SPECTRAL SUBSTANCES OF DEMOCRACY:
AGENCY, AFFECT, AND POWER IN AMERICAN ROMANCE

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English and Comparative Literature

Chapel Hill
2013

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ABSTRACT

KWANGTAEK HAN: Spectral Substances of Democracy: Agency, Affect, and Power in American Romance
(Under the direction of Eliza Richards)

Focusing on texts by Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville, my dissertation traces the historical conditions that shaped their heterodox political ontologies and the challenge these ontologies posed to what their contemporaries considered the essential fulcrums of American democracy: autonomous agency, solidifying affect, and consensual power. These canonical authors capture the paradox that such principles are liable to impersonal, disruptive, and autocratic operations that preclude the actualization of American democracy. This liability, they reveal, is hardly perceived as threatening to American democracy since it is a necessary condition for sustaining a fantastical belief in American democracy as a consensual society of self-governing individuals sympathizing with others for the public good. The romancers dramatize the unrecognized, antidemocratic workings of agency, affect, and power in their works, written during the critical periods of nation-building (Brown), Jacksonian Democracy (Poe), the rise of abolitionist and feminist movements (Hawthorne), and the Secession crisis leading to the Civil War (Melville). Their romances divulge the profound paradox that personal autonomy, affective solidarity, and popular sovereignty are spectral substances—conceptually present yet empirically absent—that uphold the politico-ontological ground of American identity. These

oxymoronic foundations of American existence, I argue, not only account for the enduring social desire and energy of American democracy, but also answer for its eventual impossibility.

In the introduction, I define the three key concepts of my project—democracy, ontology, and substance in antebellum contexts. Chapter I investigates how Brown in *Wieland* demystifies the two competing ideologies of American democracy: the Republican-Democratic call for individual self-government and the Federalist request for national unity. Chapter II explores Poe's critique of the dominant democratic logic of political and cultural identification and the vain pursuit of singular individuality. Chapter III examines Hawthorne's inquiry into morbid, immoral sympathies in *The Scarlet Letter*, which reject the notion of sympathy for democratic social reforms. Chapter IV considers Melville's insight into the paradox of popular sovereignty in *Moby-Dick* by focusing on the quarter-deck scene, in which Ahab garners the crew's voluntary, unanimous consent to transform the commercial whaler *Pequod* into an instrument of his personal vengeance.

For Jina

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without many brilliant scholars and generous advisors I have had at UNC-Chapel Hill, this work would never have come to fruition. My first thanks go to Eliza Richards, whose intellectual rigor, unwavering support, and enormous patience have guided me through every turn of this project. She recognized the value of my claims and energized me with her unflagging intellectual enthusiasm, astute insights, and meticulous comments. I am honored and lucky to have benefited from her sharp critical eye, indefatigable inquiry, and high expectations as much as I have from her scholarship. I also owe a special debt of gratitude to my committee members: to Jane Thrailkill, a dynamic and inspirational model of intellectual rigor, for her seminars which set me on the path toward American literature, culture, and philosophy; to Timothy Marr, a true exponent of the Melvillean vision and life and another model of infectious intellectual enthusiasm, whose gracious and benevolent guidance led me to Melville's leviathans and krakens; to John McGowan, whose own work and balanced insights into philosophy and politics sharpened my arguments and played a crucial role in shaping the theoretical frameworks I bring to literature; and to Matthew Taylor, whose incisive comments and penetrating questions helped me hone my thinking and writing on the intricate questions of ontology and literature.

I am also indebted to other marvelous UNC faculty members, who contributed to my development as a scholar along the way: I am grateful to Gregory Flaxman for opening my eyes to the abyss of Freud, Lacan and Deleuze; to Philip Gura for transforming me from a reader to a collector of hundreds of early European and American books, magazines, and newspapers; to Eric Downing for helping me diving into Freud, Benjamin, Nietzsche, and Adorno; Lawrence Grossberg, Richard Cante, Christian Lundberg in the Communications Studies Department for introducing the field of Cultural Studies to me; John Kasson in the History Department for his brilliant teaching on American cultural history; Jay Garcia in the Department of American Studies for his seminar on Paul Gilroy and inviting me to the 2008 Paul Gilroy Conference. I also wish to express my thanks to other wonderful faculty members in my home department: especially to Beverly Taylor, James Thompson, Tyler Curtain, Daniel Anderson, Mary Floyd-Wilson, and Jennifer Ho, for their emotional and intellectual support. My thanks also go to Duke faculty members, Nancy Armstrong, Fredric Jameson, Michael Hart, Priscilla Wald, Cathy Davidson, who helped me nourish my intellectual spirit and contributed immeasurably to my project; I especially have endless gratitude and admiration for Nancy Armstrong who, an exemplary scholar in every respect, always took me as a scholar and taught me not to become “a shallow thinker,” and Cathy Davidson, who taught me about early American literature and generously provided a HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science and Technology Advanced Collaboratory) scholarship for me.

It was my privilege to be part of the UNC Writing Center for two years as a writing tutor. I was truly lucky to work with Kimberly Abels, Vicki Behrens, Ben Shields, Chris Cameron, Josh Davis, Julia Osman, Rania Chelala, and Margaret Swezey, who bridged the gap between friend and mentor. I would have to say that it is impossible to imagine my past seven years in Chapel Hill without my graduate colleagues at UNC and Duke; my thanks to Elena Oxman, Meredith Farmer, Kelly Bezio, Ashley Reed, Jenn Williamson, Sarah Marsh, Pat Horn, Lynn Badia, Nick Gaskill, Ben Rogerson, Heath Sledge, Heather Branstetter, Melissa Pojasek, Katie Shrieves, Marc Cohen, Erin Lodeesen, Erin Allingham, Sarah Blythe, Oren Abeles, Erin Branch, Krista Turner, Michael Cadwallader, Daniel Lupton, Doreen Thierauf, Graham Culbertson, Robin Smith, Jittima Pruttipurk, Lynne Feeley, Rebecca Evans, Anna Gibson, Ainehi Edoro, Stefan Waldschmidt, Melody Jue, Bill Hunt, and Alexa Garvoille, for making my life and study more meaningful, enjoyable, and memorable. Thanks also to my t friends, Yoon-Young Shin, Chang-Yoon Hahn, Yunhee Shin, Donghee Om, Junhee Kim, Hana Lee, Wonyul Lee, Chiyoung Oh, David Huh, Jeff Hong, Tschoong Huh, Hyunseok Lee, for their goodness, humor, helpful advice and aid.

I am grateful to my department for funding my research with the C. Hugh Holman Fellowship, the Kirby Summer Research Fellowship, and several teaching fellowships. To the tuition award from the Graduate School of UNC-Chapel Hill and a fellowship from Fulbright I owe my thanks as well.

Without my teachers at Yonsei University—Chong-Chul Choi, Kyung-Sook Shin, Kyung-Won Lee, Suk-Koo Rhee, Min-Woo Yoon, Hye-Joon Yoon, Hong-Won Suh, Hyungji Park, and Sahng-Young Moon, I would have been unable to begin this journey. It is to these professors that I profoundly owe my growth, and I cannot thank them enough.

Finally, my deepest debt of gratitude is due to my parents and brother for all the years of unending love and devotion. And most of all, as ever, for everything, thanks to Jina. She simply makes all the difference for me, and I dedicate this volume to her.

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Introduction

The Romance of Democracy

For the last thirty years, literary critics have identified the antebellum romance as an effective mode of critique for the failings of American democracy. The source of those failures, according to this vibrant critical tradition, resides in the Gordian knot of race, class, and gender inequality. Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville continue to be singled out as genuine critics of these three interlocking historical failures of democracy during the antebellum period.[1]

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[1] For the most recent studies on the question of race/class/gender in Brown's romance, see Hana Layson, "Rape and Revolution: Feminism, Antijacobinism, and the Politics of Injured Innocence in Brockden Brown's *Ormond*," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2, no. 1 (2004): 160-191, Fredrika J. Teute, "A "Republic of Intellect": Conversation and Criticism among the Sexes in 1790s New York," Julia Stern, "The State of "Women" in *Ormond*; or, Patricide in the New Nation," and Sean X Goudie, "On the Origin of American Specie(s): The West Indies, Classification, and the Emergence of Supremacist Consciousness in *Arthur Mervyn*," in *Revising Charles Brockden Brown: Culture, Politics, and Sexuality in the Early Republic*, eds. Philip Barnard, Mark L. Kamrath, and Stephen Shapiro (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 149-181, 182-215, 60-87, Paul Lewis, "Attaining Masculinity: Charles Brockden Brown and Woman Warriors of the 1790s," *Early American Literature* 40, no. 1 (2005): 37-55, Maria DeGuzman, "The Shadow of the Black Legend," in *Spain's Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-Whiteness, and Anglo-American Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 1-68, Laura Doyle, "Transatlantic Seductions: Defoe, Rowson, Brown, and Wilson," in *Freedom's Empire: Race and the Rise of the Novel in Atlantic Modernity, 1640-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 145-182, Bryan Waterman, "'The Sexual Difference': Gender, Politeness, and Conversation in Late-Eighteenth-Century New York City and in Charles Brockden Brown's *Alcuin* (1798)," *The Literary Utopias of Cultural Communities, 1790-19*10, eds. Marguérite Corporaal and Evert Jan van Leeuwen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 23-46, Erica Burleigh, "Incommensurate Equivalences: Genre, Representation, and Equity in *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot*," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9, no. 3 (2011): 748-780. For the most recent studies focusing on the question of race/class/gender in relation to the failings of American democracy in the romances of Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, see Joan Dayan, "Romance and Race," in *The Columbia History of the American Novel*, ed. Emory Elliott (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 89-109, Timothy B. Powell, *Ruthless Democracy: A Multicultural Interpretation of the American Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), Arthur Riss, *Race, Slavery, and Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Amy Schrager Lang, *The Syntax of Class: Writing Inequality in Nineteenth-*

Offering an alternative to this dominant critical tendency, my dissertation examines the works of these four canonical authors in order to identify their shared critiques of the fundamental but overlooked ontological causes of democracy's failure in America. Their arcane romances, I contend, capture the profound paradox of American democracy: the ways that Americans think and feel about personal autonomy, social harmony, and political authority preclude the actualization of the democratic doctrines that give rise to these thoughts and feelings. The values of autonomous selfhood, humane social order, and consensual power are inscribed in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution; and yet the very desire for these inviolable values, when activated through the ideologies, institutions, and practices designed in support of democracy, works in an impersonal, disruptive, and autocratic fashion that prevents the instantiation of democratic principles. Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville reveal that the presence of this dilemma on an ontological level is central to the unfulfilled promises of American democracy and exists prior to the historical quandaries of race, class, and gender inequalities.

In so doing, these authors find their contemporaries oblivious to the antidemocratic workings of agency, affect, and power. This collective ignorance is, they notice, necessary for sustaining the communal vision of American democracy in which autonomous individuals work for the public good through their shared sympathies and establish a political authority based on popular consent. Upholding this seamless vision is not simply a political strategy, but also, on a more fundamental level, an ontological necessity. From its outset, the American Republic was predicated on the notion of

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Century America (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), Ivy G. Wilson, *Specters of Democracy: Blackness and the Aesthetics of Politics in the Antebellum U.S.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

political autonomy and independence from the British Empire, and this logic, as expressed in the Declaration of Independence, posited that every American citizen was liberal and equal, imbued with the "voice of justice and of consanguinity" for "the public good," and managing the government through "the consent of the governed." Considered "self-evident," these ontological propositions, as historian Edmund S. Morgan has pointed out, "are not debatable, and to challenge these would rend the fabric of our society"[2] since they are the fundamental ideological foundations of American existence. Indeed, the declared doctrines of American democracy were enshrined as the essential components of the American existence, and the unprecedented social democratizations after the abolition of the monarchy and aristocracy in the early national and the antebellum periods[3] reinforced the equation of the principles of American democracy with the foundations of American existence. This equation, central to the formation of a sense of the exceptional meaning and importance of the American life, prevented antebellum Americans from recognizing and criticizing the problematic workings of their agency, affect, and power. The political ontologies of Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville capture the paradoxical necessity of this ignorance, which served to maintain a fantastical belief in America as a consensual government of self-governing individuals sympathizing with others for the public good.

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[2] Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988), 14. Like a number of scholars of American history and culture, Morgan regards the principles of universal liberty and equality as well as the rule by the consent as "the fictions we accept today as self-evident," which "Thomas Jefferson enshrined in the Declaration of Independence" [Ibid]. In this dissertation, I am more concerned with the practical dimension of such historical fictions—how a set of social practices coupled with the ideologies of American democracy during the early national and the antebellum periods served to delusively substantiate the American convictions in the abstract values and doctrines of liberty, equality, and sovereignty through the tangible instances of such social democratization.

[3] The Declaration of Independence abolished the monarchy and the Article I, Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution abolished aristocracy by proclaiming that "[n]o Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States."

The present project aims to recover the long-ignored politico-ontological critique of American democracy in the romances of Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville. It also challenges the existing critical propensity to reduce the failures of American democracy to issues of race, class, and gender. A number of scholars have identified how these authors critically partake of their contemporaries' discourses of race, class, and gender. But none has noted their shared insight into and critique of the fundamental ontological paradox underlying the political fashioning of what are considered the essential American identity and existence, which, prior to the specific historical issues of race, class, and gender inequality, accounts for the enduring failures of American democracy. In this introduction, I first turn back to the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when the profound ontological paradox of American democracy arose within the process of founding a new democratic nation and constituting a corresponding people.

The Ontology of American Democracy

From its inception, the American Republic amalgamated a strain of philosophy, a fabric of polity, and a mode of life germane to the democratic maxim of "We the People," a resounding opening phrase of the Constitution which established the citizens of the U.S. at the heart of their new democratic government. This threefold combination was first manifested in the Declaration of Independence, as it made a public announcement of a new American people designated "We." One of their "self-evident" natural rights was, among others, a government, "instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." Later, the preamble of the U.S. Constitution brought to the fore the phrase "We the People" in order to insist that they "ordain and establish" their

Constitution in order to, among other important principles, “promote the general welfare.” The two documents together endowed the referent of the elusive “We the People” with a significant sense of its empirical existence. In his autobiography, Thomas Jefferson, who had authored the Declaration of Independence, underscored that “[t]he question was not whether, by a declaration of independence, we should make ourselves what we are not; but whether we should declare a fact which already exists.”[4] Jefferson was confident that there was ontic substance to the philosophized and politicized concept of “We the People.” As a matter of fact, the notion was no pure illusion to his contemporaries. It found its proper, if not perfect, referent in a succession of the common American people’s active political coalitions, declarations, and reactions, as well as the ardent cultural demonstrations of their democratic ideals and interests during the Revolutionary War and subsequent years.[5] Such dynamic phenomena of social democratization in a new political order and a new cultural sphere allowed antebellum Americans to feel certain that a viable democratic society established by “We the People” was emerging. As Thomas

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[4] Thomas Jefferson, *The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1790*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 24. For Jefferson’s philosophical and practical ideas of the Declaration of Independence, see Garry Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002).

[5] In fact, large numbers of common men actively engaged in their commonplace pursuit during the founding era through various forms of political and cultural practices. Regarding the expressions of popular convictions and mobilizations of the people before and after the “Declaration of Independence,” see Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997). For the substantial influence of the democratic force of the populace upon the formation of the Constitution, see Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), Jason Frank, *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Postrevolutionary America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class 1788-1850* (1984; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 63-76. For the most recent study on the democratic literary culture during the founding era, see Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). 33-104.

Paine firmly believed, "*We* have it in our power to begin the world over again … The birthday of a new world is at hand"[6] [emphasis added].

However, the proclaimed model of a democratic government—a government *of* the people ("instituted among Men"), *by* the people ("powers from the consent of the governed"), and *for* the people ("the general welfare")—did nothing but articulate the democratic principle of the American Republic: the sovereignty of a government should be vested in the people. As Carl Schmidt has pointed out, "[t]he connection of actual power with the legally highest power is the fundamental problem of the concept of sovereignty."[7] For the framers facing this conundrum, to decouple actual power from legal power was the only solution. As the new nascent Republic enclosed a multitude of heterogeneous people and their conflicting desires and practices in geopolitical boundaries and social limits,[8] the consequent social complexities and contradictions were ascribed to the side effects of democracy that would transform all the encompassed people into the political demos. Thus, the democratic government run by the multitude solely for their common interests remained an idea that was neither fully accepted nor implemented. Indeed, the framers divorced the theory of the sovereign populace from the reality of popular sovereignty in order to prevent the possibility of mob-driven democracy. According to Joseph K. Ellis, "none of the founders, to include Jefferson, regarded democracy as a goal of the American Revolution. Throughout the founding era, the term "democracy" remained an epithet, used to tar an opponent with the charge of demagogy or popular pandering."[9] Sean Wilentz has also affirmed that "[i]mportant elements of democracy existed in the infant American republic of the 1780s, but the republic was not democratic. Nor, in the minds of those who governed it, was it supposed to be."[10] For instance, James Madison, who stressed that "the censorial power is in the people over the Government, and not in the Government over the people," stubbornly denounced and rejected the institutionalization of rule by the popular majority for fear of democracy with mob rule.[11] Even William Findley, an ardent Anti-Federalist, underscored in his speech that "sovereignty is in the states and not in the people in its exercise."[12]

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[6] Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense, and Other Political Writings*, ed. Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 53.

[7] Carl Schmidt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 18.

[8] Aware of the inherent and increasing heterogeneities of the American people, James Madison stressed that "[t]hose who contend for a simple Democracy, or a pure republic, actuated by the sense of the majority, and operating within narrow limits, assume or suppose a case which is altogether fictitious. They found their reasoning on the idea … that they all have precisely the same interests, and the same feelings in every respect. … We know however that no Society ever did or can consist of so homogeneous a mass of Citizens" (Quoted in Joseph K. Ellis, *American Creation: Triumphs and Tragedies at the Founding of the Republic* [New York: Vintage Books, 2007], 112-113). Robert A. Dahl has also pointed out that the nascent Republic was "not a static system" in the sense that history had indeed forged no relevant models of democratic government on similar scale, much less the scale US democracy would attain in the years to come (*How Democratic Is the American Constitution?* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002], 10).

Nonetheless, "[w]hen Americans referred to the sovereignty of the people," as Gordon W. Wood has pointed out, "they meant that the final, supreme, and indivisible lawmaking authority of the society remained with the people themselves, not with their representatives or with any of their agents."[13] Therefore, the philosophical and political configurations of the very essential doctrine of democratic power based on popular sovereignty found no proper counterpart in political reality. Since the substantiation of the doctrine of popular sovereignty was central to sustaining a seamless and holistic sense of American identity grounded on the democratic vision of “We the People,” the American people had to and did contrive alternatives that filled in the blanks; individual liberalism was their solution. As a matter of fact, the American Republic was a historical construct built not so much on popular democracy as an individual liberalism and would remain so until the Jacksonian era; the political space the new nation unfurled was for individuals who, now free from social hierarchy and monarchical power, became unbridled members—not necessarily political equals—of society. The grounding visions and ideas of the framers and the new political system they enacted were intended less for the equal demos than for liberal individuals, partly due to their primary aim to secure individual freedoms from British tyranny and partly due to their deep concerns about the dangers of popular power, then considered the equivalent of mob rule. This condition brought about an unbridgeable divide between the feared political demos and the privileged liberal individuals. The two were now strictly separated in exerting the rubric of “We the People,” which placed the referent of “We the People” in a fundamental ontological dilemma, caught between individual liberalism and popular democracy. Since democracy was not considered the effective and desirable solution for implementing the principle of popular sovereignty, individual liberalism was the only way to deal with the dilemma.

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[9] Joseph K. Ellis, *American Creation: Triumphs and Tragedies at the Founding of the Republic* [New York: Vintage Books, 2007], 241-242. Ellis presumes that Thomas Paine did not employ the term "democracy" in *Common Sense* (1776) because of its negative connotation (Ibid., 43).

[10] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: Norton, 2005), xvii.

[11] Quoted in Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 71. For Madison's famous discussion of the problems of the popular government operated by the people, see *The Federalist*, No. 10.

[12] Quoted in Pauline Maier, *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 110.

[13] Gordon S. Wood, *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 184.

The American notion of selfhood during the Revolutionary Era was the product of individual liberalism before it was aligned with the newly formulated notion of democratic citizens. The new dilemma lay in the impossibility of equating democratic citizens circumscribed by the electoral rules and governmental policies with liberal individuals as distinct agents of personal autonomy. For liberalism and democracy were two fundamentally distinct, even conflicting ideologies, putting individual freedom at odds with public equality.[14] To conceive of a society of liberal *and* democratic members without canceling their liberal or democratic grounds required a reconfiguration of the American self proper to the American democracy. This requirement was met by bringing the tenets of democracy to the realm of proper individualism. According to Christopher Castiglia, early American citizens were encouraged to relocate their democratic impulses, aspirations, and strivings to their interiors, what he calls "inner life," which served to displace the conflictual political and cultural publics with the turbulent feelings and conflicted desires. This internalization of democratic dilemmas, Castiglia argues, caused antebellum Americans to misconceive "the incessant labor of vigilant self-scrutiny and self-management as effective democratic action."[15] However, he does not probe into the ideological origin of this misconception—what led to the misrecognition of private thoughts and feelings as a vessel for the practice of democracy.

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[14] According to Chantal Mouffe, who draws on Claude Lefort's concept of modern democracy as "the dissolution of the markers of certainty," such a radically indeterminate modern democracy stems from "a contingent historical articulation" between "the liberal tradition constituted by the rule of law, the defense of human rights and the respect of individual liberty" and "the democratic tradition whose main ideas are those of equality, identity between governing and governed and popular sovereignty" (*The Democratic Paradox* [London: Verso, 2000], 2-3). For the conceptual difference between liberalism and democracy, see John McGowan, *American Liberalism: An Interpretation for Our Time* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2007), 12-13; by McGowan's account, "[i]n general, liberalism is the attempt to maximize individual freedom within a legal order that distributes power. Democracy, on the other hand, refers to the location of sovereignty in the people and to mechanisms of decision-making at various sites, most notably within the government, but also potentially in the workplace and other locales" (ibid., 13).

[15] Christopher Castiglia, *Interior States: Institutional Consciousness and the Inner Life of Democracy in the Antebellum United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 2. Castiglia develops a persuasive argument for the cultural process of internalization of politics by means of exploring popular antebellum fictions including the works of Hawthorne and Melville. I concur with such an observation, but I am more concerned with the politico-ontological way in which such internalization works to make impossible the instantiation of democratic visions and beliefs; whereas Castiglia believes in the relocated presence of democracy, I contend that American democracy is always an improbability misconceived as a probability.

At the heart of the implementation of democracy in the individual interior was the internalization of the property of the body politic. During the Constitutional Convention to address and resolve issues of how to govern the United States of America, its participants generally agreed that "the permanent temper of the people was adverse to the very semblance of monarchy."[16] Their underlying consensus was that the character—at once individual and collective—of an American exactly corresponded to the attribute of their polity. In the same vein, during the debates between Federalists and Anti-Federalists, Noah Webster, a staunch proponent of the federalist cause, wrote against the federalist plan for building a strong national army by stressing that "the principles and habits of the Americans are directly opposed to standing armies."[17] Though other Federalists had realistic concerns about the security of America without national troops,[18] Webster disproved the point by underscoring what an American individual's "principles and habits" could not accept and arguing that their refusal would undermine American national identity. For Webster, the way "We the People" existed—"the principles and habits of the Americans" in his words—was constitutive of and congruous with the essence of their political system. Another case that revealed the American tendency to equate the nature of their polity with that of their character was the petition from the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, which urged the Congress to abolish slavery because slavery was not compatible with the value of the American Revolution and Republic, which was, for the petitioners, enough reason for the Congress to "devise means for removing this inconsistency from the Character of the American People."[19]

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[16] Quoted in Robert Middlekauft, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 651.

[17] Quoted in Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1990), 354.

[18] For the Federalist argument for the necessity of national troops, see *Federalist Papers,* No. 23.

All these instances evidence that the locus of national politics was believed to reside in the interiors of citizens who were thought to be the equivalent of a homogeneous whole of individuals with the same political dispositions. However, this reconfiguration of the American people was fraught with the political dilemmas of selfhood and nationhood. Though American selfhood became the proving-ground where posited individuals of the same political tempers, principles, and habits could resolve external issues on common ontological grounds, such prepositions of ontologically homogenous selfhood and its assumed ability to deal with the actual political issues pertinent to the question of nationhood were impracticable.

Contemporary spectators of the birth and development of the U.S. noticed this ontological reconfiguration without noting its practical problems. Having seen the U.S. finally establish itself as "a state" after the Ratification of the Constitution in March 1789,[20] Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790) referred to the historic event as "the complete transformation of a large people into a state, which took place recently." Kant was especially interested in the American case in order to present it as historical evidence to verify his formulation that the ideal body politic is analogous to a living organism. In the newborn American Republic, explained Kant, "no member should be a mere means, but should also be an end, and … he contributes to the possibility of the entire body, should have his position and function in turn defined by the idea of the whole."[21] What he observed in the nascent American Republic was a perfect ontological reciprocity between individual citizens and their polity, a necessary condition for America selfhood and nationhood. Kant scholars such as Pheng Cheah have viewed this organismic metaphor as "replac[ing] the hierarchical relationship between head and limbs with an egalitarian interdependence between citizens and the state similar to the relation of parts and whole in an organism."[22] What is central to the equal interconnectedness between citizens and their state is, in effect, that the "idea" or the "possibility" of the state is both formative of and formed by the corresponding ontological features of each citizen. In Kant's view, the ideational potentiality of the state is always implicated in the agency of an individual, which characterizes the reciprocal relation between American self and society.

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[19] Quoted in Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Fathers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 83.

[20] Kant scholars have assumed that the reference indicates the French Revolution, which however was in its very early stage when Kant was writing *Critique of Judgment* (1790). It is more possible that Kant refers to the American Revolution and its subsequent years given the fact that the U.S. Constitution was adopted on September 17, 1787 by the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ratified by conventions in eleven states, and went into effect on March 4, 1789.

Kant's organismic metaphor can be traced back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's lesser-known notion of "common *self*," strikingly analogous to the concept of "We the People." In *The Social Contract* (1762), Rousseau posited that what enables a "social pact" is the condition that "*Each of us puts his person and his full power in common under the supreme direction of the general will and in a body we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole*" [italics in the original]. Such a self-generated, conscious "act of association," he suggested, "produces a moral and collective body made up of as many members as the assembly has voices, and which receives by this same act its unity, its common *self*, its life and its will" [italics in the original]. This scheme was postulated by the assumption that a society that "*receive*[s] *each member as an indivisible part of the whole*" is constructed by a liberal individual who willingly "*puts his person and his full power in common under the supreme direction of the general will*" [italics in the original]. Moreover, it was also premised but did not prove that such a democratic society is "a moral and collective body" of diverse individual "voices" as well as a collective "unity," and thus its member is at once private and public, what Rousseau called a "common *self*."[23] His apparently oxymoronic notion of "common *self*," as seen in the logic of his formulation of the term, was grounded on the threefold premise of individual autonomy and morality, social hospitality and solidarity, and the perfect reciprocity between the individual and the social. In his scheme, these essential conditions, all combined together, were supposed to serve the purpose of the "general will," a dynamic of social association presumably built into every human agency. However, as Allan Bloom has pointed out, the general will is "only the expression of a desire that something be done" in a particular social condition and thus "[t]he [social] force to do it is also necessary."[24] For Bloom, the external force should be the government in a modern society; however, the government, as "the intermediary between sovereign and individual citizen," is "totally derivative," not the general will *per se*.

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[21] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 254.

[22] Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 91.

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[23] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 50-51.

[24] Allan Bloom, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1712-1778," in *History of Political Philosophy*, eds. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 570.

Central to Kant's and Rousseau's ontological equation of individuality and polity is a premise of the ideal democratic social body as an end, not merely a means.[25] For Kant, the nature of a body politic is synonymous with the political disposition of its each member. In the same light, Rousseau establishes the theoretical model of a citizen, an active participant in politics, working with other equally involved others to decide what is best for the good of their community, such as proper laws. Theoretically, this model of citizenry renders possible the essential formula of modern democracy—the ruled are in effect the rulers, which is an end rather than a means. For Rousseau, as David Held has pointed out, "the idea of self-rule is posited as an end in itself."[26] Also for antebellum Americans, this logical formula was crucial to dealing with the structural rupture between their liberal individuality and democratic citizenship; if the problems of the political sphere can be relocated to and reconfigured in the domain of the individual psyche, then the individual cognitive and affective faculties, which had been philosophically posited to be rational and moral,[27] can help undo the intricate knot of political, social, and cultural issues reducible to interpersonal questions and problems. Hence the conceptual—not necessarily practical—reconciliation that is possible between liberal individuals and democratic citizens.

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[25] Both Rousseau and Kant do not favor the idea of popular democracy as a proper form of government. However, their shared presuppositions of an ideal politic body are indicative of a democratic government, a government established by the fundamental principles of democracy such as universal liberty, equality, and popular sovereignty.

[26] David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 45. Held maintains that "Rousseau set himself firmly against the post-Machiavellian distinctions between state and civil society, government and 'the people'" (Ibid., 45-46).

[27] Gilles Deleuze has claimed that the preconditions of Western philosophy are the questionable yet never questioned presuppositions of "a natural capacity for thought endowed with a talent for truth or an affinity with the true, under the double aspect of a good will on the part of the thinker and an upright nature on the part of thought." Due to these assumptions pervading the philosophical formulation of mental faculties and their functions, Deleuze argues, ontological and epistemological agencies are always posited to be intrinsically rational and moral (*Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton [New York: Columbia University Press, 1995], 131).

In a chapter entitled “PRINCIPAL CAUSES WHICH TEND TO MAINTAIN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IN THE UNITED STATES” in the first volume of *Democracy in America* (1835), Alexis de Tocqueville maintained that “the manners and customs of the people” in the U.S. are more important than natural conditions and laws. In the chapter Tocqueville particularly singles out “manners,” by which he means not only courtesy and etiquette but also “what might be termed the habits of the heart,” as well as “the various notions and opinions current among men” and “the mass of those ideas which constitute their character of mind.”[28] Three decades after the birth of the American Republic, whose essential founding principle was the ontological reformulation of the individual mind as the locus of dealing with the social, Tocqueville noted that “heart,” “notions and opinions,” “ideas,” and “mind” were crucial components to “maintain” the democratic nation. Thus, in his study of democracy in the U.S. he had “sought” “the image of democracy itself, with its inclination, its character, its prejudices, and its passions,” as well as “the influence which the quality of conditions and the rule of democracy exercise on the civil society, the habits, the ideas, and the manners of the Americans.”[29] Tocqueville was especially concerned with the ways Americans thought and felt in their lives, because American democracy was attributed to the ontological conditions and features of American life. For him, democracy in America was a composite of the various ways in which Americans thought and behaved on a daily basis. From this standpoint, he concluded that “although a democracy is more liable to error than a monarch or a body of nobles, the chances of its regaining the right path, when once it has acknowledged its mistake, are greater also; because it is rarely embarrassed by internal interests, which conflict with those of the majority, and resist the authority of reason." Like Rousseau and Kant, Tocqueville thought of a significant homology between personhood and nationhood, and thus understood a democracy in view of a rational and moral individual being who can adjust to survive in given conditions. In this regard, a democracy is the equivalent of a living existence and therefore its practical problems can be fixed as those in life; as Tocqueville asserted, "a democracy can only obtain truth as the result of experience."[30]

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[28] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Norton, 2007), 354.

[29] Ibid., 19.

However, to experience is one thing and to exist is another. More important, how to exist predetermines how to experience. What Tocqueville ignored was that the way in which antebellum Americans existed preceded and preconditioned the way they lived, recognized, and coped with their problems in life. The significance of American existence was, as I have argued above, predicated on the fundamental ontological reconfiguration of American selfhood as the equivalent of American nationhood. The crucial correspondence between the essential nature of personhood and that of polity would have been impossible without the premise of the entity of each notion; in order to believe in the identical reciprocity between a democratic self and a democratic society, one should first believe in the substance of each notion as a historical entity. Americans during the early nation-building period were firmly convinced that their democratic self and society were actual historical entities, a collective belief confirmed by the fact that they had actually set out to build the American Republic as a consensual society of autonomous individuals sympathizing with others for the public good through political and cultural practices designed for such a democratic society. Therefore, the significance of American existence was grounded on the belief in the substances of its essential components. These were, as they were inscribed in the Declaration of Independence, autonomous agency, solidifying affect for the public good, and democratic power built on popular consent.

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[30] Ibid., 188.

The Substances of American Democracy

"We the People" was not an expression of American experience; rather, it was *the* expression, or ontological prescription, of American existence. How to exist, not how to experience, was the key question at stake and as such the elusive phrase "We the People" served as the ontological upholstery. The models of autonomous agency, solidifying affect, and consensual power, regardless of their practical problems, were central to defining the significance of American existence. Regardless of their empirical dilemmas, the three models were the essential prerequisites for American existence. However, these preconditions were not historical entities as they were believed to be; rather, they were conceptual fulcrums for sustaining the significance of American existence. However, they were not merely misleading mirages, given their substantial credibility and ideological functionality, which effectively contributed to constituting a new nation and a new people. Moreover, they were fundamental reasons for the failures of American democracy; prior to the political, socioeconomic, and cultural problems relevant to race, class, gender inequalities lay the fundamental ontological question of the American people.[31]

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[31] The recent studies of how antebellum authors critically reflect the failings of American democracy in their works have tended to confine their insight into the specific issues of racial discrimination, class

The key to the ambiguous—conceptual yet substantial—workings of the models of autonomous agency, solidifying affect, and consensual power lies in their function as the substances of American existence. In fact, this notion of substance was derived from the Enlightenment formulation of subject and society. René Descartes, for instance, understood the term "substance" as "every thing in which whatever we perceive immediately resides, as in a subject, or to every thing by means of which whatever we perceive exists." According to Descartes, "[b]y 'whatever we perceive' is meant any property, quality or attribute of which we have a real idea. The only idea we have of a substance itself, in the strict sense, is that it is the thing in which whatever we perceive (or whatever has objective being in one of our ideas) exists, either formally or eminently." In this view, not only an actual entity but an idea perceived as an entity is a substance; if one can perceive a certain "property, quality or attribute" of "a real idea" as substantially existent, it is nothing but a substance. However, Descartes, who asserted that "we know by the natural light that a real attribute cannot belong to nothing," hardly distinguished between perceiving and believing in recognizing a substance.[32] This problem occurred in his famous formula, "*I am thinking, therefore I exist*," in which he posited that "I knew I was a substance whose whole essence or nature is simply to think, and which does not

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struggle, and gender conflict. In particular, scholarly inquiries into the varying paradoxical significance of "We the People" throughout the antebellum period have mainly focused on how antebellum authors engaged with the political (re)fashioning of the identity of an American people in relation to their contemporary issues of race, class, and gender. This contextual and local attention can provide an answer to the question as to how American democracy has failed the promise of "We the People" and how American authors have functioned as keen critics of such failures. However, it ignores a more central question regarding the continual failures of American democracy which are not necessarily reduced to the questions of race, class, and gender. For the recent studies on how antebellum authors struggled with the elusive notion of "We the People," see Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), Kimberly K. Smith, *The Dominion of Voice: Riot, Reason, and Romance in Antebellum Politics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999).

[32] René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes. vol. II*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (1984; Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 114.

require any place, or depend on any material thing, in order to exist."[33] The problem of this logical reasoning lies in the possibility that Descartes confirms the certainty of his existence by thinking that "*I am thinking, therefore I exist*." As Jacques Lacan has incisively noted, *cogito ergo sum* "is not simply the formulation in which the link between the transparency of the transcendental subject and his existential affirmation is constituted" due to the possibility that "[p]erhaps I am … assuredly, insofar as I think so."[34] In this case, what is perceived as the thinking substance is an effect of thinking, more precisely an effect of a certain belief; it is not substance *per se* independent of the thinking subject's desire or external conditions.

In the similar vein, John Locke proposed that "substance" is an entity that should exist to uphold other relevant concepts. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke insisted that "substance" is the entity without which what "stand[s] under" it cannot exist.[35] This formulation exactly applied to his political proposition in *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) that "a State of perfect Freedom" and "of Equality," which is given "by Nature," is "so evident in itself" in the sense that "[t]he *State of Nature* has a Law of Nature to govern it, which obliges every one: And Reason, which is that Law, teaches all Mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent"[36] [italics in the original]. Here, Locke posited the substances of "a Law of Nature" and "Reason" as "that Law" in that they sustain the self-evident existence of a nation of perfect freedom and equality. In this logical reasoning, however, the functional substance can be misconstrued as the original substance; indeed, Locke himself seems to be ambiguous about the difference between the two. Also questionable is the meaning of "so evident in itself," strongly indicative of the self-evident nature of substance without explaining why and how it is self-evident. Moreover, Locke does not question the substances of "Nature" and "Reason," which he apparently believed to be the given substances in themselves.

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[33] René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes. vol. I*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (1985; Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 127.

[34] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006), 532.

[35] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 296-297.

[36] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 269.

It was David Hume who first posed a question regarding the inherent mode of belief—in particular its affective attribute which accounts for the self-affirming certainty of the act of believing—in the underlying logic of thinking of substance. Though he shared Locke's empiricist premise that it is only from experience that an understanding of the external world can be derived, Hume suggested in *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (1748) that it is in fact "belief" that renders our experience substantially comprehensible, accessible, and useful to us. According to him, belief as the epistemological substance is in essence affective: "belief is something felt by the mind, which distinguishes the ideas of the judgment from the fictions of the imagination. It gives them more weight and influence; makes them appear of greater importance; enforces them in the mind; and renders them the governing principle of our actions." Hume located the centrality of affect and imagination to our comprehension and conviction; in this view, the substance we believe in is the effect of our feeling and imagining. Therefore, Hume argued, "belief consists not in the peculiar nature or order of ideas, but in the manner of their conception, and in their feeling to the mind," suggesting that belief is not necessarily subjective agency; on the contrary, it "depends not on the will, nor can be commanded at pleasure" but "a customary conjunction of the object with something present to the memory or senses." For Hume, "the sentiment of belief" comes from the customary "principles of connexion or association" such as "resemblance," "contiguity," and "causation." Hume's point is that the substance of human epistemic agency lies in the working of feelings structured by the connective and associative laws of social custom.[37] In short, Hume's model of an empirical subjectivity, which Gilles Deleuze calls a "psychological subjectivity,"[38] proposes "the sentiment of belief" as the actual substance of belief which foregrounds understanding and knowledge. This affective belief, Hume argues, is in essence associated with "fancy," which operates to make its holder convinced of what he or she believes as the fancy brings about actual somatic satisfaction: "every thing, which is agreeable to the senses, is also in some measure agreeable to the fancy, and conveys to the thought an image of that satisfaction, which it gives by its real application to the bodily organs"[39]

In the first chapter of volume II of *Democracy in America* (1840), Tocqueville referred to several "principal characters of … the philosophical method of the Americans." One of them is "to aim at the substance through the form."[40] He did not expound upon the phrase in the chapter, only implying that the forms of democratic life in America actually engendered the actual substance of American democracy. For him, Americans believed that the forms, if actualized to the fullest, can be the substances; they were thus all Cartesians and Lockeans.[41] To the contrary, Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville were close to Hume in rejecting to conceive of the given—self-evident—substance through its corresponding forms. For these authors, the paradox of American democracy lies in the very belief Tocqueville identifies as the American "philosophical method," a belief that substances can be perceived and verified through the Cartesian and Lockean method. If the forms serve to validate certain substances, these forms should be already substances, and if the forms are substances, what they serve to prove to be substances should be substances. Central to this logic is an inverted causality of belief—the act of believing in the substance of forms (or means) retroactively validates the substance of what the forms are supposed to uphold (or ends). At the heart of the American "philosophical mind" was this logic, operating as the fundamental ideology underlying the antebellum beliefs in American democracy.

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[37] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding And Other Writings*, ed. Stephen Buckle (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 47-53.

[38] Gilles Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrines of the Faculties*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 12-13. For Deleuze's discussion of Hume's formulation of subjectivity, see Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature,* trans. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[39] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, eds. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 232.

[40] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 378.

According to Slavoy Žižek, who rejects the popular phase "the end of ideology" and argues for the persistent centrality of ideology to any analysis of political, social, and cultural questions, the inverted logic of belief is what Louis Althusser unknowingly brings to the theory of ideology. He first reconsiders Althusser's famous example of ideology that "interpellates individuals into subjects": the example of a police officer shouting out "Hey, you there!" in public. On hearing this exclamation, an individual turns around instantly and "by this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject."[42] In Althusser's analysis, the very act of acknowledging that it should be he who is addressed enables the individual to recognize his subjectivity. Here, Althusser's point is the double formation of the subjectivity—although the individual is recognized as a social subject by the law, he is also subjugated to the law.[43] Thus, he sees ideology functioning not as an illusion but as an imaginary yet generative mediator between systems and institutions of power and individuals, thereby complicating the relationship between domination and subordination by introducing the ideological interpellation process in which individuals recognize themselves as subjects through ideology. This formula illustrates *how* subjects are complicit in and subject to their own domination, but fails to explain *why* they come to believe in the substance of the ideological injunction.[44]

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[41] For the influence of Locke on early American literary and political culture, see Gillian Brown, *The Consent of the Governed: The Lockean Legacy in Early American* Culture (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

What especially concerns Žižek in the Althusserian formula of ideology is the veiled logic of the paradoxical subjectivization. For him, it "designates the retroactive illusion of "always-already" … when the subject recognizes himself in an ideological call, he automatically overlooks the fact that this very formal act of recognition creates the content one recognizes oneself in."[45] He elaborates on the way in which the act of perception retroactively renders the perceived object a substantial content by unveiling the mechanism of affective belief inherent in the process of ideological recognition. According to him, "[m]embers of a community who partake in a given "way of life" *believe in their Thing*, where this belief has a reflexive structure proper to the intersubjective space," for example: "I believe in the (national) Thing" equals "I believe that others (members of my community) believe in the Thing" [italics in the original]. This view provides a clear account of why the interpellated individual quickly responds to the police officer's call; on hearing it, he or she believes that others would also turn around instantly in the same situation. Hence Žižek concludes that "[t]his paradoxical existence of an entity which "is" only insofar as subjects believe (in the other's belief) in its existence is the mode of being proper to ideological causes: the "normal" order of causality is here inverted, since it is the Cause itself which is produced by its effects (the ideological practices it animates)."[46]

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[42] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation" in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1991), 174.

[43] For Althusser, the interpellating ideology allows for hegemonic power to reproduce itself by obscuring traditional forms of repression and incorporating individuals into the power structure. He thus emphasizes the ubiquity of ideology and interpellation by noting how subjects are consistently constituted by Ideological State Apparatuses such as the family, educational institutions, and media such as literature, radio and television. Thus, ideology is "a structure essential to the historical life of societies," in which "the real relation is inevitably invested in the imaginary relation, a relation that *expresses* a will (conservative, conformist, reformist, or revolutionary), a hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality." For example, "the bourgeoisie *lives* in the ideology of *freedom* the relation between it and its conditions of existence: that is, *its* real relation (the law of a liberal capitalist economy) *but invested in an imaginary relation* (all men are free, including the free laborers)" [italics in the original] (*For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster [London: Verso, 2005], 232, 234).

[44] Drawing on Hegel, Althusser, and Foucault, Judith Butler has similarly maintained that the notion of "[s]ubjection" signifies the process of becoming subordination by power as well as the process of becoming a subject. Yet she also fails to consider *why* individual subjects in subjection would like to choose to be subject to power collectively (Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997], 2).

Žižek owes his reformulation of Althusserian ideology to Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic notion of fantasy. For Lacan, fantasy is the "very essential structure"[47] of the human psyche—"essential" in that it works unconsciously as the condition of human agency. The "unconscious fantasy," as he calls it, is "an image set to work in the signifying structure," which is "the means by which the subject maintains himself at the level of his vanishing desire, vanishing inasmuch as the very satisfaction of demand deprives him of his object," or what he calls the "original possibility."[48] Lacan understands desire as a psychological force that cannot be fully satisfied or fulfilled, unlike needs or demands; it always evades the subject, triggering the subject's pursuit of it. Žižek is indebted to Lacan's proposition that fantasy clarifies and confirms the substance of what seems to be originally possible in the world of the subject, thereby constituting a sense of proper subjectivity and seamless reality; by illustrating the original possibility, fantasy 1) *conceals* the essential inconsistency, gap, or lack—i.e., impossibility—of the subject and the world, and thus sutures our ontological incompletion, "provid[ing] us with firm foundations" of our existence,[49] 2) *creates* a hologram of the originally possible as a perceivable and pursuable entity, thereby "protect[ing]" what is impossible in reality, or "the real" in Lacan's terminology; this function of fantasy is " the support of desire; it is not the object that is the support of desire."[50] Whether concealment or creation, fantasy transposes the effect of our recognition of the lack or the whole into its cause so as to provide us with a plausible scenario of consistency, identity, unity, and plenitude of our subjectivity and society. It is due to the inverted logic of fantasy, as Lacan asserts, that "the empty spaces are as signifying as the full ones"[51] and thus "the impossible is not … a negative form, [nor] necessarily the contrary of the possible."[52] As Lacan encapsulates the paradox, "“*the effects are successful only in the absence of cause*"[53] [italics in the original].

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[45] Slavoy Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 73.

[46] Ibid., 201-202. The example of The Holy Spirit Žižek gives makes his point clear: "The Holy Spirit is the community of believers in which Christ lives after his death: to believe in Him equals believing in belief itself, i.e., believing that I'm not alone, that I'm a member of the community of believers. I do not need any external proof or conformation of the truth of my belief: by the mere act of my belief in others' belief, the Holy Spirit is here. In other words, the whole meaning of the Thing turns on the fact that "it means something" to people" (Ibid.). For Žižek's detailed discussion of the logic of belief, see Slavoy Žižek, *On Belief* (London: Routledge, 2001), 79-89.

[47] Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety*, trans. C. Gallagher, unpublished, 1.

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[48] Lacan, *Écrits*, 532. Lacan goes on to explain that "[t]his is why any temptation to reduce fantasy to imagination … is a permanent misconception" (ibid.).

[49] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1998), 31.

[50] Lacan, *Écrits*, 185. For Žižek's thorough analysis of Lacan's formulation of fantasy and its significance, see Slavoy Žižek, "The Seven Veils of Fantasy," in *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, ed. Dany Nobus (London: Rebus, 1998).

What these fantastical effects proffers in reality is, as Žižek stresses, more than "a hallucinatory realization of desire" in that "fantasy is the realization of desire, however, not 'realization' in the sense of fulfilling it, but rather 'realization' in the sense of bringing it forth, of providing its coordinates." In this sense, "it is not the case that the subject knows in advance what he wants and then, when he cannot get it in reality, proceeds to obtain a hallucinatory satisfaction in fantasy. Rather, the subject originally doesn't know what he wants, and it is the role of fantasy to tell him that, to 'teach' him to desire."[54] It is due to this essential ignorance that "fantasy guarantees the consistency of a socio ideological edifice."[55]

My readings of the romances of Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville identify these authors' Lacanian insights into the logic of fantasy built in agency, affect, and power linking it to the questions of antebellum political economy and culture. The authors note that what is central to the failed American democracy is what renders the very notion of American democracy possible in "the human heart" (in Hawthorne's expression) of Americans. For instance, for antebellum Americans, their democracy was in fact the creation of their collective belief in the existence of a construct built on the popular consent, where self-governing individuals in emotional solidarity with others work for public good. These interlocking forms of democracy were believed to be substances in order to conceive of an American democracy—which these forms uphold conceptually—as a historical entity. This vision of American democracy, to borrow Tocqueville's words, the substance aimed at through the form. In order that the substance is an entity, the form should be believed to be an entity, too. This belief, which creates and validates the substance of American democracy, is not merely an illusion. Rather, it is both formative of and formed by historical entities that evidence an unmatched level of social democratization in the U.S. such as free and equal opportunities given by the absence of aristocracy, the extended universal male suffrage and the resultant national elections, participatory rallies, and conventions, an incomparable freedom of the press, and a blossoming literary public sphere.

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[51] Lacan, *Écrits*, 327.

[52] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 167.

[53] Ibid., 128.

[54] Slavoy Žižek, *Interrogating the Real* (London: Continuum, 2008). 279-280.

[55] Slavoy Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (1992; New York: Routledge, 2008), 103.

Autonomous and singular agency, socially harmonious and solidifying affect, and democratically consensual power exist only as long as they are believed to be substances of American life. What the four romancers expose further in the specific historical context of antebellum American is the intricate relation between literature and reality. The real substances of democracy always lie in the contingent articulation of the affective belief in form of imagination—as Hume explains—in democracy and the actual phenomena of political, socioeconomic, and cultural democratizations: what American people actually perceive, feel, and pursue are the substances of democracy. More importantly, for these authors the actual workings of the substances of democracy were doubly misleading, for the very ontological conditions of American democracy on individual and collective levels are in effect liable to be operative in an antidemocratic—impersonal, disruptive, and tyrannical—way. The main characters created by the four romancers believe in the power of their autonomous agency, the effect of socially linked feelings serving the purpose of public good, and the legitimacy of popular sovereignty built on the consent of the governed, and such belief is constitutive of the significance of their existence. Contrary to their belief, however, their agency, affect, and power actually function in a way that rejects their socially determined mandates and roles which are believed to serve the cause of democracy. Rather than being self-governing and in harmony and consensus with others, their agency, affect, and power are working in a desubjectivizing, disintegrating, and despotic way.

Moreover, this important paradox remains a blind spot in praises or criticisms of American democracy because the shared idea and promised possibility of American democracy are necessary conditions that fantastically constitute *and* substantially sustain each American individual’s sense of his or her existence. That is to say, the fantasies of democratic agency, affect, and power serve as ontic substances, without which existence is completely futile and unbearable; indeed, it is not possible for antebellum Americans to conceive of themselves as incapable to of thinking or doing anything on his own, failing to feel for and with others in a given community, and living under a political authority that is established regardless of his consent. Such a condition was not only unreal but also unbearable in ideologized political, socioeconomic, and cultural registers. In other words, the other side of the same logic of the fantasies of American democracy is that living is believing; living as an American is tantamount to believing in the substance of being an American, which is also equal to the substance of American democracy. Thus, there must be no doubt or suspicion of the three substances; without the three interlocking substances, life does not exist in America.

Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville capture the necessary ignorance of their characters, characters whose lives are grounded upon the fundamental fantasies of agency, affect, and power as conceived in democratic terms. Unbeknownst to them, they suffer the self-destructive and antisocial effects of the undemocratic workings of their agency, affect, and power. Though they suffer from the paradox of what fantastically substantiates their lives, they do not see into its essentially empty, delusive substance due to its fantastical yet substantial working. Paradoxically, it is the very structural void that sustains their sense of existence and reality. Owing to this oxymoronic function, I call the models of agency, affect, and power the spectral substances of American democracy. They are spectral in that they are at once conceptually present and existentially absent and they keep haunting, as ghosts, exposing the dilemma of American democracy without revealing its paradoxical nature. The deeper secret of such enduring haunting as well as the necessary ignorance of it lies in the underlying logic of fantasy that maintains the spectral substances. The following chapters explore how Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville capture the spectral substances of American democracy by focusing on their texts and as well as probing the historical, critical, and theoretical writings related to their themes and styles.

Chapter Outline

In the first chapter, I examine Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland, or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1789) to shed new light on the author's political insights into the essential paradox of America in the historical process of nation building. Political readings of *Wieland*, inspired by its suggestive subtitle, have tended to focus on Brown's relationship to the two dominant political ideologies competing to design the fundamental fabric of the American Republic: Federalism, which pursued a secured and solidified unity; and Democratic-Republicanism, which valorized the doctrine of self-government on individual and public levels. In these historical readings, Brown distances himself from the Federalists or the Democratic-Republicans by using one to critique the other; for example, if a critic understands Brown to be blaming the Federalist vision of national unity for its homogenizing force, then of course Brown believes in the value of uninterrupted self-government, and if Brown is understood to be attacking the Democratic-Republican conviction of inviolable personal autonomy, then he necessarily agrees to the necessity of social order and security. These dichotomous interpretations overlook Brown's awareness of the absent substance of self-government and national unity. I suggest instead that Brown rejects both ideologies to disclose their common problem—their underlying logic of fantasy in particular. For Brown, I argue, both the Democratic-Republican adherence to the model of self-sufficient and self-governing personhood as well as the Federalist obsession with national unity are grounded in a fantastical logic that transposes an absent entity into a present one simply by asserting a given belief in it.

Like Lacan's account of fantasy as the essential structure of our sense of being and reality, Brown's *Wieland* elucidates the centrality of fantasy to the formation of the American idea of self-government and national unity. The two notions, in his view, are perceived and pursued as realities because they are believed to be realities; this belief is not simply an illusion, but a necessary condition for sustaining the notion of subject and society as conceived of in a democracy. According to the prevalent philosophical and political ideas of democratic society in America, an individual should be capable of self-government (a tenet of Democratic-Republicanism) and their society should be constitutive of national unity (a principle of Federalism). Note that the word "should," which does not necessarily guarantee "can," is logically inverted to "can" due to the inversion's centrality to building a new republic of imperative doctrines for promising universal liberty and equality. In *Wieland*, Brown dramatizes the possibly fatal consequence of this logic by depicting a character who believes in the existence of his own God—a necessary condition for the significance of his life—and then kills his family and dismantles his community just because he believes that God actually orders him to do so. The way in which Wieland believes in the substantial existence and mandate of his God is based on the inverted logic of causality; his actions make the object of belief—the God he believes in—exist to him. Conversely, the confirmed existence of God justifies what Wieland thinks about the supreme authority. This thinking, Brown suggests, is inherent in both Federalism and Democratic-Republicanism, which accounts for not only his sharp awareness of the logic of fantasy underlying the early American political ideologies but his dark vision of the inherent impossibility of American democracy.

This pessimism underlies the other three authors I study. In the second chapter, I view Edgar Allan Poe's two tales, "William Wilson" (1839) and "The Man of the Crowd" (1840), as a pair that critically reflects on the paradox of individualism during the Jacksonian Era. The first part of this chapter investigates how the political, economic, and cultural democratizations during the 1820s and 1830s deteriorated after the Great Panic of 1837. Before the Panic, pervading social democratizations brought about the expansions and developments of political participation, free capitalism, and literary democracy. During this period, the principle and practice of liberal individualism in political, economic, and cultural spheres were promoted and prospered. However, the unprecedentedly destructive national economic depression drastically deformed expressions of individualism in literary culture and the literary market. Rather than an increasingly diverse and heterogeneous literary public sphere, the post-Panic sphere became skewed toward the dominant logic of capitalist production. The enormous popularity of penny literary newspapers and magazines, which published work with derivative styles and themes for a wide range of general readers, facilitated the transformed the course of literary democracy. Now, to reproduce a popular literary model successfully was the key to commercial and critical success. In politics as well, interpersonal identification was crucial to success as politicians; both Jacksonians and anti-Jacksonians tried to imitate the model of Andrew Jackson to replicate his political success and popularity. The shrewd imitation of an existing celebrated model became more necessary and effective in appealing to the general populace than establishing a unique political identity. Poe’s sharp critique of this paradox of democratic individualism is reflected in “How to Write a Blackwood Article” and “A Predicament” (1838) and “The Man That Was Used Up, A Tale of the Late Bugaboo and Kickapoo Campaign” (1839). In these stories, peculiar individuality or extraordinary singularity, idolized and sought, turns out to be nonexistent.

After the Panic, Poe expressed his growing concerns with the increasingly dominant logic of political and cultural homogenization and impersonalization in his tales. The second part of the chapter II discusses the harsher criticism of the logic of democratic individualism expressed in “William Wilson” (1839) and “The Man of the Crowd” (1840). Wilson, mortified by his namesake/doppelgänger’s “most absolute identity” with him, seeks his own singular identity in vain, and the narrator of “The Man of the Crowd,” also chasing after an nameless old roamer’s “absolute idiosyncrasy,” finally realizes that such a peculiarity is “in vain to follow.” These two stories reveal Poe’s sustained inquiry into the paradox that the awareness of the lack of genuine individuality triggers one’s urgent yet deluded striving to secure his own or a stranger’s autonomy and singularity; what his characters chase after is, as they find eventually, nothing. The two stories collectively chastise the contemporary intellectual—mainly Tocquevillian and Emersonian—urge to retrieve the proper individual sphere marred by the democratic logic of political and cultural homogenization and impersonalization facilitated by permeating social democratizations. Poe indicts this public injunction as a double delusion: first it posits the discursive conception of a self-possessed and distinctive individual as a historical entity, and then it proclaims the loss of such proper individualism, which is thus considered the urgently sought-after object. Poe precisely captures this doubly misleading delusion as central to the democratic individualism of the Jacksonian Era.

In the third chapter, I explore how Nathaniel Hawthorne studies the mechanisms of a plurality of sympathies in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), sympathies that complicate the simple antebellum notion of sympathy. Hawthorne’s contemporaries tended to regard sympathy as an essential, socially harmonizing feeling, through which one can gain a deeper understanding of the suffering of others in social troubles and ills. This sympathetic understanding and bond were generally considered the necessary conditions for social reform and thorough democratization, especially in abolitionist and women's rights movements. Composed at a time replete with political and cultural discourses relying on the reforming and democratizing power of sympathy, *The Scarlet Letter* demonstrates that the way sympathy operates in interpersonal relationships is not necessarily democratic; rather, sympathy is, in effect, an affective structure that allows interpersonal knowledge and action. Moreover, there are modes of sympathy that work in amoral, immoral, or morbid ways. These "strange" sympathies, Hawthorne shows, do not work in a subjective and harmonious way; rather, they desubjectivize their holder. Hawthorne's point is that sympathies, or any other social feelings required for a proper democracy, are fundamentally misconceived, though they are supposed to be the foundation for democratic relationships and sociality. Thus, he denounces the serious misconceptions of sympathy, which mislead the public into fantasizing about the substantial power of sympathy to lay the groundwork for establishing a liberal and democratic society. He also acknowledges the inevitable necessity of believing in this impossibility, because it enables his contemporary Americans to have the wholesome sense of sound American democracy.

In the final chapter, I read Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (1851) in the historical context of the 1848 presidential elections in the U.S. and France and their aftermath. That year, Zachary Taylor, who had no name in politics, won the American presidential election, and Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, also a political neophyte, became the first elected President in France. What enabled their rise to power was not only their popular celebrity—one was the nephew of Napoleon I and the other was a Mexican War hero—but also universal suffrage and the presidential election by popular vote, both based on the principle of popular sovereignty. By 1848, France and the U.S. were the only two countries to institutionalize popular sovereignty on the national level. Napoleon and Taylor were the system's beneficiaries, however, they both failed to fulfill their promise of better democracy; Napoleon became Emperor Napoleon I through coups, and Taylor was helpless about the Secession crisis that led to the Civil War. Published in 1851, *Moby-Dick* attends to the paradox of popular sovereignty, especially in the celebrated quarter-deck scene. I focus on the strikingly democratic and consensual way in which Captain Ahab persuades his crew into the communal pursuit of Moby Dick at the cost of their economic profit and in breach of the original contract with the owners of the *Pequod*. Unlike existing readings that critically view him as a totalitarian dictator, I argue that Melville depicts Ahab in this scene as a democratic leader who first asks for the consent of others and follows the result of their collective decision. This democratic procedure, however, serves the purpose of Ahab's private intention and despotic design. This paradox, I argue, is central to the paradox of consensual democracy, an enduring aporia of modern democracy.

Chapter I

Selfhood, Nationhood, and the Logic of Fantasy in Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland*

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's often neglected tale, "The Hall of Fantasy" (1843), the narrator, who is identified with the author himself, wanders in the titular edifice located in the "mystic region, which lies above, below, or beyond the actual." At a spot in the building, he stops and sees "[i]n niches and on pedestals … the statues or busts of men, who, in every age, have been rulers and demi-gods in the realms of imagination, and its kindred regions," a constellation of literary masters such as "Aesop," "Dante," "Ariosto," "Rabelais," "Cervantes," "Shakespeare," "Spenser," "Milton," "Bunyan," "Fielding," "Richardson," and "Scott." Beside them, "[i]n an obscure and shadowy niche," he finds "the bust of our country man, the author of Arthur Mervyn," Charles Brockden Brown.[56] Hawthorne's allusion to Brown as the only American author qualified for this glorious pantheon of stellar authors inaugurates an enduring genealogy of American dark romancers including these two, as well as Poe and Melville.[57] Designating Brown as *the* precursor of Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, critics have noted and valorized the ironic, significant chiaroscuro between the progressive Enlightenment ideals Brown openly endorses in his political writings and the "intensification of shadow," as Harry Levin puts it,"[58] that he creates in his fictional writings. Over the past decades, this critical attention to Brown's status as the forefather of the American Gothic imagination and the romance genre has gradually shifted to uncovering the breadth of his active contribution and achievement as a prolific historian, essayist, journalist, and editor eagerly engaging with the pressing concerns and issues in the young American Republic's emerging national politics and literary culture. Hence the prevalent reassessment of Brown as a key figure for comprehending the political, socioeconomic, and cultural contours of the nascent Republic.[59]

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[56] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Mosses From an Old Manse*, vol. 10 of *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. William Charvat et al. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1974), 173-174.

[57] It is Melville who first employs the word "dark" to characterize the arcane and profound theme of Hawthorne's fiction in "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1850), a review of Hawthorne's two volumes of *Twice Told Tales* (1837, 1842). In the essay Melville ascribes "the great depth and breadth of this American man" to "the great power of blackness" and "the blackness of darkness beyond" in him, lauding him as the proud American author to "prize," "cherish," and "glorify" ("Hawthorne and His Mosses: By a Virginian Spending July in Vermont," in *The Piazza Tales*, vol 9 of *The Writing of Herman Melville*, eds. Harrison

One recent critical tendency in reappraising the political Brown through focusing on his protean literary career is an increasing attention to his implicit yet keen political stance during the 1790s, especially expressed in his first romance, *Wieland or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798).[60] Political readings of the text have had a tendency to bifurcate into two mutually exclusive interpretations of Brown's cautious tale of contemporary politics. One identifies Brown as a Federalist proponent of a stable, viable social order free from the turmoil and seductive politics of demagogues. Critics

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Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle [Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1987], 243, 247).

[58] Harry Levin, *The Power of Blackness: Hawthorne, Poe, Melville* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1980), 21.

[59] For an overview of recent Brown criticism that marks this critical shift, see Mark Kamrath, "Charles Brockden Brown and Contemporary Theory: A Review of Recent Critical Trends in Brown Scholarship," *Profils Americans* 11 (1999): 213-45.

[60] Brown had already composed *Alcuin* and *Sky-Walk* and published minor literary pieces before the publication of *Wieland*. Yet the latter was the first of his major romances to be published in its entirety.

such as Jane P. Tompkins have presented this reading by viewing the eponymous character's tragedy caused by his solipsistic religious zealotry and the stranger Carwin's deceptive and destructive influence as "a plea for the restoration of civic authority in a post-Revolutionary age."[61] In the same light, Christopher Looby and others have regarded *Wieland* as "offer[ing] a direct refutation of the Republican faith in men's capacity to govern themselves without the supports and constraints of an established social order."[62] Opposing this critical strand, other critics have tended to align Brown with contemporary Democratic-Republicans pursuing personal autonomy and democratic diversities, rather than an established social system and forced unity that circumscribe individual freedom and local liberty. From this perspective, Eric A. Wolfe and others have identified Wieland's tragic story centering on his fanatic religiosity and self-destructive zealotry as "a tragedy caused by the relentless search for unity of identity, and more particularly, a tragedy played out in the quest for a unified voice."[63] Though these two readings seem to conflict, they are in fact premised upon the common assumption that Brown is seriously concerned that the political idea and identity he rejects—whether Democratic-Republican or Federalist—is the real menace to the progress of American democracy.

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[61] Jane P. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1890-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 61.

[62] Christopher Looby, *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 202.

[63] Eric A. Wolfe, "Ventriloquizing Nation: Voice, Identity, and Radical Democracy in Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland*," *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 78, no. 3 (2006): 452. There is also an eclectic reading that tries to combine the two opposite readings of the political Brown. For example, Robert S. Levine maintains that *Wieland* expresses both "Brown's 'Federalist' concerns about the threat posed by expedient seducers" and an "ironic critique of the foundationalism implicit … in the idea of America as a reified national entity." Overall, however, Levin's reading is lopsided toward acknowledging more Brown's political affiliation with Federalists (*Conspiracy and Romance: Studies in Brockden Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville* [Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 30).

My reading of *Wieland* confronts and confounds the existing political readings of the text. Directing attention to Brown's radical critique of the unquestioned ideological premise that delusively substantiates both the Democratic-Republican and Federalist causes, I unmask his deep concerns about the logic of early American political fantasy that makes such delusive substantiation possible. For Brown, I contend, both the Democratic-Republican call for self-government of individual agency and the Federalist request for national identity and unity are fundamentally misplaced and misleading in that what each party argues for does not exist; in Brown's view, the perceived substance of the Federalist and Democratic-Republican belief is nothing but the fantastically substantial belief itself. To discuss how Brown makes such a radical point in *Wieland*, I first turn to the volatile decade of the 1790s which established an unbridgeable gulf between Democratic-Republicans and Federalists. During this decade, President George Washington's shocking public announcement of his retirement in September 1796 and the subsequent heated presidential election held in December 1796 made evident the increasing ideological antagonism between the two conflicting parties, while the scandalous XYZ Affair in July 1797 and the controversial passing of the Alien and Sedition Acts in July 1798 deepened these inter-party hostilities. Moreover, the decade witnessed escalating diplomatic tensions and political crises between the U.S. and France, which caused conflicts between Democratic-Republicans and Federalists. After considering this historical context, I reconsider the political significance of ventriloquism in *Wieland*. Critics have explored the political and cultural meanings of the hazardous effects of ventriloquism in *Wieland* as an allegory of the contemporary political debates over agency, identity, and authority. I claim that, ultimately, their readings mistakenly portray Brown as a firm believer in the substance of contemporary political ideology. The political Brown I restore poses a question regarding the very tendency to have faith in spectral substances of political ideologies.

"*The Transformation: An American Tale*"

On September 19, 1796, George Washington published his valedictory in the *American Daily Advertiser* after 45 years of dedicated military and political service in building the new republic. The departing president emphatically called upon his fellow Americans in the celebrated "Farewell Address" to continue understanding their strong bonds of union as "sacred ties." Ironically, however, his sudden decision to leave office would set the stage for the first presidential election, a contentious election that divided leading statesmen and their followers into two opposing political factions—Democratic-Republicans led by Thomas Jefferson and Federalists aligned with Alexander Hamilton and John Adams. Both sides organized campaigns for the coming presidential election on the local, state, and national levels, largely disregarding Washington's public warning of the dangers of political partisanship. During the unprecedentedly heated and vicious race between Adams and Jefferson, the Democratic-Republicans blamed Federalist elitism and their call for national political economic policies (e.g., a powerful and regulative central government, a national bank, heavy government subsidies, and tariffs, etc.) that they portrayed as a serious menace to American ideals of individual freedom and local liberty. Meanwhile, the Federalists denounced the Democratic-Republicans, likening them to French Jacobins who would radically attempt to bring down the central government and prevent the progress of the American Republic.

The result of the election was that Adams narrowly defeated Jefferson in the electoral college with a vote of 71-68. Yet according to the U.S. Constitution, the runner-up was to be elected Adams's vice president, a rule which would undermine the stability of the national body politic. Another crisis in the Adams administration was precipitated by Adams himself. Many Federalists, more loyal to Hamilton, considering Adams too moderate to fulfill the Federalist vision of America; therefore, they were lukewarm or hostile to Adams's weak leadership. Accordingly Adams's presidency faced political challenges from the outset, both from his own party and from the opposition whose leader was his own vice president; Adams was at the helm of the young Republic amid increasing political divisions and party rivalries. During his presidency, as a consequence, he disagreed with the Federalists as much as he did with the Democratic-Republicans.[64] One significant example of this was his stubborn decision to end the Quasi-War with France and push for peace even though the Federalists favored making peace with Britain and continuing to be hostile to France.[65] At the cost of his own party support, popularity, and consequently reelection, Adams obstinately turned his fact against the Federalist choice and resolved the conflict with France.

The XYZ Affair, a political and diplomatic scandal and a fatal blow to Adams' presidency, happened during this negotiation. In 1797, Adams sent three American envoys to Paris to secure a peace treaty with the French government. However, the American envoys received insulting demands from the French: the public apology of the

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[64] Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 647.

[65] Hamilton favored this option for the purpose of promoting closer ties with Britain for the U.S.'s commercial interests. On the contrary, Adams always sought peace as he frankly wrote in his letter to his wife: "[r]econciliation if practicable and Peace if attainable, you very well know would be as agreeable to my Inclinations and as advantageous to my Interest, as to any Man's" (John Adams to Abigail Adams, 18 February 1776, *Letters of John Adams, Addressed to His Wife Vol I*, ed. Charles Francis Adams [Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1841], 85).

American government, granting a loan, and also paying a bribe of $250,000 to the French government. When this news reached America, many citizens were furious and, regardless of party affiliation, they demanded war. Despite the insult, Adams kept trying to reach an agreement with France, which resulted in a deluge of public denunciations and attacks directed at him, especially from Democratic-Republicans. To quash the Federalist opposition, Adams signed the notorious Alien and Sedition Acts into law in June and July of 1798. The laws were supposed to control the hostile activities of French-sympathizing foreigners in the U.S. during a time of impending war, but they actually put a gag upon members of the press voicing opposition to the Adams administration. Indeed, after the passing of the Acts anti-Federalist newspaper publishers and journalists were arrested, tried, and convicted. Seeing this, Adams' vice President Jefferson lamented, "I know not which mortifies me most, that I should fear to write what I think, or my country bear such a state of things."[66]

It was during this period of domestic political crisis that menaced the foundational values and principles of American democracy that Brown published his four major romances: *Wieland* (1798), *Ormond, or, The Secret Witness* (1799), *Arthur Mervyn, or, Memoirs of the Year 1793* (Volume 1 in 1799 and Volume II in 1800), and *Edgar Huntly, or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker* (1799). During this brief explosion of imaginative power, Brown advanced a new form of the American romance, a form characterized by enigmatic figures, their unresolved dilemmas, and a narrative voice willing to speak the unidentified truth of the young American Republic. As the portico to the "obscure and shadowy"—as Hawthorne calls it—sanctum of dark romances, *Wieland* explores the centrality of complex dimensions and functions of the human psyche to the unidentified sources of early American political problems. Since its first appearance, the highly suggestive subtitle of *Wieland*–“*The Transformation: An American Tale*”—has tempted a number of readers and critics to try to unveil its ambiguous political, social, and cultural meanings, positioned as the novel is within the historical context of the nation building period.

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[66] Thomas Jefferson to John Tylor, 26 November 1798, vol 4 of *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson: Being His Autobiography, Correspondence, Reports, Messages, Addresses, and Other Writings, Official and Private*, ed. H. A. Washington (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1854), 259.

One of the most striking and significant transformations the early American Republic underwent was the increasing diversification of the American population. For Brown and his contemporaries, late 18th-century America was indeed reeling from the fundamental, guiding principle of national unity that directed the Revolutionary War. After the Revolutionary years, Americans began to face and fear inherent and increasing political, social, and cultural (especially religious) differences in their own populace. *Wieland* captures the deepening tension and anxiety about such internal heterogeneities that practically threatened to shake he necessary ideology of national unity. To reflect this social concerns, one of the romance’s main characters, Francis Carwin, is an alien; he is an Englishman who has abandoned his birth country’s faith, culture, and identity, essentially to become a Spaniard. He has learned the Spanish language, identified with its cultural norms, and even converted to Roman Catholicism. Brown’s contemporaries would have considered Carwin’s varied, heterogeneous national and cultural identities a tangible threat to the formation of American unity. In particular, his ventriloquism—an ability to make and manipulate a voice that cannot be easily identified as his own—indicates the serious issue of identity and identification he brings to the early American Republic suffering from the crisis of national unity during the 1790s. Jay Fliegelman and

Eric A Wolfe, among other critics, have viewed the disruptive power and influence of Carwin's ventriloquism upon Wieland as an indication of the specific political incidents that flamed the emerging national chauvinism made manifest in the XYZ Affair and the Alien and Sedition Acts to deal with the crisis of American unity.[67] According to these critics, Brown's exploration of the effect of ventriloquism takes on a political significance as Brown depicts the ventriloquist Carwin thwarting and disrupting Wieland's fantasy of the identity of bodily agent and vocal agency. Their readings suggest that *Wieland* not only channels Brown's anxiety about the violent logic of the American body politic but also underscores his strong belief in the possibility of a more genuine democracy, one that would embrace unauthorized voices of people with diverse identities. However, these readings ignore Brown's suggestion that divorcing voice from body is impossible, as is the divorce of identity from authority, and choice from will. The irresistible and overwhelming influence of Carwin's ventriloquism upon the Wieland circle suggests that only Wieland is unable to decouple himself from the fantasized identification between selfhood and authority. In what follows, my close reading of

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[67] The main plot of *Wieland*, which hinges upon the delusional and destructive effect of a strange visitor's ventriloquism resulting in his host's familicide, has invited a number of critics to a discussion of the intricate philosophical questions of agency, authority, will, and identity/identification in relation to contemporary European and American political thoughts. Leigh Eric Schmidt's *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000) provides a thorough historical and cultural study for the discussion of the thematic importance of ventriloquism in *Wieland* by elucidating the centrality of ventriloquism to demystifying the logic of religious revelation. For the philosophical and political readings of *Wieland* in terms of the issue of ventriloquism, see Jay Fliegelman's introduction to the Penguin Classic edition of *Wieland; and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist* (New York: Penguin, 1991), vvxii-xxxivv, Emory Elliott's introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition of *Wieland and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), vii-xxx, Caleb Crain's introduction to the Modern Library Classics edition of *Wieland or, the Transformation: An American Tale and Other Stories* (New York: Random House, 2002), xi-xxiv, Nigel Leask, "Irish Republicans and Gothic Eleutherarchs: Pacific Utopias in the Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone and Charles Brockden Brown," in *British Radical Culture of the 1790s*, ed. Robert M. Maniquis (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2002), 109, David S. Hogsette, "Textual Surveillance, Social Codes, and Sublime Voices: The Tyranny of Narrative in Caleb Williams and Wieland," *Romanticism on the Net: An Electronic Journal Devoted to Romantic Studies* 38-39 (2005): 1-24, and Barbara Judson, "A Sound of Voices: The Ventriloquial Uncanny in *Wieland* and *Prometheus Unbound*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44, no. 1 (2010): 21-37.

Wieland expounds how Brown represents Wieland's dilemma as associated with an ontological problem that cannot be easily fixed, as well as this unresolved problem's political implications.

"Wast thou the agent?"

Though notoriously complicated and confusing, the major events of *Wieland*'s plot originate from and revolve around Wieland's religious fanaticism and monomaniacal zealotry. The story is narrated by Wieland's sister Clara Wieland upon someone's request of the details of her American experience. Clara undertakes her autobiographical story with some hesitancy, in part because the incidents she has gone through are so repulsive and led to her emotional and nervous breakdown, and in part because she is not quite confident that others will believe her experience. Yet she begins to tell her story to the unidentified recipient, starting with a brief history of her family and the bizarre death of her father Theodore. Theodore Wieland, a mercantile apprentice in London, was early converted to a strict form of Protestant Christianity. One day he decided to come to America to convert the savages. However, his failure to persist in his calling bred a deep guilt and an ungovernable anxiety in him, as well as a feeling that he had disappointed his God. When Clara was six, he died, apparently by spontaneous combustion, in the very location of his religious ritual and worship, an appalling event that would remain in the minds of Clara and her elder brother Theodore.[68]

What is particularly noteworthy in Clara's recollection of her father is her precise delineation of the origin and structure of his religious belief. She details how he transforms into “a fanatic and a dreamer” with “invincible candor and invariable integrity” (13):

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[68] Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist*, ed. Jay Fliegelman (New York: Penguin, 1991). Further references will be to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

> A Bible was easily procured, and he ardently entered on the study of it. His understanding had received a particular direction. All his reveries were fashioned in the same mould. His progress towards the formation of his creed was rapid. Every fact and sentiment in this book was viewed through a medium which the writings of the Camisard apostle had suggested. His constructions of the text were hasty, and formed on a narrow scale. Everything was viewed in a disconnected position. One action and one percept were not employed to illustrate and restrict the meaning of another. Hence arose a thousand scruples to which he had hitherto been a stranger. He was alternately agitated by fear and by ecstasy. He imagined himself beset by the snares of a spiritual foe, and that his security lay in ceaseless watchfulness and prayer. (9-10)

In this depiction, Clara underscores the quite problematic ground of her father’s religious belief, which is formed and fortified in an impetuous (“rapid,” “hasty”), parochial (“a particular direction,” “on a narrow scale”), illusory (“reveries”), self-contradictory (“by fear and by ecstasy”), as well as a passive, submissive, and subjugated (“beset by the snare of a spiritual foe”) fashion. All these negative attributes of his creed are central to the solid groundwork for his belief, which then characterize his existence: “[t]he empire of religious duty extended itself to his looks, gestures, and phrases” (10). In a sense, Clara implies that his belief is devoid of substance. Ironically, what constitutes it is its form and procedure, not its true content. The problematic aspects of his religious apprenticeship indicate that it is his act of belief that forms and fortifies the validity of what he believes.

Another notable episode that demonstrates this inherent problem with his piety is the way in which he decides to come to America. When seeking a new habitation, “there was another of the most imperious and irresistible necessity,” the logic and operation of which is described in Clara’s account:

> He imbibed an opinion that it was his duty to disseminate the truths of the gospel among the unbelieving nations. He was terrified at first by the perils and hardships to which the life of a missionary is exposed. This cowardice made him diligent in the invention of objections and excuses; but he found it impossible wholly to shake off the belief that such was the injunction of his duty. This belief, after every new conflict with his passions, acquired new strength; and, at length, he formed a resolution of complying with what he deemed the will of heaven. (10-11)

Here, Brown significantly suggests that the religious belief of Clara's father is in truth contingent on an inverted logic of causality—the cause is retroactively created by the effect. In his case, the cause of his religious belief is recognized as the substantial "injunction of his duty" by suffering the terrifying effect of such belief; that is, it is the very act of his belief and its effect that impel him to have faith in the substantial cause of his belief. Note that despite his own existential fear and anxiety about his decision to immigrate to America—the apprehensions are what his true self really feels and understands—it is his "belief" that forces him to conform to what he believes to be "the will of heaven." His decision led by the underlying logic of his belief requires no internal confidence or external confirmation of how true his belief is; what is necessary is only the act of firm belief itself. By believing in the substance of what he believes, Brown suggests, he undoubtedly confirms the validity of the substance of his own religious belief.

When Clara's father moves to Philadelphia, he purchases a farm and begins cultivating it, still believing that the Indians require his proselytizing. However, his religious faith slackens as he becomes caught up in hard work in the New World. Eventually, he returns to his theological studies and takes up the missionary mantle once more, but in vain due to practical difficulties and hardships in reality. It is harsh reality itself—not his belief—that thwarts his religious design to convert the savage tribes in

America. Discouraged and despondent, he engrosses himself in building a veritable temple on a cliff for solitary meditation. Building the temple signifies his desperate endeavor to keep the form of his belief because the belief is what substantiates and sustains his sense of being and reality. Without it, he does not exist ontologically. In this sense, he already lives a dead life devoid of substance, without the knowledge of the paradox. Thus, his sudden death, though its cause is inexplicably mysterious and unbelievable, is not surprising at all. Rather, the putative cause of his death, the spontaneous combustion whose source or cause cannot be identified or explained, implies his life devoid of the proper substance of his belief. In sum, his causeless life is the equivalent of his causeless death.

After describing the death of her father, Clara's narration shifts to the story of a circle comprised of herself, her brother Theodore Wieland, his wife, Catharine Pleyel Wieland, their four children, and Wieland's brother-in-law, Henry Pleyel, who live in a relatively isolated rural community outside Philadelphia. Their insular intimacy and happiness in a close-knit circle of families and relatives/friends begin to falter as they hear a series of unidentified and disembodied voices, some of which are later revealed to be the work of Francis Carwin, a strange visitor to the Wieland circle. Carwin has the peculiar ability to throw his voice and thus seems to be responsible for the mysterious voices, though he stubbornly denies it. Whether through Carwin's vocal manipulations or not, Wieland, who has inherited his father's heightened religiosity, becomes strongly convinced that he really hears the voice of God, especially an order that demands the sacrifice of his family to prove his faith. In the end, to fulfill the order of his God Wieland kills his wife and their children. He also tried to kill Clara, but she is saved by

Carwin’s ventriloquized command from God to stop Wieland. In his last moments, Wieland doubts his divine sanction for the first time, but only when he has nothing left to do but terminated his falsely guided life.

Arguably, no event in *Wieland* is more traumatic and catastrophic for the Wielands and Pleyel than the tragedy caused by Wieland’s religious solipsism and fanaticism, which he seems to have inherited from his father. As a matter of fact, in Clara’s reminiscence, though “[t]here was an obvious resemblance between him and my father, in their conceptions of the importance of certain topics, and in the light in which the vicissitudes of human life were accustomed to be viewed … the mind of the son was enriched by science, and embellished with literature” (26). Therefore, “[h]uman life, in his opinion, was made up of changeable elements, and the principles of duty were not easily unfolded” (25). Unlike his religiously obsessed father, Wieland is open to the world of variability and objectivity through his deep interests in literature and science; thus, he understands human life in terms of its changeability and relativity as well as objectivity and rationality. However, the significant dissimilarity between the father and the son eventually becomes a salient similarity as the son also becomes a religious fanatic who focuses on nothing but his own religion due to his belief in the substance of the mysterious voice. Wieland’s drastic transformation is in fact enacted and derailed by the logic of inverted causality; like his father, he convinces himself of the substance of the religious cause he believes in by means of suffering the effect of the act of his religious belief.

What compels his transformation is the mysterious, unidentified voice. One evening, Wieland, Catharine, Pleyel, and Clara are in the temple Theodore Wieland built on a hill for his religious rituals. The women practice needlepoint while the men argue a particular point of Cicero. Then a storm comes and they retire to the house. When Wieland returns to the temple for a letter he himself left in it, he hears his wife's voice at the bottom of the hill, which is impossible because he thinks she must be at home at that time. Later Clara and Wieland have a chance to talk about the extraordinary event, when he expresses his opinion of it for the first time: "There is no determinate way in which the subject can be viewed. Here is an effect, but the cause is utterly inscrutable. To suppose a deception will not do. Such is possible, but there are twenty other suppositions more probable" (40-41). Given this comment, Wieland's later transformation to a religious fanatic is especially shocking. At that moment, he seems to clearly understand what is central to the problem of his religious belief—"Here is an effect, but the cause is utterly inscrutable." He is aware of the fact that central to the actual problem with any determinism is the presence of an "effect" whose "cause is utterly inscrutable." As he acknowledges, the paradox is not an epistemological question of "deception"; rather, it is a deeper ontological question regarding why one is compelled to explore the "probable"—not simply "possible"—"suppositions." This exploration is triggered by believing in the "probable" "suppositions." That is, the act of believing what is supposed to be the probable, whether "inscrutable" or not, is enough for believing the substance of the cause—though the latter remains still "inscrutable." This is, in truth, the logical "effect" of believing. Wieland's awareness of this logical problem is, however, to be overshadowed by the domineering logic of his religious belief—the very logic of inverted causality.

The mysterious voices, which haunt the mind of Wieland, also influence Clara, and she precisely records the actual working of the inverted logic of causality in her own mind, making her a self-aware case study to help the reader understand better the case of Wieland. When she hears the unidentified voices, she says that "[t]he words uttered by the person without, affected me as somewhat singular, but what chiefly rendered them remarkable, was the tone that accompanied them. It was wholly new." Here, she ascribes the irresistibly attractive power of the voice to the new and remarkable singularity of the tone. The tone is an affectively expressive mode of voice, which is not necessarily pertinent to the content the voice conveys. In other words, the tone is nothing but an affective effect and therefore cannot be the actual substance of what voice intends to deliver. However, the problem is that the tonal effect, due to its affectively expressive and infectious tonality, sounds like a new and singular entity, which attracts individuals who hears it. This attraction of the voice works like gravitational force because of its inherent affectivity: "a heart of stone could not fail of being moved by it" because "[i]t imparted to me an emotion altogether involuntary and incontrollable" (59). In *Wieland*, Brown underscores that this overwhelmingly powerful—"involuntary and incontrollable"—affective influence of the effect is so substantial that no one can resist its operation.

Pleyel also falls prey to the power of the effect misconstrued as the cause. Misunderstanding the strange voices as evidence of Clara's affair with Carwin, he leaves her. Verifying the substance of an incident does not matter to him anymore. Pleyel's problem in his misunderstanding of Clara indicates the inherent problem of the Enlightenment model of epistemological subjectivity. Under the influence of the

Enlightenment, antebellum Americans tended to believe that one's senses are the conduits to receiving and accumulating knowledge; an individual should trust their senses rather than place their faith in religion. In *Wieland*, however, the senses are as faulty and misleading as misplaced and misleading religious faith. As a matter of fact, Pleyel is the most emphatic advocate of the truth of sensory perception. Without questioning, he accepts all the voices he hears. Wieland is also convinced that he hears the voice of God command him to murder his family. In the absence of Pleyel, as Clara later depicts, the "power" whose "might" is "irresistible" "disarmed" Wieland "of all his purposes" and forced him to kill his wife and children (261). In his confession, he later admits that "[w]ith regard to myself, I had acted with a phrenzy that surpassed belief" (241). This confession is seriously erroneous, however. For it is his belief in the truth of the voice that makes him commit familicide, not a simply excessive "phrenzy." The deep irony Brown reveals here is the agent's ignorance of the real problem of the mechanism of his belief. In fact, this lasting ignorance is what makes possible the persistence of belief; only without any doubt or knowledge of its problematic logic can the belief keep operating on human agency. When called upon to testify in his own defense during his trial, in front of "judges, advocates, and auditors," he begins his testimony by posing a question regarding his identity:

> It is strange; I am known to my judges and my auditors. Who is there present a stranger to the character of Wieland? Who knows him not as a husband—as a father—as a friend? Yet here am I arraigned as criminal. I am charged with diabolical malice; I am accused of the murder of my wife and my children! … You know whom it is that you thus charge. The habits of his life are known to you; his treatment of his wife and his offspring is known to you; the soundness of his integrity, and the unchangeableness of his principles, are familiar to your apprehension; yet you persist in this charge! (186-187)

Wieland never denies the obvious fact that he has killed his family. Nor does he deny the "integrity" of his perceived identity or character. As he explains in his courtroom statement, "God is the object of my supreme passion. I have cherished, in his presence, a single and upright heart. I have thirsted for the knowledge of his will. I have burnt with ardour to approve my faith and my obedience." In the continuing confession, he also contends that "[m]y purposes have been pure; my wishes indefatigable." His sense of purity attests to his ignorance of the essential problem central to the mechanism of his belief. The belief, as he acknowledges, can be "fully gratified" only by the act of killing his family (187). That he sees this murder as "divine command," or the inevitable act of sacrifice which would "set myself forever beyond the reach of selfishness" (195), or a "duty" (the word he emphatically repeats three times [194, 195, 196]) reaffirms that he never doubts the substance of his belief.

For Wieland, the tragedy he brings about and answers for is nothing but a necessary consequence of "searching for the revelation of that will [of God]." As a matter of fact, as he acknowledges, now he realizes that "I have not been wholly uninformed; but my knowledge has always stopped short of certainty." What fills in the lacuna in his knowledge is his certain belief based on his unnoticed misrecognition and misjudgment. Therefore, he underscores that "If I erred, it was not my judgment that deceived me, but my sense" (256). This self-justification leads to his sense of purity, not only for his "purposes" but for his being itself. "I am still pure. Still will I look for my reward in thy [God's] justice!" says him (256). This self-imposed conviction suggests that the logic of inverted causality allows him to be convinced of a seamless ontological plenitude by covering up what is absent in his actual selfhood and social life. "Wast thou the agent?"

(250) is the question Wieland asks Carwin in order to verify if he was the real perpetrator of the mysterious voices. However, the question regarding the real agent no longer matters to Wieland as he is now haunted by the inverted logic of causality without the knowledge of its operation and influence. This fatal ignorance, which prevents him from understanding the problematic mechanism of his agency, enables him to keep maintaining a holistic idea of his God.

The Logic of American Fantasy

As I have discussed in the introduction, David Hume's concept of "belief" as a contingent—i.e., non-subjective—mode of affective imagination complicated John Locke's and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notions of rational agency and liberal individualism central to the conceptualization of modern democracy. As Locke and Rousseau were heralded as the philosophical mentors of the American revolutionary mind—while Hume's skepticism found no place in it, the underlying logic of Locke's and Rousseau's abstract formulation of liberal individuals and their democratic society was predominantly operative in the American thought. Also functioning were the problems of their logic. For example, when Jefferson presents and advocates the notion of the self-governing agency, he follows the conceptual model of Locke and Rousseau. The notion of self-government pervades Jefferson's design of the American Republic as an "Empire for Liberty." America, he believes, is to be "such an empire for liberty as the world has never surveyed since the creation; and I am persuaded no constitution was ever before so well calculated as ours for extensive empire and self-government."[69] His notion of self-government suggests the government of and by the self-governing and self-sustaining individuals; that is, the political form of government reciprocally corresponds to the agentive form of its citizen. In this view, the self-government gains its rightful authority from the agent as an autonomous subject, proving that at the heart of American democracy is proper liberal individualism. His visionary rendering of the fulcrum of a young American Republic highlights the self-evident and proper liberal individualism at its core. However, as Brown reveals in *Wieland*, the fantasized notions of autonomy and unity are doubly delusional; both are devoid of their proper substances, which however unknowingly activates the inverted logic of causality as a necessary means of sustaining a fantasized vision of the desired political reality of American democracy.

Therefore, it is noticeably suggestive that *Wieland* is, according to Brown's own prefatory "Advertisement," set in "between the conclusion of the French and the beginning of the revolution war" (4), an indication of the text's pertinence to the outset of the history of American democracy. In fact, Brown's focused attention to the self-imposed and self-endorsed logic of inversed causality, which retroactively creates a grand cause and then blindly pursues and (simultaneously) validates any substantial process to fulfill it, is indicative of the same logic's implicit service for constructing the American republic. It is strikingly notable that the logic of Jefferson's vision of "Empire for Liberty" is analogous to that of Wieland's religious fanaticism. They both believe in the substance of what they believe, which exists as long as it is believed to exist. In the same way that Wieland's act of belief retroactively creates and validates the substance of the pseudo-

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[69] Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 27 April 1809, vol 5 of *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson: Being His Autobiography, Correspondence, Reports, Messages, Addresses, and Other Writings, Official and Private*, ed. H. A. Washington (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859), 444.

Christianity he believes in, Jefferson's belief in American democracy transmutes the object of fantasy into a perceivable and thus pursuable object. The paradox is that Jefferson adamantly argues for "building a wall of separation between church and State" in order that the "expression of the supreme will of the nation" should be "in behalf of the rights of conscience," not religious "faith" or "worship."[70] For Brown, what is central to Wieland's abnormal religious enthusiasm is also central to the emerging American idea of and passion for a new democratic republic because they both are contingent on the logic of inverted causality inherent in the non-subjective mode of affective and imaginative belief.

By suggesting this analogy in *Wieland*, Brown disproves the politicized notion of personal autonomy as well as any political fantasy of national unity. He thus displaces both the Democratic-Republican and Federalist belief in the substance of their respective political ideology and thus reveals his *disbelief* in the possibility of a true democracy. What Brown specifically criticizes is not so much the Federalist and Democratic-Republican fantasies themselves as the essential logic of fantasy central to the ideologized American democracy. For him, both Federalism and Democratic-Republicanism are in effect empirically impossible; self-government of agency is not possible given the democratic social realities that implicate individual citizens in a set of complicated social relations and connections, and a unified identity or a national unity is also an obvious impossibility due to the heterogeneous fabric of American reality as well as the established two-party system in American politics.[71]

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[70] Thomas Jefferson to the Banbury Baptists, 1 January 1802, *Jefferson: Political Writings*, eds. Joyce Appleby and Terence Ball (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 397.

Hence there is something more subversive in Brown's acerbic critique of the underlying logic of American democracy. That is, his true intent for *Wieland* is not to simply highlight his double rejection of the respective political ideology of Democratic-Republicans and Federalists. Rather, he aims to direct attention to the fundamental national myths and practical social practices that serve to delusively substantiate the irresistible and overwhelming fantasies of self-government and national unity. For Brown, it is the American political ideologies that function to foster and fortify the haunting idea of American democracy, and the paradox is the shared sense and pursuit of the substance of American democracy.

"America has opened new views to the naturalist and politician, but has seldom furnished themes to the moral painter," writes Brown in the preface of *Edgar Huntly*. A new theme of moral philosophy America can provide for a moralist is, Brown suggests, the unique dynamic of agency and causality in the American mind; "[t]hat new springs of action and new motives to curiosity should operate; that the field of investigation opened to us by our own country should differ essentially from those which exist in Europe, may be readily conceived." What are "peculiar to ourselves" are, Brown identifies in the preface, "[t]he sources of amusement to the fancy and instruction to the heart." The centrality of "fancy" and "heart"—rather than rationality and reason—to the operation of the American agency and the American sense of the logic of causality (especially "new springs of action and new motives to curiosity") indicates the significance of the working of an American affective imagination and its underlying logic of inverted causality in the way Americans believe and confirm the political meaning and importance of their existence.

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[71] Leading Federalists such as James Madison endorses the significance of political objection established by the Constitution. Madison argues that the "political truth" "on which the objection is founded" has great "intrinsic value" and the authority of "enlightened patrons of liberty." In this regard, he claims that "[t]he accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny" (quoted in David F. Epstein, *The Political Theory of the Federalist* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984], 126).

For Brown, romance is the most effective mode of criticism of American social and political reality. In his essay, "The Difference Between History and Romance,"[72] published in April 1800, Brown explains how the romance can guide readers to deeper awareness of their social questions and problems. Brown claims that historians and romancers, like early modern scientists such as Isaac Newton, should be social scientists who employ literary narratives and devices to delve into the existing social system and order so as to educate their contemporary readers about the essential, structural problems of their society. In this regard, he rejects the common notion that history and romance are different from each other in that the former is factual and the latter is fictional. Rather, he proposes, history documents the significant process and result of actual historical actions in order to confirm facts about real events and identify their lessons, while romance explores the possible conditions and motives that bring about such historical actions in order to pose a deeper question as to why and how the events occur. Therefore, for him, romance is concerned with the veiled causes and consequences of individual behaviors and social actions through the medium of imaginative conjecture and literary representation, which he believes will illuminate the way in which social systems and forces operate. Brown thus suggests romance as a mode of deep realism to probe into the essential ideological fabric and function of fantasized reality. In his view, *Wieland*, his first romance, is intended to disclose the uniquely American psychical dynamic that is constitutive of what is spectrally inherent in the logic of causality political ideology and reality.

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[72] Charles Brockden Brown, "The Difference Between History and Romance," in *Wieland, Or, The Transformation: An American Tale, with Related Texts*, eds. Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2009), 196-198.

Brown's dark vision of American democracy would lead him to foreswear writing fiction. By April 1800, Brown would find reasons "for dropping the doleful tone and assuming a cheerful one" and would thereafter abandon the Gothic theme and style that marked his best literary writing. In the end, not only did he change into a critic and magazine editor, but he disavowed radical politics he had advocated before. In October 1803, he wrote in an editor's note stating "I should enjoy a larger share of my own respect, at the present moment, if nothing had ever flowed from my pen, the production of which could be traced to me." By writing this, he meant to restart his career as an editor. Indeed, he had carried on the editing of *The Monthly Magazine, and American Review*, while drafting and publishing *Edgar Huntly* and the second part of *Arthur Mervyn*. Although the final issue of the *Monthly Magazine* appeared in December 1800, the review section, which had proven to be the magazine's most popular feature, continued; The *American Review* and *Literature Journal* (1801-1802) began appearing quarterly in New York.

William Dunlap, Brown's friend and first biographer who wrote *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown* (1815), identified a significant change that occurred in Brown's life between the latter years of the eighteenth century and the early ones of the nineteenth century. According to Dunlap, "[f]rom the regions of poetry and romance; from visionary schemes of Utopian systems of government and manners, Mr. Brown … became a sober recorder of things as they are."[73] Dunlap welcomed the transformation as Brown started to devoe himself to serious writing on the real issues of American politics and life. However, the nature of the change has been interpreted differently over the years. William Charvat, for example, has claimed that after 1801 Brown "spent the rest of his life storekeeping and doing hack work for Philadelphia publishers."[74] In the similar view, Frank Luther Mott has suggested that "[f]ailure in his most ambitious literary attempts, the unfaith of his promising friends, the responsibilities of marriage, the lectures of his conventional brother, and – finally – physical illnesses, tamed his high spirit and made him a hack."[75] But just as a prophet who has already conveyed the prophecy would not tell it repeatedly, Brown, who had already pointed to the central ontological dilemma of American democracy did not need to compose more romances to express the same concern. Ironically, the tragic ending of his literary career as a romancer was the inevitable consequence of his correct insight.

Brown's deep concern about the paradoxical yet necessary logic of American democracy proved prophetic for Edgar Allan Poe in only a few decades. During the 1830s and 1840s, Poe had to confront the political and cultural monsters borne out of the very logic. The next chapter considers how the development and deflection of American democracy in Poe's time had generated the two monsters at the heart of the democratic values and practices his contemporaries desired and pursued and how the author struggled with them in his romances that capture the intrinsic contradiction of American political and literary democracy.

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[73] Quoted in Michael Cody, *Charles Brockden Brown and the Literary Magazine: Cultural Journalism in the Early American Republic* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2004), 1.

[74] William Charvat, *The Profession of Authorship in America 1800-1870*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 28.

[75] Frank Luher Mott, *A History of American Magazines 1741-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 222.

Chapter II

Edgar Allan Poe and the Paradoxes of Democratic Individualism

> " … in most of the operations of the mind, each American appeals to
> the individual exercise of his own understanding alone …"
> -Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835)

Edgar Allan Poe has long been politically labeled as an anti-Democratic Whig due to his help with a Philadelphia presidential campaign for Whig candidate William Henry Harrison, as well as his strong aversion to the Jacksonian "Era of the Common Man" as expressed in his "Some Words with a Mummy" (1845) and "Mellonta Tauta" (1849).[76] In these satires, Poe explicitly indicts the Jacksonian paean to the American embodiment of "the great beauty and importance of Democracy," particularly the institution of "suffrage *ad libitum*" or "universal suffrage" [italics in the original]. For Poe, the extension of the right to vote to a wider range of common (white) men would inevitably degrade into "the most odious and unsupportable despotism" whose "usurping tyrant" is "*Mob*."[77] Hence the long-held image of Poe denigrating the Jacksonian mobocracy as synonymous with egalitarian chaos and political turmoil.

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[76] "Some Words with a Mummy" was published in *The American Review: A Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art, and Science*, a New York City-based monthly periodical, whose prospectus manifested that it was founded to advocate "the permanent maintenance of Whig principles and improvement of American literature." The prospectus also declared that it would oppose "pernicious" and "dangerous" policies of the Jacksonian democracy stemming from "Jacobinical opinions, from which, if suffered to gain ground, we can look for nothing but the corruption of our morals, the degradation of our liberties, and the ultimate ruin of the Commonwealth." "Some Words with a Mummy" was published two months after the defeat of Henry Clay, the Whig candidate for the 1844 presidential election, and "Mellonta Tauta" was published in February 1849, two months after the victory of Whig candidate, Zachary Taylor, in the 1848 presidential election.

On the other hand, critics have in recent decades tended to reconsider Poe's daunting vision of Jacksonian democracy in terms of its profound menace to individualism by noting the representation of such a crisis in "William Wilson" and "The Man of the Crowd." This new critical orientation focuses on Wilson's solipsistic selfhood negated by the intrusion of his identical double and a solitary narrator's botched pursuit of an idiosyncratic peregrinator among the unindividuated crowds, viewing them both as referential to the foreclosure of individual autonomy and singularity as well as self-isolation. Such a twofold crisis of individualism indicates that democracy at once homogenizes and insulates individuals in a mob of the disconnected. From this perspective, Poe is aligned squarely with Alexis de Tocqueville and Ralph Waldo Emerson, contemporary champions of the inviolable dignity and value of self in the face of democratic equalization and seclusion; that is, for these critics Poe's denunciation of mob impulse and rule should be regarded in the same light with Tocqueville's angst over a homogeneous mass of detached individuals and Emerson's loathing of the herd mentality—all three warn against the democratic liquidation of proper individuality, which must be preserved.[78]

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[77] Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales and Sketches Vol. 2: 1843-1849*, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 1194, 1300. For Poe's contemporary Jacksonians, the expanded franchise, though still limited to white male adults, was recognized as putting into practice the unfulfilled ideal of general liberty and equality manifested by the Declaration of Independence. For their sense of universal suffrage, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1945), 30-31, Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 152-153.

[78] See Monika M. Elbert, "'The Man of the Crowd' and the Man outside the Crowd: Poe's Narrator and the Democratic Reader," *Modern Language Studies* 21, no. 4 (1991): 16-30, Theron Britt, "The Common Property of the Mob: Democracy and Identity in Poe's "William Wilson,"" *Mississippi Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1995): 197-210, Louis A. Renza, "Poe and the Issue of American Privacy," in *A Historical Guide to Edgar*

This recent critical leveling not only ignores Poe's ingrained skepticism of self-sustaining agency, a consistent theme in his arcane works; it also eclipses his incisive critique of the contemporary intellectual urge —mainly Tocquevillian and Emersonian— to retrieve the individual marred by permeating social democratizations. Poe chastises this public injunction as a double delusion, for this delusion first posits the discursive conception of a self-possessed and distinctive individual as a historical substance and then it proclaims the abstraction unredeemable as the urgently sought-after object. Poe precisely captures this doubly-mistaken delusion in "William Wilson" and "The Man of the Crowd." Note that Wilson, contemptuous of the utter democratization of his name of "a noble descent" into "the common property of the mob," is mortified by his namesake/doppelgänger's "most absolute identity" with him, a case of extreme interpersonal identification which depersonalizes his agency by rendering him a mere part of the "twofold repetition" (431, 434).[79] Also notable is that the narrator of "The Man of the Crowd," immersed in watching a kaleidoscopic view of the unindividuated demos ("throng," "population," and "masses") on the street, is strongly drawn to and desperately chases after an nameless old roamer's "absolute idiosyncrasy," only to realize that such a peculiarity is "in vain to follow" (507, 511, 515). What binds the two tales together thematically is Poe's sustained inquiry into the way in which the bare reality of the desubjectivized individual and the depersonalized masses triggers the narrator's

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Allan Poe, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 167-188. Challenging the dominant psychological and moral readings of the doppelgänger narrative in "William Wilson" and the story of the botched pursuit of a conspicuously peculiar roamer in "The Man of the Crowd," these critics have considered Poe's problem with individualism beleaguered by democracy in juxtaposition with Tocqueville's and Emerson's common advocacy of the individual against the collective as encompassing their respective concern about individual seclusion and homogenization.

[79] Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales and Sketches Vol. 1: 1831-1842*, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 431, 448. Further references will be to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

urgent yet deluded striving to secure his own or a stranger's autonomy and singularity; what the narrator perceives and pursues is, as he finds in the end, nothing but an nonentity that has deluded their dogged chase after it. So Poe is not a Whig, not a champion of individualism, but a demystifier of the false logic of democratic individualism.

By dramatizing the impossible condition of autonomous and singular agency in "William Wilson" and "The Man of the Crowd," Poe directs the reader's attention to the paradox underlying contemporary politics and culture in which the very agentive impossibility actually functions as the key condition for both presidential victory and literary success. This oxymoronic phenomenon originated from the new social fabrics molded by social democratizations and their drastic fluctuations during the Jacksonian era. The first half of Poe's literary career, from 1829 to 1841, overlapped with Andrew Jackson's two consecutive terms and Jackson's loyal successor Martin Van Buren's one term and this era saw the flowering of unprecedented political, economic, and cultural democratizations, as well as their deflected ramifications. Many new voters created by the extension of the franchise fell prey to massive political mobilizations which intensified the unbridgeable factional confrontation between Jacksonians and anti-Jacksonians;[80] the widely promoted and pursued laissez faire doctrine of the Jackson and Van Buren administration gave rise to the frenzied and competitive land boom and speculative fever leading to the Great Panic of 1837; and due to the recession, the publishing market veered toward conforming to the dominant popular tastes. Those shifting contours of American social democratization had transformed the structures of national politics and literary culture into the impersonal mechanisms of the presidential race and the printing market in which imitating what the populace favored, even if it required the sacrifice of personal identity and singularity, became a decisive determinant of presidential victory and authorial success; for instance, William Henry Harrison won his rematch with Martin Van Buren in the 1840 presidential election by camouflaging his aristocratic background and identifying himself with Jackson's popular image of a homespun war hero of humble origin. In the literary market, imitation and reproduction of popular genres and styles helped to guarantee an author's commercial and critical success. Published in the final years of the Jacksonian Era, "William Wilson" (1839) and "The Man of the Crowd" (1840) register Poe's critical reflection on how the logic of impersonal identification emerged and prevailed in the political and cultural spheres, making the fantasized model of autonomous and singular agency in the new social milieus of American democracy impossible.

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[80] Between the presidential elections of 1824 and 1844, the vote for President jumped about 750 percent, while the population did not quite double during the same period. This disproportionate increase resulted from the increased ballots of a number of citizens formerly disenfranchised by lack of property or poverty.

What follows is a historical, literary, and theoretical study of how Poe developed and aestheticized his critical review of the paradox of individuality in the politics and culture of antebellum democracy. While I suggest "William Wilson" and "The Man of the Crowd" are the two best cases and focus on their textual and contextual significance, I also insist that Poe's life and work during the years before the two works' appearance be discussed as well, for during these years Poe began to represent the emergence and prevalence of the logic of impersonal identification. The first part of this chapter investigates how the widespread political, economic, and cultural democratizations during the Jacksonian era engendered the dominant logic of impersonal identification in antebellum politics and culture, and how Poe had literalized his growing concerns with this logic in tales prior to “William Wilson” and “The Man of the Crowd.” The second part provides a close reading of the textual and contextual significance of “William Wilson” and “The Man of the Crowd” in terms of Poe’s critical analysis of the impossible condition of individual autonomy and singularity in thorough democratization and his allusion to this agentive impossibility as the necessary condition for political and literary success in Jacksonian America.

Poe and the Deflections of Jacksonian Democracy

In the period when “William Wilson” and “The Man of the Crowd” were published, Poe was composing many of his most lasting literary and critical works. These prolific years, however, came after his literary hiatus from February 1837 to May 1839. During this period, as his biographer Kenneth Silverman puts it, Poe “virtually disappears from biographical view.” What Silverman terms Poe’s “blank period” began after his break with the *Southern Literary Messenger* and his move from Richmond to New York City with his wife and mother-in-law in order to seek a literary position more worthy of him. But the decision brought him fifteen unemployed, poverty-driven months in Gotham, as the unprecedented colossal collapse of business and banking began in early May 1837. New York City was the epicenter of the catastrophic economic depression, causing the entire nation to pass through the depths of financial paralysis and ruin over the following years.

Poe became one of the many victims of the depression. Upon the outbreak of the Panic, Harper and Brothers in New York postponed the publication of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym Of Nantucket* (originally scheduled to appear in May). During the long delay of the debut of his first attempt at a novel designed mainly for commercial success, a pseudo-realistic travelogue designed mainly for commercial success, Poe had nothing to do but perform some sporadic hack writing to make a living for his family "literally suffering for want of food" and barely surviving "on bread and molasses for weeks together,"[81] as one acquaintance described their dire poverty. Seeking an end to their miserable life in New York, the Poe family relocated to Philadelphia in early 1838 to seek other opportunities. A few months later, Poe, still unemployed, wrote to James Kirke Paulding, imploring the prominent New York literary figure and Secretary of the Navy to get him any job "beyond mere literature" such as "the most unimportant Clerkship … *anything, by sea or land*" (italics in the original). The same letter also reveals Poe's deep disenchantment with his literary career: "the miserable life of literary drudgery to which I now, with a breaking heart, submit, and for which neither my temper nor my abilities have fitted me."[82]

Poe's long ordeal finally ended, when he began to work for *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* as its editor in June 1838. When the news was announced in the magazine's June issue, the editor of the *Saturday Courier* openly expressed his envy, saying "Mr. Poe was very favourably known as editor of the Southern Literary Messenger in its early days: and he has produced several works, which prove him a man of letters and industry. His accession is very valuable."[83] Charles Alexander, influential publisher and journal owner in Philadelphia, also said that "[h]e is a gentleman of superior ability and character, and we are glad to see that his name is associated with Mr Burton in the future direction of the Gentleman's Magazine."[84] Poe proved them right. Working for *Burton's*, he took pains to select submissions and edit works for the magazine to increase its subscribers. He also published some of his finest tales such as "The Fall of the House of Usher," "William Wilson," and "The Man of the Crowd" in the magazine, heralding his rise as one of the most celebrated, if not financially successful, authors in the country.

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[81] Quoted in Kenneth Silverman, *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 123-133, 137.

[82] Edgar Allan Poe, *The Collected Letters of Edgar Allan Poe Vol.1 1824-1846*, ed. John Ward Ostrom (New York: The Gordian Press, 2008), 175.

[83] Dwight Thomas and David K. Jackson, eds., *The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 265.

Poe's "blank period" spent in New York and Philadelphia from February 1837 to May 1839 has received little scholarly attention because of his biographical lacuna and literary silence during the years; a very few records are extant to document his sufferings during the two years in which he only produced two new tales ("Von Jung, the Mystific" and "Siope: A Fable," later known as "Shadow"). Critics have also paid little attention to the specific social contexts of Poe's first two years as the editor of *Burton's*, concentrating instead on Poe's literary trajectory in the 1840s. Yet, the "blank period" left an indelible mark on Poe's life and literary career and it requires more thorough scholarly attention since it helps to trace how he had struggled with the political, economic, and cultural transformations of Jacksonian democracy before and after the Panic.

After his 1831 visit to the U.S., Alexis de Tocqueville published two volumes of *Democracy in America* to inform French readers how America "has attained the consequences of the democratic revolution"[85] unlike European countries. One significant effect of the young public's political democratization is, Tocqueville states, that "[a]t the present day the principle of the sovereignty of the people has acquired, in the United States, all the practical development which the imagination can conceive" and furthermore, in the unprecedented system of thorough political democratization "the nation participates in the making of its laws by the choice of its legislators, and in the execution of them by the choice of the agents of the executive government."[86] What strikes Tocqueville in particular is the extended suffrage for white men, which was granted in most states by eliminating property requirements for voting and eligibility for office by the mid 1820s.[87] During Jackson's terms, most states completely eliminated property or tax-paying qualifications for voting. This pivotal reform drew an increasing number of common voters into national politics. Parties began to make efforts to appeal to the mass of voters by selling their leading candidates as the best choice for public good and prosperity.

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[84] Ibid., 266.

[85] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 18.

The two presidential elections in 1828 and 1832 showcased the emergence of the new popular dynamics of political democratization, a dynamic unique to American politics. The two elections won by Andrew Jackson also marked the appearance of national political conventions and campaigns, as well as public verbal brawls and harsh mudslinging between candidates and supporters. Now the "public will" and "public opinion" mattered; common people were now the driving force of national politics. Tocqueville describes these new scenes on election day: "[a]s the election draws near, the activity of intrigue and the agitation of the populace increase; the citizens are divided into several camps, each of which assumes the name of its favorite candidate; the whole name glows with feverish excitement."[88]

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[86] Ibid., 51.

[87] Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (London: Verso, 2003), 62.

Abreast of this pervasive political democratization was its economic counterpart, also observed and recorded by Tocqueville. To Tocqueville's eyes, America was the young republic incarnating the Lockean possessive individualism and the Smithian principle of laissez-faire: "The American republics of the present day are like companies of adventurers, formed to explore in common the waste lands of the New World, and busied in a flourishing trade. The passion which agitates the Americans most deeply, are not their political, but their commercial passions."[89] In fact, the Jacksonian federal government exhibited a strong will to develop a capitalistic economy based on the doctrine of noninterference or economic liberal individualism; under Jacksonian economic philosophy and policy, the federal government refrained from granting special privileges and allowed free competition in the marketplace. As a result, unrestrained enterprise capitalism led by a multitude of aspiring entrepreneurs gradually replaced the former agricultural economy and contributed exponentially to the growing national wealth during the Jacksonian era. In addition, revolutionary innovations in transportation and communication facilitated a vibrant economy of finance, transportation, and information,[90] helping liberal economic democracy to penetrate deep into all corners of the nation. During this era of progress, Emerson proudly accorded high praise to the "awesome hunger for land, material security, and personal success" as a "benign force that summoned the creative force of the people."[91] For Emerson, the new epoch was especially remarkable for the "immense creation of property and so by the increase of the political importance of individuals everywhere, or the steady progress of the democratic element."[92] In the same vein, he extolled in his 1836 essay "Nature" the "new importance given to the single person" as "a sign of the times."[93]

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[88] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 109-110.

[89] Ibid., 242.

[90] See Terrence Whalen, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses: The Political Economy of Literature in Antebellum America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

For Poe, the United States of America was particularly the republic of cultural democratization characterized by the spread of "literary democracy"[94] and he himself was one of its beneficiaries. As the political and economic democratizations propagated by the spirit of individualism allowed eligible individuals to participate in the operation of diverse social systems,[95] American literary democracy also enabled the liberal and equal participation of amateur writers in seeking seek popular recognition. The public networks of the literary marketplace helped an aspiring neophyte like Poe to enter the world of letters and claim his or her share of literary democracy by winning public popularity. By the early 1830s, Tocqueville observed that "[t]he number of periodical and occasional publications which appear in the United States actually surpasses belief."[96] He suggested that the prosperity of the American literary market stemmed from "[t]he facility with which journals can be established [that] induces a multitude of individuals to take a part in them."[97] In fact, literary democratization became more facilitated and widespread due to technological advances and improvements in papermaking, typesetting, and printing machinery along with the extended transportation systems of the railroad and steamboat. According to Frank Mott, the period from 1825 to 1850 was "A Golden Age of Periodicals."[98]

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[91] Peter S. Field. *Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Making of a Democratic Intellectual* (Lanham: Rowman & Littelfield, 2002), 154-155.

[92] Ibid., 155.

[93] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature and Selected Essays*, ed. Larzer Ziff (New York: Penguin, 2003), 103.

[94] Larzer Ziff uses the term "literary democracy" as the book title of his study of the rise of literary independence in America (*Literary Democracy: The Declaration of Cultural Independence in America* [New York: Viking, 1981]). By literary democracy Ziff means the common character of the canonical work of American Renaissance writers (e.g., Emerson, Poe, Melville, Hawthorne, and Whitman, etc.) as the paragon of democratic representation of American cultural identity. Yet by the same term I differently mean in this essay the democratically open public sphere of the mass literary market.

[95] For example, Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, and their political competitor and opponents such as Daniel Webster and Henry Clay rose from very humble background.

[96] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 151.

Poe owed his quick rise from a nonentity to a celebrity in the publishing world—from a nameless dilettante to a popular litterateur and finally to a leading editor and proprietor of his own literary magazine—to the very democratic openness of the literary public sphere. The development of Poe's professional literary career exactly overlapped with the burgeoning period of Jacksonian literary democracy. Poe published his first three books in Boston, Baltimore, and New York, and his early poems, short stories, and reviews in literary periodicals and newspapers issued in these three cities as well as in Philadelphia and Richmond. All these major cities were then the nation's leading publishing venues, containing leading literary figures and entrepreneurs, heavily capitalized commercial publishing firms, and a large reading population. To reach a wider readership, Poe actively introduced his work to influential critics and editors who played a crucial role in the effective promotion of a promising new author to general readers and other publishers. In addition, he quickly established a reputation as a rising author by entering literary competitions that offered significant prize money, which helped him to become a favored contributor to several major literary periodicals. All these endeavors eventually led him to gain an editorial position at the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1835, only three years after having launched his professional literary career. When Poe left Richmond, he expected to get another quick and easy chance at literary business in New York, then the dynamic center of American literary democracy. The Jacksonian zeitgeist of political and cultural democratizations was best expressed by John Keese, the toastmaster who exclaimed in a celebratory dinner held for the booksellers of New York City in April 1837 that "we cannot but exult that we have lived to see the day when American liberty and American literature walk hand in hand."[99] Poe was also present at the dinner to propose a toast to "The Monthlies of Gotham—Their distinguished Editors, and their vigorous Collaborateurs."[100] It was only a few weeks before the outbreak of the Panic.

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[97] Ibid., 152.

[98] For the specific political, social, and economic conditions in the expansive era of literary periodicals, see Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines 1741-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 339-74. Also see Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). For the lowering the costs and prices of newspapers and magazines, see Pessen, *Jacksonian America*, 63-64.

The auspicious progress of Jacksonian democracy was drastically derailed by the outbreak of the Great Panic. In early 1840, the estimated economic losses after the Panic were estimated to be six billion dollars.[101] The Panic "engulfed all classes and all phases of economic life within its toils; and for seven long years the people of this land struggled to free themselves from its oppression."[102] The intellectual response to the worst depression of the national economy was to urge despondent Americans to reclaim their lost self-confidence. On August 31, 1837, Emerson delivered a public address later entitled “The American Scholar,” which was an attempt to hold out hope during a period of unprecedented economic hardship. Emerson began his address with the promise that the start of a new academic year would offer hopeful prospects in order to evoke a renewed sense of a fresh start in his audience. Thinking anew, he then insisted, can be achieved only by means of “self-trust,” a self-conscious attainment of inner confidence and resolve. Emerson’s emphasis on self-possessed individuality would reappear with a much stronger tone in his 1838 lecture, “Divinity School Address,” which Oliver Wendell Holmes praised for redefining “the [individual] soul as the supreme judge in spiritual matters.”[103]

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[99] "The Booksellers' Dinner," *New York American*, April, 3, 1837.

[100] Quoted in Silverman, *Edgar A. Poe*, 130.

[101] Samuel Rezneck, "The Social History of an American Depression, 1837-1843," *The American Historical Review* 40, no. 4 (1935): 662.

[102] Reginald Charles McGrane, *The Panic of 1837: Some Financial Problems of the Jacksonian Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 1.

Another spiritual leader who reaffirmed the significance of self-mastery was William Ellery Channing. In his “Self-Culture,” an introduction to a series of public lectures delivered in 1838, Channing argued that “we are able to discern not only what we already are, but what we may become, to see in ourselves germs and promises of a growth to which no bounds can be set. … This is indeed a noble prerogative of our nature. Possessing this, it matters little what or where we are now; for we can conquer a better lot, and even be happier for starting from the lowest point.” He went on to stress that what he termed “the self-forming power” which “makes self-culture possible” now “slumbers in most men unsuspected, unused!”[104] Both Emerson and Channing put symbolic and practical emphasis on the spiritual potential of self-centered individuality as the creative power to overcome the troubled world. Yet Poe, now an impoverished author who found himself enmeshed in economic hardship, was confronted with the changed reality of a literary world, in which the autonomy of self-sufficient agency would be impossible to desire and pursue.

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[103] Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885), 116.

[104] William Ellery Channing, *Self-Culture: An Address Introductory to the Franklin Lectures, Delivered at Boston, September, 1838* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838), 10-11.

In the wake of the Panic, the unprecedented national depression transmuted the existing democratic literary culture and market into a highly competitive industry serving the now commercialized tastes of common readers. As a consequence, "Poe's career," as Jonathan Elmer has pointed out, "is marked by alternate solicitations and repudiations of mass popularity, both a desire for merger with the general taste and an equally intense compulsion to distinguish himself from it"[105] According to Terrence Whalen, the second half of Poe's literary career after the Panic was, in fact, profoundly affected by his predicament during this period of socioeconomic turmoil and the reshaped terrain of the literary market under the influence of the troubled political economy.[106] However, even before the outbreak of the Panic, the ever-shifting cultural market was slipping out of Poe's editorial grasp and control. One instance was his failure to publish *Tales of the Folio Club*. Though a popular writer and editor, he could not find a publisher for the book, his most ambitious work for the reading public. Harper and Brothers declined the book, explaining to Poe that many of the works were "too learned and mysterical" and had been already published in several literary magazines. The publisher claimed that American readers now preferred works "in which a single and connected story occupies the whole volume."[107] This advice made Poe enlarge the draft of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, Of Nantucket* (1838) to a longer narrative replete with fresh, exotic adventures, one of the most saleable genres at the time. Though he had already published its two installments in the *Southern Literary Messenger* early in 1837, he revised them and continued expanding the book after arriving in New York in order to make it more popular and profitable, and he carefully composed the subtitle to whet the reading public's appetite for a thrilling travel narrative.[108]

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[105] Jonathan Elmer, *Reading at the Social Limit: Affect, Mass Culture, & Edgar Allan Poe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 32. For Poe's ambivalent relationship with his employers and readers, see Edd Winfield Parks, *Edgar Allan Poe as Literary Critic* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1964), Robert D. Jacobs, *Poe: Journalist & Critic* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), and Kent P. Ljungquist, "The Poet as Critic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe,* ed. Kevin J. Hayes (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7-20.

[106] See Whalen, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses*, 21-57.

In May 1837, Harper and Brothers finally announced that Poe's new book was almost ready for publication. But the abrupt outbreak of the Panic delayed the publication more than a year, until July 1838. In the meantime, the publisher suggested that Poe compose poems and short tales for popular penny newspapers to maintain his popular attention and popularity, a concerned reaction to the inundation of cheap dailies and weeklies providing a variety of sensational literary materials including factual news and fictional stories. These literary newspapers had already existed before the Panic, but increased exponentially after the Panic.[109] The first popular penny newspaper was *The Sun*, which appeared in New York in 1833. It was not sold by subscription but on the street, and it was small to entice readers to buy and read it with ease. In order to attract the general reading public, it cost only a penny. New Yorkers took to the new form of literary entertainment and within several months *The Sun* was selling 4,000 copies a day and two years later its circulation surged to 22,000 copies with the advent of the steam press. Also popular was the *New York Herald*, founded in 1835 by James Gordon Bennett, who proudly declared that it was the first newspaper designed "for the great masses of people." He sent reporters out to uncover the news of common people in the hotels, theaters, courts, slums, and docks. Popular daily papers, historian David M. Henkin points out, "reinforced emerging modes of anonymous, market-oriented, urban sociality in New York" especially by "becom[ing] a regular feature of the verbal cityscape, rendering new forms of social knowledge visible in the public spaces of the city to a broad and impersonal readership."[110] Proud of the great success of his newspaper, Bennett spoke in 1836 that "[w]hat is to prevent a daily newspaper from being made the greatest organ of social life? Books have had their day—the theatres have had their day—the temple of religion has had its day. A newspaper can be made to take the lead of all of these in the great movements of human thought, and of human civilization. A newspaper can send more souls to heaven, and save more from hell, than all the churches and chapels in New York—besides making money at the same time."[111]

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[107] Quoted in Silverman, *Edgar A. Poe*, 135.

[108] The subtitle is as follows: "The Narrative Of Arthur Gordon Pym, Of Nantucket; comprising the details of a mutiny and atrocious atrocity on board the American brig *Grampus*, on her way to the South Seas – with an account of the recapture of the vessel by the survivors; their deliverance by means of the British schooner Jane Gray; the brief cruise of this latter vessel in the Antarctic Ocean; her capture, and the massacre of the crew among a group of islands in the 84th parallel of Southern latitude; together with the incredible adventures and discoveries still further South, to which that distressing calamity gave rise."

[109] Whalen, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses*, 24.

New York would soon become notorious for its highly competitive literary newspapers: in the 1830s and 1840s, more than 300,000 New Yorkers enjoyed reading about fifty dailies and weeklies.[112] Due to their growing popularity, the penny publications had to be more attuned to the particular sensibilities of common readers in order to augment the readership of the street. Indeed, they competed by offering more distinctive stories, that is, by specializing in a particular topic so as to attract a specified group of readers, topics such as literature, humor and gossip, local news, commercial information, politics, the interests of the laboring classes, theaters and plays, or religion.[113] They also stole popular articles and essays from literary monthly magazines so frequently that in 1845 an editor of the *Broadway Journal* would openly complain that "[i]t has long been the custom among the newspapers—the weeklies especially—to copy magazine articles in full, and circulate them all over the country—sometimes in advance of the magazines themselves."[114]

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[110] David M. Henkin, *City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 104.

[111] Ric Burns, James Sanders, and Lisa Ades, eds., *New York: An Illustrated History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 81.

[112] For the statistical chronology and development of New York's penny press, see Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States through 260 Years* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 215-220, 222-28, 243.

As the mass appeal of the literary newspapers threatened existing literary magazines, the latter tried to secure their precarious position by transforming into "special class" magazines. According to Mott, from 1830 onward literary magazines increasingly targeted special classes of readers, such as politically inclined or religious readers, women, and children.[115] As a consequence, calculating readerly tastes and preferences became the crucial issue for publishers and editors. Indeed, as they started to classify books, magazines, and newspapers by their appeal to distinct market niches, they had to deploy particular rubrics and marketing strategies for particular classes of readers. Consequently, effective marketing strategies were no longer derived solely from the author's fame and popularity or the text's theme and topic.[116] Consequently, professional authors , if they were not successful and famous, were forced to precisely discriminate among readers of different social statuses and backgrounds to calculate the most profitable genre and form of their work in order to appeal to their specific readership. Poe had to compete with a number of these authors in the competitive literary market. By 1842 the deflected democratization of literary business, Poe lamented, made it a fact that "the higher order of poetry is, and always will be, in this country, unsaleable."[117] His lamentation was already inscribed in his two outrageous parodies of the literary market's logic of impersonal identification: "How to Write a Blackwood Article" and "A Predicament."

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[113] For a thorough study on the various specialties of penny newspapers, see Isabelle Lehuu, *Carnival on the Page: Popular Print Media in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), and Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, *Literary Dollars and Social Sense: A People's History of the Mass Market Book* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[114] *Broadway Journal*, New York, April 1845.

[115] Mott, *American Journalism*, 494.

Poe's Literary Responses to Post-Panic America

Originally paired as "The Psyche Zenobia" and "The Scythe of Time," Poe published the two pieces later known as "How to Write a Blackwood Article" and "A Predicament" together in the November 1838 issue of the *American Museum*. These stories are the most striking literary examples of Poe's critical view of the contemporary magazine warfare facilitated by the thriving printing and literary markets for the reading public in antebellum America. Both tales overtly deride the blind pursuit of the characteristic styles of popular articles from *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, and in these tales Poe inveighs strongly against an American propensity for complying with typical themes and styles in an effort to manufacture profitable literary commodities on the market. In this condition, talented authors are stripped of their own literary originality, degraded to mere assemblers who are compelled to fabricate the most formulaic composite of the most popular genres and styles in order to attract more readers for commercial success.

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[116] Sarah Wadsworth, *In the Company of Books: Literature and Its "Classes" in Nineteenth-Century America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 99.

[117] Edgar Allan Poe to Thomas H. Chivers, 17 September 1842, *Letters*, 216.

However, on a deeper level the two stories serve as more than a satirical jab at the standardized mode of popular writing. In the first story, the narrator Zenobia expresses a meticulous sensitivity about her public identity as a singularly recognized individual. She begins her narrative by proudly stating, “I presume everybody has heard of me. My name is the Signora Psyche Zenobia.” Then, she affirms that her name is “a fact” in a conscious effort to defend her unusual name and its significance from her “enemies” who calls her “Suky Snobbs,” which is “a vulgar corruption of Psyche.” She emphasizes that “Psyche, which is good Greek, and means “the soul” (that’s me, I’m *all* soul) and sometimes “a butterfly,” which latter meaning undoubtedly alludes to my appearance in my new crimson satin dress, with the sky-blue Arabian *mantelet,* and the trimmings of green *agraffas*, and the seven flounces of orange-colored *auriculas*” (336). Here Poe italicizes the names of attire and ornament to indicate that the singular identity that she so self-assuredly claims, which she stresses is her “*all* soul,” is nothing but the effect of an ensemble of manufactured, popularized fashion commodities. That is, her seemingly peculiar and special personality is constructed through her impersonal identification with the popular elements of fashion.

Filling the void of original subjectivity by identifying human agency with impersonal items is central to the question of representing a true self in literary writing. In her interview with William Blackwood, Zenobia is advised to “get yourself into such a scrape as no one ever got into before" (340), that is, a uniquely sensational experience that will bring out the agent's own authorial identity; in other words, Blackwood suggests that an author's peculiar subject is constitutive of her subjectivity.[118] He also strongly recommends that she consider and determine "the tone, or manner, of your narration" (341) and perform "*the filling up*" of the story with "a host of little scraps of either learning or *bel-esprit-ism*" (343). Blackwood therefore instructs Zenobia to learn how to construct a most compelling assemblage of existing literary styles and information—a multi-layered composite of aesthetic identifications—in order to highlight her own experience; however, Poe suggests, the experience's originality, if any, will be offset by the assemblage's banality, eventually producing a work deprived of its author's own identity.

The sequel, "A Predicament," shows the tragic corollary of this utter impersonalization. It is offered as an example of a Blackwood article composed by Zenobia according to the very principles given by Blackwood. In "seeking for desperate adventures – adventures adequate to the intensity of my feelings, and adapted to the vast character of the article I intended to write" (347), Zenobia walks through the city of Edina with her two faithful companions, her poodle Diana and her servant Pompey, and ascends to the peak of a Gothic cathedral with a tall steeple. At the top, she finds a hole through though which she can command a city view and thrusts her head through the opening in the dial-plate. Losing track of time while watching the city view, Zenobia is suddenly surprised to feel the exceedingly sharp minute hand touching her neck, pressing harder and harder into her skin and gradually decapitating her. Dying excruciatingly, she finally exclaims, "what *no*w remains for the unhappy Signora Psyche Zenobia" is "*nothing!*" (italics in the original), a bitter awakening to the paradox of constructing personal identity through impersonal identification. Thus, Poe's stories that concern the homogenizing logic of the literary market capture the essential void of proper subjectivity; for Poe, paradoxically, the democratic literary market only exacerbates the delusion of democratic individualism.

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[118] To prove his point, Blackwood gives two examples: "There was 'The Dead Alive,' a capital thing! – the record of a gentleman's sensations, when entombed before the breath was out of his body – full of taste, terror, sentiment, metaphysics, and erudition. You would have sworn that the write had been born and brought up in a coffin. Then we had the 'Confessions of an Opium-eater' – fine, very fine! – glorious imagination – deep philosophy – acute speculation – plenty of fire and fury, and a good spicing of the decidedly unintelligible. That was a nice bit of flummery, and went down the throats of the people diligently" (339-340).

The same critique also runs through Poe's political satires, published during the same period, that directly assail the declining Jacksonian power. As a matter of fact, Poe's criticism of Andrew Jackson had already been expressed in his 1836 tale, "Four Beasts in One/The Homo-Cameleopard." The story lampoons a Jackson-like ancient ruler whose apparent predilection for democratic republicanism is betrayed by his imperial ambitions to identify himself with Zeus, a quite explicit allusion to Jackson's "kingly commoner" persona, or, as Whigs called him, "Andrew Jackson I." In contrast to this story, which centers on Poe's problem with Jackson's deceptive identity, two political satires Poe published in 1839 direct attention to the essential nothingness of agency and the dynamics of impersonal identification that construct the agent's identity. 1839 was a politically charged year, a year of preparation for the next year's presidential election. Whigs were desperately trying to terminate the 12 year long Jacksonian reign. Drawing attention to the continuing economic depression was the Whig's most likely chance to beat the incumbent President Van Buren, and to do this, the Whigs publicized popular complaints and antipathy toward Van Buren. Poe's "The Man That Was Used Up, A Tale of the Late Bugaboo and Kickapoo Campaign" represents Poe's contribution to the Whig effort to end the Jacksonian reign.

In August 1839, Poe published the story in *Burton's*. To his contemporary readers, the piece was a straight-forward allusion to Van Buren who was then derided as "a used up man" ("Van, Van's a Used Up Man") due to his futile economic policies after the Great Panic. However, critics have noted deeper thematic complexities in the story. Mabbott, for instance, construes this story as "consider[ing] the problem of identity," in other words, as an ontological question regarding "[h]ow much of a man still makes a man?"[119] This philosophical issue is raised by the shocking ending scene in which the idolized General John A.B.C. Smith, a highly celebrated American war hero whose singular physical charm and impressive power of speech[120] attract the public, including the narrator, turns out to be an assemblage of artificial prosthetic devices and parts. At the end of the story, the narrator accidentally finds the shocking fact that the general is only completely reconstructed after his black valet literally assembles his essential physical parts piece by piece, screwing his second leg and arm on to his body and adding his shoulders, a chest, a wig, a glass eye, and false teeth. Poe's point is clear. The essence of the celebrated general is nothing but a nothing. The fabrication of apparent agency from manufactured impersonal commodities in this story repeats Poe's criticism of Zenobia in the pair of *Blackwood* stories. The same acerbic criticism is now directed toward a prominent and respected public idol. Poe dramatizes that what the narrator first perceives and pursues as “something, as it were, remarkable – yes, *remarkable*, … about the entire individuality of the personage in question” (378), turns out to be naught, or simply “the object” (388).

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[119] Mabbott, *Tales and Sketches Vol. 1*, 376.

[120] The narrator thinks of the general as arguably "one of the most remarkable men of the age," given his magnificent physical specimen six feet tall with "richly flowing" black hair, his eyes that are "large and lustrous," a powerful set of his shoulders "which would have called up a blush of conscious inferiority into the countenance of the marble Apollo," "a mouth utterly unequalled," and other physical attributes expressing "the supreme excellence of his bodily endowments" (379-340). In addition, his speeches are as grand and attractive as his appearance, containing as they do boasts of his victories over his inferiors and magnificent statements eulogizing the unmatched progress of the present age. Seemingly, he is hardly "used up," as he was addressed as such due to his grievous injuries and wounds from various military battles.

What links the *Blackwood* pair to the political satire thematically is Poe’s deepening concern with the impossibility of individual singularity in the newly democratic political and cultural milieus. The stories of Zenobia and General Smith satirize the myth of individual autonomy and singularity in the public sphere. A public celebrity who is believed to own and claim a peculiar personhood is in effect just the effect of amassed and assembled popular parts and items that are impersonally manufactured for and consumed by the public. In all three stories, the model of individual autonomy and peculiar singularity is fundamentally denied and the ardent pursuit of it is doomed to fail. Zenobia’s vacant identity and General Smith’s material identity showcase the essential absence of peculiar individuality in the absolute state of social democratization, suggesting that Emerson and Channing’s postulation of individual subjectivity is a double delusion; what they try to reclaim from democracy is what is already absent and thus unredeemable. Poe’s ever critical view of the impersonal identification central to his contemporary political and cultural democracies would gain a even more profound politico-philosophical depth as he directed his attention to the contradictory nature of democratic individuality in “William Wilson” and “The Man of the Crowd.”

The Paradox of "Absolute Identity" in "William Wilson"

"William Wilson" first appeared in the annual *The Gift: A Christmas and New Year's Present for 1840,* which was published in mid-1839 and was later reprinted in the October 1839 issue of *Burton's*. This doppelgänger story has been construed as a meditation upon the familiar narrative of the psychological and moral struggles between good and evil twins—oftentimes interpreted as a complicated allegory for a bipartite soul consisting of two internal selves that contradicts each other—and the ultimate triumph of the evil over the good.[121] Indeed, the narrator himself shows his intent to frame his narrative as a moral confession by introducing himself as "an object for the scorn – for the horror – for the detestation of my race," dwelling upon his own "unparalleled infamy" ascribable to his "later years of … unpardonable crime" and thus trying to narrate how "in an instant, all virtue dropped bodily as mantle."

In the first paragraphs of the story, beneath the hyperbolic self-criticism that effectively conveys a moral message to his audience, is the narrator's subtle yet significant indication of a profound ontological question that has constantly haunted his fallen life. Wilson's "later years" have been, he narrates, filled with not only "unpardonable crime" but also "unspeakable misery" (426). Both are attributed to the fact that he has been "in some measure, the slave of circumstances beyond human control." In the following narrative, the irresistibly determinant "circumstances beyond human control" are alluded to as sharply at odds with his self-assured control of his own agency.

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[121] Mabbott epitomizes the moralist and psychological readings of the story by stating "Poe's originality" in the story "lies in one idea" that "[e]ach man has only half a complete soul, and the pair has but one conscience, which abides wholly in the half that belongs to the whisperer" (Mabbott, *Tales and Sketches Vol. 1,* 425).

Wilson is, as he states, “the descendant of a race whose imaginative and easily excitable temperament has at all times rendered them remarkable; and, in my earliest infancy, I gave evidence of having fully inherited the family character.” This “remarkable”—the very adjective Poe repeatedly employs to accentuate the singular “individuality” of General A.B.C. Smith—personality of Wilson is inseparably associated with his being “self-willed, addicted to the wildest caprices, and a prey to the most ungovernable passions.” Hence the unbridled constitution of his own individualism: “my voice was a household law; and at an age when few children have abandoned their leading-strings, I was left to the guidance of my own will, and became, in all but name, the master of my own actions” (427). A self-centered individual, Wilson once believed that “[t]he teeming brain of childhood requires no external world of incident to occupy or amuse it,” and he is still convinced of his uncommon singularity: “Yet I must believe that my first mental development had in it much of the uncommon – even much of the *outré*” (430). Wilson’s boyhood autonomy and self-assurance would become more overtly pronounced later in his school years, as “the ardor, the enthusiasm, and the imperiousness of my disposition, soon rendered me a marked character among my schoolmates, and by slow, but natural gradations, gave me an ascendancy over all not greatly older than myself.”

However, Wilson’s singular individuality and its unchecked power are soon confronted with “a single exception” that would not conform to his imposing personality. “This exception,” he explains, “was found in the person of a scholar, who, although no relation, bore the same Christian and surname as myself; a circumstance, in fact, little remarkable” due to the social democratization pervasive in Wilson’s time: “for notwithstanding a noble descent, mine was one of those everyday appellations which seem, by prescriptive right, to have been, time out of mind, the common property of the mob.” For this reason, Wilson uses a pseudonym, explaining that “In this narrative I have therefore designated myself as William Wilson, —a fictitious title not very dissimilar to the real” (431). This democratic “circumstance,” for Wilson, accounts for the very “unspeakable misery” he mentions, and it renders him “the slave of circumstances beyond human control.” Wilson never veils his loathing of the democratic circumstance. At the outset of his narrative, Wilson asks the reader to “call myself, for the present, William Wilson” because of his unforgivable crime and ignominy. As he confesses several pages later, however, “I had always felt aversion to my uncourtly patronymic, and its very common, if not plebeian prænomen. The words were venom in my ears” since “a second Wilson,” as he calls his identical copy, is the object of loathing because he is “the cause of its twofold repetition, who would be constantly in my presence, and whose concerns, in the ordinary routine of the school business, must inevitably, on account of the detestable coincidence, be often confounded with my own” (434).

Wilson’s open abhorrence toward the “uncourtly” and “very common” rather than the “plebeian” indicates that Poe understood modern democratization not as a sociality of Roman-like commoners sharing civic rights and virtues but as a sociality of the unrefined modern masses whose “very common” attributes are characterized by rudeness and coarseness, that is, lacking a proper sense of one’s own individual position in relation to others. The fundamentally unindividuated democratization is already devoid of the very locus of proper individuality itself. For Poe, that is, the essential condition of “very common” democratization, as Wilson’s name exemplifies, disallows the possibility of a sense of individual self and its individualist approach to others. Individuality in thorough democratization exists only in the mode of naught or, in other words, the absent individual is the condition of possibility of thorough democratization. “[R]epition” and “coincidence” are, in this regard, constitutive of democratization, not its side-effects.

Poe’s sense of the absent individuality is more clearly indicated in the latter part of Wilson’s narrative. He states that his “namesake alone … refuse[s] implicit belief in my assertions, and submission to my will – indeed, to interfere with my arbitrary dictation in any respect whatsoever.” What the namesake nullifies is “a supreme and unqualified despotism … the despotism of a master-mind in boyhood over the less energetic spirits of its companions” (431). Here, Poe suggests that Wilson’s individualism is grounded in his childish solipsism. Since the ground is insubstantial, his relation and response to the identical copy is groundless, as well. More significantly, Wilson confesses that he “secretly felt that I feared him, and could not help thinking the equality which he maintained so easily with myself, a proof of his true superiority … Yet this superiority – even this equality – was in truth acknowledged by no one but myself” (431-432). Wilson’s fear of his identical double is attributed to his understanding of the “equality” they share as evidence of the copy’s “true superiority” that “so easily” enables him to be identical to the original. Physically, his fear results from the confrontation of what is believed to be impossible to reproduce (i.e., the original) and the lack of a sense of self-superiority. Ironically, he loses confidence in his superiority as he literally faces himself; what he sees, Poe suggests, is what he actually fears to see.

Furthermore, he goes on to confess his self-contradictory feelings that now undermine the very ground of his solipsistic individualism: “It may seem strange that in spite of the continual anxiety occasioned me by the rivalry of Wilson, and his intolerable spirit of contradiction, I could not bring myself to hate him altogether" (432-433). More inexplicably, "[i]t is difficult, indeed, to define, or even to describe, my real feelings towards him. They formed a motley and heterogeneous admixture; – some petulant animosity, which was not yet hatred, some esteem, more respect, much fear, with a world of uneasy curiosity. To the moralist it will be unnecessary to say, in addition, that Wilson and myself were the most inseparable of companions" (433). The uncanny homology, if not friendship,[122] Wilson notices in his troubling relation to his copy is self-negating. The first Wilson who overtly loathes "a similarity of mind, person, or condition" (434) becomes impossible to dissociate from his copy. Indeed, he becomes "the slave of circumstances beyond human control," the circumstances of thorough democratization. His ambivalent feelings toward his double decisively reveal that there is no substantial agency with which the original can defend his "true superiority."

To highlight this point, Poe provides a striking case that evidences the void of Wilson's originality. The event occurs when he is stealthily trying to play a trick on his double at night in order to make the copy feel the original's "malice." Wilson secretly sneaks into his double's room to plot "ill-natured pieces of practical wit at his expense" and looks at his "countenance." Then, he is completely appalled at what he finds: "I looked; — and a numbess, an iciness of feeling instantly pervaded my frame. My breast heaved, my knees tottered, my whole spirit became possessed with an objectless yet intolerable horror." What terrifies him is "the lineaments of William Wilson" which paradoxically "were" and "were not" his at once. It is obvious, he exclaims, that he shares

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[122] Wilson actually confesses that "there were many points of strong congeniality in our tempers, operating to awake in me a sentiment which our position alone, perhaps, prevented from ripening into friendship" (432).

“[t]he same name! the same contour of person! The same day of arrival at the academy! And then his dogged and meaningless imitation of my gait, my voice, my habits, and my manner!” and yet there is something that is not exactly the same in the double’s face. Not solving the mystery, he leaves the chamber and the halls, “never to enter them again” (437).

Wilson’s horrified confrontation with another Wilson’s oxymoronic sameness with him suggests to the reader that his self-assured identity is not exactly identical to what he really is like. If the identical does not look exactly like the original, then logically the original is not what he should be like. Or the original cannot define what he is like, if he fails to recognize any difference in the copy. In either case, the original’s authenticity is in question. Significantly, after this shocking incident Wilson confesses that “I could now find room to doubt the evidence of my sense; and seldom called up the subject at all but with wonder at the extent of human credulity” (438). As the original Wilson begins to suspect his own sense and the judgment of his subjectivity, the copy exudes an “inscrutable tyranny” from which the original has to “at length flee, panic-stricken, as from a pestilence.” However, as Wilson laments, “to the very ends of the earth *I fled in vain*” (445).

Towards the end of his narration, Wilson, once the dictator of his associates and himself, reveals an awareness of his “utter weakness and helplessness” (446), a bitter, frank confession of the groundless construct of his self-centered despotism. Paradoxically, it is the occurrence of “the most absolute identity” that drives him to face the veiled truth of his lack of individual autonomy and singularity. In this sense, the denouement of the story does not remain ambiguous; the death of the two Wilsons is an inevitable corollary of the vain battle between the absent original and its vacant copy. The ultimate irony is that death has always haunted the original ever since he found the absence of his own singularity in his copy's face. The spectral identification tells the bitter truth of the myth of individual identity. One year later, Poe revisits the paradoxical interplay between identity and identification that he explores in "William Wilson" in "The Man of the Crowd," this time in terms of the ontological issue's political context.

The Paradox of "Absolute Idiosyncrasy" in "The Man of the Crowd"

First published in the December 1840 issue of *Graham's Magazine*, "The Man of the Crowd" is a short story with a very simple plot: an anonymous narrator unexpectedly discovers a peculiar-looking old man among the crowds he has been watching, becomes immediately electrified by the old man's singular physiognomy, and desperately chases after him to verify his true identity, but to no avail. At the outset of the story, the unnamed narrator is seated next to the transparent window of a London coffeehouse as evening slowly settles in. Having returned to health after a long illness that he does not specifically identify, he is now relishing watching the scene of the bustling streets thronged with the passing crowds. With "a calm but inquisitive interest in everything," the narrator obsessively enjoys "observing the promiscuous company in the room" and "peering though the smoky panes into the street." The crowded street "is one of the principal thoroughfares of the city, and had been very much crowded during the whole day." What especially catches his eyes is the momentarily varying size of the watched "throng" and the speedy movement of "two dense and continuous tides of population." Having "never been in a similar situation," he is now "filled" by "the tumultuous sea of human heads." And due to "a delicious novelty of emotion" that he feels, the narrator becomes "absorbed in contemplation of the scene without."

In what follows, the narrator becomes more eagerly engrossed in surveying the massive crowds, trying to provide a detailed analysis of them. He first takes "an abstract and generalizing turn" by "look[ing] at the passengers in masses, and th[inking] of them in their aggregate relations" and then he shifts his attention to "details, and regarded with minute interest the innumerable varieties of figure, dress, air, gait, visage, and expression of countenance" (507). Through looking, he learns about their "satisfied business-like demeanor," and notes how the crowd is "restless in their movement," with "flushed faces," and "an absent and overdone smile upon the lips," and being "overwhelmed with confusion" and "feeling in solitude," all ascribable to "the very denseness of the company around" (508).

The crowds on the street, though the narrator focuses on their general features, collective relations, and multifarious details, are all viewed as the impersonal masses. Even though he later takes a more categorizing look at the crowds, he still understands each individual as an impersonal entity, using their generic physical and social identity markers to interpret their age, race, class, and occupation. First, he easily discerns "noblemen, merchants, attorneys, tradesmen, stock-jobbers—the Eupatrids and the common-places of society—men of leisure and men actively engaged in affairs of their own—conducting business upon their own responsibility." Yet those people "did not greatly excite my attention." What interests him is "[t]he tribe of clerks" who are "the junior clerks of flash houses" whose appearances are "an exact facsimile" of what had been in vogue. "[T]he best definition of the class" is wearing "the cast-off graces of the gentry." These commoners are characterized by their impersonal collective identity. The following description follows the same categorization: "The division of the upper clerks of staunch firms," "the race of swell pick-pockets, with which all great cities are infested," "[t]he gamblers," "an order of men somewhat different in habits, but still birds of a kindred feather" (508-509). The narrator repeatedly stresses that he can promptly discern their collective identity. Though he stares at what appear to be "the innumerable varieties of figure, dress, air, gait, visage, and expression of countenance" (507), he as a matter of fact sees the varieties of types, not specific individualities. What identifies an individual's seeming identity is his or her social type, a certain generic marker for a given collective identity.

The same method of voyeurism continues while the narrator finds "darker and deeper themes for speculation," such as "Jew peddlers," "sturdy professional street beggars," "feeble ghastly invalids," "modest young girls returning from long and late labor to a cheerless home," "women of all kinds and of all ages," "pie-men, porters, coal-heavers, sweeps; organ grinders, monkey-exhibiters and ballad mongers, those who vended with those who sang; ragged artisans and exhausted laborers of every description." They are all categorized by their apparent collective identity such as race, class, and vocation. Nonetheless, he believes that he is "occupied in scrutinizing the mob" to read their individual faces and their respective "histor[ies] of long years" (510-511). The narrator's sense of individuality and individuation is, Poe shows, misplaced from the beginning; he misconstrues the diversity of "the general character of the crowd" (511) as the "innumerable varieties" of heterogeneous masses. What appears to be an individual entity is in fact just a distinctive case expressive of the particular collective identity it belongs to socially.

A number of critics have regarded the narrator's taxonomic voyeurism as an attempt to take epistemological control of the new social spectacle of the urban masses, an effort to capture their abstract humanity by focusing particular attention on their identifiable characteristics. For instance, Jonathan Elmer points out that the narrator's "typing was very attentive to details of class difference, but only in order to supersede such differences through a reassuring appeal to a common humanity; the typing thus served a desire for clarity and social transparency"[123] Yet, what Poe suggests in the story is the self-dehumanizing force of a mob of impersonal individuals that encourages the observer to fantasize about their individual diversities. For example, consider the narrator's sudden and strong attraction to the singularity of the old stranger, which implies the absence of the true individuality he seeks. It is this spectacle of impersonal individualities that unconsciously drives the narrator to desire to find and pursue a peculiar exception. While watching "the general character of the crowd," to his surprise and joy, "suddenly there came into view a countenance (that of a decrepit old man, some sixty-five or seventy years of age), – a countenance which at once arrested and absorbed my whole attention, on account of the absolute idiosyncrasy of its expression." The old man is *th*e unique singularity he "had never seen before," which excites the watcher immediately: "As I endeavored, during the brief minute of my original survey, to form some analysis of the meaning conveyed, there arose confusedly and paradoxically within my mind, the ideas of vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness, of avarice, of coolness, of malice, of blood-thirstiness, of triumph, of merriment, of excessive terror, of intense – of supreme despair.” Only by watching the old man’s existence is the narrator “singularly aroused, startled, fascinated.” He cannot but believe that a “wild” “history” “is written within” his “bosom!” And “[t]hen came a craving desire to keep the man in view – to know more of him” (511).

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[123] Elmer, *Reading at the Social Limit*, 170. In the similar regard, Mary Esteve reads "The Man of the Crowd" as a pioneering case of "urban aesthetics"; see Mary Esteve, *The Aesthetics and Politics of the Crowd in American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 44-50.

The significance of the old urban roamer and his unseizable and illegible singularity have titillated and evaded critical attention. Focusing on the old man’s membership in position within the anonymous crowds and his mysterious identity that eventually exhausts the narrator to the extent of becoming “wearied unto death” (515), Robert. H. Byer and many others have maintained that the old man’s lethal attraction and inexplicable escape reflect Poe’s “vision of the crowd’s sublime mystery.” According to this reading, both the old man and the crowds embody the threat to an individual self of being overwhelmed by the nameless masses, or they represent a case of excessive individual isolation from society and people as shown in the similarities shared by the narrator and the old man.[124] What underlies this interpretation is the assumption that Poe depicts the crowds as evil and that both the narrator and the old man are asocial. However, a closer examination of the text reveals that the narrator’s deepening anxiety comes, not from the watched crowds, but from his pursuit of the old man. He actually feels secure and satisfied when he is just watching the crowds. It is his chase after the old man that makes him nervous and drained.

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[124] Robert H. Byer, “Mysteries of the City: A Reading of Poe’s “The Man of the Crowd,” in *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, eds. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jhelen (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 227. Byer maintains that the narrator is tormented by “[t]he “feverish” haunted movement of Poe’s crowd” and “[t]he crowd’s demonic and threatening physiognomy.” Karen Halttunen also claims that “[o]f all Poe’s tales, this one [“The Man of the Crowd”] appears most explicitly to represent “his generation’s shock at realizing that the urban stranger cannot be known” (*Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* [New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982], 36). Also see Elmer, *Reading at the Social Limit*, 172.

As Walter Benjamin sharply points out, the narrator is a “flâneur” and “[t]o Poe the flâneur was, above all, someone who does not feel comfortable in his own company. This is why he seeks out the crowd; the reason he hides in it is probably close at hand. Poe purposely blurs the difference between the asocial person and the flâneur. The harder a man is to find, the more suspicious he becomes.”[125] It is also noteworthy that, as proved by his particular categorization of randomly passing people, the narrator is able to easily discern and precisely analyze social divisions and dynamics. In this sense, Poe is not particularly negative about the crowds, nor is the narrator asocial. The old man is not an asocial demon, either, given the obvious fact that he passes by the city’s diverse people and places rather than seeking to escape from them. He is neither a passive recluse nor an active runaway from society; rather, he is a thorough explorer of society.

Public alarms about the city in antebellum America were generally derived from deep concerns and anxieties about the rapid fluidity and indecipherable rootlessness of one’s true individual identity in a new mobile urban space full of a multitude of strangers. Yet, at least in Poe’s story, the narrator actually takes a full epistemological hold of the crowds until he meets with the exceptionally singular old man. As social modes and frames for understanding anonymous others are disabled by the appearance of “the absolute idiosyncrasy,” the narrator finally “grew wearied unto death.” Such death-like experiences, Poe underscores, happen when one follows what is absent but seems so tantalizingly tangible

In the beginning of the story, the narrator’s tone suggests that he gets joy and stability from his categorizing and typifying observation of the crowds. His secure figuration of the crowds is a social act because it is a way of understanding the individuals of a society as they are constituted and represented. Furthermore, the narrator embraces the unknown crowds and their social status and lives as readable and identifiable texts, recognizable and visible structures of the social reality. But the emergence of "the man of the crowd" disrupts this safe relation and world. His peculiar identity is not only illegible but also destructive to the significance of the crowds and the society. He loosens the narrator's epistemological grasp of the crowd. This is why the interplay between seeing and identifying does not come to a final resolution in the story: seeing fails to capture what identifying does.

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[125] Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Vol. 4 1938-1940*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and others (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 27.

Poe thus redirects the reader's attention from the question of surfaces to the question of what lies beneath. Critics such as Elbert and Byer contend that the narrator comes to be identified with the man of the crowd, an identification that foregrounds the self-annihilation of his individuality. Their focus on the irony that the narrator comes to bear a striking resemblance to the man he is chasing is correct. However, they disregard the inherent impossibility of the identification between two men. Since the old man's identity is, from the first, illegible and elusive, the chaser desires to be identified with what is always already a lost object. The moment when the frustrated pursuer exclaims that "It is in vain to follow him" discloses the truth of the deceptively misplaced identification. In fact, the conclusion echoes the story's outset, as the narrator returns at the story's end to the geographical starting point of his narrative. At first he remarks that "[t]here are some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told." Those secrets, he claims, make men "die with despair of heart and convulsion of throat, on account of the hideousness of [their] mysteries which will not *suffer themselves* to be revealed" (506-

507). The secret of the absence of individual peculiarity is a hideous secret in that it negates the existing individualism. In this light, the true fear of “The Man of the Crowd” inheres not in facing the identification but in realizing that it is a fantasy that serves to substantiate the popular illusion of the imaginary singular identity. That is, by centering the narrative on the delusive workings of impossible identification, Poe redirects the reader’s attention from the vain myth of reclaiming absent individualism to the substantial power of the deceptive desire for singular agency. The substantial power of the logic of impersonal identification, for Poe, underlay his contemporary national politics.

The paradoxical relation between the narrator and the old man reveals a deeper political connotation if it is linked to Poe’s contemporary political contexts. Note that “The Man of the Crowd” was published in December, 1840, the same month in which the Whig candidate, William Henry Harrison, defeated the Democrat Martin Van Buren in the presidential election. In several important respects, “The Man of the Crowd” allegorizes Jacksonian legacies of political democratization. First of all, the description of the old man in the story alludes to Jackson. For example, upon his first glance at the old man, the narrator describes his appearance, guessing that he seemed “some sixty-five or seventy years of age.” It is no coincidence that Jackson began his second term at the age of sixty five. Jackson was also often times called “Old Hickory” or “Old Man.” After his two terms, he became literally “a decrepit old man” and died in 1845, five years after leaving the White House.

Furthermore, the old man’s “absolute idiosyncrasy” is strongly redolent of Andrew Jackson’s persona. For Poe’s contemporary readers, Jackson was arguably the unprecedented and simultaneous epitome of both a singular man and the man of the common men, just like Poe's old man of the crowd. He was especially known for his strikingly idiosyncratic egotism and political obstinacy. Born in obscurity and poverty, Jackson rose to incarnate the American paragon of the self-made, heroic, and representative man, and he was the most popular and polarizing political leader in the history of antebellum America. His outstanding military leadership in the War of 1812 between America and Britain earned him national fame as a military hero. He then became the charismatic leader of the Democratic Party, and during his two terms his doctrine of democracy for the common men democratized Americans' political sensibilities and practices in drastic and irrevocable ways. Jackson held the presidency through his keen instinct, lightening-rod personality, formidable will, and effective public gestures that drew popular support. To subdue his political opponents, he personalized political disputes as his solitary struggle to fight for the cause of common men as opposed to the privileged, believing in and representing himself as the true, invincible democratic leader. Consequently, he garnered both popular admiration and political condemnation.

Jackson's unprecedentedly strong political character and popularity made his opponents seek and contrive more effective tactics to prevent his second term in the 1832 election. The election featured the first appearance of the third party to join the presidential race, the Anti-Masonic Party, which introduced important political innovations to American politics, such as nominating conventions and the adoption of party platforms, two new institutions that catered to the voting public and changed the contours of political democratization. The new minor party first emerged as a public movement to prevent Masonic figures from assuming public office, and yet in early 1828 its strong anti-Masonic feeling formed and intensified through a series of mass meetings, quickly transformed into a strong anti-Jacksonian political faction that sought to prevent Jackson's second presidency on the grounds that Jackson was actually a high-ranking Mason. In order to consolidate and promote their new party effectively, anti-Masons invented the national nominating convention, in which locally elected delegates would select state candidates to pledge their loyalty and mobilize the increased number of voters, and the party platform, in which they officially specified their principles and doctrine for the public. On September 26, 1831, the Anti-Masons held the first national political party convention to nominate their presidential candidate. The new procedural innovation proved more successful than expected; the public selection process gave the party publicity and its candidate legitimacy. Whigs and Democrats quickly recognized its effectiveness and rushed to hold similar national conventions to anoint their candidates; on December 12, 1831, the National Republican Convention nominated Henry Clay, and on May 21-22, 1832, the Democratic Party Convention nominated Jackson for reelection.[126]

Central to the election of 1832 was the singular political personality of Jackson, who embodied the popular idea of advocating for the common man. His political character was inseparable from the most heated issue of his administration: the existence of the Bank of the United States. During his first term, Jackson made all possible effort to dismantle the Bank of the United States because it had too many foreign investors, it favored the rich over the poor, and it restricted loans for western expansion and development plans. For these reasons, Jackson promptly vetoed the legislation passed by the Senate to renew the bank's charter in 1831. When the House and Senate voted to reauthorize the bank in July 1832, Jackson announced a second veto stating "[i]t is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes…When the laws undertake, … to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society, the farmers, mechanics and laborers, who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors for themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their government." Soon after this Congress overruled Jackson's veto and both sides continued the confrontation. As the 1832 campaign approached, the question of the Bank's survival became the pivotal debate between Jacksonians and Anti-Jacksonians. Whereas the National Republican platform assailed Jackson's "character" and equated it with his policy, the Democratic Party shrewdly issued no platforms that might displease lukewarm Jacksonian voters.[127] In a famous National Republican cartoon, he was portrayed as "King Andrew the First," and the 1832 election was the first substantial popular national election in American political history, one that decided whether Jackson was a popular tribune or a democratic despot, a referendum on Jackson himself.

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[126] In the 1832 election, Anti-Masonic party candidates won 10 percent of all House races, and the party's Presidential candidate, William Wirt, carried Vermont and won almost 8 percent of the popular vote nationally. For the emergence of the Anti-Masonic Party and its political impact on the American politics, see Michael F. Holt, *Political Parties and American Political Development from the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

In the election, Americans favored Jackson's singular character, regarding it as representative of their interest and voice. Jackson easily won his reelection, proving himself more popular than the National Bank. He later interpreted the overwhelming victory as "a decision of the people against the bank." Early in his second term, Jackson ordered the removal of the government’s deposits and funds from the National Bank in order to distribute them to local state banks. Shocked, the Senate, which was controlled by Whigs, passed a resolution demanding that Jackson open the cabinet’s documents related to the 1831 veto. When Jackson refused to release the documents, on March 8 in 1834 Congress officially censured the President for the first time in American history. However, the politically symbolic censure failed to stop Jackson from demolishing the federal banking system. Though Jackson’s battle against the National Bank and the privileged seemed to be a fight for the common man, historians have agreed that the National Bank was not abolished because of public opinion.[128] Rather, as one historian trenchantly sums it up, “[t]he killing of the BUS [Bank of the United States] was primarily the work of one man, and that man was Andrew Jackson.”[129] Indeed Jackson took his fight against the Bank personally; the Bank “is trying to kill me,” he told Vice President Van Buren, “but I will kill it.” Ultimately, the decision was Jackson’s own and nothing but his personal popularity could have overridden the complaints of the privileged and the elite.

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[127] Michael Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15.

However, the boundary between public perception and the correct understanding of Jackson’s political strife is still ambiguous. First of all, the public opinion Jackson relied upon was not necessarily formed by the voices of common people. For instance, Amos Kendall, who masterminded much of Jackson’s political strategy and composed many of his official papers, wrote editorials that he sent to friendly newspaper editors around the country. He then (re)quoted their friendly articles in his own journal to give evidence of the people's approval of Jackson's policy. Moreover, Jackson's decision was not necessarily the opinion of the Democratic Party; by 1836, twenty-eight Democratic congressmen who had voted to recharter the Bank had left their party.[130] Tocqueville's analysis of the ideological contest over the Bank and Jackson's reelection victory precisely captures the essence of the groundless substance of Jackson's singular authority, believed to represent the public good:

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[128] See, for example, Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 386.

[129] Robert Vincent Remi, *Andrew Jackson and the Bank War: A Study in the Growth of Presidential Power* (New York: Norton, 1967), 43.

> when the president attacked the bank, the country was excited and parties were formed; the well-informed classes rallied round the bank, the common people round the president. But it must not be imagined that the people had formed a rational opinion upon a question which offers so many difficulties to the most experienced statesmen. The bank is a great establishment which enjoys an independent existence, and the people, accustomed to make and unmake whatsoever it pleases, is startled to meet with this obstacle to its authority. In the midst of the perpetual fluctuation of society, the community is irritated by so permanent an institution, and is led to attack it, in order to see whether it can be shaken and controlled, like all the other institutions of the country.[131]

Here, Tocqueville poses the question of popular rule uniquely central to the American politics. To the French aristocrat concerned with the self-interest and demagoguery peculiar to American democracy, it was apparent that the political imagination was now at the mercy of a charismatic leader's public image, so long as it was equated with the public cause. Connecting the significance of the 1832 election to the 1828 election, Tocqueville points out that Jackson's supporters share the same political psychology and self-affirming delusions:

> "General Jackson, whom the Americans have trice elected to be the head of their government, is a man of a violent temper and mediocre talents; no one circumstance in the whole course of his career ever proved that he is

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[130] Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 390.

[131] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 146.

> qualified to govern a free people; and indeed the majority of the enlightened classes of the Union has always been opposed to him. But he was raised to the presidency, and has been maintained in that lofty station, solely by the recollection of a victory which he gained, twenty years ago, under the walls of New Orleans; a victory which was, however, a very ordinary achievement, and which could only be remembered in a country where battles are rare. Now the people who is thus carried away by the illusions of glory, is unquestionably the most cold and calculating, the most unmilitary (if I may use the expression), and the most prosaic of all the peoples of the earth."[132]

This passage reveals Tocqueville's acute analysis which especially concerns the political ambivalence of the masses as well as the self-deceiving dynamics of their political desire. This problem, he anticipates, would deepen if American politics centered on the political character of Jackson and the common support for his actions. Indeed, the consequence of Jackson's two terms was, as Harry L. Watson has noted, that "the President's actions stripped his original supporters down to fighting strength and gave them a strong sense of group identity … [and] the emerging Democratic Party shared an emotional loyalty to Jackson and his legacy and a fervent desire, in the President's words, to give it "permanent ascendancy.""[133]

It is notable that Poe represents a singular identity as not only mysteriously alluring but also potentially lethal. Poe already warns in "William Wilson" of the deceptive binary between the original and the identical through that story of fatal impersonal identification. In "The Man of the Crowd" the Jackson-like old man allures and exhausts his chaser. In both narratives, the narrating pursuers are completely entrapped by the uncanny power of the identical or the original. Likewise, Poe's contemporaries were infatuated with what they believed to represent a common humanity and what they believed to be singular leadership. This paradoxical double delusion is difficult to avoid since impersonal identification is not only conceptual but also sympathetic. Collective affects enables the communal belief justified by the very act of feeling together. The coming presidential election would take advantage of this secret mechanism of impersonal identification.

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[132] Ibid., 236.

[133] Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (1990; New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 174.

Jacksonians viewed the 1836 election as a third election for their admired hero since the Democrat candidate was Van Buren, Jackson's best advisor with unvarying loyalty and dedicated service, whom Jackson openly designated as his successor and others ratified unanimously. To defeat Jackson's avatar, the Whigs took strategic action. Ignoring the precedence of the last election, they held no national convention to nominate their candidate. Instead, various states nominated three Whig candidates, William Henry Harrison of Ohio, Hugh Lawson White of Tennessee, and Daniel Webster of Massachusetts. The purpose of this decision was twofold; it was intended to heighten and take full advantage of regional hostilities to Jackson and his successor Van Buren, and it was expected that several competitors would split the vote sufficiently to send the election into the House of Representatives. As a matter of fact, this had happened in the1824 election when Jackson got more popular votes but the decision of the House of Representatives favored John Quincy Adams. But Jackson was still the old hero of most Americans. Van Buren won a clear-cut victory over all other Whig candidates. His victory signifies a now tolerable discrepancy between the original image and its double; regardless of the actual substance, Americans could embrace the identical double of the original image as the real entity. Poe's "William Wilson" captures this new political paradox and “The Man of the Crowd” indicts the absence of substance at the heart of the paradox.

By 1840 the two opposing party system, national conventions, and mass rallies defined the more extensively democratic course of the coming presidential race. Both parties were organized down to the regional level, and the proportion of voters in the presidential election had tripled from 26 percent in 1824 to 78 percent in 1840. Yet, despite the codification and solidification of the party presidential campaigns, the campaigns became more of “personalities and not of issues.”[134] Indeed, the Whigs recalled the valuable lesson they learned from the last election and accurately adjusted their strategies and tactics. In December 4, 1839 the Whigs nominated Harrison. For the campaign, Whigs popularized three carefully crafted, rousing campaign slogans: “Log Cabin and Hard Cider,” “Tippecanoe and Tyler, too,” and “Van! Van! Is a Used-Up Man!” They were calculated to make the public visualize Harrison as an Andrew Jackson-like Southern war hero and a simple commoner in contrast to Van Buren, whom the Whigs represented as a corrupt career politician indulging in a luxurious, aristocratic lifestyle while the nation’s economy failed.[135] In fact, however, Van Buren was of humble origins, whereas Harrison was a propertied slaveholder from a renowned Virginian family. Along with campaign newspapers, Whigs also employed a variety of visual and mobile devices such as plentiful placards, large emblems, massive rallies, and catchy campaign songs and slogans. In addition, as the Democratic Party successfully did four years before, the Whig Party did not adopt a platform in order to prevent any possible political conflicts within them. In this extensive democratization of national politics, it became almost impossible to establish a distinction between the original and the identical, as suggested in "William Wilson," and more importantly, as Poe implies more allusively in "The Man of the Crowd," what appears to be the original "will be in vain to follow."

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[134] Quoted in Pessen, *Jacksonian America*, 168.

[135] On March 23, 1840, an article in the *Baltimore Republican* argued that “upon condition of his receiving a pension of $2000 and a barrel of cider, General Harrison would no doubt consent to withdraw his pretensions and spend his days in a log cabin on the banks of the Ohio.” Seizing upon this comment, the Whigs began to portray Harrison as a humble frontierman in favor of the common people and their lifestyle.

The consequence was a Whig victory, a death sentence to twelve years of Jacksonian power. The politics of impersonal identification worked well with the American public. Jackson, who had been the epitome of impersonal identification, wrote scornfully of the Whigs misleading the people by "worshipping coon and sour cider … [attempting] to degrade the people to a level with the brute creation."[136] However, the Whigs only imitated what the Democrats had been doing, but in a more effective way. Thus, an editor of the *Democratic Review* lamented "they have at last learned from the art of victory! We have taught them to conquer us!"[137]

"The horrid law of political economy"

The three presidential elections in 1832, 1836, and 1840 had shown Americans the predominant logic of impersonal identification at the center of national politics. Though Jackson was idolized and detested as the incarnation of absolutely idiosyncratic political agency, his individuality cannot be easily defined as autonomous and singular. For the democratic individuality he embodied was in constant interplay between the individual and the public; his individuality was always coupled with the democratic will which is not necessarily the expression of the real demos. The paradox of democratic individuality was more egregious in the case of William Henry Harrison as seen in his intentional disowning of his original selfhood and his identification with the image of his political adversary. In these cases of Jackson and Harrison, it is difficult to find the original locus of autonomous and singular agency. Central to what formed and transformed the political contours of 1830s was, as Poe suggests in his tales, the spectral substance of the logic of impersonal identification.

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[136] Pessen, *Jacksonian America*, 169.

[137] Quoted in Robert Gray Gunderson, *The Log-Cabin Campaign* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 108.

In 1846, Poe wrote that "in this country, which has set the world an example of physical liberty, the inquisition of popular sentiment overrules in practice the freedom asserted in theory by the laws." "William Wilson" and "The Man of the Crowd" had explored the way in which what he calls "the horrid law of political economy" became the unavoidable structure of American reality and how "the public sentiment overrules in practice the freedom" in irrevocable ways.[138] The two tales, at their respective conclusion, make the same point: the fantasy of "absolute idiosyncrasy" is an ideological hologram of the reality built on the logic of "absolute identity." For Poe, such "absolute" conditions best characterize the increasing social democratization and also the spreading sense of the threat from the new social milieus characterized by the homogenizing of individualities. With this in mind, Poe's strong and explicit loathing of American transcendentalism should be reconsidered. He disdained Transcendentalists as "Frogpondians" and ridiculed their philosophy of individualism as "metaphor-run mad" which lapses into "obscurity for obscurity's sake" or "mysticism for mysticism's sake."[139] Poe once wrote in a letter to Thomas Holley Chivers that he disliked "only the pretenders and sophists among them."[140] For Poe, transcendental individualism is a doubly misconceived and misleading hoax since there is in truth no individual autonomy or singularity and thus it is impossible to reestablish or reclaim them.

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[138] Edgar Allan Poe, "The Literati of New York," *Edgar Allan Poe: Essays and Reviews*, ed. G. R. Thompson (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 1134.

In the same vein, "William Wilson" and "The Man of the Crowd" can also be read as allegories of how "public opinion" deludes the individual into sympathizing for the original and the identical. The strenuous struggles of both narrators are substantial—not simply unreal just because they are misled by fantasy—because these struggles are the actual ways in which one maintains one's ideological vision of being and society. Poe's daunting vision of American mobocracy warns against the very deceptive substantiation that is visible and palpable but not legible. Like "a certain German book," described by the narrator of "The Man of the Crowd," it "does not permit itself to be read" and thus commits a "deep crime" (515). For Poe, the deeper, more significant lesson is the transformation of the power of the delusive substantiation of the absent, abstract notion of the singular individuality into the tangible, tantalizing entity in democratic social milieus. Poe's inquiry is thus directed at the working of the spectral substance of the uniquely American democratic individuality, its paradoxical fictionality and historicity.

Whereas Poe was interested in political and cultural democracy in terms of the presidency, the national political economy, and the cultural market, Hawthorne was concerned with political and cultural democracy in terms of the widespread and popular social reform movements of the 1840s. In the next chapter, I consider how Hawthorne's romance, like Brown's and Poe's, discloses the underlying paradox of the fundamental principles of democracy; but in his romance Hawthorne studies democratic feelings, sympathy in particular.

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[139] Edgar Allan Poe, "Editorial Miscellanies from the *Broadway Journal*," *Edgar Allan Poe: Essays and Reviews*, ed. G. R. Thompson (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 1098-1099.

[140] Quoted in Silverman, *Edgar A. Poe*, 169.

Chapter III

Strange Sympathies in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*

In "The Procession" chapter in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne, watching Arthur Dimmesdale passing by with a throng celebrating the election day, abruptly "felt a dreary influence come over her, but wherefore or whence she knew not." This inscrutable feeling forcibly divorced Hester from Dimmesdale by rendering him "so remote from her own sphere, and utterly beyond her reach." Against the sudden affective dissociation, she strove to reinstate their furtive relationship by evoking a reminiscence of "the dim forest … where, sitting hand-in-hand, they had mingled their sad and passionate talk" and "deeply had they known each other then." However, such a deep mutual understanding predicated on sympathetic dialogue was irrevocably ruptured by the inexplicable and ungovernable feeling, which severed their empathic rapport so completely that "[s]he hardly knew him now." To add to Hester's misery, Dimmesdale's expression amid the procession betrayed "unsympathizing thoughts" and an intention to "withdraw himself from their mutual world." Hawthorne's dramatization of the profound disconnect between the couple not only accentuates the centrality of sympathy to reciprocal understanding and solidarity, but poses a provocative question regarding the substance of knowledge and association built on sympathy. Indeed, the strong sympathy that binds Hester and Dimmesdale together at the forest tryst is suddenly foreclosed, leaving no solid ground for their sympathetic comprehension and connection. Hawthorne reaffirms the futility of sympathy in the wake of their mutual alienation by depicting how Hester's "spirit sank with the idea that all must have been a delusion, and … there could be no real bond betwixt the clergyman and herself."[141]

Hawthorne's intent to limn this saliently "unsympathizing" scene seems quite clear. He confounds the antebellum sense of sympathy which his contemporaries considered the most essential and effective interpersonal affect. Hawthorne's contemporary understanding of sympathy is what Hester and Dimmesdale believe it to be in their forest reunion; it is supposed to lead individuals to share deeper truth of each other's heart. To the contrary, sympathy in Hawthorne's depiction in later scenes is desubjectivizing, disruptive, disintegrating, and decoupling. But Hawthorne scholars, though never missing the thematic importance of sympathy, have ignored Hawthorne's concerns with the paradoxical—binding yet immaterial—substance of sympathy expressed by his depiction of the ways in which Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth suffer its unquestioned mechanism. During Dimmesdale's public sermon, for instance, his "tremulously sweet, rich, deep, and broken" voice and "[t]he feeling that it so evidently manifested, rather than the direct purport of the words, caused it to vibrate within all hearts, and brought the listeners into one accord of sympathy." His emotional "appeal" was so "powerful" that "[e]ven the poor baby at Hester's bosom was affected by the same influence" (67). In Hawthorne's delineation of the scene, sympathy arises among townsmen to concatenate them into one affectively homogeneous group as the pastor's sonorous voice and its emotional repercussions—not the didactic content of his sermon—touch a chord in their hearts; thus, even Hester's infant baby, who understands not a single word of the sermon, becomes one of those sympathizers. What is notable here is Hawthorne's particular attention to the way in which sympathy *substantiates* a state of emotional synchronization of individuals regardless of the actual content of what they are supposed to sympathize with. This paradox offers an explanation of why the strong sympathetic binding between Hester and Dimmesdale suddenly comes to naught. Hawthorne suggests that sympathetic welding, whether epistemological or ontological, is in effect formed by the contingent merging of feelings, rather than the firm foundation of enduring mutual understanding and connection. To this end he depicts Hester and Dimmesdale "sitting hand-in-hand" in the forest "mingl[ing] their sad and passionate talk," and mistaking this for deeply knowing each other. Their sympathy is directed toward the "sad and passionate" expression of respective emotional talk, not its profound content. In the same vein, their failure to fend off the intrusion of unsympathizing affect proves that they have not constructed a "real bond" beneath the veils of sympathetic feeling, "a delusion" as Hester puts it.

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[141] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, vol. 1 of *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. William Charvat, et al. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1962), 239-240. Further references will be to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

It is also noteworthy that sympathy is not merely a moral virtue in Hawthorne's view. Note that the mingled talk the couple shares in the forest has nothing to do with moral relief or salvation and Dimmesdale's listeners are captivated by his emotional voice regardless of its moral message. Moreover, Hawthorne's other representations of how sympathy arises and operates in *The Scarlet Letter* divulge some darkly multifarious—immoral, irrational, and even pathological—effects that preclude any possibility of sympathetic harmony. These negative sympathies subjugate the main characters, though the characters do not recognize this due to their misunderstanding of the true structure of sympathy and their circumscribed agency. Rather they remain believers and followers of sympathy as their own while their respective fate is doomed to fall victim to the power of sympathy which they believe to work for them. Hawthorne's particular focus on the non-subjective, insidious attributes of sympathy, I argue in this chapter, complicates and challenges the antebellum conception of sympathy. Hawthorne's contemporaries generally hold that sympathy is in essence a self-generated and self-governing feeling grounded on a rational and moral awareness of another's condition. Therefore, the very subjectivity and rational morality of sympathy should lead sympathizers to build a harmonious social order because of each individual's reasonable judgment and ethical practice for the public good and justice. In this light, sympathy is perceived and pursued as a politically valorized affect that serves the purpose of arousing public attention to the sufferers and their problematic social conditions. This prevalent notion of sympathy, less theoretical than prescriptive, especially added impetus abolitionism and the women's rights movement in antebellum America. Indeed, social activists and reformers such as William Lloyd Garrison, Lydia Maria Child, Margaret Fuller, the Grimké sisters, and Frederick Douglass in their lectures and writings resort to individual and collective sympathy for those under the burden of patriarchal bondage or racial enslavement. With the American goal of creating a democratic society of liberal individuals, they all seek to capitalize on the far-reaching and permeating effect of sympathy in order to raise awareness of and encourage engagement with the social abuses oppressing women and African-Americans.

Composed at a time replete with political and cultural discourses relying on the reforming—liberating and democratizing—power of sympathy, *The Scarlet Letter* demonstrates that Hawthorne is also concerned with the enlightening and solidifying effect of sympathy, but only to pose a question concerning its ability to redress the social structure and system that hinder the realization of a genuine liberal democracy. This question brings the paradoxical substances of both sympathy and sympathizer to the fore so as to demystify the contemporary notion of sympathy as cementing interpersonal relations in a subjective, moral, and harmonious way that serves the cause of social liberation and democratization. In *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne vividly represents amoral, immoral, or morbid instantiations of sympathy; the striking lacuna of subjectivity in such cases; and the main characters' inability to identify their true feelings with another's in a harmonious way or to realize their impotent feelings. The public's misconceptions of sympathy indicate the serious misconceptions of sympathy which mislead the public into pursuing the power of sympathy as laying the groundwork for establishing a liberal, democratic sociality. In what follows, I first discuss the premises of sympathy widely posited in Hawthorne's time, then investigate how the logic of antebellum cultural politics exploits the posited power of sympathy, and finally reexamine how Hawthorne delves into the question of paradoxical sympathies in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Premises of Sympathy

The antebellum notion of sympathy inherited the legacy of its philosophical usage in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The term sympathy gained currency in moral philosophy as Adam Smith explicated its nature and function in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Departing from the contemporary thinkers discussing the origin of morality in terms of intrinsic moral sensibility or practical social utility, Smith maintained that it is sympathy that structures and activates moral ideas and actions. In order to advance a new theory of sympathy, he first considered the case of "pity" or "compassion," which he defined as "the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner." According to him, one cannot feel pity or compassion for another's emotional expression without "conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation." That is to say, pity or compassion stems from the working of one's imaginative consciousness which puts oneself in another's shoes. It is in this sense that Smith called pity and compassion "fellow-feeling," an affect that "arises from any object in the person principally concerned" as "an analogous emotion [which] springs up, at the thought of his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator." Then he linked pity and compassion as "fellow-feeling" to sympathy which encompasses both pity and compassion: "[p]ity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others, Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever."

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith predicates his formulation of sympathy on three interlocking presuppositions, each of which he considers self-evident. The first premise of sympathy is its spontaneity, which is so important that Smith mentions it in the very opening passage of his theory of sympathy: "That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it; for this sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it."[142] Here sympathy—as a comprehensive idea that includes sentiment and passion for another—is conceptualized as a natural tendency inherent in human agency with which we are all endowed equally; therefore, Smith calls sympathy one of the "principles" and "original passions of human nature." According to this notion of sympathy as a universal, self-generated feeling, it is self-evident that individual cannot fail to feel sympathy for others while watching their troubles and difficulties.

Though Smith confirms that sympathy does not only belong to "the virtuous and humane," he posits that sympathy always arises in a moral manner. What renders sympathy morally operative are two *a priori* faculties inherent in human agency: imagination and reason. Regarding the mechanism of sympathy, Smith explains that one cannot feel sympathy for the watched sufferer without "imagination" though which "we can form any conception of what his sensations are." That means, "[t]he compassion of the spectator must arise altogether from the consideration of what he himself would feel if he was reduced to the same unhappy situation … with … present reason and judgment."[143] Here Smith associates imaginative faculty with "reason and judgment," indicating that the working of sympathy is, though affective and imaginative, grounded on rational consideration of another's condition. If so, it is impossible that sympathy works under the influence of immoral intention or thought. Hence sympathy is always a moral sentiment *per se*.

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[142] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11.

[143] Ibid., 15.

In addition to the essential spontaneity and rational morality of sympathy, the last premise of sympathy Smith considers self-evident is its socially harmonizing power. He explains that when we "'place ourselves in [another's] situation" through imagination, ''we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them.''[144] Yet, as Smith acknowledges, the sympathizer's feelings "will, indeed, always be, in some respects, different from what he [the sufferer] feels, and compassion can never be exactly the same with original sorrow; because the secret consciousness that the change of situations, from which the sympathetic sentiment arises, is but imaginary, not only lowers it in degree, but, in some measure, varies it in kind, and gives it a quite different modification." Nonetheless, he asserts that "[t]hese two sentiments … may, it is evident, have such a correspondence with one another, as is sufficient for the harmony of society. Though they will never be unisons, they may be concords, and this is all that is wanted or required."[145] To Smith's mind, sympathy that enables one's emotion to correspond with another's is a necessary and sufficient condition for establishing a harmonious society; the mutual affective identification through sympathizing is not only possible but probable because sympathy, which has a subjective and rational effect on the individual level, is supposed to work in a moral way on the public level.

As a matter of fact, sympathy in Smith's formulation is equivalent to empathy in current usage, which specifically signifies both the understanding of and identification with another's feeling and situation. Sympathy as synonymous with empathetic "fellow-feeling" denotes the essentially moral and social dimension of the word. And the latter, in Smith's regard, cannot be constituted without the fundamentally individual and voluntary—i.e., subjective—dimension of sympathy, since "there may be some correspondence of sentiments between the spectator and the person principally concerned, the spectator must, first of all, endeavor, as much as he can, to put himself in the situation of the other, and to bring home to himself every little circumstance of distress which can possibly occur to the sufferer."[146] In the later part of his book, Smith develops the idea of the sympathetic spectator into the conception of the "impartial spectator," an agent whose sympathy always arises from a sense of social harmony: "To disturb his happiness merely because it stands in the way of our own, to take from him what is of real use to him merely because it may be of equal or of more use to us, or to indulge, in this manner, at the expense of other people, the natural preference which every man has for his own happiness above that of other people, is what no impartial spectator can go along with."[147]

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[144] Ibid., 12.

[145] Ibid., 27.

Puissance of Sympathy

Smith's contemporary Jean-Jacques Rousseau also considers sympathy a feeling for the public good in terms of an "impartial spectator." In *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality among Men* (1755), published five years before *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Rousseau, as Philip Fisher points out, views "compassion" as a "species preserving" different from "individual preserving feeling."[148] Fisher shows interest in Rousseau's intentional use of vivid literary images that directly appeal to the reader's sympathy as in Rousseau's depiction of "the tragic image of an imprisoned man who sees, through his window, a wild beast tearing a child from its mother's arms, breaking its frail limbs with murderous teeth, and clawing its quivering entrails. What horrible agitation seizes him as he watches the scene which does not concern him personally! What anguish he suffers from being powerless to help the fainting mother and the dying child." In Fisher's analysis, Rousseau intends that this appalling image evinces the fact that sympathy stems from "a species-preserving feeling as opposed to those feelings which have only the individual's own survival at their source."[149] Indeed, by limning a peculiar case of a helpless prisoner who can do nothing but watch the tragic scene happening outside his cell, Rousseau implies that sympathy as a social feeling occurs only when the motive of the spectator who sympathizes with another is far from self-interested and personal.[150]

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[146] Ibid., 26.

[147] Ibid., 96.

But there is a significant difference between Rousseau and Smith in their understanding of social sympathy. Whereas Rousseau's emphasis on the prisoner's inability to stop the suffering he watches "makes him a crucial image of the reader of sentimental stories" who "obviously cannot affect the outcome of events that he witnesses,"[151] Smith's model of the spectator sympathizing with the watched sufferer effaces the boundary between the personal and the public under the influence of sympathy. While Rousseau highlights the sympathizer's inability to act as a crucial part of social sympathy, Smith puts emphasis on the substantial power to affectively identify with the sufferer. This contrast is more specifically revealed as Smith provides the example of literary plot and characters to account for the actual working of sympathy: "[o]ur joy for the deliverance of those heroes of tragedy or romance who interest us, is as sincere as our grief for their distress, and our fellow-feeling with their misery is not more real than that with their happiness. We enter into their gratitude towards those faithful friends who did not desert them in their difficulties; and we heartily go along with their resentment against those perfidious traitors who injured, abandoned, or deceived them."[152] Smith's point is that one's sympathetic "enter[ing] into" another's emotions, as in the specific case of feeling for sentimental characters in "happiness," "distress," "misery," or with "resentment," submerges the sympathizer's view and concern in the very feelings of the sufferer. For Smith, the substantial formation of such sympathetic identification through the experience of affective (inter)subjectivity lays the solid foundation of a social harmony.

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[148] Quoted in Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 105.

[149] Ibid.

[150] For Rousseau's concept of sympathizer as spectator, see David Marshall, "Rousseau and the State of Theater," *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 135-177.

In his thorough historical study of the formation of the public sphere in the seventeenth- and eighteenth century, Jürgen Habermas also notes the power of sympathy to substantiate an interpersonal space where a feeling subject takes part in constituting a public sphere. Like Smith, Habermas considers the case of a reader's experience of literary sentimentalism:

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[151] Quoted in Fisher, *Hard Facts*, 106.

[152] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 13.

> … the empathetic reader repeated within himself the private relationships displayed before him in literature; from his experience of real familiarity (*Intimität*), he gave life to the fictional one, and in the latter he prepared himself for the former. On the other hand, from the outset the familiarity (*Intimität*) whose vehicle was the written word, the subjectivity that had become fit to print, had in fact become the literature appealing to a wide public of readers. The privatized individuals coming together to form a public also reflected critically and in public on what they had read, thus contributing to the process of enlightenment which they together promoted."[153]

What Habermas suggests is the centrality of the imaginative identification on an interpersonal level to the formulation of a public sphere, which echoes Smith's formulation of the social dynamic of sympathy. In fact, in the late seventeenth- and eighteenth century, Habermas mainly examines and adopts Smith's notion of social sympathy rather than Rousseau's.

Along with the immense popularity of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* the three underlying premises of sympathy Smith posits in the book served as the significant conceptual underpinnings to the booming sentimental culture—especially literary sentimentalism. Smith's contemporaries were still infatuated with Samuel Richardson's internationally acclaimed sentimental novels such as *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740) and *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady* (1748) published about two decades before, which inaugurated the widespread popularity of literary sentimentalism during the latter half of the eighteenth century and subsequent decades. Some examples of internationally successful sentimental novels are Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768), and Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771). These works collectively reflect the profound influence of the Smithian concept of sympathy; they all represents sympathy as a personal and public affect that can contribute to building a more moral and harmonious social order.

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[153] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into A Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 50-51.

Smith's deep, lasting influence also permeates the antebellum American understanding and usage of sympathy. For example, the 1853 edition of *An American Dictionary of the English Language* by Noah Webster defines sympathy exactly as Smith does: "Fellow-feeling; the quality of being affected by the affection of another, with feelings correspondent in kind, if not in degree." This common understanding of sympathy also permeates American letters in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, which witnessed the sentimental genre dominating the literary public sphere with its enormous popularity and commercial success. The most popular antebellum novel that echoes Smithian sympathy in Hawthorne's time is Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) published one year after *The Scarlet Letter*. Stowe intends her sentimental novel to evoke public sympathy for African American slaves through illustrating their perils and agonies in graphic detail and thereby invoking the political advantages of sympathy as a solution to the increasing political dissensions and moral dilemmas surrounding slavery. She manifests this view in the novel's concluding chapter, basing it on a belief that "[a]n atmosphere of sympathetic influence encircles every human being; and the man or woman who *feels* strongly, healthily and justly, on the great interests of humanity, is a constant cultural benefactor to the human race" [emphasis in the original].[154] In this passage she posits that any individual who sympathizes with the cause of humanity cannot help but work for general human welfare; therefore each sympathizer for those in the inhumane realities of enslavement and bondage must make constant efforts to abolish the institution of slavery. Central to this axiom, she stresses, is the simple fact that “every individual can … *feel right*” (emphasis in the original).[155] For her, to “*feel right*” is a universal faculty serving as the *a priori* locus of sympathy which works in an individually spontaneous and socially moral manner, which applies Smith’s premises of sympathy to the cultural politics of antebellum America. Like Smith, Stowe has no doubt that individuals are endowed with rational judgment and moral sensibility, and accordingly individuals can and should “*feel right*” about the social evils they cannot but watch.

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[154] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (New York: Norton, 1994), 385.

Noting this conceptual affinity between Smith and Stowe in their respective formulation of sympathy, critics have tended to read Stowe’s deployment of sympathy in terms of Smith’s formulation of the term. For example, in his discussion of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* Glenn Hendler first explains that “Smith insists that there must be a mediating force between the sympathizer and the sufferer, even if that mediator is the viewer’s own imagination.”[156] Hendler continues, noting that Smith implies that sympathy is not simply a natural sensation; for Smith, it is a sentiment that can and should be cultivated in order to identify Smith’s view as constitutive of Stowe’s injunction to “feel right.” The problem here is that the application of Smith’s theory to Stowe’s text disregards a subtly differentiated case of sympathy Stowe recognizes. For instance, Simon Legree, Uncle Tom’s vicious and barbaric master on the Louisiana plantation is completely subject to his “strong, impassioned” mother on the brink of Legree’s insanity, who “had always kept over Legree the kind of influence that … made her a sort of object of dread to

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[155] Ibid.

[156] Glenn Hendler, *Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 4.

Legree, who had that superstitious horror of insane persons which is common to coarse and uninstructed minds."[157] This line suggests that Legree sympathizes with his mother in a terrified way and the sympathy is what he tries to escape, but in vain. However, the strange supernatural case of Legree is not Stowe's main concern regarding sympathy; it is depicted as an aberration from a general concept of sympathy. In contrast, Hawthorne is mainly concerned with the aberrant modes of sympathy unidentified by Smith. Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is structured around the conundrum of such unrecognized sympathies.

Paradox of Sympathy

Hawthorne's particular concern with sympathy is already found in "Ethan Brand," written in the winter of 1848 and 1849 and published in the *Boston Weekly Magazine* in January 1850.[158] The tale is like a portico to *The Scarlet Letter* in that it deals with a very similar question regarding sympathy. It centers on the unexpected return and death of the titular character, a mysterious roamer who has travelled the world in search of what he calls "the Unpardonable Sin." After eighteen years, he finally returns his hometown to report that he has found the sin, which ironically resides in his "own heart." Yet after his deep rumination on "what love and sympathy for mankind, and what pity for human guilt and woe, he had," as well as "with what reverence he had then looked into the heart of man," he becomes greatly disillusioned by his discovery of "the Unpardonable Sin" in his "own heart," and especially by the tragic fact that his heart is no longer "a temple originally divine" as he had viewed it before. As a consequence, his heart, in sharp contrast to his cultivated and developed "intellect," "had withered—had contracted—had hardened—had perished! It had ceased to partake of the universal throb." The ensuing result is, as Hawthorne laments, that "[h]e had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. He was no longer a brother-man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets."[159]

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[157] Stow, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 321.

[158] "Ethan Brand" was republished in *The Snow-Image* and *Other Twice-Told Tales* (1851).

Hawthorne had hoped to publish a longer romance about Brand's life and travel in search of the "Unpardonable Sin." Thus, the full title of "Ethan Brand" when it was republished was "Ethan Brand: A Chapter from an Abortive Romance." The failure was brought about by the excessive difficulty Hawthorne underwent in composing it. Working on it, he confessed that "I have wrenched and torn an idea out of my miserable brain, or rather, the fragment of an idea, like a tooth ill-drawn and leaving the roots to torture me."[160] This unprecedented trouble seems to come from the difficulty of treating the question of sympathy that is the cause of Brand's tragic fate. In his narration, Brand reveals his bitter regret about his loss of "sympathy" as well as "love" and "pity" in his heart. Hawthorne implies that, paradoxically, Brand sacrificed his heart to sympathize with another, and "he was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and, at length, converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study." The striking incompatibility between sympathy and intellect in Hawthorne's description of

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[159] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Snow-Image And Uncollected Tales*, vol. 11 of *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne,* ed. William Charvat, et al. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1974), 98-100.

[160] Edwin Haviland Mille, *Salem is my Dwelling Place: A Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 266.

Brand allows no middle zone for the Smithian doctrine of the “impartial spectator” as the model of a true sympathizer; being “a cold observer” is, for Hawthorne, the inevitable consequence of “vast intellectual development, which, in its progress, disturbed the counterpoise between his mind and heart.”[161]

Also notable in the story is Hawthorne’s quite ambiguous descriptions of the nature and function of sympathy. The narrator of Brand’s story defines sympathy as “the magnetic chain of humanity,” suggesting that the powerful effect of sympathy is an irresistible bond, and that the sympathetic bond is structured by the affective mechanism built in human agency. Far more ambiguous is the description of Brand’s actions as: “opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets.” By this account, “holy sympathy” imbues its holder with a faculty for unsealing the deep dark secrets deposited in “the chambers or dungeons of our common nature.” If this is the case, sympathy is not simply operating to help express and share true feelings among one another; rather, it helps one detect the hidden depth of another’s feelings. Smith never conceives of this dark use of sympathy. Yet given the capacity and propensity for affection built into human agency, the existence of this dark sympathy is not implausible; it is just another consequence of a sympathetic connection among feeling individuals. In “Ethan Brand” Hawthorne does not provide a plausible explanation for why it is impossible for one to inhabit a middle zone—the zone of the “impartial spectator”—between excessive intellect and drained sympathy. Hawthorne offers no account of why Brand could not stop cultivating his intellect during his transformation into a “fiend” as Hawthorne calls him. Several months later, Hawthorne revisits this lingering question in *The Scarlet Letter*, in which he succeeds in presenting the answer.

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[161] Hawthorne, *The Snow-Image And Uncollected Tales*, 98-99.

The question of sympathy haunts the reader of *The Scarlet Letter* from its opening chapter. In describing the “wooden jail,” which is an “ugly edifice,” the narrator turns his gaze on “a wild rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him” (48). The following two chapters focus on Hester’s public ignominy in front of the coldhearted crowd, evoking the reader’s sympathy for the victimized heroine who helplessly expects to seek “whatever sympathy” possible “in the larger and warmer heart of the multitude” (64), but her expectations are in vain due to “the solemn mood of the popular mind” (57) that blames her for the sin of adultery. Here, sympathy serves the interest of the law by not working at all; that is, one of the tools of Hester’s punishment is that the public does not reveal their sympathy for her because she is a criminal. This paradoxical working of sympathy twists the Smithian premise of the spontaneity of sympathy. The blocking of sympathy, for Hawthorne, is a tool for social control and the forced absence of its spontaneity is an effective means of public punishment. In fact, forcing Hester to wear the scarlet letter A on her chest prevents people from sympathizing with her: “Man had marked this woman’s sin by a scarlet letter, which had such potent and disastrous efficacy that no human sympathy could reach her, save it were sinful like herself” (89). As a result, when Hester appears to the townspeople on a public holiday seven years after her first exposure to public ignominy, “[h]er face … was like a mask; or, rather like the frozen calmness of a dead woman's features" because "Hester was actually dead, in respect to any claim of sympathy, and had departed out of the world with which she still seemed to mingle" (226). Sympathy deployed as a mode of strict discipline in the public sphere is not included in Smith's design of socially moral sympathy. Therefore, sympathy, as Hawthorne suggests in the very beginning of *The Scarlet Letter*, is difficult to define as a moral virtue. In later chapters, he represents the morally ambiguous attributes of sympathy.

Though the spectators initially refuse to sympathize with Hester, Dimmesdale successfully makes a sympathetic connection with his audience—the same townspeople watching Hester—through his eloquent speech. During the emotionally charged public sermon, his powerful and appealing voice welds "the listeners into one accord of sympathy." However, as I have pointed out in the introduction to the present chapter, their sympathy is captivated by his expressive voice, "rather than the direct purport of the words." Though without content, their shared sympathy takes the form of a belief and works in such a way. In his narration, Hawthorne's notes that "[s]o powerful seemed the minister's appeal, that the people could not believe but that Hester Prynne would speak out the guilty name; or else that the guilty one himself, in whatever high or lowly place he stood, would be drawn forth by an inward and inevitable necessity, and compelled to ascend the scaffold" (68). This public belief established by their shared sympathy is not necessarily moral, and this amoral belief is not going to be realized, contrary to its believers' communal, substantial expectation. Hester indeed would not reveal the veiled sinner's name. The failure of sympathy as a mode of belief indicates the substantial yet delusional power of sympathizing together.

As the story develops, Hawthorne represents another significant attribute of sympathy unidentified by Smith. In Chapter IV, for instance, after returning to prison Hester and her child become emotionally unstable. To treat them, the jailer leads in a physician named Roger Chillingworth, who is in fact Hester's legal husband yet disguises his identity. After offering the mother and the daughter a cure for their symptoms, he urges her to reveal the name of the adulterer, but she firmly refuses. Then, Chillingworth confidently tells her that he will "sooner or later" seek out the veiled lover because "[t]here is a sympathy that will make me conscious of him. I shall see him tremble. I shall feel myself shudder, suddenly and unawares. Sooner or later, he must needs be mine!" (75) The sympathy Chillingworth deploys is an efficacious strategy that enables him to approach and dig out another's dark secrets nestled deep in his or her heart. This strange usage of sympathy is neither fit for nor compatible with any of Smith's premises of sympathy, especially the model of the impartial spectator who thinks and acts in a moral manner. Rather, the dark intention of the sympathy Hawthorne represents undermines the most crucial ground of Smithian sympathy as it does harm to harmonious interpersonal relations.

The capacity for dark sympathy is also found in Hester and Dimmesdale. In the following chapter that describes Hester's life after she is released from jail, Hawthorne states that "the scarlet letter had endowed her with a new sense. She shuddered to believe, yet could not help believing, that it gave her a sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in other hearts." She can now exert the same sympathy that Chillingworth is employing in order to identify her secret lover. Hester is "terror-stricken by the revelations" of "the insidious whispers of the bad angel, who would fain have persuaded the struggling woman … that the outward guise of purity was but a lie, and that, if truth were everywhere to be shown, a scarlet letter would blaze forth on many a bosom besides Hester Prynnes's" (86). The intent and method of this sympathy is undoubtedly dark, since it would "leave nothing, whether in youth or age, for this poor sinner to revere." Unlike her husband, however, Hester tries to reject her newly recognized sympathizing power by "struggl[ing] to believe that no fellow-mortal was guilty like herself" (87). Yet Hester's moral determination does not deprive her of her capacity for the inexplicably dark sympathy.

Dimmesdale also recognizes that the same power exists in his feeling agency. One day, Dimmesdale's ability to sympathize with the public through his powerful language "gave him sympathies so intimate with the sinful brotherhood of mankind; so that his heart vibrated in unison with theirs, and received their pain into itself, and sent its own throb of pain through a thousand other hearts, in gushes of sad, persuasive eloquence" (142). In a later chapter titled "The Minister in a Maze," Hawthorne shows that even after the pastor reunites with and deeply sympathizes with Hester in his secret meeting with her in the forest, he fails to recover his sound reason and virtuous sympathy. Rather, on the way back to town from the woods, he is unusually filled with physical and emotional energy and regards the world differently. Hawthorne suggests that his strong sympathetic binding with Hester immediately brings a profound change to his painful life. However, the striking change transforms his ability to sympathize. On the path back to town, Dimmesdale abruptly feels the overwhelming desire to corrupt an innocent young girl, or to teach naughty words to Puritan children. This new aspect of his changed moral fabric is highlighted by his encounter and conversation with the witch Mistress Hibbins, whose sympathetic connection to him “stupefied all blessed impulses [in him], and awakened into vivid life the whole brotherhood of bad ones. Scorn, bitterness, unprovoked malignity, gratuitous desire of ill, ridicule of whatever was good and holy, all awoke to tempt, even while they frightened him.” As Hawthorne notes, “his encounter with old Mistress Hibbins … did but show its sympathy and fellowship with wicked mortals, and the world of perverted spirits” (222). Given that Dimmesdale is a moral and religious beacon for his community, it is significant that dark sympathy cannot be driven out, even by strong moral sensibility and firm religious belief.

In “Ethan Brand,” Hawthorne suggested the existence of a sympathy that allows one to detect another’s concealed secrets. Yet he leaves the story as an abortive romance because he fails to grapple with the sources of the insidious sympathy. In *The Scarlet Letter,* Hawthorne gives a plausible answer to this question through the case of Chillingworth, a counterpart of Ethan Brand. Like Brand, Chillingworth is a scholarly figure who later transforms into a fiend or Satan through of his excessive obsession with making full use of his intellect. In his earlier life, however, Chillingworth was a model of rational judgment and proper use of reason. “Old Roger Chillingworth, throughout life,” writes Hawthorne, “had been calm in temperament, kindly, though not of warm affections, but ever, and in all his relations with the world, a pure and upright man.” Even Hester acknowledges in him “the former aspect of an intellectual and studious man, calm and quiet.” Furthermore, upon meeting a “half-frenzied” Hester and her moaning baby in a prison room, he makes and gives his best medicine to the two for the sole purpose of relieving them; when Hester worries about his intent to poison her and her baby, he calmly replies, “[w]hat should ail me to harm this misbegotten and miserable babe? The medicine is potent form good; and were it my child, — yea, mine own, as well as thine! — I could do no better for it.” He never chastises her or her lover for her adultery in his absence; instead, he acknowledges his “folly” in marrying her, “the first wrong” committed by himself “when [he] betrayed [her] budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with [his] decay.” He even promises Hester that “as a man who has not thought and philosophized in vain, I seek no vengeance, plot no evil against thee” and “shall [not] interfere with Heaven’s own method of retribution, or, to my own loss, betray him to the gripe of human law,” nor shall he “contrive aught against his life; no, nor against his fame, if, as I judge, he be a man of fair repute.”

For Chillingworth, as he expresses frankly, “[n]o matter whether of love or hate; no matter whether of right or wrong!” He is only concerned with his scrutiny of the identity of the veiled adulterer, which preoccupies him. He is certain that he will find out who cuckolded him because “there are few things, — whether in the outward world, or to a certain depth, in the invisible sphere of thought, — few things hidden from the man, who devotes himself earnestly and unreservedly to the solution of a mystery but the investigation of his hidden identity through sympathy” (75-76). This confidence, which suggests that he associates his reasoning power with sympathizing power, foreshadows his tragic fate. Yet it is not his obsession that leads him to his doom. In the case of Ethan Brand, Hawthorne defines Brand as “a fiend” as his heart comes to be completely drained by using his reason and intellect to the utmost. On the other hand, Chillingworth becomes “Satan” because he relishes his obsessive desire to fully exploit his reasoning power in order to sympathize with the one he chases after. When he is first concerned with and then obsessed with the process of searching for the true identity of Hester’s lover, he actually enjoys his investigation of the enigma no one else can solve. What "the eyes of the wrinkled scholar" ardently seek after is not any vengeance on the adulterer but uncovering his hidden identity, as he makes clear to Hester. The real ethical problem lies in the fact that he does it with a "smile," which makes Hester "troubled at the expression of his eyes" and leads her to conceive of him as "the Black Man" (73-74). It is clear that he is morbid in deploying his sympathy and the very morbidity is another attribute of sympathy that Hawthorne suggests.

In a chapter titled "The Leech," a detailed account of Chillingworth's complex qualities as an able yet morbid doctor, Hawthorne directs the reader's attention to the question of how Chillingworth derives morbid pleasure from his chase after the man who cuckolded him. For Chillingworth, the pleasure emerges from his "new interests" that tempt his "faculties"; once he is known to be dead at sea as he intends, he expects that "new interests would immediately spring up, and likewise a new purpose; dark, it is true, if not guilty, but of force enough to engage the full strength of his faculties." In the following scene, Hawthorne intentionally juxtaposes Chillingworth's "dark" intellectual "force" with "an intellectual cultivation of no moderate depth or scope" joined by "a range and freedom of ideas" that Dimmesdale recognizes in the doctor. Hawthorne represents Chillingworth, whom Dimmesdale identifies as "the man of science" and "a physician" possessed of "learning and intelligence … [in] more than a common measure" (119, 123), as a case of reason coupled with passion which was not considered in the Enlightenment thought until David Hume formulated it.

The representative Enlightenment thinker René Descartes claimed that our knowledge of the external world is constructed by the use of reason, and that sensory input is inherently unreliable owing to its changeable and erroneous attributes. Since this binarism, reason and passion have been treated as inherently disparate, even conflicting entities and the full use of reason is favored as the only certain measure and instrument for understanding of the world. In his article “Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?” (1784), Immanuel Kant asserted that the “Enlightenment is man’s exit from his self-incurred minority.”[162] “Minority,” he contended, “is the incapacity to use one’s intelligence without the guidance of another. Such minority is self-incurred if it is not caused by lack of intelligence, but by lack of determination and courage to use one’s intelligence without being guided by another.” It was in this light that he declared “the motto of the enlightenment:” “*Sapere Aude*!” (“Have the courage to use your own intelligence!”)[163]

On the other hand, there is a different perspective on reason within Enlightenment philosophy. David Hume maintains that “reason” is “the slave of the passions”[164] in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), in which he discusses reason in its inseparable relation to passion. Yet Hume fails to clarify that the two are a combined entity; he merely distinguishes between “calm” passions that “cause no disorder in the soul” and “are readily taken for the determinations of reason” and “certain violent emotions of the same kind” to conclude that “[w]hat we call strength of mind, implies the prevalence of the calm passions above the violent.”[165] In other words, it is only the orderly passions that are constitutive of our reason; that is, passionate reason is in effect operative as a mode of reason.

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[162] Immanuel Kant, *Basic Writings of Kant*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. Thomas K. Abbott (New York: Random House, 2001), 135.

[163] Ibid.

[164] David Hume. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 266.

[165] Ibid., 268.

In *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne pushed further Hume's notion of reason coupled with passion by presenting a case of pathological reason associated with morbid passion. Chillingworth is his case study, who incarnates Hume's model of passionate reason in a more radical manner. Hawthorne accounts for what lies beneath the ideal model of reason that Chillingworth embodies:

> He had begun an investigation, as he imagined, with the severe and equal integrity of a judge, desirous only of truth, even as if the question involved no more than the air-drawn lines and figures of a geometrical problem, instead of human passions, and wrongs inflicted on himself. But, as he proceeded, a terrible fascination, a kind of fierce, though still calm, necessity seized the old man within its gripe, and never set him free again, until he had done all its bidding. (129)

In this passage, Hawthorne describes how Chillingworth's reasoning process becomes transformed into a morbid obsession, "a terrible fascination" with the arduous investigation and, ultimately, a pathological desire that tries to find its own pleasure through the exhaustive use of reason and judgment. Hawthorne attributes this morbid reason that ardently pursues "the disclosure of human thoughts and deeds," to Chillingworth's stated intention that he "meant merely to promote the intellectual satisfaction of all intelligent beings" (131).

Ironically, Chillingworth himself realizes that his irreversible "fascination" with exhaustive reasoning is "a dark necessity":

> It is not granted me to pardon. I have no such power as thou tellst me of. My old faith, long forgotten, comes back to me, and explains all that we do, and all we suffer. By thy first step awry, thou didst plant the germ of evil; but, since that moment, it has all been *a dark necessity*. Ye that have wronged me are not sinful, save in a kind of typical illusion; neither am I

> field-like, who have snatched a fiend's office from his hands. It is our fate. Let the black flower blossom as it may! [174, emphasis added]

Such "a dark necessity," Chillingworth rightly realizes, gradually transforms him into a satanic figure; "a pure and upright man" becomes "a devil" after "gloat[ingly]" indulging himself in the investigation of another's heart:

> In a word, old Roger Chillingworth was a striking evidence of man's faculty of transforming himself into a devil, if he will only, for a reasonable space of time, undertake a devil's office. This unhappy person had effected such a transformation by devoting himself, for seven years, to the constant analysis of a heart full of torture, and deriving his enjoyment thence, and adding fuel to those fiery tortures which he analyzed and gloated over. (170)

Chillingworth's hideous metamorphosis, which he cannot prevent or stop, contrasts strikingly with a description of what he was like nine years ago. At that time, all his life "had been made up of earnest, studious, thoughtful, quiet years, bestowed faithfully for the increase of [his] own knowledge, and faithfully, too, … for the advancement of human welfare" (172). The noble Enlightenment cause of advancing knowledge and reason is now deformed by the very dynamic inherent to the pursuit of knowledge and reason.

Revealing the true identity of Chillingworth to Dimmesdale, Hester "thoughtfully" explains that "[t]here is a strange secrecy in his nature … and it has grown upon him by the hidden practices of his revenge. I deem it not likely that he will betray the secret. He will doubtless seek other means of satiating his dark passion" (196). Indeed, when he first notices Dimmesdale's hidden history of the "hot passion of his heart" (137), Chillingworth joyfully mutters "A rare case! … I must needs look deeper into it. A strange sympathy betwixt soul and body! Were it only for the art's sake, I must search this matter to the bottom!" (138) By critically portraying the pathological transformation of “a man of thought, — the book-worm of great libraries, — a man already in decay, having given my best years to feed the hungry dream of knowledge” (74) into a diabolic “unfortunate” scholar who is now irrevocably preoccupied with “a wild … wonder, joy, and horror,” reveling in “a ghastly rapture” (138) resulting from the thorough scrutiny of his victim’s moral interior, Hawthorne negates the Enlightenment model of the subjective reason of the rational subject as an admirable substance of human agency; for Hawthorne, a subject is an amalgam of reason and passion that is always subject to irresistible pathological degradation.

This degrading effect of sympathy is morally ambiguous, even to Chillingworth himself. When Hester supplicates him to stop searching into Dimmesdale’s body and soul, he asks her “[w]hat evil have I done the man?” (171), and even she cannot answer clearly. For until then Chillingworth had only delved into the heart of Dimmesdale, and it is difficult to for the reader and for Hester to distinguish between morbidity and evil intent in Chillingworth’s attempt to sympathize with Dimmesdale. Hawthorne suggests that there is a moral ambiguity in Chillingworth’s exploitation the power of sympathy, calling it “dark … if not guilty” (118). Chillingworth’s intention is morally dark, yet it cannot be considered “guilty” based solely on its dark intention. However, as his study progresses, Chillingsworth becomes obviously “satanic” in that he feels no guilt about continuously eliciting morbid pleasure from his evil sympathy.

Though not as morbid as Chillingworth, Dimmesdale also suffers from a serious problem with sympathy that Smith never identifies. For Dimmesdale, sympathy is not a means of interpersonal communication, nor is it a self-sustaining property. Though Hawthorne first describes the pastor’s powerful sympathetic appeal to the public in the market place scene, his agency in private life undergoes and conceals the torment of the shadowy side of sympathetic connection. Though he achieves “a brilliant popularity in his sacred office” through his eloquent preaching that comes from”[h]is intellectual gifts, his moral perceptions, his power of experiencing and communicating emotion,” no one recognizes that these gifts all are “kept in a state of preternatural activity by the prick and anguish of his daily life.” Likewise, he is endowed with the gift of “addressing the whole human brotherhood in the heart’s native language,” which is profoundly different from simply religious sermons that only “express the highest truths through the humblest medium of familiar words and images.” Thus highly praised, “[i]t is inconceivable, the agony with which this public veneration tortured him!” since “[i]t was his genuine impulse to adore the truth, and to reckon all things shadow-like, and utterly devoid of weight or value, that had not its divine essence as the life within their life.” Though “[h]e had spoken the very truth, and transformed it into the veriest falsehood,” his parishioners are unable to sympathetically understand his plight or help to soothe his agony. Consequently, “above all things else, he loathed his miserable self” (144). This is an example of the inherent impossibility of communication that sympathy cannot resolve. It is highly ironic that Dimmesdale has no sympathizer beside Chillingworth; only the physician can sympathize with his moral suffering, and his sympathy leads to no moral ends.

In highlighting Chillingworth’s morbid sympathy, Hawthorne strongly indicates that he has no control of it. In other words, he is not the author of his own excessive feelings. Likewise, Hester cannot fully control her feeling agency that struggles with the outer world from the first market-place scene to the last one. For example, Hester cannot leave the town that stigmatizes her because “there is a fatality, a feeling so irresistible and inevitable that it has the force of doom, which almost invariably compels human beings to linger around and haunt, ghost-like, the spot where some great and marked event has given the colour to their lifetime; and, still the more irresistibly, the darker the tinge that saddens it” (79-80). Here, feeling works as a non-subjective—neither self-generated nor self-governing—force that confines an individual’s body and mind to a particular place for no rational reason. Hester cannot resist or even understand why she feels a certain way; she just follows it as if it is a given fate.

The salient absence of subjectivity in affective agency is also found in the scene where Hester listens to Dimmesdale’s last sermon at the scaffold of the pillory. The “weitht[y]” yet “ill-defined” sense holds her tight by “an inevitable magnetism in that spot, whence she dated the first hour of her life of ignominy,” which creates the illusion that “her whole orb of life, both before and after, was connected with this spot, as with the one point that gave it unity” (244). However, even that seemingly subjective sense, as Hawthorne emphatically states, is stirred by “[a]n irresistible feeling” (242) that forcefully brings her to and keeps her at the scaffold.

The lack of subjective affectivity is also characteristic of Dimmesdale. In his examination of the pastor’s moral interior, Chillingworth “dug into the poor clergyman’s heart, like a miner searching for gold; or, rather, like a sexton delving into a grave, possibly in quest of a jewel that had been buried on the dead man’s bosom, but likely to find nothing save mortality and corruption” (129). Paradoxically, Dimmesdale’s heart is full of nothingness. Knowledge and religion cannot fill the void, and neither can his powerful preaching or his ability to appeal to and communicate with others through sympathy. In this sense, it is highly suggestive that he dies soon after confessing his sin to the public. Since his agency lacks substance, he passes away when he is done with his functional—that is, religious and moral—social role.

All the paradoxical sympathies Hawthorne dramatizes in *The Scarlet Letter* are critical of Smith's premises of sympathy. In challenging Smith's premises, Hawthorne demystifies the contemporary belief that sympathy lays the groundwork for a genuine liberal democracy. What Hawthorne really proposes in his romance is a new political understanding of sympathy.

Social Reform and Politics of Sympathy

The relationship between literary production and the social reform movement was especially close in Hawthorne's time. As María Carla Sánchez has argued, "antebellum social reform writings seized on fiction as 'too important an engine' to be ignored, and in so doing, helped to form connections among fiction, truth, and literariness that shaped U.S. literary history."[166] According to Sánchez, "in the nineteenth century, every aspect of social life needed to be fixed, and Americans set out to do the fixing" (8). In broadly defining reform writing to include "any work that diagnoses an institution, system, or social practice in need of change," for Sanchez, literature participates in advancing a reformist agenda whether it does so overtly or covertly (11). In her view, therefore, Stowe and Child are especially emblematic of an antebellum tendency to view history "as a branch of literature, not a wholly separate vein of writing" (148).

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[166] María Carla Sánchez, *Reforming the World: Social Activism and the Problem of Fiction in Nineteenth-Century America* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2008), 3.

Hawthorne has been hardly discussed in relation to the contemporary social reform movements; he has been construed as a politically conservative or nonchalant quietist who condoned slavery and women's inequality due to their necessity or difficulty to abolish. For instance, Sacvan Bercovitch, Jonathan Arac, and others have proposed a political reading of the text of *The Scarlet Letter*, highlighting the way the text "expresses a particular culture's mode of resolving crisis."[167] For these critics, Hawthorne's work serves as a vessel for the dominant ideologies and contradictions of liberal individualism. On the contrary, Lauren Berlant, who is more concerned with the diverse and local cultures that operate in Hawthorne's narrative, has suggested that in *The Scarlet Letter* nothing is clearly resolved in any given political sphere, and that Hawthorne tries to capture political tensions located between the national and the local, the collective and the individual, a utopian vision and an historical reality.[168] Similarly, Larry J. Reynolds has recently argued that Hawthorne sought to understand political issues through "sustained study from multiple perspectives," valuing "complexity" over "partisan" dichotomy,[169] a way of resistance to the inherent "fanaticism" of his surrounding influences, including his Salem ancestors, American revolutionaries, and New England abolitionists who imagined public matters in terms of "good and evil" or "moral absolutes." These critics, whether focusing on the containment or the diversification of antebellum political culture in Hawthorne's work, all assume that *The Scarlet Letter* is an implicitly political defense of the possibility of genuine American liberalism or democracy. In contrast, I am interested in Hawthorne's attention to the way in which liberalism and democracy in America are conceptually possible yet not historically probable because of the necessary working of sympathy. For Hawthorne, sympathy is the most powerful vehicle for the ideological transmutation of the abstract concept of liberalism or democracy into the real form of government because it allows individual citizens with different concerns and interests to imagine the existing regime taking the forms of liberalism and democracy as if it is, in essence, a liberal-democratic polity. To his mind, liberalism's and democracy's presence is what is believed to be real, so long as it is felt as real.

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[167] Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Office of The Scarlet Letter* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 88. In the same vein, Jonathan Arac claims that Hawthorne's "prose negotiates the conflicting realities of past and present, the overlays of Puritan, agrarian, commercial, and industrial ways of life that he encountered in New England, as well as the tension between American politics as a continuing revolution and politics as patronage, mere "rotation" ("The Politics of The Scarlet Letter," in *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, eds. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen [Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1986], 257-58). As a matter of fact, the conservative readings of Bercovitch and Arac were a critical response to the existing democratic reading of Hawthorne's political stance. The discussion of Hawthorne as a proponent of liberal individualism has been a long critical tendency. See F. O. Mattiessen, *American Renaissance: Art, and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988), Nina Baym, *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), Sharon Cameron, *The Corporeal Self: Allegories of the Body in Melville and Hawthorne* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), and Emily Miller Budick, *Fiction and Historical Consciousness: The American Romance Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

[168] See, for example, Lauren Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Since the very beginning of the American republic, sympathy played a crucial role as an affective channel through which Americans could substantially feel that their vision of a democracy was an historical construct. During the revolutionary war and the subsequent years of nation-building, as historian Gordon S. Wood points out, "for many American thinkers this natural sociality of people became a modern substitute for the ascetic classical virtue of antiquity."[170] The rhetorical effect of sympathy welded them into a newly formed national sociality. Deployed to concatenate different individual citizens into a strong affective bond, sympathy led them to cherish a belief that they could feel with and for one another in the cause of social order and harmony. Critics such as Elizabeth Barnes attend to this nationalizing function of sympathy in early American fiction and politics, maintaining that reading sympathetically, which was equated with reading like an American citizen, played a key role in the construction of an American sociopolitical identity. What is interesting in Barnes' argument is her concern for the substantial way in which "[s]entimental literature exploits the idea [of sympathy] by attempting to both represent and *reproduce* sympathetic attachments between readers and characters" (emphasis in the original). She explains that by "typically foreground[ing] examples of sympathetic bonding in their story lines as a model for the way in which readers themselves are expected to respond," sentimental narratives urge the reader to "imagine how the other feels … by projecting onto the other person what would be one's own feelings in that particular situation. According to this model, personal feeling becomes the basis of both one's own and the other's authenticity."

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[169] Larry J. Reynolds, *Devils and Rebels: The Making of Hawthorne's Damned Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 10, xv, xvii, 88.

Raising the Smithian notion of sympathy in order to discuss its national importance in early American novels, Barnes also posits that "[a]s Smith describes it, sympathy is more than feeling for others; it involves a projection of the self outward, so that the viewer or reader imaginatively inhabits the minds of others."[171] In the same vein, Cathy Davidson asserts in her investigation of early American novels during the

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[170] Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12-13.

[171] Elizabeth Barnes, *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 20.

Revolutionary years that through sympathetic identification "the distance between text and reader, author and reader is effaced," as "[t]he reader is present at the conversation and becomes imaginatively part of the company." As a consequence, she stresses, "[w]hether an esteemed political leader or a lowly printer's apprentice, the reader is privileged in relationship to the text, is welcomed into the text, and, in a sense, *becomes* the text" [emphasis in the original].[172] Both Barnes and Davidson postulate the solid substance of sympathetic identification in American reality and politics.

The two scholars' communal postulation was important to antebellum American literary culture. Central to the popularity of literary sentimentalism was the public's growing interest in the political importance of sympathy in uniquely American cultural and political registers. For example, earlier American bestselling novels such as William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy: or, The Triumph of Nature* (1789) Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple, A Tale of Truth* (1791) and Hannah Webster Foster's *Coquette or, The History of Eliza Wharton* (1797) are typical sentimental narratives that center on the tragedy of a heroine who falls a prey to vicious temptation and degradation. A number of scholars have paid critical attention to the political implications of these sentimental plots and characterizations. Davidson and many others focus on the novels' portrayal of the increasing conflict between the individual and the social world, as well as between reason and passion. Situating the texts in their specific historical contexts, these critics collectively maintain that the underlying political ideology of the early American republic was created by the emerging middle class and that this class's novelistic representation of reality captures the social violence of the Revolution and the foreclosure of liberty for women, the poor, Native Americans, and African Americans.[173]

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[172] Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (1987; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 118.

The power of sympathy to engender a close, reciprocal intersubjectivity became more politically important and powerful in the 1820s and 1830s, as various calls for social reforms increasingly captivated public attention and popular writers and lecturers began to speak out on the social issues of racial discrimination, slavery, poverty, and women's rights. Sympathy became politically valorized as crucial to fulfilling the vision of a liberal and democratic republic because it was thought to be the natural internal force that serves to connect one person to another. Accordingly, leading social activists and reformers relied heavily on the enlightening and solidifying power of sympathy in advocating for their causes. Their public discourse became a venue for them to take advantage of the power of sympathy in order to bring attention to those suffering from the problematic social structure and system—for example, Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok: A Tale of Early Times* (1824) and Catharine Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie: Early Times in Massachusetts* (1827) convey strong feminist overtones and concerns about the historical treatment of Native Americans. Some years later, William Garrison, the Grimké sisters, Margaret Fuller, Frederick Douglass, and many other social reformers and activists wrote and lectured regarding the question of equality for women and African-Americans. They all appealed to their audience's sympathetic connection with others in order to raise awareness of and redress the structural and systematic problems of their society.[174]

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[173] See Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, Sharon M. Harris, *Redefining the Political Novel: American Women Writers, 1791-1901* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), Julia A. Stern, *The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), and Ivy Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship: Politics and Affiliation in Early American Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

However, the politics of fostering sympathy through the literary imagination, an imagination that relied on the premises of the Smithian notion of sympathy, inevitably encountered serious political problems with fitting conception and cause of sympathy into a literary narrative. For instance, Child's *Hobomok: A Tale of Early Times* (1824), a pioneering anti-patriarchal and anti-racist work, portrays sympathy as capable of forming a sense of affinity between the titular Indian chief Hobomok and the white heroine Mary Conant. In the novel, Hobomok embodies the contemporary concept of the "noble savage," a famous literary or rhetorical device that represents an idealized indigene who is as essentially rational and virtuous as a civilized westerner in order to highlight the oxymoronic combination of his or her inherent nobility and his or her uncivilized social condition and life. Hobomok's admirable virtue and nobility are epitomized in his rational judgment to sacrifice his happiness by leaving Mary, who married him in a state of grief over the purported death of her white lover, when her supposedly drowned lover returns alive. In the ending of the novel, Hobomok goes west, alone, to pass away, thereby foreshadowing the doom of his whole race.

In Child's novelistic narrative, Hobomok incarnates the Smithian ideal of the "impartial spectator" through the disinterested benevolence and dignity that he expresses through his rational, moral actions. His rationality and morality are the reasons he was able to communicate with and fall in love with Mary despite their racial differences and cultural boundaries. For readers, sympathizing with an Indian other who was depicted as equal to themselves in terms of human nature and agency allowed them to sympathize more readily with the plight of the Native Americans. However, Child's strong humanitarian overtone is offset by her inability to locate the ethnic other in the actual reality of white Americans. After his demise, Hobomok's child, given Mary's patronym, moves to England and becomes a Cambridge graduate, and to him "[h]is father was seldom spoken of; and by degrees his Indian appellation was silently omitted."[175] This ending proves that sympathy does nothing in reality. Ultimately, for Child sympathy only creates social order and harmony between the reader and the character, not between historical people as they are depicted in the literary imagination, because literature has an interpersonal, but not necessarily social, dynamic.

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[174] For example, the most famous event led by women's rights movement in antebellum America was the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, the first national convention to gain for women a greater proportion of civil rights such as equal suffrage. The convention resulted in "The Declaration of Sentiments," a parody of the form and words of Declaration of Independence. The new Declaration was designed to provoke the public sympathy for the women deprived of equality liberty and rights.

Another circumscribed and problematic application of sympathy through literature is more clearly shown in Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie or Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827). Her romance centers on the interracial relations between the main characters and is set against the backdrop of the historical relations and conflicts between early Puritan settlers and Native Americans in the 1640s. Despite offering a sentimental depiction and a sympathetic view of Native American displacement and removal, Sedgwick does not conceive of sympathy as a mode of integration and cooperation between the natives and the settlers; sympathy only serves as a medium of mutual understanding between the reader and the characters—whether Indian or Puritan—in the text. Though she maintains a very open-minded view of Indian culture and she indicts the hypocrisy and violence of the Puritans, she suggests that no integration is probable between them through the resolution of the love stories of two interracial couples—the romantic relationship between Everell and Magawisca fails to develop, and Faith and Oneco's relationship is never fully explored by the narrator. Moreover, Faith, who marries Oneco, no longer speaks English, thereby erasing her original cultural identity. In their interpersonal relations, each lover strongly sympathizes with his or her partner. But their sympathy is frustrated by social norms, cultural taboos, and political prejudices, hence their strong interpersonal sympathy only effects their partners, not the larger social world.[176]

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[175] Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings on Indians*, ed. Carolyn L. Karcher (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 150.

Also set in the 1640s,[177] Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* exemplifies his underlying belief that sympathy is not the necessary and sufficient condition for a liberal democracy. Through the romance, he aligns his view with a more profound philosophical insight into the misconceived and misled premises of sympathy. For Hawthorne, the fundamental improbability of social sympathy lies in the ontological limits of human agency rather than an unbridgeable political divide. In formulating his theory of sympathy, Smith presupposes "the entire concord of the affections" in their kind, if not in their degree. For example, when we see others in distress, we feel for them but our feeling cannot be as strong as the original because we are not (or cannot be) the sufferer. Yet Smith believes that a sympathetically shared feeling is the same kind of feeling.

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[176] For the encouraged yet circumscribed function of sympathy in antebellum literature, see Laura L. Mielke, *Moving Encounters: Sympathy and the Indian Question in Antebellum Litera*ture (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008). Kristin Boudreau also argues that the "earliest proponents of sympathy" such as Hannah Webster Foster and William Hill Brown view it as a "social panacea" which is capable of uniting a diversity of social members with ties of affection regardless of their identities. However, she contends, later writers such as Stowe colludes in the "erasure of all differences between spectator and spectacle" in their deployment of sympathy in their literary work (*Sympathy in American Literature: American Sentiments from Jefferson to the Jameses* [Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 2002], xiv, 83). The implicit ideological work of *Hobomok* and *Hope Leslie* I have discussed evidences how the dominant social ideology functions in American literature prior to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

[177] *Hope Leslie* is set mostly in 1643 and *The Scarlet Letter* is set in between 1642-1649.

However, the problem with Smith's belief is that a different degree of feeling is tantamount to a different kind of feeling; if one has a feeling that is different in degree, the feeling is already different in kind. Smith does not see that a difference in degree is a difference in kind.

Another practical problem with the Smithian notion of sympathy is that the dialectics of difference and sameness or differentiation and identification in actual historical reality is much more complicated than can be explained by theory. In the material conditions of social reality, profound differences such as racial otherness, cultural disparity, economic disparity, and gender difference cannot be resolved only by sympathy because the workings of sympathy bring in two practical dilemmas that are hard to resolve. First, how can one perfectly know the other's suffering in order to identify with the sufferers in their actual plight? To do this, one should imaginatively "enter," as Smith describes the process, into the other's situation to experience how one would feel in the other's place. However, to imagine is one thing and to experience is another; there is always a gap between imagining and experiencing. This epistemological and representational problem poses a more serious question regarding the fundamental nature and function of the imagination. Epistemological or representational gaps or errors, which usually result from the difference of material conditions, can bring about the mistaken or misguided imagining of another's feeling and condition. As a consequence, as Hannah Arendt has sharply noted, unlike pity "[c]ompassion, by its very nature, cannot be touched off by the sufferings of a whole class or a people, or least of all, mankind as a whole. … Its strength hinges on the strength of passion itself, which, in contrast to reason, can comprehend only the particular, but has no notion of the general and no capacity for generalization."[178] For this reason, sympathy is not a necessary condition for democratic social reforms.

Moreover, Smith hardly takes into consideration the subtle and serious differences among individuals and their agencies in terms of their specific social status and condition that directly or indirectly affect the particular way in which they make an imaginative connection with others. Smith's postulation of affective agency is simply predicated on the universal subject in the abstract; thus, in his formulation, when the other's "agonies ... are … brought home to ourselves … [and] begin at last to affect us," the "we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels."[179] However, the actual subject is an historical individual with personal concerns and interests who functions in a specific social context. In other words, sympathy is not a universal moral sentiment, but a particular expression of feeling associated with the sympathizer's political, social, and cultural condition. Therefore, there is no spectator who can impartially sympathize with another.

In *The Scarlet Letter,* Hawthorne demonstrates how theoretically possible conceptions such as subjectivity, rational morality, and sympathetic identification only substantiate their improbabilities. But the egregious paradox in *The Scarlet Letter* is that belief in each concept's probability is substantially delusive, like a visible yet not tangible ghost. For Hawthorne, such spectral substance is characteristic of sympathy and the sympathizer, and it constitutes historical progress though it is always faulty and problematic. Chillingworth, Hester, and Dimmesdale are created to show the very working of a cruel historical paradox, as well as the sad paradox of humanity. Capturing the two paradoxes creates, as Hawthorne calls *The Scarlet Letter* in its first chapter, "a tale of human frailty and sorrow" (48).

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[178] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (1963; New York: Penguin, 2006), 75.

[179] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 12.

While Hawthorne attends to the central paradox of social reform movements, Melville focuses on the central paradox of national politics. What Melville captures is a political leviathan that would devour American democracy. The following chapter is about Melville's hunt for the monster in his romance.

Chapter IV

The Aporia of Popular Sovereignty in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*

> "Nothing is more surprising to those, who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye, than to see the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and to observe the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we enquire by what means this wonder is brought about, we shall find, that as Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. 'Tis therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular."
>
> -David Hume, *Essays and Treaties on Several Subjects* (1758)

> "… the typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field. … He becomes a primitive again. His thinking becomes associative and affective."
>
> -Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942)

In October 1849, Melville sailed for London to negotiate for the publication of *White-Jacket; or, The World in a Man-of-War* (1850), after which he planned to take a long journey through England and the Continent for the twofold purpose of selling his new book in person for the best price and finding sources for future works. While bargaining with publishers in London, he "saunter[ed] into" the city's historical sites, art galleries, and literary places, and after finally signing the contract in late November he took a channel steamer for Boulogne and arrived in Paris by train. In Paris, an unexpected spectacle awaited him: in his travelogue he described the "great numbers of troops marching all about" as in "a garrisoned town."[180] This unusual military display was staged by the current President, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte (hereafter referred to as

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[180] Herman Melville, *Journals*, vol. 15 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, eds. Howard C. Horsford and Lynn Horsford (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University and The Newberry Library, 1989), 30.

Napoleon), who was oppressing his political dissenters and quelling their demonstrations by means of his armed forces.[181] He was the nephew of Napoleon I and had been elected the first President of the French Republic by popular vote in December 1848 due to his famous last name. Melville, an eloquent advocate of the inviolable value of a democratic republic, expressed no fulmination about the reactionary potentate until scathingly dubbing him "Louis the Devil" in *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (1851).[182] This epithet is found in chapter 35, in which Ishmael refers to the imposing statue of Napoleon I gazing down "careless[ly], now, who rules the decks below; whether Louis Philippe, Louis Blanc, or Louis the Devil," only to find "the distracted decks,"[183] an allusion to the continuing political unrest caused by the dethroned King Philippe, the reformative but failed socialist Blanc, and the democratically elected but tyrannical President Louis Napoleon. Given that Melville's British editor changed "Louis the Devil" to "Louis

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[181] For Louis Napoleon's repressive policies during the years from 1849 to 1851, see Matthew Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics: Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the Fete Imperiale, 1849-1870* (London: Oxford University Press, 1997), 20-22.

[182] Melville in *Mardi, and a Voyage Thither* (1849) and *White Jacket; or, The World in a Man-of-War* (1850) poses a political question regarding the possibility of despotism, oppression, and depravity in the American Republic. In *Mardi*, for instance, he represents the fictitious Republic of Vivenza, a country of free and equal men, which however also includes enslaved people whose labor is exploited and unrewarded—what he critically calls "a blot, foul as the crater pool of hell" (*Mardi, and a Voyage Thither*, vol. 9 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, eds. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle [Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and Newberry Library, 1968], 125). *White Jacket* also betrays his loathing of the tyrannical social order and violent institution by blaming flogging. For the discussion of Melville's vision of a liberal-democratic republic in his work, see John P. McWilliams. *Hawthorne, Melville, and the American Character: A Looking-Glass Business* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 151-154. Melville's such a vision can be also found in his correspondence; after the publication of *Mardi*, Melville penned to Evert Duyckinck that "political republics should be the asylum for the persecuted of all nations; so if Mardi be admitted to your shelves, your bibliographical Republic of Letters may find some contentment in the thought, that it has afforded refuge to a work, which almost everywhere else has been driven forth like a wild, mystic Mormon into shelterless exile" (*Correspondence*, vol. 14 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, ed. Lynn Horth [Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1988], 20).

[183] Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or The Whale,* vol. 6 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, eds. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1988), 155. Further references will be to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text. During his visit to Paris, Melville actually saw the column; see Melville, *Journals*. 32.

Napoleon" in order to tone done Melville's harsh censure of the despotic ruler, contemporaries must have easily recognized the referent of the satanic sobriquet. Indeed, "Louis the Devil" had already proved to be the demonic anathema to liberalists, democrats, and republicans due to his drastic hypocritical metamorphosis from President to Emperor.

Napoleon had been forced into a long exile since his famous uncle's deposition in 1815. He finally returned to France as an elected member of the newly established Constituent Assembly in September 1848, and he was hailed as the savior of the French Republic by numerous people disenchanted with the continuing social conflict and political unrest since the February riots that had dethroned King Louis Philippe. The provisional government, whose key representative for common workers was the popular socialist Louis Blanc, had failed to relieve the continuing unemployment crisis, which led to a series of violent civil uprisings in June 1848. Meanwhile Napoleon, though campaigning from in London, had electrified a majority of voters by representing his celebrated last name as the "hope of social consolidation" for a "great-hearted people," as well as "the symbol of order, of glory, of patriotism."[184] In November 1848, the new Constitution established a single four-year-term presidency by universal male suffrage, the first institutionalization of a national referendum in the Western world. Napoleon won the presidential election in a landslide victory in December.[185] But the Second Republic, under his command continued to remain "the distracted decks," for the self-proclaimed "People's President" soon took an overtly dictatorial course in the name of the will of the nation, which his opponents vehemently resisted with demonstrations in the street. By July 1851, when Melville completed the draft of *Moby-Dick*, few contemporaries doubted Napoleon's imperialist aspirations, and on July 1 he asked the Parliament to revise the Constitution for an imperial restoration so that an empire would be established by "the will of the people, freely expressed and devoutly accepted."[186] The Parliament rejected his request and in December 1851 he responded by staging a coup to declare his presidency for life; exactly one year later he finally became Emperor Napoleon III. Ironically, the two incidents were legitimately approved afterwards by the overwhelming majority of popular votes in the fairly conducted plebiscites.

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[184] J. M. Thompson, *Louis Napoleon and the Second Empire* (New York: Norton, 1955), 95, 91.

[185] Npoleon mustered over 74% popular votes in the election, three times as many votes as the four other candidates combined.

"[T]he histories of the French and American republics for these four years," lamented George Sanders in the lead article in the January 1852 issue of the *Democratic Review*, "have been identical." The year 1848 was, he reminded readers, the inception of "four years of anti-democratic rule," when "The French republic [was] deceived" by "an outlaw" and "[t]he American people [were] similarly duped into the worship of a name merely victorious on the battle field." Accordingly, Americans "yielded, contemporaneously with the French people, the power of the American Republic, and the control and use of its government, into the hands of a party-colored faction" against "the popular will."[187] Sanders unmistakably implied that the two identical political imposters were President Napoleon and his American counterpart, President Zachary Taylor. Such a pair was not preposterous at all to Sanders' contemporaries: both were elected in 1848—Taylor in November and Napoleon in December; both played no part in politics before 1848 and owed their victory to their unmatched popularity—"Napoleon" was the most nostalgia-inducing last name in France and Taylor was the most famous military hero from the Mexican-American War; and though both uniformly resorted to the power of popular sovereignty, their political leadership failed to satisfy popular expectations—Napoleon became a tyrannical emperor and Taylor failed to assuage the escalating crisis over slavery. In light of these negative consequences, Sanders claimed that Napoleon and Taylor had “deceived” and “duped” their innocent, gullible people. However, it was the people themselves who worshipped the two political neophytes and enthusiastically voted them into office. More precisely, it was the institutionalization of the essential democratic principle of popular sovereignty through the establishment of universal suffrage and the referendum process that made it possible for the people of the two nations to excitedly channel their political hopes, aspirations, and desires into the most popular candidate, only to find that their choice proved to be against “the popular will.”

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[186] Ibid., 112-114.

[187] George Sanders, "Eighteen-Fifty-Two and the Presidency," *Democratic Review*, no. 30 (1852): 1-2.

Such a profound paradox confounded and contested what the Declaration of Independence had proclaimed as the founding doctrine of the American Republic—a government “instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” Melville was one of the witnesses to the emergence of this paradox of popular sovereignty; before his trip to Europe in late 1849 he had seen how the popularity of the political novice Taylor allowed him to defeat the experienced statesman Lewis Cass in the 1848 presidential election, and during his stay in France he observed the rise of the democratically elected yet increasingly dictatorial Napoleon. Melville composed *Moby-Dick* from early 1850 through July 1851, a period of mounting political tensions in both the U.S. and France caused by Taylor’s sudden death in July 1850 and Napoleon’s overt democratic despotism. I argue in this chapter that the two presidents, both beneficiaries of the institution of popular sovereignty which at the time existed only in the U.S. and France, exposed a paradox that permeated Melville's political imagination as he worked on *Moby-Dick*. Note that in the opening chapter of *Moby-Dick* Ishmael claims that "the grand programme of Providence" set his whaling voyage after the "Grand Contested Election for the Presidency of the United States" (7).[188] Furthermore, the chapter that contains the allusion to "Louis the Devil" is followed by the romance's celebrated quarter-deck scene that dramatizes how the "magnetic" "ascendency" (211) of Captain Ahab, who acknowledges himself to be "demonic" (168), results from the convened crew's voluntary consent to join his monomaniacal chase after Moby Dick against their best economic interests. Central to this consensus is the paradox that the decision enacted by the popular vote is democratic but not legitimate because the transformation of the *Pequod* from a commercial whaler to a vessel motivated by vengeance is a serious breach of contract with the ship's owners.

In what follows, I examine how, in *Moby-Dick*, Melville offers a critical anatomy of the paradox of popular sovereignty in order to indicate its centrality to the American and French presidential elections of 1848 and their political ramifications. As Ishmael offers a series of chapters that analyze different parts of the leviathan's anatomy, I argue that Melville anatomizes the bodies of the political leviathan in order to unveil the inherent, constitutive constrictions central to the working of popular sovereignty. I first discuss two emblematic events—the Taylor Boom and the Napoleonic Cult in 1848—in more detail to explore how the American and French people respectively "deceived" and "duped" themselves, to borrow Sanders's terms, by means of the very democratic political system they took pride in. I then turn to the quarter-deck scene in *Moby-Dick*. My rereading of the scene challenges the dominant Manichean interpretation of Ahab as a totalitarian leader with the crew as his helpless victim. Through a close reading of the way that even Ishmael and Starbuck, who critics have construed as the dogged dissenters against Ahab the dictator, feel with and for the captain and ultimately give their consent to his request, I claim that the quarter-deck scene captures the paradox that the possibility of despotism is always already implicated in the institution that makes possible the instantiation of democracy.

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[188] In chapter 32 of *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael indicates that the present year is 1850. Thus, the most recent president election was the 1848 one.

The Taylor Boom and the Napoleonic Cult in 1848 and their aftermath

In the summer of 1847, Evert Duyckinck asked Melville to write a story for *Yankee Doodle*, a humorous weekly popularly called "the American Punch" that was edited by his friend, Cornelius Mathews Taylor. Melville wrote a collection of short satirical sketches called "Authentic Anecdotes of 'Old Zack.'" They recount General Taylor's vulgar attitudes and uncivilized habits, such as slapping his buttocks to emphasize a point during conversation and wearing down "the seat in his ample pants" until they become almost threadbare.[189] The pieces squib the Mexican-American War hero whose spectacular victory at the Buena Vista battle in February 1847 suddenly dominated popular attention and launched the Taylor boom for the coming presidential election. Taylor's lack of qualifications for the presidency were skewered and spurned in Melville's explicitly political sketches. In fact, the homespun General deserved this public suspicion and derision. Except for his military feat, he was unfit for presidency in many respects: he had shown neither physical appeal nor experienced statesmanship,[190] nor did he, aspire to run for presidency—he was content to remain in the military until the Whigs began to desperately draw him into their political ring because they thought Taylor would help them end the reign of the Democratic Party.

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[189] Herman Melville, *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces 1839-1860*, vol. 9 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Alma A. MacDougall, and G.Thomas Tanselle (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University and the Newberry Library, 1987), 155. For a study of Melville's attempt to write a political satire, see Luther S. Mansfield, "Melville's Comic Articles on Zachary Taylor," *American Literature* 9, no. 4 (1938): 411-418.

Only because of the war hero's national popularity for his military leadership, the Whigs chose Taylor to beat Lewis Cass of the Democratic Party, who had long-term political careers: Cass had served as governor of Michigan (1813-1831), Secretary of War (1831-1836), the American ambassador to France (1836-1842), and a U.S. senator from Michigan since 1845. Yet Taylor's response to the overtures of the Whig Party was consistently lukewarm. Despite the Whig preference for Taylor, the general had been openly indifferent to their preference and seemed to be discomfited by being suggested as the Whig candidate. Like former soldier-turned-presidents such as Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison, Taylor garnered popular support by building on his national fame as a war hero. But unlike his two predecessors, who publicized their party identity and remained loyal to party principles, Taylor tenaciously and openly referred to his desire to be drafted "by the spontaneous will of a majority of the people, & not by any party,"[191] and his hope for a nomination by a nonpartisan popular convention "to be the president of the people if at all, & not of a party."[192] Though finally nominated as a Whig candidate in June 1848, he refused to espouse the Whig positions and policies.[193] Nor did he even canvass the country during the campaign; he rarely left his home in Louisiana and confined his brief travels to neighboring states, making no public appearances or speeches. His stubborn insistence on and public manifestation of the principle of popular sovereignty continued persistently throughout his campaign; he kept reaffirming his political neutrality, making no concrete legislative proposals or political comments related to the Whig Party. Instead of party affiliation, he silently relied on the political authority of the people's choice. He firmly believed that his presidency would be won or lost at the mercy of the people's will and choice.

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[190] A senator described General Taylor as "sleeping forty years in the woods and cultivating moss on the calves of his legs" (Van Deusen, *Jacksonian Era, 1828-1848* [New York: Harper, 1959], 252). Unlike previous solder-presidents Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison, both of whom rose from General to President and had political career as Senator and House of Representative before their presidency, Taylor had no such political career.

[191] Zachary Taylor to Robert Wood, 9 May 1847, Ibid., 99.

Published as Taylor was unexpectedly emerging as the most popular Whig choice, Melville's "Authentic Anecdotes of 'Old Zack'" lampooned the new political star. However, the stubborn, boorish General still received both electoral and popular majorities in the presidential election. His victory would have been impossible without the popular support of voters of different and divergent political affiliations and interests who expected his strong military leadership to resolve the intricate questions of slavery and sectional tensions. Ironically, his multifarious, somewhat contradictory political identities—a Southern slave owner but not a hard-liner on the slavery question, a solid Jeffersonian, a lukewarm Whig, and an advocate of bipartisanship—convinced a wide spectrum of voters of his political neutrality and reliability as well as his strong leadership for the nation; Northern abolitionists expected him to deal with the slavery issue impartially and independently from the Whigs, while pro-slavery southerners preferred that a Louisiana-based planter and slaveholder would represent their concerns.[194] Moreover, his military fame overshadowed his lack of political career and directly appealed to general voters as a guarantee that his strong leadership could rescue the nation from internal strife.

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[192] Zachary Taylor to Robert Wood, 30 May 1847, Ibid., 103. In his letter written on 23 June 1847, Taylor repeated the same point by stating that "if I ever occupy the White House it must be in a way that I can be the president of a nation & not of a party" (Ibid., 110). Also in his letter to Wood written on February 18 1848, he wrote that he would "not be the exclusive candidate of any party; for if I occupy the White House, I must be untrammelled & unpledged, so as to be the president of the nation, & not of a party; making the interest of the whole country my only object, within the prescribed limits of the constitution" (Ibid., 153). As seen in this case, Taylor was quite different from Andrew Jackson and William Harrison, both of whom were war heroes closely associated with their respective party identity.

[193] Whereas the Whigs condemned President James K. Polk's war politics, Taylor never blamed Polk or the Mexican American War. It was not until early August that Taylor was openly willing to admit that his sympathies lay with the Whigs "but not as an ultra Whig" only because he considered it closer to Jefferson's ideals he admired than the Democrat's. His son-in-law Jefferson Davis confirmed it by saying that Taylor was neither a Whig nor a Democrat. See K. Jack Bauer, *Zachary Taylor: Soldier, Planter, Statesman of the Old Southwest* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 225.

After the election, Taylor simply attributed his victory to "a majority of the free & independent voters of the country." The victory's "maxim" was, he stressed, "that the sovereign people when left to themselves rarely err" and "they are capable of judging for themselves & showing their servants who they placed in high places that they are capable of judging for themselves & deciding who shall rule over them."[195] Though he understood that his victory was also won by his majority of electoral votes, it was the popular enthusiasm and support for him expressed during a series of political rallies and conventions that earned him the candidacy. At the heart of his presidency, as Taylor firmly believed, was the power of popular sovereignty. However, it is difficult to discern whether his obstinate advocacy of popular choice was, as Sanders claimed in his criticism of Taylor, intended to deceive his people.

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[194] Unlike Zachary Taylor, Lewis Cass and Van Buren were not slaveholders; they actually were abolitionists.

[195] Zachary Taylor to Robert Wood, 10 December 1848, *Letters of Zachary Taylor From the Battlefields of the Mexican War*, ed. William H. Samson (Rochester: Genessee Press, 1908), 167.

A month after Taylor's triumph, Louis Napoleon won France's first presidential election by a landslide, polling 5,434,226 votes against his rival Louis-Eugène Cavaignac's 1,448,107 votes. Surprisingly, Alphonse de Lamartine, a moderate republican and a handsome, charming, intellectual, and capable statesman, garnered only 17,910 votes.[196] Napoleon's astonishing victory was wholly ascribable to his shrewd strategy of hiding his true political identity from the general voters. In order to appeal to millions of first-time voters after universal male suffrage was established, his presidential campaign centered on the restoration of the order and glory of the obsolete Bonaparte Dynasty, though he still openly confirmed his allegiance to the Republic. Like Taylor, he had neither eloquence nor personal appeal; he even had a German accent acquired during his long exile. Yet he tried to convince all the upper, middle, and lower classes that he stood, not only for law and order, but for the army and the workers. Thus, his campaign promises included: freedom of occupation and education, protection of property, reduction of taxation, provision of employment, care for the elderly, improvement of industrial conditions, free enterprise, liberty of the press, the interests of army, and a general amnesty for political offenders. He also publicly pledged that he would leave the presidency to his successor at the end of his four-year term after seeing "the executive strengthened, liberty intact, and progress accomplished." Along with these rosy promises, his name emotionally captivated the majority of voters from all over the country.[197] As historian Mike Rapport has pointed out, he "offered many contradictory things to a wide variety of people" including peasants, the working class, radicals, moderates, republicans, conservatives, and monarchists, all of whom voted for him because they wanted the great Napoleon to represent their respective interests and concerns.[198]

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[196] Thompson, *Louis Napoleon and the Second Empire*, 96. Americans were especially infatuated with the moderate republican leadership of Lamartine. For his popularity in Americans newspapers and magazines, see Larry J. Reynolds, *European Revolutions and the American Literary Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 18-24.

[197] Tompson, *Louis Napoleon and the Second Empire*, 95-96. Also see S. C. Burchell, *Upstart Empire: Paris During the Brilliant Years of Louis Napoleon* (London: Macdonald, 1971), 30.

Both of the 1848 presidential elections were characterized by the increased importance of the popular vote. Both the Taylor boom and the Napoleonic cult demonstrated the growing power of the voting public's tastes and desires. Taylor and Napoleon were both very sensitive about the public preference for their campaign. They were sharply cognizant of the fact that the popular response to the presidential candidate would play a decisive role in the national election. Indeed, Taylor's inaugural address reaffirmed the victory of popular power by beginning with a humble introduction of himself as "Elected by the American people to the highest office known to our laws."[199] Likewise, in his inauguration ceremony after giving his oath to "the French people" and "the democratic Republic," Napoleon emphasized that "[m]y future conduct is determined by the national vote and the oath that I have just taken."[200] The two presidents were the beneficiaries of the power of popular sovereignty as expressed through participatory political activities, especially universal suffrage, which was only institutionalized in the U.S. and France in 1848. They also betrayed, whether intentionally or not, the people's expectations that their leadership would lead their nations in a harmonious direction.

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[198] Mike Rapport, *1848 Year of Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 333.

[199] Inaugural Address, March 5, 1849. Due to the increasing importance of popular votes during the Jacksonian Era, the inauguration address of Taylor's predecessor, James Knox Polk, also emphasized the value of popular votes: "Without solicitation on my part, I have been chosen by the free and voluntary suffrages of my countrymen to the most honorable and most responsible office on earth."

[200] Thompson, *Louis Napoleon and the Second Empire*, 99.

"I am prepared to be baptized with the waters of universal suffrage, but I do not intend to live with my feet in a puddle," President Napoleon allegedly said. Indeed, he aspired to become emperor like his uncle and was not faithful to the idea of national politics ruled by the popular will. Though he swore in his oath of office to "remain faithful to the one and indivisible democratic Republic" and read a short speech declaring his faith in the Republic and his desire to "strengthen democratic institution,"[201] for him, receiving the baptism of universal suffrage was simply a necessary step towards his coronation. Since the Constitution of 1848 only allowed a one-term presidency, he proposed a constitutional amendment that would make it possible for him to succeed himself, arguing that four years were not enough to fulfill his political and economic programs. His regime became increasingly authoritarian and oppressive. Finally he transformed the Second Republic into the Second Empire through his coup in December 1851 and his ascendency to the imperial throne in December 1852. Karl Marx was one of witnesses to Napoleon's rise to dictatorship. In "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" (1852), he wrote that "[t]he period 1848 to 1851 saw … the adventurer, who covers his low and repulsive visage with the iron death mask of Napoleon." In his astute analysis, "[a] whole people, believing itself to have acquired a powerful revolutionary thrust, is suddenly forced back into a defunct era" and this historical setback, which paradoxically came after a series of civil revolutions, was ascribed to "[u]niversal manhood suffrage," which had been "building" and "demolishing" all the achievement of the French democracy such as "[t]he constitution, the national assembly, … the blue [right-wing] and the red [left-wing] republicans, … the sheet-lighting of the daily press, all the literature, political names and intellectual reputations, the civil law and the penal code, liberty, equality and fraternity"; these had been "magically vanished under the spell of a man whom even his enemies would deny was a sorcerer."[202]

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[201] Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics,* 14.

After the 1848 election in the U.S. came the increasing crisis of the debate over slavery and threats of secession. In office, President Taylor angered many Southerners who had voted for him by taking a moderate stance on the question of slavery. Though many expected that Taylor would be bipartisan, over the course of his administration a rift developed between Taylor's firm belief in the decisions of "the sovereign people" and his deep distrust of a newly proposed, controversial political formula that was ironically also based on the doctrine of popular sovereignty. The notion of popular sovereignty gained new currency as a solution to the simmering disputes about the extension of slavery into the new territories acquired through the Mexican-American War.[203] As Congressional attempts to resolve the issue led to gridlock, during his presidential campaign in 1847, Lewis Cass proposed that the residents of a new state should electorally determine the form—slave or free—of their local government instead of letting Congress decide.[204] The idea was closely tied to the principle of popular sovereignty as well as the democratic principle of majority rule. Thus, Cass employed the term “popular sovereignty” in naming his new legislative principle. The bill was aptly named; obviously, it applied the principle of popular sovereignty to determine the constitution of local government. The founding principle of popular sovereignty was, on a local level, related to the question of how to organize and legitimize a local government. Stephen A. Douglas, the chairman of the Committee on Territories in both the House and Senate, strongly promoted Cass’ proposal as the only practical solution to resolve the contentious debate over slavery in the territories and to prevent the threat of further sectional conflict.[205] However, Cass’ proposal would call into question the fundamental nature and elements of independent self-government; it was also constitutionally problematic since the Constitution was unclear about the relationship between the federal and local governments.[206]

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[202] Karl Marx. "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" *Later Political Writings*, ed and trans. Terrell Carver (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 33, 36.

[203] Paul K. Conkin notes that though the term "popular sovereignty" had not been frequently deployed before the 1840s, there had been "the almost unanimous acceptance of popular sovereignty at the level of abstract principle" in American history (Paul K. Conkin, *Self-Evident Truths: Being a Discourse on the Origins & Development of the First Principles of American Government—Popular Sovereignty, Natural Rights, and Balance & Separation of Powers* [Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1974], 52). Willi Paul Adams maintains that the "principle" of the popular sovereignty "expressed the very heart of the consensus among the victors of 1776" (*The First American Constitutions: Republican Ideology and the Making of the State Constitutions in the Revolutionary Era* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001], 137). According to Christian G. Fritz, the American idea of "the people in a republic, like a king in a monarchy, exercised plenary authority as the sovereign," which "persisted from the revolutionary period up to the Civil War" (*American Sovereigns: The People and America's Constitutional Tradition Before the Civil War* [Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2008], 7). For a recent study on political debates of and movements for the practice of popular sovereignty during the antebellum period, see Ronald P. Formisano, *For the People: American Populist Movements from the Revolution to the 1850s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

President Taylor, an ardent advocate of the principle of popular sovereignty in terms of universal suffrage in a national election, adamantly rejected Cass’ doctrine of

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[204] On December 27 1847, Lewis Cass, then the Michigan Senator, wrote a letter to A. P. O. Nicholson concerning the Mexican War and the pressing issue of slavery extension in the new territories. The letter was intended as a public statement to launch Cass’s campaign for the 1848 Democratic nomination for the presidency and thus was published in newspapers. The letter showed Cass’s earliest ideas of popular sovereignty as a doctrine that the residents of the new territories should decide whether or not to permit slavery. In the letter he clearly argued that Congressional leadership “should be limited to the creation of popular governments and the necessary provision for their eventual admission into the Union; leaving in the meantime to the people inhabiting them to regulate their own internal concerns in their own way.’” He also applied the same principle to his foreign policy: “[t]o the people of this country, under God, now and hereafter, are its destinies committed; and we want no foreign power to interrogate us, treaty in hand, and to say, … Our own dignity and the principles of the national independence unite to repel such a proposition” (Quoted in Willard Carl Klunder, *Lewis Cass and the Politics of Moderation* [Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1996], 168-70).

[205] Robert W. Johannsen, *The Frontier, the Union and Stephen A. Douglas* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 95-96.

[206] According to the Article 4, Section 3, Clause 2 of the Constitution, “Congress shall have the power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory and other property belonging to the United States.”

“the popular sovereignty” for fear that the authorization of self-government would lead to increasing sectionalism. Indeed, the principle of popular sovereignty, which placed ultimate authority in the people, haunted lawmakers with questions of how to put the doctrine into practice—how could a collective sovereign be defined and decided? In what ways would “the people” exercise sovereignty in their territory? How would they constitute their self-government? These questions betrayed a potentially dangerous ambiguity in the practice of popular sovereignty free from the interference of the federal government or the courts. Moreover, the key principle of popular sovereignty—leaving decisions about local government up to the electoral decision of the locality’s people—could bring about secessionist ideas of independent self-government. The underlying paradox was that what worked for a local government might not be conducive to national unity. Cass and Douglas remained silent on the specific procedures of this proposition. Noting this contradiction inherent in the logic of popular sovereignty, Jefferson Davis in *A short History of the Confederate States of America* (1890) derided it by contemptuously calling it “squatter sovereignty.” According to him, “[l]ogically carried out, the theory of “squatter” or “popular sovereignty” bestowed on territorial legislatures, the creatures of Congress, a power not vested in Congress itself, or in any legislature in the fully organized and sovereign States, as their authority is limited both by the State and the Federal Constitutions.”[207]

Taylor’s sudden death in July 1850 finally ended this controversy and made possible the passing of the Compromise of 1850 in September. However, as Taylor and many others worried, the Compromise’s reliance on popular sovereignty would tear the

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[207] Jefferson Davis, *A Short History of the Confederate States of America* (New York: Belford Company, Publishers, 1890), 32.

Union apart in a few years. The Compromise of 1850 called to attention to the dilemmas of individual and public sovereignty as well as the possibility of self-government and its independent sovereigns. Melville dramatizes all these intermingled political questions about popular consent and sovereignty in the quarter-deck scene in *Moby-Dick* to investigate their profound paradoxes. Before the scene, he first writes about what is paradoxically central to democracy; the irresistible yet violent puissance of democracy as "the Spirit of Equality," who "select[s] champions from the kingly commons."

"Thy selectest champions from the kingly commons"

No passage in *Moby-Dick* eulogizes the democratic equality of all people and the dignity of the common people as ardently as the one in chapter 26. The passage is the narrator's ode to democratic equality that praises the ordinary people who embody "that democratic dignitary which, on all hands, radiates without end from God; Himself!" (117) Evoking Tocqueville's famous praise of "[t]he gradual development of the equality of conditions" as "a providential fact … possess[ing] all the characteristics of a divine decree" which is "universal" and "durable,"[208] the paean to the deified "The great God absolute! The centre and circumference of all democracy! His omnipresence, our divine equality!" extols the very essence of equal democracy. Critics have read the passage as evidence of Melville's advocacy of American democracy in terms of universal equality. Myra Jehlen, for instance, contends that Melville views "class" as "what defines those who do not define themselves" and "[d]emocracy, in the passage about the Spirit of Equality, means being able to escape class."[209]

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[208] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 12.

However, the passage conveys a subtly yet significantly different overtone, as it personifies the "Spirit of Equality," who "hast spread one royal mantle of humanity over all my kind!" The "great democratic God!" the narrator goes on to state, "didst not refuse to the swart convict, Bunyan, the pale, poetic pearl; Though who didst clothe with doubly hammered leaves of finest gold, the stumped and paupered arm of old Cervantes; Thou who didst pick up Andrew Jackson from the pebbles; who didst hurl him upon a war-horse; who didst thunder him higher than a throne!" Here, Melville suggests the historical movement of the impact of democracy from the past cases of European authors to the uniquely American example of Andrew Jackson, implying that the locus of democratic power is not confined to literature in American politics as it is in European monarchies. More significantly, Melville's vivid depiction of the ascendency of Andrew Jackson from his low birth to the presidency by means of his military renown employs quite violent verbs as in "didst pick up Andrew Jackson from the peebles," "didst hurl him upon a war-horse," and "didst thunder him higher than a throne!" Here, Andrew Jackson is hardly a self-willed subject in his rise to the presidency; rather, he is the mere agent of the almighty democratic force. Given that the "great democratic God" "in all [his] mighty, earthly marchings" "select[s] champions from the kingly commons," the sentence indicates how the popular vote picks and lifts up its favored candidate. The passage thus describes the basic doctrine of democratic sovereignty—that, based on the principle of equality, all individuals can select their political leader by casting a vote. This interpretation can be verified by Melville's emphasis on the "democratic dignity" resting "on all hands" (117), an allusion to the principle of universal suffrage that is central to the ideal of popular sovereignty.

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[209] Myra Jehlen, "Melville and Class," in *A Historical Guide to Herman Melville*, ed. Giles Gunn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 101.

In this passage on democratic equality, Melville suggests that the new power of popular sovereignty is embodied in the institution of universal suffrage and the general election, which establish the fundamental democratic doctrine that every individual voter is equally important and significant in the electoral constitution and each supports the political power of a democracy by his voting. Melville's personification of the "Spirit of Equality" implies that each vote is of equal value and thus this spirit can be also called the "great democratic God" operating "in all [his] mighty, earthly marchings" in order to "select champions from the kingly commons." After all, the "democratic dignity" resting "on all hands" precisely signifies the democratic principle of popular sovereignty expressed by universal suffrage and the general election, the doctrine that posits that the ultimate sovereign power is vested in the people—their voting in particular, the legitimacy of political authority comes from their collective democratic will, and they should choose the form and function of their government. The most radical substantiation of this doctrine on a national level emerged through the American Revolution and the U.S. Constitution, what historian Sean Wilentz calls "the great principle undergirding American government."[210] As the founding principle of national government, the doctrine of popular sovereignty was premised on, as Donald S. Lutz suggests, "the existence of some form of popular consent."[211] Melville's description of democratic equality allegorizes the very substantial form of popular consent—how the deified might of popular sovereignty "select[s] champions from the kingly commons" (117). This allegory applied to Zachary Taylor who was selected by the popular will to rise from general to president. In fact, Taylor did not even believe that he, a resident of a slave state and a slaveholder, would become President. In early 1847, he regarded his candidacy as "too visionary to require a serious answer," confessing that "[s]uch an idea never entered my head, nor is it likely to enter the head of any sane person." In July 1847 he reiterated his disinterest in the presidential nomination, assuring Jefferson Davis, "[I] can truly say that I feel more interest in the recovery of your wound, & in the termination of this war … than I do of being president of the U. States."[212] Despite his reserved attitude and prolonged indecision, his popularity as a war hero elevated him to the office eventually. In short, it was the God of popular sovereignty that "did pick up" Zachary Taylor "from the peebles," "didst hurl him upon a war-horse," and finally "didst thunder him higher than a throne!"

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[210] Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 513. Regarding the British origins of the concept of the popular sovereignty and public consent as the basis of government' also see Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988).

The Question of Popular Sovereignty in the Quarter-deck

While the heated debates over the Compromise of 1850 were raging after the sudden death of President Taylor and while the French President overtly revealed his dictatorial designs, Melville was drastically reshaping the draft of *Moby-Dick*. Melville changed the text from Ishmael's documentary-like whaling narrative to the story of a newly created character, Ahab,[213] who is idiosyncratic in every respect. He is, as Michael Paul Rogin has astutely pointed out, "the first and only captain with commanding personal authority in all Melville's diction."[214] Due to his charismatic and domineering leadership, a number of critics have viewed Ahab as a representation of contemporary political leaders such as Daniel Webster, John Calhoun, or William Lloyd Garrison. Yet, as Rogin has convincingly maintained, "Ahab derived from no single one alone. Rather he reunited … patriarchal New England Whiggery—Webster and Shaw … [and] [p]olitical figures who exposed one connection between American slavery and American freedom. … Ahab stands as a reproach to and culmination of the all."[215] In critical attempts to identify the real model for Ahab among the political figures who were Melville's contemporaries, no one has considered the possibility that Zachary Taylor and Louis Napoleon might have been the models. Their tendency to appeal to popular support and the popular vote and their success in winning the supreme political authority they desire, however, are very similar to the power dynamics of Ahab, who also garners the general consent of his crew in order to lead the *Pequod* to hunt a killer whale called Moby Dick for his own purpose. Chapter 36 ("The Quarter-Deck") limns this dramatic and decisively important event that inaugurates a completely new plot. The chapter is especially famous for its shocking description of how the captain and the entire crew of the *Pequod* decide together to reject commercial whaling and undertake a revengeful quest for Moby Dick. During the quarter-deck scene Ahab suddenly emerges, gathers all the crew members, and then renders them his followers in the new plan of pursuing Moby Dick.

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[211] Donald S. Lutz, *Popular Consent and Popular Control: Whig Political Theory in the Early State Constitutions* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 38.

[212] Bauer, *Zachary Taylor*, 226, 227.

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[213] For a thorough analysis of Melville's revision, see John Bryant, "Moby-Dick as Revolution," The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville, ed. Robert S. Lane (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 67.

[214] Michael Paul Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville* (1979; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 128.

[215] Ibid., 108-109, 130.

Ahab's unexpected and remarkable power play, which accounts for a drastic change in the plot as well as the fate of the crew, has long plagued critical attempts to give a political reading of the captain's leadership and the crew's conformity. For F.O. Matthiessen and many other critics, the importance of the scene in political terms lies in the simple, obvious fact that Ahab "coerces the crew" into following his plan for revenge. Matthiessen's influential reading of the text as a reflection of "Melville's hopes for American democracy" claims that the author represents Ahab as "a fearful symbol of the self-enclosed individualism that, carried to its furthest extreme, brings disaster both upon itself and upon the group of which it is part" in order to highlight its opposite political symbols—"[t]he strong self-willed individuals" and their democratic hopefulness.[216] C.L.R James advances Matthiessen's point by maintaining that "we can see in his full stature Ahab, embodiment of the totalitarian type. With his purpose clear before him, he is now concerned with two things only … "the management" of "things" and "men."[217] David S. Reynolds also highlights a sharp contrast between "the *Pequod*'s … rebellious crew" and Ahab as "an oppressive master."[218] In the same vein, David Dowling has recently reconfirmed this interpretation by noting that "Ishmael gives his consent to

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[216] Matthiessen, *American Renaissance*, 445-459. A number of Americanists who particularly deal with Melville's question of the American democracy are concerned with Ahab's faulty individualism which is undemocratic and totalitarian. For early Americanists, Melville's representation of Ahab as "a fearful symbol of the self-enclosed individualism that, carried to its furthest extreme, brings disaster both upon itself and upon the group of which it is part" is to highlight its opposite political symbols—"[t]he strong self-willed individuals" and their democratic hopefulness.

[217] C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegaders & Castways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live in* (Hanover: Dartmouth College, 2001), 15.

[218] David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 289.

Ahab's mission, but Melville is careful to portray it as being unnaturally coerced out of him through a kind of witchery or sorcery … Ishmael's soul is processed by Ahab's mysticism on the quarter-deck."[219] In these readings, Ahab is as a powerful antidemocratic leader forcing his irresistibly mysterious and coercive leadership onto two innocent victims—liberal Ishmael and dissenting Starbuck.

However, what Melville actually depicts during the quarter-deck scene is how Ishmael and Starbuck are subject to the centripetal force of Ahab's appeal, but only by their consent. Moreover, the Ahab of the quarter-deck scene is hardly tyrannical. The image of Ahab as dictator comes from Ishmael's description of him as "the absolute dictator" (97), "supreme lord and dictator" (122), and "a Khan of the plank, and a king of the sea, and a great lord of Leviathans" (129). These evil images, however, stem from Ishmael's own imaginings about the reclusive captain before he even appears to the crew. Ishmael frankly narrates that his "first vague disquietude touching the unknown captain, now in the seclusion of the sea, became almost a perturbation" (122). Thus, the image of the tyrannical Ahab is generated by Ishmael's curious anxiety. Unlike his vague expectations of Ahab, the captain in the quarter-deck scene is hardly tyrannical when he garners his crew's consent to obey his plan to chase after Moby Dick.

On appearing, he first "order[s] Starbuck to send everybody aft" (160). When all the sailors get together, he suddenly and loudly asks a series of very simple questions about whaling such as "What do ye do when ye see a whale, men?" to excite some of the gathered sailors. Their increasingly emotional responses are spontaneously generated by what their feelings about Ahab's questions; except Ishmael, they are experienced whalers.

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[219] David Dowling, *Chasing the White Whale: The Moby-Dick Marathon; or, What Melville Means Today* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 83.

Ahab knows that his simple questions regarding whaling will arouse a contagious, collective enthusiasm among his sailors. Thus, “observing the hearty animation into which his unexpected question had so magnetically thrown them,” he continues to ask the similarly simple yet carefully-planned questions—“And what do ye next, men?” “And what tune is it ye pull to, men?” Responding to those questions, “[m]ore and more strangely and fiercely glad and approving, grew the countenance of the old man at every shout; while the mariners began to gaze curiously at each other, as if marveling how it was that they themselves became so excited at such seemingly purposeless questions.” This is followed by a depiction of their being “all eagerness again, as Ahab, not half-revolving in his pivot-hole, with one hand reaching high up a shroud, and tightly, almost convulsively grasping it” (161).

Ahab then pulls out a gold Spanish doubloon, shows it to everyone, announces that whichever lookout finds “a white-heated whale with a wrinkled brow and a crooked jaw … with three holes punctured in his starboard fluke” will receive the doubloon, and finally nails the doubloon to the mast. Watching this unexpected action, the crew becomes more wildly excited: “Huzza! Huzza!” cried the seamen, as with swinging tarpaulins they hailed the act of nailing the gold to the mast” (162). It is notable that Ahab, in addition to astonishing his spectators with his well-planned rhetorical devices and strategies, employs an emotionally charged symbol to move them in the particular ways he intends. According to Emile Durkheim, “it is a well-known law that the feelings something awakens in us are spontaneously communicated to the symbol that represents it. This transfer of feelings simply occurs because the idea of the thing and the idea of its symbol are closely connected in our minds: as a result, the emotions provoked by one are contagiously extended to the other.”[220] Ahab clearly understands what Durkheim calls the “well-known law” of the arousal and contagion of feelings through the strong effect of affective symbols. Indeed, Ahab’s gold doubloon incites the crew to a display of stronger emotions associated with the now collectively shared idea of the ultimate goal of hunting down Moby Dick together.

After all, all Ahab does is facilitate his crew members’ ebullience. After he succeeds in forming affective unity, Ahab asks for their consent and support by employing excessively emotional gestures and rhetoric: “it was Moby Dick that dismasted me; Moby Dick that brought me to this dead stump I stand on now. Aye, aye,” he shouts, “with a terrific, loud, animal sob, like that of a heart-stricken moose.” Also with “tossing both arms, with measureless imprecations,” he keeps loudly shouting: “Aye, aye! And I’ll chase him round Good Hope, and round the Horn, and round the Norway Maelstrom, and round perdition’s flames before I give him up. And this is what ye have shipped for, men! To chase that white whale on both sides of land, and over all sides of earth, till he spouts black blood and rolls fin out.” After that, he asks for the crew’s consent but without coercion: “What say ye, men, will ye splice hands on it, now? I think ye do look brave.” To this sudden request, his whalers immediately and enthusiastically respond together with ““Aye, aye!” even “running closer to the excited old man.” In a completely voluntary and consensual manner, they shout a rallying cry together: “A sharp eye for the White Whale; a sharp lance for Moby Dick!” (163). Amid the sailors fervently approving Ahab’s description of the vengeful pursuit as “what ye have shipped for” (163), only his first mate Starbuck dissents due to the new plan’s religious blasphemy and commercial incongruity, but to no avail, as he too becomes one of Ahab's followers with "the enchanted, tacit acquiescence." He is finally persuaded by Ahab's impassioned proclamation that like "a general hurricane" the other crew members are now "one and all with Ahab, in this matter of the whale" (164).

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[220] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, ed. Mark S. Cladis, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 165.

In the same emotionally charged way, Ahab secures the consent of the crew by creating a ritual to bind them together. Central to the rite, as Melville narrates, is that Ahab "would fain have shocked into them the same fiery emotion accumulated within the Leyden jar of his own magnetic life." Also notable is the way in which Ahab foregrounds the free will of the crew: "I do not order ye; ye will it." Consequently, Ahab succeeds in forging an "indissoluble league" to serve his monomaniacal purpose. The essential ontological paradox of the quarter-deck drama is precisely captured by Melville, who comments in the scene that "with little external to constrain us, the innermost necessities in our being, these still drive us on" (165). Matthiessen interprets the ritual as an example of "Ahab's power to coerce all the rest." Yet clearly Ahab, in Melville's depiction of his expressions and actions, employs no physically or verbally coercive force to achieve his purpose in the quarter-deck scene. It is the inexplicable "innermost necessities in our being," Melville suggests, that "drive us on." Starbuck's soliloquy after the quarter-deck scene explains the secret of Ahab's power that successfully generates the crew's self-willed servitude: "my soul is more than matched; she's overmanned; and by a madman!" for Ahab has "drilled deep down, and blasted all my reason out of me!" The authority of Ahab's emotional persuasion is clearly analyzed in Starbuck's soliloquy: "I think I see his impious end; but *feel* that I must help him to it" because "Will I, nil I, the ineffable thing had tied me to him" and even though he "tows me with a cable I have no knife to cut." Hence, he calls Ahab "Horrible old man!" (169) [emphasis added].

The captain's confession after the quarter-deck scene reveals something more horrible than Ahab's irresistible power. He soliloquizes that "'T was not so hard a task, I thought to find one stubborn, at the least; but my one cogged circle fits into all their various wheels, and they revolve" (167). The truth is, he goes on to say, "like so many ant-hills of powder, they all stand before me; and I their match" (168). That is, as a leader Ahab only activates the already built-in dynamics of affective unification and communal fanaticism in order to obtain the crew's emotionally charged volition and cohesion, which deceptively confirms the validity of the crew's consent to their captain's plan to find and kill Moby Dick. Because of this internal mechanism, no sailor except Starbuck suspects the malicious intention of Ahab or gets in the way of his purpose; and because of internal mechanism, Starbuck finally submits himself to Ahab's request.

This striking scene of unification is followed by a chapter that contains the confessions of Ahab, Starbuck, and Stubb, and a chapter that depicts the dazzling ethnic, regional, national, and cultural diversity of the *Pequod* sailors (Chapter 40 "Midnight, Forecastle"). In contrast to the quarter-deck scene of forming "an indissoluble league," or a collective identity of the crew, "Midnight, Forecastle" brings the incommensurable pluralities of the heterogeneous whalers to the fore. There are, Ishmael narrates as the *Pequod* sets sail from Nantucket, "nearly all Islanders in the *Pequod*, Isolatoes too, … each Isolato living on a separate continent of his own." Their whaling voyage, however, renders them "federated along one keel, what a set these Isolatoes were!" (121) This precarious union of heterogeneities characteristic of the true identity of the *Pequod* is essentially different from the unity that will be rebuilt on the quarter-deck later. Whereas the former is created by the contract of commercial whaling that each sailor signs, the latter is nothing but a collectivity engineered for Ahab's own purpose, demanding the sacrifice of the original contract that contains all the sailors' economic motives and interests. The latter constitutes a homogenized unity that serves the purpose of finding and killing Moby Dick, but for no profit. This drastic change is ominously depicted in the description of the crew on the second day of the chase after Moby-Dick: "[t]hey were one man, not thirty. For as the one ship that held them all … all the individualities of the crew, this man's valor, that man's fear; guilt and guiltlessness, all varieties were welded into oneness, and were all directed to that fatal goal which Ahab their one lord and keel did point to" (557).

This transformation of "a set" of "Isolatoes" into the "welded" "oneness" calls attention to the enabling conditions of such a drastic change. "I, Ishmael, was one of that crew," Ishmael admits a few chapters later as he reflects on what transformed him into the captain's rabid votary: "my shouts had gone up with the rest; my oath had been welded with theirs; and stronger I shouted, and more did I hammer and clinch my oath, because of the dread in my soul. A wild, mystical, sympathetical feeling was in me; Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine" (179). Aware of the overpowering empathetic identification that engenders his self-contradictory, voluntary, and irresistible mental merging with Ahab, Ishmael questions "[h]ow it was that they so aboundingly responded to the old man's ire—by what evil magic their souls were possessed, that at times his hate seemed almost theirs; the White Whale as much their insufferable foe as his; how all this came to be" (187). Ishmael's question indicates Melville's deep concern with the question of affective collectivization leading to a communal consent. Indeed, central to Ahab's successful strategy is that the crew's voluntary and consensual assent to Ahab's despotic design is, as Ishmael recognizes, in effect coerced by their feeling of unity, which irresistibly identifies Ahab's private enmity with theirs, thus nullifying their profit motives only to sanction and obey a new authority. That is, the only coercion in the quarter-deck scene does not come from Ahab but from the way the crew feels with and for their captain's anger at Moby Dick for mutilating him with "an inscrutable malice," and in the way this empathy for Ahab stirs up their animus against the demonized behemoth whale (164). Without such reciprocal affectivity, Ahab could not successfully enlist the crew's compassionate support in transmuting the whaling voyage into a communal hunt for his attacker.

From a political perspective, Ahab essentially holds a general election on the quarter-deck; he makes all the individuals on the *Pequod* participate in the decision-making process that will decide the new course of the whaler by verbal voting. During the pseudo-election the captain's fiery rhetoric sounds emotionally outrageous and aggressive, yet not derogatory against his crew; rather, he praises and respects the valor of his crew. Therefore, the sailors become excited about Ahab's new plan to chase after Moby Dick. Though the plan actually comes from Ahab's personal motive for revenge, his direct appeal to the crew jolts them into a collective frenzy as in election campaigns. The quarter-deck scene implies that each sailor is able to decide on the fate of their community as an independent, liberal sovereign. It also dramatizes the idea that sovereign power is vested in the people and their elected representative, who is chosen to govern his voters, is a trustee of this power and must exercise his power in obedience to the general will. In the American political context, the power of popular sovereignty—the establishment of electoral consent in the form of extended universal male franchise—which will determine the fate of the Union is allegorized in the quarter-deck scene as the principle that will decide the destiny of the *Pequod*. The procedure Ahab follows is surprisingly democratic and thereby represents the paradoxical outcome of the democratic principle of popular sovereignty. Central to the paradox is that a leader selected by the electorate, like Ahab, can aspire to "higher than a throne" through popular consent and support. He can also justify his autocratic decision as the representative expression of the general will. After all, the nemesis of democracy is already inside the very institution of democracy.

The Nemesis of Democracy within Democracy

The quarter-deck scene complicates and challenges the Enlightenment models of subjectivity and sociality which undergird the formation of democratic citizens and democratic society. Melville especially calls into question John Locke's formulation of self-sustaining reasoning agency and a contractual society of such individuals, which is the philosophical ground of American democracy. Locke defines the "person" as "a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness" and "self" as "that conscious thinking thing" which is "concerned for itself, as far as that consciousness extends."[221] In this regard, "When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will anything, we know that we do so. Thus it is always as to our present sensations and perceptions: and by this everyone is to himself that which he calls *self*"[222] [italics in the original]. He does not, however, ignore the corporeal "substance" of consciousness, adding that "the body too goes to the making the man."[223] Therefore, the Lockean self is a self-aware and self-reflective consciousness that is reified in a corporeal body. That is, a self is the self-sustaining unity of soul and body.

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[221] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Roger Woolhouse (New York: Penguin, 1997), 307.

In *Moby-Dick* Melville depicts Ishmael as a typical Lockean subject. Ishmael, a former "schoolmaster" (6), oftentimes ruminates on the deeper, veiled meaning of his life before and after the *Pequod*. His compulsion to grapple with inscrutable mysteries is an arduous means of seeking a harmonious balance between his thinking self and his experiencing body, which prompts him to thoroughly examine the surface and the depth of things he observes in order to delve into what lies behind and beneath. Yet Ishmael is also characterized as possessing cognitive affect. For him, feeling is a way of assuring himself of the mode and standard of his agency. When Ishmael becomes a bosom friend to Queequeg, for instance, he describes how "I began to be sensible of strange feelings. I felt a melting in me. No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. This soothing savage had redeemed it" (51). Here Ishmael remarks that affect operates as a deeper channel of understanding the world, which helps him to naturalize his new abstract understanding and unprecedented experience. This intercommunicative affect is in effect a mode of sympathy. However, it operates in an inexplicable and impersonal way. For example, when Ishmael "felt a sympathy and a sorrow for him [Ahab]", he confesses, "I don't know what, unless it was the cruel loss of his leg. And yet I also felt a strange awe of him; but that sort of awe, which I cannot at all describe, was not exactly awe; I do not know that it was. But I felt it; and it did not disincline me towards him; though I felt impatience at what seemed like mystery in him" (80). Melville suggests that a feeling of sympathy can work as a paradoxical—obscure and contingent yet self-assuring—mechanism to confirm the affective and cognitive basis of one's interpersonal identification, thereby revising the Lockean model of subjectivity that is based on cognitive consciousness and awareness.

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[222] Ibid., 302.

[223] Ibid., 306.

In his reminiscence of the quarter-deck scene, Ishmael asks himself: "How it was that they so aboundingly responded to the old man's ire—by what evil magic their souls were possessed, that at times his hate seemed almost theirs; the White Whale as much their insufferable foe as his; how all this came to be." What befuddles him the most is the oxymoronic—both substantial and insubstantial—core of the shared feelings at the quarter-deck scene. The only possible explanation for such a mysterious affective solidarity is that "what the White Whale was to them, or how to their unconscious understandings, also, in some dim, unsuspected way, he might have seemed the gliding great demon of the seas of life." He then acknowledges the impossibility of fully understanding the conundrum: "all this to explain, would be to dive deeper than Ishmael can go. The subterranean miner that works in us all, how can one tell whither leads his shaft by the ever shifting, muffled sound of his pick? Who does not feel the irresistible arm drag?" (187).

Melville noted the significance of inexplicably paradoxical affect when he wrote *Moby-Dick*. In June 1851, working on the draft of *Moby-Dick,* Melville penned a letter to Hawthorne and inserted a postscript that "[t]his "all" feeling, though, there is some truth in. You must often have felt it, lying on the grass on a warm summer's day. Your legs seem to send out shoots into the earth. Your hair feels like leaves upon your head. This is the *all* feeling. But what plays the mischief with the truth is that men will insist upon the universal application of a temporary feeling or opinion."[224] The universalizing tendency of feeling, Melville indicates, enables us to believe in the reality of this experience of feeling. This affective substance of thinking and action is a key to the mystery of the quarter-deck scene and the actual political scene it represents. Melville implies that the secret of the crew's voluntary submission to Ahab, as Ishmael recognizes, lies in the human tendency for "the universal application of a temporary feeling." During the quarter-deck scene, Stubb notices that Ahab "smites his chest … [but] it rings most vast, but hollow," and Stubb is right; there is no ontic substance to Ahab's preposterous cause. Yet Ahab proves more correct than Stubb when he underscores that "my vengeance will fetch a great premium *here*!" in order to refute Starbuck's criticism of the plan's unprofitability (163). The "great premium" Ahab promises is, in effect, the shared enthusiasm, an affective mode of communal consent and unification, which substantially motivates every individual crew member to voluntarily and consensually follow their leader.

The quarter-deck scene also contests and confounds the Lockean model of possessive individualism and the social contract. As Ishmael explains, "[p]eople in Nantucket invest their money in whaling vessels, the same way that you do yours I approved state stocks bringing in good interest" (73). That is, whaling is a collective business based on a socioeconomic contract. The *Pequod*'s "two principal and responsible owners" are Bildad and Peleg (77). By detailing the contract-making process in which Ishmael and Queequeg participate in Chapter 18, Melville especially underscores the fact that the *Pequod* is a contracted commercial business involving the participants' private profit motive and interest. Through his democratic coup, however, Ahab usurps their property rights. The changed purpose of the *Pequod* has nothing to do with bringing back whale oil; it is now solely concerned with how to wreak vengeance upon the great white whale. Ahab's new authority and the crew's voluntary subjection to it cancel the original and essential economic purpose of the contractual society, which Starbuck clearly points out when he objects to the captain.[225] In order to counter Starbuck's objection, Ahab utters words that strike at the very foundation of the Lockean possessive individualism and the principle of social contract. He shouts: 'Nantucket market! Hoot! … If money's to be the measurer, man, and the accountants have computed their great counting-house the globe, by firdling it with guineas, one to every three parts of an inch; then, let me tell thee, that my vengeance will fetch a great premium here!" (163)

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[224] Melville, *Correspondence*, 194.

In this line, Ahab recklessly tramples upon the sacred Lockean principle of a social contract of individuals with personal property, thereby menacing the pillars of American democracy. According to Locke, a society is constructed by free men who own property and this contracted society should protect their rights. He predicates his model of a liberal, individual subject with free will and property rights on the model of autonomous self-containment and self-coherence. For Locke, the autonomous individual who enters into a social compact with other such individuals is the only foundation of legitimate political authority. The old authority established and justified by divine right, Scripture, and history is now to be replaced by a rational political and socioeconomic contract between autonomous men. In this vein, Locke argues for the imperative to "set the *mind* right … on all occasions … to consent to nothing but what may be suitable to the dignity and excellency of a rational creature."[226] Ahab rejects all these principles. For example, one day when oil is leaking from the vessel, Ahab, only intent on his pursuit of Moby Dick, refuses to stop to repair the leak. Starbuck protests again, saying "[w]hat will the owners say, sir?" and Ahab replies: "Let the owners stand on Nantucket Beach and outyell the Typhoons. What cares Ahab? Owners, owners? Thou art always prating to me, Starbuck, about those miserly owners, as if owners were my conscience. But look ye, the only real owner of anything is its commander" (474).

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[225] For a detailed historical study of Whig dissidence, see James Duban, "A Pantomime of Action": Starbuck and American Whig Dissidence," *The New England Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (1982): 432-439.

The quarter-deck scene also questions Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concept of direct popular sovereignty. According to Rousseau, "[s]overeignty cannot be represented for the same reason that it cannot be alienated; it consists essentially in the general will, and the will does not admit of being represented: either it is the same or it is different; there is no middle ground." For Rousseau, the problem of representation can only be solved when "sovereignty cannot be represented." That is, the people as a collective whole of individual citizens are sovereign only to the extent that they directly take part in articulating their general will; without such direct participation, they are not sovereign. As Rousseau's famous example indicates, "[t]he English people thinks it is free; it is greatly mistaken, it is free only during the election of Members of Parliament; as soon as they are elected, it is enslaved, it is nothing. The use it makes of its freedom during the brief moments it has it fully warrants its losing it." Against Rousseau's idea that directly expressed sovereignty can prevent the side-effect of represented sovereignty, the quarter-deck scene indicates that the former, though it seems to be more thoroughly democratic, can also result in an undemocratic decision. What Rousseau ignores—and what Melville highlights—is the fact that members of a democracy can make an undemocratic decision that goes against their political and economic interests, an enduring dilemma of modern democracy. As Charles Taylor has explained, "[i]n Rousseau's language, the primitive instincts of self-love (*amour de soi*) and sympathy (*pitié*) fuse together in the rational and virtuous human being into a love of the common good, which in the political context is known as the general will."[227] Melville rejects these presuppositions by dramatizing how Ahab's monomaniac leadership becomes legitimized by the general will and consent of his crew. The paradox is highlighted when Starbuck, in his monologue after the quarter-deck congregation, addresses Ahab's essentially undemocratic politics: "Who's over him, he cries;—aye, he would be a democrat to all above; look, how he lords it over all below!" (169) Melville also notes that Ahab definitely has "certain sultanism of his brain, which had otherwise in a good degree remained unmanifested; through those forms that same sultanism became incarnate in an irresistible dictatorship" (147). As Ahab soliloquizes, "all my means are sane, my motive and my object mad" (186).

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[226] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education and Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, eds. Ruth W. Grant and Nathan Tarcov (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), 25.

Like Ahab, Louis Napoleon utilized apparently sane means for his despotic objective. The fair plebiscites were a part and parcel of his imperial designs and aspirations. After he staged a coup, he asked the people to approve or disapprove it. On December 21, 1851, a referendum, conducted largely without coercion and in a democratic way, approved his illegitimate seizure of power by an astounding majority—seven and a half million affirmative votes as against 640,000 opposed. On December 12, 1852, he became the Emperor Napoleon III, and was subsequently approved by a fair plebiscite again. Even more ironically, according to the official formula used in all decrees issued by Napoleon III, he was Emperor “by the grace of God and the national will.”[228] Just like Napoleon, Ahab produces a scene of plebiscite by all crew members to legitimize his authority because his regime openly relies on a procedurally democratic franchise as the primary source of its legitimacy.

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[227] Charles Taylor. *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 118.

Another similarity is the way in which Napoleon and Ahab employ the strategy of creating a popular spectacle. During his presidency, Napoleon particularly enjoyed the spectacle of cheering masses wildly yelling out “Vive Louis-Napoleon!” and “Vive le President!” regarding these displays as evidence of his power and authority. The enthusiastic crowds gave tangible substance to the abstraction of the general will of the nation, transforming them into a coherent political force. Both ardent Bonapartist and non-Bonapartist newspapers provided accounts and illustrations of the public ceremonies and the enthusiasm of large crowds cheering for their President.[229] Likewise, Ahab stages a spectacular scene of popular consensus on the quarter-deck and the spectacle itself facilitates and strengthens the process of affective unification. When individual citizens of a nation-state are concatenated by a shared bond into an organic social whole, this national unity is, as is the striking case in the quarter-deck scene, mobilized and cemented by the affective solidarity among individuals impersonalized and totalized by the very union they take part in. The deeper paradox of this homogenizing politicization lies in the way in which liberal individuals will follow their leader despite the sacrifice of their given rights and promised benefits only because they *feel a unity* with him. For it is, given their voluntarily reached consensus, procedurally liberal and democratic rather than oppressive and totalitarian. In *Moby-Dick*, Melville precisely captures this paradox; no sailor on *the Pequod* is forced or hoodwinked by Ahab into joining the pursuit of Moby Dick. The captain only activates the paradoxical dynamics of affective agency and solidarity.

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[228] Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics*, 5.

[229] According to a sympathetic newspaper’s report, he drew 30,000 to 150,000 crowds in a political gathering (Ibid., 21).

The most serious problem revealed by Ahab's paradoxical democracy is that the factual truth no longer matters. Melville highlights this paradox by leaving Moby Dick's responsibility for Ahab's deformity highly questionable, raising the reader's suspicion thorough Starbuck's question: "Captain Ahab, I have heard of Moby Dick—but it was not Moby Dick that took off thy leg?" (163) The fact that the other crew members do not care about the factual truth means that they are not deceived by Ahab or by their own false consciousness. In the first chapter of *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael narrates in retrospect that "now that I recall all the circumstances, I think I can see a little into the springs and motives which being cunningly presented to me under various disguises, induced me to set about performing the part I did, besides cajoling me into the delusion that it was a choice resulting from my own unbiased freewill and discriminating judgment" (7). As the only survivor from the *Pequod*, Ishmael now clearly sees the workings of the affective delusion that deceived him into feeling for and with Ahab, the beginning of the *Pequod*'s tragic course. During the quarter-deck scene, Ishmael, who has never served as a whaler, shouts and cries like his fellow whalers because he, like they, believes that his choice "result[s] from my own unbiased freewill and discriminating judgment." Ahab now benefits from the operation of such delusion, from the very process of the paradoxical workings of affective politics.

Also problematic is the nature of Ahab's and his crew's communal purpose. For the sailors, whaling is their identity and their asset regardless of their nationality and race. Ahab's appeal to their self-esteem gives rise to their enthusiasm, which immediately forms a collective identity. Yet it aims at no public good. The problem of the quarter-deck convention is the fact that it is structured by individual and collective feelings of both the love of the hunt and hatred of Moby Dick, not for the accomplishment of the tangible public good. After describing the features of Moby Dick, Ahab vividly relates the tragic story of his mutilation: "aye, my hearties all round; it was Moby Dick that dismasted me; Moby Dick that brought me to this dead stump I stand on now. Any, aye," he shouted with a terrific, loud, animal sob, like that of a heart-stricken moose." And subsequently he stresses that "Aye, aye! it was that accursed white whale that razeed me; made a poor pegging lubber of me for ever and a day!" This emotionally charged appeal is soon coupled with collective hateful politics. Right after representing himself as a tragic victim of Moby Dick, Ahab demonizes the whale. Starbuck's monologue also addresses the same question of Ahab's procedurally undemocratic politics more directly: "Who's over him, he cries;—aye, he would be a democrat to all above; look, how he lords it over all below!" (169) Designating an external malice or an enemy, something or somebody to abhor and annihilate together, is a very effective way of making a strong affective solidarity in a polity because nothing can help it more effectively than expressing and enacting a communal hatred together against a public foe. In short, affective solidarity has a double dynamic of forces—inwardly driven sympathy and outwardly directed antipathy, both of which encourage a society to solidify its own identity and unity based only on the simple interpersonal feelings of association and indignation.

Ahab's political rhetoric, designed for communal indignation and hatred, undermines Adam Smith's theory of sympathy as a constitutive dynamic of a society of liberal subjects. Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) posits that "a correspondence"—not necessarily "unisons"—exists between the emotions of the sufferer and the spectator through the latter's "imaginary change of situation, upon which their sympathy is founded" and these imaginings are "sufficient for the harmony of society"; "all that is wanted or required" to construct a harmonious society of liberal individuals is, he adds emphatically, the "concords" of sympathy as an inter-subjective "fellow-feeling," and to this aim "nature teaches the spectators to assume the circumstances of the person principally concerned, so she teaches this last in some measure to assume those of the spectators."[230] In this formulation, Smith undoubtedly postulates sympathy as the essential substance of good human nature and the building materials for constructive socialization. However, the same inherent mechanism of sympathy, Melville suggests, can also be employed more readily to serve an autocratic leader like Ahab.

In the second volume of *Democracy in American* (1840), Tocqueville wrote that "obviously without … common belief no society can prosper … no society does subsist; for without ideas held in common, there is no common action, and without common action, there may still be men, but there is no social body." For the existence and prosperity of a society, he concluded, "it is required that all the minds of the citizens should be rallied and held together by certain predominant ideas."[231] Yet he was aware of the possibility of the rise of demagogues to power in a democracy. Nonetheless, he believed "[t]he nearer the citizens are drawn to the common level of an equal and similar condition, the less prone does each man become to place implicit faith in a certain man or a certain class of men." However, what still haunted his mind was the paradoxical power of "the common belief": "[b]ut his readiness to believe the multitude increases, and opinion is more than ever mistress of the world. Not only is common opinion the only guide which private judgment retains among a democratic people, but among such a people it possesses a power infinitely beyon what it has elsewhere"[232] (383). What concerned Tocqueville was the paradox that the condition that makes possible democracy would work as the condition that makes it impossible; the nemesis of democracy resides in the heart of it. It is this dilemmatic contradiction of the common belief in a democracy that Melville stages in the quarter-deck chapter.

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[230] Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 27.

Moby-Dick **as the Wicked Prophecy of Democracy**

In his November 1851 letter to Hawthorne, Melville candidly confessed his feelings about the recent publication of *Moby-Dick*: "I have written a wicked book, and feel spotless as the lamb."[233] Earlier, in June while the book was still in progress, he wrote Hawthorne that his book was being "boiled in hell-fire" and gave Hawthorne a riddle to guess: "This is the book's motto (the secret one), —— but make out the rest yourself."[234] As Melville had anticipated, the finished romance bore witnessed to the actual occurrence of the previously described "secret motto." In Chapter 113 ("The Forge"), Ahab baptizes the special harpoon meant for Moby Dick, anointing its barb with the blood of his three pagan harpooners—Tashtego, Queequeg, Daggoo, and a Satanic incantation, "Ego non baptize te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!" (489) Adding "patris, sed in nomine diabolic" ("the Father, but in the name of Devil") as the answer of his riddle for Hawthorne, the sensationally blasphemous line obviously mocks the Christian baptismal formula.[235] Yet the "secret" "motto" of *Moby-Dick*, given Melville's suggestive description of the work as "a wicked book," indicates that its more profound meaning has yet to be unearthed. If the text of *Moby-Dick* is "wicked," then the embodiment of its "wicked" theme is arguably the character of Ahab, who acknowledges himself to be "more a demon than a man" (544) in his diabolic transformation of the fate of the *Pequod* crew in the quarter-deck scene. The wicked Ahab reveals the wicked truth of popular sovereignty, the essential element of public consent that has self-contradictory—both democratic and antidemocratic—ramifications in the years after the 1848 presidential elections in the U.S. and France.

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[231] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 382.

[232] Ibid., 383.

[233] Melville, *Correspondence*, 212.

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[234] Ibid., 196.

[235] According to Charles Orson's study of Melville's marginalia in his private memos and notes, the truncated Latin passage's original form is "written in Melville's hand, in pencil, upon the last flyleaf of the last volume, the one containing Lear, Othello and Hamlet," which begins "Ego non baptize te in nomine Patris et/ Filii et Spiritus Sancti—sed in nomine/ Diaboli," meaning "I do not baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit to sanctify—but in the name of Devil" (Charles Olson, *Call Me Ishmael* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997], 52-53). The transcription I use is the one included in the Northwestern-Newberry edition of *Moby-Dick*. The facsimile image of the quoted note can be seen in the edition's appendix, "Melville's Notes (1849-1851) in a Shakespeare Volume," [970]. For the original source of the Latin passage and the argument over its thematic relevance to *Moby-Dick*, see Geoffrey Sanborn, "The Name of the Devil: Melville's Other "Extracts" for Moby-Dick," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 47, no. 2 (1992): 212-232 and "Lounging on the Sofa with Leigh Hunt" A New Source for the Notes in Melville's Shakespeare Volume," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 63, no.1 (2008): 104-115.

An even more wicked truth is that Ahab himself is a desubjectivized agent who gradually loses his self-sustaining selfhood. The nemesis of Ahab's democracy is most vividly revealed in his pained soliloquy after the quarter-deck chapter: "Gifted with the high perception, I lack the low, enjoying power; damned, most subtly and most malignantly! damned in the midst of Paradise!" (167) Notably, a later scene also delineates that Ahab suffers from his absent selfhood: "when what seemed Ahab rushed from his room, was for the time but a vacated thing, a formless somnamsulistic being, a ray of living light, to be sure, but without an object to color, and therefore a blankness in itself" (202). Toward the end of the text, Ahab finally confesses his desubjectivized agency by telling that "I act under orders" (561) and his actions are "mechanical" (562). More explicitly, in a later scene he questions what constitutes and sustains his own identity: "What is it, what nameless, inscrutable, unearthly thing is it; what cozening, hidden lord and master, and cruel, remorseless emperor commands me; that against all natural lovings and longings, I so keep pushing, ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare? Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm?" (545) This radical loss of the substantial entity of his sovereign individuality highlights the profound paradox of Ahab's democracy—if a leader is devoid of his own subjectivity, what can one make of the popular support of and submission to his leadership?

Recent readings of Melville's politics have attended to his problems with the predominance of liberal individualism as a menace to proper democracy[236]or considered the author's growing anxiety over aberrations of democracy, such as mob riots.[237] In all these readings, critics have always enshrined Melville in the pantheon of the most genuine champions of American democracy, those who believe in the value and dignity of democracy as an ideal polity and thus criticize the derailed democracy. However, the quarter-deck scene is layered with multiple political references and allusions that evade a simple interpretive dichotomy of democracy and its menaces. What the famous scene ultimately divulges is an egregious paradox: that the conditions of democracy preclude democracy *per se*.

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[236] For New Americanists, Ahab's excessively self-focused individualism, doomed self-imprisonment, and liquidated subjectivity are indicative of his literary victimization for serving a particular cultural politics to represent its ideological claims and to caution their possible threats. See Donald Pease, *Visionary Compacts: American Renaissance Writings in Cultural Context* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987) and

Democracy, in Claude Lefort's view, requires "an institutionalization of conflict" since "[t]he locus of power [in a democracy] is an empty place, it cannot be occupied—it is such that no individual and no group can be consubstantial with it—and it is cannot be represented."[238] Lefort disregards the possibility that Melville presents in the quarter-deck scene, in which the locus of power in a democracy is occupied by Ahab's affective politics and the center is effectively represented by the consensus to pursue Moby Dick. For David Held, "[d]emocracy is not a panacea for all human problems, but it offers the most compelling principle of legitimacy – 'the consent of the people' – as the basis of political order."[239] What Melville indicates in the quarter-deck scene is the danger of the consent of the people. The presidential elections of 1848 in America and France

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Wai-chee Dimock, *Empire for Liberty: Melville and the Poetics of Individualism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

[237] For Melville's later expressions of anxiety about disorderly mass democracy, see Dennis Berthold, "Democracy and its Discontents," in *A Companion to Herman Melville*, ed. Wyn Kelley (London: Blackwell, 2006), 149-164.

[238] Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1988), 17.

[239] Held, *Models of Democracy*, ix.

demonstrated how popular sovereignty could occupy the empty locus of national politics in the name of the consent of the people, only to be misused by the president who was elected by the popular vote. In that sense, the institution of democracy can always be baptized in the name of devil, for example, the devil-like Louis Napoleon. Melville's *Moby-Dick* brings the deep paradox of modern democracy emerging in the U.S. and France to light by representing the tragic end of the captain and crew of the *Pequod*. Melville clearly understands that the paradox contradicted the ideals of liberal democracy as embodied by popular sovereignty.

The true wickedness of *Moby-Dick* is thus ascribable to Melville's politico-ontological analysis of the profound aporia of popular sovereignty. In the quarter-deck chapter Melville prophesies the tragic, inevitable dialectic of democracy with this ominous metaphor: "the bloodshot eyes of the prairie wolves meet the eye of their leader, ere he rushes on at their head in the trail of the bison … only to fall into the hidden snare of the Indian" (165). At the end of the romance, only Ishmael "*survive[s] the wreck*." Ishmael was "*drawn towards the closing vortex*" but could escape from it by grapping "the coffin life-buoy" [italics in the original]. He is also the only survivor from the irresistible vortex and the irrevocable wreck of Ahab's consensual democracy. The truth Ishmael can tell after his survival is the very vortex and wreck of democracy. He is about begin to tell the truth by saying, "I only am escaped alone to tell thee" (573).

Conclusion

The Romance of A New Hauntology of Democracy

The instantiation of modern democracy has been haunted by questions regarding its substance. Since Rousseau and Locke revived the long-forgotten ancient Athenian principle of rule by the people to provide a conceptual fulcrum for a new political system and social order, the perceived substances of subjectivity and sociality germane to the democratic principles of universal liberty, equality, and popular sovereignty have been questioned due to the unbridgeable gulf between democracy as a concept and democracy as a reality. Thus, the history of modern democracy, first theorized as a set of abstract political doctrines and then enacted as a distinct form of political rule on a national scale, has registered how an individual and collective life is always incompletely defined and mobilized by its ontologically dilemmatic conditions. No historical case demonstrated the paradoxical emergence of the politico-ontological question of modern democracy more vividly than American democracy during the antebellum period. Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, I have suggested, capture the profound paradox underlying the dynamic operation of modern democracy by focusing on how its spectral substances such as autonomous agency, solidifying affect, and consensual power are contrived and compromised so that Americans can sustain their sense of a seamless and holistic democracy as manifested and insisted upon in the grounding principles of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. These spectral substances, as the authors dramatize in their romances, are paradoxically necessary conditions—though always evasive and elliptical—for upholding the ideologized idea of an American identity and reality.

What the four writers observed in each important period of the history of American democracy—Brown in the process of nation building, Poe in the rise of Jacksonian era, Hawthorne at the height of social reform movements, and Melville in the Secession crisis leading to the Civil War—was the American instantiation of ambivalent Western modernity, a modernity that was, as Bruno Latour defines it, "much more than an illusion and much less than an essence."[240] American democracy has remained "much more than an illusion," given its contribution to the actual historical progress that has brought about political, socioeconomic, and cultural democratizations. It also has been "much less than an essence," given its perennially delayed fulfillment of what its doctrines prescribe and promise. David Held in his thorough study of the models of democracy has concluded that "[d]emocracy, as an idea and as a political reality, is fundamentally contested," and his comment actually encapsulates the internal dynamics of American democracy rather than forces that assail it from without. At the heart of this essential contest between ideal democracy and real democracy, explains Held, lies the interlocking questions of "the proper meaning of 'political participation', the connotation of 'representation', the scope of citizens' capacities to choose freely among political alternatives, and the nature of membership in a democratic community."[241] All these local issues are the best representations of what American democracy has struggled with and strived for. They are, at the most fundamental levels, reduced to the common conundrum of the oxymoronic modalities of political agent, action, faculty, identity, and affiliation, and these modalities operate in ways that reveal more about them as conceptual notions than ontic entities.

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[240] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 40.

[241] Held, x.

Throughout the antebellum period, American democracy evinced this inherently in-between nature and function of modern democracy, especially because of the intricate questions of race, class, and gender inequalities prevalent in antebellum society. These issues were arguably the nemesis of modern democracy, which thwarted the ideal of democratic citizens and their democratic society. The discriminations, disparities, and oppressions in the realms of race, class, and gender have always served as a barometer that indicates how the promise of democracy has failed to be fulfilled. The enduring dilemmas of modern democracy have provoked leading political thinkers to reformulate the substance of democracy in terms of spectrality.

For instance, Jacques Derrida stresses the profound ontological aporia that “the specter is a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other,”[242] and deploys the concept of spectrality in order to confront and compound the premises of traditional ontology. According to him, the idea that a ghost is “someone other that we will not hasten to determine as self, subject, person, consciousness, spirit, and so forth”[243] negates the dichotomous divide between being and nonbeing, the present and the absent, and the identical and the non-identical. This new problematic leads him to outline a newly subversive mode of ontology, what he terms "hauntology." In *Specters of Marx* (1993), he describes the twofold aim of hauntology: 1) it deals with the in-between and porous modalities of being veiled and repressed by the predominant logic of ontological binarism predicated on and reducible to the premises of ontic identity, certainty, and plenitude. Derrida ascribes this function of hauntology to the ghost's "effectivity."[244] 2) it also sheds new light on the messianic—returning and redemptive—"potentiality" inherent in a disregarded, abandoned, and forgotten entity. The latter, now "dead" in Derrida's expression, will come back to life one day because of its potential to survive the current time that is "out of joint."[245] In either case, Derrida's hauntology proposes that the substance of the spectral is *not unreal*; it is always operative in the mode of its own effectivity and potentiality.

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[242] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.

[243] Ibid., 6.

In fact, *Specters of Marx* engages in the debate over the demise of communism in order to resuscitate the lost communist cause in the era of the apparent victory of liberal democracy. His hauntological call for spectrality serves the particular political purpose of his book. Derrida makes a Jeremian prophecy that "communism has always been and will remain spectral: it is always still to come and is distinguished, like democracy itself, from every living present understood as plenitude of a presence-to-itself, as totality of a presence effectively identical to itself." Because "a ghost never dies, [and] it remains always to come and to come-back," the proper values and ideals of communism will outlive the current misunderstandings and blindness to it.[246] What is notable here is his reference to “democracy itself,” which aligns the two opposing ideologies. This unusual juxtaposition indicates that democracy is also a hauntological entity, which is at once what is dead now and what is to come in the future. Indeed, in *Specters of Marx* Derrida oftentimes alludes to democracy in terms of democracy to come. In this regard, democracy is not an actual reality in the way that the conservative liberalists such as Francis Fukuyama insist it to be: as the most perfect form of a nation-state to defeat communism. To the contrary, democracy, like communism, is the spectral substance of history, and hence any guarantee of its triumphant realization and fulfillment in the present is misleading.

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[244] Ibid., 10. More specifically, Derrida maintains that the not-unreal ghost haunts our mind to affect our vision and action. For Derrida's ontological reformulation of spectrality, also see Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Ecographies of Television: Filmed Interviews*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek (London: Polity, 2002), 113-134.

[245] Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in A Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, ed. John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 22-25.

Leading contemporary political philosophers have shown a tendency to construe the unresolved ambivalence intrinsic to modern democracy as indicative of the essential dynamics of “democracy to come,” as Jacques Derrida calls it. In a recently published collection of essays on democracy, these leading political philosophers all concur with Derrida’s understanding of democracy as less of a fixed or established political system than an undecidable potentiality: Giorgio Agamben redefines democracy as “a fiction, a screen set up to hide the fact that there is a void at the center”; for Alain Badiou, “there is no doubt that this word [democracy] remains the dominant emblem of contemporary political society”; Wendy Brown calls democracy “an empty signifier to which any and all can attach their dreams and hopes”; Jean-Luc Nancy construes democracy as “an exemplary case of the loss of the power to signify … no longer capable of generating any problematic or serving any heuristic purpose"; Jacques Rancière asserts that "democracy, in the sense of the power of the people, the power of those who have no special entitlement to exercise power, is the very basis of what makes politics thinkable"; and addressing the paradoxical issue of democratic dictatorship, Slavoy Žižek contends that democracy is not an intrinsically impartial and democratic form of government but in effect "an empty frame" which always becomes class-biased and class-driven in its political instantiation.[247] What underlies these critics' reformulations of the nature of democracy is a common attention to the absent substance of present, practical forms of democracy. The substance of democracy is, in their view, always inscribed in the future tense; thus, the genuine democracy in the present exists like a haunting ghost that returns to the world in order to evince its oxymoronic—neither alive nor non-existent—ontological modality.

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[246] Ibid., 123. It is notable that Derrida particularly employs the term “come-back” to denote the essentially delayed actualization of genuine democracy, or the essential potentiality of genuine democracy. Jean-Luc Nancy and Giorgio Agamben have also respectively proposed a homologous notion of “the inoperative community” (Nancy) and “the coming community (Agamben); see Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, eds. Peter Connor, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) and Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

According to Žižek, however, "it is not sufficient to say that "pure" democracy is not possible" since "the crucial point is where we locate this impossibility." Žižek stresses that ""[p]ure" democracy is not impossible because of some empirical inertia that prevents its full realization but which may be gradually abolished by democracy's further development; rather, democracy is possible only on the *basis* of its own impossibility; its limit, the irreducible “pathological remainder, is its positive condition””[248] [italics in the original]. Žižek’s point is that the desire for democracy is directed and activated pathologically yet positively toward the democratization of society due to the essential impossibility of democracy. On the other hand, this paradoxical dynamic of social democratization is ascribed to what he calls “[t]he subject of democracy … in all its abstraction.” In other words, “democracy *is* a formal link of abstract individuals” in that democratic principles and doctrines always posit individual citizens as universally liberal and equal regardless of their particular identities and specific situations—especially by ignoring their differences and disparities; indeed, the concept and practice of democracy cannot be possible without the premise of individual liberty and equality; that is, the abstract subject of democracy is “a pure singularity, emptied of all content, freed from all substantial ties,”[249] like an apparition devoid of substance of life.

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[247] Giorgio Agamben, et al. *Democracy in What State?*, edited by Giorgio Agamben, trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 4, 6, 44, 58,79, 120. Among the contemporary political theorists, Rancière especially elaborates on the absent substance of democracy. "The term democracy," claims he, "does not strictly designate either a form of society or a form of government. 'Democratic society' is never anything but an imaginary portrayal designed to support this or that principle of good government" (Jacques Rancière. *Hatred of Democracy*, trans. Steve Corcoran [London: Verso, 2006], 52). Rancière draws the contrast differently between democracy as a permanently expansive movement and democracy the way it is taught in political science departments as an institution or regime. For his detailed analysis of democracy as an amorphous system of disagreement and conflicts, see Jacques Rancière. *On the Shores of Politics*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 2007), 20-23, 39-61, Jacques Rancière. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 2010), 45-61.

However, there is another unidentified, spectral yet substantial ghost who has always lived with us in our political life. To face the ghost allows us to unveil the way it haunts political realities and relations in our democracy. The intent of this dissertation has been to conjure up the ghost from the romances of Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville. The ghosts they lived with evince the spectral substances of American democracy that enabled its continuation through a lasting belief in its historical entity. Antebellum history has indeed shown that the ghost of American democracy is more than a phantasm. The writers’ contemporaries, who believed in their autonomous and singular agency, harmonious and solidifying affect, consensual and popular power—all essential prerequisites for a genuine democracy—had shared, solid convictions of the substances of their democracy. And their substantial beliefs, in turn, enabled them to believe in the substances of their shared beliefs without doubts. However, as the four romancers tell us, these substances were in effect spectral; they were present as ideas, but absent as practices—though always operative in a set of enduring social desire and energy of democracy.

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[248] Slavoy Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), 166.

[249] Ibid., 164.

“[H]aunting is historical,” argues Derrida, in that it comes back to our reality as an actual event. In this sense, the spectral substances of American democracy are historical as well. These substances have activated actual historical events and participated in the course of American history. All the expectations and enthusiasms about American democracy thus cannot simply be dismissed as illusions or mirages. Though the underlying conceptions of an individual human being as free, equal, moral, self-governing, and sympathizing with others for the public good and their society established by their rational and harmonious consent are always misleading, the feelings of and beliefs in—whether individual or collective—these substantial grounds of proper democracy make our reality bearable, fixable, and pursuable.

“[T]he state becomes democratic, and the empire of democracy is slowly and peaceably introduced into the institutions and manners of the nation,” wrote Tocqueville in 1835. In America, he actually observed how American democracy had mobilized tangible political, socioeconomic, and cultural spheres—e.g., democratic townships, local administrations, political jurisdiction, parties, and the liberty of the press, to name a few. In tandem with the actual substantiation of democratic values and principles, Tocqueville also saw the negative workings of “the impetuosity of the feelings,” “enthusiasm,” and "an ardent faith" in the scenes of social democratization in America. He expected that in the absence of such feelings, "great sacrifices may be obtained from the members of a commonwealth by an appeal to their understandings and their experience." He also "conceive[d] that a society in which … the loyalty of the subject to the chief magistrate would not be a passion, but a quiet and rational persuasion."[250] Tocqueville was correct in valuing the substantial democratizations of American society, but incorrect in anticipating the future democracy free from feelings and faiths to preclude its fulfillment. As Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville suggest, these feelings and faiths—always associated with the fantasized substances of democracy—are the very necessary preconditions for democracy. Therefore, we have to face this paradoxical truth, a key to the success and failure of democracy in America.

In William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which actually inspired Derrida to bring the notion of spectrality to philosophy, the late king's ghost is no simulacrum devoid o substance. It is indeed more than a hallucination or a nonentity; in full armor he beckons, speaks, and orders like a real live king, causing tremendous shock and fear to those who face it. Thus, his son, though "a noble mind" and "scholar," never doubts the substance—though spectral—of his apparitional father, and "will take the revenant's word for a thousand pound." The prince Hamlet says, "[i]t is necessary to speak of the ghost, indeed to the ghost and with it." For the ghost's "haunting is historical," according to Derrida. Likewise, it is necessary for us to speak *of* and *with* the ghost of historical democracy and its spectral substances, for they tell us the hauntology of our democracy. Indeed, the heterodox political ontologies of Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville enable this conversation by establishing a genealogy of the crucial spectral substances of democracy, which foretells the essential impossibility of democracy while guaranteeing its significant contributions to democracy.

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[250] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 15.

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