the parameters of Atlantic and Oceanic Studies, the larger fields in which this criticism falls. Atlantic and Oceanic Studies foreground the fluidity of aquatic spaces and focus, therefore, as I do not, on maritime regions as disconnected from landed concerns like the nation. William Boelhower's "The Rise of the New Atlantic Studies Matrix" (2008), for example, notes that aquatic regions are "[spaces] of dispersion, conjunction, distribution, contingency, and heterogeneity" (92-3). While this is accurate, this understanding of Oceanic and Atlantic Studies suggests that examining the relationship between the nation—connoting ideas of union and stability—and the maritime world—connoting ideas of instability and flux—is difficult if not impossible. These fields of study have thus focused their attention on the "transnational" and "intercultural," as Blum's "The Prospect of Oceanic Studies" and Paul Gilroy's essential *The Black Atlantic* (1993), as well as the anthology *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean*, make plain (Blum 670; Gilroy 17; Klein and Mackenthun "Introduction" 5). While I do not want to completely abandon the incredibly useful ideas such authors express about the maritime world, I also want to open the possibility in this project for a space to discuss the ways in which transnational aquatic regions have profound effects upon national concerns.

Additionally, although I take issue with this aspect of Cohen's work, I am more concerned with the effect her belief in the disconnection between nation and sea has on the issue of U.S. citizenship. In a sense, by claiming that maritime regions and narratives about them lead inexorably away from national concerns, Cohen suggests that those regions and narratives too lead away from civic questions, since such questions would be germane to a landed, national

rather than an aquatic space. I find this idea, like the other, misleading: Maritime experiences and narratives about them could and did shape the understanding of the parameters of U.S. citizenship. In his aforementioned *Oration on the Rise and Progress of the United States* (1798), for instance, Alexander Addison explicitly concerns himself with describing the events precipitating an early foreign policy crisis, and implicitly interrogates the limits of U.S. citizenship by provoking alarm about activities of certain citizens. In other words, by calling attention to and castigating the actions of the mariners, Addison proffers a view of what citizens should and should not do. He outlines the duties of U.S. citizenship. Importantly, he does this through an examination of maritime activities. A recent talk by Nathaniel Perl-Rosenthal reinforces such sentiments, in that he argues for the centrality of the sailor in the emergence of a concept of national, unified citizenship, rather than the model of citizenship founded upon one's relationship to an individual state—Delaware or Massachusetts, for instance—and not to the United States. Perl Rosenthal discusses the various methods by which sailors' nationality became credentialized within the early republican period and posits that such documentation offered a foundation for the national passport. The maritime regions and what occurs there are therefore not disconnected from issues of citizenship; rather, as Addison and Perl-Rosenthal make plain, the maritime regions and things that occur there have a profound effect upon the nation's understanding of its citizenry and the boundaries of civic privileges.

As we will see at more length in chapter one, the maritime narratives of James Fenimore Cooper reinforces the idea that the events that occur on oceans, rivers, and seas have significant implications for the conceptualization of national citizenship. In Cooper's Revolutionary War novel *The Pilot* (1824), for instance, Cooper uses a series of events involving an anonymous John Paul Jones to suss out the limits of the uncertainty and instability of national citizenship.

John Paul Jones's liminal civic status represents a boon to the members of the U.S. Navy sailing off the shore of England. His expertise is praised and his willingness to serve alongside the Americans, in spite of his status as a subject to the crown, is accepted. As one character notes, it seems that "the republics cannot doubt the man who has supported their flag" (J. Cooper *Pilot* 211). Jones's mutability, wherein he can pass for both British subject and U.S. citizen, leaves Griffith and Barnstable, the two dominant American characters in the novel, unfazed. Though Jones has shown a willingness to alter his affiliations, the U.S. military men doubt him very little.

Yet Jones also emerges as an object of suspicion in the novel, at least at its end. Though the U.S. Americans can trust Jones as he works alongside them on the ship, he cannot return to North America with them to a hero's welcome. His uncertain and unstable citizenship status works particularly well on the sea, this suggests, but would become much more vexing on land. He could not act as a good, trustworthy citizen on terra firma. His mutability would render him suspect. The novel explicitly renders this figuration at the end of the novel. Griffith represents an exemplary soldier and sailor and patriot throughout the course of the novel, yet, in the closing chapter, the narrator notes that he relinquished his post with the Navy at the end of the Revolutionary War and "devoted the remainder of his life to the conjoint duties of a husband and a good citizen" (J. Cooper *Pilot* 420). By tying Griffith's status as a good citizen to being on land, the novel seems to position the sea as a site from which good citizenship can come but a site nevertheless that troubles the understanding of limits and parameters of U.S. citizenship.

In exploring such issues as the limits and parameters of U.S. citizenship, maritime narratives like Cooper's demonstrate that the relationship between nation and aqueous regions are not, as Cohen has it, centrifugal. While there is an aspect of maritime literature that directs

the reader away from national concerns, there is the equally important aspect that is implicit in the writings of Philbrick and Linebaugh and Rediker and that allows readers to reconsider the ramifications of the social, political, and economic developments of the nation. In this dissertation, I argue that U.S. maritime literature of the antebellum period frequently casts a homeward glance by considering the implications that maritime labor (of both the merchant and naval varieties) and travel have for the political and social ideals of the United States. In particular, U.S. maritime literature of this period provides an ideal site for considering the dimensions of U.S. citizenship. With its rigid hierarchy and emphasis on both collectivity and individuality, the ship both provides support for and ultimately challenges to the dominant ideas about the limits of citizenship in the United States. In other words, as Paul Gilje has suggested, liberty for seamen and liberty for lubbers are two distinct things that, though overlapping, should not be conflated. My specific concern in this work will be the relationship between seamanship and citizenship. As works like Cooper's *The Pilot*, *Red Rover* (1828), and *Afloat and Ashore* (1844), as well as works like Melville's *Redburn* (1849) *White-Jacket* (1850), attest good seamen embody valorized civic practices—an idea that flies in the face of the popularly imagined seaman of the nineteenth century who, away from the ship, was often understood as frittering away his time with drink, prostitutes, or fisticuffs.

Importantly, the models of citizenship promoted through the figure of the sailor do not simply affirm the dominant republican and liberal ideals of citizenship of the antebellum period. Although certain maritime narratives smooth the rough edges of the seaman and remove his often refractory nature in order to uphold the possibility of his status as a good citizen, many more allow this refractoriness to remain and allow the figure of the seaman to redefine the idea of what good citizenship does and should entail. As a literary figure, then, the seaman does not

simply exist as a propagandistic type that upholds models of citizenship in the U.S. that are reactionary; instead, the seaman provides models of citizenship that allow authors and readers to conceive of alternatives to the liberal and republican models that often undermined the civic ideals of freedom and equality that were supposedly key concepts to U.S. antebellum political thought and practice. Centrally, this dissertation asks both why the seaman of maritime literature—both fictional and factual—is ascribed civic characteristics that are not often associated with such a figure and why the seaman is afforded the opportunity to both reinforce and redefine the concept of good citizenship, particularly when figures as important as James Madison had pointed out the impossibility of seamen becoming good citizens.

This dissertation offers a competing understanding of the ways in which maritime literature and national political concerns interact. It also makes two other contributions to the study of literature and citizenship. First, it establishes the maritime narrative as an essential element in understanding the dimensions of U.S. citizenship in the nineteenth century. It provides for a more nuanced understanding of the civic categories as well as the ways in which maritime literature refracted the concept of the citizen. Considering the maritime dimensions of citizenship remains an under-researched area but one worthy of consideration, given the historical and legal connection between citizenship and the maritime regions. Second, this project promotes the sailor as a figure—like the child, woman, or African American—that complicates and calls into question the definitions of citizenship in the United States.

Using a variety of fictional maritime materials, both canonical and forgotten, as well as congressional acts, sermons, and literary ephemera, this dissertation explores what happens when citizenship goes out to sea over the course of four chapters, the first two of which focus on specific maritime authors and the last two of which consider specific maritime genres. This

dissertation analyzes some of the best-known nautical authors of the antebellum period as well as less familiar writings about pirates and freshwater navigation. The body of the dissertation divides into two parts of two chapters each. Each part acts as a diptych in order to underscore the uneven and discontinuous ways in which antebellum literary culture understood the seaman, with chapters one and three focusing on authors and genres of nautical literature that upset the notion of the sailor as bad citizen in order to reinforce dominant civic ideals, while chapters two and four center on authors and genres that upset both the notion of sailor as bad citizen and the prevailing models of citizenship.

Chapter one explores the way in which James Fenimore Cooper's late-period *Afloat and Ashore* (1844) portrays the sailor of the late eighteenth century as the embodiment of republican and liberal civic virtues central to antebellum discussions of good U.S. citizenship. This representational strategy serves a two-fold purpose. First, it refutes the early American suspicion of the sailor as citizen. Second, it responds to the contemporaneous U.S. Exploring Expedition of 1838-42, descriptions of which portrayed the sailor as an emerging, integral figure in the nation's political and social landscape. The novel, and Cooper's late nautical material in general, thereby establish the seaman not as an embryonic good citizen but rather someone who had long proved his civic bona fides. The second chapter complements and complicates this relationship by focusing on Herman Melville's *Redburn* (1849) and *White Jacket* (1850). It argues that Melville's novels construct sailors who redefine the ideals of U.S. citizenship not only in light of maritime cultural and social practices but also in response to both the emergence of international anarchism during the antebellum period and the more focused and revolutionary European political agitation of the late 1840s.



The two subsequent chapters explore popular maritime literary genres of the antebellum period. Chapter three highlights the understudied genre of early American pirate narratives. It argues that fictional narratives like Cooper's *The Red Rover* (1827), Washington Irving's pirate tales, and J. H. Ingraham's historical pirate romances, *Lafitte: The Pirate of the Gulf* (1836) and *Captain Kyd* (1839), as well as paraliterary works like *The Pirates Almanac* (1843), unsurprisingly portray their pirates as unfit for national citizenship. This portrayal reinforces prevailing civic ideals, offering good citizen-sailors as reputable counterpoints to the more radical pirates. More importantly, though, in reinforcing such civic principles and admonishing the politics of piratical culture, the discourse of citizenship in these texts helps propagate beliefs essential to the anti-abolition movement. The final chapter focuses on river narratives. Examining folk tales about Mike Fink (1820s-50s), Emil Klauprecht's *Cincinnati* (1856), and Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849), I contend that early American authors treated rivermen with remarkable ambivalence, which derives not only from their residence at the edges of the nation's geographical boundaries but also from their dalliances with critical, derogatory national concerns—slavery and imperialism. This final chapter has an eye towards redefining the boundaries of oceanic and transatlantic studies, which constrain themselves to analysis of oceanic narratives. Yet, as I contend, freshwater literature plays a significant role in shaping U.S. concepts of citizenship.

My dissertation's conclusion considers how works of well-known late-nineteenth- and the twentieth-century maritime literature—Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), London's *The Sea Wolf* (1904), Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny* (1951), and Peter Mathiessen's *Far Tortuga* (1975)—lose interest in their fresh- and saltwater mariners' abstract civic dimensions in order to focus on the mariner as laborer. That is not to say that these texts' depiction of the

mariner as laborer is unconcerned with the mariner as citizen, merely that the mariner's citizenship becomes entwined with their status as worker. They become sites for exploring worker's rights and roles in the body politic and not for exploring generic rights and roles in the body politic. I argue that the immigrant replaces the sailor and riverman as the figure for exploring abstract, monolithic concepts of citizenship.

In their introduction to *Sea Changes*, Klein and Mackenthun begin with Derek Walcott's "The Sea as History," considering the poet's titular contention as a call, an instigation for historians "to take a cue from this poetic foray into an imaginative maritime historiography" and "venture beyond outworn patterns of historical causality and explanation" ("Introduction" 2). Although this dissertation attempts to embark upon a similar project in that I too endeavor to work around and beyond the received wisdom of the antebellum sailor as citizen, much as Klein and Mackenthun work against the grain of extant maritime historiography, I find the lines from Walcott's poem a curious starting point for such a project, given his sense that the sea "has locked ... up" in its "grey vault" the "martyrs" and "monuments" of history (Walcott 364). Such an impassive, silent sense of the oceanic seems disheartening. It may be impossible to inscribe upon the sea the histories of conquest and capital, war and creation that monuments intend to memorialize, but the men that traveled those seas carried with them books, carried with them journals and therein created a body of material. The sea may obscure and embody history as Walcott suggests, but mariners wrote their own histories of the sea. I do not wish to pry open the lock of the sea's vault in order to abscond with a history of maritime literary citizenship. I am interested instead in the civic work performed by the literary characters populating antebellum maritime narratives, those narratives available to us. Yet this project is not without hazard, even if it's not the hazard of plumbing the depths for history that Walcott points towards. Taking on

the sailor as citizen during the antebellum period—an uneven, fluid concept, relying on no pattern or stable foundation—is a little like taking on the sea. Iain Chambers’s words might, then, serve as both a warning of the potential swamping of such a project as well as its potential, fruitful insight: “And then there is the sea: its liquidity, its seemingly anonymous materiality, resonates with a postrepresentational understanding, an anchorless image loaded with time” (679). The sea and projects that approach it face uncertainty and instability but also great possibility. It is not for nothing that Chambers cites the “Nietzschean provocation of the marine horizon” in an essay about the propensity for theoretical shipwrecks: “Every daring venture of knowledge is again permitted, the sea, *our sea* again lies there open before us” (Chambers 679; Nietzsche 343).

But what does this open sea hold out before us? Specifically, this work will serve as an incitement, an encouragement to think about the concept of citizenship that, in a way, takes a more complicated approach to understanding the connection between citizen and nation. The sailor as a citizen confounds expectations. It is easy to follow R. B. Forbes and discount the sailor’s civic dimensions because they seldom find themselves near the polls on election day. It is harder to think through what it might mean to conceive of citizenship when the citizens in question find themselves by choice and for long duration beyond the boundaries of the nation. The sailor differs from the soldier, in that regard—the citizen-soldier is deployed and the citizen-sailor deploys him or herself. The sailor forces us to think of citizenship as not so easily bounded by nation, by national border, and by national interest. The sailor encourages us to recognize that Renan’s nineteenth-century critique of the racial bases for definitions of the nation or citizenship might provide us a methodological model for considering the troublesome effects of consigning citizenship to the geographic dimensions of nation alone. Étienne Balibar’s work in *Race*,

*Nation, Class* (1990) provides a similar suggestion in that, although he acknowledges the “continuing power of myths of national origin,” he also characterizes the desire to grant a nation the “continuity of a subject” as an “illusion” (87, 86). Both Renan and Balibar posit that understandings of nation and, concomitantly I would argue, national citizenship as stable, unified, or easily defined smack of a misguided attempt at standardizing, classifying, and routinizing things that resist it. The idea of a stable, clearly-defined, and impregnable body politic persists in the political discourse of the 21st-century U.S. Balibar and Renan show us that a citizenry is a complex, ever-shifting phenomenon. In its focus on the sailor as citizen, this dissertation contributes to that understanding, characterizing national boundaries as yet another way to delimit a body politic through exclusionary politics. Demonstrating the various ways in which antebellum literary culture recovered the mariner as a viable civic figure hopes to shed light on the ways in which we might reconceive of citizenship in spite of rather than in light of national boundaries and difference.

## 2.0 “OUR MARINE”: JAMES FENIMORE COOPER’S *AFLOAT AND ASHORE*, GOOD CITIZEN SAILORS, AND THE U.S. EXPLORING EXPEDITION

With his first sea narrative, *The Pilot* (1823), James Fenimore Cooper, a former sailor, sought to distance himself from and augment the British sea narratives that had appeared throughout the century preceding its publication, employing the prefaces to *The Pilot*’s first edition and its 1849 reprinting to both establish his place within a genealogy of nautical fiction and to set himself apart from his British forebears. In his 1823 preface, for instance, he implicitly acknowledges his debt to British nautical fiction, anticipating the complaints of his audience that Cooper’s novel does what “Smollett has done ... before him, and in a much better manner.” Cooper does not, in other words, suggest that he wrote *The Pilot* without an eye towards earlier authors of sea fiction. He fully understands that his narrative has a relationship to those of Smollett. Nevertheless, Cooper continues, “it will be seen ... that though he [Cooper] has navigated the same sea as Smollett, he has steered a different course; or, in other words, that he has considered what Smollett has painted a picture which is finished, and which is not to be daubed over by every one who may choose to handle a pencil on marine subjects” (*Pilot* 3). He and Smollett both deal with maritime scenarios, Cooper states, but readers should not understand his novel as a direct extension of the latter’s. *The Pilot* does not revise *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751), or *The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1760-

61); instead, it contributes to the body of nautical fiction in general, claiming a place alongside Smollett's novels while reinforcing its difference from them.

Additionally, this preface intimates a transatlantic competition in regard to maritime narratives, as the metaphor Cooper employs implies pretensions toward serious art. To Cooper, Smollett's novels are paintings, after all, and not the sketches of a dilettante, as are his own.<sup>xi</sup> Yet, here, the competitive tone is muted, as one might expect from a living writer just embarked upon a career comparing himself to someone long deceased. In his 1849 preface to *The Pilot*, however, the rivalry Cooper discerned between his sea narratives and those produced by British authors becomes more evident. Introducing the novel again, Cooper recreates the origins of *The Pilot*, chronicling a conversation between him and "a friend" who doubted that "a man of Scott's habits and associations could have become so familiar with the sea." Although Cooper believed it "hypercritical" to chastise Scott's novel for being "not strictly nautical, or true in its details," he nevertheless found *The Pirate* a "provocation" and set about, with *The Pilot*, "to produce a work which ... might present truer pictures of the ocean and ships than any that are to be found in [*The Pirate*]" (*Pilot* 5). Rather than focus simply on his difference from Scott, as he had done with Smollett, Cooper establishes the implicit bona fides of his novel in contradistinction to *The Pirate*: Cooper's narrative remains truer in its depiction of the sea and those that labor upon it. Cooper is not simply establishing credentials here, as he does in the earlier preface; he is not simply suggesting that his portraits of maritime life might sit comfortably alongside those of Smollett. He portrays his nautical works as the worthy replacements of those by Scott and, presumably, others, ignoring, in the process, the genealogy of maritime literature sketched in his initial preface and replacing himself at the head of an entire genre.

Yet, if Cooper sought to establish himself as a respected and popular author of nautical fiction, he faced an uphill slog. As Thomas Philbrick explains, the sea narrative itself had never been a properly popular genre. This situation derived in large part because those fictions classified as nautical often had little to do with the sea, and those books that did contain nautical themes were “limited in scope,” paying little heed to the particulars of nautical life (*James Fenimore Cooper* 4). The ships of Smollett may have had “vivid detail” but they “represent[ed] only one in the seemingly endless series of locales” to which the author’s picaresque heroes travel (*James Fenimore Cooper* 4).

Cooper wasn’t therefore hitching his literary wagon to a proven formula. Smollett may have been popular, but he wasn’t necessarily popular because of his characters’ nautical adventures. Had Cooper desired to build on an existing and popular form of nautical fiction, he would have done better to turn to Defoe and his *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner* (1719), a popular novel expressly about a seaman and the travails that result from his occupation. Yet Cooper had very little to say about Defoe or Crusoe, even as critics have positioned his sea novels in relation to Defoe’s (Philbrick *James Fenimore Cooper* 9). Cooper even neglects mentioning Defoe and Crusoe in his preface to *The Crater* (1847), a novel of shipwrecks and island castaways that we might classify as a Robinsonade, were it not for Cooper’s decision to acknowledge “Cook’s voyages” rather than Defoe’s novels as a source of inspiration in the preface, a situation reinforced by the novel itself which “neatly reminds Cooper’s audience of the relevant differences between” the two texts (*Crater* 1; W. Franklin *New World* 197). In the prefaces to *The Pilot* and elsewhere, then, Cooper appears to position himself as *sui generis*, imagining himself and not Smollett, Scott, or Defoe as the

progenitor of both his maritime narratives and “a tolerably numerous school of nautical romances that have succeeded it” (*Pilot* 5).

Although he does not go so far as to characterize maritime literature as a distinctly American endeavor, Cooper and his desires for nautical fiction still appear more ambitious than they initially seem. He does not just contribute to a canon established by Defoe, Smollett, and Scott; he has discovered a new method for crafting sea narratives. He does not fancy himself a Columbus or, perhaps, a Balboa, discovering a new ocean; but he might see himself as a Cook, having “navigated the same sea ... [but] steered a different course” (*Pilot* 3).

Importantly, he has achieved this not only by creating stories that more accurately reflect life at sea but also by reclaiming “the daring and useful services of a great portion of our marine” from “the obscurity under which it is now buried” (*Pilot* 3, 4). Cooper may minimize this aspect of his sea fiction, in that it appears itself buried in the midst of the preface. Nevertheless, the sentiment expressed in these lines represents what I believe is the key feature of Cooper’s maritime literature—the attempt to recuperate the sailor (“our marine”) and retrieve him from both anonymity and disrepute. The central concern in Cooper’s sea fiction is not simply to revise and expand a genre previously the province of the British but rather to use that genre as another medium for advocating on behalf of the seaman as citizen. In several, subtle ways, the sentence quoted above achieves what we find throughout Cooper’s maritime writings. It not only establishes the sailor as a hero—committing “daring ... services”—but it also suggests that he performs “useful” deeds in the service of the nation—after all, he is “our marine” rather than simply “a marine.” Moreover, this last touch—the use of the possessive “our”—enfolds the marine into the nation. This sentence then suggests the marine—an admittedly unfortunate substitute for sailor, but a substitute nevertheless—represents an integral and integrated part of



the body politic. In other words, the maritime fiction of Cooper seeks in large part to establish the sailor as an essential and reputable civic figure, a type that belongs to and in the U.S. rather than a figure opposed to and outside it.

Cooper's characterization of the sailor as an important component of the body politic, evincing and adhering to the ideals of good citizenship of the antebellum period, reaches its apex in his late-period diptych *Afloat and Ashore, or The Adventures of Miles Wallingford: A Sea Tale* (1844) and *Miles Wallingford, a Sequel to Afloat and Ashore* (1844), which uses its titular hero and other maritime characters rebuff the dominant views of mariners throughout the antebellum period. Rather than portray the sailor as a member of an unprincipled, un-civil rabble, Cooper stresses the attributes of good citizenship that adhere to these figures.<sup>xii</sup> His seamen, especially Miles Wallingford, amalgamate the civic ideals gleaned from liberal and republican theorists like Locke and Montesquieu that informed the nation's founders' ideas about citizenship. As a result, Cooper molds his sailors in such a way that they lose the radical opinions and actions described in the work of maritime historians like Marcus Rediker. He transforms them into figures worthy of civic praise, individuals who should be retained within the body politic—"our marine"—rather than sent to its edges or outright banished. They are citizen heroes and the route to national achievement, a position, *vis à vis* the sailor and the United States, that derives, I will argue, from what Cooper likely saw as the increasingly important role sailors played in the nascent stages of the United States' emergence and understanding of itself as a global, potentially imperial power. Ultimately, then, *Afloat and Ashore* provides Cooper the opportunity to challenge the longstanding ambivalence toward seamen as integral U.S. citizens upon two fronts. First, it affords him the opportunity to construct a historical narrative of the early republic that repudiates the contemporaneous revulsion felt by many toward the sailor as a civic figure and underscores

the way in which sailors reflected the civic ideals emerging in that period as national civic ideals. Second, the novel offers Cooper a chance to challenge his own contemporaries' lack of interest in the effect that the maritime and the mariner had and was having upon the global fortunes of the United States.

The attitude towards sailors during the period in which Cooper sets *Afloat and Ashore*—the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—generally characterized them as troubling to the democratic body politic, in spite of the vital role they played in both the events of the U.S. War for Independence and the events that gave rise to it. As discussed in the introduction above, pivotal figures in the formation of not only U.S. foreign and domestic policy but also the idioms and ideals of U.S. citizenship like Adams, Jefferson, and Madison found the sailor a troubling influence on the national polity and sought to minimize their influence within the body politic. Certainly, figures like Crèvecoeur and Franklin counterbalance the negative appraisals of the mariner offered by figures who dominated the executive branch of the U.S. government for two decades, but, as demonstrated above, the general public discourse of the period spoke against the seaman as a reputable figure of U.S. civic life and even those, like Crèvecoeur and Franklin, who saw the value of sailors hardly spent significant time advocating for their place within the body politic. After all, Franklin left the sea behind for the printing press and Crèvecoeur had good reason for not titling his most famous work *Letters from a Nantucket Fisherman*. This political and cultural understanding provides the backdrop for Cooper's *Afloat and Ashore*, a novel set between 1795 and 1805.

*Afloat and Ashore* belongs to that possibly largest category of Cooper novels—the overlooked—even as it has received a recent, heavily edited reprint by AMS (2004).<sup>xiii</sup> Earlier critics tended to dismiss the novel as inessential; if the novel warranted any interest, it derived

from *Afloat and Ashore*'s relationship to Cooper's own life and its novel narrative voice.<sup>xiv</sup> More recent criticism has not taken an approach that is as directly dismissive of *Afloat and Ashore*, though it too refuses to trace the nuances and particularities of the novel in favor of rehashing earlier generations of critics' perspectives.<sup>xv</sup> Aside from some passing mentions of *Afloat and Ashore* in recent articles about Cooper's relationship to nativism and Cooper's self-annotated manuscripts, little of merit—little that offers more than commentary on the novel's first-person narration and connection to Cooper's own experiences—has been said in the last several decades about the novel.<sup>xvi</sup> Even critical work that could benefit from the novel's perusal—work that deals with Cooper and the cult of domesticity, for instance, or Cooper's sense of political justice—assiduously avoid it.<sup>xvii</sup> Both the earlier, qualitative dismissals as well as the more recent disregard for *Afloat and Ashore* have their origins in the mid-nineteenth-century reception of the novel which was unflattering, to say the least.<sup>xviii</sup> Necessarily, then, by limiting their observations to the novel's autobiographical qualities and its narration, these critics have done a disservice to a complex, complicated novel that, to a more significant degree than any other in Cooper's oeuvre, explores the interplay between land and sea and the effects that those spaces have on the development of one's individual identity, as well as, I contend, one's civic identity. In other words, extant analysis of the novel—even Philbrick's prolonged consideration of the novel in his *James Fenimore Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction* (1961)—adopt a reductive, narrow view of a text that interrogates topics—land-ownership and rental, impressment, piracy, estate law, adoption, naturalization, and marriage—that have ramifications for the concepts and ideals of U.S. citizenship as they relate to mariners in the antebellum period.<sup>xix</sup>

*Afloat and Ashore* is not, therefore, one of Cooper's minor sea-narratives or even minor Cooper; instead, it represents the apex of his concern about the sailor's place within the body politic. We can certainly see Cooper working with this idea of the sailor as good citizen throughout much of his maritime fiction. His earliest and most hallowed sea novels—*The Pilot* and *The Red Rover: A Tale* (1828)—rely upon a very similar narrative arc: In both texts, central characters attain notable and in the case of the latter reputable civic status as a result of their marine exploits during the Revolutionary War.

In *The Pilot*, for instance, Edward Griffith becomes a “good citizen” through his service as a sailor for the United States during the U.S. War for Independence (P 420). Cooper compares the steadfast Griffith throughout the titular and suspicious Pilot, a thinly veiled John Paul Jones, whose connection to the sea in this particular narrative is local and circumscribed—his usefulness to the various U.S. naval vessels derives not from experiences sailing the globe but rather from his knowledge of the British coast. His value lies not in his ability to perform the mundane tasks of sailing—to do the work of the common sailor—but to perform fleeting if daring deeds, shepherding ships by his words and not his hands through treacherous geographic features. Thus, while the naval officer Griffith achieves the status of “good citizen” upon the war's conclusion, the Pilot dies “in the service of a despot,” his so-called “love of liberty “ and “devotion to America” dubious (422).

In *The Red Rover*, on the other hand, Cooper depicts the eponymous pirate as kin to *The Pilot*'s John Paul Jones—a notorious and potentially untrustworthy figure who nevertheless appeals to the reader's interest if not sympathy. Yet, unlike Jones, the Rover not only dies before the reader's eyes—Jones's death receives only passing mention in a character's long speech about his disloyal behavior—he also dies having achieved “redemption,” his “hopes of pardon”

having been fulfilled (R 868). Although the characters speak of the dying Rover with religious terms, the sequence of concluding events suggests a civic and secular source for his redemption rather than a spiritual one: First he reveals his identity, then admits service during the Revolutionary War, and is finally described as redeemed (R 867). His sense that “our country needed” him to serve during the Revolutionary War gives way to his sister’s assessment of his spiritual condition, the implication being that her concern over him is less about his relationship to God and more about his relationship to country. The ship and the mariner again become a path to civic and, in the case of the Rover, familial reintegration.

Later narratives do not so much articulate sea labor as a path to good citizenship, but they do depict sailors as having the attributes of good citizenship. For example, *Jack Tier, or the Florida Reef* (1848) characterizes the ocean as “a republic,” implicating the seas as a space operating outside the civic ideals of the nation but rather within them (J. Cooper *Jack Tier* 43). More importantly, the novel features a titular character who easily classifies the Stephen Spike as a “capital willian,” given Spike’s treasonous support of Mexico during the Mexican American War and his desire to kidnap and force into matrimony the young Rose Budd (seriously) (*Jack Tier* 43, 184). That Jack Tier bears an unmistakable homophonic similarity to Jack Tar encourages a reading of Tier both as another in a series of good citizen-sailors and as emblematic of Cooper’s belief in the common sailor’s civic and moral virtue and proper devotion to the United States.

*Homeward Bound, or The Chase* (1838) eschews the sailor as civic emblem of *Jack Tier* in favor of depicting sailors who are as legally and juridically intelligent as they are aquatically intelligent. Faced with a bailiff and attorney, intent upon removing a fugitive from his ship, Captain Truck informs them that he will not prevent them searching for their fugitive but that

they should next expect him to delay his ship's launch, a response that contained "logic, useful information, law, and seamanship" that causes the lawyer to feel uneasy (J. Cooper *Homeward Bound* 23). Although this anxiety derives in part from the possibility that the attorney might wind up too far out to sea to row back to port with the sailor, the general antipathy shown by the bailiff and attorney towards the mariners, including the captain, suggests that they presumed the seamen ignorant of both logic and law. The narrative has obvious disdain for the attorney and bailiff—the latter is named Mr. Grab, after all. As a result, the exchange not only manages to portray the sailor as legally knowledgeable but it also casts implicit aspersions upon those who doubt the seaman's awareness and affinity for a nation's rule of law.

Even his novels not explicitly tied to the ocean find a way to situate characters' seamanship as evidence of their civic belonging, as Jasper Western in *The Pathfinder* (1840) earns the trust of a British garrison through his deft maneuvering of ships upon Lake Ontario, having earlier in the novel had his national allegiance questioned. The point is, then, that the topic—the viability of the seaman-citizen—is threaded throughout Cooper's oeuvre, supplanting during the later stages of Cooper's career, I would argue, the author's stated goal, articulated in the preface to *The Pilot*, that he wrote sea narratives to compete with those of various British authors. By the 1830s, he had effectively influenced the way in which British authors approached their maritime fiction. Writing at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, Joseph Conrad situated the popular British novelist Frederick Marryat and Cooper as complements to one another, the former "invincibly young" and the latter "mature and human," establishing something like a genealogy between the popular maritime authors on either side of the Atlantic—the old master Cooper and the young upstart Marryat, whose most popular and successful novels appeared during the early 1830s (Conrad 55).

The central goal of Cooper's later sea fiction, then, is to recuperate the sailor as a viable civic figure—how else to explain the flurry of maritime novels that appeared between 1840 and 1849—and this project reaches its peak toward the middle of that decade in *Afloat and Ashore*. Those other works, while they speak to this concern, do not, as this novel does, vacillate between the ocean and the land. They may speak to the civic dimensions of sailors and intimate the fitness of sailors for the body politic but such ideas emerge only in passing—note that the moments cited in both *The Pilot* and *The Red Rover* occur at the very end of those narratives. These novels focus, more often than not, only upon the civic dimensions of sailors at sea. As its title suggests, *Afloat and Ashore* not only suggests that seamen *should be* integrated into the national community but also demonstrates *how they are* already integrated, as the novel combines the national and the global in a single gargantuan text in order to counteract the pervasive belief that the mariner was not a necessary and viable member of the national body politic.

Cooper establishes from the outset that *Afloat and Ashore* exists as a corrective; what it means to correct, though, remains debatable. At first, Cooper appears to emphasize the novel's authentic and factual qualities that early reviewers frequently remarked on, given his pronouncement that "all that is necessary is, that the pictures should be true to nature, if not absolutely drawn from living sitters" (1). Stressing the novel's realism would seem to cast *Afloat and Ashore* in contradistinction to the majority of his earlier sea narratives, which tended towards the romantic. The novel would then seek to improve upon his earlier form, trading the prominent, sublime seascapes for a more mundane representation of the maritime. His subsequent claim that fiction provides "nearer views than [one] might otherwise obtain" is in line with the contention that his novel provides, in a sense, a corrective (if magnifying) lens, allowing his readers to see more clearly the maritime world.

Nevertheless, brief turns of phrase in Cooper's preface imply that his concern is not so much with the representation of sea life in general but rather with the mariner in particular. Shortly before his claims for the text's realism, for instance, he offers the possibility that "certain captious persons may be disposed to inquire into the *cui bono?* of such a book" (1, emphasis in original). His answer—that the book has relied upon anything capable of rendering the world realistically—doesn't really answer the question. At least, it doesn't answer it satisfactorily. The Latin *cui bono* after all translates most directly to "to whose benefit." Admittedly, Cooper may have employed the phrase incorrectly.<sup>xx</sup> His subsequent paragraph, though, leads me to think otherwise. Following his claims for the novel's realism, Cooper writes in seeming non-sequitur:

Perhaps the greater portion of all our peculiar opinions have [sic] their foundation in the prejudices. These prejudices are produced in consequence of its being out of the power of any one man to see, or know, every thing. The most favored mortal must receive far more than half of all that he leans on his faith in others, and it may aid those who can never be placed in positions to judge for themselves of certain phases of men and things, to get pictures of the same, drawn in a way to give them nearer views than they might otherwise obtain. (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.1)

Although this moment fails to connect directly to that which precedes it textually, it offers answers both to Cooper's self-question (*cui bono?*) and the question I posed above (what does this novel correct?). In contending that the better part of one's opinions derives from prejudice, Cooper underscores the human inability to have significant knowledge or understanding about people, places, things, etc. with which they have limited or no contact. As he says, one can only "[lean] on his faith with others" and hope for accuracy in such ideas that he gleans from others. Yet novels specifically and writing more generally can supply greater insight than the ideas



picked up from others in passing by allowing one unfettered access to “certain phases of men” in a scientific manner. The novel, for Cooper, acts like a magnifying glass or microscope, providing clarity where the muddled vision of prejudice once reigned. The novels in general and this novel in particular, then, provide readers with the corrective. It is a text meant to establish a more accurate representation and ultimately to benefit the civic standing of “certain phases of men”—viz., the sailors who dominate the narrative. The novel might fail in the former endeavor inasmuch as Cooper’s attempts at reclaiming the seaman as a reputable figure render the said seaman relatively toothless and certainly not radical. In other words, Cooper may propose the sailor as a model of good citizenship, but he does so by removing anything remotely politically unsavory. Nevertheless, the novel is an act of reclamation and not simply an, albeit failed, attempt at verisimilitude.<sup>xxi</sup>

One of Cooper’s primary civic concerns at the time—the Somers Affair—lends credence to the idea that Cooper returned to the sea narrative during the 1840s with a greater sense of urgency about his representations of seamen.<sup>xxii</sup> In 1842, a series of incidents occurred on the U.S. naval vessel *Somers*. First, a naval midshipman whom the ship’s captain, Alexander Slidell MacKenzie, disliked was forced to join the crew of the ship; second, said midshipman allegedly attempted, with the help of a boatswain and foremast sailor, mutiny with the goal of turning the ship from a naval vessel into a piratical one; third, the mutiny averted, the captain ordered the three men hung aboard ship without trial; fourth, Captain MacKenzie was acquitted in his court-martial. MacKenzie’s conduct aboard the *Somers*, as well as the Navy’s handling of the case after the executions, incensed Cooper, who was already predisposed against the captain, given their dust-ups over Cooper’s treatment of the War of 1812’s Battle of Lake Erie in his *History of the Navy of the United States of America* (1839). Consequently, Cooper crafted a scathing review

of the event and the court martial that wound up appended to *Proceedings of the Naval Court Martial in the Case of Alexander Slidell Mackenzie* (1844). In this review, Cooper laments eloquently and at length the mistreatment of the executed sailors. He notes: “If the name of an American citizen cannot be a warranty that life will not be taken without the accusation, hearing, and condemnation, required by the law, of what use are our boasted rights” (“Review” 266). In other words, Cooper finds himself appalled by the tyrannical infringement of rights effected by Captain Slidell—behavior that goes well beyond even the most extreme tyrannical, nautical tendencies of foreign powers during antebellum period—as well as the public response, which gladly accepts Slidell’s actions.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Importantly, Cooper implies that both Slidell’s actions and the public’s grateful response derive from the profession of the executed. Representing the typical response to the events, Cooper writes: “Men have talked among us, and we doubt not felt, as if they exulted that one “of *our* officers, on board one of *our* ships, has hanged three villains who had conspired to run away with one of *our* vessels” (“Review” 266-7). The use of villains, here, in lieu of seamen has the effect of equating the words, of collapsing them together. They are not “treacherous seamen” or “villainous seamen.” They are simply villains. Their status as seamen needs not be articulated. It’s implicit within the characterization of them as villains. To put it another way: Their status as seamen presumes villainy. How else to explain the willingness to execute without trial or the willingness to accept such an infringement of one’s civil rights?

Cooper’s investment in this case thus suggests that, around the time he began writing *Afloat and Ashore*, he had a significant interest in both defending seamen against depredations of figures like Slidell as well as the condescension of men and women that allowed them to accept

and even expect the maltreatment of sailors. A brief digression by Miles in the novel's second part gives credence to this idea:

A word on behalf of American seamen in passing, may not be entirely out of place, or season. Men are seldom wronged without being calumniated, and the body of men of which I was then one, did not escape that sort of reparation for all the grievances they endured, which is dependant upon demonstrating that the injured deserve their sufferings.

*(Afloat and Ashore 2.168)*

He was very much interested in denying the slander and defamation heaped upon seamen by ignorant or malicious people. He was very much interested in presenting seamen not as mutinous villains unworthy of the civic compact to which they supposedly belonged as U.S. citizens. He was very much interested in demonstrating the ways in which their behavior and beliefs were parallel rather than antithetical to the civic ideals of the United States.

Cooper rehearses this idea throughout the novel, most notably in relation to his protagonist, Miles Wallingford, who lacks the stereotypical attributes of the common sailor. He does not drink or carouse, choosing to save his earnings from his various travels to, ultimately, procure his own vessel. He has a sincere and very chaste relationship with the daughter of his guardian—a rural clergyman. He doesn't seem to have much religion, but his respect for and relationship with Reverend Hardinge make up for it in the moral calculus of the novel. About the only typical behavior is his single utterance of what amounts to a salty curse in Cooper—"d—n 'em" (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.414). Yet Cooper even minimizes the severity of this mild oath. Wallingford self-consciously characterizes of the curse as "a little [pointed]" and, moreover, his nosy passengers, intent upon hearing the story of how Marble ended his self-imposed exile, drive him to it—"it was enough to make a much more scrupulous person swear" (*Afloat and Ashore*

1.414). His sterling character extends to his shipboard conduct. On his first journey, for instance, he speaks of having “the honour of keeping an anchor watch” and recalls how he “strutted the deck ... paid a visit every five minutes to the bows, to see the cable had not parted, and that the anchor did not ‘come home’” (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.50-1). In other words, Miles loves his work. He never grumbles over an order issued from above. He never runs afoul an officer or captain. He never even gets seasick. He loves so much the life at sea that, well after he has made his fortune, he continues to operate a ship, though he “did not intend to regularly into commerce” (*Afloat and Ashore* 2.412). Far from the booze-hungry, salacious, refractory seaman, then, Miles becomes a figure of virtuous seamanhood. He has become—without intervention—the type of sailor the Boston Society for the Religious and Moral Improvement of Seamen hoped to create by “leav[ing] upon their minds the most useful impressions” in order to “advance their virtue and happiness” (*Address to the Masters of Vessels* 3).

Such attributes, of course, do not really speak to the fitness of the seaman for full acceptance into the body politic. It may reveal Cooper’s version of the seaman to be at odds with both the historical seaman of the early nineteenth century as well as the cultural representations of the seaman in that time. Miles Wallingford is as far from the rebellious, politically agitated figures that circulated the earth’s oceans during that era, and he is equally far from such seamen’s literary cousins, like Robin Day, who doesn’t purposefully seek a criminal career but nevertheless winds up “the actual accomplice of a robber in a felony” (*Bird* 1.172). Other portions of the novel, though do speak to Wallingford’s fitness as a citizen, according to contemporaneous ideals.

Perhaps the most direct way in which Cooper contradicts and revises his contemporaries’ understanding of the seaman and his place within civil society relates to his treatment of

Wallingford's relationship to property. Recall, for a moment, Madison's takedown of the sailor—the seaman remains “imprisoned within the bark that transports him. ... [He is] at home in his vessel” and can experience nothing but “the same monotonous occurrences in ports and docks” (109). The seaman has no home but the ship. He has no ties to the land, except for the liminal waterfront spaces. In other words, he has no property except that which provides him with “a scarcity” at worst and “a sustenance” at best (109). Wallingford echoes Madison's sentiments about shipboard life. Although he does not quite characterize it as imprisonment, he does note its claustrophobic nature, referring at one point to the “relief” a seaman feels at having “escape[d] from the confinement of a ship” (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.284). Yet he does not feel that the life of a seaman—the life of nautical captivity—results in a lack of fitness for holding property. In other words, being a sailor does not inure one to a transient life. It is possible to be a sailor and maintain a profound connection to the land and to property in general.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Wallingford does precisely that, maintaining both a home—the country estate Clawbonny—and a ship. He is valued, as the book doesn't hesitate to explain, at upwards of \$20,000 in liquid assets and manages (in spite of the vicissitudes of global trade) to acquire even greater wealth through a marital alliance with Lucy Hardinge, his guardian's daughter and an heiress (*Afloat and Ashore* 2.140). He has property, then, and landed property at that, which ties him to the nation physically. He is not the detached, cosmopolitan sailor, willing to spend his life drifting about the oceans. For example, Miles rhapsodizes upon his return to both Clawbonny and Reverend and Lucy Hardinge, after having been feared dead: “How different was it with [Reverend Hardinge]; and I may add, with Lucy! The old gentleman turned to me, with tears in his eyes, pointed to the dear, old, house, with a look of delight” (1.354). Miles consistently dreams of this return to his country and to his makeshift family often both before this moment

and afterwards, on subsequent trips. He takes great pride and solace in his returns home. He has “a *country*, ... and that is the next thing to family and home” (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.299, emphasis in original).

Wallingford’s actions over the course of the novel attest to his having a similar high regard for property, even if he never explicitly articulates it. When both his dutiful actions as a mariner and the untimely deaths of various captains place Miles first in the position of first mate and then in the position of captain, he struggles to care for the cargo of the ship. He refuses to give up the ship to a French crew once they have commandeered it during the Quasi-War, and he outwits some Pacific island pirates. Furthermore, he speaks respectably about taking advantage of the current trade climate, which allowed him to trade, in Canton, goods highly prized in China for goods available cheaply there but valued dearly back home. He notes that he “worked like a dog ... under an entirely novel sense of responsibility” (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.312). Wallingford doesn’t love the labor—the sense of responsibility “oppresses[s]” him—but he does the work dutifully (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.312). He is careful to not assume the cargo as his own, and he is careful to take advantage of beneficial commercial circumstances. Furthermore, he is proud of his actions, feeling that he “deserved some portion of the credit subsequently obtained” (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.312). In other words, Miles respects property. In fact, his respect is so great that he offers to repay the ship’s owners for the “better food” that he winds up giving to the Mertons, a British father and daughter whom Wallingford transports first to Canton and then to the United States (1.313).

Given Wallingford’s willingness to salvage and protect the property owned by others, it should come as no surprise that he is similarly concerned over both his real estate and the property that he carries on his own ship in the novel’s second half. As in the novel’s first volume,

Wallingford must fend off those—in this case the British rather than the French—who would abscond with his property, but here he must also face the elements and proves himself, when trying to evade British naval vessels giving him chase, willing to take chances with his life by trying to anchor in an unfamiliar Irish harbor. He is also willing to ensure that Clawbonny remains in the Wallingford family, both willing it and mortgaging it to a cousin before his lengthy, ultimately unsuccessful trip to Hamburg. Wallingford thus understands the importance of property and seeks to preserve it. Importantly, he also understands the role of civil society in the protection of property. He can discuss the treatment of his friend Marble's mother as having her "just rights derided" (*Afloat and Ashore* 2.48). He can claim it necessary of a British naval vessel to respect "her [his ship's] rights" (*Afloat and Ashore* 2.160). He can even justify his own imprisonment when it is for a moment believed that he has lost his property and thus lacking in any way to pay his debts: "I cannot handle the law, even with [Marble's] powerful aid, *nor should I wish to*, if I could. I am bound to gaol, my friends, having no bail" (*Afloat and Ashore* 2.364, emphasis added). He understands the laws governing property—"[he is] no lawyer, but, like almost every American, [he] knew something of that branch of jurisprudence"—and he respects them to the utmost degree (*Afloat and Ashore* 2.46).

In spite of his status as a mariner, then, Wallingford reveals himself as one who both subscribes to and acts in accordance with liberal, viz. Lockean, civic ideals. As mentioned, Miles speaks often and occasionally at length about the infringement of rights. His encounters with British ships that would hold him in port and impound his cargo, for instance, or French vessels that would take over the ship he commands as a prize, or even a slightly nefarious real estate magnate who tries to swindle Marble's mother out of her property bring out this side of the character. Each of these instances prompts him to defend his actions and choices based on the

way in which he understands concepts of law and justice, or, alternately, they prompt him to seek recourse to his rights as he understands them. Importantly, each of these instances is tied specifically to property (cargo and real estate). As a result, in the world of the novel, the primary use of government (an institution that appears only intermittently in the narrative) and the primary purpose of both national and international law seems to be the protection of property. Such a position smacks of Lockean civil society, in which the political power of the government is limited to “making Laws with Penalties of Death, and consequently all less Penalties, for the Regulating and Preserving of Property” (Locke 268). The legal and political world of Cooper’s novel does not exist to ensure that everyone has equal access to the ballot or that people need not incriminate themselves at trial. It exists to ensure that property remains with the “proper” persons and that they can do with it what they will. The greatest crime that one can commit in *Afloat and Ashore* is theft of property, whether it’s through wartime prize-taking or piracy, as the fates of a British vessel that captures Miles’s ship (overthrown and cast off to sea in a small boat) or a group of Pacific islanders who commandeer it (executed or tossed overboard) demonstrate. As a firm believer in this ideal, Miles reveals himself as an ideal citizen.

Yet the connection between Wallingford and the tenets of Lockean, liberal citizenship runs deeper than simply accepting and upholding the idea that government’s sole purpose is the protection of property. He also frequently expounds on notions of individual liberty. As I said, Miles’s rhetoric of rights and laws most often emerges in situations involving the loss or theft of property; the only other context in which it emerges, though, is equally important—cases of impressment. Facing the possible loss of men to a British ship, for instance, Wallingford explains that he “knew that impressment from foreign vessels, out of the waters of Great Britain at least, could be defended on no other ground but that of power” (*Afloat and Ashore* 2.162). Such



actions, Miles suggests, are indefensible. At least they're indefensible according to the language of law and right. They are only defensible when viewed through the lens of power. Such language implies that Wallingford views the impressment by the British is something that approaches tyranny, being something that is achieved only through domination and control and not through proper, lawful channels. Such antipathy towards the impressment of seamen finds an echo in Locke. Locke may have written primarily about the ways in which civil governments protect the physical property possessed by its constituents. However, his sense of property is more inclusive than that, inasmuch as property, for Locke, also comprises one's corporeal self. As he notes, "every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*" and, as with one's physical property, one is free to do with their person what the wish, so long as one doesn't kill himself or herself or use their person to infringe upon the rights of others (287). Wallingford's irritation, then, at the British ship *Speedy*, which leaves him with only four sailors derives in part from a belief that this respect for the liberty of the individual. After all, he does not bemoan the detrimental effect the loss of seamen will have upon his ability to sail his ship. Rather, he feels the British, particularly a Lieutenant Sennit, are "vulgar rogue[s]" (*Afloat and Ashore* 2.189). Their roguishness, importantly, derives not from any effect their impressments have on Wallingford and his ship but instead from their taking Tom Voorhees, a man "of Dutch extraction, a fellow who had not a drop of English blood in his veins ... whose family [Miles] know[s] to be American for near two centuries" (*Afloat and Ashore* 2.189). Importantly, this liberal belief in an individual's right to bodily property extends beyond those characters whom Miles sails beside. In fact, it even extends beyond the European characters in the novel, as his concern over the hanging of the piratical Pacific islander Smudge—he wished to "remonstrate [his captain], for [he] had some

tolerably accurate notions of legality and the rights of persons”—demonstrates (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.218).

Although he respects property and adheres to a belief in individual liberty, Wallingford does not embrace unbridled commerce and vast accumulations of wealth through trading. His respect for property, in other words, never develops into self-interested greed. This idea comes most clearly into focus through his status as foil for his boyhood friend, Rupert Hardinge, and Rupert’s eventual wife, Emily Merton.<sup>xxv</sup> Both Rupert and the Emily obsess over lavish, material possessions. Miles recounts, for instance, coming upon Emily Merton closely inspecting a pearl necklace, “gazing at it, by the light of a powerful lamp, with eyes ... liquid and soft” (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.279), as if brought to tears by the sight of the jewels, and Rupert nearly always appears in the novel with some mention of his modish clothes, fixated on appearing as though he is a “gentleman of a certain class” (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.391). Cooper reinforces their interest in material possessions and (mostly unattained) wealth time and again—their trips to Europe, their country and city homes, etc. They bear the markings of liberal self-interest in their acquisitiveness. Yet the novel assuredly condemns them. After all, the general arc of the first part of the novel relates to Wallingford’s growing understanding of and revulsion at the self-centeredness of these characters.

This conflict between these characters, then, suggests that Wallingford doesn’t completely embrace the liberal model of citizenship that emerged during the early republic. Moreover, this conflict—wherein commerce does not totally overtake Wallingford’s worldview—points to his commingling of liberal and republican civic ideals. The novel, for example, delineates over its concluding chapters the result of this conflict—Miles succeeds (ultimately) in business by paying off his debts and ensuring that he never again finds himself

without recourse to do so. His frugality, embodied in his decision to remain at his ramshackle country home rather than acquire something newer and more amenable to the sophisticated tastes of Rupert, pays off in the end. Rupert, though, struggles his entire life with profligacy and debt, looking well-to-do but frequently resorting to gifts from Miles in order to keep his debtors at bay. Such a situation endorses the sentiments of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*, in which that author notes the uselessness of debts inasmuch as they "cannot be advantageous" (418). Like Montesquieu, then, Wallingford understands the necessity of commerce. It is "that parent of so much that is useful to man, [yet it] has its dark side as well" (J. Cooper *Afloat and Ashore* 1.147). He grasps that it "corrupts pure mores .... [and] polishes and softens barbarous" ones (Montesquieu 338).

Importantly, Miles's skeptical embrace of commerce and property is not the only moment in the novel that recalls republican civic ideals. For instance, he frequently exhibits a sense of working for a collective or common wealth. He is not self-interested but rather frequently selfless. As mentioned above, his concern for the loss of his sailors to impressment in the second part of the novel derives from a concern over their well-being rather than his own or his property's; he similarly looks after his friend Marble, who is "touched by the interest ... manifested in his welfare" (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.304). One might also note the moment shortly before the impressment scene in which Miles bestows upon Rupert \$20,000 unofficially bequeathed to him by Grace Wallingford. At this point, Wallingford has developed significant if civil disgust towards Rupert, whose extravagance and search for the signifiers of social status have led him to break an engagement with Grace and pursue Emily Merton. What's more, his sister's bequest is merely informal; she has not made the stipulation a part of any will or legal document. Miles could easily keep the money for himself rather than gift it to one whom he

loathes and thinks unworthy of his sister's generosity. That he does not suggests, first, that he is more concerned about fulfilling the wishes of others and, second, on some level, he prefers keeping Rupert from destitution. After all, Miles continues supporting Rupert by paying his debts until Rupert's untimely death.

Elsewhere, Wallingford demonstrates an understanding of himself as part of a collective, part of the common wealth; this is nowhere more evident than in his descriptions of shipboard labor. Early in the novel, for instance, Wallingford recalls an instance in which they begin sailing:

Marble and I were conversing on the forecastle at the time, our eyes turned to the westward, for it was scarcely possible for him to look in any other direction, when he interrupted himself by shouting out—"hard up the helm. Spring to the braces, my lads—man the mizzen-staysail down-haul!" This set everybody in motion, and the captain and third mate were on deck in minute. The ship fell off, as soon as we got the mizzen-staysail in, and the main top-sail touching. ... We got the starboard fore-tack forward, and the larboard sheet aft. (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.164)

Although this moment evinces the dry, technical style Cooper prefers in depictions of work at sea, such understated and unadorned prose serves a purpose, imbuing scenes of maritime labor with a matter-of-factness and authenticity that reinforces the sense that Cooper intends in this novel to depict sailors realistically and thereby to suggest that the good seaman citizens he constructs are not the romantic figments of his imagination but rather valid impressions of real sailors.<sup>xxvi</sup> Moreover, the above passage demonstrates the narrative shift that frequently takes place in such scenes. As you'll note, the passage begins with Miles representing himself in the first-person. He stands on board the ship as an individual, and by Marble's side he takes in the

ocean view. However, as soon as the imperative enters through Marble's order to attend to the sails, the subject of Miles's sentences shifts. First, instead of the "I," it becomes "everybody." Then, in the following sentences, Miles includes himself among this everybody by using the first-person plural. Miles reveals himself, therefore, as a member of a larger community—a community that labors together as a group. This narrative tendency is relatively consistent even after Miles has become master of his own ship (he notes, trying to evade some British vessels, "fill we did, and what is more, we put our helm up so much as to leave quite a cable's length") (*Afloat and Ashore* 2.245). This tendency, then, suggests that Miles views himself not entirely as an individual. Rather, he sees himself as an individual and as part of a collective body.

Other moments in the narrative further suggest that he sees himself as part of a larger social or political body. For instance, commenting on the habit of New Yorkers to look up to British officers and to look down upon members of the continental army, during the early 1800s, Wallingford notes with a hint of scorn the way in which people treated a "half-pay English major" as if he were "a nobleman" (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.323). He continues: "This was true, however, only as regarded *society*; the ballet-boxes, and the *people*, giving very different indications of their sentiments" (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.323). Given his republican distaste for titles and nobility at other moments, Miles presumably imagines himself, here, as part of the people, a collective body of individuals and, what's more, a political, collective body that makes their opinions known through the democratic voting process. He becomes a figure, then, who is "made for living in society" (Montesquieu 5). Although he "could forget his fellows," his sense of law and society puts him on the side of the people (rather than the aristocratic "society") in order to fulfill his republican duties to the commonwealth.

Cooper's decision to portray Wallingford as evincing the attributes of both the good liberal and republican citizen is remarkable, given the general trend of U.S. civic ideals away from republicanism and toward liberalism. However, when we consider Cooper's own political writings, it becomes less surprising. *The American Democrat* (1838) depicts the governing structure of the United States frequently as something that succeeds and achieves uniqueness through its more republican, communitarian properties. For instance, he emphasizes the republican character of the nation, describing the way in which the government emerged through the cooperation of individual states as "communities" that comprised the nation and reinforcing the notion that the United States operates more as a Union than as a confederation (*American Democrat* 20, 18). Cooper is much more intent on idealizing the ways in which the nation demonstrates an ability to work through issues together as a community—to see the commonwealth as just as essential as individual interest. The mélange of republican and liberal principles in *Miles* is no accident; after all, Cooper positions Congress and not the president as the key to understanding U.S. government and politics, "bodies of men notoriously acting with less personal responsibilities than individuals" (*American Democrat* 29).

What Cooper imagines in *Afloat and Ashore*, then, is his idealization of the sailor as citizen, a figure who has tempered his liberal tendencies with adequate republicanism. The sailor, I would argue, serves Cooper's purposes perfectly. In other words, it may not only be the sailor alone who can achieve the idealized citizenship but the sailor is a key type in Cooper's own distribution of citizens.<sup>xxvii</sup> There is, in part, an autobiographical rationale for this—Cooper served as a sailor—but that does not explain why his ideal of the citizen-sailor appears so late into his career. In other words, why does he wait two decades to craft a character like Miles Wallingford to so thoroughly embody his concerns about the sailor's place within the body

politic? Cooper's investment in the Somers affair helps to answer this question in part, but it would be reductive to think of *Afloat and Ashore* as a response to a single event. Instead, the significant attention to the sailor as citizen in this text derives from what I believe to be Cooper's general dismay at the public's inability to grasp the centrality of sailors to the national project in spite of obvious contemporary events that spoke to that very claim.

Cooper published *Afloat and Ashore* in 1844, meaning that it was both written and appeared during the afterglow of one of the most important periods in U.S. naval history—the United States Exploring Expedition (U.S. Ex. Ex.). Taking place between 1838 and 1842, the U.S. Ex. Ex. sailed throughout the Pacific Ocean, surveying and charting various islands and shoals, completing the first survey of the Oregon coast, and confirming the continental status of Antarctica (N. Philbrick xv). It was an expedition meant to affirm the status of the United States as a global power. It even amounts to an early instance of vaguely imperial yearning. Although Secretary of Navy J. K. Paulding instructions to Lieutenant Wilkes, which informed the expedition's commander that the “expedition is not for conquest, but discovery,” both the secretary's instructions and Wilkes's accounts of the expedition hint at imperial intentions; if the expedition was not meant to conquer, in other words, it may have been meant to reconnoiter for later imperial and para-imperial endeavors (Wilkes *Voyage* viii). For instance, Paulding orders the expedition to “proceed to the Feejee Islands, which you will examine with particular attention, with a view to the selection of a safe harbor....; it being the intention of the government to keep one of the squadron of the Pacific cruising near these islands in the future” (Wilkes *Voyage* vi). The intention for the expedition is, then, to explore with an eye toward expanding U.S. influence outside the western hemisphere. The expedition complied and the writings of Wilkes after the fact read with an eye toward establishing a strong U.S. presence

within the various island chains in the Pacific. Describing the Tonga Islands, for example, he provides extensive descriptions of the fortifications found there, extensive in that he spends an entire paragraph detailing the entryways to these compounds (Wilkes *Voyage* 343). Such passages may appear throughout the anthropological chapters, where he notes how the “Tongese ... countenances are generally of a European cast”; nevertheless, these passages effectively point the U.S. toward viable locations for settlement, locations where the inhabitants more closely resemble U.S. citizens and where one might have detailed knowledge of the inhabitants’ defenses (351).<sup>xxviii</sup>

In spite of the dimensions of the expedition, and in spite of the *American Journal of Science and Arts*’s contention that “the country is much interested to know what has been done by the expedition,” other evidence suggests that the expedition prompted much positive interest during its time away and met with little fanfare upon its return (393). Periodic articles chronicling developments during the course of the expedition did appear but they hardly constitute a multitude, and, importantly, those that did appear do not seem to have had a life beyond the papers of coastal urban centers. Unlike other maritime activities (mutinies, for instance), the stories of the U.S. Ex. Ex. did not find their way into the papers of the interior nearly as often. Moreover the reception of the expedition upon concluding its work was chilly at best: “[Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, commander of the U.S. Ex. Ex.] had found a new continent, charted hundreds of Pacific islands, collected tons of artifacts and specimens, and explored the Pacific Northwest and the Sulu Sea. And he had now returned to find that nobody in New York, Washington, or, it seemed, the entire nation apparently cared. ... [N]o official mention of the Expedition had been made” for nearly a year prior to its return (N. Philbrick 303-4). Contemporary responses to the conclusion, like this one from the *New York Spectator*, are not so



much disinterested as they are critical, presumably of Wilkes's perceived mistreatment of his crew: "There has been much, very much, in the whole management, of the United States exploring expedition, and more in the lamentable sequel, to cause regret and shame in the breast of every citizen" ("The Exploring Expedition"). Thus, the response to the U.S. Ex. Ex. characterized the work of these sailors—the work of the mariners on behalf of the nation—as, at best, unimportant, and, at worst, a fiasco.<sup>xxix</sup>

Although Cooper indicates nowhere in *Afloat and Ashore* that his novel responds to the general disdain for sailors that circulated at the time both in civic discourse and in the positioning the work and achievements of mariners, the narrative as well as Cooper's writings elsewhere does point us to that possibility. *Afloat and Ashore*, for instance, includes among its many maritime scenarios, the passage of a ship through the Pacific Ocean and into the Pacific northwest; although it is hardly the same journey as the U.S. Ex. Ex., it nevertheless resonates with the actual journey.<sup>xxx</sup> Externally, we might also note Cooper's apparent general interest in maritime exploring expeditions—his review of Sir William Edward Parry's expeditions in search of the northwest passage and *Mercedes of Castille* (1840), a novel about Christopher Columbus. Cooper was undoubtedly interested in this aspect of maritime life and, arguably, understood marine expeditions as central to a nation's place in the world, having characterized the British decision to send Parry out to sea a "do[ing] her ministers great credit" (J. Cooper "Parry's" 66). It is possible, then, that Cooper was both aware of the U.S. Ex. Ex. and quite possibly disappointed by the response it received upon its return. In fact, this is quite likely: Cooper was "an old family friend of the Wilkeses"—the family of the man who led the expedition (W. Franklin 339).

Cooper thus uses *Afloat and Ashore* to challenge the perspective of the sailor that dominated his era, presenting readers with Miles Wallingford, the central figure of his narrative, a good seaman, who works his way up to master, as well as a good citizen, who demonstrates the liberal and republican civic ideals that were central to the early American sense of citizenship. Cooper may not completely exonerate the seaman from his so-called crimes against civil society—he allows two brief descriptions of recently debauched sailors entering various crafts—but for the most part he portrays them as sturdy, dependable, and intelligent. He takes the radical, threatening seaman and recasts him as a viable and even necessary component in the social and political order. The seaman becomes worthy of the status as citizen. This position isn't consistent throughout Cooper's work. His romantic seamen—John Paul Jones or the Red Rover—are treated ambivalently, and Captain Spike of *Jack Tier* is blatantly villainous.

Nevertheless, his seamen—particularly those that occupy the privileged position in the narratives—resemble Miles Wallingford.<sup>xxx</sup> Cooper, who you'll recall had spent time at sea, seemed bent on reclaiming the sailor as an integral, beneficial member of U.S. society. He may have had a complicated relationship to his seamen. Cooper wanted to present sailors as ideal citizens but almost always adopted a position of intellectual superiority to them—even if Cooper allows Wallingford the status of good citizen he also presents the character as a naïf, who gains knowledge of civic life but never enough to pen something like *The American Democrat* (1838). Cooper may have written *Afloat and Ashore* at least partially as autobiography but with the key difference that, even as he sought to integrate sailors into the body politic, he seeks to distance himself from them. Cooper certainly encourages his reader to map his life onto Miles's. Not only did he write the novel in the first person, but also, as his daughter, Susan Fenimore Cooper, notes in her introduction to Household Edition of *Afloat and Ashore*, “it was an autobiography” (S.

Cooper ix). Yet because of this overlap between Cooper and Wallingford the differences—the retired life with some public involvement of the latter compared to the politically invested, eternally engaged life of the former—are cast into relief. Treating Miles in this way (“he is good but I am better”) parallels the way the novel constructs mariners’ civic viability (“they are fine as they are but I must present them as better”). He takes away the so-called flaws of the seaman, the flaws that render the seaman unfit for civic life according to the public discourse about seamen, but he replaces them with adherence to standard definitions of civic ideals. He aggressively forces the seaman into a civic mold, rather than allowing for the seaman’s radical politics to challenge and ultimately redefine that mold—something that Melville achieved in his autobiographical sea fiction, as I discuss in the subsequent chapter.

### 3.0 HERMAN MELVILLE'S *REDBURN* AND *WHITE-JACKET* AND COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNAL-ANARCHISM IN THE 1840S

Herman Melville's position within the academy has proven the inverse of his older contemporary, James Fenimore Cooper. As the fortunes of the latter have diminished, those of the former have risen in the century-plus since his death.<sup>xxxii</sup> Importantly, this inversion also emerges from the divergent methods of representing and characterizing sailors as citizens in Melville's work, for, whereas Cooper attempts to salvage the mariner-citizen by divesting him of his more radical tendencies and aligning him with the dominant features of liberal and republican ideals, Melville's recuperative project accepts the radical civic politics of the sailor and seeks to realign U.S. civic discourse around the more progressive politics of the seaman.

In spite of their divergent fortunes within the academy and, arguably, without, Melville and Cooper were inextricably linked during the mid-nineteenth century. Writing a review of Cooper's re-issued *The Red Rover* (1850), Melville availed himself an opportunity to reminisce: "Long ago, and far inland, we read it in our uncritical days, and enjoyed it as much as thousands of the rising generation will when supplied with such an entertaining volume" (qtd. in Leyda 46). He would seem to damn Cooper's work with faint praise here. It appeals primarily to the untrained, or, as he has it, uncritical, eyes of children (the "rising generation"), offering an "entertaining" reprieve rather than something, like his recently published *Mardi* (1849), that challenges the intellect. Moreover, Melville sells Cooper's popularity short, setting the limits of

his readership in the thousands.<sup>xxxiii</sup> *The Red Rover* may offer a small group of undiscerning readers a diversion, his review suggests, but little more, suggesting a limited connection between the works of the two men at best.

Reading Melville in this way, though, does a disservice to his understanding of Cooper and overlooks just how profound an impact that earlier author had on him. In a letter to anthologist and critic Rufus Griswold (1851), for instance, Melville echoes the retrospection of the review while also positioning Cooper as a sort of literary pole star or antecedent, claiming that “[Cooper’s] works are among the earliest I remember, as in my boyhood producing a vivid, and awakening power upon my mind” (qtd. in Leyda 46). Cooper’s works were foundational fictions for Melville—they were among the earliest to pique his aesthetic sensibilities, even if he approached them with an uncritical eye. More important, however, is the import of the final clause-and-a-half, wherein he recalls Cooper’s novels “producing a vivid, and awakening power upon [his] mind.” In this moment, Melville suggests that these novels did not simply stir an aesthetic response to literature but rather and moreover served as an initiation into literary life. They activated imaginative processes, this description implies—processes that might culminate in his later ability to concoct narratives occupying a “freely imaginative space” that does not simply reflect everyday concerns (Arac 4).

The connection between these two authors was legible to others during the period in which their writing overlapped and not just to Melville. In a March 1856 article entitled “A Trio of American Sailor-Authors,” *Littell’s Living Age* considered the relationship between and the work of Melville, Cooper, and Richard Henry Dana, Jr. The anonymous author of this article makes a claim for a connection between the authors not simply in terms of their parallel biographies—both Cooper and Melville had sailed before the mast—but also in terms of their

narrative styles and intentions. According to the anonymous authors of this omnibus review, and in spite of the stylistic differences between them (the “clearness” of Cooper’s prose compared to Melville’s overwhelming “wealth of fancy” and occasional “mystical form”), Cooper and Melville are, at foundational levels, kindred spirits (“A Trio of American Sailor-Authors” 561, 564, 566). Among the litany of positive attributes held by these men, for example, the author lists the “accuracy” and “truth and fidelity” with which both Melville and Cooper describe both the sea and the lives of seamen upon it (564, 562). Both authors exhibit occasional lapses in precision—Cooper in relation to describing entire fleets (as opposed to one or two vessels) and Melville in relation to the maneuvering of naval ships. Nevertheless, for the author of the review, both men also remain faithful to the “real ... life” of a sailor (560). Moreover, Cooper and Melville share what the author of the article refers to as “poetical” qualities (561, 566). Both men render the worlds of their sea narrative with an aesthetic perspective that imbues their works with uniqueness and originality. They manage to color common narrative elements and sequences in such a way that “irresistibly startles and enchains the interest of the reader” (566). They are authors who succeed by virtue of blending “forcible, accurate” depictions of life at sea with poetical descriptions of the same (566). We may take what the reviewer says of Melville’s work and extend it to his or her description of Cooper as well: “It is his *style* that is original rather than his *matter*” (566).<sup>xxxiv</sup>

In spite of the connection that the author of this review (and others) seeks to establish between Cooper and Melville, close attention to the work of the latter underscores that a vast gulf separates the work of the two men. Certainly, as the reviewer notes, there is something of the genius in Melville—a quality that the reviewer does not assign to Cooper—but, in this chapter, I am more interested in a more significant difference—the way in which Melville

implicitly challenges the representation of sailors found in the works of Cooper. As explained above, Cooper reclaims the seaman from civil society's dustbins by instilling in him noble, idealized attributes of the citizen. He molds the sailor to fit the contours of good citizenship espoused during the antebellum years. His sailors appear not as the rabble of contemporary newspaper accounts, bent on moral dissolution at best and violence at worst, but as their inverse—virtuous, sympathetic, socially- and politically-engaged, property-holding individuals.

Melville does something quite different. Rather than romanticize the sailor as ideal citizen, in *Redburn* (1849) and *White-Jacket* (1850), Melville portrays, with their rough edges intact, common sailors of naval and merchant vessels. He depicts them as they were frequently described in contemporary journalistic accounts of maritime life. Yet Melville does not portray his rough, recalcitrant, and boisterous sailors from a position of condescension. In these two novels, rather, he upholds sailors as model citizens not by fitting them neatly into the mold of good citizenship circulating at the time but by positing that the qualities that made them anathema to the likes of Madison and Adams in fact made them ideal models of an alternative concept of good citizenship. As a result, Melville becomes not only more aesthetically radical than Cooper but also more socially and politically radical, in regard to the civic dimensions and qualities of sailors. The maritime radicalism on display and held up by *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*—cosmopolitan communal-anarchism—importantly not only situates Melville in contradistinction to Cooper and prevailing U.S. civic discourse in the antebellum period but also in alignment with the circulating practices and ideals of the radical politics in the United States and Europe during the 1830s and 1840s.

Yet, while Melville's more radical political and aesthetic tendencies have aided the proliferation of critical appreciation of his work over the last century—Melville espouses points

of view that strike many readers as more progressive—the characterization of Melville as a progressive political and social thinker lacks nuance. As radical as Melville’s idea of the sailor-citizen is at times, at other times Melville positions his seamen as ambivalent figures at best, complicating and challenging the ideals of cosmopolitan communal-anarchism articulated elsewhere. *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* do not rapturously embrace the rowdy sailor as an ideal citizen akin to the European revolutionaries of 1848-49 but rather hesitantly propose a more refractory civic alternative to the good citizen of his day who, as Michael Schudson explains, was likely to embrace institutional, organized party politics that contradicts the more radical tendencies displayed in Melville’s sailors (94, 110-1).

Although Melville wrote his semi-autobiographical novels of life before the mast in roughly the same period as Cooper crafted his later maritime fictions, the cultural, social, and political contexts from which *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* arose differ to a considerable degree, in that the novels are representations of contemporary sea-faring and contemporary sailors. The novels do not seek to redefine the civic narrative of the sailor throughout the early republic, as Cooper’s *Afloat and Ashore* did. They do not seek to make a claim for the centrality of the mariner in the U.S. body politic from the nation’s beginnings; rather, they are novels concerned with the ways in which contemporary political and social practices of sailors might be used to adjust contemporary U.S. civic practices. In other words, *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* position themselves as future-oriented works, looking to the ways sailors might prove emblematic as the ideals of U.S. citizenship develop and evolve over the latter half of the nineteenth century. While Cooper’s novel did respond to his present moment—the U.S. Exploring Expedition, 1838-42, in particular—it engaged with civic ideals and conversations that, primarily, circulated in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.<sup>xxxv</sup> On the other hand, Melville’s *Redburn* and *White-*



*Jacket* responded to the social, political, and cultural perspective of sailors and their civic roles and identities of the era in which he was writing—the 1840s.

The image of the sailor that circulated through U.S. public discourse—namely through newspaper accounts—in this era echoes the disdain found in the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century depictions discussed above and extends it. Throughout the 1840s, U.S. newspapers regularly offered descriptions of maritime life. The representation of common sailors in such articles, however, was often unflattering and, even when it aimed at a becoming portrait, frequently demonstrated a dubious ideological motivation in regard to the sailor’s position within U.S. society.

Aside from shipping news—which ships had recently departed or entered various ports—nineteenth-century newspaper accounts of maritime life most often recounted harrowing tales of the high seas relating to the issues of mutiny and piracy. During the 1840s, stories mentioning piracy and mutiny appeared in various U.S. newspapers nearly ten times more often than stories that commented on common sailors and common seamen. The most common image of a sailor for many U.S. American readers was therefore that of the refractory, rebellious, and treacherous pirate or mutineer.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these newspaper accounts did not simply play up the scandalous and dangerous aspects of such figures—they also cast them, as earlier writers had cast sailors in general, as poor civic specimens at best and, at worst, outside the U.S. body politic entirely. In “A Dreadful Mutiny,” a story published in Tallahassee’s *The Floridian* in February 1840, for instance, the narrator recounts a fictional mutiny that develops following the fatal results of a captain’s mistreatment of his sailors. Although the captain of the story comes across as a petty tyrant—he has a “detested face” and “the devil ... in him”—he nevertheless appears more

humane than the mutineers, who repeatedly stab him with bayonets and marlin spikes, leaving him “covered with a hundred wounds” and the deck “covered with ... the blood of [their] officers, many of whom were as good men as ever lived” (“A Dreadful Mutiny”). As a result, this story casts the mutineers as disreputable members of U.S. society inasmuch as they mistake “good men” for despots, thereby becoming mutineers rather than heroes.

Further, the story suggests that the men are unworthy of calling themselves American. Following the deaths of the captain and several officers, the crew holds a council of war and decides that, rather than turn pirate, they ought to submit themselves to a foreign power, first France and then Spain. The story thereby suggests that mutineers do not simply reject the despotism that accompanies life at sea and seek to instantiate something more autonomous. They do not seek to take the boat over for themselves and turn pirate. Rather, they relinquish their civic ties to U.S. society in favor of submission to a foreign land that, as of 1840, remained under monarchical rule. They reject democratic autonomy in favor of continued subservience. They do not, therefore, exhibit characteristics desirable in U.S. citizens.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Other depictions of mutiny suggest that the act of mutiny itself removes sailors from the body politic entirely, or, rather, from the protections of their supposed rights—whether the mutineers choose to align themselves with another nation or not. For example, the New York *Herald* published a piece entitled “Horrible Mutiny on the United States Brig *Somers*—Hanging at the Yardarm!” Ignoring the intellectual quandary posed by the title—no mutiny transpired aboard the *Somers*, though a sailor was executed for allegedly forming one—we find inside the article itself the events characterized as an “inhuman conspirac[y]” (1). The author of the article here animalizes the mutineers. It is not simply enough to characterize them, as those in “A Dreadful Mutiny” are, as foolhardy citizens, expatriating themselves from one despot to another.

Instead they become beasts, or, as the author of this piece on the *Somers* depicts Philip Spencer, the head mutineer, as a “dare-devil,” a descriptive term with diabolical intimations that seem pertinent in this context than those pertaining to bravery (“A Dreadful Mutiny” [*Floridian*]). Moreover, as beasts, mutineers like Spencer can be executed summarily without ever having actually mutinied. They are without rights or recourse to justice. They are beyond the reach of the protections of U.S. citizenship.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Merely an implication in the article about the *Somers* mutiny, the borderline non-citizenship of the sailor receives a clearer articulation in a slightly earlier (1840) letter to the editor of the *Boston Courier*. Writing about the use of seamen’s testimonials in court cases, the letter-writer, who calls him or herself Mentor, explains that “shipmasters and mates were to be believed, rather than sailors, when the testimony of one conflicted with another” (Mentor). The author assures that he does not believe this to be a nationwide or statewide judicial mandate, but rather “advice” frequently given by judges to juries in cases involving maritime disputes—advice, he notes, that has “irresistible influence” upon said juries (Mentor). Although not as severe, such judicial pronouncements against sailors share ideological underpinnings with legislation governing the restrictions of slaves’ judicial recourse. While sailors were not denied trials and were not barred from testifying on their own behalf, their perceived lack of credibility in relation to their superiors certainly resonates and, moreover, similarly works to establish the sailor as a figure—like the slave—that manages to exist within and without the body politic simultaneously, subject to laws and regulations but without recourse to basic civil rights.

This is not to say that newspaper accounts of sailors and maritime life invariably portrayed seamen as bad citizens or reinforced their tenuous relationship to the rights and privileges conferred by U.S. citizenship. Isolated instances occurred during the first decade of

Melville's writing career in which authors recounted the stories of "heroic sailors." Such articles aim to demonstrate the selflessness of sailors and might, arguably, be said to counteract the depiction of mutineers and pirates more common in contemporary newspapers. However, attention to these articles reveals limited concern for the seaman and a limited definition of heroism. In 1845, for instance, during the mid-summer months, several newspapers circulating eastern cities recounted the story of Abraham Heath, a sailor who rescued a Mrs. Ford and her child from a capsized ship, while, three years later, the story of a sailor Frederic Jerome, who saved "from certain and speedy death" several emigrants, including women and children, from another capsized ship ("Heroic Sailor"; "Frederic Jerome and the Ocean Monarch"). These two pieces effectively portray maritime heroism as little more than the selfless salvaging of women and children. Sailors become heroes not because they look out for their fellow sailors but rather because they save the so-called innocent. It's telling that these two articles were republished several times a piece during the mid- to late 1840s, while the story of Robert Bourne, who saved a fellow foremast hand from drowning, was reprinted fewer times. The good citizenship of sailors—rewarded with the "freedom of the city," in the case of Jerome—depends on relations to and willingness to defend the interests of women and children, not the interests of themselves or their fellow seamen ("Frederic Jerome and the Ocean Monarch").<sup>xxxix</sup>

In this environment, undeniably hostile towards mariners even as their work became more obviously essential to the nation and to the nation's sense of its place in the world, as I discussed in the previous chapter, Melville developed his early sea fiction. Many of his early novels bristle at the representations of the sailor as a recalcitrant mutineer, a bad citizen, embracing the seamen for his refractory qualities. Three of his five early novels, focus on sailor-heroes who desert their ships in favor of sojourns among cannibals or Swiftian island-hopping.

To varying degrees, these novels—*Typee* (1846), *Omoo* (1847), and *Mardi* (1849)— provide commentary on the representation and treatment of sailors within the body politic.

*Mardi* in particular offers an extended meditation on the national and racial politics of the antebellum period in the narrator's stay on the island of Vivenza, a "re-publi-can-land" where "all-men-are-born-free-and-equal ... . Except-the-tribe-of-Hamo" and therefore obvious analogue for the United States of the late 1840s (*Mardi* 448). This section of *Mardi* features considerable consideration of contemporary political debates—the merits, for instance, of "be[ing] politically free"—yet the novel hardly merges the political discourse encountered on Vivenza and other islands with the condition of the sailor at the center of the narrative (461). Like the novels that precede it in Melville's oeuvre, *Mardi* serves as a travelogue and anthropological study. It certainly diverges from *Typee* and *Omoo* in that the direction of the narrative's exploratory gaze shifts from the exotic, non-western Marquesas to the more familiar ground of North America and Europe. Moreover, its complex allegorical structure resembles less the linear progressions of *Typee* and *Omoo* and more the intricate architectonics and symbolic orders of later work like *Moby-Dick* (1851) or *The Confidence Man* (1857).

Nevertheless, its treatment of the sailor and his civic dimensions remains inchoate. Because it scans more as travelogue or allegorical anthropology, the narrative does not dwell much on the mariner's place within the national body politic. Instead it affords the sailor the opportunity to come face-to-face with a state and its republican hypocrisy. Yet, because the novel exists as a series of allegorical deflections, Taji does not come to recognize Vivenza as an American analogue—the narrative reserves that recognition for the reader—and as a result he does not see himself ensnared by an hierarchical structure similar to one found in southern Vivenza, where "hundreds of collared men were toiling" with "men unlike them ... armed with

long thongs, which descended upon the toilers, and made wounds” (465). *Mardi*, then, allows Melville to create a more politically-motivated narrative than his earlier work, but it treats the political with little insight into the way mariners fit into the national debates of citizenship and civic models.

Such meditations Melville saves for *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*, his other early fiction, which appeared after his Pacific narratives—*Typee*, *Omoo*, and *Mardi*—but before *Moby-Dick* and which offer more sustained engagement with the issue of the civic position and dimensions of sailors during the antebellum period. Extant criticism of these two narratives is largely problematic. In some cases, critical analyses tend towards abstraction, and in others they overdetermine Melville’s democratic impulses. While the former overlook the historical context and reduce the singularity of his sailor characters, the latter incorrectly articulates how and why he represents his sailors in a sympathetic and unvarnished light.

Among the first category, Wai-Chee Dimock’s *Empire for Liberty* (1989) reads Melville’s *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* as allegories of the diminishment of an author’s sovereignty and the flourishing of the reader’s. She builds this argument out of Melville’s professed opinion of the two novels—that they were, as he explained in an oft-cited phrase written in a letter to his father-in-law, “two jobs”—as well as what she characterizes as a “poetics of authorial subjection” in the language of the novels (qtd. in Dimock *Empire* 76, Dimock *Empire* 77). The reading ultimately posits that the books evince Melville’s aversion to his readership because they have subjected him to writing two novels of little interest to him and, moreover, because they “[relish]” the “hierarchical and expansionist” worlds of *Redburn*’s merchant vessel and *White-Jacket*’s man-of war—relish worlds that uphold the prerogatives of

Manifest Destiny, a concept that, Dimock contends, Melville “seems to relish ... less” (*Empire* 103, 102, 103).

Dimock’s work on *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* is interesting and, moreover, useful inasmuch as she situates the novels as both dissimilar and able to “complement, contextualize, and elucidate each other” (Dimock *Empire* 92). Nevertheless, her approach to the novels tends to render them less specific in their function and ideology. For, though she admirably avoids reading the novels too literally, Dimock seems to place her analysis at two removes from the texts themselves. For her, *White-Jacket* and *Redburn* are not simply chronicles of the lives of common seamen. They are allegories of the relationship between author and audience that expand outwards into commentary on contemporary politics (expansionist policies and Manifest Destiny). This approach seems, to me, to go somewhat astray, rendering the texts simultaneously polemics and forms of psychological narrative therapy. Moreover, her readings of these novels, like the readings of the novels by others, underestimate their status as commentary about the roles of sailors within civil society. She depicts *White-Jacket* in particular as “an oddly soothing” narrative, which, by focusing on the mistreatment of sailors, ignores “other problems” (namely looming sectional conflict) occurring within the United States (Dimock *Empire* 101). As such, she diminishes the importance of Melville’s commentary on sailors, criticizing the novel for ignoring a topic—slavery—that isn’t within its narrative scope.

A similar effect is achieved in William Dillingham’s *An Artist in the Rigging* (1972), which is one of the few scholarly works to focus entirely on Melville’s early (pre-*Moby-Dick* [1851]) fictions. Like Dimock’s book, Dillingham’s does not engage in the specific, civic implications of the representations of seamen in the novel. Unlike Dimock, however, Dillingham refuses to engage with the political dimensions of the novels at all. For him, they are, foremost,

existential, psychological novels, concerned not with politics, society, or even life before the mast but rather with the inner-turmoil and intellectual convolutions of their central characters and consciousnesses. Thus, *Redburn* chronicles the eponymous character's overwhelming desires, portraying a young man who "burn[s] with 'fever,' hungering and thirsting for something to alleviate the fever of his soul" (35), while, in *White-Jacket*, "the heart of the book is not in what it says about society, or the injustices of the navy, or democracy, but what it says about one man, White-Jacket" (58).

There are, of course, works that, unlike Dillingham's, focus on the social and political ramifications of Melville's novels while also avoiding the level of abstraction found in Dimock's work, though these too fall prey to analytical problems. Nancy Fredrick's *Melville's Art of Democracy* (1995) is perhaps the most sustained examination of Melville's politics. However, it ignores *White-Jacket* and *Redburn* in favor of *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre* (1852). Nevertheless, this work articulates an idea of Melville's fiction that resonates with the designs others have teased out of *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*. She characterizes Melville as a class-conscious author who evinces "hostility toward the upper classes and ... valorization of the lower" (8). Such sympathetic portraits of the so-called marginal derive from an embrace of the democratic spirit, for Fredricks. Such a reading of Melville's work is not out of line. As he wrote in an 1851 letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne of his "ruthless democracy": "A thief in jail is as honorable as a personage as Gen. George Washington" (Melville *Correspondence* 190-1).

Yet this idea of Melville as someone who embraces rather than shuns the "social plebian" (Melville *Correspondence* 190) leads to erroneous assumptions regarding his representation of sailors in *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*. For instance, in contrast to Dimock's later assertion to the contrary, Michael Rogin's *Subversive Genealogies* (1985) posits that *White-Jacket* "attacked



slavery on board ship, in the middle of a crisis over slavery” (86). Margaret Cohen’s brief consideration of the same novel in *The Novel and the Sea* (2010) makes a similar claim. In it, she writes, “Melville hammered home ... [ideas] about life on a man-of-war that the navy is a brutal hierarchy ruled by force, flagrantly at odds with American ideals” (155). Although neither author speaks of *Redburn* in these quotes, the sentiments can extend to isolated moments in that earlier text, moments that reinforce the sense of the ship, merchant or naval, as a world at odds with the political theories that founded the country. In a sense, the approaches of Rogin and Cohen have the effect of reading *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* as direct or indirect public service announcements against various inequalitarian U.S. policies. They ignore the civic dimensions of the novel’s representation of seamen as seamen. They are instead interested in characterizing the novels themselves (particularly *White-Jacket*) as evidence of Melville’s own civic practices.

Melville does not use his novels as a means of simply agitating on behalf of the seaman (the “social plebian” of choice in his novels). He turns to sailors as a means to explore the national and international bodies politic because they offer an alternative model of citizenship. Importantly, this mode of citizenship need not be read as clearly democratic. Melville himself relies upon that word and related concepts in his novels and other writing—the “ruthless democracy” he identifies in his intellectual and political beliefs, the “republican progressiveness” he would introduce to literature, his apostrophes to “thou great Democratic God” and “thou just Spirit of Equality” in *Moby-Dick* (*Correspondence* 190; “Hawthorne and His Mosses” 125; *Moby-Dick* 119). Nevertheless, as I will show, based on his representation of sailors and their conduct before the mast in *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*, Melville’s political rhetoric goes beyond democratic republicanism. That is not to say that Melville does not embrace democracy and democratic citizenship. Rather, through his mariners, he embraces versions of these civic

abstractions that run counter to the way they have been typically thought of in U.S. political theory and rhetoric.<sup>xl</sup>

Although they remain sympathetic to the sailor, *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* establish maritime worlds that reject the idealized fictions found in the works of sea-narrative specialists like James Fenimore Cooper and in so doing establish sailors who test the boundaries of republican and liberal civic ideals.<sup>xli</sup> Cooper certainly makes passing reference to unsavory marine activities—the brief mention of formerly drunk and now dissipated sailors returning to the vessel after their time in port in *Afloat and Ashore*—yet it is impossible to imagine Cooper crafting the following description of shipboard life:

What too many seamen are when ashore is very well known; but what some of them become when completely cut off from shore indulgences can hardly be imagined by landmen. The sins for which the cities of the plain were overthrown still linger in some of these wooden-walled Gomorrah sod the deep. ... More than once complaints were made at the mast in the *Neversink*, from which the deck officer would turn away with loathing, refuse to hear them, and command the complainant out of his sights. (*White-Jacket* 379)<sup>xlii</sup>

Melville recounts here in veiled yet nevertheless lucid terms the practice of sodomy aboard ships. He shows himself capable of characterizing seamen not simply capable of taking part in debauched, alcoholic proceedings (the “well-known” activities of the seamen in port) but also capable of what his narrator refers to scornfully and piously as the “sins” of the cities of the plain. The world of Cooper’s ships elides such so-called transgressive behavior on the part of the seamen.

Furthermore, Cooper's works have no room for the ambiguity with which the eponymous narrator of *White-Jacket* describes the sodomy. While the narrator, in the selection above, seems to dutifully and sanctimoniously chastise the sailors for taking part in the "evils" of naval vessels (379), the inclusion of the deck officer's actions raises some questions about what, precisely, the narrator associates textually with this term. It could very well be the sexual activity that *White-Jacket* skirts around, but, as Tony Tanner notes, "Melville's apparent horror at the very idea or word 'homosexual'" may be "feigned or real" (Tanner xxiv). The real "evils" in this moment, for Tanner, are instead—at least potentially—the "perversity of conventions of representation" (not the so-called perversions of particular sexual acts), which allow Melville to "describe sadistic floggings at length" while never once uttering even the word homosexual (xxiv).<sup>xliii</sup>

Taking a page from Tanner's book, I find that the term "evils" here pertains not to the common sailors engaging in sodomy but rather to the disdain heaped by the deck officer upon the complainant. The suggestion of this series of events (sodomy, complaint, nauseated dismissal of complaint) is that it's not just sodomy taking place below the deck—it's coerced or forced sodomy. Why else characterize the individual mentioning the activity as a "complainant"? While it is possible to imagine the complainant as a foremast sailor upset with the sexual activities of others, it seems more likely—given the officer's revulsion (he "turns away with loathing")—that the complainant has experienced non-consenting sodomy (*White-Jacket* 379). The evils, therefore, refer not to sexual acts but rather to both the inhumane treatment of an individual whose claims to bodily sovereignty have been infringed and the deck officer's callous dismissal of that individual's request for justice.

Of course, in some way, we might be tempted read this scene as a challenge to the prevailing notions surrounding the fitness for civic belonging related to their sexuality. In other

words, we might read the negative portrayal of the deck officer's response to the complainant as commentary on the social distrust of homosexuality, as commentary on the ways in which the treatment of sailors—dismissed by authorities in their pursuit of justice and recompense—aligns with the treatment of homosexuals during the era. As Shane Phelan notes of gay men and women, so too, we might say, Melville notes about sailors: "citizenship for some depends upon the willingness of the majority to acknowledge them as members" (139). There is merit to this idea, in that *White-Jacket* establishes connections between sailors and other groups pushed to the margins of U.S. political society. Nevertheless, although sexuality has had an affect on the perception of one's fitness for civil and political society for a period of time, it did not have the same significance as it does now. As Phelan notes, prior to 1968, "homosexuals were barely a blip on America's radar screen," suggesting that sexual minorities exerted little influence on the debates over national belonging (1). Moreover, looking at Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, it becomes clear that homosexuality as a concept with a set of definable practices did not circulate for much of the nineteenth-century. As a result, this passage in *White-Jacket* seems less likely an attempt by Melville to rope in another category of citizen to compare to and align with the sailor. Rather, it affords the novel the opportunity to underscore a moment of troubled fraternity both before the mast and between the officers and common sailors. Ultimately, then, what emerges from this passage is not squeamishness about homosexuality. This moment does not embody a moment of Melvillian homosexual panic. Instead, Melville highlights his highly sympathetic relationship to both this common sailor in particular and that class of seaman in general. That one tar forcefully sodomizes another does not necessarily diminish Melville's compassion for the mariner; such behavior does not lead him to dismiss seamen as categorically and inexorably brutish but rather to remonstrate with the officer. He instead portrays the scene with a marked

detachment, suggesting that, perhaps, the cruelty of the sodomizing mariner stems not from his status as a common sailor but rather from his situation aboard a hierarchized, inequalitarian, and arbitrarily-governed ship.

This episode provides an extreme example of the lengths to which Melville goes to treat his sailors without the varnish of romantic idealism, even as his empathy for them remains intact. Other, less drastic situations abound in which common seamen demonstrate unsavory behavior. In *Redburn*, for instance, the titular narrator recounts the beginning of his tenure aboard a Liverpool-bound merchant ship, noting that he “began to feel unsettled and ill at ease about the stomach” (*Redburn* 38). Upon telling a fellow sailor “how it was with me, and begg[ing] him to make my excuses very civilly to the chief mate, for I thought I would go below and spend the night in my bunk,” the sailor only “laugh[s] at me” (*Redburn* 38). Although neither as violent nor severe as coercing another into sexual activity, this scenario certainly resonates with the discussion of sodomy in *White-Jacket*. Both the sailor here and the implicit rapists of *White-Jacket* lack a modicum of civility and sympathy for their fellow laborers.

This lack of sympathy and civility among sailors situates Melville’s sailors as poor civic specimens, at least according to the principles of republican citizenship. In his foreword to *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), for example, Montesquieu defines his use of the term “virtue” throughout the text: “One must note that what I call *virtue* in a republic is love of the homeland, that is, love of equality. It is not a moral virtue or a Christian virtue; it is a *political* virtue” (xli). Although Montesquieu’s language here is a bit slippery (how does virtue equal love of the homeland and love of equality), it suggests two important things: First, virtue is a foundational element of republican citizenship and republican social formations. Second, this virtuous love subordinates love of self for love of the body politic or larger society. Although it would be easy

to classify this virtue as a form of proto-nationalism (“love of homeland”), the qualifying clause in the first sentence (“that is, love of equality”) suggests that this love of homeland derives from a fellow-feeling with the constituents of the homeland. In other words, it is not simply abstract devotion to the nebulous concept of a nation or state or even, it would seem, the more physical if metonymic representative of the nation or state—the monarch. Instead, it is devotion to one’s society. The behavior of the sailors described above certainly runs roughshod over such sentiments, just as it does principles of liberal citizenship like consent.<sup>xliv</sup>

In spite of the implicit non-consensual sodomy appearing towards its finale, *White-Jacket* tends to downplay the lack of republican principles among common seamen that we find in *Redburn*. While the former novel does contain scenes of outrageous sailor-on-sailor violence, it almost invariably occurs in a top-down fashion, underscoring the rigid hierarchy of U.S. naval vessels commented on at length in criticism of the novel.

Although one can filter such events as the various floggings—or near-floggings, in the case of White-Jacket himself—through the language of republican civic principles, I am more interested in the lengths to which the novel goes to portray the common seamen as lacking respect for key concepts of liberal citizenship—the basic rights of property outlined by John Locke. In a chapter entitled “From Pockets to Pickpockets,” White-Jacket explains how, as he offers in the previous chapter, he came to find himself “minus several valuable articles”—the proliferation of pickpockets on board men-of-war or, as he puts it, “endless” “minor pilferings” (*White-Jacket* 39, 40). The sailors are, in a word, thieves and give little heed to, for instance, Locke’s belief in the inviolability of one’s possessions. The world of a man-of-war, then, is not the civil society imagined in the *Two Treatises of Government*, whereby a group of individuals enter a social and political body for the sake of protecting their property. The pickpockets

described by White-Jacket may claim that their behavior does not run counter to the laws of property. After all, they only “covertly abstract a thing from one whom they dislike; and insist upon it, that, in such a case, stealing is no robbing” or “steal for the sake of the joke” (*White-Jacket* 39). Nevertheless, White-Jacket seems to understand that their depredations on his and others’ property constitute both a religious and civic transgression. As he explains, they “take their own views of ... theological or ethical definitions” as they relate to “morality and the Decalogue” (*White-Jacket* 39). Moreover, they have the most “liberal notions” about things like an individual’s possessions (*White-Jacket* 39). The narrator here uses the adjective liberal in an undoubtedly ironic fashion, and it suggests that he is aware of the rather illiberal civic attitudes of his peers. It suggests that he understands the common sailors to lack familiarity with Lockean liberalism in spite of the ship’s library containing, among other volumes, “Locke’s *Essays*—incomparable essays, everybody knows” (*White-Jacket* 169).

Perhaps, though, we might press on that final phrase—“everybody knows”—and propose the following question: If the sailors are unfamiliar with Lockean liberalism, why does everybody know the incomparability of Locke’s essays? We can and should understand this parenthetical aside—“everybody knows”—as directed towards White-Jacket’s readers, a method by which the narrator informs us of his status as an educated young man. Nevertheless, the possibility of a different reading presents itself if we consider that White-Jacket avoids, at this juncture, the encompassing subject “we.” In other words, rather than clearly indicate that White-Jacket imagines himself and his readers (“we”) as intimately familiar with Locke’s writing, he chooses “everybody,” a term that certainly includes the men with whom he sails. With this possibility in place, we might reread this interlude as indicative of the sailors’ conscious

rejection of a Lockean understanding of property rights. They are not ignorant of the idea, in other words, as *White-Jacket* seems to suggest, they simply ignore it.

Whether sailors might have had access to Locke's work aboard ships remains, at this point, unclear. Hester Blum's account of sailors' reading practices in *The View from the Masthead* (2008) offers the longest consideration of this subject and does not indicate that Locke would have, likely, found a place in a shipboard library. Her characterization of one mariner's reading habits is instructive: "Ranging from etiquette books to religious writing, from racy flash papers of the urban underworld to Cooper's popular sea novel [*The Pilot*], this catalog shows both the hunger and the range of seamen's participation in literary culture" (*View* 22). The majority of the texts that she catalogues as commonly found in the references to sailors' libraries—officers and common seamen both—confine themselves to a few different categories: Anglo-American novels, including both sea adventures by Cooper, Smollett, and Marryat and domestic fiction like *Pamela* (1740); religious, temperance, and conduct tracts; travelogues; and various ephemeral works, like pamphlet novels, sold in port (*View* 9, 20-22). Although such broad categories seemingly preclude the inclusion of something like Locke, other materials Blum has located leave open the possibility that, in fact, mariners would have access to texts like Locke's. As she notes, the U.S. Navy "sought to standardize the libraries aboard ships" as much as possible and established book lists for its vessels. Although many of these book lists have been lost, one from 1839, which reflects the common contents of a naval vessel's library in the 1830s and 1840s, survives and exhibits a more esoteric body of materials, including not only expected volumes like Cooper's sea novels but more surprising texts like the *Federalist* (1788), histories of the United States and England, Hallam's *Constitutional History of England* (1827), the U.S. Constitution and the Constitutions of different states, and Vattel's *The Law of Nations*



(1758) (Blum *View* 36). The holdings aboard U.S. naval ships, then, included history and political theory. Although Locke is not listed on the book list Blum provides, his work would not look out of place at all among the volumes listed above and, in fact, would be consistent with their general inclination towards establishing a set of reading materials that would shape the sailors in a way commensurate with national ideals. Further, since seamen tended to “read and re-read” the contents of a ship’s library, it’s likely that, had Locke found his way onto the Navy’s book list at some point, the sailors working alongside *White-Jacket* might very well have been familiar with Locke—recall that the *Neversink* is a naval vessel—and might therefore be ignoring rather than ignorant of the proprieties surrounding property (Blum *View* 21).

The two novels thereby establish themselves as the inverse of Cooper’s *Afloat and Ashore*. Whereas that novel emphasized the romantic sailor replete with common, positive republican and liberal civic attributes, Melville’s texts avoid such idealization at all cost. An impassioned rhetorical flight about three-quarters through *White-Jacket* serves as a valid description of both novels, as they relate to the traditional moral, social, and civic dimensions of the sailors depicted:

Be it here, once and for all, understood, that no sentimental and theoretic love for the common sailor; no romantic belief in that peculiar noble-heartedness and exaggerated generosity of disposition fictitiously imputed to him in novels; and no prevailing desire to gain the reputation of being his friend have actuated me in anything I have said, in any part of this work . . . . (*White-Jacket* 307)

In a few words Melville offers a negative explanation of *White-Jacket* and, convincingly, his other sea narratives and his representations of sailors in them: Explicitly, he will not idealize them according to rules conjured by romance, and, implicitly, he will not idealize them

according to standard definitions of civic propriety, an idea that seeps into this passage through his reference to “noble-heartedness and exaggerated generosity,” notions that resonate with republican civic discourse.

If Melville does not set out to affirm the sailor as a romantic ideal or as an ideal citizen according to traditional principles of U.S. citizenship, then what does he aim to do in these novels? It is entirely possible to follow other critics, like Margaret Cohen or Michael Rogin, and claim that he uses *White-Jacket*, *Redburn*, and even *Moby-Dick* to craft a multivolume, anti-romantic polemic about the undemocratic mistreatment of sailors aboard U.S. naval vessels. As he claims following the passage quoted above, “indifferent as to who may be the parties concerned, I but desire to see wrong things righted and equal justice administered to all” (*White-Jacket* 307). Yet, to read the novels based on this particular statement ignores one integral thing: Melville is not our narrator, even if he, like White-Jacket, sailed before the mast on a naval vessel or, like Redburn, served on a Liverpool-bound merchant ship, and even if the stories unfold with a masked, indeterminate “I.”<sup>xlv</sup> The claim about seeing wrongs righted and justice prevailing need not derive from Melville, the man, but rather from one of his creations; similarly, the disinterested approach to sailors evinced by both White-Jacket and Wellingborough Redburn need not be shared by their creator as well. In fact, both novels demonstrate supreme interest in the sailors’ well-being (as the above quote shows) and in their status as citizens. The novels, in other words, aim to underscore the usefulness of maritime civic practices and principles even if they run counter to those espoused by traditional liberal and republican political theorists and politicians. While *Redburn* serves as a type of bildungsroman, in which the narrator, a young man in his first trip to sea, comes to understand and value the civic ideals of seamen—which I’m

calling cosmopolitan communal-anarchism—White-Jacket thoroughly rejects similar ideals, fleeing the mariner’s life rather than embracing it, as Redburn does.

In both *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*, the narrators position themselves above the other foremast hands on their respective ships in social, ethical, and moral terms. For Wellingborough Redburn this perspective develops prior to his setting foot upon the *Highlander*, the boat with which he sails for Liverpool. Although he has, as he states at the outset, “a naturally roving disposition” that combined with his family’s diminishing wealth to “[conspire] within [him], to send [him] to sea as a sailor,” Redburn nevertheless is incapable of imagining himself as an actual sailor during this early, land-based portion of the novel and rejects the friendly advances of another young sailor whom Redburn characterizes as “the most stupid and ignorant boy [he] had ever met with” (*Redburn* 1, 24). White-Jacket more directly affirms his feelings of moral and ethical superiority in his description of the variety of men aboard a man-of-war: “Indeed, from a frigate’s crew might be culled out men of all callings and vocations, from a backslidden parson to a broken-down comedian. The Navy is the asylum of the perverse...” (*White-Jacket* 77). Although White-Jacket never offers the reader the desultory course that led to his service aboard the *Neversink*, he does not seem, in this moment, to position himself among the perverse sailors of the U.S. Navy. He remains an outsider. He may employ the first-person plural to refer to himself and the other sailors throughout the novel, but in this moment he steps aside. He does not say that one might cull from “our frigate’s crew” or even “[his] frigate’s crew” a diverse population of men. To do that would indicate possession and to indicate that he considers himself, in essence rather than in condition, a part of that crew. Instead, he adopts the general “a frigate’s crew,” casting himself as the distanced and disinterested viewer, a man who works on behalf those he studies but not, necessarily, with them.

In spite of the condescension on display within the novels' narrators, both *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* disrupt the reader's alliance with those same narrators. We should not assume, in other words, that we should align ourselves with the condescending perspective of those two characters. For instance, Redburn demonstrates repeatedly a lack of interest in working in observance of the dictates of the ship. Such moments challenge the moral authority that Redburn adopts throughout the narrative. In a sense, his resistance to trivial matters demeans the very real mistreatment of and the very real inegalitarian actions against seamen that we witness both at the end of *Redburn*, when Captain Riga refuses to pay certain sailors, or in *White-Jacket*, where seamen receive floggings for inconsequential transgressions (not shaving off beards). It also portrays him as one unwilling—from the outset—to support his fellow-sailors, as he should, by performing his assigned tasks.<sup>xlvi</sup> Such a position on his part runs contrary to the ethos of the common sailors who are “always very bitter against any thing like *sogering* ... any thing that savored of a desire to get rid of downright hard work” (*Redburn* 56).

Such qualities as are implicitly ascribed to Redburn in the narrative thereby suggest that we might not want to align ourselves with him in regard to his perspective on sailors. Although this narrative technique initially appears ineffective—why recover sailors and hold them up as embodying alternative and preferable civic ideals through the narration of someone as dismissive of the sailors as the general public—there is a logic to it. If, following Iser, we understand that “what is said only appears to take on significance as a reference to what is not said,” that “it is the implications and not the statements that give shape to meaning,” then we might understand this aspect of the novel—the perspective of the narrator, which his general priggishness and immaturity calls into question—as raising questions for the reader as well (1676). In a sense, readers who hold an opinion about sailors similar to Redburn but who understand themselves to

be much less jejune might notice this discrepancy and wonder about the implications of this, about the implications that the novel raises concerning their perspective on the sailor. Not only might such a process recalibrate the reader's understanding of mariners, it might also disrupt the relationship and identification between reader and narrator.

In *White-Jacket*, Melville takes a slightly different approach to disrupting the identification between the reader and the narrator by offering moments that undermine White-Jacket's seemingly sincere desire to redress the wrongs committed against seamen. The primary way in which Melville achieves this is by establishing an implicit regard, in White-Jacket's language, for the people he is ostensibly chastising for their treatment of sailors. In other words, White-Jacket several times reveals sympathy for the officers of the *Neversink*. Take, for instance, his description of the "waisters" during his delineation of the components of the ship's social system: "Inveterate 'sons of farmers,' with the hayseed yet in their hair, they are consigned to the congenial superintendence of the chicken-coops, pig-pens, and potato-lockers" (*White-Jacket* 9, emphasis in original).<sup>xlvii</sup> This moment so clearly echoes the scene from *Redburn* referred to above that it hardly seems accidental. Similarly purposeful, I would argue, is the implicit alignment of figures across the texts. In the earlier book, the reader encounters lines like these coming from the *Highlander*'s first-mate (his reference to Redburn and other greenhorns as "farmers and clodhoppers") (*Redburn* 27). Coming from him, an able-seaman with advanced skills aboard the ship, such lines are apposite, if mean-spirited. Coming from White-Jacket, though, a relatively novice sailor, an epithetical reference to sailors of a similar caliber sounds inane. Moreover, it has the effect of aligning him with officers through the use of similar rhetorical and belief structures. After all, he mimics the language here of a mate, not a common seaman.

Of course, accusing a neophyte of being a neophyte isn't just the province of officers; nevertheless, other moments in *White-Jacket* reinforce his sympathy for those occupying the upper-reaches of the ship's hierarchy. For instance, if we attend to White-Jacket's intertexts, we see that the narrator demonstrates familiarity with some socially and politically reactionary figures. Among others, White-Jacket quotes Edmund Burke, thereby referring to a man whose ideologies would have been at least somewhat conservative to nineteenth-century U.S. readers (*White-Jacket* 189). Although he sympathized with the North American colonists' grievances about their governance, Burke nevertheless hardly offered unqualified support of the colonists' rebelliousness: "[W]e conjure you [colonists in North America] by the invaluable pledges which have hitherto united, and which we trust will hereafter lastingly unite us, that you do not suffer yourselves to be persuaded or provoked into an opinion that you at war with this nation" (Burke 234). To adopt the words of a man relatively lacking in revolutionary sentiments positions White-Jacket again on the side of law and order (embodied on the ship by the officers) and not on the side of resistance. In fact, in one of his earliest descriptions of the ship, White-Jacket more or less admits to this belief. As he explains, "precision and discipline" aboard ships is necessary, for, "were it not for these regulations a man-of-war's crew would be nothing but a mob" (*White-Jacket* 9).<sup>xlvi</sup> Given his apparent sympathy for those who oversee the mistreatment of sailors that White-Jacket elsewhere claims to abhor suggests that, as in *Redburn*, we ought not follow his lead and cast our glances down on the common seamen, regardless of their foibles.

In fact, *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* wind up revealing that the sailors' actions, worlds, and worldviews can serve as model principles for a cosmopolitan communal-anarchism that offset the problems with traditional civic practices and principles. On the whole, *Redburn* tends to deal with this alternative civic model embodied by shipboard practices of sailors to a much lesser

degree than *White-Jacket*, though the seeds that sprout forth fully in the later book are certainly there.

Although the implications of anarchic tendencies among the seamen of *Redburn* are played down, they are certainly there, particularly in the way in which the narrative discusses the other sailors' treatment of Jackson, the crass and mean-spirited mariner of whom Redburn runs afoul early on. In the lengthy introduction to Jackson, Redburn explains that, though "a poor miserable wretch," the other sailor had become "such a tyrant over much better men than himself" (*Redburn* 59). The other common sailors, over whom Jackson "play[s] the dictator," do not countenance this despotic behavior, nor do they look kindly upon him telling "with a diabolical relish" of his time working on a slave-ship, "of the *middle-passage*, where the slaves were stowed, hell and point, like logs, and the suffocated and dead were unmanacled, and weeded out from the living" (*Redburn* 59, 55). Instead, those that do not "[cringe] ... about him like so many spaniels" would "plot against him among the other sailors, and tell them what a same and ignominy" it was for them to subordinate themselves to Jackson (*Redburn* 57, 59). Those same sailors would convince "nearly all hands [to agree] to it" (*Redburn* 59). They may never overthrow Jackson, but this scenario imparts two important bits of information. First, Jackson is an anomalous sailor, suggesting that such petty tyranny occurs infrequently among common seamen. Indeed, as C.L.R. James points out, the only analogous figures in Melville's oeuvre are Ahab and *Billy Budd's* (1924) John Claggart, figures who sit towards the top of a vessel's hierarchy (James 54). Second, the common sailors of the *Highlander* have little patience for anyone who would presume dominion over them—whether it's one of their own or the captain and officers. Certainly, the men of *Redburn* do not foment mutiny against either Jackson or Captain Riga, but their feelings about inegalitarian treatment by a peer is evident. Importantly,

they do not choose to aim to replace Jackson with another sovereign. They do not choose to elect another to serve as leader among themselves. Such a position smacks of the democratic, but it certainly also smacks of democracy that little resembles that of the United States. It is not, in other words, a representative democracy, but rather something more akin to traditional concepts of anarchy, the leaderless social and political system implied by the Greek term as well as the term as it circulated in the mid-nineteenth century—a society without government, with the sovereignty of each individual intact and not, in some way, infringed upon by some other state power structure.

We can certainly question the historical precision of using the term anarchism to characterize the politics of *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*, considering that the modern understanding of this term begins, typically, with Bakunin's writings of the late 1860s and the Paris Commune of 1871. In Bakunin's writing on the Commune, for instance, we see his argument for a dissolution of the State in his call for "equality ... established in the world by the spontaneous organization of labor and the collective ownership of property by freely organized producers' associations, and by the equally spontaneous federation of communes, to replace the domineering paternalistic State" ("Paris Commune" 262). This particular model of anarchism Bakunin articulates in contradistinction to "authoritarian communists who support the absolute power of the State" ("Paris Commune" 262). Such sentiments resonate with the perspectives on display in Melville's work, perspectives that promote communal and non-hierarchical social groupings, but they also appear far later than either *Redburn* or *White-Jacket*.

However, anarchism does have deeper and more specifically American roots in the nineteenth century. For example, Proudhon's articulation of individual sovereignty and the necessity of egalitarianism speaks to the type of political structure envisioned among the sailors



in *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*. In Proudhon's most famous text, *What Is Property?*, he characterizes representative democracy and monarchy as, more or less, the same thing, explaining that "no doubt when a nation passes from the monarchical to the democratic state, there is progress" (28). Nevertheless, even "with the most perfect democracy, we cannot be free," since democracy always requires a deferral of sovereignty: "the people-king [of a democratic state] cannot exercise sovereignty itself; it is obliged to delegate sovereignty to agents" (28). It is of little importance how many agents there are, Proudhon explains, the same scenario plays out—the loss of an individual's ability to govern for him or herself. What both Proudhon proposes, then, finds an echo in Melville's sailors who encourage individual sovereignty for all, rather than for the few. The sailors in *Redburn* for instance understand the authoritarian system in which they find themselves; the scorn they display for Redburn's aforementioned duty-shirking therefore derives less from their fondness for "sogering" and more from an interest in achieving sovereignty for the body of sailors as a whole and not for one or two (*Redburn* 56). Proudhon, though, published his most important work in French in 1840 and the likelihood that Melville would be familiar with its ideas is slim. Nevertheless, the anarchist tradition of the mid-nineteenth century France certainly resonates with the implicit politics of Melville's sailors with the implicit politics of Melville's sailors.

The ideals that Proudhon expresses found an analogue across the Atlantic in the writings of Josiah Warren.<sup>xlix</sup> In his *The Peaceful Revolutionist*, a periodical published in 1833 and revived for at least one edition in 1848, Warren articulates a vision of the world in which "one of our most fatal errors has been the laying down of rules, laws, and principles without preserving the liberty of each person to apply them according to the individuality of his views" (Warren "The Peaceful Revolutionist" 105).<sup>1</sup> In other words, democratic political and civil society have

subverted their supposed intentions—the creation of a non-hierarchical nation—and instead created a nation that relies upon the subservience of individual sovereignty and will to differ. For Warren, the “natural sovereignty of the individual over her of his person, time, property, and responsibilities” trumps all other matters, as it concerns bodies politic, social, or economic (“Manifesto” 238). Therefore, he promotes a world in which unorthodox views meet not with suppression to a state’s abstract and therefore uniform understanding of the citizen but rather with acceptance. Like Proudhon, then, and, arguably, Melville, Warren seeks to establish a world in which, as he notes in a later piece of writing, the individual is not “reduce[d] ... to a mere piece of a machine” (“Manifesto” 238).<sup>li</sup> He seeks to establish a world in which uniformity becomes a necessity, infringing on an individual’s sovereignty, creating a situation not unlike that which occurs towards the end of *White-Jacket*, as the forecastle captain defends the liberty of a bearded sailor to maintain his beard—“old Ushant’s beard is his own!”—against the tyrannical, arbitrary instructions of Captain Claret, who would have Ushant’s beard in spite of the seaman’s never “yet miss[ing] his muster” or never yet refusing to do his duty (*White-Jacket* 367).

*Redburn* also highlights the communal and cosmopolitan aspects of sailors. For instance, in relation to the former concept, we find the scene involving the discovery of a stowed away boy, who, after getting dressed down by Captain Riga—who threatens to “toss him overboard as a tit-bit for *John Shark*”—goes among the men of the forecastle (*Redburn* 107). These men “[receive] him with open arms” and make or give him a variety of goods, including clothing and dishware (*Redburn* 107). The men, in other words, sympathize with the boy, forlorn like themselves, and set about sharing their goods among themselves as they see fit. This is not,

therefore, a world in which self-interest reigns supreme, but rather one in which the commonwealth and communal good are paramount.

This situation derives from, perhaps, the quasi-cosmopolitan outlook put forward by the sailors and the novel itself. As Redburn notes early in the novel (and as White-Jacket reiterates in his own tale), sailors are “amiable outcasts” (*Redburn* 46). This depiction of seamen suggests that they have become, so to speak, men without a country, men for whom national distinctions of citizenship have little importance. The novel, to a degree, reinforces this idea, demonstrating that there remains something imperfect and inane in maintaining such national distinctions. For instance, *Redburn* contains at least two characters who put themselves forward as U.S. citizens but hail from foreign lands—Captain Riga, who “though he spake English with fluency ... was in fact a Russian by birth,” and Max, a Dutchman who, though naturalized as an U.S. citizen, “couldn’t quite [pass] himself off as a born native” (*Redburn* 209, 77). Cosmopolitanism also gets filtered through another sailor named Larry, who embraces the “free and easy” life of traveling among the islands of the Indian Ocean and encourages Redburn to do the same and “blast Ameriky” (*Redburn* 96). Although Larry seems to have an affinity for Madagascar, his diatribes seem to derive from a distaste for modern civil society with its poverty (“darned beggars”) and governmental apparatus (“pesky constables”) (*Redburn* 96). He wants instead to be a man of any and every country and avoid the problems of being confined to a single locale.

*White-Jacket* arguably magnifies these principles—anarchism, communalism, and cosmopolitanism—in the actions of its seamen and, moreover, situates them more clearly in the realm of politics and citizenship. For instance, in his description of a Fourth of July theatrical aboard the *Neversink*, White-Jacket reveals the way that the common sailors who put on the performance both instill cosmopolitan ideals into the proceedings and also use the proceedings to

foment a an anarchic interlude. Although the theatrical performance has an innocuous title—*The Old Wagon Paid Off!*—it contains some troubling elements (though those elements go undescribed) that cause Captain Claret, “enacting the part of censor” and “in the end let[ting the play] ... pass,” nevertheless “[object] to some parts” because they may “breed disaffection against lawful authority” (*White-Jacket* 95). This particular phrasing—“breed disaffection against lawful authority”—implies that Claret understands his men to be averse to the rigid hierarchy of the ship and in favor of a leveling and potentially anarchic system of egalitarianism that, given the language of law employed, gives this a more political and civic bent. To be against “lawful authority” does not necessarily mean that the sailors are against governance, but that is certainly one way to interpret it. Prior to the actual performance, therefore, the overall impression of the theater is one of wariness. In the hands of the sailors, Claret’s actions and ideas suggest, the theater is a potentially anarchic event.

Importantly, the performance has precisely that effect. The rapt audience oscillates between silence and “uncontrollable bursts of applause,” and the play climaxes with a “heart-thrilling scene” in which one character “rescues fifteen oppressed sailors from the watch-house in the teeth of a posse of constables” (*White-Jacket* 96). This series of events pushes the audience beyond mere clapping, as they “[overturn] capstan-bars” and “all discipline seem[s] gone forever” (*White-Jacket* 96, 97). Although this riot subsides with the arrival of a squall that forces everyone into their rightful position, *White-Jacket* allows himself a moment of reflection upon the achievements of the theatrical—achievements that he describes in terms in keeping with the ideals of anarchism. As he notes, there occurs an “unwonted spectacle of the row of gun-room officers mingling with *the people*” at the end of the commotion (*White-Jacket* 97). The play therefore not only foments a rebellious reaction among the common seamen, encouraging them

to undermine the authority of the officers, but it also achieves something like traditional anarchy. The hierarchy has disappeared; officers and common seamen stand side by side rather than in an antagonistic relationship to one another. The shipboard society has been leveled.

This scene of a Fourth of July theatrical diverges to a degree from the standard Fourth of July commemorations. To begin, the leveling that the mariners achieve through their performance speaks more to revolutionary fervor, to rebellious resistance. Therefore, while it memorializes the Fourth of July, the events that transpire resonate more strongly with the more aggressive actions of April 19—the battles of Lexington and Concord marking the beginning of the colonists’ armed struggle with Great Britain—and not with the intellectual, highly eloquent rationalizations of independence put forward in the Declaration. Moreover, the typical Fourth of July celebrations during the 1840s urged not the dissatisfaction with “lawful authority” but rather sought to assert and reinforce it. In an 1844 Fourth of July oration in Boston, for instance, Peleg Whitman Chandler promotes the notion that “the law [is] ... sacred; public order ... to be preserved at all events” (36).<sup>lii</sup> He characterizes the 1840s as an era that is “distinguished above all others in intellectual culture, as opposed to moral” and is, therefore, in danger of diverging significantly from the ideals put forward by “the fathers of New England” (18, 19). Without a turn towards moral as well as intellectual instruction, Chandler fears, “law and order will be decried or secretly opposed” (16). William Greenough’s oration in Boston on the same occasion five years later—*The Conquering Republic*—strikes a less worried tone than Chandler’s while similarly promoting national steadiness, characterizing the U.S. government as one of the “oldest, most stable, and most powerful” in the world (5). In both cases of Fourth of July oratory, then, the purpose seems to be that which Captain Claret strives for—peaceable assembly—rather than the egalitarian agitation that is achieved.

Additionally, this section of the novel suggests that this anarchic principle among the seamen is in some way connected to the ideal of cosmopolitanism held among them. Certainly, the sailors begin this theatrical in a decidedly un-cosmopolitan manner: They “[strike] up *Hail Columbia*” (*White-Jacket* 96). In spite of this patriotic overture, the sailors seek to create a cosmopolitan space in which to hold their performance. For instance, the actors in *The Old Wagon Paid Off!* adopt the roles of “Maltese mariners,” and, furthermore, the sailors decorate “the bulwarks round about [the stage] ... with the flags of all nations” (*White-Jacket* 96, 95). Before the play starts, then, the sailors have established a space in which distinction of national citizenship are impermanent. This may be a U.S. naval vessel, but it becomes increasingly hard to see that, as the signs (the U.S. flag and U.S. sailors) are removed from privileged, central positions. In their stead are emissaries and symbols from other lands.

In a manner of speaking, the global hierarchy represented by nationalistic and patriotic fervor, like the shipboard hierarchy, is leveled in this moment, and, importantly, the novel upholds that as a frequent characteristic as the seamen of the *Neversink*. For instance, the reader’s lengthy introduction to Jack Chase—one of the sailors most admired by White-Jacket— informs that that particular sailor had at one time deserted his ship. Importantly, he did not do this “to avoid naval discipline” or “for love of some worthless signorita” (*White-Jacket* 17). He did it instead for a “far higher and nobler, nay, glorious motives”: As “a stickler for the Rights of Man, and the liberties of the world,” “he went to draw a partisan blade in the civil commotions of Peru” (*White-Jacket* 17). He leaves behind, in other words, the defense and service of his own nation in favor of that of another. He becomes a cosmopolitan seaman—British by birth, American by service, and nevertheless “bravely clad in the Peruvian uniform” (*White-Jacket* 17). He is not alone. As White-Jacket explains towards the end of his narrative, he “was repeatedly

struck by the lack of patriotism in many of [his] shipmates” (*White-Jacket* 383). Thus, for all the talk of the ship in the novel existing as “a great city,” it is not a city tied to any particular nation but rather to all nations (*White-Jacket* 55). The sailors understand their place not as citizens of an individual locale but rather of all locales. Being American or British or French makes no difference to them: As Jack Chase explains, at one point, “the same breeze blows for John Bull” as for them (*White-Jacket* 274).<sup>liii</sup>

The appreciation for anarchist and cosmopolitan principles among the sailors in *White-Jacket* potentially lead them to the third component of the political philosophy embodied in their ideals and actions—communalism. Although I upheld it earlier as an example of the way in which *White-Jacket* characterizes the seamen of the *Neversink* as butting against the principles of liberal citizenship, I would like to now return to the description of pickpockets on the ship as a means of underlining their communalist impulses. During his analysis of their behavior, *White-Jacket* typifies the pickpockets as “desparadoes” and “criminal” (*White-Jacket* 40, 39). Yet, by the end of the chapter, he more or less concedes that there is little wrong with this behavior and little use to officers attempting to threaten them with “condign punishment”: “They rob from one another, and rob back again, till, in the matter of small things, a community of foods seems almost established” (*White-Jacket* 40). The thefts certainly impinge on individual property rights, but, as *White-Jacket*’s language shows, the seamen ultimately develop an egalitarian system by which all sailors have access to a communal body of goods. They see themselves as equals, therefore, and thereby diminish their ties to national citizenship and its ideals of individual property. They reject traditional civic principles for alternative ones.

The source of this dissatisfaction derives, I would argue, from the failure of shipboard governance to correspond to the traditional civic principles. As *White-Jacket* explains in the

midst of his narrative, “nevertheless, in a country like ours, boasting of the political equality of all social conditions, it is a great reproach that such a thing as the common seaman rising to the rank of a commissioned officer in our Navy is nowadays almost unheard of” (*White-Jacket* 117). To White-Jacket, it is clear that the ship and the claims to equality and freedom in the founding documents are at odds, while the political possibilities and alternatives that the seamen put into practice and strive for in these texts would, in fact, release this tension and reconcile the abstract ideals inscribed in the Declaration with the social structure of the ship.

White-Jacket seems to set up a dichotomy between the lives of sailors and the lives of landmen—he notes that “any American landsman may hope to become president” while common seamen cannot expect the same hope in the hierarchy of their ships—but his phrasing in the quote cited above (“boasting of the political equality of all social conditions” and “it is a great reproach”) actually implies that there is less a difference between the body politic of the nation and the body politic of the sea. For instance, to say that the nation “[boasts]” of political equality in no way means that such political equality exists. The narrator carefully implies that claims to such egalitarianism are exactly that—claims—and not necessarily facts. Furthermore, it is unclear to whom the lack of upward mobility in the Navy reproaches. Is it a reproach to the Navy for not living up to the standards set by the physical nation or to the nation’s own corruption of ideals of democracy and equality? White-Jacket (and Melville) leave it ambiguous here, but a later moment suggests that the latter is a more apt interpretation. Towards the end of the narrative, for example, White-Jacket describes Captain Claret in the following way: “Indeed, he *may almost be said* to put off the citizen when he touches his quarter-deck; and almost exempt from the law of the land himself” (*White-Jacket* 304, emphasis added). White-Jacket again seems to establish a dichotomy between land and sea, but, as the italicized portion of the quote above



shows, he makes subtle but significant qualifications. In other words, the captain does not become mere tyrant or despot upon the sea, casting off his land-based status as citizen, even though the former terms are used to describe him and other officers throughout the novel. Instead, he retains his status as citizen or, at least, part of his status as citizen in the role of captain, the implication of which being that the distance between civic conduct on land and civic conduct on sea are not as far apart as they initially appear.

Although both *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* reveal and uphold the communal cosmopolitan anarchism of the sailors, the alternative civic practices have discrepant effects on the two narrators: While Redburn accepts the ideals and practices of the sailors, White-Jacket rejects them. For Redburn, his antipathy towards the hierarchical structure of the ship emerges over encounters with the officers of the ship, as well as the captain. In the case of the latter, for instance, the narrator “attempt[s] to drop in at the cabin” in order to pay his respects to the captain, whom he imagines, as the son of a gentleman, he is on equal footing with (*Redburn* 68). This attempt at camaraderie across the ranks—“common civility” as Redburn has it—is met with the captain’s “rage,” leading Redburn to “let the captain alone” (*Redburn* 68). Arguably, Redburn comes to the conclusion that his old way of seeing the world no longer functions properly. He cannot, it seems, trust his senses in explaining to him the social structures that surround him, and this, I believe, opens him up to new ways of thinking. What he says towards the middle of the novel about guide books serves as a nice metaphorical encapsulation of this shift in Redburn’s outlook: “Guide-books ... are the least reliable books in all literature; and nearly all literature, in one sense, is made up of guide-books. Old ones tell us the ways our fathers went, through the thoroughfares and courts of old; but how few of those former places

can their posterity trace, amid avenues of modern erections; to how few is the old guide-book now a clew” (*Redburn* 151).

In other words, one must not rely so thoroughly on the traditional view; one must rip them up and start again. For Redburn, that means turning to life as a sailor and seaman, joining their ranks and adopting their ideals. After all, at novel’s end, we learn that, at some time after the events of the novel, Redburn “found himself a sailor in the Pacific” (*Redburn* 300). Importantly, he does not find himself a captain or officer (though the phrasing does not discount his possible ascension to those ranks). He finds himself merely a sailor, or, at the very least, he presents himself to us as such. In spite of his so-called initiation into evil at the hands of sailors (per Newton Arvin’s biography [1950] of Melville), Redburn appears incapable of leaving them or the life of the sailor behind. He perhaps becomes someone not totally dissimilar from Ishmael in *Moby-Dick*, someone who “whenever [he finds] himself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in [his] soul; ... and especially whenever [his] hypos get such an upper hand of [him], that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent [him] from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people’s hats off—then [he accounts] it high time to get to sea as soon as [he] can” (*Moby-Dick* 21).

On the other hand, there is White-Jacket, who shows no such affinity for the sea, the seamen, or their way of doing things. He never seems to grasp—as Redburn does—the value of alternative perspectives and in spite of the intimations of problems with traditional civic principles in the novel he remains a firm believer in the potential, at least, of U.S. civic practices to correct the wrongs he finds aboard naval vessels. Moreover, there is no sense that he, like Redburn, will return to sea. As early as the second chapter, for instance, we find this rhetorical flight: “Homeward bound!—harmonious sound! Were you ever homeward bound!” Although

not one averse to exclamatory statements, White-Jacket, in the section from which this quote is pulled, uses seven in the span of a couple paragraphs. His excitement at heading home—at leaving behind the ship and the ocean—is palpable, and this yearning for soil rather than waves asserts itself throughout the novel. For instance, faced with the prospect of finally returning to U.S. soil, White-Jacket offers no sense that his departure from the *Neversink* and its crew will be bittersweet. After all, he describes the soon-to-be-looming land as the “blessed Capes of Virginia” and decides to not discuss things that would make the conclusion more bittersweet (*White-Jacket* 400).<sup>liv</sup> White-Jacket becomes someone not like *Moby-Dick*’s Ishmael but rather like Richard Henry Dana, Jr.’s, representation of himself in *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840), who, at various points, reflects in horror on the possibility of remaining on his ship longer than two years. As Dana notes, towards, the end of his narrative, “for two years more in California would have made me a sailor for the rest of my days. I felt all this, and saw the necessity of being determined” (290). And, perhaps, Melville had this connection in mind: In an October 1849 letter to Dana, he informed him that in “this man-of-war book [*White-Jacket*]” Dana “will not wonder, perhaps, at anything” (*Correspondence* 140).

This key difference between Redburn and White-Jacket likely speaks to the ambivalence that Melville likely felt about the radical potential of the alternative civic model of communal cosmopolitan communal-anarchism that he develops through the sailors depicted in *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*. It is not, after all, as if Melville couldn’t imagine the possibility of such alternative civic models. The civic principles articulated by the sailors of *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* should not be taken as wholly original. The communal leanings evidenced by Melville’s sailors, for instance, are not out of place for the 1840s: That is the decade of Brook Farm (1844-47) and the

Oneida Community (1848-1881), settlements in the northeastern United States that dabbled in communal style living.

Cosmopolitanism would have had a similarly insurgent cachet during the mid- to late-1840s. For example, in his early writing, particularly in *The Reaction in Germany* (1842), Bakunin proposes freedom and the revolutionary pursuit of it as “stand[ing] at the head of the agenda of history” at that point in time (“The Reaction in Germany” 37). Although largely interested in pan-Slavic agitation during this period, he nevertheless recognizes revolutionary sentiments arising throughout Europe in “social and religious societies ... wholly alien to the present political world” (“The Reaction in Germany” 57). Such societies that “develop and diffuse themselves in silence” he notes have the potential to shape the extant political and social orders and, importantly, they have evolved not only in the locations of specific interest to Bakunin—Eastern Europe, Germany, Russia—but also in places like France and England (“The Reaction in Germany” 57-58). The revision and liquidation of authoritarian social and political order, then, is not, for Bakunin, an isolated or national concern but rather one that traverses boundaries in ways that resonate with Melville’s work.<sup>lv</sup>

Melville would not have had access to works of Bakunin. Nevertheless, that the latter’s imagined sailors conceived of social formations that Bakunin also perceives a possible and preferable suggests that the ideals of transnational revolution represented ideals that circulated throughout the antebellum period both in the United States and the larger world. Most likely, the appeals to cosmopolitanism in *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* find their most logical echo or origin in the upheavals throughout Europe in 1848-49.<sup>lvi</sup> Recent histories of the European 1848 have underscored the emergence of social and political movements as cosmopolitan rather than national, local phenomena. For instance, Sabine Freitag has provided an analysis of both the

events of the German 1848 as well as historiography of it that draws out the cosmopolitan dimensions of revolutionary activities that had long been understood in national terms.<sup>lvii</sup> She cites, in particular, a “Prussia-oriented historian” that recognized as early as 1864 the effect that global and international trade and communication had on the revolutions of 1848-49. They were “not national but cosmopolitan” as trade and communication “inevitable [tore] down the walls separating people from people” (Freitag 115). Axel Körner has made similar claims about 1848. At the time, people did not understand the upheavals as nationalistic events; rather “the revolutions were seen at the time as a European event, the overthrow of a European order through a European revolution, a European ‘springtime of peoples’” (Körner 5). These revolutions also resulted in active public support in the United States for the revolutions.<sup>lviii</sup>

Importantly, Melville had particular interest in some of the radical social movements preceding the revolutions of 1848. For instance, *Redburn* features an interlude in which the titular character encounters and sympathizes with a Chartist, Chartism having been a working-class reformist movement that developed in the late 1830s and petered out in the late 1840s. Moreover, one of Melville’s characters in *Clarel* (1876) expresses explicit sympathy for one of the leading figures in the French revolution of 1848—“poor Lamartine” (183).

That 1848 should serve as a touchstone for the radical politics in a maritime narrative is less surprising when we acknowledge the symbolic significance of the maritime and the oceanic to descriptions of the revolutions themselves. In his retrospective memoir and analysis of the revolution in France, Alexis de Tocqueville frequently employs aquatic metaphors. Revolutionary masses “spread as aimlessly as waves in a swell” and the revolution itself is “one of those great democratic floods that drown those individuals, and those parties too, who try to build dikes to hold them” (114, 77). Capable as it is of initiating natural, dynamic, and unstable

forces capable of devastating so-called stable creations, the ocean and its storms have long served an important symbol of other disruptive forces. To use metaphors of oceanic destruction to characterize the coming revolution, as de Tocqueville does in *Recollections* (1893) more broadly, as well as in a January 1848 speech before the Chamber of Deputies (“a tempest on the horizon,” he calls it) is hardly surprising (15).

Other writing on the revolution in France, though, suggests that the maritime and mariners had particular resonance for those trying to make sense of the events transpiring. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), for instance, Marx on multiple occasions characterizes revolutionary forces of several types as mariners. The “pure republicans,” he notes, found themselves “shipwrecked” in the aftermath of the more radical revolution’s dissolution (59). On the other hand, the proletariats that instigate the initial upheaval in February 1848 Marx characterizes as “a mutiny broken by grapeshot” (40). Given this terminology, we might see the radical politics of sailors that Melville chronicles in *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* and the radical politics of 1848 as mutually constitutive. The revolutions of 1848 created disturbances whose cosmopolitan dimensions that appealed to Melville and Melville’s sailors, while, at the same time, the longstanding status of sailors as revolutionary figures provided writers about the revolutions of 1848 with a symbolic and metaphorical framework to represent those revolutions.

Nor are the anarchic tendencies of the seamen out of place for the period, as Melville’s radical seamen could be said to reflect ideas espoused by fellow writer and acquaintance Ralph Waldo Emerson, who imagines a utopian future in which the State has dissolved and anarchy reigns in his essay “Politics” (1844): “To educate the wise man, the State exists; and with the appearance of the wise man, the State expires. The appearance of character makes the State unnecessary. The wise man is the State. He needs no army, fort, or navy ... ; no statute book, for

he has the lawgiver; no money, for he is value” (568).<sup>lix</sup> Such ideals are not, importantly, confined to Emerson, for, though he may have developed his ideas about anarchism on his own, he certainly has anarchic forebears that stirred up some of the ideals found in him and in Melville’s sailors. For instance, we might look briefly at William Godwin. After all, in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), we find the following claim: “...government is, in all cases, an evil’, and ‘... it ought to be introduced as sparingly as possible’. Man is a species of being whose excellence depends upon his individuality; and who can be neither great nor wise but in proportion as he is independent” (Godwin *Enquiry* 556). Such sentiments sound strikingly similar to the sailors’ perspective in *White-Jacket* and *Redburn*, which speak to the “chronic evils” that necessarily befall the sailors in their positions as sailors and the evils of shipboard governance (*Redburn* 133). Importantly, there is a connection between Godwin and Melville’s work. Melville did own Godwin’s *Things as They Are, or, the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794)—a novel very much influenced by the political philosophy espoused in Godwin’s *Enquiry* of the year before—when he was in England attending to the publications of *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* (late 1849). Although this makes the relationship between Godwin and Melville somewhat messy—Melville had not necessarily read *Caleb Williams* prior to writing either *Redburn* or *White-Jacket*—there remains a suggestion of sympathetic visions. In other words, although Melville wrote neither *Redburn* nor *White-Jacket* with an eye towards Godwin’s philosophical outlook, he nevertheless found in Godwin something of a kindred intellect.

Yet that something of interest might not have been Godwin’s inclination towards anarchism but rather the ambivalence that he charts at in the preface of *Things as They Are*—the tension that Godwin articulates between “one party plead[ing] for reformation and change, the other extol[ing] in warmest terms the existing constitution of society” (*Things* 5). In other words,

the tension that Godwin establishes as a guiding tension in his novel is one that Melville himself embodies. In spite of his sailors' potentially radical redefinition of the dimensions of citizenship, Melville himself should not be understood as an entirely radical figure. His sailors may embody radical civic ideals, but other works by Melville would seem to upend the extreme egalitarian visions of *White-Jacket* and *Redburn*. For instance, "Benito Cereno" (1855) has a rather ambivalent perspective on its mutineering slaves. The story does not dismiss them entirely, but it nevertheless effects the demise of the slaves' leader (Babo) and questions, through the voice of Amasa Delano, the sympathetic relationship between the slave and the captain whom he had imprisoned, the titular Benito Cereno. Furthermore, we might look at the (convincing) analysis Wai-Chee Dimock offers of the expansionist rhetoric in *White-Jacket* (*Empire* 102). In a sense, where I come to the cosmopolitan slant of Melville's novels from a more idealistic perspective, she points to a way in which a cosmopolitan perspective can complement imperial desires. In other words, the two concepts are not antagonistic but rather mutually reinforcing. Lastly, we might look too to Walter Herbert's assessment of Melville as a "failed patrician" in his *Marquesan Encounters* (1980) (149).

Such a characterization is, in some ways, in keeping with other interludes in Melville's life in which he condescended towards working class individuals, in which he suggested that he was not so much a man of the people—embodied by the foremast hands in *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*—as he might initially appear. For instance, during the Astor Place riots, Melville was among the forty-seven New Yorkers who signed a petition, encouraging William Charles Macready, the British actor whose feud with U.S. actor Edwin Forrest, contributed to the riot. Signing that petition effectively aligned Melville not only with high culture but also with the upper classes—to support Macready and the Astor Place Opera House was to support an



exclusively upper-class environment, which by virtue of various policies was seen to prohibit working class patrons (Zarrilli, McConachie, Williams, Sogenfrei 283-4).<sup>lx</sup>

Melville therefore may have been in some ways out of step with his times, aesthetically and politically, but he also remained a man of them. He could take provocative stances, but to see him and his works as unproblematic ur-texts for contemporary radical politics seems to take him too far afield of what his works say and how they relate to the mid-nineteenth century. That's not to say that his works and words cannot inform contemporary understandings of the state and an individual's relation to it—that his works cannot speak to civic matters—simply that we need to be careful with how we understand him.

#### 4.0 VILLAINS OF ALL NATIONS, CITIZENS OF NONE: U.S. PIRATE LITERATURE AND THE ANTEBELLUM SLAVERY DEBATES

Given Herman Melville's proclivity for the more provocative political consequences of mariners' behavior, Melville might have developed a penchant for piratical characters. As Marcus Rediker's *Villain of All Nations* (2004) explains, pirates were nothing if not politically radical in a manner similar to the seamen of *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*, composing themselves in heterogeneous, cosmopolitan groups that emphasized shared privileges and duties through anarchic, egalitarian social and political structures. Yet while *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* construct a version of the citizen-seaman that in its radicalism runs contrary to that found in Cooper's novels, those texts and, more broadly, Melville's oeuvre overlook the correlation between the civic ethos expressed by their sailors and the political ethos embodied by pirates.<sup>lxi</sup>

In fact, Melville's novels lack a signal piratical figure. That Ahab's inexorable pursuit of his dismemberer leads to his use the *Pequod* for purposes other than those outlined by the owners might tempt a reading of him as pirate. Although not strictly adhering to the definition of piracy, in its loosest sense as robbery at sea, he does perform a figurative theft of Bildad's, Peleg's, and various others' property. As Starbuck reminds Ahab during his speech upon the quarter-deck, the crew should be "game for [Moby Dick's] crooked jaw, and for the jaws of Death too ... [but only] if it fairly comes in the way of the business [they] follow"; they "came here to hunt whales, not [their] commander's vengeance" (*Moby-Dick* 158).<sup>lxii</sup> They should not limit themselves to

the pursuit of Moby Dick, as their orders—given tacitly by the whaling ship’s owners—is to acquire as much oil as possible and not to simply seek “vengeance on a dumb brute” (*Moby-Dick* 159). In effect, by reminding Ahab of their supposed duty, and by questioning “how many barrels” of oil Ahab’s “vengeance will yield,” Starbuck underscores the implicit or passive theft Ahab commits against Bildad and Peleg (*Moby-Dick* 158). He steals not by commission but rather by omission and therefore commits, at best, indirect piracy.

A better—though not entirely convincing—argument can be made about the piratical dimensions of Babo in “Benito Cereno.” Nevertheless, he remains much more clearly a mutineer than a pirate, given the implications of the latter term.<sup>lxiii</sup> Even though, as David Mitchell and other pirate historians have noted, “trying to define piracy is like trying to catch an eel or wading into a semantic morass,” its general outlines—“sea-going outlaws” without the backing of a national authority to plunder commercial and naval vessels—are readily acknowledged, by most historians of piracy (Mitchell 14, 11). In his *Villains of All Nations*, Rediker offers a definition that implicitly supports that of Mitchell, as he notes, quoting pirate Walter Kennedy, that pirates were those that “declared War against all the World” (Rediker 46). From either of these perspectives, Babo does not conform to extant definitions of a pirate. Neither the narrator nor the other characters describe him as such.<sup>lxiv</sup> Moreover, Babo does not overthrow Captain Delano in order to go on the account—to turn pirate and sail about searching for ships whose wealth he and the other mutineers might abscond with. Instead, he leads the revolt in order to secure their freedom.

Although piratical characters found little heroic purchase in the novels and stories of Melville—perhaps because Melville’s representation of the ship located human threats from the authoritarian practices *within* rather than the potential threat of piracy *without*—the pirate

nevertheless circulated as a popular figure within antebellum U.S. literary culture. The memoirs and confessions of captured and soon-to-be-executed pirates appeared in port towns during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, while the pirate proved an appealing figure for popular, canonical authors like James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving, as well as popular, non-canonical authors like J. H. Ingraham.<sup>lxv</sup>

The pirate may have been a common trope in antebellum U.S. literary culture, but, as I will argue in this chapter, the character did not become an idealized, romantic, or revolutionary figure that he did elsewhere. At best, U.S. authors of pirate narratives ambivalently romanticized their buccaneers. Authors might have couched their pirates in romantic trappings, but the piratical characters themselves seldom became idealizable in general or political terms. Nineteenth-century U.S. literary culture largely evinces contempt for pirates, employing them as unworthy civic figures, who redeem themselves only by rejecting the radical political and social ramifications of piracy/pirate society and subordinating themselves to nationalistic pieties and hierarchic social and political structures. In other words, only by denying themselves the revolutionary aspects of piracy can the pirates of nineteenth-century U.S. literary culture enter the body politic as valuable and valued citizens. This national disapproval of pirates, I will argue, finds partial explanation in the historical relationship between the United States and piracy, as well as the way the term featured significantly in the debates about race and slavery during the antebellum period. Unlike Great Britain, where certain pirates played a significant role in the nation's imperialist expansion, the various sections of the United States understood the pirate as an affront to divergent and often contradictory civic ideals—the inviolability of individual liberty and the necessity of equality, on the one hand, and the inviolability of individual property and the economic necessity of social and political hierarchies on the other.

Unlike the common sailors discussed in the previous chapters, then, the pirate served not as an embodiment of civic ideals but rather as a foil to the body politic, thereby recapitulating the popular conception of the mariner that circulated in the political and social discourse of the early republican and antebellum periods. Narratives like Cooper's *The Red Rover* (1827) or Ingraham's *Lafitte: The Pirate of the Gulf* (1836) still sought to recuperate the sailor. However, they did so not through the novels' piratical characters but rather by distinguishing their common, non-piratical sailors from the pirates. In other words, these texts propose good citizen-sailors but only by casting them in relief against the mariners unequipped for national citizenship—the pirate.

Nineteenth-century pirate literature—particularly U.S. pirate literature—has received relatively short shrift by both contemporary and historical critics. Most critics have, in fact, focused their attention on earlier and later piratical narratives and most of the narratives discussed are British. For instance, at the beginning of his historical synopsis of piracy, David Mitchell reviews the touchstones of pirate literature, breezing through descriptions of Captain Johnson's *A Generall History of the Robbers and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates* (1724), Byron's *The Corsair* (1814), Scott's *The Pirate* (1822), Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (1855), and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883). Although it does include Charles Ellms, a Bostonian, and Rafael Sabatini, an Anglo-Italian, Mitchell's genealogy of the pirate narrative hardly has an international flavor, and it overlooks almost entirely the contributions to the genre from colonial and U.S. American authors, to say nothing of non-English-language pirate narratives, like those of Latin America.<sup>lxvi</sup>

This tendency to overlook pirate narratives in analyses of U.S. antebellum literature is not totally surprising. As Marcus Rediker explains, the so-called “golden age of piracy ... spanned

the period from roughly 1650 to 1730” (Rediker *Villains* 8). Although piracy persisted and continues to persist throughout the seas, its heyday ended decades before the U.S. became the U.S., and so too did its perception as a systemic problem requiring an “international campaign of terror to eradicate” it (Rediker *Villains* 10). The English colonies that would become the United States, though, produced pirates and their antagonists. Rediker, for instance, begins his study of piracy’s final years with a discussion of William Fly’s activities off the Carolina coast and subsequent execution for them in Boston (Rediker *Villains* 4). Importantly, colonial officials did not understand these activities as minor disturbances in the functioning of the colonies. Piracy in the North American colonies could not be abided; the colonies should instead seek “[to] extirpate [pirates] out of the World” (Rediker *Villains* 127). Nevertheless, the most well-known historical pirates, aside from Captain Kidd and Edward Teach, tend to have limited connections to the United States—preying on the North American colonies rather than hailing from them—suggesting that piracy was unlikely to provide fertile ground for the literary imagination of the nation.

If the colonial American and early republican periods valued the pirate, they valued him or her for their penitent confessions. This genre had a long history in North America, dating back to at least *The Vial Poured Upon the Sea* (1726), a text consisting of biographical sketches of several convicted pirates as well as intervening chapters exhorting both the pirates and the reader to seek forgiveness in God. The decline of Atlantic piracy during the remainder of the eighteenth century, though, did not eradicate this genre, as the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries continued to see their publication, as Rachel Wall’s “Life, Last Words, and Dying CONFESSION” (1789), *The Life of Samuel Tully* (1812), and *Mutiny and Murder: The Confession of Charles Gibbs* (1831) attest.

Although it is not possible to tell how widely read these works were, it is telling that Tully's biography, at least, was printed and sold in Boston, suggesting that the publishers imagined a market for what amounts to a very dry, incredibly unsalacious narrative of quasi-piratical behavior.<sup>lxvii</sup> The publishers were probably correct: Joshua Belcher published the proceedings of Tully's trial, and it went through at least four editions within a year of the trial, implying a modicum of popularity for the Tully case.<sup>lxviii</sup> Gibbs's narrative seems to have met with some popularity as well. Versions of his story appeared not only under the title *Mutiny and Murder* but also *The Life and Extraordinary Confessions of Gibbs* (1831, Liverpool) and *The Horrible Confessions of the Pirate and Murderer: Charles Gibbs* (1831, place of publication unknown).<sup>lxix</sup> A market for the story of Gibbs, a mutinous pirate hailing from Rhode Island and hung in New York, existed and, importantly, it extended beyond his place of origin or his place of execution and into port towns on the other side of the Atlantic. There was, so to speak, a Gibbs cottage industry in Atlantic ports following his death, further underscoring the popularity of U.S. pirate narratives during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Of course, not all non-fictional pirate narratives were biographies/confessions of convicted pirates. Others fall into the category of pirate captivity narratives. Most of these are akin to the *History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin, who Was Six Years a Slave in Algiers* (1807). The abundance of North African captivity narratives during this era, should not surprise, due to the two Barbary Wars fought between 1803 and 1815.<sup>lxx</sup> Others, though, like the *Narrative of the Capture, Sufferings, and Escape of Capt. Barnabas Lincoln* (1822), eschewed the more exotic setting of North Africa for the more common West Indian scenery. Although these types of pirate narratives appear less common and less popular, the presence of extant copies of these narratives in reputable libraries suggests that enough appeared

in print for them to still be available and that the demand for them was such that they found their way into the holdings of certain libraries.<sup>lxxi</sup>

Further substantiating the idea that pirate narratives represented a vital and popular genre during the first half of the nineteenth century are the fictional narratives that proliferated from the 1820s onward. James Fenimore Cooper may have bemoaned the dearth of historical narratives for U.S. authors to plunder for their fictional pirate narratives, citing only the “meagre incidents connected with the career of Kidd” in his 1850 preface to *The Red Rover* (429), but those “meagre incidents” provided fodder for several pirate novels and stories: Cooper’s other quasi-pirate novel, *The Water-Witch* (1830); one of Poe’s most well-known tales, “The Gold Bug” (1843); a series of connected stories in Irving’s *Tales of a Traveller* (1824) gathered under the title “The Gold Diggers”; and *Captain Kyd, or The Wizard of the Seas* (1839) by the now unknown but once popular J. H. Ingraham. Although Kidd provided much inspiration to antebellum authors, other pirates found their stories retold in fictional accounts as well. Charles Ellms’s *The Pirates Own Book* (1837) compiles tales about a number of pirates, while Ingraham’s *Lafitte: The Pirate of the Gulf* (1836) and Maturin Ballou’s *Fanny Campbell: The Female Pirate Captain* (1845) focus their narrative attention on specific figures. By overlooking these texts, studies of nineteenth-century pirate narratives create a sense that the United States largely avoided the genre, while, in fact, pirate narratives were both many and popular in the United States during antebellum period.

However, critical considerations of the nineteenth-century pirate narrative do not simply fall short due to their neglect of the genre’s proliferation in the United States, they also offer a reductive overview of the tone of the genre during the period. The basic contention about pirate narratives appears in Grace Moore’s introduction to *Pirates and Mutineers of the Nineteenth*



*Century*, as the author states, in a variety of ways, that “the pirate was radically reconfigured during the nineteenth century” (iii). This change, Moore contends, consists of replacing “the dangerous, uncouth cutthroats like the notorious Blackbeard” with the “brooding Romanticism of Byron’s corsair and the swashbuckling charisma of figures such as Captain Hood and Long John Silver” (i).

This shift is not evident in U.S. pirate narratives. Although Byron’s romantic corsair does exert an influence on U.S. pirate narratives, as Moore suggests, he does not dominate, nor does his heroic status. In nineteenth-century U.S. literary culture, pirates remain villains, as they had been for most authors during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They do not become objects of emulation and they can hardly be “seen as patriotic” as Katherine Anderson contends in her essay on *Fanny Campbell: The Female Pirate Captain* and nationalism (100). The political and civic dimensions of the pirates in nineteenth-century U.S. pirate narratives remain ambiguous in the several works mentioned above. Although some of the pirates—such as the Red Rover or Fanny Campbell—can become heroic and idealizable citizens, they do so only by ceasing piratical behavior. In other words, pirates might become good citizens, should they voluntarily give up their depredations and avoid the gallows, but they could never be good citizens *as pirates*. The terms are as antithetical for U.S. authors and audiences in the nineteenth century as they were for Mather in the eighteenth—*hostes humani generis* (Rediker *Villains* 127). If a shift occurred in the understanding and representation of the pirates, it went in the other direction, whereby what was once a strong ambivalence about the pirate became a full-fledged rejection. The rejection of the pirate in antebellum literature, I will argue, develops in concert with the use of the term literally and metaphorically within the debates about slavery, suggesting that the contempt for the pirate in these narratives is not simply directed towards

external threats to the nation but towards internal ones as well. Antebellum pirate narratives should not be read as attempting an allegory of the racial and civic dimensions of debate about slavery, but the two should be seen as inter-related phenomena.

Of course neither Moore in her introduction nor Anderson in her essay on *Fanny Campbell* argue explicitly against this idea. They don't concern themselves with the civic dimensions of piracy (even if Anderson's essay, in its consideration of nationalism, manifest destiny, and female pirate narratives, comes close). That said, their perspective on the pirate—that the figure becomes less threatening as the nineteenth century unspools—runs contrary to the actual representation in the extant U.S. pirate narratives even as it establishes a foundation from which one might begin making claims about the wider culture's acceptance of pirates' radical social and political beliefs in nineteenth-century U.S. culture. This argument is, therefore, meant to underline the reactionary representations of pirates in this era of U.S. literature. Although I highlight the less-than-radical representations of pirates in nineteenth-century U.S. literary culture, I prefer the portrait offered by Marcus Rediker in *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* and *Villains of All Nations*, texts that understand pirates as highly subjugated working-class men and women whose turns to piracy were not demonstrative of ill morals but rather were a means of reacting against an inegalitarian political, social, and economic system. It is not a perspective adopted by U.S. authors of fiction, history, or biography, but it reads more accurately and underscores the potential of the pirate as a useful civic figure.

The representational resistance to pirates in a general sense and to their potential as civic models in the nineteenth century has strong ties to the literature about pirates circulating in the colonial Americas. In even the earliest accounts of Atlantic piracy, we find an articulation of

pirates' generally reviled position and bad civic habits, though, as I will show, there was greater ambivalence about the pirate in this era.<sup>lxxii</sup>

For John Smith, pirates represented an unavoidable nuisance. Writing about the “bad life, qualities, and conditions of pyrats” in his *The True Travels, Adventures and Observations of Captain John Smith* (1630), he noted that, as populated areas bred thievery, “so in all Seas much frequented, there are some Pirates” (John Smith 401). Smith certainly comes off as blasé in his depiction of pirates, here. Pirates are not so much iconoclastic outliers, nor are they clearly despised as Smith’s comrades in Jamestown, whom, J. A. Leo LeMay claims, Smith considered “useless parasites” (170). Pirates are simply a fact of life. They are the mere consequence of poverty and inter-oceanic commerce. As Smith explains, “those that were poor and had nothing but from hand to Mouth, turned Pirates; some, because they became slighted of those for whom they had got much Wealth; some, for that they could not get their Due; ... and as they found themselves more and more oppressed, their Passions increasing with discontent, made them turn Pirates” (John Smith 401). For Smith, then, as long as there exists an unequal distribution of wealth—as long as some “became slighted of those for whom they had got much Wealth”—and as long as said wealth is accumulated and transported aquatically, there will, undoubtedly, be pirates.

Such sentiments speak to an apparent sympathy between Smith and the pirates, but that is not the case, for, throughout his brief chapter on piracy, Smith both subtly and unsubtly hints at the uselessness of pirates in the emerging, modern nation-state. For instance, at the very beginning of his essay, he notes that, among notable recent pirates, “*Clinton* and *Purser* his companions, who grew famous” found themselves “hanged ... at *Wapping*” by “Queen *Elizabeth* of Blessed Memory” (John Smith 401, emphasis in original). Although this relatively

unembellished description of two pirates and their fate does not reveal aggressive contempt for those pirates, there is, at the same time, no sense that they did not deserve their fate. Additionally, the linguistic genuflecting offered by Smith towards the dead monarch—she is “of blessed memory”—certainly derives, in part, from the necessities of living under an absolute ruler who doesn’t take kindly to a lack of proper respect, let alone out-and-out remonstrance.

Yet taken together with his lack of concern over the pirates’ hanging, there is the suggestion, at least on some level, that part of Smith’s respect for the dead Queen Elizabeth is sincere, especially when considering the ways in which Smith goes on to describe pirates as his essay progresses. If his representations are neutral and potentially sympathetic to start, towards the end they veer to the other end of the spectrum. Describing European pirates who had “retired to Barbary,” he explains that they were “so Riotous, Quarrellous, Treacherous, Blasphemous, and Villainous, it is more than a wonder they could so long continue, to do so much Mischief” (John Smith 401). Far from the compassionate pirate driven to his or her deeds by want and necessity, these pirates are outright criminals, transgressing the law of God and man. Importantly, there is no sense that the pirates he describes here—those that have removed themselves to Barbary—have not descended into this state. Those pirates, he says, “basely consumed [their spoils], amongst *Jews, Turks, Moors*, and Whores,” and, in their debauched state, became slaves to the native inhabitants and began “instruct[ing] them in their best skill,” “turned Turk,” and helped make the “Moors of Barbary ... the Terror of all the *Streights*,” becoming, as a result, “the most cruel Villains in *Turky*, or *Barbary*; whose natives are very Noble, and of good Natures, in comparison to them” (John Smith 401, 402, emphasis in original). In other words, the corruption does not spread as it did in later English imperialist

discourse from the exoticized other to the Englishman. Here it heads in the opposite direction, as the self-exiled English encourage the damaging behavior of the Turks and Moors.

On one hand, this description of the pirates as turning Turk or Moor—of infecting Barbary with their cruel villainy—would have had tremendous resonance for readers of Smith's tale during the antebellum period and it would have raise questions about the pirates' civic dimensions.<sup>lxxiii</sup> As mentioned earlier in this chapter, as well as in chapter one, the United States found itself having a significant squabble with the Barbary states during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This conflict met with considerable odium in bureaucratic correspondence and public presses, as well as the period's literary culture more broadly. Writing to James Madison, for instance, General William Eaton, who served as consul to Tunis between 1797 and 1803, offers an exemplary characterization of the U.S. political perspective on the conflict. The first Barbary War was not simply to Eaton and others in the government a war: It was a "Barbary outrage" (239).<sup>lxxiv</sup> Such sentiments would have likely primed antebellum readers of Smith's voyages to question the national allegiance of his pirates even more so than Smith does, even those readers of the later antebellum period. After all, anti-Barbary writing appeared throughout the era. Well after the conclusion of the second Barbary War, for instance, the *Niles' Weekly Register* published a British speech about the Barbary Pirates that characterized their behavior as "the most outrageous, the most atrocious" (S. Smith 124).<sup>lxxv</sup> For U.S. readers, then, these pirates do not simply expatriate themselves to some other nation, they expatriate themselves to a nation with whom the U.S. had an on-going conflict.

On the other hand, this description of the English pirates among the Turks and Moors also begins to elucidate the ways in which Smith himself considers those same pirates poor civic figures, or, at least, poor subjects. As the above description notes, the pirates don't simply find

themselves enslaved to the denizens of North Africa and the Middle East: They “turned Turk” (John Smith 401). There is a sense, then, in that description that these pirates not only willingly exiled themselves from their homelands but also willingly deracinated themselves. They forego allegiance to James I and, by virtue of his metonymic relationship to England, the nation as a whole. They are not just criminals or revolutionary figures but, in a manner of speaking, enemy combatants.

This thread of concern over the pirates’ relationship to the English nation appears elsewhere in Smith’s essay. For instance, he notes that pirates “would rob before their faces, and even at their own Ports” (John Smith 401). They have no affinity for or connection to their nation; they will steal from its subjects just as well as those of another. They have no sense of a commonwealth and disinterested sympathy for other Englishmen. As Smith explains, pirates have no patience for any Christian ruler, of whom they are “hateful” (401). They are not valuable members of an increasingly modern nation, Smith suggests, and not worthy of society at all, for “any wise Man would rather live amongst wild Beasts, than them” (402). While Smith may call for “Merchants, Gentlemen, and all Setters forth of ships, not to be sparing of a competent pay,” he reserves most of the, albeit minimal, scorn for the pirates themselves (402). And this scorn derives, in large part from the pirates’ perceived refusal of England and Englishness. After all, Smith only uses the terms “villanous” and “villains” to describe the English pirates who had “turned Turk” (401). His treatment of them is, therefore, at best ambivalent and at worst pejorative.

Far less ambivalent about pirates and not at all pejorative is Alexandre Exquemelin’s *The Buccaneers of America* (1678), a work that exists at the intersection of travelogue, biography, and anthropology but whose intent seems, largely, to entertain and titillate. As a surgeon who

sailed alongside the some of the men chronicled in his book, Exquemelin had a more intimate understanding of pirates than Smith, whose encounters with actual pirates seem to consist of a brief kidnapping by French freebooters, so, perhaps, his acceptance of both the pirates and the radical implications of their social and civic structures is less surprising. Nevertheless, he presents a stark contrast to Smith. For example, introducing the subject of his text, after having first delineated the flora, fauna, and geography of Hispaniola, Exquemelin explains that he employs the term “Pirates of America” only because these men “are not maintained or upheld in their actions by any Sovereign Prince” (53). For Exquemelin, the terms piracy or pirate are hardly derogatory, as he uses them to describe men operating without official, state sanction—not the violent or immoral acts of criminals. Exquemelin’s pirates are not villains of all nations or *hostes humani generis*. They are men who happen to disrupt trading vessels in the Caribbean and who are not, according to Exquemelin’s rhetoric, criminal. Exquemelin may, from time to time, look askance at piratical behavior, calling the pirates’ activities “insolent actions,” but he just as frequently classifies them as “bold” or “rare and admirable” (54, 62). Taken in conjunction with the intimations Exquemelin makes about why some men turn pirate, these descriptions make him seem an exceedingly sympathetic author. After all, for some of his pirates, they take over large ships with “undaunted spirit” because “*their provisions beginning to fail, they could keep themselves no longer upon the ocean, or they must of necessity starve*” (Exquemelin 54, emphasis in original). Exquemelin may acknowledge that those particular men aimed at turning pirate anyway—they were at sea with “*intent of piracy*”—but his description of their deprivation, their having been “*reduced to despair*,” almost buries that fact, rendering the men pirates by necessity rather than choice.

More importantly, Exquemelin frequently highlights the more radical qualities of pirate society, which qualities, though not exclusively civic in nature, are often so. For example, Exquemelin makes much of the pirates' generosity. In speaking of the outfitting of pirate vessels, he explains that "having got provisions of flesh sufficient for their voyage" the pirates receive "twice a day ... as much as he can eat, without either weight or measure" (58). The pirates may resort to thievery to acquire their provisions, but they see to it that every man not only has enough but also has as much as he wants. Furthermore, no man receives "any greater proportion of the flesh, or anything else" (Exquemelin 58). Although the amount given depends upon the amount desired, there are no standard allotments for various members of the pirate crew, depending on the position within pirate society. In other words, the captain does not receive more of the provisions than "the meanest mariner" (58). Their society is, therefore, egalitarian.

It is also democratic. As Exquemelin explains, once the ship is fit for sailing, "they call another council, to deliberate towards what place they shall go, to seek their desperate fortunes. ... In this council, likewise, they agree upon certain articles. Which are put in writing, by way of bond or obligation, which every one is bound to observe" (59). The men enact and engage in, so to speak, a proto-Continental Congress. They discuss among themselves the laws that will govern their travels and they determine as a group the exact nature of their journey. They even determine the amount of the prizes acquired that each member of the ship will receive. As the description of their debates above implies, this is not a top-down procedure. Exquemelin does not use the singular subject "he" in describing any of the governing procedures among the pirates; he uses the plural subject "they" over and over. Orders are therefore not given by the captain to the crew, at least prior to the start of their trip. Orders are given by the crew to the captain, whose salary is even determined by his subordinates (59). Neither this behavior nor the



egalitarian distribution of provisions receive negative commentary by Exquemelin. He does not find the pirates' social/political structure inconceivable or ill-advised. It simply is. I do not want to go so far as David Mitchell and describe Exquemelin's tone, regarding the pirates and their habits, as "nostalgic" (20), but I do want to suggest that the author's refusal to comment at the very least implies a mind undecided about equality and democracy (if not outright acceptance).

These more accepting and ambivalent representations of piracy give way to outright pejorative depictions of the pirate and their social/political qualities in the eighteenth, as the pirate narratives of that era avoid the generally dry listing of events and individuals for pedagogical and pious diatribes. In, perhaps, the most well-known collection of pirate stories from the eighteenth century, for instance, Captain Charles Johnson positioned his narratives in *A General History of the Pyrates* (1724) as educational opportunities for his readers, noting that, although some pirates amass wealth, "the far greater Part of these Rovers are cut short in the Pursuit, by a sudden Precipitation into the other World" (35).<sup>lxxvi</sup> He does not portray pirates as "wanton ... in their cruelty" for the sake of titillation; he does so to underline their "terror" and "danger," as well as the terror and danger that accompany their often gruesome ends (29, 26).<sup>lxxvii</sup>

A similar situation occurs in Cotton Mather's *The Vial Poured Out upon the Sea* (1726), though this work takes a less worldly and more spiritual approach. This text may contain a thorough description of William Fly and his accomplice's piratical activities, but Mather gives the majority of his volume over to sermonizing. As the allusive and gloriously-punning title of his work suggests, *Vial* remains concerned primarily with preserving the souls of the soon-to-be-executed pirates.<sup>lxxviii</sup> As he nears the end of the sermon, for instance, Mather proceeds to offer his listeners/readers a series of questions, including, "I demand it of you, whether if you *dy without Wisdom*, your *Folly* will not be inexcusable, your *Horror* intolerable, your *Torture*

insupportable” (46, emphasis in original). He turns, in other words, to “two *Questions*, in the *Catechism for Conscience*” the series of questions employed by church leaders to instruct and assess the spiritual knowledge of parishioners (46, emphasis in original). This portion of the text clearly serves a pedagogical function. Such a situation suggests that Mather understands the text to operate this way on the whole, even if he does not articulate its pedagogical work as clearly as Johnson. After all, in *Vial*, Mather clearly imagines his interlocutors as the pirates facing execution; he does not turn aside to a generalized reader. Still, the mere fact of its printing suggests a larger if unspoken readership for the text. A sermonizing pamphlet will not do dead men much good. Therefore, although Mather is concerned not so much worried about the ramifications turning pirate has on a person’s existence so much as he is worried about turning pirate’s effect on their souls, his work is similarly disparaging of piracy and similarly pedagogical in tone.

In addition to their general dismissal of piracy, as well as their overall overlooking of piracy’s radical qualities, both Johnson and Mather’s works present piracy as a bane of the emerging modern nation state and pirates as poor models for citizenship. In Mather’s work, for instance, the author portrays the pirates as unfit for existing within the framework of a nation-state by underscoring the antagonistic relation between the pirates and the state. He spends much time emphasizing the criminality of the pirates, during his description of their piratical activities. Mather may invoke the language of morality from time to time—he does refer to the pirates as “the wicked” (5)—but he more often outlines the ways they “ransack’d the Vessel,” threatened a pilot with bodily harm, and disposed of their original captain in order to go on the account, portraying them, therefore, not primarily as transgressor against God’s laws but man’s (3). I could—and maybe should—conflate the two in this context. Rediker discusses the sermon

delivered by Benjamin Colman prior to the hanging of the pirates described in Mather's *Vial* and explains the way in which that work equates social and political order with the dictates of a supreme being (in other words the ways in which earthly and heavenly laws blur) by referring to God as "*the king of terrors*" (*Villains* 5). Still, I want to highlight here the way that Mather sets up a conflict between the pirates and the state, even as his aims are, elsewhere in *Vial*, more towards insisting on the divergence of piracy from spiritual concerns.

The conclusion of the pirates' narrative reaffirms this, as Mather notes the ways in which "the *Special Court of Admiralty* which the *Act of Parliament* has ordered for the Trial of *Pirates* ... quickly tried these *Four Pyrates* and after a plain and full Conviction ... pass'd the just *Sentence of Death*" (5). The institutions referred to in this passage constitute two-thirds of the governing system in place in the British empire, the legislative and judicial branches. The conflict that Mather sets up, then, is between the pirates and those elements of the state. He may not invoke the king, but by referring to these elements he does imply a perceived threat from the pirates to the state. Moreover, this threat is of an economic nature—the state "sought to eliminate piracy as a crime against mercantile property" (Rediker *Villains* 5). Pirates are, therefore, a problem for the nation-state as a whole (because they threaten the commercial enterprises that uphold the nation-state), but they are also a problem for the good individual subject or citizen. As the epigraph printed at the beginning of Mather's work states, "to this vile Crue you may the PIRATE add/Who puts to Sea the Merchant to invade/And reaps the Profit of another's Trade" (no page number). Pirates, then, prey on the men who understand property and the way it operates according to Lockean terms (the merchants put their labor—very loosely defined—into the acquisition of goods and come to possess it in a so-called legal manner), while the pirates do not. They "invade" the possessions of the merchants and insinuate themselves illegally between

the good subject/citizen and his rightful property. They have no understanding of the rights of those they depredate against: They may be egalitarian and democratic among themselves, but in regard to others, they “consciously used terror to accomplish their aims,” stealing goods and both threatening and committing, without due process, the executions of those opposing them (Rediker *Villains* 5).

Captain Johnson similarly introduces his pirates as foes rather than components of an operational nation-state, making the claim in an arguably more direct manner than Mather. He notes, for instance, “the great Mischief and Danger which threaten Kingdoms and Commonwealths” and explains that governments should not neglect “crush[ing them] before they gather strength” (26). There is a very clear opposition, then, between the nation-state and the pirate, and this opposition exists primarily in the commercial realm, as it did for Mather—after all Johnson decides to enter into a discussion of pirates and offer his warnings to European readers because “the Pyrates in the *West-Indies* have been so formidable and numerous, that they have interrupted the Trade of *Europe* into those Parts” (26). Where Johnson differs slightly in his depiction of the pirates and their failure as civic models, or, rather, divergence from standard definitions of good citizenship/subjecthood. He does not imply, as Mather does, that pirates fail to represent good civic practices because they cannot understand the ways in which property operates both in relation to individuals and to a particular nation. Rather, he demonstrates that they lack or refuse knowledge of particular, abstract political/civic concepts. Captain Johnson, for example, includes a story about Roman pirates, in which the pirates, having captured a ship’s captain, “hung out the Ladder of the Ship, and coming with a Shew of Courtesy, told him, he had his Liberty, desiring him to walk out of the ship” (29). Although underscoring the humor of the pirates, this scene also demonstrates a concept of liberty that is, at best, ironic. They may

understand the term, but they appear to have little patience for it or interest in it (at least for other people). They reject one of the cornerstones of emerging liberal democracy. Of course, as mentioned, the pirates Johnson describes here are Romans, and, therefore, not exactly of the so-called enlightened age in which he wrote. Nevertheless, the Roman connection to the concepts of liberty and republicanism, as well as the fact of Johnson using the term liberty in the era in which it was becoming an increasingly theorized concept, suggest that my reading of this brief story is not totally anachronistic.

The negative perception of pirates both in general and as citizens persists into the nineteenth century, though the general critical perspective has been that representations of piracy became more romantic and more idealized the further away one gets from their seventeenth- and eighteenth-century heyday. U.S. literary culture preferred portraying pirates in increasingly monstrous, gory, and pathological terms. The only pirates worthy of emulation for literate U.S. citizens seem to have been those that either admonished themselves for their piratical behavior or unknowingly entered the trade. All others were scoundrels. This aversion to pirates more broadly and romanticized pirates more specifically stemmed, I will argue, not only from the pirates' exemplifying both a threat to a citizenry and an alternative civic path but also from their importance both literally and figuratively to the debates that surrounded slavery during the antebellum period.

Of course, there is a basis for the claims made by the likes of Grace Moore—claims that the nineteenth-century witnessed an increasing acceptance of the pirate--especially if we look to Byron's *The Corsair* (1814), wherein we find a pirate, Conrad, and his crew introduced with glorious paean to their sovereignty. The speaker begins the poem by imagining the pirates cruising across the waters:

O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,  
Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,  
Far as the breeze can bear the billows foam,  
Survey our empire, and behold our home!  
These are our realms, no limits to their sway—  
Our flag the scepter all who meet obey. (I.1-6)

In this first stanza of the poem, the speaker emphasizes limitlessness of the pirates' domain and the unbridled autonomy that they exercise. These are men not only "boundless" in their thoughts—in their ability to imagine possibilities for themselves and their actions—they are men of unlimited freedom spirit and action. Nothing impedes them. They control, or perceive that they control, the known aqueous world. They may not reign over much land, as their influence extends only to those spaces where the "breeze can bear the billows foam," but over the maritime regions they are supreme, forcing the submission of any that meet them to their power (I.3). Taken with the jauntiness of the rhythm; the timely use of an exclamation point, rather than a less-excitable period; and the speaker's inclusion of himself or herself into this grouping (it is "our" and not "their"), this first stanza suggests an attempt to not just delight the reader with rollicking prosody but also to entice them with the pirates' life. Everything here is meant to entertain. It is no mistake that the only intimations of terror appear dozens of lines later and in a tossed off manner, as the bloodied swords are encountered with a "careless eye" and more or less ignored (I.50).

Beyond this alluring introduction, we also find the eponymous pirate himself, described in terms that render him rather sympathetic. For instance, although Byron reiterates humankind's concern about Conrad—they "crouch'd and dreaded" him—he also emphasizes the way in which

Conrad's descent into piracy derives not from some biological or psychological determination (I.270). The first canto introduces the topic in a manner that *does* imply such an explanation. After all, the speaker begins Conrad's vague history with the apparent rhetorical question "yet was not Conrad thus by Nature sent/To lead the guilty..." (I.249-50). But, though the phrasing suggests one, there is, in fact, no question. The aforementioned line does not pose any inquiry; it's a statement, thereby implying, albeit in an ambiguous way, that the intention of the line is to claim that Conrad was not doomed to piracy by nature but was rather doomed to it by nurture. The remainder of Conrad's history reinforces this reading. As the speaker notes, in his youth, Conrad underwent a transformation: "his soul was changed .../Warp'd by the world in Disappointment's school" (I. 251-3). Importantly, the catalyzing factor in this change appears to be external. The speaker may be cagey on how, exactly, Conrad was mistreated, but it seems very clear that his piracy—and misanthropy—develop because of some type of subjugation, as he is "fear'd—shunn'd—belied" by some unknown people for some unknown reason (I.261). Conrad, then, is not only someone with limitless domain and autonomy, but he is one who has achieved this in reaction to perceived ill treatment by society, who has achieved this because "his heart was form'd for softness—warp'd to wrong" (III.662).

All of this suggests, then, that, as Moore and others claim, the pirate was emerging as an increasingly sympathetic and heroic during the nineteenth century. Yet this overlooks the political dimensions and implications of Byron's Conrad. Byron may be sympathetic to his corsair and understanding of his fall, but he does not overlook the reactionary qualities of the figure as well. He does not, in other words, construct a pirate who upholds the egalitarian and democratic aspects of piratical society that Alexandre Exquemelin outlined. Instead, he emphasizes the propensity of the pirate towards despotism. Rather than form a council with his

men that determines the policies and decisions of the larger group, for instance, Conrad leads his men by subordinating them to his whims and desires. As the speaker notes, “they make obeisance, and retire in haste,/... so that Conrad guides;/And who dare question aught that he decides” (I.169-172). There is a very clear hierarchy here and at its head is the titular pirate chief, and, as the word “obeisance,” with its etymological ties to the word “obey,” suggests, Conrad represents not just any executive power but an authoritarian power and one who recognizes himself as such. After all, when Gulnare later tries to free the imprisoned corsair, he refers to himself as “that hated tyrant, Conrad” (III. 319). Conrad may therefore be sympathetic and the pirates’ life may be portrayed, at least initially, as beguiling, but the poem exhibits an undercurrent of distrust. Conrad is upraised not as a revolutionary figure but rather a figure against whom the revolutionaries of the era rebel. He is not radical. He embodies, instead, that which would quell the spread of radicalism.<sup>lxxix</sup>

U.S. American authors took a much less compassionate approach to pirates during the 1800s. Echoing the likes of Captain Johnson or John Smith, James Fenimore Cooper publicizes his first pirate narrative (and most piratical of his pirate narratives) *The Red Rover* (1827) as a morality tale with a pedagogical function. For example, although he avoids commenting on the subject of the novel in its preliminary preface, when the time came to republish *The Red Rover* as part of “The Standard Novels” (1834), Cooper felt compelled to expend some energy outlining his intentions, explaining that:

All that has been aimed at, in the way of moral, is to show the manner in which men of the fairest promise can be led astray by their wayward passions, and to prove how narrow the boundaries become between virtue and vice, when education or neglect gives a false tendency to such minds as may contain the seeds of better things. It was also believe it



might be useful to show that crime can be committed under fair exterior... . (*Red Rover* 427)

Cooper here stresses and perhaps overstates the dissolution and dishonesty of his titular pirate. His Red Rover has not simply gone “astray,” but rather gone “astray” because of “wayward passions.” The redundancy of the sentiments (“astray” and “wayward”) contained in the beginning of the passage underlines a significant concern about the character of his character. The continuation and proliferation of pejorative sentiments unfurled in the remainder of the passage merely reinforce this idea: He is a criminal and is given to “false tendency” by “neglect.” He also stresses the educational component of the narrative, remarking both on the “moral” as well as “useful” nature of the novel. Cooper’s Red Rover may have the “fair exterior” and transition into immorality and criminality found in Byron’s “The Corsair,” but, at least in the novel’s paratextual frame, he is lacking in sympathy.

Cooper’s narrative itself similarly upholds this unsympathetic and derogatory treatment of the Red Rover. The Rover may be a charming and witty fellow, but Cooper makes clear, time and again, his duplicitous and misleading behavior. Perhaps nowhere does this appear more blatantly than in the Rover’s interview with Wilder, the ostensible seaman-hero of the novel, at the outset of the tale. Conversing in the Rover’s shipboard apartments, as Wilder tries to gain a berth aboard what he believes to be a legally-operating vessel, Wilder notices several flags, and asks the Rover about their meaning. The Rover explains: “This is the Lily of France you see. No bad emblem of your stainless Frenchman ... . Here you have the calculating Dutchman ... . . . . These are England ... . Here is my Lord High Admiral; your St. George; your field of red and of blue, as chance may give you a leader, or the humor of the moment prevail. The stripes of Mother India, and the Royal Standard itself” (*Red Rover* 506-8). The Rover’s ship contains,

therefore, flags identifying it as an emissary from any number of European nations, and, as the latter part of the passage shows, any number of elements of the United Kingdom and its colonies. Having all of these flags, then, as well as “a blood-red” pennant that the ship sailed under most often, underscores the deception that the Red Rover relies upon to attain his prizes. He is a many of many faces, and most of them not particularly flattering.

This scenario continues to play out in the way in which Cooper describes the Rover presenting himself to the community of Newport, RI, at the beginning of the novel. For, in order to go unnoticed in the harbor, he pretends that his ship is not a piratical vessel but a slave-ship. Although Cooper was not the most outspoken opponent of slavery, the novel clearly understands the slave-ship as an emblem of immorality. For instance, in the early part of the novel, the slavers are described alternately as “innocent and harmless” and “honest and conscientious” (*Red Rover* 459, 460). Such descriptions smack of irony. Written in the late 1820s, *The Red Rover* appeared at a time when slavery was increasingly understood—particularly in Cooper’s north-east—as a social and political ill. Narratives of slavery, such as *The Life of William Grimes* (1825), had already begun to appear in print, as a means of exhorting abolition, and *David Walker’s Appeal* (1830) was soon to appear. Moreover, the slave trade itself had been done away with, at least on paper, by the *Act Prohibiting the Importation of Slaves* (1807). Thus, even though slavery might not have been understood as criminal and immoral, the slave trade was to Cooper’s readers. More importantly, it was understood as piracy by 1820, when Congress amended a piracy act from the previous year to include international—not intranational—slave-trading considered an instance of piracy. To have the Red Rover mask his piratical aspect with a slave-trading one would therefore read somewhat ironically for Cooper’s readers—slave traders *were* pirates for them—and the joke is on the Red Rover, who, in the world of the novel,

successfully masks himself but, in the world of Cooper's readers, reveals himself as a social, political, and legal transgressor from whichever aspect he offers those around him.

Arguably, this choice of disguise for the Red Rover also underscores a subtle way in which Cooper questions the fitness of the pirate for the liberal, democratic body politic. If the romantic, idealized representation of pirates embraced their egalitarian and democratic impulses, Cooper's representation here largely eschews it. The Red Rover is neither democratic nor egalitarian in his piratical activities (he dupes various characters into his service and kidnaps others), nor is he democratic or egalitarian in his pretended activities. One who makes his or her living by buying and selling humans into bondage would hardly be said to have liberal impulses. Furthermore, Cooper sets up his conflicting central pair—the Rover and Wilder—as representatives of competing views about liberalism. In other words, while the latter espouses vaguely liberal sentiments the other implicitly opposes them. For instance, during the end of their initial interview, the Rover offers Wilder a position on the ship, explaining to him that he is “poor—here is wealth” (*Red Rover* 511). This offer of riches, however, is turned down by Wilder, who understands that, joining the Rover will result in his subordination, stating that said wealth would “amount to nothing without liberty,” causing the Rover to offer this rejoinder: “And what is this liberty “ (511). I would not contend that the Rover's questions indicates a failure to understand the concept, but I would argue that it points to the concept holds little fascination for him. He has no patience for liberty or freedom—except his own—in the face of the possibility of increasing his wealth. He is not a devotee of the liberalist ideal to pursue one's interest only so far as they don't impinge upon another's; he is an adherent to his self-interest without thought of others.

Cooper's Red Rover winds up being among the more favorably viewed pirates in nineteenth-century literary culture. Most other pirates received much less sympathetic portraits—particular actual, historical pirates rendered in either biographic or fictional-biographic portrayals. In his Captain Kidd stories (“Kidd the Pirate,” “The Devil and Tom Walker,” “Wolfert Webber, or Golden Dreams,” and “Adventure of the Black Fisherman”), a series of interconnected narratives in the “Money-Diggers” portion of his *Tales of a Traveller* (1824), Washington Irving portrays pirates in a manner that resonates with the narratives of Johnson, Mather, and Cooper. For instance, in the manner of Johnson and Mather, Irving characterizes his only living pirate (Kidd) and pirates in general as opponents of the nation-state. He offers a litany of troublesome characters in the early English North American colonies, but “foremost were the Buccaneers ... rovers of the deep, who, perhaps, in time of war had been educated in those schools of piracy, the privateers; but having once tasted the sweets of plunder, had ever retained a hankering after it” (Irving “Kidd” 650). Unlike the other “random adventurers” and “loose livers” that thrived in the colonies, however, from Irving's perspective, the pirates of history required state-sponsored extermination: “At length these excesses rose to such a height as to become a scandal to the provinces, and to call loudly for the interposition of government” (“Kidd” 649, 650). Irving offers no indication that such efforts were misguided. If anything, he implies that they were wholly necessary, for, like Cooper, he felt the pirates represented social dregs unworthy of a position in the body politic. After all, they “dislike[d] the old fashioned restraint of law” (“Kidd” 649), and Kidd's supporters and, presumably, Kidd himself, made “great exertions ... to screen him from justice” (“Kidd” 652). The pirates, then, lack an affinity for hallmarks of civil society. Although the historical record shows that many did, from Irving's

perspective, pirates were unconcerned with the pursuit and reinforcement of justice. They were, instead, opponents of justice, attempting to circumvent it whenever possible.

Irving, though, takes the admonition of pirates further in his subsequent pirate stories in *Tales of a Traveller*, as well as in his later writing about pirates/pirate themes. For example, in “The Devil and Tom Walker,” Irving demonstrates the way in which even fleeting and tenuous contact with piracy has dire results. A “meagre miserly fellow, Tom Walker finds himself in a dreary woods and in the company of a diabolical woodsman who offers him access to Kidd’s buried treasure (“Devil” 655). Initially skeptical, Walker eventually manages to make a deal with Old Scratch, agreeing to “open a broker’s ship in Boston” (rather than “fit out a slave ship”) once the money was his (“Devil” 663, 662). With the money-lending shop opened, Tom takes advantage of “this propitious time of public distress,” and “accumulated bonds and mortgages; gradually squeezed his customers closer and closer; and sent them at length, dry as a sponge from his door” (“Devil” 664). In a sense, then, by coming into contact with the pirate’s money, Tom himself turns pirate, operating not upon the open ocean but rather upon the unwitting, “needy,” and “gambling” members of the body politic (“Devil” 663).<sup>lxxx</sup>

This situation articulates the implicit threat that piracy exemplified for antebellum readers and authors alike. On one hand, Tom embodies the traditional threat that the pirate poses to the citizen upon the high seas. As Rediker notes, the primary issue with piracy derived from its “[interference] with the very security of possessing property” (*Villains* 128). Like the Red Rover, Walker illustrates that very divergence from the theoretical tenets of classical liberalism, as they relate to property; Walker uses his self-interest and monetary interest to prey upon other members of the colonial civil society rather than to operate in neutral relation to them, much as a pirate would. As a “miserly fellow,” Tom may be predisposed to treating the other men and

women in Bostonian society, but he does not become an aggravating, mercenary figure until after he has his hands on Kidd's treasure. In other words, his contact with the effects of piracy—not even a pirate her or himself—transforms him from common miser to bandit of a sort, implying that the concern with piracy, from this perspective anyway, derived from its offer of an alternative civic ideal—one that doesn't hem in rapacious self-interest at all but rather seeks to exacerbate it.

On the other hand, Tom Walker also reflects the concern that piracy had for an antebellum U.S. that, for much of that era, had little concern about actual pirates. Pirates and piracy of course persist beyond the early eighteenth century, to which the Barbary Wars in the nineteenth century or the recent *Captain Phillips* (2013), a chronicle of Somali piracy, attest. Nevertheless, by the time Cooper and Irving wrote, piracy had largely abated as a major national or even international concern. The prospect of coming into contact with an actual pirate and choosing that life and the ideals it embodied was rare.

Yet the legends of piracy, as this story suggests, have a lasting impact on the health of a body politic. The choice of Kidd as the piratical presence in this story is telling. Kidd exerted the most influence over antebellum pirate narratives—Irving, Cooper, and Poe count his stories as important source material—and to have Walker come into contact with his gold in order to precipitate Walker's own terrestrial piracy might suggest that, in fact, not only pirates but also their persistence in memory might prove a hindrance to the growth and fitness of the nation. Pirates could certainly affect the fortunes and prestige of a nation, as the Barbary Wars demonstrate, just as they could encourage citizens to leave behind the nation for the egalitarianism of a pirate colony. More importantly, though, in the nineteenth century, the stories of pirates might offer the likes of a Tom Walker a blueprint for on-shore malfeasance. In the

story, certainly, piracy seems pathological; Walker encounters the gold catches a case of piracy. But we might also read the gold, as it is Kidd's, one of the more popular literary pirates of antebellum U.S. culture, as representing Kidd's history and the legends that grew up around him. Reading the story in this way, one need not go so far as encounter a pirate or even the pirate's gold—the germ of piracy might find itself transmitted through language and literature.

Although concerned with the pirate and piracy, Irving's stories are not fully invested in the genre. After all, only the brief "Kidd the Pirate" discusses the actions and demeanor of an actual pirate. At best, the other stories offer only piratical echoes, even those, like "Guests from Gibbet Island," which follows a pirate who tries to leave behind the piratical life and open an inn, only to find himself unable, and perhaps unwilling, to shake the specters of his past. The fate of Yan Yost Vanderscamp reinforces the idea flowing through the other Irving stories: Piracy and its ancillary elements lead to untimely and horrifying death, as Yan finds himself, having in jest invited former, now-executed compatriots to his home, frightened to death by having to entertain those same deceased compatriots. And the rationale for his supernatural extermination is as reactionary as the representation of pirates elsewhere in the nineteenth century. It is because he refuses to yield to authority, as the narrator notes, "lay any command on him, and the stubborn sea-urchin was sure to rebel" ("Guests" 148-9). This is not the model rebellion of the late-eighteenth-century U.S. war for independence. This is rebellion, like the refractoriness in evidence in many of the pirates discussed thus far, that requires what Mather referred to as extirpation.<sup>lxxxi</sup>

Although Kidd gets a relatively unflattering representation in Irving's stories, he merely hovers in the background. He is undoubtedly a vital and necessary element of these stories, but he does not feature centrally, as, in a way that looks forward to Hawthorne's use of Matthew

Maule in *The House of Seven Gables* (1851), Irving is more interested in the ways in which Kidd's nefariousness adversely affects those that come after him. A version of Kidd appears as a much more devious and dastardly figure, as well as a much poorer model of civic involvement, in Joseph Holt Ingraham's once popular and now forgotten *Captain Kyd, or the Wizard of the Seas* (1838).

This bifurcated novel divides the narrative between the titular Kyd's adventures in coastal Ireland and early seventeenth-century Manhattan, but in both parts the narrator consistently undermines the heroic stature of the eponymous character. In other words, though Kyd *should be* the novel's hero, he remains its villain throughout. From the start Ingraham portrays him as a blood-thirsty and excessively violent man. For instance, when Mark Meredith, fisherman's son, makes eyes at Kate Bellamont, Kyd's betrothed, Kyd behaves in a distinctly ungentlemanly fashion. While Meredith "confront[s] him with that calm courage," Kyd reacts by "with a bound leap[ing] on him, ... [catching] him by the throat" so that he might "get his fingers firmly clinched upon his windpipe" (Ingraham *Captain Kyd* 1.73). The narrator describes Meredith's actions in general terms, here, noting that he merely moves Kyd backwards with "the force of a blow" (1.73). Kyd's maneuvers, though, are delivered to us in relatively particular detail and the description of his attempts to strangle Meredith (to clench his fingers around the man's windpipe) reveal a particularly sadistic character. By the second volume of the novel, after Kyd has turned pirate, Ingraham offers his readers excessively gory descriptions of Kyd's actions. Kyd himself may not perform as many dastardly deeds once he becomes captain, but, as the narrator notes in the first description of a sea battle, he has no qualms with spilling blood, whipping his men up into a frenzied "crew of demons," who "yelling and shouting menaces of



death, mingled with horrible execrations and oaths of vengeance for their slaughtered comrades, ... [obey] the energetic and sanguinary orders of their chief” (Ingraham *Captain Kyd* 2.46).<sup>lxxxii</sup>

Moreover, Ingraham offers readers many insights into the failure of Captain Kyd as a civic model, since, throughout the narrative, the narrator reminds the reader that Kyd is not only sadistic but also tyrannical. Early on, for instance, the narrator underscores his “imperious” qualities (1.22). This suggestion of despotism plays itself in the novel’s second volume, as we become privy to life aboard the pirate’s ship. Describing the ship’s make-up Ingraham notes that there were “eighty men, half of whom were blacks, that composed her crew, ... variously occupied forward and in the waist, though many of them were lying listlessly between the guns. They were a desperate band, with hard looks, and the aspects of men accustomed to crime and inured to danger” (2.145-6). Yet Kyd had no worries from these men—but not because he treated them well or because they conducted themselves on equal footing. Rather, it was because he “kept these inferior and scarcely less fierce beings in subjection” (2.146). The use of the phrase “in subjection” here recalls the earlier comments about his imperiousness, reinforcing his authoritarian position. He is not a ruler whose men have selected him democratically. He is a shipboard monarch, exercising his sovereignty over his subjects. He is antagonistic to the ideals of civil society and good citizenship, antagonistic to the ideals represented by the men and women of Manhattan in the novel, whom the narrator describes as “principal citizens” (2.187). In the world of the novel, the pirate ship is a world of bloodshed and vengeance, as described above. Manhattan, on the other hand, is the realm of good citizens, the “principal citizens” who contribute to the common wealth, exhibiting the disinterested but involved qualities prized by republicanism. As the narrator notes,

The citizens took watch by turns or were fined. They were to be "good men and true, and free from cursing and swearing." It was their duty to watch by the gate and the bridges, and thrice during the night to take the rounds of the city, particularly to see that neither Indians nor negroes were abroad, or lying about in the market-places. In cases of emergency or alarm, they were commanded to call on the nearest citizen for aid. (2.72)

Although the novel depicts colonial New York, the qualities of the citizens on display here—willingly looking out for the well-being of all and displaying the requisite sympathy for their fellow citizens—would not be out of place in descriptions of nineteenth-century theorizations of the good citizen. Readers of the novel, then, would understand the Captain Kyd, who operates a tyrannical rule over his men, as the antithesis of model civic behavior and the Dutch and English denizens of Manhattan as its apotheosis.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

In nineteenth-century literary culture, these sentiments, highlighting the pirates' opposition to so-called good, civil society, were not limited to works of fiction, but also to pirate biographies and memoirs. For instance, in Charles Ellms's *The Pirates Own Book, or Authentic Narratives of the Lives, Exploits, and Executions of the Most Celebrated Sea Robbers* (1837), the author appears to articulate the appeal of the pirate and the pirate narrative inasmuch as he characterizes the stories as "exploits" of "celebrated" figures. Nevertheless, within the text itself, Ellms characterizes the pirate, from the outset, as a vile and villainous figure against which the author can contrast the typical mariner, who has a "superstitious horror" of pirates ("monsters in human form") (Ellms iii). Ellms appeals to a standard of social, legal, and political ethics and morality in his preface to this book and refuses to acknowledge any way in which the pirate might be admitted into a concept of civil society. As he notes, "the apprehension and foreboding of the mind, when under the influence of remorse, are powerful, and every man, whether

civilized or savage, has interwoven in his constitution a moral sense, which secretly condemns him when he has committed an atrocious action,” but such sentiments are absent in pirates who have no problem committing any number of crimes and transgressing mores in any number of ways (iv). That they lack this “apprehension and foreboding,” which both “civilized or savage” man has, implies that the pirates have so far removed themselves from civil society and the realm of the good citizen that they have traveled beyond even a state of nature, that the savage man might occupy. They are beyond humankind, and thereby, animals or parasites of some kind, preying on humanity rather than members of it. They are *hostes humani generis* while not being of humankind.

Pirates would therefore seem to lack a place within the consideration of cultural understandings of citizenship and seamen during the antebellum period. If they defy the albeit Manichaeian categorization of humanity that Ellms sets up—civilized and savage—then pirates would seem to have no place within conversations about citizenship, as the abstract political theorizations about the development of civil society employ similar binary characterizations. Origins of civil society described in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and therefore laying much of the groundwork for modern civic concepts locate a division between civilized and savage at the founding of civil government, between the state of nature and civil society. As neither civilized nor savage, according to Ellms, pirates would seem to not fit into the schematics of political theory.

In practice, that is largely the case: Figures like Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau have little use for the pirate as a possibility within their imagined beginnings and development of civil society. Pirates do appear in Locke and Rousseau, but they show up in a manner that reinforces the implications of Ellms’s text: The pirate exists beyond the boundaries of and in

contradistinction to civil society. Rousseau brings up pirates during his discussion of the relationship between the size of a body politic and the size of the territory they occupy. Speaking specifically about coastal towns, Rousseau suggests that such settlements require their citizens to live in close proximity to one another, not only because of the “lack of land” but also because piracy necessitates that they “congregate together more in order to repel” attacks (Rousseau 48). The pirates, as with Ellms, exist outside of civilized society and prey upon it.

Locke’s use of piracy in his *Second Treatise* is even more characteristic of the general disregard for the pirate in works of Enlightenment political theory. Although he does not, as Ellms and Rousseau do, draw a clear distinction between citizen and pirate, between civilized society and its antecedents and the position of the pirate, his discussion of the dissolution of civil government does characterize the pirates not as part of civil society but rather as an other, beyond the boundaries of that society. He writes:

But if they, who say it lays a foundation for rebellion, mean that it may occasion civil wars, or intestine broils, to tell the people they are absolved from obedience when illegal attempts are made upon their liberties or properties, and may oppose the unlawful violence of those who were their magistrates, when they invade their properties contrary to the trust put in them; and that therefore this doctrine is not to be allowed, being so destructive to the peace of the world: they may as well say, upon the same ground, that honest men may not oppose robbers or pirates, because this may occasion disorder or bloodshed. (Locke 417)

This passage reinforces the readings of pirates in nineteenth-century antebellum literary culture in a number of ways. To begin, the connection that Locke makes here positions pirates not as common criminals but rather as tyrannical rulers. Those who make “illegal attempts ... upon

[the] liberties or properties” of individual citizens are not mere delinquents but rather delinquent governments and rulers. In creating this connection between pirate/robber and tyrant, Locke proposes a connection that authors like J. H. Ingraham in particular exploit in casting their pirates not merely as petty thieves but rather as imperious tyrants. Moreover, this passage also establishes the pirate, like Rousseau or Ellms, as outside the world that he largely considers in this text. While the pirate and sailor proved important to antebellum considerations of the U.S. body politic, as I have been demonstrating, the pirate was of little consequence to a theorist like Locke. The actual threats to a body politic came from the state and not from members of a political community, necessarily. The pirate was not so much a concern as was the piratical ruler. Pirates are not even included in this consideration of unlawful depredation as an *actual* threat—they are a figurative threat. Locke thereby suggests that, though pirates exist and though they can disrupt the accumulation or flow of capital, property, or the individual, they represent less a real threat to civil society and civil liberties and more a metaphorical threat—hardly a position staked out in the texts of Cooper, Irving, Ingraham, or Ellms, let alone Cotton Mather, but one that nevertheless reinforces the limited importance or usefulness of pirates when considering the dimensions of citizenship for political theorists.

Of course, although the pirate had a particularly narrow function for political theorists during the Enlightenment, the pirate nevertheless remains important to this period’s articulation of the citizen through its absence. The absence of the pirate from discussions of civic issues in Locke or Rousseau, as well as Ellms’s more pointed inference that the pirate exists beyond the definitions of humanity, implies that both Enlightenment theorists, as well as authors of antebellum pirate narratives, could little make sense of the pirate within the parameters set up for civil society in either the abstract or the actual. The popular understanding of the pirate did not

allow them to fit into either of the too-neat categories of civilized and savage. They were men from the so-called civilized world that opted out of the protections of civil society, embracing the state of war, if not the state of nature, instead of seeking solace from it. They defy the historical metanarrative devised by Enlightenment thinkers to make sense of human society. They therefore not only threatened civil/civilized society at a quotidian level—divesting citizens of property and offering an alternative civic model—but at a more abstract level, as well, calling into question the basis and rationalization of civil government.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

This perception of piracy as a threat to civil/civilized society in Ellms's book is wonderfully captured by the illustration on the title-page of the 1844 edition, which depicts the pirate Charles Gibbs carrying a girl onto his ship, his hands wrapped around her waist, his lips positioned as if they're about to kiss her breast, and her arms flailing. The implication is obvious even if it's ultimately contradicted in the actual story of Gibbs: Pirates will steal our women and impregnate them with their pirate seed. Although this may seem too specific a reading for a relatively harmless illustration, I'd like to refer, momentarily, back to one of the more scandalous episodes in Ingraham's *Captain Kyd*, wherein an Irish rebel-cum-pirate, Hurtel the Red Hand, tricks a poor girl from a fishing village into becoming his so-called wife (he doesn't actually marry her, just tells her he will, and talks her into sleeping with him). The result of this encounter is, of course, the baby that will grow up into Captain Kyd, suggesting, in another work entirely, that piracy was not just a profession but some sort of genetic deformity, passed down from father to son.

The exaggeration contained within Ellms's preface finds both its precedent and successor in other non-fictive representations of pirates. For instance, in a much earlier pirate memoir by Samuel Tully, who was hanged for piracy in Boston in 1812, Tully goes to great

lengths to remove from himself the stigma of being a pirate. He admits to mutiny and portrays himself as having been willing to revolt against what he saw as unfair and potentially deadly treatment at the hand of his ship's captain. However, he is unwilling to admit to the crime for which he faced death—the murder of the captain and the turn to piracy the ship took upon that man's execution. He may not, as Ellms does, refer to piracy as a monstrosity, but he's clearly much more perturbed by the legal attribution of the term to himself, spending as much time as he does on detailing his hardworking habits and his seafaring life as nothing other than the only profession available to him, in spite of his father having been a Revolutionary War hero. Such details in the narrative (he's diligent and the descendant of patriots) suggest that he wants to set himself up as a good citizen and that the pirate he's perceived as is not that at all. There's a sense in this memoir (as opposed to that of William Fly in Mather's *Vial*) that the pirate cannot accept that he was a pirate. There's a sense that the term is far too derogatory by the nineteenth century to be something faced without animation and anxiety.

Published for the mid-Atlantic states, *The Pirate's Almanac* (1844) makes the monstrosity of the pirate implicit in Tully's memoir and more explicit in Ellms's book even more obvious.<sup>lxxxv</sup> The monstrosity comes through, though, not in the language of the text (which is fairly dry and pedestrian, lacking even the limited flourish of Ellms) but in the many illustrations accompanying the various stories and legends of Atlantic and Caribbean pirates. On the cover of the *Almanac*, for example, is an illustration of the Pirate Heldt, Captain of the Black Dragon, which shows his teeth bared but surrounded by a wild, bushy beard and located underneath a pinched face that, though humanoid, renders him a little less than human and located above a typical sailor's uniform. The image is ridiculous (the fearsome visage above a sailor's tie), somewhat racialized (the Portuguese Heldt is dark-skinned but of indeterminate race), and a little

bit unsettling due to its amateurishness. Although other illustrations in the *Almanac* portray the monstrosity of the pirate through explicit renderings of violent behavior (there are many a decapitated head in the *Almanac*'s pages) of the pirates and others depict the dead pirate as a hardly human form, the cover portrays a pirate in a way that eschews any semblance of reality. There is no endeavor to capture the human qualities. I doubt that it is a mistake that Heldt's face is primarily furry. He is meant to be perceived as some sort of animal and, given his bared teeth and wild eyes, a feral one at that. The pirate, the illustrations in this almanac imply, is not just a "lawless sea chief" but rather someone with a literal, animalistic "thirst for blood" (*The Pirate's Almanac* 8).<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

Although the general tendency in nineteenth-century literary culture was to portray the pirate in negative terms, highlighting the pirate as villainous and poor models of civic behavior, there were exceptions. Maturin Murray Ballou's *Fanny Campbell*, Ingraham's *Lafitte, or The Pirate of the Gulf*, and Cooper's *The Red Rover* each depict pirates who aid the U.S. cause against British. For instance, in Ballou's novel, set at the beginning of the War for Independence, the titular pirate adopts a seaman's outfit in order to gain a berth on a British merchant vessel and thereby rescue her betrothed, who had been imprisoned in the Caribbean. In doing this, though, she finds it necessary to overthrow the rule of the ship's captain and mate and thereby becomes, as her betrothed ultimately points out, a mutineer and a pirate. In spite of this, Fanny remains a heroic figure, saving her lover and performing a minor act of rebellion against a tyrannical British captain during the Revolutionary War. The novel therefore implies that, in a manner of speaking, Fanny's actions are not piratical; they're analogous to those actions of the landed patriots in Concord or Lexington, and, because the colonies are at war with Great Britain, Fanny's actions are in keeping with those considered legal in a time of war. Taken in connection



with the fact that Fanny is surprised when her lover informs her that she has, in effect, become a pirate, it is difficult to see the novel as understanding her as such and therefore difficult to see the novel as a positive comment on the pirate and the pirate's value as a civic figure.

Cooper and Ingraham's novels operate in a slightly different way. Their pirates, unlike Fanny, knowingly choose their profession but, when faced with international crises, the Revolutionary War for the former and the War of 1812 for the latter, both side with the United States and put their skills to work for the country. As the Rover notes upon his deathbed, for example, he had been "[drawn] ... from concealment" to fight in the Revolutionary War, which he considers a "cause so holy" (J. Cooper *Red Rover* 867). The titular Lafitte, on the other hand, decides to refuse the offer of British officers to join their ranks and instead takes information he has gathered pertaining to British maneuvers against New Orleans, giving this information to the Louisianan governor and General Andrew Jackson. Having done this, Lafitte imagines himself for the first time—about three-hundred pages into a four-hundred page novel—as a citizen of the United States, referring to the denizens of New Orleans as his "fellow citizens" (Ingraham *Lafitte* 2.108). In both instances, the pirates have entered the service of the U.S. Navy but they have done so after rejecting their former lives as pirates. Their legal maritime service represents an act of contrition for them, in a manner of speaking, and, explicitly in the case of *Lafitte*, it allows them to integrate themselves into the body politic. It is no mistake that both the Rover and Lafitte die following their service, so as to remain unblemished, nor is it a mistake that the Rover employs the language of last rites ("repentance") (J. Cooper *Red Rover* 867). These are men, then, saved from the piratical life at the end of their novels and not men who should still be considered pirates. The implication is, therefore, that only by rejecting the pirate's life can the pirate enter into civil society (represented here by their patriotic service in the U.S. Navy).

Interestingly, even though *Lafitte* and *The Red Rover* seek to recuperate or reform their pirates, they're both not entirely successful and, implicitly, not exactly interested in doing such. For instance, its review of the novel, the *Southern Literary Messenger* points to the major shortcoming of the novel. The novel encourages readers to sympathize with Lafitte by the end of the narrative but, even then, he reveals himself an unnecessarily brutal and bloody-minded individual—"A weak, a vacillating villain, ... a cowardly cut-throat, who strikes an unoffending boy under his protection, and makes nothing of hurling a man over a precipice for merely falling asleep" (595). His status as a fratricide (presumed fratricide, that is) at the beginning of the novel is not over-written; it remains an essential element of his character. The novel then does not really recommend the pirate to its readers, even if that is its aim. This situation is similar to *The Red Rover*, wherein the Rover tells of his exploits on behalf of the U.S., but in vague terms. We do not see these adventures, and we must take his word that he has repented and reformed and become a good, patriotic citizen of the new republic. Cooper's decision to leave out the specifics of this transition speak, as they did in *Lafitte*, to a half-hearted desire to recover the pirate. Recuperating piracy, then, doesn't appear to be the goal of either text, nor was that the goal of many pirate narratives in nineteenth-century U.S. literary culture.<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

The treatment of pirates as citizens—as non-citizens—in antebellum U.S. literary culture finds at least a partial explanation in the bureaucratic, cultural, and social understandings of the pirate during the era. For instance, the legal understanding of piracy in the nineteenth-century United States had specific origins in British law. William McFee might go too far in saying that the "principles of piracy have never changed," but his claim about the genealogy of maritime law, as it relates to piracy remains accurate (85). For McFee, the definition of a pirate throughout the modern era derives in part from Sir Edward Coke's cogent explanation of the term—"a

‘robber upon the sea’”—and in part from Charles Molloy’s claim that pirates lack “a Commonwealth” (McFee 85, 86). As understood in the nineteenth-century United States, then, the pirate existed as a maritime thief operating independently of a national protections. A compilation and analysis of U.S. statutes against piracy published in *The Monthly Law Reporter*, “The Law Against Piracy” (1861) reinforces this understanding. As that article notes, the initial 1790 act defining and prohibiting piracy characterizes that activity as robbery or murder occurring in bodies of water beyond the jurisdiction of individual states and distinguishes between piracy and “any act of hostility against the United States ... upon the high seas, under color of any commission from any foreign prince or state” (“The Law Against Piracy” 14). U.S. law may have expanded the definition of piracy to include robbery on “any open roadstead” in an 1820 law, but the American legal concept of piracy retains the significant elements developed in Great Britain (“The Law Against Piracy” 15).

Although these definitions accurately describe the way piracy was understood legally in the United States in the nineteenth century, as well as the way it was understood in the fiction of that era, piracy remains a more complicated concept. C. M. Senior’s *A Nation of Pirates* (1976), a history of English piracy, outlines the ease with which actions that were not, legally, piratical could, legally, become so. Senior notes the changes to English maritime law that accompanied the coronation of King James I and the cessation of Anglo-Iberian hostilities. According to Senior, the ongoing war with Spain during the Elizabethan era had acclimated English seamen to the “expansion of privateering” (7). There had been Elizabethan pirates, “but then much of the maritime aggression of the English had been absorbed by privateering—a system whereby private ships were authorized by commissions of reprisal or letters of marque to go to sea and make war on the enemy and to capture hostile shipping and goods” (Senior 7-8). Seaborne

robbery—at least of particular ships—received the backing of the state, and pirates thereby ceased to be pirates. Privateers did not belong to the navy. They were private vessels engaging in private war against an enemy of their nation. During the reign of King James I, who held an “uncompromising attitude on privateering” and “refused to issue letters of marque,” this situation disappeared and the privateers would find themselves privateers no more (Senior 8). Mariners who had made a living legally as privateers during Elizabeth’s reign found themselves “abrupt[ly]” categorized as a pirate (Senior 8).

Senior might echo McFee by claiming that there was “no confusion about what constituted piracy,” but his description of how legal maritime behavior became illegal piracy, punishable by death, demonstrates the instability of the term pirate and the hazy distinction that exists between piracy and privateering. Seemingly concrete (a robber/robbery at sea), the determination of a pirate or piracy has been frequently subjective. One nation’s pirate was another nation’s idol. As Mitchell notes, “Drake was a hero to Englishmen and a pirate to Spaniards, just as John Paul Jones was a hero to Americans and a pirate to Englishmen,” and nations with “imperial pretensions had always branded their rivals as pirates” (Mitchell 16).<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Since piracy was in the eye of the beholder, to call it a stable and easily definable concept, as McFee does, is misleading, even if piracy’s attributes avoid abstraction and abstruseness.

The frequent lack of distinction between piracy and privateering as well as the subjective nature of defining piracy is especially important to understanding the concept of piracy in the United States during the nineteenth century. While the United States had a clear legal concept of piracy, the nation remained inconsistent in applying the term. For instance, during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, U.S. vessels sailed as privateers on behalf of France in its on-going war with Great Britain, as noted in Alexander Addison’s *Oration on the Rise and*

*Progress of the United States* (1798). Although these ships sailed under the imprimatur of another country, such behavior could be construed as piracy for individual citizens, as early congressional laws pertaining to piracy (1790) determined that those sailing against nations with whom the U.S. was at peace were not “protected by a foreign commission” (United States Congress *Public Statutes* 511). Yet, in his oration, Addison avoids defining U.S. vessels and citizens sailing on behalf of the French and against the British as pirates. Repeatedly, however, he uses the term “those privateers” (Addison 7). Addison’s aversion to the term pirate is telling in this context. As a circuit judge in Pennsylvania, Addison should certainly understand U.S. maritime laws pertaining to piracy and privateering. His avoidance of pirate in favor of privateers, then, suggests hesitancy on his part to affix the label of pirate on citizens engaged in depredations against vessels of other nations.

Addison’s aversion to the term piracy in this context is indicative of a larger distaste, on the part of U.S. maritime law in general, to describe its citizens as pirates when said piratical behavior is inflicted upon the ships of other nations. Since the United States relied on privateers for national defense during the nineteenth century, the hasty categorization of its citizens as pirates, due to depredations of another nation’s ship, would have detrimental ramifications.

As Edgar Gold explains, the U.S. “considered privateering to be a necessary method of naval warfare for states that did not possess large navies” and therefore demurred at signing international proclamations like the Paris Declaration of Maritime Law of 1865, which “abolished privateering once and for all” (148). To understand the citizens described by Addison as pirates would therefore undermine one of the ways by which the U.S. conducted its maritime defense, so the term pirate was to be assiduously avoided. Piracy would *primarily* describe maritime activities that infringe upon U.S. commercial enterprises, as the name of the 1819 law

forbidding and defining the activity implies. Maritime activities against the commercial enterprises of other nations could be considered piratical, but, as Addison's oration makes plain, they could also be considered privateering and therefore legal, even as other nations might name them piracy.

In effect, then, the authors that explored the issue of piracy during the antebellum period tended to depict their pirates in the basest terms so there was little ambiguity about their being both pirate and unfit for citizenship. Piracy was an activity committed only by the most bloodthirsty, by the most vile and their actions were not the necessary and proper actions of a privateer. The actions of a Lafitte or a Red Rover are arbitrary and unnecessarily aggressive. In Ingraham's imagination, a Captain Kyd has a maternal tie to witchcraft. The pirates of antebellum U.S. literary culture have little in common with the pirates of history, as Rediker chronicles. At least one of the points the literary pirate of the antebellum period makes is therefore the distinction of the pirate against the common sailor, who might engage in the actions of a privateer and who does not deserve rejection from the body politic. Tellingly, in many of the narratives addresses here, the pirate finds his double in a good citizen sailor. *The Red Rover* features Harry Wilder, a sailor who infiltrates the Rover's ship in order to disrupt its piracy; *Captain Kyd* features Mark Meredith, the son of a fisherman who is the eponymous pirate's rival in both love and war. The pirate narrative of the antebellum period, then, seems to take up as a cause the refinement of the citizen-sailor, to articulate a position consistent with the more reactionary political thinkers of the antebellum period who would have all sailors rejected from the body politic. These texts, I would suggest, seek to recover the sailor but to do so not in a decontextualized manner but rather at the expense of the pirate.

The antipathy toward the pirate in these narratives, though, need not be explained solely through the attempts to salvage the sailor as an idealizable citizen when the distinction between regular mariner and pirate could be quite murky. I would also like to suggest that the publication of these novels and tales with the backdrop of the antebellum debates over slavery offers another way of explaining the approach to the pirates here that diverges from the way authors like Melville and Cooper elsewhere embraced other types of mariners.

Piracy and slavery had a close literal and figurative connection in the antebellum U.S. As mentioned above, the U.S. Congress passed legislation in 1820 to outlaw the nation's participation in the international slave trade. Importantly, "An Act to Continue in Force 'An Act to Protect the Commerce of the United States and Punish the Crime of Piracy,' and also to Make Further Provision for Punishing the Crime of Piracy" goes about establishing the illegality of the slave trade by determining that any citizen found engaging in the slave trade either on their own ship or that of another—even on a vessel operated by the foreign power—would find themselves "adjudged a pirate" (United States Congress *Laws* 130). Although the language of this statute identifies only the trade of enslaved "negro or mulatto," the intention of the law is clear (United States Congress *Laws* 130).<sup>lxxxix</sup> It further enacts that trading and enslaving any person of African descent amounts to "robbery upon the high seas" (United States Congress *Laws* 129).

On the one hand, this law offers an instructive and implicit precursor to Chief Justice Taney's opinion in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), which denied citizenship to both slaves and free African Americans. Here, though the language of the statute, in light of the legal definitions of piracy, can speak to the inviolability of "negro or mulatto" personhood—they are persons and therefore have individual rights over themselves—it can just as easily establish, in yet another venue, the pernicious belief in the propertyhood, not personhood, of people of African descent.

In other words, this moment, by equating the enslavement of Africans or African Americans with theft, implies that the “negro and mulatto” exist as property prior to their enslavement. To put them into slavery does not make them property; to put them into slavery is to steal them from someone else. We might interpret the theft that takes place in the act of kidnapping a “negro or mulatto” for the slave trade as the theft of individual sovereignty, but the language, here, does not make that explicit.

On the other hand, this law clearly establishes a connection between slavery and piracy and that connection might, in part, explain the antipathy towards pirates and piracy within antebellum literary culture. Pirates become *personae non gratae* due to the association between piracy and the national institution that most obviously contradicted the civic ideals articulated in the nation’s founding documents.<sup>xc</sup> Being a pirate included being a slaver, according to U.S. law, and that affiliation might have been enough to detract from the revolutionary potential embodied by the pirate, which revolutionary potential might have made the pirate more appealing to a nation founded upon rebellion. Of course, this does not mean that these narratives somehow allegorize the racial tension permeating antebellum U.S. politics and culture. Although *The Red Rover*, *Lafitte*, and, another Captain Kidd story undiscussed here, “The Gold Bug” feature African American, African, and Afro-Caribbean characters, race exists as a peripheral concern in these narratives.

Nevertheless, that these texts do not allegorize debates about slavery does not mean that the debate over slavery and its rhetoric can not inform the way that we understand and interpret the dismissal of the pirate from the body politic in these narratives. Not only were piracy and slavery legally related through the act of 1819, the terms piracy and pirate circulated through the rhetoric of the abolitionist movement as well. In an article excoriating churches for not opposing



slavery more explicitly and more actively, H. C. Wright describes those that would “[sustain] slavery by silence and otherwise” little more than “Algerine corsairs ... ‘ROBBERS OF THE WORST POSSIBLE CHARACTER’” (Wright 124). To support slavery by commission or omission, Wright explains, is to turn pirate, to become like one of those that had plagued U.S. mariners during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Of course, this equation—supporting slavery is commensurate with becoming a corsair—might want to emphasize its racial dimension. In other words, Wright might hope that his readers underscore “Algerine” rather than “corsair,” thereby understanding that he means to render ironic the so-called Christian churches—so-called because, in his figuration, they become Moorish. Although Wright’s language allows for this interpretation, he seems equally invested in the idea of the supporters of slavery as pirates: Later in the article he offers a rogues gallery of offenders against sensibility and the civic ideals of the United States, enumerating “the high-way robber, the midnight assassin, the slaveholder, [and] the pirate” (124). Although Wright does not specifically liken the slaveholder to the pirate—he does not employ metaphor or simile here—he allows the two to exist on the same plane. His language implies not so much that the slaveholder *is* or *is like* a pirate through his or her actions but rather that his actions are, in their immorality, linked to piracy. To establish a character as a pirate during the antebellum period therefore came with the stigma of slavery attached, allowing readers to code the characters not only as offending the inviolability of individual property but also the inviolability of individual sovereignty.

Of course, the circulation of piracy as a metaphor did not confine itself to the abolitionist movement—as that previous sentence implies, pirates in these narratives were pirates because they violated individual property rights and, as Rediker notes, this violation of property served as a primary signifier of the pirate. As a result, the language of pirates and piracy became

entrenched within pro-slavery rhetoric as well, as characterizations of abolitionists and African Americans, enslaved and otherwise, as pirates found expression during the antebellum period. Following the 1841 race-riots in Cincinnati, for instance, an author argued that the riots themselves arose because of “*abolition influence*” in the city; the rioters, under this abolitionist influence, became something akin to corsairs, having “arms enough for the outfit of an Algerine pirate vessel” (3, emphasis in original). Another article, detailing recent elections, quotes a pro-slavery politician’s assertion that the elections demonstrated that “Democracy [was] victorious!!!” and “the black flag of abolition laid low!!” (M. J. S. 70). Although the specific meaning of abolition’s “black flag remains unclear, the implications of piracy certainly pervade the image; after all, the black flag—the flag of no nation—serves as one of the primary symbols of the pirate ship.

Piracy therefore circulated figuratively in the antebellum period as a way of describing both pro- and anti-slavery forces. The consistent use of this metaphor in relation to the issue of slavery suggests, then, that the idea that the negative portrayal of the pirate finds some connection to the relation of the pirate to an issue that, regardless of region, found a way to characterize the enemy as the pirate. The pirate may have been, for much of the modern era, *hostes humani generis*, the enemy of all nations and therefore the citizen of none. In the United States, though, the pirate seems to have been the enemy of all regions. Whether the pirate became a metaphor for both sides of the slavery debate because of a national predisposition against piracy or a predisposition against slavery and its connections to piracy colored the representation of the pirate in antebellum culture is unclear; that the pirate had no place within the antebellum U.S. civic hierarchy, though, is abundantly apparent.

## **5.0 THE COMMON HIGHWAY AND THE ALLIGATOR-HORSE: THE CIVIC DIMENSIONS OF THE RIVER AND RIVERMAN IN ANTEBELLUM LITERARY CULTURE**

River boatmen are not seamen or mariners in any traditional sense: This statement is true enough. Etymologically, the geographic locations occupied by these characters seem worlds apart. Sea may derive from the Germanic and Old English for ocean, lake, or pond, but, though diverse in terms of salinity and size, such bodies of water remain fundamentally different from the river, which bears not the sense of boundedness connoted by those other bodies of water. In fact, *body of water* seems utterly inapt to describe the river in that its dynamism defines it and not its shoreline; after all, river derives from Anglo-Norman and Old French for a *stream* of water. River and sea may both be nouns, but the former's definition relies upon words that not only define its thing-ness but also what it does.<sup>xci</sup>

In spite of the clear differentiation between the geographies occupied by rivermen and seamen, rivermen and seamen deserve side-by-side analysis. Although we understand rivers and seas as different types of water and although river and sea have clearly differentiated etymologies, the two types of water do interpenetrate one another. In his early modern mapmaking, for instance, Jacques Cartier rendered rivers as “incursion[s] of ocean” into the land (Seelye *Prophetic* 17). Ignoring the directional flows of rivers and oceans where they meet, which certainly complicate what incurs into what, Cartier's graphic representation of aquatic

intersections has significant truth to it: Rivers and oceans are not separate. Some rivers find no outlet to the sea, but most of the rivers important to a nation have oceanic access. Rivers are valued, often, precisely because they do reach the sea.

More importantly, focusing on rivermen as well as seamen as citizens proves very useful for this project. To begin, those who grow up working riverboats sometimes move onto to oceanic; for instance, Miles Wallingford in Cooper's *Afloat and Ashore* finds himself valued as a mariner because of the skills he developed operating river boats. Thinking through the implications of the civic representation of the rivermen therefore has an effect on the understanding of maritime labor and citizenship during the antebellum period. Furthermore, the representation of river workers provides a counterpoint—or at least a potential counterpoint—to the depiction of labor at sea. In a sense, because antebellum literary culture treats rivermen in a manner similar to seamen, their status as maritime laborers within the nation's boundaries—rather than outside them—offers insight into the suspicion of the mariner as citizen that circulated more broadly. Last, to dwell for a time on this particular group of mariners calls into question one of the more problematic aspects of oceanic studies—the artificial and arbitrary dislocation of interior rivers and lakes from what is considered the maritime, when, because of the frequent, literal connection of rivers, lakes, and oceans, critics should consider all bodies of water as part of a larger water system.<sup>xcii</sup>

Although I do not encourage expanding oceanic studies into some new, meaninglessly broad scholarly field—water studies, for instance—I find it equally disingenuous to characterize a river like the Mississippi as not part of U.S. maritime-oceanic geography, literature, or culture. Scholars should not separate the river from the ocean and oceanic studies, as river narratives often have much to say about transatlantic or transpacific narratives.<sup>xciii</sup> Not only will this shift

allow for a more complex understanding of the literary and cultural maritime, but it will also provide for more supple metaphorical readings of the maritime. Both the sea and the river have significance within literary criticism as sites useful for symbolic excavation. Although I am primarily concerned with the civic ramifications of material conditions depicted in maritime literature, I believe that the intersection of the river and the sea might provide a more complex metaphorical framework than currently exists in oceanic studies, relying, as it does, often on the rich image of the shipwreck and the castaway, the wave and the storm.

Moreover, several of the key texts examined in this dissertation blur the boundary between sea narrative and river narrative. Redburn's journey to London begins on the Hudson, as do Wallingford's global wanderings. Although mentioned only sporadically, we might mention *Moby-Dick* here too, which begins on Manhattan, an island defined as much by its Hudson and East River borders as by its Atlantic access. The maritime does not stop at the shore, but it instead continues inland, revealing the way that the work of sailors and civic dimensions of those figures literally penetrates and becomes part of the nation.

If oceanic studies provides worthwhile territory for literary and cultural inquiry, as I believe it does, it ought to expand its horizons some. The ocean may provide a vast territory—and a vast archive—to work with and study. Nevertheless, why shouldn't we read something like Thoreau's *Cape Cod* (1865) through an oceanic studies matrix, given the oceanic resonances of his descriptions of a barren, desert-like environment to say nothing of the Cape's geographical existence as a little spit of land surrounded by bays, sounds, and oceans? Should we really read Cooper's *The Pathfinder* (1840)—or even *The Deerslayer* (1841)—as frontier novels only when significant portions of the narratives occur on lakes large and small and when the subtitle of the former is *The Inland Sea*? Thinking about that novel, for instance, in the context of oceanic

studies might raise questions about Natty's failure to provide expertise upon Ontario. Is it important that a pioneer and a colonial American to boot must subordinate himself to the skills of Jasper, who will presumably live to see more of the early republic than Natty? Clearly, it is.

Although this chapter takes as its subject the treatment of the river boatman as a citizen, I begin with a discussion of the river itself in nineteenth-century U.S. and European literary culture, as a considerable disconnect exists between the civic understanding of the rivers and the representation of its laborers as citizens. The first part of the chapter outlines the representation of rivers between 1782 and 1855, underscoring the ways in which rivers became central to both U.S. and British writers for representing the interconnectedness of a body politic nevertheless geographically dispersed within the boundaries of a nation. The rivers, in other words, unified a populace. They also, at least in U.S. antebellum culture, served as essential conduits of commercial enterprise, providing both literal fertility to the physical lands along their shores but also figurative, capital fertility to the towns that grew up along the same.

Yet the rivermen who worked these rivers, are treated differently in antebellum literary culture than their ocean-going counterparts. Moving west to east and chronologically through a variety of rivers (Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Concord, and Merrimack), I examine the literary representations of the boatman alongside contemporaneous extra-literary discussions of the figure. Beginning with the folklore of Mike Fink (d. 1823), a keel boatman of the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri Rivers, whose exploits proved posthumously popular from the 1820s to the 1850s; the chapter then moves on to Emil Klauprecht's *Cincinnati, or The Mysteries of the West* (1856), an expansive tome with the titular city's and the titular city's citizens' place within the Ohio and Mississippi river system as its central concern; and it then takes up a much different genre of river literature in Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849). By

looking at these three central texts, this chapter will not suggest that river boatmen were inevitably vilified throughout antebellum literature. Rather, I will argue that authors treated these laborers with remarkable ambivalence. They are not the rowdy “mobs” of oceanic mariners that were of such concern throughout the antebellum periods nor were they the marauding pirates—though there are certainly elements of these class-based anxieties.

Nevertheless, the river boatmen are implicitly and explicitly depicted as unfit for the body politic, lacking, as they do, the requisite features of the citizen. This ambivalence stems, in part, from geography. However, concern over the rivermen as citizens in antebellum literary culture has other sources. Not only do suspicions over the rivermen’s civic fitness arise because of their residing near the literal boundaries of the nation; suspicions also arise because of dalliances with complicated, messy national concerns that indicate residence at the ideological boundaries of U.S. civic practices as well. Each of these texts portray the riverman as connected to if not involved directly in slavery and imperialist expansion, suggesting that such figures have a slippery and paradoxical understanding of national civic ideals, unlike their counterparts in the novels of Cooper or Melville.

Yet these texts remain ambivalent. They find themselves wary of rivermen due to the taint of exploitative political and social processes like slavery and expansionist martial practices, but they accept the rivermen because their involvement in such enterprises is somewhat less troublesome due to their rustic and primitive equipment—the keelboat rather than the steamboat—and their subsequent distance from the technological processes (not only steamboats but also steam-engines) that were redefining these morally compromising national endeavors by industrializing them.

Early republican writers in the U.S. understood the centrality of rivers to the nation's expansion and concomitant prosperity. Towards the end of January 1803, for instance, the Philadelphia-based *Gazette of the United States* published an exceedingly anxious "Extract from a Letter from a Gentleman Now at the Seat of Government to His Friend in Massachusetts," which chronicled the national concern over the Spanish cession of Louisiana a half-year before the U.S. purchase of that territory from France was ratified. The author commences this letter not by underscoring the nervousness of U.S. citizens living in New Orleans or even those in neighboring states and territories—those whose proximity to Louisiana renders them most susceptible and most likely affected by French incursions into U.S. territory. Instead, he underscores the united, national disturbance fomented by this cession. The author notes the uneasiness caused by this event, stating that he has "heard Mr. Jefferson mention it as a very unfortunate event to this country—indeed I believe the public opinion is wholly undivided upon this subject" ("Extract of a Letter"). From the mouth of the president himself, then, the author has it that this event may prove troublesome for "this country" rather than any particular region. Moreover, it is the author's belief that an "undivided" public shares this concern.

The crisis precipitated by France re-establishing a North American colonial presence thereby knits the nation together. The president in the "seat of government" and the anonymous, vast public share the concern about this series of events, and, importantly, it is the river that gives rise to such sentiments: "The Mississippi River is the common highway to the people of the Western country, on which they must past [sic] with their produce to market ... . The free navigation of this river must be preserved to that portion of the American people or the American empire must be dismembered" ("Extract of a Letter").<sup>xciv</sup> Again, the author emphasizes the river's ability to unite an evolving and expanding nation—the Mississippi is a "common



highway,” after all, and its absence would sunder the Union. Yet here he hints at the origin of his and presumably Jefferson’s and the public’s concern over the French coming to Louisiana. There may be intimations in this article that the author fears a French invasion inasmuch as he wishes “we had a Washington at the head of our government” who would order troops to Natchez and then onto New Orleans to rebuff Bonaparte’s men (“Extract of a Letter”). Nevertheless, what seems truly at stake is not invasion or the prospect of losing the “people of the Western country” to European colonials; rather it’s that the Mississippi provides a “common highway” for the transportation of “produce to market” (“Extract of a Letter”). What unifies the nation and its ancillary territories, then, is the river, but it is the river’s commercial utility first and, perhaps, its transportative utility second that establish this unifying function.<sup>xcv</sup> That this letter exists in the newspaper as an “extract” moreover underscores that these features of the river are most intriguing and important for a public audience. The letter undoubtedly says more than we are privy to—at least, the imagined letter does—but such information is of little matter for the regular newspaper reader. The river’s commercial and unifying functions matter primarily.

The understanding of the river’s centrality to the U.S. both in general and more specifically as a commercial highway that bound the nation together resonates throughout the early republic. The story recounted by the unnamed politician in the article cited above, for instance, is echoed in miniature in Emma Willard’s textbook, *The Abridged History of the United States, or, Republic of America* (1846), in which Willard writes of the events precipitating the Louisiana Purchase:

In 1802, the port of New Orleans was closed against the United States. Spain having ceded Louisiana to the French, the Spanish intendant announced that the citizen’s of the United States could no longer be permitted to deposit their merchandise and effects in the

port of New Orleans. The western states apprehended the ruin of their commerce; and great agitation was excited. ... [T]he alarm had shown, how important was the possession of the waters of the Mississippi to the western states. (269)

Although Willard de-emphasizes the unifying function of the Mississippi-Missouri-Ohio river systems, she rehearses the commercial talking points of the anonymous politician and, arguably, instills greater perturbation in the events delineated for her readers decades after the events transpired. In 1803, on the one hand, during the actual closure of the port, an author describing the event resorts to descriptive words such as “unfortunate,” primarily, and saves his exaggeration for the final image of a “dismembered” states and territories, giving, ultimately, a serious and seriously bloody sense of the event’s magnitude. In 1846, on the other hand, Willard focuses repeatedly exorbitant descriptions of the port closure, given the passage of time. It is not simply an unfortunate event and it will not simply disconnect the western states and territories from the rest of the nation—it will “ruin” the denizens of the west and it does not merely cause but rather “excite[s]” “great agitation.”

I do not contend that the closure was not or would not have been commercially calamitous nor do I contend that the closure did not excite the citizens of western states. I cite this example merely to underscore its hyperbole in spite of historical distance. Willard’s description of the seizure, therefore, suggests that, over the course of the first-half of the nineteenth century, the perspective on rivers shifted: Whereas they served an important function during the Jeffersonian era, they had grown exceedingly important by the late-Jacksonian/early-Whig periods. What could be discussed in a more-or-less even manner during the actual crisis had become a topic prone to melodramatic posturing nearly forty-years later. More importantly, it had become melodramatic not for your standard reader of newspapers, but rather for your

standard student. The centrality of rivers to the nation and the nation's commercial interests, then, had become not just important for a public who likely overlapped to a significant degree with the enfranchised body politic but important for a body of individuals who would only become full-citizens in the future if at all. In other words, if, in 1803, the importance of rivers was required information for the voting public, by 1846, it had become essential for students' historical education.

As the examples above substantiate, the Mississippi River stoked much interest during the antebellum period and, of course, afterwards. The fluctuating environment of the river could result, in 1812, in a lengthy article in a Chillicothe, OH, newspaper about the navigational disturbances caused by an earthquake that occurred a year earlier (James Smith). Although Chillicothe likely served as Ohio's capital at the time of the article's publication and although Chillicothe was situated on the Scioto River, which merges with the Ohio about fifty miles south of the city, it was, nevertheless, a municipality located several hundred miles from the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Undoubtedly, among its antebellum citizens, the city counted boatmen who traveled to and from New Orleans. Nevertheless, Michael Allen's history *Western Rivermen, 1763-1861* (1990) suggests that a place like Chillicothe was unlikely a major port along the western river system. As he notes, the Scioto, among many other secondary rivers of the antebellum west, featured "continuous local traffic" that indicates significant commercial enterprise in Chillicothe and cities like it but such commercial enterprise, per Allen, was by-and-large "non-Mississippi trade" (Allen 146). If Chillicothe, then, located far away from the Mississippi and largely disconnected from that river if not its larger system, found serious space in one of the city's papers for lengthy descriptions of channels "entirely choked up with drift" as a result of an earthquake nearly half a year after said earthquake took

place, we need to consider just how central to U.S. culture, commerce, and national self-awareness the river was (James Smith). Places tangentially related to the Mississippi published its variations and its hazards. It was integral to the national consciousness.<sup>x cvi</sup>

Antebellum culture did not treat the Mississippi alone in this way. For instance, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), we find Thomas Jefferson expounding at length on the rivers of his home state. Written and published as the war with Great Britain wound down, *Notes* provides an extensive catalogue of Virginian land and Virginian peoples and, notably, privileges discourse on its rivers. Most famous, perhaps, for its treatment of Virginia's Native American and slave populations, *Notes* situates those concerns in, more or less, the latter half of the text—queries 11 and 14, respectively. One can certainly make the case that *Notes on Virginia* maintains an implicit narrative in the development of its queries: It begins by outlining the inanimate and, perhaps, “natural” qualities of the state—its geology, geography, and climate—only to move into more civilized concerns like the state's governance, its municipalities, and its people. Nevertheless, the primacy of Jefferson's discussion of rivers speaks to his understanding of those by-ways as an essential component of his state's geographic make-up. Furthermore, that the query regarding rivers is second only to the query regarding the state's boundaries suggest that they are the primary, defining feature of the state's internal composition. They are, in other words, the first thing Jefferson describes after establishing the state's outlines. He turns not to mountains or cascades or even the local flora and fauna: He turns to the rivers. Implicitly, Jefferson does not bear the sole responsibility for establishing the primacy of rivers in this text. He wrote *Notes* for “a Foreigner of distinction, in answer to certain queries proposed by him respecting [Virginia's] boundaries; rivers; [etc.],” implying that François Barbé-Marbois, his unnamed interlocutor, suggested the outline of the manuscript through the order of his questions

and Jefferson saw fit to maintain that order (Jefferson *Notes* 185). From an outside perspective, then, rivers were an essential feature of the U.S. landscape, just as they were internally.

Furthermore, Jefferson and Barbé-Marbois understood rivers, even at this early stage, in a manner similar to that discussed above—as commercial highways and as unifying geographic features. The title of the second query itself—“A notice of its rivers, rivulets, and how far they are navigable”—gives lie to the first assumption, that one of the river’s central functions is to move things, namely people and goods (Jefferson *Notes* 188). Jefferson’s answer initially appears to run contrary to this idea (that his and Barbé-Marbois’s concern with the navigability of Virginian rivers relates to their economic prospects), as, in discussing the potential volume of Virginian river-harbors and the lengths to which ships might travel, Jefferson speaks not of merchant ships—at least not explicitly merchant ships—but rather of “sixty gun” or “sixty-four gun” (188). In describing the navigability of rivers such as the Elizabeth in this way, Jefferson implies that navigability is a concern not for commerce but rather for martial endeavors. Since he writes this in the final stages of the Revolution, he would likely have such things on his mind. Nevertheless, as he continues in his descriptions of Virginian rivers—particularly in his discussion of the Nansemond and James Rivers, as well as Pagan Creek, Jefferson establishes the river as a commercial space by emphasizing ships’ tonnage in relation to navigability instead of the extent of their armament (*Notes* 189). Moreover, his earlier entries on minor Virginian rivers implicitly emphasize their use in the transportation of agricultural produce. He writes of the Roanoke, for example, that “so far as it lies within the State, is nowhere navigable but for canoes and light batteaux” (Jefferson *Notes* 188). The brevity of this description, as well as his pronouncement of the river’s lack of navigability, suggests that the Roanoke would place low in the hierarchy of the state’s waterways. Yet that overlooks the implication of including light

bateaux, as well as canoes. While the canoe certainly connotes a more primitive and non-commercial watercraft, batteaux may refer to small merchant ships, as batteaux was the local term for small craft used to transport tobacco and other agricultural products throughout the state (Chapelle 34).

Although not to the same degree as he underscores the commercial viability of Virginian rivers, Jefferson's description of the rivers of Virginia also establishes them as a unifying feature of the state—a geographic aspect of Virginia that allows not only for commerce but also for intercourse between disparate locations. He frequently notes, for instance, ports along the several rivers discussed. He calls his reader's attention to the villages and towns reachable by river, enumerating those locales further and further into the state that travelers might reach by a variety of craft and thereby establishes a sense of his state not as a series of frontier outposts, out of touch with one another. Instead, we see, particularly with his discussion of the James, how the municipalities situated on the coast—Hampton and Norfolk—are reachable by those living in the Blue Ridge mountains. Importantly, as Jefferson walks through the steps from Hampton Road to the Blue Ridge—Jamestown to Richmond to the mountains—he makes little of any obstacles. He may note “navigation ... interrupted by falls” in Richmond, but he gives said cascades very little attention and makes no claims about their disruption of travel (Jefferson *Notes* 189). In all, he depicts river-travel to Virginia's interior as a rather easy endeavor. One may need to change boats at one point or another for smaller, lighter craft, but one can nevertheless make it through the Blue Ridge mountains with “a ton weight” (Jefferson *Notes* 189). The people of northwest Virginia, therefore, would remain in contact with those of the state's southeast. The state would remain unified; settlement of the interior could occur, as Jefferson notes, “advantageously” (*Notes* 189).

Moreover, in a brief moment towards the end of his discussion of the James, Jefferson imagines too Virginian rivers becoming a route out of the state as well, connecting it to the remainder of the U.S. As he notes, “in some future state of population I think it possible that [the James’s] navigation may also be made to interlock with that of the Potomac, and through that to communicate by a short portage with the Ohio” (Jefferson *Notes* 189). That Jefferson then goes on to conclude his dissection of Virginian rivers by considering the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers underscores the way that those rivers and others like them become, in Jefferson’s future-oriented imaginary, highways stretching across the continent. Jefferson does not invoke imperialism, but the rivers and their inexorable flow from east to west prefigure U.S. expansionist policies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (It is telling then that, twenty years later, during the closure of New Orleans, that aforementioned anonymous politician considers the closure a detriment not to the American nation but to the American empire.) Thinking about the rivers of his state—minor rivers, when compared to the major thoroughfares of what would become the west—Jefferson races as far west as he is able, to the headwaters of the Missouri. The emphasis on agriculture and on the land itself that one finds in much early U.S. literature—Crèvecoeur, for instance—disappears here, and it is not the apparently mystical fertility that makes the nation and its citizens exemplary but the nation’s rivers. It is the rivers that will—even at this early stage—transform the U.S. from a series of coastal settlements connected by the Atlantic and the Gulf to a continental behemoth.<sup>xcvii</sup> Of course, Jefferson’s sense of national waterways as a unifying geographical feature, as a suturing of east and west, is less apparent in his later writings. He orders Lewis and Clark’s journey up the Missouri “for the purposes of commerce” and not for the purposes of peopling the interior. Nevertheless, at this

early stage, he offers a startling perspective on the relative value of rivers to the inchoate United States, a perspective that continues throughout the antebellum years.

This phenomena of depicting rivers as central to one's nation or environment is hardly a trait of only U.S. literature during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Frederic Colwell explains, the river served Romantic poets especially well, "provid[ing] the most compelling, frequent, and inevitable figurings" of artistic, imaginative consciousness (5).

Colwell's argument holds water, yet it also, as I continue to ponder the relationship between waterways and the body politic, between the river and citizenship, overlooks the profound political dimensions of these Romantic rivers. His analysis of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1805), for example, teases out the centrality of the River Derwent to the author's aesthetic development, noting that the river "establishes [the poem's] narrative as well as its psychological and metaphysical dimensions" (Colwell 9). But Colwell fails to attend to the way in which the River Derwent also, like the U.S. rivers discussed above, unites disparate people and effectively establishes a community of like-minded or, at least, compatible individuals. Wordsworth writes:

Was it for this  
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved  
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,  
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice  
That flowed along my dreams? For this dost thou,  
O Derwent, traveling over the green plains  
Near my 'sweet birthplace,' didst thou, beauteous stream  
Make ceaseless music through the night and day,



Which with its steady cadence tempering  
Our human waywardness, composed my thoughts  
To more than infant softness, giving me  
Among the fretful dwellings of mankind,  
A knowledge, a dim earnest, of the calm  
Which Nature breathes among the hills and groves? (l.269-81).

In this passage, Wordsworth certainly aligns the river with a central place in constructing his artistic and psychological growth. It is, after all, the river's "ceaseless music" that allows Wordsworth to then experience "composed ... thoughts," and there is, undoubtedly, a subtle play there between the river's own tunefulness and Wordsworth's infantile act of composition. Moreover, Wordsworth clearly constructs a developmental narrative here as we move from murmurings to the inexorable and uncontrolled music of the Derwent to the composed, calm, and stable thoughts of Wordsworth.

Yet that is only one of the narratives expressed through these lines. At the same time that Colwell chronicles this use of the river—river as aesthetic and cognitive metaphor—he ignores the way in which this moment in the poem also speaks to Wordsworth's civic sensibilities, his emerging sense of community. This narrative begins with Wordsworth's image of the harmonizing river and nursemaid; moves to the connection between the river, nurse, and Wordsworth himself, at least in his dreams; and culminates with the author's sense of himself among the multitude in the "fretful dwellings of mankind." The river interpenetrates these relationships—Wordsworth and his nurse, Wordsworth and his home town, Wordsworth and mankind—and ultimately blends them or at least soothes them into a unified if not entirely pacified whole. As John Wilson noted elsewhere, "there is a sympathy in streams" (28). The

river serves, then, for Wordsworth as for Jefferson or Willard or the anonymous politician as a unifying figure, a body of water that can contribute to the sense of a national (or, I suppose in Wordsworth's case, a human) community. It gives shape to and defines that community and, for Wordsworth at least, it is in fact the source of that sympathy that 18th and 19th century republicans saw as foundational to the civic compact of the modern nation.

Rivers then are central to the eighteenth and nineteenth century conceptions of the nation, both in the U.S. and elsewhere. As Mark Twain said later of the Mississippi, so might we say of rivers more broadly: They are "the body of the nation" (30). There is an irony here of course, whether Twain intended it or not, since rivers are necessarily fluctuating, unstable geographical components that are just as destructive—if not more destructive—than oceans. Ocean storms may disrupt merchant ships; river floodings most definitely disrupt both the agriculture and the settlements inevitably found along their shores. Nevertheless, the idea that Twain works with here, that the river gives the nation its shape and form and substance, is certainly held up by those authors explored earlier or by an early nineteenth-century article in the *National Intelligencer and Washington Advertiser* (Washington, DC), which devoted the entire first page of its June 15, 1808, edition to "improvements of the navigation" of a variety of eastern and western rivers ("Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on Roads and Canals").

The critical tradition as it relates to the literary/cultural treatment of rivers in the U.S. has followed this general pattern, privileging the river over the men who worked upon it. These works have also been keenly aware of the river as a commercial artery and a unifying one, as discussed above. In John Seelye's *Prophetic Waters: The River in Early American Life and Literature*, the author examines "the primacy of rivers in the exploration and settlement of the Atlantic seaboard" (6). Both a work of history and literary history, the book focuses on up-

stream adventuring and mapmaking during the colonial period—his subtitle is a little misleading. Yet, Seelye does present an argument. For instance, he notes that “like Cartier on the St. Lawrence and Lane on the Roanoke, Smith went up the Chickahominy in search of a passage to India” (*Prophetic* 69). His contention, as the quote implies, is that rivers served an important function in colonial America—they were the route to empire and riches, embodied in India above, for adventurous, exemplary men. Explorers like Smith and Cartier travel up rivers to locate valuable commodities and expand Europe’s colonial reach. It is not just transoceanic travel that accomplishes this. Seelye’s argument has, therefore, incredible value—at least as far as his overarching observation is concerned—inasmuch as it reorients our perspective on the colonial and imperial projects taken up by European nations during the early modern era. To take nothing away from the centrality of oceans to those projects, we should remember that until the mapping of North America was completed in the 19th century, the exploration of rivers and streams was an essential practice. Moreover, Seelye’s belief that “if we wish to comprehend the imperialistic thrust of American history then we must widen the limits of our literary domain” suggests that one ought to be looking to the errands up rivers as well as those into the wilderness (Seelye *Prophetic* 3). He seeks, in other words, to reorient U.S. imperialist practices from the national-continental mission of Manifest Destiny into something more international (he is intent on locating the U.S. empire’s relationship to British imperial practices) and aquatic.

Nevertheless, in spite of the noble aims and in spite of his significant attention to the various up-stream experiences of a variety of European authors, Seelye pays little heed to the men who embarked on and organized these journeys. He spends much time discussing the travails of key colonial figures like Smith and John Winthrop and Cotton Mather, among many others. But that brisk description should give some insight into what Seelye is after here—a great

man narrative of river exploration. He has little interest in those joining Smith or Cartier and, moreover, aside from the “imperial thrust” of these fluvial journeys, has little to say about how rivers contributed to non-imperial (i.e., national-civic) concepts during the colonial period.

The closest he comes is in a discussion of William Wood’s 1634 map of New England, when he notes that his is “a landscape centered by the village, the river, and the harbor ... promoting a peaceful, self-contained emphasis” (Seelye *Prophetic* 155). Hardly enlightening regarding the civic positions of rivermen, this moment does suggest the river as a part of a city’s—the civitas’s—environs and therefore integral in an understanding of the body politic’s geography, serving, as he puts it, as “implements [of Wood’s] mercantile, agrarian design” (Seelye *Prophetic* 155). To put civic-minded words in Seelye’s mouth, Wood’s map, unlike the “expansionist maps” of others, help promote the image of the farmer and trader as ideal citizens in the emerging U.S. national consciousness (*Prophetic* 155). Rivers in other words serve “settlement and cultivation” (Seelye *Prophetic* 153); presumably, those that work with them—ideally through their irrigative qualities—will be bounded within the community. The river doesn’t run from a city or village; it remains part of it—so too, then, the men of it. Yet the ideas to which Seelye’s analysis leads are hardly consistent with the way rivermen are treated in antebellum literary culture.

Some recent scholarship does a better job than Seelye in this regard, focusing as it does on the riverman as a laborer and cultural icon rather than simply an explorer and imperial figure. Thomas Smith’s *River of Dreams: Imagining the Mississippi Before Mark Twain* (2007) provides an expansive representation of the river and its denizens, though his concern is, as his book’s title suggests, with a single stream. Still, his book provides a valuable chronology of literary Mississippi rivermen during the antebellum years—particularly his chapter on the

Jacksonian Mississippi and the figure of the “backwoods rowdy” (5), which redefined the imagined citizenry of the U.S. to a degree by offering the “alligator-horse Kentuckian” (the odd nomenclature of frontiersmen affiliated with Mississippi river-boating in the antebellum years) as “a popular hero” and a “folk hero” (T. Smith 56, 63).

Ultimately, though, Smith’s concerns rest elsewhere. He overlooks the civic dimensions of representing rivermen in favor of the civic dimensions of the river itself, which, he notes, served as a “symbol of change, transformation, and liberation” as well as a “symbol of stagnation, regression, and bondage” in its capacities as a commercial avenue as well as a means of transporting slaves throughout the south (T. Smith 90). He is less concerned, in other words, in teasing out the civic implications of seeing the boatmen and their “poetry [...] like a good republican [...] dressed in rags and limping on crutches,” as James Hall wrote in 1828, (Hall qtd. in T. Smith 62), than he is in demonstrating that the river and river travel had a leveling and corrupting effect (T. Smith 91). True, at times Smith draws near the subject of rivermen and citizenship—as well as river emigration and citizenship—during the antebellum period, as the quote above shows, but, more often than not he explores the ways that the Mississippi disrupts hierarchies in a general way, creating a “topsy-turvy society” with coarse manners and questionable morals (T. Smith 91). In other words, he might offer us a nineteenth-century writer’s ironic figuration of the riverman as a “good republican,” but he ignores it in favor of a broader, social and cultural concern—not a political one.<sup>xcviii</sup>

Historical surveys have proven more worthwhile in the endeavor to understand the riverman as member of the body politic. Leland Baldwin’s *The Keelboat Age on Western Waters* (1941) and Michael Allen’s *Western Rivermen* (1990) offer expansive views of the Ohio-Mississippi-Missouri River (as well as Ohio-Mississippi-Missouri-adjacent) boat pilots during

the antebellum years and they speak to the ways in which the western rivers have political valences unexamined in the literary assessments of rivers. Baldwin, for example, notes the use of rivers and the disguise of riverman during the revolutionary period to outfit the continental army with weaponry (10-11).

Yet these books too concern themselves with the historical narrative of river work. They are invaluable for their descriptions of the work itself, but they hardly address the ways in which rivermen and their labor were understood civically—aside from Allen’s contention that the rivermen served the national psyche by offering an “industrializing people” the image of a “simpler frontier past” (4). Although it’s an apt argument, I take Allen to task on a couple fronts. First, although the rivermen are romanticized, to a degree, I find their treatment more ambivalent than he does. The backwoods rowdy does not appear to have been a thoroughly idolized figure. Second, Allen’s belief that the tales of rivermen “tell us a good deal more about the mythologizers than the mythologized” notwithstanding, he doesn’t really take up the political dimensions of the rivermen themselves (4). He understands them as central to the cultural work of the Jacksonian era—inasmuch as they help redefine some vague notion of American-ness—but he doesn’t really think of them as part of the body politic, perhaps because he’s invested in some idea of the “advent of ‘civilized’ society in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys” (Allen 4). Such a position—in spite of his scare quotes—suggests that the western territories and states, as well as those that lived and worked their rivers lived in some pre-political chaos that the rise of steamboats eventually undermined or rather overwrote.<sup>xcix</sup> There is, therefore, little concern with the political dimensions of rivermen.

Why is there so little attention paid, then, to the rivermen and their political dimensions, while much is paid to the river itself? I posit that the centrality of the river to conceptualizing the

nation during the antebellum years developed because of the river's ability throughout that era to embody national civic ideals more transparently than the rivermen do. In a variety of sources, we can see the river as symbolic of freedom and liberty. The *Boston Atlas* ran, for instance, a front-page brief about an escaped—or, rather, nearly escaped prisoner—nestled among articles detailing the goings-on in the Massachusetts state legislature as well as the Congress. The short write-up details the failed attempt of a prisoner at an unnamed New York prison (likely Sing Sing), who procured a hogshead, placed it in the Hudson River and himself in the hogshead, and proceeded down river. Although a person working on the prison's pier caught sight of the barrel and then caught the barrel itself, this series of events is, somewhat, instructive. Having been removed from society and therefore from the body politic, the prisoner seeks re-entry and adopts the river as his route from non-citizen to citizen. For the prisoner, the river would help him cross the boundary from confinement to freedom, from inmate to citizen. Would this valence have been legible to a mid-nineteenth-century readership? It is hard to say, but the language of the article's conclusion gives a hint: "[The prisoner] was secured, taken back to prison, and a dose of the cat thoroughly administered" ("Attempt to Escape"). As we see here, the author emphasizes detainment, confinement, and discipline. From the author's perspective, as well as that of the prison overseers, the prisoner has by seeking liberty transgressed the boundaries of good behavior and, in a manner of speaking, taken liberty with prison procedures. The conclusion—the necessary and preferred conclusion, from the author's sadistic perspective—is the opposite of freedom and liberty. Order has been restored by confining the prisoner by barring the prisoner's path to freedom, the river. There is certainly a sense here of juxtaposition—freedom and confinement—and, I think, it would be difficult for that binary to be illegible to readers.

Moreover, in a famous set-piece from one of the nineteenth-century's most-popular novel, a similar figuration of the river appears. In Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), of course, we find Eliza's famous escape across the Ohio, wherein, by use of a "raft of ice" a Kentucky slave finds herself, though pursued by slave-catchers, technically freed (117). The representation of the river is, in Stowe, a little more vexed. While the Hudson River tosses up "no impediments" ("Attempt to Escape"), the Ohio offers Eliza a "turbid current by the shore" over which she must make "one ... flying leap" to attain footing on her natural raft (Stowe 117), and, in comparison to the seemingly compliant, make-shift hogshead-boat, Eliza's ice-raft not only "pitched and creaked" but also, by virtue of its unruliness, necessitates "stumbling—leaping—slipping—springing upwards again" from piece of ice to piece of ice as she goes across the river (Stowe 118).

Nevertheless, the implication here that the river provides the route to freedom and liberty—that the river itself is that liberating space—is present in Stowe. The river is merely an obstacle for Eliza. As the narrator establishes at the beginning of the scene, the river is the route to which Eliza must head: "Her room opened by a side door to the river. She caught her child, and spring down the steps towards it" (Stowe 117). The prose here is rushed and the sentences short. The rhythm of the sentences here conveys unhesitating briskness, as does the strange blurring of space that occurs with the period. Stowe does not acknowledge that Eliza opens the door—only that there is a door and that it faces the river—giving a sense of Eliza suddenly by its shore. Although there are certainly pauses in this scene (the period and the comma), they hardly slow the pace of Stowe's language. There may seem to be "a thousand lives ... concentrated in that one moment to Eliza," but there are, undoubtedly, thousands of actions concentrated in this scene and, presumably, elided over (Stowe 117). After all, Eliza's escape is iconic, yet it occurs



early in the novel (its first third if not its first quarter) and it comprises less than a page of a nearly 600 page novel.

Although the political or civic implications of the river—namely, its liberatory qualities—do not always extend to the men who work upon them, many of the literary and historical analyses of these figures account only for the ways in which antebellum culture embraced the boatman as necessary cogs in the national machine. Writing in the 1940s, Leland Baldwin describes the keelboatmen in particularly impressed terms. He does note that these men “were ... more vicious and bellicose” than others on the river, they were also the “toughest men on the frontier, at first largely Indian fighters,” “walked with a long stride,” and were “more daring and restless than the Creole boatmen” (87). This moment—in a history written almost a century after the keelboatman had faded from the social landscape—sounds particularly curious. The demerits of these figures are limited to a certain viciousness and bellicosity that Baldwin leaves undeveloped. There is little sense of to whom these attributes are directed. Is it the other citizens of the western states and territories? Or is it towards the indigenous populations with whom, Baldwin notes, many keelboatmen were entangled? Baldwin uses little specificity in describing these more dubious aspects of the laborers. Yet we know better how they walk—with an undoubtedly long manly stride—and we know them as the toughest and most daring residents of the west. The effect of this description is to create the riverman as a masculine—maybe hypermasculine—archetype. There is little sense, here, that the broader culture might have questioned the racist, pro-expansionist/anti-democratic treatment of the Indians. There is little sense here of the riverman as anything other than a macho rowdy.

Such a sense of the riverman carries over to more contemporary explorations of similar territory. Writing of the Mike Fink folklore, Thomas Ruys Smith quotes nineteenth century

sources that established this particular figure having “‘stood an acknowledged leader’ amongst the boatmen” due to being “‘celebrated on the rivers of the West’ as ‘the hero of a hundred fights, and the leader in a thousand daring adventures’” (T. Smith 65). For Smith, the boatman was a “popular frontier figure” and one that was embraced by the antebellum reader of newspapers and popular periodicals like the *Crockett Almanacs* (66). As with Baldwin, Smith does not counter the narrative of the well-established and well-like river boatman—they were heroic figures like Mike Fink or they were, like Davy Crockett and Andrew Jackson, figures capable of translating their fluvial adventures into martial and political capital (67). As Smith notes, “the river featured prominently in Crockett’s political career and was vital to the persona that he cultivated for the stump” in spite of his time as a riverman being “less than auspicious” (67). Smith’s apparent claims to the contrary, I remain unconvinced that Crockett necessarily benefitted politically by his connection to river work. Smith even seems to make this claim—it is “the river” and not the boat or his work as a boatman that “feature[s] prominently” in Crockett’s persona. Still, Smith here proffers the suggestion that being a boatman had certainly not hindered Crockett or Jackson in their political enterprises, which seems incredibly disingenuous and wrong given the classist and regionalist aversion to Jacksonian democracy.<sup>c</sup>

Prominent and recent studies of the antebellum river and antebellum riverwork therefore tend to contrive the boatman as an heroic figure that is at odds with an antebellum literary culture that remained remarkably hesitant towards the rivermen and that conceptualized them as problematic group within the body politic. Importantly, the aversion to the rivermen diverges from the concern about the oceanic mariner. Whereas anxiety about the seamen in broader U.S. society stemmed from reactionary positions that questioned their involvement in and fomenting of socially and politically radical movements and activities, the anxiety related to the rivermen

derives from more egalitarian principles. Literary culture relating to the rivermen looked askance at these figures due to their involvement in exploitative and expansionist projects that challenged supposed U.S. civic ideals like sovereignty, freedom, and equality.

Among the earliest, extensive writings about rivermen and their suspicious and contingent place within the body politic are the Mike Fink legends. These legends have a basis in fact. Born around Fort Pitt between 1770 and 1780, Fink became a notable keelboatman on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers during the first decades of the nineteenth-century. As Thomas Ruys Smith explains, Fink was popular enough that, in 1821, Alphonso Wetmore could write a play, *The Pedlar*, where the last line of the play reveals the theretofore unnamed boatman character to be Mike Fink as “an aside,” Smith writes, “for the river-town audience” (T. Smith 63). Following his death in the early 1820s, though, stories of Fink proliferated, an explosion commenced by Morgan Neville’s “The Last of the Boatmen” (1828), “the first extended treatment of the definitive alligator-horse”—a chimerical term that riverboatmen used to refer to themselves (T. Smith 63).<sup>ci</sup> In these narratives, according to Smith, Fink generally appeared in generally positive terms. He became “a folk hero” who spoke to the egalitarian impulses behind U.S. founding documents if not actual U.S. society. As Smith notes, Fink “was the first uncommon common man to occupy a central cultural role in America” (T. Smith 63). Moreover, as Michael Allen explains, the rivermen’s lifestyle “lent itself easily to romanticization: nostalgic Americans conjured up images of a brawny, red-shirted, sun-browned, rough-and-ready race of super-frontiersmen plying the western waters” (Allen 8).

This understanding of Fink in antebellum culture, then, looks to include him within the body politic. Both Smith and Allen acknowledge Fink’s peripheral social and geographical position, but they also make a claim for him as both exemplary—he’s an uncommon common

man and a super-frontiersman—and integral to the nation. He was not only central to the nation’s literary and folk culture, but he was also an artifact for national consideration. In Smith and Allen he becomes something of a polestar for antebellum American readers and authors. Both authors make claims for Fink’s vital role in shaping the U.S. national consciousness, or, perhaps better stated, the nation’s sense of itself. For Smith he provides a sense of the nation’s direction. Fink’s popularity provides an early entry into the mythology of upward mobility by which an Andrew Jackson, for instance, can find herself or himself plucked from the pebbles and hurled “higher than a throne” (Melville *Moby-Dick* 119). Why else would Smith temporally tie the publication of the first major Fink narrative to Jackson’s election in 1828 (T. Smith 63)? Allen on the other hand allows Fink to embody where the nation comes from, as Fink only works for the “nostalgic” American. Between these two critics, then, Fink serves an important culture and civic function, establishing a through line from the U.S. of generations past to the U.S. of generations to come. Although they do not present him as, outright, an idealized antebellum civic figure, there are intimations of that here. After all, he does help define and redefine the ideals of American-ness.

Smith and Allen have a point about all this. Mike Fink does often appear in these nineteenth-century sketches and stories as a rough but nevertheless useful, if not wholly idealizable, citizen. While in his initial appearance in Wetmore’s *The Pedlar* (1821), the literary Fink exhibits questionable morality, fighting with another U.S. archetype and demanding to get soused, his posthumous premiere in Neville’s “The Last of the Boatmen” (1828) minimizes these qualities and maximizes the sense of Fink as an able citizen.

Defining his emergence into manhood, for instance, Neville writes that “at the early age of seventeen, Mike’s character was displayed, by enlisting himself in a corps of Scouts” (53). A

crucial point in his biography, enlisting into military service establishes his support of nation and suggests that Fink felt a strong affinity for the national project. Unlike the stereotypical ocean mariner who to a degree rejects not only the property-holding ideal of the antebellum period (which I need to remember to explain by virtue of property being a litmus test for citizenship in my chapter on Cooper) but also the nation itself, Fink here embraces it, entering a group that institutionally embodies the state. This corps of scouts may be “a body of irregular rangers” but it is nevertheless a component in the early American military network (Neville 53). It is important to remember, too, that he is not a reluctant member of this unit, which Neville is at redundant pains to inform us. Fink not only enlists; he enlists himself, thereby establishing unequivocally his investment in the nation. He is not coerced into military service but rather consents to it. Moreover, this group of scouts serves a defensive function. They do not simply explore the “North-western frontiers of Pennsylvania, [they] watch the Indians, and ... give notice of any threatened inroad” (Neville 53). In other words, not only are these scouts integrated into the state, they also serve an important function in defining that state’s political and racial boundaries, something that Neville reinforces by noting that their work takes place “on the extreme verge of white population” (Neville 53). What these inroads amount to, then, is a little murky. Is the concern over indigenous incursions into the U.S. as a national concept or are the inroads a little more biological—an invasion of blood rather than armed forces? It’s not, as I say, precisely clear here.

What is clear, though, is that Fink, as a self-enlisted scout, serves as a barrier of/to American-ness, helping to both protect a citizenry from so-called savage violence and establish a racial ideal of that body politic, an idea that Neville expands upon when describing the conclusion of Fink’s career as a scout.<sup>cii</sup> He writes:

In the meantime, the country was filling up with a white population; and in a few years the red men, with the exception of a few fractions of tribes, gradually receded to the Lakes and beyond the Mississippi. The corps of Scouts was abolished ... . Some incorporated themselves with the Indians, and others ... joined the boatmen ... . Among these was our hero, Mike Fink. (Neville 54)

Although Neville suggests that all scouts had become, by virtue of being scouts, “unfitted ... for the pursuits of civilized society” (54), he seems eager to point out that such unfittedness was complex and did not establish an individual, necessarily, as a questionable citizen. In fact, it’s unclear, based on the development of this section of Fink’s story whether being a boatman necessarily situates him as completely unfit for civilized society, since the characteristic that most seems to define that unfittedness for Neville is an abandonment of U.S. society altogether—a defection to the Native Americans. The boatmen, on the other hand, remain “a distinct class” of U.S. citizen and Mike attains status among them as well, becoming “as celebrated on the rivers of the West, as he had been in the woods” (Neville 54). Neville may not call Fink a good citizen outright, but in his relationship to the state and in his relationship to other, possible political bodies it becomes clear that Fink is considered, so to speak, one of us.

Of course, Fink’s status as useful, possibly ideal citizen does not derive solely, or even mostly, from his status as a one-time scout. In fact, had that been the case critics like Smith and Allen would have an even more problematic argument, inasmuch as it would appear that Fink’s status as useful or ideal citizen derived from his military service and was called into question by his work on rivers. That is not the case, however, as Neville points to the importance of Mike Fink to the commercial interests of the nation and to his care for inviolate private property. The boatmen may have had a “ferocious reputation” as far away as Europe, but, as Neville explains,

“on board of the boats thus navigated, our merchants entrusted valuable cargoes without insurance, and with no other guarantee than the receipt of the steersmen, who possessed no property but his boat” (52). Although speaking of boatmen in general, he goes on to note that, “among these men, Mike Fink stood as an acknowledge leader” (Neville 53). In other words, Mike stands out as exemplary among a group of men in whom merchants had confidence that “was seldom abused” (Neville 52). Boatmen and Fink in particular seem to understand their role within a civil society that requires commercial enterprise to reinforce it. They have no literal investment to speak of in the property transported on their boats, but they nevertheless understand, believe in, and privilege private property and enterprise. The boatmen and especially Fink are good nineteenth-century liberals. Additionally, if we look at the language Neville uses to describe Fink here, we see echoes of a democratic electorate among the boatmen. Certainly, there is not the sense that Fink oversees some fluvial imperium in imperio. Yet he does “among these men ... [stand] as an acknowledged leader” (Neville 52). Importantly, he stands not simply as a leader but rather as an acknowledged leader. The addition of that qualification hints that Fink is chosen and selected as leader of these men. In spite of his ornery sobriquets—“Snapping Turtle” and “The Snag”—Fink is not a tyrant but someone whom the boatmen consent to follow.<sup>ciii</sup>

In spite of this, though, we shouldn’t assume that Smith and Allen are completely on point when describing Fink as an integral, uncomplicated appendage of the body politic. Although I admire their endeavor and, really, sympathize with their desire to configure this river-mariner as an idealized and romanticized civic and folk figure, it tends to overlook the way in which both Neville and subsequent authors of Finklore undermine his usefulness as a citizen by questioning his devotion to liberal economic ideals and also concerning themselves with the

unsavory racial and territorial aspects of Fink's career. In Neville, for instance, although Fink stands as peerless among a group of men devoted to their cargo and therefore the economic interests of their employers, he also keeps those living near rivers on their toes: "Every farmer on the shore kept on good terms with Mike—otherwise there was no safety for his property" (52). He may have secured his employers' property, but that of others was fair game. Neville gives no sense of how one might get on Mike's bad side, though he does compare Fink to Rob Roy, there is no sense that his depredations against farmers had any moral thrust—he was not an anti-hero but simply a blackmailer (52).

Neville additionally complicates the notion of Fink as an ideal citizen in a democratic republic by aligning him with historical figures who connote significantly inegalitarian social hierarchies and rather illiberal practices. "He would have been a conspicuous member of any society in which his lot might have been cast," writes Neville (52). The societies Neville chooses to consider, though, are odd. He begins by imagining him as a figure of Greek mythology—Apollo—and then moves him into "the court of Charlemagne" (Neville 52). There are certainly periods of classical and early modern history into which Neville might have fit Fink to underscore his democratic essence, and Greece might have been one of them. Yet to align him not with someone who reads as democratic but rather with a god seems suspect. That he then positions him as an aristocratic consort of an imperial figure should come as no surprise. Fink, then, is no "uncommon common man" as Smith has it. He's godlike nobility. It might be possible to read Neville as radically ironic at this moment in his narrative and to see Neville as using these analogies to redefine and question notions of nobility. In other words, he might be asking, why one can't we place Fink within an aristocratic lineage. Yet, that becomes a little less radical with just a moment's thought: Why resort to such a genealogy at all unless one wants to



establish Fink's nobility? Furthermore, that Neville then goes onto compare Fink to the "Putnams of the" revolutionary period suggests that he does conceive of Fink in noble terms, Israel Putnam having been born to a prominent Massachusetts family (52). The point, then, seems to question Fink's investment in the liberal and egalitarian ideals that citizenship in the U.S. during the antebellum period conferred on individuals. There are hints that he belongs within the U.S. body politic, as discussed above, but then there are these moments that question his fitness for inclusion and, importantly, these suspicions are unrelated to his rough-and-tumble life or his time in the wilds. If anything, he's connected not to the primitivism of the western landscape but rather to the aristocratic degeneracy of Europe.

Even with such caveats to his civic character, Neville's Mike Fink is undoubtedly among the more hagiographic treatments the boatman received in the antebellum period. In later works, he's not simply an outlaw and a noble but an arbitrary and tyrannical menace of the western waters. In "Mike Fink: The Last of the Boatmen" (1829), an anonymous author in *The Western Monthly Review* immediately establishes Fink as an unsavory character—so unsavory, in fact, that the author was compelled to leave out not only Fink's salty language but also "atrocities" (57). This Fink, far from a folk hero, exhibits "monstrous anomalies of the human character" (57). Importantly, such anomalous, monstrous behavior does not derive from class-based or regional concerns.<sup>civ</sup>

Although the editors of the volume in which this version of the Fink narrative is collected offer their opinion that the "piety of the editor" of *The Western Monthly Review* colored the treatment of the boatman, I suspect that there are civic reasons behind the castigation as well (Blair and Meine 56). The anonymous author of this piece writes, for instance, that Fink "was also a wit" who "excited the fears of all the fraternity of boatmen; for he usually enforced his wit

with a sound drubbing, if any one dared to dissent by neglecting or refusing to laugh at his jokes” that resulted in “Mike always [having] a chosen band of laughing philosophers about him” (“Mike Fink: The Last of the Boatmen” 59). Here we see the earlier, Neville-penned Fink inverted. No longer a democratic leader chosen from among the boatmen due to his skills and talent—a meritocratic, democratic president of the western rivers, as it were—Fink is now an autocrat, stifling dissent and wielding a tyrannical wit. Fink does not contribute to republican ideals of sympathy and the commonwealth. He divides and upends fraternity and emerges as a figure at odds with that ideal as he is with democracy. He no longer stands as a leader among men by their choice but rather lords himself over other men by his own choice.

If there’s a playfulness to the description of Fink’s tyrannical wit, there’s little to no humor found in the concluding episode of this version of Fink’s life. The author here notes how Fink, upon seeing that an African American “had a strange sort of foot and heel peculiar to some races of Africans,” decides to trim the “unshapely foot” through the prowess of his marksmanship (“Mike Fink: The Last of the Boatmen” 60). A scene of this sort, given the racial valences and given the antebellum timeframe, could certainly be played for humor—a way of reinforcing the superiority of even the most peripheral white men over those of African descent. Here, however, the author offers the outcome of this shooting matter of factly: “The boy fell, crying murder, and badly wounded. Mike was indicted in the circuit court of this country for this offence, and was found guilty by a jury. I have myself seen the record of the court” (“Mike Fink: The Last of the Boatmen” 60). There is no mockery here of the young African American shot by Fink; moreover, there is a sense that such behavior is beyond the pale for a U.S. citizen. Fink is not only brought to trial over the matter; his peers choose to convict him as well. His protection of the white population from racial interlopers in Neville is, like his democratic status in that

text, turned on its ear. Here, he does not serve as a barrier to racial intrusion. Instead, he terrorizes other races. His actions do not define a racially homogenous body politic but rather threaten a more cosmopolitan and egalitarian society.

This scene could and was used by other authors to validate Fink's racial policing and to question the state's response to his actions, as is the case with John Robb's version of the story in "Trimming a Darky's Heel" (1847), in which the magistrate trying to punish Fink is a Frenchman whose broken English is a source of amusement ("Leave ze court, you raskells of ze boat") (Robb 91, emphasis in original). Moreover, that version of the story makes it clear that what Fink achieves with his gun constitutes an improvement in that the successful shot "altered his breed, and arter this his posterity kin warr the neatest kind of boot" (Robb 91). The narrative itself seems to agree: Fink goes unpunished for his actions and "amid a torrent of words and laughter [he] retreated to his boat" (Robb 92).

That anonymous author of the earlier piece chooses to treat the unnamed African American that suffers Fink's prowess *not* as an object of ridicule speaks volumes about the way antebellum literary culture understood Fink and other literary boatmen as complicated members of the body politic. Furthermore, to think a little more about the 1829 version of the story, we might also note that the unnamed African American is not only *not* treated as an object of ridicule but that he is also *not* treated as an object at all. The author does not, in other words, make a point of describing Fink's "offence" as one that goes against a citizen's property rights ("Mike Fink: The Last of the Boatmen" 60). The crime is not, therefore, Fink destroying the property of a slave owner by shooting the foot of his slave. At least, that's not the crime as it's described in the story (even if that might be what stands behind this). The author leaves that out and instead portrays it as a crime against the African American himself, suggesting that the crime

relates much more to the violation of the African American's individual rights than to the violation of some slave-owner's rights. After all, the legend gives no indication of the African American's status. Although Emil Klauprecht's *Cincinnati* (1856) takes up this subject matter more directly, this moment points toward the way antebellum literary culture questioned the civic status and dimensions of boatmen due to their questionable involvement with and relationship African Americans. Extant Fink narratives never describe him as having carried slaves as cargo upon his ships, but here, at least, we see him as reinforcing the racial hierarchies of the period rather than challenging them and coming up the worse for it.<sup>cv</sup>

Beyond his tyrannical behavior and his questionable treatment of racial minorities, certain elements of the Fink stories also suggest that he is not just a petty tyrant but also a slightly imperious and, perhaps, imperial figure. Returning to Neville for a moment and recalling his analogizing Fink to a member of Charlemagne's court, we might note the imperial overtones of such a characterization. We can also see imperial implications of Fink in Neville's discussion of him also as similar to a "favorite" of Richard the Lionheart during the Crusades (Neville 52). He is figured again, then, as one of the imperial forces. We can, of course, read these descriptions in relatively positive terms. During this era the U.S. expanded its borders as well as its international reach; those with imperial inclinations would prove welcome.

Nevertheless, the literary treatment of the conclusion of Fink's life suggests that people were not so completely comfortable with U.S. imperial expansion, which suggests that those with some valued position in the body politic are fatally corrupted by their involvement in the establishment of empire. As Franklin and Meine note in their introduction to their collection of 19th and 20th century Finklore, following his career as a boatman on the Ohio and Mississippi, Fink became involved in the western fur trade and worked as a pathfinder "of the Far West" who

“map[ped] the courses of empire” in the process (11). In the anonymously authored “Mike Fink: The Last of the Boatmen” (1829), for instance, Fink travels west and helps “[build] a fort for the purposes of trade and security” (260).<sup>cvi</sup> Again, then, he establishes himself as part of the expansionist project of the U.S. The author, though, suggests that Fink’s involvement here results in his degeneracy. A man who in other narratives shows himself to be of little menace to his compatriots (he’s not as much of a threat, it seems, to those he works with, even if he might drub them for not laughing at his jokes) finds himself, at the outskirts of U.S. territories “quarrel[ing] a deadly quarrel” not with any Native American or even a so-called enemy but rather with his “friend Carpenter” (261). This quarrel results in Carpenter’s death—a scene in which the ace marksman Fink unsuccessfully attempts to shoot a cup of whiskey from Carpenter’s head. The scene implies that the events do not occur by accident, as indicated by the author’s assessment of Fink as “treacherous,” and therefore implying that Fink meant to miss his shot, though he claims otherwise (261, 262). The events result in Fink’s own death by extrajudicial means and then the death of Fink’s murderer. The view of westward expansion here is hardly rosy. In fact, it appears fairly apocalyptic, and, importantly, some racialized other that does not bring about this end-times in miniature. The white boatmen do. Moreover, a sense that the life of the boatman himself that leads to this devolution at the edge of empire or, rather, in the midst of empire lingers. The scene with Carpenter, in which Fink takes aim, clearly recapitulates tales of shooting prowess earlier in his career. Those behaviors, then, that are liable to result in judicial punishment within the non-expanding territories of the U.S. become liable to outright death in the process of expansion. Unlike Natty Bumppo who, in *The Pioneers*, is certainly bumptious and runs afoul the law but nevertheless serves as a frontiersman who helps establish

the foundation of an expansionist society, Mike Fink does not. The riverboatman and his connection to empire become suspect.

The suspicion of the Mike Fink's civic credentials finds an echo in Emil Klauprecht's later river-saga *Cincinnati, or The Mysteries of the West* (1854-5), an understandably neglected novel from the same decade that brought U.S. readers *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *Moby-Dick* (1851), and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).<sup>cvii</sup> As easy as it is to grasp the critical disregard for the novel—originally published in German, it did not receive an English translation until the 20th

Century—such neglect remains nevertheless unfortunate, as this politically-motivated melodrama complements other important works of the era, like Stowe's aforementioned novel, Brown's *Clotel* (1853), or Douglass's expansive revision of his autobiography in *My Bondage, My Freedom* (1855), all of which, like *Cincinnati*, explore the institution and effects of slavery. Unlike those works, though, *Cincinnati* adopts a more panoramic perspective of contemporaneous society and culture, concerning itself with filibustering, Anglo-Native American relations, and the labor of rivermen as well. Klauprecht's certainly pales qualitatively in comparison to some of the authors mentioned above, but he still evinces much talent and, more importantly, considerable insight into antebellum politics and society.

Klauprecht's critical and cultural neglect arguably derives from his audience. As I mentioned, he originally wrote in German for the German-American contingent of the Midwestern population.<sup>cviii</sup> Admittedly, this throws some significant hurdles in my way. I don't read German, so I must work, for the time being, from the 1996 translation; moreover, Klauprecht was an active journalist who wrote highly politicized editorials for *Cincinnati* papers, which haven't been translated, so I am as yet unable to situate this novel within his broader political writings. Still, I'm induced to include this novel in this chapter for a few reasons: First,

it really is an interesting, lively, and even good novel. Second, it is, as the editor of the translation writes in his preface, “one of the first major German-American novels” (Tolzmann v). Finally, and most importantly, I think that this particular novel, as a novel by an immigrant and for an immigrant community, can offer a useful gloss on the understanding of citizenship as well as the boatman as a civic figure during the antebellum period.

In addition to these reasons, *Cincinnati* also provides a much less flattering and more explicit critique of the boatmen’s civic dimensions during the antebellum period. Of course, the novel also, like the Fink legends, offers moments in which the boatmen appear as heroic citizens. While being tended to by Maleachi, a Native American doctor in Cincinnati, Alligator, a boatman, recounts his previous work:

I stood high on the breastwork of cotton bales, not hidden away like a beaver like the others. Bullets whistled past me, but I didn’t care, I knocked General Gibbs and General Keene nicely from their horses and made them kiss American soil; they directed sniper fire at me, but I stayed put and fired as long as there was still a redcoat to be seen. ...

[T]he Alligator remained uninjured. (Klauprecht 40)

This biographical sketch deals, of course, with the Alligator’s work on behalf of U.S. military forces during the Battle of New Orleans. What marks this moment is the patriotic way in which the Alligator describes his efforts. He does not simply establish himself as brave, though he certainly does that (he is not “hidden away like ... the others” and winds up with his “hat ... ventilated” for his effort”) (Klauprecht 40). He establishes himself as one who bends British military men to the ground and forces them to pay a momentary and undoubtedly demeaning obeisance to the Alligator’s nation. It goes a little further than that, though, inasmuch as there’s a sense that he’s not just demanding these men respect the United States’s military prowess—he

rubs their faces in what they've lost. New Orleans, part of the Louisiana Purchase, symbolizes a vast, growing nation, hardly the sliver of coastal property that these men once stood guard over.

The Alligator, then, is a great citizen, and it appears that this greatness derives *from* his status as a boatman. Note how he says that he does not remain “hidden away *like a beaver like the others*. ... [T]he Alligator remained uninjured” (Klauprecht 40, emphasis added). The proliferation of animals here seems purposeful, as it offers the speaker the means of distinguishing himself from his more cowardly compatriots. The others are beavers and he is The Alligator—not just *an* alligator, but the essence of alligator-ness. This differentiation, of course, establishes him as a violent, cunning creature, capable of evading the bullets of British snipers. However, it also is his title—he is a boatman after all. His bravery and his patriotism—his ability to force not just British soldiers to the ground but generals—implicitly derives from his work on the river. Being a riverman in other words helps establish his civic credentials. He suggests as much before telling this story, as he explains that he has “experienced [the travails of life on the river himself], when [he] was a pilot and often ran against snags with the full force of a charging steamboat, ...; I experienced it in New Orleans with Old Hickory under the rain of bullets of Packenham’s grenadiers” (Klauprecht 40). This moment suggests that the Alligator sees himself as one not far from former president Andrew Jackson—they serve side-by-side and they also go by curious monikers—and thereby furthers the Alligator’s credentials as a good citizen. More importantly, though, the Alligator aligns the work done on riverboats and the experiences there with the experiences that he had in New Orleans. The chronology of the lines lends a sense of progressiveness—first he experienced the sinking of the ship and then he was ready for the mayhem of combat and the ability to establish himself as a brave, patriotic individual. Achieving patriotic valor and a prominent place within the civic hierarchy of a tumultuous time is nothing,



this seems to say, when one has “ran against snags” that result in the momentary sinking of a ship.

However, the Alligator quickly compromises and complicates such valor, as he proceeds to abscond with a parcel that had been left with Maleachi for safe-keeping, underscoring the way that the novel treats rivermen with a critical eye. This situation occurs most prominently in relation to Captain Butler, who the novel demonizes particularly for his connection to slavery and the internal slave-trade of the antebellum period. Klauprecht introduces his readers to Butler by noting that he receives the worship of the novel’s villainess—Zenobia—who “worshipped the values of desperados” like Butler (Klauprecht 99). Although what constitutes a desperado or a desperado’s values begins in obscurity and vagueness, Klauprecht quickly clarifies the meaning of the concepts. Desperado does not mean, simply, thief or criminal of a particularly romantic sort. Rather, as the narrator explains, these desperados are “*avengers of blood* in the Southwest,” who take part in “appalling fights with Bowie knives, ... bloody duels in dark rooms, ... [and] the cannibalistic atrocities of *lynchers* and *moderators*” (Klauprecht 99, emphasis in original). The use of lynching here should not be understood in the same sense that it would twenty years later. It was not, in other words, a term that referred mostly to the extrajudicial killing of African Americans—just extrajudicial killings in general.

Nevertheless, when we proceed to the following paragraph, the lynching of African Americans becomes a possible activity of the desperado, as Butler tells “uproarious tales about hunting and Negroes” (Klauprecht 99). Certainly, “hunting” and “Negroes” are separated here. Klauprecht, then, does not set up Butler as “hunting Negroes.” Yet we should not be so quick to overlook that possibility. Klauprecht chooses to align two words in a clause with a binding conjunction. There is, therefore, a connection here that Klauprecht subtly tries to insinuate

between hunting and African Americans. Therefore, if subtle, the effect is nevertheless that Butler might have been actually hunting African Americans. On the one hand, this reading then casts the previous description of his tales—avenging blood through cannibalistic practices—paints a gothic portrait of, possibly, stanching slave revolts (the novel is certainly aware of those, as I'll discuss below, and largely sympathetic to them). On the other hand, and more likely, understanding “hunting and Negroes” as related to, at least, “hunting Negroes” situates the novel in its historical period. Written in the mid-1850s, *Cincinnati*, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, takes place in the shadow of the Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Law—the latter of which clearly makes “hunting Negroes” a contentious topic during the era. It is difficult, then, to read “hunting and Negroes” and *not* think of the possibility that it can also stand in for “hunting Negroes.”

As a result, the novel positions Captain Butler—a riverman—as a less-than-reputable citizen and, furthermore, suggests that his riverwork and animosity for African Americans are connected. As the narrative notes, he “had not always been ... a ‘river character.’ He had once been an important *stump*-politician, and in the years from 1836 to 1838 had even held a seat as a member of the Arkansas *Legislature*” (Klauprecht 99). He was an important citizen and there's no sense that his “depraved [character]” as a possible slave hunter preceded his work on the river (Klauprecht 99). The opposite is true. He began his decline by turning to the river for work. By becoming a “river character,” he also becomes a depraved citizen bent on blood and evincing violent racial beliefs.

In regard to Butler at least, the mistreatment of African Americans/slaves exists in concert with a generally poor position as a citizen within the body politic. In other words, his disdain for African Americans and his potentially violent treatment of them is not the only thing

that Klauprecht uses to establish his credentials as a bad citizen. He notes elsewhere, for instance, that Butler operates outside of the law. We encounter him, for instance, as one of many within a literal criminal underground (they operate out of tunnels under Cincinnati), or, as Klauprecht puts it, a “convention of murder and robbery” (Klauprecht 218). Not only is this, as a criminal underground, criminal; it also seeks to subvert the justice system, as the group’s leader asks Butler to “break the walls and doors of the jail and free our brethren” (Klauprecht 216, emphasis in original). Importantly, the criminal enterprises of these men and women are not presented, in the course of the narrative, as radical. The work that they do in fact reinforces inequalitarian social and political hierarchies, as they are, like Butler, in league with southern slave-owners. The novel is suspicious of the political society of the antebellum period (critiques of secret, sectarian political societies abound here), so the narrative does not seek to reinforce the status quo.

That being said, the novel sees rivermen like Butler as in league with criminal elements that undermine the judicial ideals of a democratic republic and this behavior is in line with their treatment of African Americans and their connection with slavery. In other words, the novel suggests that involvement of the institution of slavery and involvement in a criminal underground amount to about the same thing—illegal, immoral behavior that casts one as an inapt citizen. And, as I said above, it is important that Butler’s involvement in these enterprises—slavery and criminal—do not seem to precede his time as a riverman but rather succeed it. In some ways, this novel makes a rather radical statement in regard to the characterization or biography of Butler, who enters into a government that allows for slavery, leaves to become a riverman that engages in slavery directly but legally, and then becomes an actual criminal. It suggests, a wariness of existing electoral politics and implies that entering into

governance built on racial and social inequality begins a slide into outright criminality that, at some level, does not differ that much from the legal enterprises engaged in, at least within this novel's moral compass.

*Cincinnati* is not some proto-radical novel, but, for the 1850s, it stakes out some remarkable political positions (likely as a result of Klauprecht's Republican Party-sympathies). Also, in spite of its anti-slavery sentiments, the novel nevertheless engages in some unsavory racial representations. For instance, Klauprecht's narrator describes the "gang of ragged Negroes" that, "like drunken demons" work with a steamboat's boilers, bellowing "infernal shouts" (Klauprecht 290). Giving African Americans a diabolical cast is, of course, not solely the province of white writers. Phillis Wheatley and Harriet Wilson also employ this trope. Still Wilson and Wheatley seem to use terms like "black devil" or "black demon" with an ironic knowingness. In other words, they use the discourse of a dominant, white society to underscore the mistreatment of African Americans. There is no irony in Klauprecht here. His earlier description of Zenobia's interest in Butler's stories of desperados' atrocities, reinforces this. Klauprecht describes her evident blood lust in an erotic manner—"the blood rose in her large breasts"—and suggests that such blood lust derives from her mixed race background: "In such moments of excitement her Indian and Ethiopian origins were betrayed" (Klauprecht 99). Both of these situations and others unmentioned—to say nothing of the villainess being part African American—point to the less savory aspects of Klauprecht's racial outlook.

In spite of this, though, Klauprecht for the most part treats African Americans sympathetically and moreover hints at sympathy for more radical and revolutionary African American figures. He notes, for example, that free African Americans do not lose sight of those who remain enslaved and that this awareness is embodied by portraits hanging in their homes,

bars, hotels, etc.: “The walls are decorated with portraits of the martyr of freedom Ogée, of the stiff, heroic L’Ouverture, of the energetic Frederick Douglass, as well as historical representations: the freeing of the slaves in the West Indies, the attack of the Negro prince Cinquez on the captain and cook of the slave ship ‘Amistad,’ scenes from Othello, etc.” (Klauprecht 284). The narrative does not comment on this décor; it does not differentiate between “Cinquez” or Othello or Douglass. These are images that the narrator deems acceptable for public and private display, but they are also, importantly, mostly images of revolution. The narrative betrays no anxiety about uprising and revolt here. Revolution—racially motivated revolution, in particular—seem accepted and acceptable in this moment. The nonchalance of the narrator at this juncture suggests that one expects to find images like these in the homes and businesses of African Americans. Moreover, the lack of anxiety suggests that, perhaps, the images that should be there in order to reinforce the revolutionary strain of abolition. As such, the reactionary relationship between the rivermen and slavery in the novel is shown to be an even greater issue in their status within the nation.

Importantly, beyond the racial problematics of rivermen’s labor, the novel also makes a connection between the riverman and imperial expansion. Although the critique of rivermen’s civic position based on their involvement with various parts of the institution of slavery is more prominent, the novel also makes a point of establishing that both Butler and the Alligator served “Colonel *Aaron Burr*” during his Western conspiracy and became, as a result, “pirates and no citizens of this country” (Klauprecht 31, 33). Again, it is important that such behavior is not in a radical vein. These are not, in other words, pirates due to their challenging the ideals of the nation—at least in a significant sense—but rather because they would attack a supposed U.S. ally (Spain) because, according to the Alligator aping Burr, “these lazy, bigoted Spaniards had as

little right on this country as ... Indians” (Klauprecht 31). There are no egalitarian or radical politics at the base of these pirates’ endeavors—just expansionist politics. The point should be clear: The novel is critical of U.S. imperialist practices, and the comments about the piracy of Burr, Butler, and the Alligator are to be taken a little ironically. I do not mean that we should assume that the term is not meant here in seriousness. Rather, I mean that, writing in the 1850s, Klauprecht calls into question various international activities that the U.S. took part in during the previous two decades, namely the Mexican-American War (1846-8), which certainly resonates with Burr’s western conspiracy. That the rivermen are involved with this—and the Alligator notes that the whole lot of filibusters is comprised of rivermen—again speaks to the suspicion of their civic investments (Klauprecht 30). After all, they are “no citizens” of the United States as a result of their behavior and practices. This we should read this critique of river boatmen as something quite different from the standard critique of seamen as citizens that circulated in the political and social rhetoric of the antebellum period. While that latter critique has its foundation largely built on an anxiety about the radical egalitarian politics that oceanic mariners. In *Cincinnati*, as well as the Mike Fink legends, antebellum authors critique rivermen for their explicit and implicit opposition to more radical and more egalitarian politics.

Although such critiques of a riverman’s civic dimensions appear most prominently and extensively in the fiction of the antebellum period, the politically progressive—anti-slavery and anti-imperialist—positions staked out by those texts resonate with a river narrative of a very different kind—Thoreau’s *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849). Because it deals with a river very different from the Ohio, Mississippi, or Missouri and, as a result, deals with the boatmen in a very different manner, Thoreau’s text stands in contradistinction to the others. Here there is not much criticism of the boatmen as citizens—and certainly no criticism of

their involvement in the slave trade or imperial expansion. Yet this particular narrative complements the others and occupies a similarly politically progressive position. Here is a text that, finally and without much equivocation, embraces the boatman—a boatman without the stain of slavery of imperialism—and, as I’ll argue, this acceptance derives both from this lack of stain as well as from Thoreau’s sympathy with the politics embodied by seamen.

Thoreau’s interest in and general approval of boatmen-seamen is by no means the most significant thread in his sinuous narrative, but it is nevertheless present, pertinent, and consistent. Writing of the canal boatman, for instance, he writes: “All the phenomena which surround him are simple and grand, and there is something impressive, even majestic, in the very motion he causes, which will naturally be communicated to his own character, and he feels the slow, irresistible movement under him with pride, as if it were his own energy” (Thoreau *A Week* 171). The rivermen here are synchronized with their work and their surroundings. They are part of the landscape and, it seems, cause the processes that unfurl upon the river rather than run counter to them. The description of these majestic men whose work shapes the river and who are in turn shaped by the river is very much at odds with the other narratives I’ve discussed. These are not men castigated by Thoreau/Thoreau’s narrator, but instead they’re embraced. Importantly, this is a longstanding feeling for the book’s narrator, who recounts how, as a child, canal boats would travel up the Concord River, “seen stealing mysteriously through the meadows and past the village” (Thoreau *A Week* 171).

The boatman, for Thoreau’s narrator, served as a source of wonder and, in the younger man, intrigue. There is tremendous sympathy for and interest in the work that these men do, though it is not an unproblematic sympathy. In a way, this narrative provides the narrator not only with the means of addressing these intimations of the boatmen and the centrality to his

experiences, since it also allows the narrator the opportunity to become one of them (not just commune with and meditate on them). As he notes shortly after the scene above, the narrator writes of their time on a Wednesday morning: “But to us river sailors the sun never rose out of the ocean waves, but from some green coppice” (Thoreau *A Week* 196). The inclusive first-person plural in this moment speaks both to the fact that Thoreau and his brother, by taking this journey, have in effect become the boatmen they admired and marveled at in their youth, in addition to holding occasional exchanges with them.

Yet there are also implications that the adulation for boatmen in Thoreau’s narrative derives from the civic ideals that they both embody and take part in. For instance, he writes of their time in the midst of the “busy” work-week river: “We began to meet with boats more frequently, and hailed them from time to time with the freedom of sailors” (Thoreau *A Week* 169). The use of freedom here is significant, suggesting, as it does, that such an ideal, clearly of national civic importance, is imbued in the mariner. Certainly, the term sailor here suggests that the term is more aptly aligned with the seaman rather than the riverman, but sailor, as a quote above demonstrates, can refer, for Thoreau, to the riverman as well. The sense of the free seaman—if materially problematic—certainly speaks to considerable appreciation for the civic valences of the riverman. Moreover, Thoreau suggests later in this same passage that this freedom of sailors does not simply indicate a freeness of discourse that one might think of as the salty, profane language often connected to sailors during this time—it really *is* “liberty,” which he sets up as one of the “occupation[‘s]” better attributes (*A Week* 169).

We additionally find a discourse describing the community of rivermen that suggests that they create their own state, that their world of freedom is one that stands in contradistinction to the nation-state. Recall the moments in which Thoreau comes into contact with other boatmen:



“Ere long another scow hove in sight, creeping down the river; and *hailing* it, we attached ourselves to its side, and floated back in company” (Thoreau *A Week* 117, emphasis added). Although slightly anachronistic, the connection I would like to make here is with Althusser’s subject formation through state-issued ideology. While that is clearly not the same thing that occurs here, nevertheless the use of “hail” is evocative of Althusser and it allows us the opportunity to see the formation of community, possibly of a political nature, outside the dimensions of the state. In this narrative, I would argue, Thoreau finds in the boatmen of his river journey some vague sense of an alternative political, social, and cultural community, which is at odds with the liberal-democratic republican ideal of the antebellum period. In other words, unlike Cooper or Melville, who to varying degrees are incapable of accepting the sailor’s more radical political valences, at least in the works that I’m looking at, and unlike Klauprecht or the various authors of Fink legends, whose boatmen, connected as they are to slavery and imperial expansion, are denied radical potential, Thoreau is able to both accept the boatmen thoroughly (none of Melville’s ambivalence here!) as citizens on their own terms, as potentially revolutionary figures in relation to political society during the antebellum period.<sup>cix</sup>

But how do we get there—from boatmen as figures of freedom and liberty to them offering and enticing Thoreau into some alternative political formation? Politics admittedly plays a minimal role in this text. When political discourse enters, it enters on some occasions with the boatmen, as I demonstrated above. The only other overtly political moment or discussion that Thoreau enters into is the following: “To one who habitually endeavors to contemplate the true state of things, the political state can hardly be said to have any existence whatsoever” (Thoreau *A Week* 104). Thoreau here, echoing similarly disdainful sentiments in “Resistance to Civil Government” (1849), writes off the state as unnatural and suggests that it represents an “*outward*

obstacle” to the freedom and liberty of men (Thoreau *A Week* 105). Somewhat anarchic in sentiment, these ideas suggest that the political valences of boatmen are in line with Thoreau’s own political sentiments. The boatmen embody freedom; the state does not. These are antipodes in Thoreau’s narrative, and it is clear that he sides with the former. That Thoreau actually sees the boatmen as stateless individuals in the best sense—in that they have developed some sort of society not bound in by the strictures of a social and political order—is echoed elsewhere in the travelogue. Writing of the world along the river, Thoreau notes that “there dwelt the subject of Hebrew scriptures, and the *Esprit des Lois* . . . . All that is told of mankind, of the inhabitants of the Upper Nile, and the Sunderbunds, and Timbuctoo, and the Orinoko, was experienced here. Every race and class of men was represented” (*A Week* 100). The river for Thoreau represents a leveled, cosmopolitan society through which breathes the ideal, republican, Montesquiean spirit of laws. There is no sense of hierarchy in this world and certainly no nation-state as it was then understood. The river is a world, for Thoreau, that is transnational and one in which everyone has representation. It is not, in other words, the world of antebellum America that he finds on the banks of the Merrimack, on the banks of rivers. Citing the New Hampshire historian Belknap, Thoreau gestures towards this: “[H]ere too, perchance dwelt ‘new lights’ and free thinking men “ (*A Week* 100). The river gives rise to a new perspective on society, political and otherwise, and the boatmen are the perfect embodiment of that for Thoreau, since they are not only free but also, as he later explains, travel these rivers to “see the world; and would possibly visit the Falkland Isles, and the China seas, before they again saw the waters of the Merrimack, or, perchance, they would not return this way forever” (*A Week* 117). There is a fatalistic sense to the conclusion of that line, for sure, but there is an optimistic possibility too—that the boatmen by descending the river and entering the oceans of the wider world make a break with the dominant idea of

citizenship—of rights, privileges, etc.—tied to a national institution, a break with the idea that citizenship can only be granted by a state. They do not return because they become true cosmopolitans, citizens of the world, and leave behind their past as “green hands from far among the hills” (Thoreau *A Week* 117).

Of course, Thoreau’s treatment of the mariner—river-bound and sea-bound—does not come without its problematic attributes, as in some ways *A Week* romanticizes the rivermen/seamen he encounters in this narrative. The way he renders the labor of rivermen can be problematic. For instance, in his memory of them engaged in upstream work, there is no sense of the protracted and difficult labor involved in moving a boat up-river. For Thoreau as a young man, they moved silently, smoothly, and mysteriously. Their work serves as mere spectacle to him, and there is no sense that, with age, Thoreau adopted a different perspective. Such visions of riverwork as simple, calming labor occur throughout the narrative: When returning to Massachusetts, Thoreau notes that they had “sailed [that] afternoon” and it recalled to him that “all the world reposes in beauty to him who preserves equipoise in his life, and moves serenely on his path ... as he sails down a stream, he has only to steer, keeping his bark in the middle, and carry it round the falls” (Thoreau *A Week* 259). The sense of ease permeating this description of the riverman’s work is obvious. Admittedly, here Thoreau describes down-stream travel, which is arguably a simpler task than taking a boat upstream. Nevertheless, the impression that he creates of working aboard a river boat is one in which the ease of the labor allows the worker a chance to truly understand the beauty that surrounds him. It is calming, simple work and it opens one’s eyes to the magnificence around them. Although a rather beautiful sentiment and written in beautiful sentences, it seems to make light of river work. Thoreau might take up the boatman as a

more radical symbol than other authors explored here, then, but he's not without condescension and ignorance.

The riverman, then, occupies an odd space within the civic discourse embedded in antebellum literary culture. The ambivalence expressed by authors of antebellum river narratives toward the riverman is surprising, given the relationship between the mariner-citizen and the antebellum sea narrative that I have traced in the preceding chapters. While authors like Cooper and Melville sought to recover the common sailor and integrate him into the body politic and authors like Ingraham employed the pirate as a counterpoint to the common seaman, the authors of Mike Fink legends, Klauprecht, and Thoreau seem torn over the inclusion of the riverman in the U.S. body politic and this tension derives from the riverman's involvement with imperialist expansion and the internal slave-trade. Yet the oceanic mariners aboard merchant and naval vessels took part in activities that, similarly, ran contrary to the civic ideals of antebellum U.S. culture. As discussed in chapter one, the naval sailors on the U.S. Exploring Expedition took part in proto-imperialist exploration; on the other hand, the navy also employed its sailors and the sailors' labor to establish zones of foreign economic if not political influence, as chronicled in something like George Henry Preble's *The Opening of Japan*. What particularly marks the riverman, then, as worthy of suspicion due to his or her proximity to such problematic activities?

As this chapter suggests, geography partially answers this question: The rivermen—particularly those on the Mississippi and its tributaries—worked within the boundaries of the nation in support of endeavors that run counter to the nation's abstracted ideals—hence the greater suspicion over the fitness of rivermen as citizens aroused by Mike Fink and the characters of Klauprecht's *Cincinnati*. The Mississippi river system, its tributaries, and their contiguous lands were inseparable in the nineteenth century from concerns over empire and

slavery and empire built on slavery. As Walter Johnson has explained, “the liberties promised by Jefferson’s vision” of an agrarian, republican Mississippi River valley “depended upon racial conquest” (4). For early U.S. political figures like Jefferson, Johnson explains, the Mississippi offered fulfillment “in the shape of a republic of independent, smallholding farmers” but such fulfillment could only arise on the back of slave labor and imperialist, continental expansion that took over the lands of indigenous tribes (4-5). The Mississippi and its tributaries arguably, then, embody the shadowy underbelly of U.S. civic ideals. What Thomas Jefferson understood as the foundation for “yeoman’s republic” developed, by turns, into an ““empire for liberty”” and a “Cotton Kingdom” (Johnson 5). The ideological shift implied by these terminological alterations should be clear: Republic becomes empire only to turn into a monarchy. The transformation for the name of the geographic space defined, in part, by the Mississippi and its tributaries, chronicles a trajectory that moves the political and civic ideals of the United States further and further from those articulated in the Declaration. That the civic fitness of men who worked these rivers, who engaged in labor that reinforced slavery and empire against democratic egalitarianism, should be met with suspicion in antebellum literary culture therefore becomes less surprising. The impediment to the civic integration of the rivermen imagined by these texts is not recalcitrance or revolutionary politics—the attributes of oceanic sailors that put them at odds with the body politic in antebellum political and social discourse—but rather the rivermen’s complicity in inegalitarian institutions and endeavors. Outside of Thoreau, at a far remove from the Mississippi and its river workers, these authors did not find in their rivermen emblems of extant U.S. civic ideals or alternative ideals, like Cooper or Melville, or emblems of civic impossibility, like the authors of pirate narratives. They found instead something messier—

figures integral to the economic viability of the nation but often inextricably linked to the nation's most oppressive attributes.

## 6.0 LABORERS AND SEASICK HUMANITY: THE MARINER AND THE IMMIGRANT IN U.S. LITERARY CULTURE SINCE THE CIVIL WAR

But what happens to the sailor in U.S. literary culture after the Civil War? They do not entirely disappear, but they become less prominent. Certain texts like the Mississippi writings of Twain—most notably *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) contain rivermen and depict, in certain notable cases, life and work upon a major waterway. There are also the works of Jack London, who counts at least one major sea narrative in his oeuvre, *The Sea-Wolf* (1904). The paucity of important maritime literature increases even more in the twentieth century. *The Caine Mutiny* (1952) and *Far Tortuga* (1975) constitute two of the very few important sea narratives of twentieth-century U.S. literary culture and, unlike the works examined throughout the earlier chapters, they come from authors hardly known as maritime writers.<sup>cx</sup>

Nevertheless, the texts bear scrutiny. Through them, a very different portrait of the mariner than that found during the antebellum period emerges, for the mariners here have become not a site for speculation about who or what belongs in the national body politic or about how the U.S. should define philosophical, civic abstracts like justice, tyranny, or the limits of individual rights. Even the most explicitly political—London's *The Sea Wolf* (1904)—is less complicated in its political musings than Cooper or Melville. What becomes central in these texts is, actually, maritime labor as a subject itself—these narratives all dwell on the spectacle of men, and occasionally women, working at sea. Yet, as I'll show, this attention to the labor of sailors is,

at best, inconsistently motivated by a desire to conceive of the sailor's place within the U.S. body politic. Moreover, what political motivations these authors do have seem hardly concerned with the sailor herself or himself but rather with abstract and allegorical concerns. In other words, while antebellum maritime narratives articulated arguments about the merits of sailors as citizens, those of the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries attend to the minutiae of maritime life as an end itself rather than for ruminations about U.S. civic life—a change that I would like to suggest derives, in part at least, from the sailor's diminished role as a civic question mark and wild card during the era in which the United States experienced a great influx of immigrants that encouraged debates about citizenship in the U.S. to take a different track.

Before moving on to these novels, however, I would like to make a few larger points about trends in maritime culture throughout the admittedly long period that this conclusion covers briefly. To begin, this dissertation considers the representation of sailors as citizens in a primarily, though not exclusively, U.S. American context. The claims made here about waning interest in the maritime narrative from both a popular audience and aesthetic tinkerers beginning in the late nineteenth century hardly apply to authors outside the U.S. The English-language maritime authors read most widely beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing through the twentieth century—Robert Louis Stevenson, C. S. Forester, Rafael Sabatini, and Patrick O'Brien, for instance—hailed from the United Kingdom.<sup>cxix</sup> The maritime setting also proved integral to the emergence of literary modernism through the works of Joseph Conrad. It is, perhaps, unsurprising that residents of an island nation would pay continued attention to sailors and the sea, particularly, as that nation saw the decline of a global empire made possible by a large navy and numerous merchant vessels.<sup>cxii</sup> Therefore, what transpired in U.S. literary culture *vis à vis* the sailor is not, precisely, a global phenomenon but rather an American one.



Of course, the shift I describe here in U.S. literary culture is arguably consigned to that niche alone, as other media, namely film, took up maritime narratives and the exploration of mariners as citizens in the twentieth century. Naming noteworthy U.S. maritime films from the twentieth century is certainly easier than naming noteworthy U.S. maritime novels from the same period. Yet many of these films are adaptations of popular or at least well-known nineteenth- and twentieth-century Euro-American maritime narratives. In fact, *most* notable maritime films began life as novels: *Captain Blood* (1935), *Captains Courageous* (1937), *The Sea Hawk* (1940), *The Sea Wolf* (1941), *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954), *The Caine Mutiny* (1954), *Mister Roberts* (1955), etc. all appeared in print before making it to the screen and, many of these are as well known as literary works as they are as cinematic ones. Few original and moderately popular maritime films appeared during the second-half of the twentieth century. The last two decades have seen some—*Waterworld* (1995) and *The Life Aquatic* (2004), for instance—but more prestigious—and originally literary—counterparts like *The Life of Pi* (2012) or *Master and Commander* (2003) have arguably overshadowed them. Moreover, both *Waterworld* and *The Life Aquatic* maintain a presence in the cultural lexicon as punch-lines, existing, in critical circles, as emblems of hubris and attenuated talent, respectively. U.S. film culture has, therefore, produced a body of original maritime narratives, but most of these narratives lack the cultural cachet among the public and critics afforded to the literary maritime narratives of the nineteenth century.

This decline in the production of literary maritime narratives in the United States and a concomitant shift in interest away from the mariner as citizen perhaps derives from the increased attention, from the late-nineteenth century onward, to the sailor as laborer. Certainly, maritime literature has a longstanding interest in a mariner's work. It is not something that develops *sui*

*generis* in the late nineteenth century, as even a cursory glance at exceedingly early western sea narratives upholds. *The Odyssey*, for instance, begins thusly: “Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns/Driven time and again off course, once he had plundered/The hallowed heights of Troy./... But he could not save [his men] from disaster, hard as he strove—/... Launch out on his story, Muse, daughter of Zeus,/Start from where you will... (Homer 1-12). The speaker’s references to the “twists and turns,” to being “driven off course”, to Odysseus’s “striv[ing]” each implicate the work of the sailor, though in abstract and indirect terms. Nevertheless, maritime labor—the labor here specifically against the elements (and, obviously, the gods)—peeks through speaker’s foggy narration and even becomes a metaphor for the literary enterprise embarked upon here. After all, the speaker demands that the Muse, at the end of this first stanza, help “launch” the narrative.

Margaret Cohen has chronicled the emphasis on maritime labor, which she characterizes in artisanal terms as “craft” or “effective practice and human ingenuity” (*Novel* 15). Throughout her *The Novel and the Sea* (2010) she traces the literary representation of craft, and, while effective, I think her examination of craft lacks a certain nuance.<sup>exiii</sup> Namely, by focusing solely on craft, she tends to overlook the way in which the political dimensions of the seafarer’s life often accompany both his or her abilities as a sailor and the types of sea labor he or she carries out. In turn, this obscures a shift in the late nineteenth century from politically and civically motivated sea narratives that prominently feature the skill-set of a sailor to narratives focused almost entirely upon the labor at the expense of civic concerns about the sailor.

Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi*, for instance, provides an exceedingly specific and extended description of the river-mariner’s work. Aside from the historical and geological discussions appearing at the very beginning, in fact, the first half of the narrative consists almost

entirely of commentary on Twain's experiences as a young man learning the work of piloting a steamship upon the Mississippi River. This description suggests that *Life on the Mississippi* constitutes a memoir, an intimation reinforced by the title.<sup>cxiv</sup> Yet the narrative concerns itself only a little with the minutiae of Twain's life or the broad, ethnographic details of communities along the Mississippi. Instead, we encounter intricate descriptions of Twain's education as a pilot. At times, he establishes a hierarchy of skills required by the pilot, as in his assertion that "there is one faculty which a pilot must incessantly cultivate until he has brought it to absolute perfection. ... That faculty is memory" (115). At other times, he enumerates the animate and inanimate dangers to the steamships, characterizing the white logs that float occasionally upon the river as "ugly customer[s] when the daylight is gone" and noting that the "swarm of prodigious timber rafts... , coal barges... , little trading scows... , and broad-horns" elicited a "mortal hatred" on the part of steamboats' crews (101). Such details provide the foundation for the early part of his narrative. Twain may achieve evocative, if momentary, descriptions of the world inhabited by the pilots and the boats, as in his account of steamships overtaking smaller river craft—"the red glare from our furnaces would reveal the scow and the form of the gesticulating orator as if under a lightning flash"—or in the salty language of those gesticulating orators.

Nevertheless, these moments, where lyrical images emerge, occur only occasionally. The remainder of the early part of this narrative consists of passages like the following, wherein he details the work done by the pilot and the steamship crew:

Sounding is done in this way. The boat ties up at the shore, just above the shoal crossing; the pilot not on watch takes his "cub" or steersman and a picked crew of men (sometimes an officer also), and goes out in the yawl—provided the boat has not that rare and

sumptuous luxury, a regularly-devised “sounding boat”—and proceeds to hunt for the best water, the pilot on duty watching his movements through a spy-glass, meantime, and in some instances assisting by signals of the boat’s whistle, signifying “try higher up” or “try lower down”; for the surface of the water, like an oil-painting, is more expressive and intelligible when inspected from a little distance than very close at hand. (109)

This particular passage—as well as the its continuation in the text—proves emblematic of Twain’s narrative tendencies. Twain here chronicles the initial steps of the sounding, employing the long, dense second sentence to establish the first two maneuvers involved in the practice. Although he throws much material at his reader here, Twain nevertheless manages to shape the passage as something like a manual. The components of that second sentence are certainly numerous, but Twain uses semi-colons—particularly the first—to great effect. In a sense, he partitions the two key steps—anchoring the steamboat and taking the yawl into the river—so as to suggest that they both comprise their own, distinct activities and make up one unit within the larger process of sounding. After all, this passage continues on in the narrative for the better part of the chapter, with Twain parsing the elements of sounding out into steps and sub-steps by way of paragraphs and punctuation.

However, Twain does not simply use specific grammatical and structural techniques here to help his readers imagine the procedures of shoal-sounding, since he also consistently clarifies and refines his procedural description. After all, the passage consists almost entirely of two main points: They anchor the ship and a small crew enters the river to measure its depth at various points. Yet the description distends due to Twain’s interruptive, parenthetical syntax, which render the second sentence convoluted but also impresses upon the reader the vagaries of maritime labor. This passage packs itself full of labor. The tying up of the steamboat, the

gathering of a crew, the going out in another boat, the hunting for “the best water,” the watching of one ship’s actions by someone on the other boat, and the communication via whistle. There may be two or three steps to the sounding in this paragraph, but there are two or three times as many actions. The emphasis is, then, unmistakably upon the *work* of the sailors. It is decidedly not upon the surroundings or the beauty of the river (tossed in here only in a parenthetical simile) or upon the way shipboard society reflects that within a national body politic.

Elsewhere in this narrative, Twain makes it clear that this situation is precisely his point. The second half of the narrative, focusing not on Twain’s work aboard steamships but rather upon his return to the river and ships of his youth *as a traveler*, may provide more extended descriptions of the Mississippi scenery: “The hills were clothed with fresh foliage of spring now, and were a gracious and worthy setting for the broad river flowing between. Our trip began auspiciously, with a perfect day, as to breeze and sunshine, and our boat threw the miles out behind her with satisfactory despatch” (185). Such passages are rare early on. Twain makes this necessity of this situation plain in describing the goal of the first part of *Life on the Mississippi*: “Whosoever has done me the courtesy to read my chapters which have preceded this may possibly wonder that I deal so minutely with piloting as a science. It was the prime purposes of those chapters...” (97). Although this statement about the content of the narrative’s first part is accurate, it overlooks or, at least, underplays one of the other central goals of the narrative’s first part. In a sense, Twain doesn’t just hope to describe the minutiae of the mariner’s work aboard a Mississippi steamboat; he also wants his reader’s situation in regard to the river to reflect that of the mariner. He hopes his readers see the river as the river mariner sees it, which is to say not at all: “[T]he romance and the beauty were all gone from the river. All the value any feature of it had for me now was the amount of usefulness it could furnish toward compassing the safe

piloting of a steamboat. ... Does he ever see her beauty at all, or does n't he simply view her professionally ...?" (96).<sup>cxv</sup> Working as a mariner, then, consists of precisely that—labor. The scenery drops away. The landscape becomes a source of information rather than romantic inspiration.

Consequently, work replaces aesthetic contemplation and, implicitly, anything else. The riverman consists of and is consumed by his work. The life of the river mariner consists of work and work alone. It is not politically-inflected life; the steamship does not, speak to the sailor's place within the body politic, as the boats of antebellum maritime literature did.<sup>cxvi</sup> Life aboard ships lacks civic motivation, according to narratives like *Life on the Mississippi*. Certainly, Twain's text gestures toward such concerns. He describes, for instance, an early impetus for becoming a pilot as the "recent exploration of the river Amazon by an expedition sent out by our government" (68), implying, therefore, that his interest in working upon the river found at least a modicum of motivation from a civic desire to serve his country. Yet the narrative makes clear that this expedition in no way instigates Twain's career as a professional mariner. After all, he explains in an earlier chapter that, "when [he] was a boy, there was but one permanent ambition among [his] comrades in [their] village... . That was, to be a steamboatman" (64). The expedition to the Amazon might have demonstrated a practical way by which he might become a steamboatman, but it did not establish the desire.

There is no civic dimension to working aboard a ship, as Twain represents it. In fact, in much the same way that the mariner appears disconnected from the landscape of the river and its valleys in the passage cited earlier, the steamboatman also seems alienated from the concerns of the body politic. Working aboard the steamboats *does* establish one's connection to the nation-state inasmuch as the steamboats received some oversight from the government, but Twain

establishes that the oversight is exceedingly limited. Describing the way in which a steersman acquires his pilot license, for instance, Twain explains that “two pilots ... could get a pilot’s license for [the steersman] by signing an application directed to the United States Inspector. Nothing further was needed; usually no questions were asked, no proofs of capacity required” (129). The work of the steamboatmen thereby operates within the purview of the U.S. government but, as the three negatives in the final sentence quoted above underscore, only nominally so. Moreover, the bureaucracy that governs the operations of steamboats and the regulations governing the treatment of rivermen falls outside the U.S. government, as described by Twain. As he notes, “a dozen of the boldest ... pilots on the river ... got a special charter from the legislature, with large powers, under the name of the Pilots’ Benevolent Association; elected their own officers, completed their organization...” (129). The events described here on the one hand read like the establishment of an incorporated entity not unlike a company (all the more so when we note that these pilots also “contributed capital” to the Association) (129). On the other hand, the group established here, with its elections, its “by-laws,” and its “large powers” granted by the legislature, operates as a sort of parallel government (129). The steamboats and steamboatmen are ungoverned by the state; they have formed their own and, as the corporatist implications of the language quoted above suggests, it is a state that focuses on work and labor.

Therefore, Twain’s steamships in *Life on the Mississippi* provide a reprieve from the concerns governing one’s place as a citizen within the social and political hierarchy of the United States.<sup>cxvii</sup> It does not magnify and worry these issues, as the ships of Cooper or Melville or Klauprecht or any number of the long-forgotten authors of pirate narratives do. This sense of the steamships as somehow transcending the political derives, perhaps, from Twain’s only slightly-

tongue-in-cheek belief in the apolitical utopia of the steamboat, at least as far as the pilot is concerned. Twain remarks, for instance, that,

In truth, every man and woman and child has a master, and worries and frets in servitude; but in the day [he writes] of, the Mississippi pilot had *none*. The captain could stand upon the hurricane deck, in the pomp of a very brief authority, and give him five or six orders while the vessel backed into the stream, and then that skipper's reign was over. (122)

There exists little friction here between the various members of the boat's crew. Each has a role to serve, the narrative suggests but none wields the omnipotence of a sovereign—a situation drastically different from the hierarchies on display in the novels of Cooper and Melville. It is worth noting here that on the ship, as imagined by Twain, power is dispersed. The captain may hold it momentarily, but it then reverts back to the pilot and crew. After all, this passage instead of casting the pilot as supreme master aboard the steamboat suggests instead that there is no master. The pilot may control the maneuvers of the ship as it ascends and descends the river, but Twain gives little sense that he has authority over the other members of the ship. I would suggest that, in some ways, this representation of the ship aims at an egalitarian utopia, but I don't know that Twain's narrative quite supports this. True, the ships portrayed in this text lack a hierarchical structure, even if said structures existed on real steamboats. Nevertheless, there is no sense that the ships have aimed at creating a space that lives up to the ideals of equality or liberty articulated in the nation's founding documents. We should not read the steamboat in *Life on the Mississippi* as some national allegory—another ship of state. If the boat, as represented by Twain, suggests a society of mariners on equal footing with one another, it is not political or civil equality. In other words, it is not because the crew all share the same rights and privileges. It is



instead because they are all rivermen. Their work—because they all work aboard the ship—renders them equals.

Jack London's *The Sea-Wolf* does not adopt such a romantic view of maritime labor, but, like Twain, he focuses his novel on the sailors as laborers rather than on their situation within the U.S. political economy. Picking up Maud Brewster and other castaways from her ship, for instance, Wolf Larsen introduces himself to them by stating the following: "Three oilers and a fourth engineer, ... [b]ut we'll make sailors out of them, or boat-pullers at any rate" (*Sea-Wolf* 115). Larsen understands these individuals not by their national allegiances or by their social or political standing but rather by their usefulness as laborers. In a moment, he strips them of their civic character and characterizes them according to their skills and their skills alone. It appears, then, that Larsen's attention focuses solely on the work that he can retrieve from his crew. He may be "just reading Browning" and finding it "pretty tough" (*Sea-Wolf* 57)—he may have an intellectual curiosity that has led him to dabble with Herbert Spencer's writings (*Sea-Wolf* 56)—but he's less pleased by these pastimes it seems than others. For instance, Humphrey van Weyden finds Larsen at work in his state-room one morning and finds himself "greeted ... genially" (*Sea-Wolf* 65). The amiable welcome is, to a degree, out of the ordinary for the gruff Larsen, and, importantly, it derives not from van Weyden's presence but rather from what Larsen has just finished working on—a tool that will allow "a child ... to navigate a ship. No more long-winded calculations. All you need is one star in the sky on a dirty night to know instantly where you are" (65). Yet it's worth noting that Larsen is not tickled with himself here due to his ingenuity or due to what seems to be his ability to design a fairly innovative tool. Instead, he is pleased because the tool will be a "labor-saving device for mariners" (*Sea-Wolf* 65). Larsen's sense of the sailor, then, is one filtered through their labor. Even in viewing himself he must

focus his energies on labor, as his devising a navigational device demonstrates. The men on the boat, himself included, exist for no other purpose than to work.<sup>cxviii</sup>

Larsen's focus on the labor of his men is judicious; he is the captain of the *Ghost*, after all. Yet the other characters in the narrative reinforce the idea that one's duty upon a ship is to work and work hard. For example, we encounter Johansen explaining to van Weyden that he expects to never be free from laboring: "we work from the time we are born until we die" (*Sea-Wolf* 85). Life is work, Johansen believes, and this idea more or less holds sway over the ship.

The only individual taken aback by the concept is the narrator, van Weyden, who is not a sailor and is, in fact, accustomed to spending his time as a passenger aboard vessels and not a worker. Consequently, the claims made on him—that he replace a sailor who died shortly after the *Ghost* embarked in order to earn his place on the ship—result in his characterizations of his labor as "involuntary servitude" (*Sea-Wolf* 27) and of Wolf Larsen as an "enslaver and tormentor of men" (*Sea-Wolf* 152). To be fair, Larsen arguably extorts van Weyden's labor. The latter did not contract to work aboard the *Ghost*. Nevertheless, Larsen's expectation that van Weyden should pay for his rescue and return to the U.S. by working is only slightly unreasonable, considering the capitalistic mania that Larsen evinces.

van Weyden serves, then, as a counterpoint to the other sailors aboard the ship, who, even when resisting their treatment aboard the ship, do little to challenge the extant hierarchy or the infringements made on their rights, liberties, and freedoms. They may agitate, in other words, but their agitation is hardly political and, only minimally class-oriented. For example, towards the middle of the novel, members of the crew attempt a mutiny. Although far from petty, the dual origins of the mutiny are disconnected from the idea of life aboard a ship as a life of labor. Resistance begins in the grumbling of Johnson, who makes "hasty talk" about the "inferior

quality” of goods in the ship’s slop-chest (“a sort of a miniature dry-goods store”) (*Sea-Wolf* 73). These complaints result in Johnson’s severe beating at the hands of Larsen, which beating then instigates the mutiny.

In some ways, this series of events resembles the mutinous events aboard the ship in Melville’s *White-Jacket*, in which mistreatment of sailors (their flogging) and arbitrary rules (the necessity of shaving one’s beard) lead to agitation among the crew. Yet I think it worth noting that this series of events also differs significantly from those in Melville’s novel. In that book, most notably, the treatment agitated against is unexceptional. Captain Claret may be slightly more authoritarian than other literary captains, but he operates within the set regulations of naval conduct. In other words, he *can* flog his crew; such punishment was common practice. Larsen’s behavior, on the other hand, like his character as a whole, is entirely out of the ordinary. His response to Johnson’s complaints is not standard-operating-procedure; the beating, Larsen explains, falls outside “ship discipline” (*Sea-Wolf* 74). Thus, the attempt at mutiny is not so much a response to existing power structures or rules governing the treatment of sailors aboard merchant ships—it’s in response to the outrageous behavior of a man set up as an exceptional figure and not a representative of a broader coalition of sea-captains.<sup>cxix</sup> The resistance is, then, not born from some dissatisfaction with the lot of the sailor aboard a ship. Johnson does not agitate because the power structure allows Larsen to beat him; he agitates as vengeance for the beating itself. Even his instigating complaint—that the oil skins in the slop chest were of inferior quality—derives not from some larger issue facing mariners but rather from the particulars of this case. In other words, Johnson gets upset that the oil-skins are shoddy and not because “whatever a sailor purchases is taken from his subsequent earnings” (*Sea-Wolf* 73). There is no

concern with the abstract political implications of this situation; there is only concern with the present situation.

Although I hesitate to suggest that London seeks in this novel to portray his seamen as divested of any political motivations and concerns, at times *The Sea-Wolf* reads that way. Events with civic and political ramifications do transpire, but, as that description suggests, politics and citizenship are, at best, extensions of the events of the novel rather than a part of them. Take, for instance, a conversation between Larsen and van Weyden early in the novel, wherein the former notes that van Weyden's concern about ethics represents "the first time [he...] had heard the word ... in the mouth of a man" (*Sea-Wolf* 55). The discussions these two men have about ethics and morality certainly broach issues germane to the realm of practical political concerns. To say that ethics and moral philosophy have had little impact on theories of citizenship and political governance would be foolish. Yet the conversations Larsen and van Weyden have remain abstract and philosophical in their entirety. The concepts of ethics or morality—or, elsewhere, justice and liberty—are divested of political character and remain transcendental universals with no relation to the men existing in proximity to a nation-state. It's as if the men on the ship, like the men on the steamboats of Twain's narrative, have found a reprieve from the typical governing structures (though here the mariners hardly find an egalitarian utopia). Civic or political concerns are not even a part of the mariners' vocabularies, as Larsen suggests and as later developments—such as the concepts of individual rights to liberty or actual national governments infiltrating the ship through another outsider, Maud Brewster (137, 173). As in Twain, then, the ship becomes not a space to take exception with the existing political and civic orders of the United States; it is a space excepted from those orders.<sup>cxx</sup>

Of course, what I characterize here as exception from the political—the focus on the sailor as worker instead of as citizen—might be understood as approaching the politics of the maritime from a different direction. In other words, this focus on the sailor’s labor might operate as indirect commentary on the civic, political dimensions of the sailor. For instance, the sailor featured prominently in Progressive Era debates about workers’ rights, and, as Leon Fink has noted, one of the defining pieces of Progressive legislation—the La Follette Act of 1915—was otherwise known as the U.S. Seaman’s Act (93). To talk about the sailor’s labor, in other words, was to also talk about their place within the body politic. The conversation may have shifted from whether to include them within the body politic to how to include them and what rights and freedoms their inclusion assured, but, to a degree, discussing a sailor’s labor was to discuss his political dimensions.

However, I would nevertheless argue that this focus on the sailor’s labor—particularly in *The Sea-Wolf* and *Life on the Mississippi*—lacks the focus on the sailor as citizen found in the antebellum texts explored earlier in this dissertation. In other words, although the labor of the seaman has a political and civic valence, it does not approach such matters with the same depth. A consideration of the sailor as worker and citizen *can* and *does* occur in the maritime literature, but it does so only sporadically. Eugene O’Neill’s *The Hairy Ape* (1922) offers, perhaps, the most significant example of this. Set aboard a transatlantic liner and in New York, the play begins with a tableau of the working conditions of the modern mariner—“a cramped space in the bowels of a ship, imprisoned by white steel” (O’Neill 956). Yet the activities performed there hardly constitute the work of the sailor, as the men do not labor as the curtain rises but drink. Certainly, the play takes on the representation of labor; scene three takes place at the stokehole, the men “stripped to the waist ... before the furnace doors” (O’Neill 960). Yet *The Hairy Ape*

seems to take up labor only insofar as it has political dimensions. Jailed, for instance, the protagonist Yank hears about a Senator Queen who casts aspersions upon the Industrial Workers of the World, characterizing the Wobblies as “a menace ... which threatens the vitals of our fair Republic” and better deserves the appellation “the Industrious Wreckers of the World” (O’Neill 966). *The Hairy Ape* therefore situates the labor of its mariners within the framework of U.S. political debates in the early twentieth century, while texts like *The Sea-Wolf* and *Life on the Mississippi* do not. The labor in those narratives only serves as spectacle.

In O’Neill’s play, then, in a medium that relies upon spectacle, the sailor’s labor finds itself connected to the civic dimensions of the sailor. Work *is* political here. Yet the sailor as citizen and laborer seems to make his or her appearance in this isolated incident. The reason for *The Hairy Ape*’s appearance is not entirely clear. In other words, it remains uncertain *why* this particular play appears at this moment. Given its appearance in 1922, we might hazard a guess that the political climate made a return of interest in the civic dimensions of sailors more likely. After all, *The Hairy Ape* emerges out of the period following the Progressive Era and the Russian Revolution. Still, *The Hairy Ape* appears anomalous in the annals of canonical U.S. literature of the twentieth century and the political climate hardly helps us answer *why* sailors become the laborers of choice in a text about labor and citizenship.

The major U.S. sea narratives of the later twentieth century demonstrate less interest in the sailor as laborer than those of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, while simultaneously continuing those narratives’ trend of developing the ship and the sea as an apolitical if imaginative space. Herman Wouk’s mid-century prize-winner *The Caine Mutiny* proves most conspicuous in this regard, particularly given its title. The mariners in the novel—particularly Willie Keith, the central figure—hardly question the hierarchical structures of the

U.S. Navy or the way their work aboard a naval vessel affect their civic standing within the body politic. For a novel that, presumably, centers upon the mutinous actions of the crew aboard a navy minesweeper during World War II a considerable amount of the narrative focuses on the romantic struggles of Willie Keith. Wouk renders life aboard the *Caine* in detail and a portion of the novel devotes itself both to the supposed mutiny and the resulting court martial.<sup>cxxi</sup> Nevertheless, *The Caine Mutiny* is a bildungsroman, chronicling the on-going maturation—particularly the romantic maturation—of Keith. The mutiny itself is not a central concern of the narrative—or rather the political and civic ramifications of mutiny aboard a wartime ship is not a central concern. Rather, the mutiny and its aftereffects serves as a series of events that merely parallel and reinforce those that occur between Willie and his love interest, May Wynn. The novel may have a somewhat cynical core, but this cynicism is directed not towards social and political institutions and structures that distribute power unevenly. It's directed towards the duplicity of individuals capable of dissimulating in order to manipulate those around them. Wouk might have imbued such concerns with a sense that this movement from ignorance to knowledge in regard to individual duplicity provided a metaphor for Willie's relationship to being a mariner-seaman in the mid-twentieth century, but he does not. The novel winds up reading like an even more apolitical version of the later countercultural artifact *The Last Detail* (1973).

Like *Caine*, *Life on the Mississippi*, or *The Sea-Wolf*, Matthiessen's *Far Tortuga* (1975) too exists as a sea narrative whose concerns hardly overlap with U.S. political or civic life, though, certainly, this novel has an obvious reason for this short-coming—it's set in the Caribbean with an exclusively Caribbean group of characters. As such, what political and civic concerns the novel travels in relate more to the specific political and social conditions affecting

Caribbean islands during the Cold War. For instance, towards the middle of the novel, the men aboard the *Eden* spot some people on land near the mouth of the Coco River, and, surveying them, the captain, Raib Avers, comments that they are “prob’ly ... refugees from some goddom place. ... In times gone back, a mon would go to help people, but in dese days dey too many dat needs help” (139). This moment, much like the one several pages later, in which a couple of the mariners discuss “Che in Guatemala” and how “Jamaicans. Haiti. People starvin, and dey goin to de States,” focuses on the disruption throughout the Caribbean and central American regions following decolonization and the Cold War (150, 151).<sup>cxxii</sup> There are questions of citizenship here and they relate not just to Caribbean nations, since some of the refugees “from some goddom place” wind up in the United States, yet the civic concerns about emigration and immigration raised at this particular moment in the narrative remain unresolved. They receive momentary attention and then fade back into the narrative. As much as the late-nineteenth century narratives discussed above, this novel is concerned not with the political ramifications of sea labor but rather with that labor itself and its hazardous potential. The novel chronicles the death of the men aboard the *Eden*; it deals with the ease with which the Caribbean fishermen meet death.

That said, *Far Tortuga* might give us some sense of why literary mariners since the late nineteenth century have been little used for exploring the dimensions of civic life in the United States. In that short passage referred to above, wherein the characters describe the migration of Caribbean and Latin American people towards the U.S., we catch sight of one of the major, on-going conversations within the realm of U.S. citizenship—how immigrants and refugees fit within the body politic. What I am tracking as a waning interest in the sailor as a U.S. citizen, in spite of on-going civic issues raised by both naval and merchant seafaring, begins in earnest



during the years in which immigration to the United States first from Europe but then later from the eastern and southern hemispheres began to increase rapidly, during the years in which migrants became a key archetype for literature that broached civic concerns.<sup>cxxiii</sup>

Where U.S. seamen once were suspect as citizens due to their contact with social, political, and national formations very different from those found in the United States, immigrants offered authors and readers alike a new set of civic concerns. In some ways, the issue of immigration had long been a part of sea narratives and certainly part of what caused many to question the validity of the mariner as citizen. People from other nations had always filled U.S. ships and contact with them and their ideals were suspect. When immigration became a driving concern, the interest in sailors' civic viability waned. From the perspective of the ruling classes, immigrants and their radical politics represented a much graver threat to U.S. institutions than sailors did; the immigrants' fitness for the body politic thus took over much of the conversation about U.S. citizenship.

In her *Constituting Americans* (1995), for instance, Priscilla Wald notes the way in which U.S. "narratives of the nation" of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries "explicitly cast the challenge posed by heterogeneity to the integrity of America as a challenge to the existence of Americans" and such concern over heterogeneity often centered on the growth of immigrant populations in the United States (204). She explains: "Memories of the Civil War invested immigrant ghettos ... with potentially treacherous national divisiveness" (204). As such descriptions suggest, the immigrant became a primary focal point of civic crises during the era in which the sailor's complication of the concept of the citizen diminished in the public imaginary.

Moreover, the language describing the threat of the immigrant and his or her radical politics echoes the characterizations of the sailors as bad citizens during the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries. For instance, during the period preceding the passage of the Immigration Act of 1903, also known as the Anarchist Exclusion Act, the equation of anarchist to immigrant circulated throughout the culture, suggesting that the immigrant took over as symbol of dangerous political radicalism that had formerly inhered in the sailor. Terminology once used to describe the rebellious sailors of the Atlantic even began to appear in connection with the immigrant. Assistant Attorney General of the United States James Beck, for example, delivered a speech, “The Suppression of Anarchy,” before the New York State Bar Association in 1902, in which he opens his remarks by reminding his audience of “a recent occurrence within the borders of the Empire State” that “has given [the audience] both a vital and tragic interest” in the subject” (190)—the assassination of President McKinley in Buffalo, NY, in September 1901 by an anarchist. Although the assassin was a U.S. citizen, Leon Czolgosz’s parents had immigrated to the United States from Poland, giving him an aura of the outsider. In fact, President Theodore Roosevelt’s first annual message to Congress (1901) makes clear that the sense of Czolgosz as an immigrant analogue had taken hold: Roosevelt took the opportunity in that speech not only to castigate Czolgosz as “a professed anarchist, inflamed by the teachings of professed anarchists” but also to launch a condemnation of “unsatisfactory” immigration laws that did not screen for anarchists (Roosevelt).

Given this connection, then, between the anarchist and the immigrant in the cultural and political imagination of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Beck’s later characterization of the anarchist-immigrant as “this hydra-headed monster of murderous malevolence” can help us see the way in which the radicalized immigrant, and therefore the immigrant more broadly, replaced the radicalized sailor, and therefore the sailor more broadly, as an object of civic scorn (190). As Linebaugh and Rediker have noted, after all, this figure—the

hydra, the hydra-headed monster, the many-headed hydra—served as a viable and widely-disseminated metaphor for the problem posed by radical sailors and pirates between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (Linebaugh and Rediker 3-4). Although the term operated more broadly to describe the “difficulty of imposing order on increasingly global systems of labor,” the term nevertheless connotes a sense of the maritime: Hydra was born of a monstrous chimera and a tempest or hurricane (Linebaugh and Rediker 3, 2). To call the anarchist-coded-as-immigrant a hydra, then, is to recall the threats to civil society from the previous century—sailors and pirates.

Such a situation suggests that, during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the immigrant, due to his or her potential for radicalism supposedly at odds with U.S. civic ideals as well as his or her exponential increase in numbers within the boundaries of the United States, became what the sailor had been before. Yet this characterization is, perhaps, a bit misleading, as there remains a maritime dimension to the immigrant just as there had been for the sailor. The immigrant, who much of the time required transoceanic travel to arrive in the United States, has ties to the ship, to the sea. Anzia Yezierska reinforces this idea in her “How I Found America,” characterizing her immigrants metonymically as “steerage—dirty bundles—foul odors—seasick humanity” (158). Abraham Cahan takes this connection between the immigrant passenger and the seaman a step further, as his David Levinsky announces himself not just “one of a multitude of steerage passengers on a Bremen steamship on [his] way to New York” but as “a good sailor” (85). Perhaps, then, we might see what transpires in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries not as a shift *from* sailor *to* immigrant as a locus of civic concern but rather as a shift in the source of concern over the maritime’s influence on the body politic. In other words, the aquatic spaces of the world still introduce the threat to the nation-state but the vessels

introducing those threats have changed. No longer do the mariners of the age of sail pose a threat; by the early twentieth-century, it had become the passengers in the age of steam.

## NOTES

<sup>i</sup> That the Constitution includes a delineation of rights as a series of appended amendments has a logical explanation. The framers of the Constitution considered the rights of U.S. citizens important. Those who challenged the inclusion of the Bill of Rights, in fact, couch their resistance in terms that promote the necessity of inalienable rights. In “Federalist No. 84” (1788), Alexander Hamilton clearly articulates the position of those opposed to the inclusion of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution: “I ... affirm that bills of rights ... are unnecessary in the proposed Constitution but would even be dangerous. They would contain various exceptions to powers which are not granted; and, on this very account, would afford a colorable pretext to claim more than were granted” (513). In other words, Hamilton posits that, by delineating the rights that the government may not infringe, the Bill of Rights may ultimately limit the rights that citizens can claim in that, historically, they are understood as “reservations of rights not surrendered to the prince” (512-13). If a right goes unprotected by the Bill of Rights, goes the reasoning, it goes unprotected once and for all.

<sup>ii</sup> Thomas’s *Civic Myths: A Law-and-Literature Approach to Citizenship* (2007), Levander’s *Cradle of Liberty: Race, Child, and National Belonging from Thomas Jefferson to W. E. B. Du Bois* (2006), Crane’s *Race, Citizenship, and Law in American Literature* (2002), and Wald’s *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (1995) are all fine books addressing the issues of antebellum citizenship and literature.

<sup>iii</sup> The British order in council of November 11, 1807, stipulated that all U.S. merchant vessels intent upon trading with continental Europe must enter “British ports to pay for permission” to conduct said trade (Kaplan 200). The common sailor had little investment in a vessel’s cargo by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although earlier seamen employed the share system, which allotted a certain amount of the ship’s cargo or proceeds to each sailor depending upon rank, this compensatory system became increasingly uncommon by the early eighteenth century (Rediker *Between* 117-9). By that time, only “fishing, whaling, and privateering expeditions” used this method of payment (Rediker *Between* 118). Instead, the eighteenth century witnessed the growth of the monthly wage as the “most common form of money payment for deep-sea sailors” (Rediker *Between* 119).

<sup>iv</sup> Jefferson’s actions as president reinforce this position. Faced with the *Chesapeake-Leopard* affair, Jefferson initially responded to the breach of his nation’s neutrality rights—a British vessel had fired upon and British officers had boarded an American ship to impress seamen—in a manner that one historian has characterized as “meek” (Kaplan 200). Further, his eventual and more significant response resulted in the Embargo of 1807, a “face-saving means” of dealing with the success Great Britain, primarily, had had “bann[ing] American commerce from the seas” (Kaplan 200).

<sup>v</sup> Neither Jefferson nor Adams demonstrate concern about the nationally heterogeneous make-up of ships’ crews. However, their colleague and peer, James Madison, did, encouraging Congress to pass a law that would have resulted in the “navigation of American vessels exclusively by American seamen” and therefore restricting if not removing the heterogeneity of many ship’s crews (Madison *Message* 1). Linebaugh and Rediker describe in detail both this tendency of

sailors as well as the tendency of the state to try to suppress it in their *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (2000).

<sup>vi</sup> Defoe's *An Essay Upon Projects* discusses projecting in ways very similar to Franklin—projects are largely marine-based and developed for the public good: “Projects of the nature I treat about are doubtless in general of public advantage, as they tend to improvement of trade, and employment of the poor, and the circulation and increase of the public stock of the kingdom; but this is supposed of such as are built on the honest basis of ingenuity and improvement, in which, though I will allow the author to aim primarily at his own advantage, yet with the circumstances of public benefit added” (23-4).

<sup>vii</sup> Roland, Bolster, and Keyssar's *The Way of the Ship* provides a useful overview of North American maritime commerce between the colonial period and the relative present. The framework of their analysis remains, perhaps, too national in focus, but it nevertheless embraces the complex influences—political, economic, technological, and militaristic—on shipping. As a chronicle of how the nation moves from “ships, barks, and pinnaces ... to the megaships” of today (2), *The Way of the Ship* provides pertinent information about specific maritime developments, even as its attempt “weave together a single story of American shipping” proves both too ambitious and lacking a global perspective (4).

<sup>viii</sup> I cannot speak highly enough of these critical texts. Nevertheless, even as they attend to the sailor and the maritime as fundamental to our understanding of antebellum U.S. literature, Cohen's *The Novel and the Sea* and Berger's *Antebellum at Sea* exhibit a tendency towards abstruseness and abstraction that I try to avoid in my work. Cohen's *The Novel and the Sea* conflates the material and the metaphorical. Cohen clearly employs the term “craft” to describe the seafaring practices of literary seamen or, as she puts it at one point, “the work of navigating

modernity's dynamic frontiers" (*Novel* 10). Nevertheless, though craft signifies "specific kinds of expertise . . . , including navigation, seamanship, maritime warfare, and managing ships and supplies," elsewhere her analysis of the concept suggests it operates not just as a description of the practices of mariners but also those of authors and critics alike (*Novel* 17). She opposes it, for instance, as a flexible alternative to the "intransigence of theory" and elsewhere notices that, while the routinization of sea travel diminished the necessity of a mariner's craft, "the poetics of sea fiction was in splendid working order" (*Novel* 58, 10). Berger's *Antebellum at Sea* demonstrates a similar tendency. Inasmuch as his text situates the maritime fiction of Cooper and Melville in particular as sites to consider the "social function of fantasy" in maritime fiction, its tendency to help bridge "the gap between lived experience and society's newly globalizing social structure," Berger walks a line similar in its fineness to Cohen's, tracking the material conditions of work at sea but understanding them as operating on a symbolic level as well (3, 16). Ultimately, though, Cohen's and Berger's books put little emphasis on the metaphorical and symbolic function of the sea narrative, and both texts provide useful models in their use of the material and the symbolic or philosophical, as this dissertation attempts to locate, in antebellum literature, the ways in which civic discourses shaped and were shaped by the imagined experience of the seaman.

<sup>ix</sup> This metaphor finds one of its earliest articulations in Plato's *Republic*, when, in Book Six, Socrates analogizes the city-state without its philosopher kings to a ship with untrained seamen vying to captain it, in spite of their inexperience with navigation (191-2). The metaphor circulated in the nineteenth-century as well—Longfellow's poem "O Ship of State" (1850) being a prominent example.



<sup>x</sup> Although Boorstin begins by contending that the sea played an integral role in helping the North American colonies imagine themselves as a consolidated community, he ultimately portrays the U.S. maritime regions and the maritime regions beyond as little more than a means to accessing a wider world. They take you away from the national and the known to the alien and unknown, and they do so without much effect on the national. As Boorstin notes, “the sea was empty and had no culture of its own—except that which the seafarers made for themselves on shipboard. This was a blessing for New Englanders whom it enabled to go everywhere without leaving home” (5). Perceiving aquatic spaces in this way—as a void that did little to trouble the idea of the home or nation—is inexcusably shallow.

<sup>xi</sup> Cooper’s opinion of Smollett is, perhaps, a little too high. For instance, Mr. Brooke would characterize Smollett’s novels for Mr. Casaubon as “light things” in Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1871-72) (261). Although Eliot wrote her novel almost a half-century after Cooper’s preface, she set its action during the 1830s.

<sup>xii</sup> For brevity’s sake, I will refer to the two novels as a single entity—*Afloat and Ashore*—following the recent AMS Press edition of novels (2004) which employs the same strategy while still publishing the text in two volumes (both have the same name).

<sup>xiii</sup> George T. Becker skips over *Afloat and Ashore* in “James Fenimore Cooper and American Democracy” because, like *The Ways of the Hour* and *New York*, it has “considerable critical content,” which I take to mean a healthy body of criticism (329). My studies have indicated otherwise and Becker provides no citations to substantiate his claim. Although mentioned frequently in Cooper criticism, then, *Afloat and Ashore* receives little actual commentary.

<sup>xiv</sup> Writing in the *Literary History of the United States* (1963), Stanley Williams describes it as having “Cooper’s best narrative manner” in its adventure scenes and chooses to emphasize

“Cooper’s own autobiography” as the novel’s central delight (267-68). Williams does not dismiss the novel outright, but he implicitly categorizes it as lesser, later Cooper, published between the “ultimate bid for immortality through enduring works of fiction” in *The Deerslayer* (1841) and his “zenith of another talent ...[,] the acute social observer” in the Littlepage Manuscripts (1845-46) (Williams 267). In his *Development of the English Sea Novel from Defoe to Conrad* (1926), Ernest Carson Ross, like Williams, associates the novel’s “charm” with its inclusion of “some of the author’s early experiences afloat” (21). Unlike Williams, however, he dismisses the novel as one of Cooper’s least successful narratives, not warranting the time of a “lover of sea stories” (21). The only other aspect of the novel that critics from early and mid-twentieth century have seen fit to comment upon relates to its voice: *Afloat and Ashore* was one of the first and is one of the few first-person narratives that Cooper wrote.

<sup>xv</sup> Tellingly, Hugh Egan’s chapter on Cooper in *America and the Sea* (1995) treats *Afloat and Ashore* only briefly and, picking up on Thomas Philbrick’s contention that the novel emphasizes the humanity of its sailors (*James Fenimore Cooper* 151), characterizes it in terms (“metaphysical,” “existential”) more appropriate for Cooper’s later *The Sea Lions, or The Lost Sealers* (1849) if not Melville’s *Mardi, or A Voyage Thither* (1849) (Egan 81).

<sup>xvi</sup> See Gladsky’s “James Fenimore Cooper and American Nativism” (1994) and Schacterle’s “James Fenimore Cooper on the Languages of the Americans: A Note on the Author’s Footnotes” (2011).

<sup>xvii</sup> See, in particular, of Wegener’s *James Fenimore Cooper Versus the Cult of Domesticity* (2005), which charts Cooper’s use of the rhetoric of the cult of domesticity even as he subverts its ideologies (2-3), and McWilliams’s *Political Justice in a Republic* (1972), neither of which

opt for *Afloat and Ashore* in spite of its concerns with both domestic space and U.S. political ideals (justice in particular in its treatment of capital, maritime punishment).

<sup>xviii</sup> The reviews for Cooper's behemoth tale of nautical adventure and domestic trials were remarkably flaccid. *Graham's Magazine's* review begins promisingly enough, noting that *Afloat and Ashore* "is one of the best of the later products of Mr. Cooper's fertile pen" ("Review Three" 192). It's qualified praise, though; the author has little admiration for any of Cooper's later novels and finds that the excessive detail necessitated by *Afloat and Ashore's* realism is "calculated to irritate" many readers ("Review Three" 192). Although the review is generally favorable, it is important to note that Cooper contributed to *Graham's Magazine* had received a lengthy, glowing biographical profile by the magazine's editor, Rufus Griswold, shortly before the review appeared (90). As Thomas Philbrick has explained, Cooper "could expect a friendly reception" in this magazine's pages; that it "was not all puffery" points to a generally tepid response to the novel of Cooper's contemporaries ("Introduction" xxvi). A review of the novel in *Arthur's Ladies Magazine* contained even less puffery, describing *Afloat and Ashore* as bloated and boring and, in an interesting development, the result of the publishing industry's cupidity—forcing an unsuspecting public into purchasing the four volumes of a novel that gives the public "no more incident than might reasonably be compressed in two" ("New Publications" 285).

<sup>xix</sup> Philbrick spends comparatively considerable time discussing the novel in *James Fenimore Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction* (1961). His discussion of the way Cooper weaves into his imaginative narrative—without undermining its coherence—both autobiography and apposite writings of others (Cook and Irving, for instance, in the Pacific Ocean episodes) is useful. Moreover, Philbrick's comments about the nationalistic effects that the novel achieves through Miles Wallingford's coeval existence with the United States (his birth coincides with

Cornwallis's defeat at Yorktown; he and the United States, in a sense, grow up together) are similarly interesting (*James Fenimore Cooper* 131-65).

<sup>xx</sup> Given that Mark Twain's list of literary rules broken by Cooper includes "use the right word, not its second cousin" (Twain "Fenimore Cooper's" 171), I don't think it's too hard to imagine Cooper misusing a Latin phrase.

<sup>xxi</sup> One of the narrative's structural motifs reinforces the idea that the novel seeks to up end prejudices of "certain phases of men." One could characterize the plot as a series of reverses, or, as Philbrick refers to them, "deceptions and illuminations" in which Wallingford comes to understand the inaccuracy of his personal biases (positive and negative in regard to the people he's met). It is a novel that charts the convergence of impression and actuality (T. Philbrick *James Fenimore Cooper* 161).

<sup>xxii</sup> Cooper never really abandoned sea fiction. However, following the publication of *The Water-Witch* (1830), Cooper had little to do with narratives concerned with U.S. (or even colonial American) sailors.

<sup>xxiii</sup> I am thinking specifically of the "detention of ships and enslavement of men" by Algerians during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Rojas 159). The Algerians' actions resulted in considerable public concern for the enslaved sailors and an outpouring of financial contributions, raised through balls, banquets, and even plays, to pay off their ransoms (Rojas 160). The capturing of U.S. vessels and seamen by the Algerians even gave rise to a literary cottage industry. Notable early U.S. authors like Royall Tyler and Susanna Rowson produced, respectively, the novel *The Algerine Captive, or, the Life and Adventures of Dr. Updike Underhill: Six Years a Prisoner Among the Algerines* and the play *Slaves in Algiers* (1794), which addressed the conflict to the U.S. public. Numerous sailors too produced Barbary captivity

narratives, though their texts circulated not so much among the general public; these authors “located their narratives’ truth-value in their serviceableness to an audience of fellow mariners” (Blum “Pirated Tar” 134).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Importantly, it is not just Miles who evinces such sentiments. He is not, in other words, the only seaman in the novel with a significant tie to the land and an ultimate aversion to the confines of human society. His friend Marble explains, for instance, that he simply couldn’t handle life alone on a deserted island, which he thought preferable to returning to the United States.

<sup>xxv</sup> The novel reinforces the idea that this relationship presents Miles as “good citizen” and Rupert as “bad citizen” by underscoring Rupert’s breaking of contracts. As Lucy informs Wallingford, Rupert and Grace, Miles’s sister, “were engaged from the time Grace was fifteen! Engaged distinctly, and in terms, I mean; not by any of the implied understandings, by which those who were so intimate, generally, might believe themselves bound to each other” (*Afloat and Ashore* 2.61).

<sup>xxvi</sup> Just as Cooper is averse in *Afloat and Ashore* to crafting romantic mariners, he reveals a similar reluctance when it comes to crafting picturesque aquatic vistas. Miles remarks early on that he is “burning to see the ocean,” only to follow up this sentiment with a lengthy description of the “motley collection” that comprises the ship’s crew (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.49). When he finally does note that “the ship was at sea” fully and completely, Miles offers only this mild depiction of his environment: “I watched the Highlands and Navesink, as they vanished like watery clouds in the west, and then I felt I was, at last, fairly out of the sight of land” (*Afloat and Ashore* 1.52). This dispassionate, unromantic style and attention to the specifics of a mariner’s

life at sea resonates nicely with the journals of sailors during this period like William Reynolds who spends little time describing the ocean and considerable time describing his finances (140).

<sup>xxvii</sup> Natty Bumppo and indigenous characters like Chingachgook speak to this. Their experiences in the wilderness position them at the vanguard of civic life in the United States, like sailors—“the foremost in that band of Pioneers, who are opening the way for the march of the nation across the continent” (J. Cooper *Pioneers* 456). Furthermore, It is not a mistake that these frontiersmen inhabit a landscape where the “earth was not unlike the ocean, when its restless waters are heaving heavily . . . . Here and there a tall tree rose out of the bottoms, stretching its naked branches abroad, like some solitary vessel” (*Prairie* 892).

<sup>xxviii</sup> Wilkes chronicled the U.S. Ex. Ex. on at least three separate occasions. The quotes in this paragraph come from his *Voyage Round the World* (1849). He also wrote the *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, which appeared in five volumes, and an autobiography.

<sup>xxix</sup> Admittedly, though successful, the expedition was hardly without its problems. Nathaniel Philbrick’s *Sea of Glory* (2003) as well as *The Private Journals of William Reynolds* (2004), which Reynolds wrote during his time with the expedition and which Nathaniel and Thomas Philbrick edited, provide invaluable insight into the noxious environment produced by the egomaniacal Lieutenant Wilkes. Paul Giles has recently presented work on Wilkes’s psychopathology at the 2014 MLA conference, which situates Wilkes in relation to key maritime maniacs like *Moby-Dick*’s Ahab.

<sup>xxx</sup> Cooper also alludes to another exploring expedition—that which founded the fur-trading post Astoria in the Oregon Territory—during this section of the novel, as a sunken ship is encountered whose crew had been killed by local natives, repeating one of the key incidents in the founding of the trading post as recounted in Washington Irving’s *Astoria* (1836).

<sup>xxxii</sup> Jones and the Rover may be the titular figures in their narratives but they are far from the focus. The same is true of Captain Spike. The central seaman is almost uniformly heroic and virtuous.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> *Last of the Mohicans* (1826) still appears in college curricula, and Cooper has proven integral to theoretical/critical works that continue to exert their influence in literary studies. Most notably, Cooper makes a brief, noteworthy appearance in Lukács's *The Historical Novel* (1937). Several older works offer valuable readings of Cooper and his work: D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), and many of the mid-20th-century critics of American romance or the American Renaissance (Richard Chase, R. W. B. Lewis, and Leo Marx) offer readings of Cooper of varying significance. Notably, Cooper plays a very small role in, perhaps, the most-important of these mid-century texts—F. O. Matthiessen's *The American Renaissance* (1941). More contemporary studies of antebellum U.S. literature make use of Cooper as well—see Arac's *The Emergence of American Literary Narrative* (2005) and Wai-Chee Dimock's *Residues of Justice* (1996). Nevertheless, Cooper's cachet among academics is limited, at this point in time. While Cooper may warrant a substantial portion of a chapter in Dimock's *Residues*, Melville gets an entire book—*Empire for Liberty* (1989).

<sup>xxxiiii</sup> To imagine Cooper's audience in the millions would have been hyperbolic. However, Melville's characterization of Cooper's audience as thousands—particularly for an early maritime narrative like *The Red Rover*—sells Cooper's popularity short. Wayne Franklin's recent biography of Cooper does not deal with Cooper's writing or publication of *The Red Rover*, but we might take his discussion of the popularity of *The Pilot* (1824) as indicative, in a general sense, of how Cooper's books sold during the mid-1820s and how *The Red Rover* in particular

might have sold. He notes that “sales of *The Pilot* had been so brisk ... that Wiley already had a team of five printers rushing a second edition, which was to appear on February 11[, 1824]” (W. Franklin *James Fenimore Cooper* 428). Wiley initially published *The Pilot* in January 1824. That the public’s demand resulted in a second edition being published only one mnth after the first suggests that the novel was highly popular. If *The Red Rover* met with similar public approbation, it did not have merely thousands of readers but rather tens of thousands if not more.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> The reviewer explicitly applies this sentence to Melville, but the review’s ideas make it applicable to Cooper as well.

<sup>xxxv</sup> That Cooper’s experience as a sailor occurred during the early nineteenth century—he left the navy in 1811—might explain his decision to focus on the sailor in a retrospective manner.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> I base the quantitative assessments on Infotrac’s 19th Century U.S. Newspapers database. I performed full-text searches for the terms mutiny, piracy, common sailor, and common seaman/seamen to arrive at the figures above. As for the claim regarding “many U.S. Americans” receiving this information, I would point out that, though most of the stories related to maritime issues originally appeared in newspapers for coastal communities (primarily Atlantic coastal communities), the articles would later circulate throughout interior states and territories like Ohio and Wisconsin.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Contemporary accounts of the mutiny aboard the *Globe* in the 1820s similarly articulated the failed democratic endeavors of mutineers.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Michael Rogin’s *Subversive Genealogies* (1985) brings up the *Somers* case in relation to Melville’s work to a degree. Although I do not follow in his interesting footsteps, his chapter on *White-Jacket* brings up the important fact that Melville’s cousin, Guert Gansevoort, was an officer aboard the *Somers*, pointing to one of the many ways Melville’s and Cooper’s narratives



and biography intertwine. The connections between these two authors go deeper and deserve more consideration than critics have heretofore offered. To take an older but instructive analysis of the cultural, social, and political context of Melville's mid-nineteenth century output: Perry Miller's *The Raven and the Whale* claims a preoccupation "with Melville's America," yet positions Cooper as "remote, inaccessible" to this story because, "fortified in Cooperstown," he hardly circulates through the central geographic focus of Miller's work—New York City (3, 25). Such marginalization of Cooper in Miller and elsewhere is unfortunate.

<sup>xxxix</sup> This situation is similar to accounts of shipwrecks during this era, which often relay the fate of the passengers, captain, and officers, while leaving the fates of the common sailors undiscussed.

<sup>xl</sup> C. L. R. James's *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways* (1953) approaches *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* in a way that complements my own. His characterization of the sailor Jackson in *Redburn*—"the individual character of passionate revolt"—speaks in part to the appreciation of refractoriness I find in both novels (92). Moreover, James identifies a key aesthetic development in *White-Jacket* that colors my thinking of the novel. As he notes: "Melville's most intriguing step forward is the manner in which he now treats the crew. ... [H]e now gives a detailed description of the various types of work that [the sailors] do and the kind of men who do it" (95). Although he doesn't dilate this idea, aside from offering a couple examples, James nevertheless isolates a characteristic of both novels that the critics mentioned above overlook: These are novels about sailors, and they are documents of shipboard life and the practices of seamanship. The same cannot be said, exclusively, of any of Melville's other novels (except, maybe, *Moby-Dick*; but that's complicated by the novel's highly symbolic order).

<sup>xli</sup> I largely overlook *Moby-Dick* even as the narrative pertains to my discussion. Like *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*, and unlike *Typee*, *Omoo*, or *Mardi*, *Moby-Dick* centers itself on the sailor and sea-labor. Nevertheless, like *Typee* and *Omoo*, *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* operate as a kind of diptych. Structurally, tonally, and ideologically, they have much in common with one another, and, though *Moby-Dick*, certainly travels some of the same terrain it remains a singular novel among Melville's oceanic narratives. To include it to a significant degree in this chapter would prove a little unmanageable.

<sup>xlii</sup> This passage is excised from the 1892 publication of the novel by United States Book Company (New York and Chicago). The chapter in which this passage appears ("The Social State in a Man-of-War") is complete except for the final paragraph. More interesting, perhaps, is the epigraph appearing at the beginning of this edition (but not in current, scholarly editions). The novel's text begins, in this version, with four lines from Thomas Fuller's "The Good Sea-Captain" (1642): "Conceive him now in a man-of-war;/with his letters of mart, well armed,/victualed, and appointed,/and see how he acquits himself" (Fuller 59). Considering that *White-Jacket* focuses on the mistreatment of man-o-war's men by officers and captains in particular, the inclusion of lines from this poem either signifies an ironic and playful or (more likely) badly-informed editor.

<sup>xliii</sup> Although Tanner's larger point is useful, his specific articulation of it, relying, as it does, on the idea that Melville avoids and must avoid the use of the word "homosexual" is highly problematic. Per the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "homosexual" did not enter into the English lexicon until forty-odd years after Melville wrote *White-Jacket*.

<sup>xliv</sup> In the case of the sodomized sailors, we do not necessarily find a lack of political consent but a lack of sexual consent. While these two things are certainly not identical, Pamela Haag's

*Consent* looks at the term in the realm of sexuality and politics, establishing them as related concepts.

<sup>xlv</sup> This situation is most obvious in *White-Jacket*, where the narrator and central consciousness is never revealed to have a name other than the sobriquet bestowed upon him by other sailors because of his coat. One might also say it's untrue, in regard to *Redburn*. Nevertheless, given the title character's surname (Redburn) and its close ties to the hunting-jacket he takes to sea—a connection remarked upon by a shipmate—it seems as though, like Ishmael, he bears a name fraught with enough symbolism so as to be pseudonymous.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Melville's later story, "Bartleby, the Scrivener," takes up this issue as well, as the eponymous character's refusal to correct documents he and the other clerks have worked upon, frustrates his colleagues and supervisor. Although that narrative does not promote the refusal to work as an ideal—the wraithlike Bartleby is hardly heroic or successfully rebellious—it remains significantly more sympathetic to its protagonist's challenges to authority and discipline. This difference derives, I think, from the different stakes involved in being a sailor or scrivener. Bartleby's refusal to work, his preference against copy-editing will not result in a flogging for him or anyone else. Redburn's disobedience might. That is not to say that *Redburn* promotes blind observance of established norms. As I argue, it assuredly does not. Rather, Melville depicts self-interested, individual resistance as nugatory.

<sup>xlvii</sup> This moment in the novel has peculiar resonance with the ways in which U.S. political discourse employed the farmer as an ideal citizen. Simply put, and as explained above, the farmer represented in his connection to the land, an incredibly necessary constituency for the new nation and an exemplar for other citizens to follow, as figures like Crèvecoeur and Madison argued. Here, however, in a moment that seeks to distance the reader from *White-Jacket* due to

his condescension towards sailors, we also have implicit condescension towards the farmer as well. This situation forces us to consider why the narrative directs White-Jacket's condescension in both directions. I posit that the multi-directional dismissal has common ground at its center—a certain discomfort in White-Jacket for working class peers.

<sup>xlvi</sup> It is rather fascinating to note the ways in which White-Jacket manages to both insert himself into the body of common seamen and distance himself from them. At certain times he employs the subject “we” and at others, as is the case here, he pejoratively refers to them as a mob.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Warren's ideas do not *echo* Proudhon's, even as they resonate strongly with them. Temporally speaking, Warren's early writing predates Proudhon's. His periodical *The Peaceful Revolutionist* appeared in 1833, the better part of a decade before Proudhon's signal work. Although Warren's writings precede Proudhon's, to say nothing of Thoreau's, following Crispin Saltwell, we should not read him as a key influence on either of those men (99). *The Peaceful Revolutionist*, after all, does not seem to be popular; his more widely read work appeared in the 1850s and 1870s, thereby coming on the heels of Proudhon and Thoreau (Saltwell 99). We might wind up characterizing Warren, then, as someone whose ideas found resonance with later, more widely read authors who then opened a space for Warren's work to find a larger audience.

<sup>l</sup> William Godwin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau also composed works that adopted anarchist sentiments. Some of these I discuss later in this chapter. Suffice it to say, Godwin and Emerson in particular would have been authors that Melville *could* have read, their work having been read widely enough in the U.S. during the 1840s.

<sup>li</sup> This particular articulation of his ideals speaks directly to the issues of sovereignty raised in the course of *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*, especially in regard to the latter. Recall, for instance, the interdiction against beards that the captain and officers initiate in that narrative. The point of the

prohibition is to create a uniform and so-called uniformly appealing group of seamen. Beards are not allowed, regardless of their purpose, regardless of their meaning to the men who grew them. The ship, in the novel, is a machine and the men are the parts. Although these were the early years of industrialization, the perceived need for uniform and therefore interchangeable parts appears to have taken hold, even within this relatively non-industrial environment.

<sup>lii</sup> Other orations and orators would fit within this argument. Nevertheless, Chandler is ideal both because he so clearly articulates a position of preserving extant law and order, as does Captain Claret on the *Neversink*. Moreover, Chandler's first name—Peleg—is has particular, peculiar resonances with Melville's oeuvre, Captain Peleg being one of the owners of the *Pequod* in *Moby-Dick*.

<sup>liii</sup> John Bull is, the personification of England.

<sup>liv</sup> I am thinking here of a couple of his repeated “shall I tells” that proliferate in this part of the novel. Things that he considers describing, but does not, include “sway[ing] and [swinging] the hearty hand of Jack Chase” or “begg[ing] a blessing of old Ushant” (400). Although White-Jacket does tell us of these things, it's telling that this litany of possible stories leads up to him exclaiming “no” (401). His emphatic dismissal of these stories says more than the often pleasant scenes he half spins out for us of the trip's conclusion.

<sup>lv</sup> *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) with its internationalist and cosmopolitan dimensions represents another key text that circulated during the era in which Melville wrote. On the whole, however, Marx and Engels' s communism strikes me as less consistent with the communal cosmopolitan anarchism on display in Melville's novels. Of course, Bakunin is involved and invested with the development of international communism, but, because of his ties to an

anarchism that Melville's sailors represent, the facets of his early writings that smack of a cosmopolitan worldview strike me as more germane to this intellectual contextualization.

<sup>lvi</sup> The upheaval in Europe had not only a cosmopolitan dimension but anarchic and communal elements as well. Published in 1893, Alexis de Tocqueville's *Recollections* provide his individual perspective on the events of 1848 in France. As to its communal qualities, de Tocqueville notes how the masses overtake the public space of Paris, "every day ... collect[ing] in the streets and squares," emphasizing the public-ness of public spaces and reinforcing the sense of the streets and squares not only as the means by which denizens traverse a city but also the communal property of the people rather than the state (114). The liquidation of the governing body that de Tocqueville describes on the other hand speaks to the anarchic aspects of the revolution. He writes: "I did, however, think then, and I think now, that the main demagogic leaders did not plan to destroy the Assembly but intended to go on dominating and using it" (114). The upheaval in France was not, therefore, orderly reformation of the social and political order. It was, instead, a chaotic, anarchic dissolution of the existing order, the "revolution ... just smashed" the older, parliamentary system and "had jumbled and confounded the old parties in one common ruin" (84).

<sup>lvii</sup> Charles Breunig's *The Age of Revolution and Reaction, 1789-1850* (1977) provides a good example of this tendency in relatively recent historical surveys of this period. He characterizes the significance of the revolutions of 1848-49 as "focus[ing] the urge towards national unity" (276). Although Breunig does attend to the effects of the various European revolutions on one another, he does not see them as cosmopolitan. The separate revolutions do not make up one European revolution but are, instead, separate revolutionary events.

<sup>lviii</sup> Certainly, there also developed counterrevolutionary discourse within the United States, primarily by those who supported slavery in the United States and West Indies, and the United States did not, as some had urged, involve itself in upholding the revolutionary governments in Europe. For descriptions of those for and against the 1848-49 revolutions see Curti, Gazley, Reynolds, and Spencer, who provide a number of specific entries into this topic.

<sup>lix</sup> Emerson's claim about Massachusetts in its "heroic day" from a Kansas Relief Meeting Speech—that it "had no government—was an anarchy"—reinforces the sense of Emerson's anarchist sympathies (261-2). Of course, the anarchic nature of Emerson's anarchism is debatable. Return, for a moment, to the citation from "Politics" above: "To educate the wise man, the State exists; and with the appearance of the wise man, the State expires. The appearance of character makes the State unnecessary. The wise man is the State. He needs no army, fort, or navy ... ; no statute book, for he has the lawgiver; no money, for he is value" (568). This narrative of human political development—State instructs man, wise man arrives, and state dissolves—insinuates potential despotism, whereby the State embodied by a bureaucratic governing body dissolves into a singular individual—the Wise Man. The political world envisioned here is not, necessarily, the leveled, egalitarian society imagined by contemporary anarchists like Proudhon or Warren or later ones like Bakunin. Emerson here conceives of a society that has more in common with the Platonic republic wherein the philosopher king has replaced the philosopher kings than the more radical paeans to individual sovereignty found in the writings of political radicals in the United States and Europe of the 1840s.

<sup>lx</sup> For a more complete narrative of the Astor Place Riot, see Cliff's *The Shakespeare Riots* (2007).

<sup>lxi</sup> As this chapter shows, the pirate did not serve as a metaphorical embodiment of political radicalism during the antebellum period. U.S. authors did not understand the pirate as revolutionary; they understood the pirate as criminal. Melville would not have been likely to understand the pirate as in some way reflecting ideals similar to those held by the sailors of his fiction.

<sup>lxii</sup> *Moby-Dick* is not devoid of pirates. During Ishmael's disquisition on the gam—maritime parley between ships—he establishes an interesting parallel between the whalers and the pirate: “And as for Pirates, when they chance to cross each other's cross-bones, the first hail is—“How many skulls?”—the same way that whalers hail—“How many barrels?” (220). He quickly distinguishes between the whalers and the pirate (as well as the whaler and a variety of other seamen, including man-of-wars' men and sailors on slave ships), but he at least allows for a momentary similarity. Malay pirates—“inhuman atheistical devils”—also make a brief appearance much later in the novel (342).

<sup>lxiii</sup> The distinction between piracy and mutiny can and does become murky in the discourse of antebellum U.S. culture. On the one hand, mutiny occasionally preceded a ship turning pirate, as sailors overthrew their captain and officers with the idea of becoming a ship that sailed under no national flag and preyed upon merchant vessels—in other words, a pirate. As Rediker explains, though, this sequence remains a “more spectacular but less common” means of becoming a pirate (*Villains* 46). Nevertheless, this sequence provided authors with fertile narrative material, and even brief tales in short-lived periodicals like *The Evergreen* (1840-41) employed it. The anonymous author of “A Dreadful Mutiny” (1840) employs this scenario in his story, whereby a group of sailors, wronged by a tyrannical captain, take over the ship, “[call] a council of war” and decide to “[cruise] for prizes as pirate” (“A Dreadful Mutiny” [*Evergreen*] 110). On the



other hand, authors would conflate the mutineer and pirate. In “The Mutiny” (1837), for instance, the anonymous poet depicts the “horrid crime” of the title in detail (295). Yet, when describing the figure urging mutiny, the author characterizes him as walking a “pirate’s path” (296). Unlike “A Dreadful Mutiny,” in “The Mutiny” there is no council, no explicit decision made by the mutineers to turn pirate: “Savage mutiny [breaks]” and the mutineers become pirates, in the language of the poem if not, in fact, in deed (296).

<sup>lxiv</sup> Melville uses the term pirate three times in “Benito Cereno” and at no time does it refer to the mutineers. The narrator refers to “Malay pirates” and their propensity for subterfuge, while Captain Delano characterizes Don Benito as a pirate—or, rather, potential pirate—on two other occasions (56). The *San Dominick* becomes, for Delano, “a haunted pirate-ship” and Don Benito a “plotting pirate” (Melville 64, 84). Although this story relies on a considerable amount of irony, in that Delano’s presumptuous characterization of Don Benito is understood as incorrect, the text never shifts the epithet of pirate from Cereno to Babo. In other words, when it becomes clear to Delano that he has misapprehended the situation aboard the ship, that Cereno is not, in fact, piratical, he does not adopt pirate as a term to describe Babo.

<sup>lxv</sup> The pirate memoir or confession has a longstanding history in North America, meaning that it did not appear *sui generis* during the early U.S. republic. No less notable a figure than Cotton Mather published a collection of biographical writings about pirates during the colonial era, in *The Vial Poured Out Upon the Sea: A Remarkable Relation of Certain Pirates* (1726).

<sup>lxvi</sup> Some work has appeared on Latin American pirate narratives, but one of the opportunities that this chapter opens is the prospect that a more hemispheric perspective on the pirate might emerge. Pirate literature as a corpus has a transnational flavor. To briefly reference one narrative that I look at here—in, unfortunately, minimal detail—*Fanny Campbell* moves between the

Massachusetts coast to Cuba. This type of non-national impulse is something that occurs in pirate literature, even as national concerns are explored. Such scholarship is emerging—Gretchen Woertendyke and Jason Payton recently presented papers on pirate narratives that adopt this approach— but most critics of pirate literature share Mitchell’s tendency. See, for instance, David Cordingly’s *Under the Black Flag* (1995) or the recent essay collection, *Pirates and Mutineers of the Nineteenth Century* (2011). While the cultural representation of Atlantic piracy is disappointing on the whole, there are a variety of useful and interesting historical discussions of piracy from Rediker’s *Villains of All Nations* and the essays in *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader* (2001) to the older Senior’s *A Nation of Pirates*.

<sup>lxvii</sup> Tully’s work’s full title is *The Life of Samuel Tully, Who Was Executed at South-Boston, Dec. 10, 1812, for Piracy, Written by Himself*, and “Piracy” is bolded, appears on its own line, and set in a font different from the rest of the document. The arrangement and design suggest that his having been convicted of and sentenced to die for piracy provide the selling point for the tome.

<sup>lxviii</sup> The extant edition of Belcher’s compilation is the fourth edition of the volume with a publication date of 1813. Tully’s trial occurred in 1812, meaning that within a year four editions of Belcher’s compilation appeared.

<sup>lxix</sup> Although bibliographic research yields citations for these particular versions of Gibbs’s narrative and confession, these editions remain unavailable due to various circumstances: The former is found only in two British library and the latter appears to have no extant public copies.

<sup>lxx</sup> North African captivity narratives featured in other genres and media as well. Both Royall Tyler's novel *The Algerine Captive* (1797) and Susanna Rowson's play *Slaves in Algiers* (1793) base large portions of their plots on captivity effected by "Algerian" pirates.

<sup>lxxi</sup> The copy of Mrs. Martin's captivity came from the New York Public Library.

<sup>lxxii</sup> Although I rely in this section on a number of works written by people who lived much of their lives outside of the colonial Americas—Alexandre Exquemelin, John Smith, and Captain Charles Johnson, for instance—these authors do have ties to the colonies in North America or their environs and all of them depict piracy in the Atlantic-Caribbean theater. Moreover, these texts represent some of the most widely-read and republished works on piracy in the period preceding the United States's nationhood. They are the works that likely colored the perception of pirates for colonial North Americans and provided fodder for authors of nineteenth-century U.S. pirate narratives.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> Antebellum U.S. readers would have had access to Smith's accounts. Franklin Press (Richmond, VA) republished the 1629 London edition of the *True Travels, Adventures, and Observations* in 1819. This edition is the first published in the United States. Richard Beale Davis has claimed this edition represents an early attempt at establishing a "native literature" with ties to the eras preceding the nation's founding (97).

<sup>lxxiv</sup> Early U.S. American literature explored similar terrain, as mentioned above. See Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* and Susanna Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers*.

<sup>lxxv</sup> The issue of North African piracy and the related enslavement of U.S. citizens remained a topic of interest throughout the antebellum period. As late as 1865, *The Ladies' Repository* featured articles like "White Slavery in Northern Africa," suggesting that the U.S. reading public maintained its interest in the subject well beyond its actual occurrence.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> All citations from *A General History* come from the Dover edition, which is attributed to Daniel Defoe. Since his authorship of this work is contested, I refer to the author of the text as Captain Johnson.

<sup>lxxvii</sup> Clearly, Johnson meant his stories to titillate in part. The text is a proto-*Newgate Calendar*, in a sense, sensationalizing so-called criminals for pleasure while also dissuading readers from following the same paths.

<sup>lxxviii</sup> The title also includes a subtle pun. The pirates themselves are the vile poured out upon the sea, resulting in an ocean filled with bloodshed and death.

<sup>lxxix</sup> Byron is a British author and writing about a European context, but that does not mean that this work—or his others—was not popular during the U.S. during the nineteenth century. By 1834, Gregg & Elliot had published an edition of *Works of Lord Byron* in Philadelphia. His work may have been more popular in Europe, but Byron found an audience in the United States as well. *The Corsair* too found itself adapted into a theatrical performance: Rediker notes that John Glover Drew “adapted [it] for a performance at Brook Farm in the early 1840s” (*The Amistad Rebellion* 117).

<sup>lxxx</sup> This being a regional variation on the Faust story, Tom, of course, winds up taken away by Old Scratch, which further reinforces the negative perspective on the pirate: The suggestion is that they are in league with the devil. They are not metaphorically but, quite literally, diabolical.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Irving composed “Guests from Gibbet-Island” much later than the other pirate stories of his mentioned here, as it was published in *Knickerbocker Magazine* in 1839 (Rosenberg xxxi) and then later appeared in his collection of miscellaneous short pieces, *Wolfert’s Roost*, in 1855. Yet, I don’t think there’s anything amiss in looking at it alongside these other stories. After all, this

tale takes its inspiration from a story collected by Jakob Grimm that Irving likely encountered in the early 1820s, around the time he was composing the other stories (Rosenberg xxx). Moreover, its connection to the folk tradition, albeit the German rather than Dutch-New Yorker one, situates it in a similar category. Like the stories comprising “The Money-Diggers,” “Guests from Gibbet-Island” is provided with a textual apparatus, indicating its status as a story supposedly collected from actual men and women.

<sup>lxxxii</sup> The convolutions of this novel’s plot make it difficult to summarize succinctly and an explanation of its intricacies is unnecessary for a chapter focusing not on it but antebellum U.S. pirate narratives in general. To give a sense of the plot’s acrobatic nature: I refer to the titular character as the title suggests I should—Kyd. However, Kyd is the *nom de guerre* of a character whose presumed birth-name is Robert Lester. Nevertheless, Kyd-Robert Lester is not Robert Lester, either. Due to some switched-at-birth shenanigans that his mother, a witch, performs, he should be someone else entirely. Also note that there are no page numbers for citations from the novel’s second volume. This is because I could only find an electronic version of it on Project Gutenberg, which has no page numbers. I was able to get my hands on a reproduction of volume one, though, so that *does* have page numbers.

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> It is worth noting that the novel positions these “good “ citizens not only in contrast to the pirate Kyd but also in contrast to Native and African Americans. We might draw a parallel, then, between the Native American, African American, and pirate in Ingraham’s narrative, which reinforces the concept of the pirate as outside the body politic. After all, Native Americans and African Americans had a vexed relationship to the nation, with the U.S. establishing them as qualified citizens rather than fully integrated ones.

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> This discussion of pirates and political theory during the Enlightenment period does raise questions about the pirates place in conceptualizations of citizenship beyond the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The pirate is similarly minimized in contemporary political theory. That said, contemporary scholarship on the citizen might prove instructive to understanding the dimensions of the pirate. Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* (1998) and *State of Exception* (2005) in particular might propose interesting ways of understanding not only the pirate but the mariner more broadly. Understood as occurring in "periods of political crisis" and therefore "political and not juridico-constitutional," the state of exception applies to the situation of the pirate and mutineer at sea, particularly the latter (Agamben *State* 1). Recall the *Somers* incident and the extra-judicial execution of supposed mutineers and we find a state of necessity leading to a state of exception that Agamben addresses. Moreover, the concept of bare life, examined in *Homo Sacer* resonates with the positions mariners depicted in a number of antebellum sea narratives, wherein the sailor finds himself having had all political and civil rights suspended.

<sup>lxxxv</sup> Although the readership of the *Pirate's Almanac* remains unclear, it seems likely that mariners themselves made up a significant part of the text's audience. This claim is pure conjecture, but Hester Blum's characterization of sailors' reading habits in *The View from the Masthead* emphasizes the ephemeral, mass-produced pamphlet as something that many seamen would have taken with them to sea to read. She does not single out this particular text, but she does make mention of books like it. That the *Almanac* has a Philadelphia publisher and was produced specifically for the mid-Atlantic states (presumably Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia as well the District of Columbia) further suggests that the text circulated in locations that had major ports. (Of course, *The Pirate's Almanac* includes information about

sunrises and sunsets for *all* states—including land-locked ones—so the audience for this text might be wider than other indicators point to.)

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> The *Almanac* contains no page numbers; page numbers given here are those I determined by counting them, using the title page as page one.

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> *Lafitte* takes great liberties with the life of the historical Lafitte, notably cutting the life of the pirate short. The historical pirate did not die shortly after his supposedly heroic turn in the Battle of New Orleans.

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Clearly, the use of piracy to characterize an enemy of a particular nation runs contrary to the idea of pirates as *hostis humani generis*—enemy of all mankind—but historically pirate was used in such situations and, as I will demonstrate, this particular aspect of the concept proves important to its use in debates about slavery during the antebellum period.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Although the racial characterization of the potential slaves makes sense, given the specifics of slavery in the United States, it remains peculiar that this law seemingly allows citizens to abscond with individuals of other racial backgrounds and sell them into slavery.

<sup>xc</sup> Although I have not fully developed this idea, we might also see the pirate comes too close to home for the United States. In effect, they embody revolutionary politics but also have, according to U.S. law, the taint of slavery applied to them and therefore resonate quite strongly with an antebellum United States that proclaims itself a model for freedom but persists in owning slaves.

<sup>xci</sup> *Mariner*, like *seaman*, has an etymology back to the Latin *mare* that relies on the sense of men who labor upon vast bodies of water rather than upon streams of water. Interestingly, the French *marinier* in modern usage refers only and specifically to bargemen, rather than workers on oceanic vessels. One of the reasons I prefer to use *mariner* in this dissertation's title is because of

this albeit foreign usage that allows for a broader understanding of the worker that this project examines.

<sup>xcii</sup> I use “mariner” to refer to rivermen in this chapter, given the modern understanding of mariner—one who works on a ship.

<sup>xciii</sup> As a continental rather than an island nation, the United States proves one of the more specific sites where this type of shift in oceanic studies might take place. Because of the vastness of the territory, the nation is defined not only by its seaports but also by its expansive rivers and lakes. Other nations have rivers and seaports as well and the literatures of Brazil, for instance, or Egypt might also prove interesting archives to consider in relation to the question of expanding the purview of literary oceanic studies.

<sup>xciv</sup> Although “the river” here means the Mississippi River in particular, I will also use the term here to mean “the river” as a metonymic representative of rivers within the national boundaries of the United States. The term operates as “the river” specifically discussed but also “the river” understood as a categorical abstraction.

<sup>xcv</sup> Transportation and commerce are, certainly, related. Nevertheless, for lack of a better word, I’m using transportative to indicate uses of the river that are non-commercial or, at least, not strictly commercial such as migration or communication.

<sup>xcvi</sup> Newspaper articles about the levels of the Mississippi would appear in papers from Galveston, TX, to Providence, RI—hardly locales dependent on the river’s fickle waters.

<sup>xcvii</sup> Although Seelye does not make these claims about Jefferson in *Prophetic Waters*, his reading of rivers as instrumental to the United States’ imperialist project certainly colors my analysis of Jefferson here.



<sup>xcviii</sup> Additionally, although I value Smith's work, I find his narrow focus on the Mississippi disappointing. T. S. McMillin's more recent *The Meaning of Rivers* (2011) attempts to address this narrowness. As he notes, "of those tens of thousands of U.S. waterways, hundreds if not thousands have been treated in hundreds of thousands of poems, novels, histories, autobiographies, plays, essays, travel accounts, and tales" (McMillin xv). McMillin does not aim for "an encyclopedia of literary rivers" but he does take up "a wide array of writings" (xv) that deals with representations of numerous U.S. rivers. McMillin's approach to literary rivers, though, is puzzling. The works he focuses on "don't just describe rivers or tell good stories about rivers or say something pretty"; rather, he devotes his attention to the metaphysical dimensions of rivers, or, as he puts it, to the "confluence of meaning and flowing water" in literature (McMillin xv). He examines the ways in which rivers make meaning and the ways in which meaning makes rivers (McMillin xv). This approach proves useful for thinking through the poetics of the river, but it still leaves us far from the riverman.

<sup>xcix</sup> Part of my problem with this derives from Allen's reliance on the Myth and Symbol school of American Studies to provide a framework for his analysis of rivermen. Although I value the work of scholars like Henry Nash Smith, I do not find members of that mid-century school of thought as useful for thinking through the politics of laborers. Although not as esoteric as someone like McMillin, Allen nevertheless loses something in a book that winds up being a little like the rivermen he describes—half horse and half alligator. He clearly aims at a work that would fit nicely within the American Studies genre, relying on both the historical record and more literary elements like folklore. As a result, it's neither thorough enough in its historicizing the rivermen nor is it analytical enough of the literature to be a truly impressive work.

<sup>c</sup> We might briefly consider the persistence of Crockett in the national imagination and the relative disappearance of Fink: Fink folklore did circulate well into the twentieth century but largely took a back seat to Crockett's. The ABC anthology show *Disneyland* (1954-58) featured a miniseries entitled *Davy Crockett* (1954-55) on which Fink shows up, serving as a nice emblem of their position within twentieth-century culture—Crockett is the star, Fink the supporting actor.

<sup>ci</sup> Alligator-horse was the chimerical term that riverboatmen; they used to describe themselves and others used it to describe them. I haven't really come across an origin of the term yet. It appears to date from the early 19th century (1807-1810) in Christian Schultz's *Travels on an Inland Voyage*, in which a pair of boatmen use the term and its variants in a "boasting" manner (T. Smith 51).

<sup>cii</sup> The flip-side of this, in which rivermen, including Fink, are suspect because of their involvement in such activities also exists. In this instance, Fink appears as national protector. In subsequent analysis, I'll underscore the suspicion raised by involvement in expansionist and racist policies.

<sup>ciii</sup> One of the ways that this gets clarified throughout the Fink folklore is by the way in which the men of the keelboats refer to Fink. He is hardly ever (if at all) referred to as captain. The men on board the boats with him always refer to him as Mike. The implication is clearly that he is one of them, that he's a leveler.

<sup>civ</sup> Although there's no author cited for this piece, Walter Blair and Franklin Meine posit that Timothy Flint, originally from Massachusetts, had a hand in "put[ting] this article into shape" (56).

<sup>cv</sup> The editors of this collection of Fink folklore strike a strange tone in the material that prefaces the anthologized narratives. They take great relish in the more rambunctious tales of Mike Fink

that is a little off-putting to modern readers—especially since what they see as his rambunctiousness is often maliciousness with racist undertones.

<sup>cvi</sup> This version of the Fink legend is the same as the one referred to earlier by the same title. The story is not hundreds of pages long, however. Blair and Meine, editors of *Half Horse Half Alligator*, broke up the various longer versions of Fink's life in that volume. They compiled, at the end of the anthology, the stories of his death. Therefore, the story referred to earlier appears in two discrete portions, as described in the bibliography below.

<sup>cvi</sup> It seems that Klauprecht is aware that he's competing with some of these figures. The novel takes up passing, miscegenation, and the switching of black and white infants, which resonates with *Clotel's* concern for characters of mixed-race backgrounds. The novel also features a character named Zenobia, a name shared by one of Hawthorne's heroine in *The Blithedale Romance* (1852).

<sup>cvi</sup> No major articles on the novel have appeared. The most significant and important treatment of Klauprecht's Midwestern mysteries (which category includes but is not limited to *Cincinnati*) appears in Werner Sollors's *Beyond Ethnicity* (1986), where Sollors spends a couple pages on the novel. Importantly, and helpfully, Sollors connects Klauprecht's novel to Stowe's, and underscores resonances between the novels, such as scenes at a New Orleans slave-market and an iced-river crossing (Sollors 145). Smith's *River of Dreams* also spends a scant few pages looking at Klauprecht's novel, situating the novel in a tradition of nineteenth-century German-American writing that includes George Lippard and Heinrich Börnstein and centering his discussion on the relationship between Captain Butler and the immigrants that work aboard his ship (166-67).

<sup>cix</sup> Readers should remember that Thoreau adamantly opposed slavery and imperial expansion. His position in *Resistance to Civil Government* relates to those two activities. So why does he differ from Klauprecht or the authors of Mike Fink narratives? I think that it relates to geography. Living and traveling upon minor, eastern rivers like the Concord and Merrimack, Thoreau doesn't see rivermen as part of the imperial project or as part of the institution of slavery. Moreover, I would also suggest that the men he encounters in the narrative, though often transporting things locally, are also tied to oceans. They are, in other words, more connected to the sea—that space of pirates and the more radical mariners. Therefore, there is maybe still something to the aversion to the rivermen—by remaining inside the boundaries of the U.S. those working the Ohio or Mississippi are involving themselves with the internal problematics of U.S. political society in the antebellum period. They cannot or do not escape the backwoods, as Thoreau describes his boatmen doing.

<sup>cx</sup> This grouping clearly leaves out the most-notable twentieth-century U.S. maritime narrative, Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). I find that *Far Tortuga* does much the same work as Hemingway's novella in a much more formally and ideologically interesting fashion and so focus on the former. Also, aside from a passing mention very soon, I will avoid discussions of maritime films, as well as maritime disaster narratives, such as Walter Lord's *A Night to Remember* (1958), although such films and narratives do maintain an active presence in the twentieth century.

<sup>cx</sup><sup>i</sup> The British have a long tradition of sea narratives that I have addressed tangentially here and there—Smollett in the eighteenth century, Marryat in the nineteenth—and who had an influence on U.S. maritime fiction. Stevenson et al. certainly owe a debt to such figures, but they also locate their origin in the U.S. sea narrative of the nineteenth century. Still, the British affinity for

the maritime between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries is undeniable. James Thomson's "Rule, Britannia!" (1740) offers a useful example, where British mastery of the sea provides the chorus for a patriotic song: "Rule, Britannia, rule the waves;/Britons never will be slaves" (61).

<sup>cxii</sup> Many of the English sea narratives of the late nineteenth century as well as the twentieth century imbue themselves with imperial nostalgia. Patrick O'Brien's Aubrey-Maturin series (1969-2004) offers prime example inasmuch as it begins, with *Master and Commander*, during the Napoleonic era, chronicling a nineteenth-century crisis in British imperial power following the period in which anti-colonial sentiments and revolution dismantled what remained of the British empire.

<sup>cxiii</sup> Although I phrase this aspect of her book as a shortcoming, I don't actually think that her book would allow her to approach this issue in a more nuanced manner. *The Novel and the Sea* chronicles the entirety of maritime fiction. The breadth of materials covered here necessitates a more generalized approach.

<sup>cxiv</sup> To say nothing of the back-cover synopsis provided by a late twentieth-century Penguin edition, which highlights the autobiographical nature of the text, in spite of them making up a very small portion of the narrative.

<sup>cxv</sup> The question that Twain poses is one he imagines directing towards a doctor who no longer sees "the lovely flush in a beauty's cheek" but rather "a 'break' that ripples above some deadly disease" (*Life* 96). However, it is clear that the question's lack of specificity indicates that it is directed not just toward the doctor but also the riverman.

<sup>cxvi</sup> Melville's final novel *The Confidence-Man* (1857) provides a useful counterpoint here. That text concerns itself directly with the social and political dimensions of the steamboat.

<sup>cxvii</sup> I do not discuss *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) at length here but it might behoove me to make the following observation: This description could serve that novel as well as *Life on the Mississippi*. I have oscillated wildly in my thinking about that novel over the years. Often I see it as a highly political novel, where the river and its adjacent towns provide Twain with a way of exploring issues of freedom and liberty. Thinking about *Huckleberry Finn* in the context of *Life*, though, and the argument I'm trying to make about that particular text, an apolitical reading of the novel takes place. *Huckleberry* clearly deals with the defining feature of antebellum civic concern—the feature of antebellum U.S. political life that raise the most pointed questions about the theoretical underpinnings of U.S. citizenship. Nevertheless, in some ways, the river in that novel becomes a site where slavery and an illiberal treatment of human beings, while still present, seem much more abstracted than in many other late nineteenth century novels, including those written by Twain (to say nothing of antebellum literature dealing with slavery). Civic concerns *can* appear muted in that novel, in other words, especially in comparison to the almost completely land-bound *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), which really does interest itself in issues of social and political belonging.

<sup>cxviii</sup> A similarly imperious literary ship's captain—Ahab—provides a striking comparison. Ahab saw his men as laborers first, as well, but he concerned himself not with labor directed towards an economic, accumulative goal. Rather, Ahab requires reminding that his crew's purpose is to acquire oil enough to turn a profit.

<sup>cxix</sup> As much as I enjoy London's novels—*The Sea-Wolf* and *The Iron Heel* (1908) in particular—I find their ideological positions poorly thought out. *The Sea-Wolf* could work as a radical assessment of conditions aboard merchant ships, but, by creating such a compelling, unique character in Wolf Larsen, London effectively upends whatever arguments he might have

made on behalf of sailors, since, certainly, readers couldn't expect to find in Larsen—the Nietzschean super-man who reads Spencer and Browning in his spare time while also designing navigational devices—emblematic of ship captains more broadly.

<sup>cxx</sup> A former sailor himself, London's narrative of his own political progression is interesting, in light of his aversion in this narrative to introduce a civic element into his sailors. In "How I Became a Socialist," London implicitly separates the development of his political convictions from his time as a mariner. His time as a tramp opens his eyes to "the shambles at the bottom of the Social Pit" and not "a seven months' voyage before the mast" (London 1119, 1118). Certainly, his time aboard ships helps shape his political worldview—he does not ignore this interlude, in other words—but, in the narrative he tells of himself, it punctuates the end of one period, one "dominated by orthodox bourgeois ethics," before the beginning of another, wherein he has "ever since [run] away from hard work" (1118, 1119).

<sup>cxxi</sup> What constitutes mutinous behavior in this novel—the refusal to follow orders because the captain's seamanship—is incredibly disappointing, even if it technically qualifies as mutiny. This novel may, for me, be the nadir of the sea narrative—the point at which the potential radicalism of the sailor as a citizen is completely neutered.

<sup>cxxii</sup> The exact historical situation of the novel is unclear to me. It transpires after 1968 (Che Guevara has died and there's a gravestone transcribed with a 1968 death-date) and so might be set after the 1973 independence of Bahama, where many of the men hail from (Matthiessen 150).

<sup>cxxiii</sup> What I mean here by "on-going civic issues" refers to the fact that maritime civic issues, particularly in relation to maritime labor rights, were hardly resolved by the late nineteenth century inasmuch as the most significant legislation in the U.S., regarding the rights of contract held by seamen, was not passed until shortly before the first World War.

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