COMPOSING THE BODY:
NARRATIVE IN THE AGE OF IMPROVISATION, 1770-1867

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Abstract

In 1820, Thomas Hastings wrote the first dissertation on music published in the United States, claiming “Here, then, is seen the great secret of musical expression. Feeling begets feeling.” My dissertation, *Composing the Body: Narrative in the Age of Improvisation, 1770-1867*, explores the social, cultural, and formal intersections of this kind of musical “feeling” with its better-known literary counterpart, the sentimental tradition. Through readings of novels, song sheets, engravings, and a host of other primary materials, I show how music reshaped prevailing attitudes toward sentimentality and the production of emotion in the United States. Early advocates of music literacy had long maintained that music’s vibrations appealed directly to—and consequently managed—an individual’s feelings. But the emergence of improvisational music, made popular in antebellum America by touring European virtuosos like Jenny Lind, Leopold de Meyer, and Ole Bull, advocated a new form of listening that challenged music’s role as an instrument of social regulation. Defined by its expression of unrestricted emotion, such music evoked the “wild, sad strains” of the slave. My work traces how figures like Caroline Lee Hentz, Augusta Evans, Herman Melville, and Lydia Maria Child reference this improvisational tradition, both through formal experimentation and through the figure of the female improvisatrice. In this way, my dissertation contributes to a number of different ongoing conversations in American literary studies—conversations about the history and cultural logic of sentiment as well as the relationship between popular culture and literature, with special emphasis on questions of race, gender, and literary form. Whereas scholars like Eric Lott and W.T. Lhamon have long emphasized the masculine, working class musical tradition of minstrel sound and stage, my work uncovers another side of antebellum music: a female, middle-class, utopian, and at times even subversive tradition.
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Introduction

“Music is both body and soul, like the man who delights in it. Its body is beauty in the sphere of sound,—audible beauty...”
John Sullivan Dwight (1849)

Housed at the New-York Historical Society is a wooden wastebasket decorated with sheet music (see Figure 1). Now yellow with age, the wastebasket prominently features the cover to musical selections from La fille du régiment, a popular opéra comique by Gaetano Donizetti performed in the United States not long after its 1840 debut in Paris, first in New Orleans and then later at Niblo’s Opera House in New York City. Accompanying Donizetti’s opera is sheet music from four morceaux, selected from the operas of Vincenzo Bellini (La Sonnambula and I Puritani) and Giacomo Meyerbeer (Robert le Diable). Carefully pasted to the inside are the “Farewell Songs of Jenny Lind in America”—with lyrics to the ballad “Auld Robin Gray” visible—and the “Jenny Lind Polka,” a duet for two pianos printed by Oliver Ditson in Boston. Displaying music popularly performed and bought in the United States in the 1840s and 1850s, the wastebasket gestures toward the rapid growth of a cosmopolitan music culture in New England in the antebellum period. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, sacred music dominated American musical practice, largely influenced by the congregational singing and musical needs of Euro-American religious denominations. By the 1840s and 1850s, however, the musical scene exploded, introducing musical genres and styles hitherto unavailable to middle-class Americans: a mixture of European and folk music traditions where blackface minstrelsy and sentimental ballads were heard alongside the Italian operas of Donizetti and the classical compositions of the European “greats,” from Mozart and Beethoven to Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Liszt.
Supported by the emergence of a distinct middle-class in the nineteenth century, musical culture in urban centers like New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Charleston and New Orleans responded to and reinforced the values that defined mainstream culture. While performance venues rather than styles of music determined a “higher” music from it working-class counterpart, appreciation for all types of music—from the entertaining to the morally uplifting—indicated an individual’s taste as well as his ability to indulge that taste. Music manuals, primers,


did not mention the number of the article.

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1 Performing organizations like the Musical Fund Society in Philadelphia and the Handel and Haydn society in Boston introduced their listening public to increasingly diverse programs. American factories began producing popular instruments like the piano and the guitar making them more affordable to their middle-class clientele while publishing firms developed new print technologies that allowed for music (particularly sheet music) to be published in larger numbers, with greater diversity, and at a lesser cost. For a quick outline of the changes that led to this explosion—from urban growth to advancements in print technologies allowing for more affordable music—see Dale Cockrell’s “Nineteenth-Century Popular Music” and Katherine Preston’s “Art Music from 1800 to 1860,” both published in The Cambridge History of American Music, edited by David Nicholls.
and general textbooks and theories on music published in the early to mid nineteenth century further encouraged readers and potential music enthusiasts in this regard. The first of its kind published in the United States, Thomas Hastings’ *Dissertation on Musical Taste* (1820), for instance, provided readers with seventeen chapters devoted to the definition and cultivation of musical taste, arguing in the introductory chapter that while “[t]aste in music may justly be regarded as an acquired faculty,” this faculty could be matured through “timely indulgence” and “enlightened observation” (11). Guidebooks, advice manuals, and articles on proper etiquette similarly suggested that how one listened to music not only spoke to his taste level more generally but also indicated his status in society. Women’s journals like *Godey’s Lady’s Book* frequently included fashion plates for dresses appropriate at the opera or concert hall and even printed instructions on comportment, warning that “loud thumping with canes and umbrellas, in demonstration of applause, is voted decidedly rude” (“Points of Etiquette”).

With its collage of popular music, the wooden wastebasket now preserved at the New-York Historical Society survives as an artifact of this cultural moment. A visual record of its owner’s musical proclivities, the wastebasket quickly indicates to passing observers the owner’s participation in the musical fashionable world. By the 1850s, Americans had become prodigious consumers of music. Encountering music in a variety of places, from street vendors to the concert hall, Americans discussed, wrote about, and frequently purchased music to be performed and re-performed in the privacy of their own homes. The Oliver Ditson music-publishing firm, housed on Washington Street in Boston, alone boasted of an inventory of nine million sheets of music spread out in two of the building’s floors (Tawa, *From Psalm* 103). To keep up with the constant demand for new music, one floor was also dedicated to the running of twelve printing presses and another to the engravers, stampers, and supplies of paper required for music
production (Tawa, *From Psalm* 103). The increased affordability and accessibility of music encouraged the development of new tastes. While some music remained popular with Americans well into the twentieth century—Stephen Foster’s “My Old Kentucky Home,” Felix Mendelssohn’s *Song Without Words*, Dan Emmett’s “Old Dan Tucker”—others were quickly replaced by new versions and variations.

Recycled into an object that contains the unwanted, the easily discarded, the sheet music wastebasket inadvertently reflects how quickly certain songs grew outdated, replaced by a seemingly never-ending supply of new operas, ballads, and piano duets. No longer used for its original purpose but still a “decorative” art, the music lining the wastebasket is a symbol of waste, from the garbage it collects to the luxury and leisure its very existence implies. Yet this music was more than mere trash to be dumped and forgotten. Rather, its reincorporation in the house as a useful object and domestic adornment is a reminder of the way in which music became an integral part of the everyday lives of many middle-class Americans. A memorial to the attachment its owner once felt for each song, the wastebasket’s music—while no longer played or heard in the home—has been relegated to a different, yet still important use: it is a record of the transformation music underwent in order to become an aesthetic acceptable for the home.

As music moved from the concert hall and opera house to the parlor, it fundamentally changed and was changed by mainstream values. The “noise, excess, unrestrained emotionalism, and showy professionalism” of popular music performed in theaters, dance halls, and the operatic stage were modified to fit a more private space (Cockrell 159). Transcriptions of operatic music of composers like Donizetti, Bellini, and Meyerbeer frequently featured only the most affective (and thereby suitable) parts of the opera; the parlor songs of composers like
Stephen Foster and the sentimental ballads performed by Jenny Lind similarly favored “romantic, melancholic, and often nostalgic texts that sometimes border on the morose” (Cockrell 180). Framed by iconography depicting middle-class values privileging the family and home, such music contributed to what Lori Merish describes as the ideology of “sentimental consumption,” where the “subjective bonding with possessions reinforced the nuclear family as middle-class culture’s privileged social form” (11).

Music’s emergence as a prominent force certainly came to fruition in a culture of sensibility that valorized feeling. While in the eighteenth century the “cult of sentiment—or sensibility, as it was then know—constructed the figure of the ‘man of feeling’ as a male body feminized by affect” (Chapman and Hendler 3), by the middle of the nineteenth century this “culture of sentiment became less directly identified with public virtue and benevolence and more associated with women’s moral, nurturing role in the private sphere of the bourgeois family” (Chapman and Hendler 3). Developing into a literary genre and cultural practice, sentimentality—or “the aesthetics of sentiment”—was “literary at the heart of nineteenth-century American culture,” as Shirley Samuels argues in The Cultures of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America (6, 4). Although associated with “private, excessive, undisciplined, self-centered emotionality,” sentimentalism also “denote[d] public sympathy and benevolent fellow-feeling” (Baym xxix-xxx). It thus reflected an eighteenth

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2 Jerome McGann argues that an eighteenth century understanding of “sensibility” differed from a later “sentiment.” Sensibility was more primitive—“the language of spontaneous overflow” (McGann 43). Conversely, sentiment “appears a kind of higher third term that not only operates through both spirit and sense” but also “establishes the ground of their integrity” (McGann 124). Julie Ellison, however, suggests that this historical shift from sensibility to sentiment “has less to do with degrees of complexity or measurable changes in terminology than with the move away from defining sentiment in terms of transactions between socially equal persons and toward scenarios of inequality” (Ellison 6). My project is primarily invested in a nineteenth century understanding of sympathy that occurs after this shift; as a “public sentiment” that linked individual emotions to a larger audience, sentiment—and the larger cultural phenomenon of sentimentality—represents the “cultivation,” to cite Glen Hendler, “of a moral and proper repertoire of feeling” (12, 2). In most antebellum instantiations, this “repertoire of feeling” was sympathetic in nature.
century understanding of sentiment (as sympathy) outlined in Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* where sympathy, or the development of “fellow-feeling,” was an imaginative act that allowed an individual to “enter” into another’s “body,” becoming “in some measure the same person with him” (4-5). An “essentially feminine” aesthetic, sentimentalism’s chosen themes esteemed womanhood and, as Lydia H. Sigourney asserted in an 1840 essay, the “unutterable sympathies” which accompanied the middle-class home (xi).

Nineteenth century attitudes toward music and music production reflected this investment in feeling, domesticity, and womanhood. American texts on acoustics, ear anatomy, and music published in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century theorized the production of sympathy to be analogous to the production of sound; music theorists, composers, and critics (Thomas Hastings, Lowell Mason, John Sullivan Dwight, among others) writing in the early to mid nineteenth century continued to emphasize music’s more affective nature to justify its institutionalization in the lives of everyday Americans. Written for the first academy of its kind in the United States, Lowell Mason’s *Manual of the Boston Academy of Music* (1834), for instance, described music’s “great object” to be “the improvement of the heart” (224). François-Joseph Fétis’ popular *Music Explained to the World, or, How to Understand Music and Enjoy Its Performance* (1844) similarly asserted in its opening pages that “[m]usic may be defined the art of producing emotions by the combinations of sound” (1). These discourses ultimately reflected an early nineteenth century representation of music as a “language of feeling”—influenced by a European discourse led by Jean Jacques Rousseau—and informed music’s portrayal in the

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3 An emotional and corporeal experience shaped by an individual’s sympathetic identification with another, sentimentalism connected the private and public realms through this shared feeling. As Baym concisely states, “sentimentality, which links ‘woman’ and ‘self,’ brings women into public life” (xxxi). Joanne Dobson offers a similar definition in “Reclaiming Sentimental Literature,” explaining, “Literary Sentimentalism is premised on an emotional and philosophical ethos that celebrates human connection, both personal and communal” (266). It is, in short, a way of conceptualizing the “self-in-relation” (Dobson 267).

4 He continues, “its aim should always be to improve the heart, and thus be instrumental in promoting the cause of human happiness, virtue, and religion” (224).
antebellum period as the ideal sentimental aesthetic. In the words of Thomas Hastings, “Music is…the language of feeling; and though we may be disposed, on some accounts, to think favorably of a composition or performance which is deficient in sentiment: yet if it I really unimpressive in its influences, it ceases to deserve the name of music” (Dissertation 12).

Benefiting from the socioeconomic changes that allowed women more leisure to pursue music as a form of public entertainment and as a personal pastime, the practice of music—from appreciation to performance—was no longer merely an accomplishment for upper-class women; rather, music became an “appropriate home-related activity” (Preston, “Art Music” 192).Marketed to a female clientele, printed music, especially the ever-popular ballads and parlor songs, featured sentimental themes and used iconography that regularly depicted middle-class women in domestic settings. Music publishing firms targeted the self-taught musician, insuring that the level of difficulty of sheet music and musical collections were matched to the buyer’s talents. By the 1860s, however, many upper-middle-class families turned to European instruction, sending their daughters abroad in order to learn music (Macleod 35). As an expected accomplishment for middle-class women, music became a critical component of female identity, from its performance to its purchase. Classified as the “new consumer subject,” middle-class American women turned to music—as sound and cultural artifact—for an expression of their domestic womanhood, exemplifying a form of “sentimental possession” where the “experience of objects constitutes the individual’s subjective endowments, so that these things are interwoven with the emotions they shape” (Merish 92, 117).

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5 As Katherine Preston explains in more length, “American women became an increasingly important part of the music-supporting public. The numbers of women who were music students, purchasers of music and instruments, or members of audiences or performing ensembles, grew steadily, especially as music became ever more integrated in the social meaning of femininity” (“Art Music” 192).
Objects like the wastebasket and the iconography found on sheet music ultimately disclose music’s participation in this culture of sentiment. Popularly termed a “language of feeling” throughout the antebellum period, music moreover influenced and was influenced by literary practices we now commonly associate with the sentimental literary genre, offering an alternative form of expression for sentimental writers overtly concerned with the portrayal and construction of emotion (see Figures 2 and 3). An example of piety and patience, musical proficiency in popular novels, short stories, and poems often symbolized the subject’s moral
goodness and self-discipline; it was a sign, in other words, of her worthiness for love. As Gertrude Flint reminds Fanny Bruce in Maria Cummins’ best selling *The Lamplighter* (1854), “Do you remember…what your music-master told you about learning to *play* with expression? I should give you the same rule for improvement in politeness”—“you must cultivate your *heart*, Miss Bruce; you must cultivate your *heart*” (268).

This dissertation thus contends that early American music theory and practice played a crucial role in the formulation of antebellum literature. In recent years, scholars like Lori Merish and Mary Louise Kete have turned to the material presence of emotion to demonstrate sentimentality’s widespread impact on American culture. Their work, along with others, expand our understanding of what Lauren Berlant describes as the “first mass cultural intimate public in the United States” (viii). *Composing the Body* extends this work even further. Each chapter situates narrative practice within a more expansive representational framework that demands an interdisciplinary methodology dictated by the classification of both sentimentality and music as multi-genre practices in antebellum culture. This archive includes the musical sounds of nineteenth century America, the affective response of audiences, and scientific discourses on musical analysis. I examine musical performance in its broadest definition—as a cultural phenomenon encompassing a network of music, musicians, composers, listeners, instruments, images, and texts. My project therefore positions fictional representations of musical performances and performers against a diverse array of material “objects,” from musical instruction manuals to memorabilia associated with popular performers of the American stage. This juxtaposition, I argue, identifies an under-studied connection between music and literature.

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6 As Petra Meyer-Frazier has pointed out, “In American sentimental novels both solo and instrumental music (primarily piano or guitar) and vocal music (either unaccompanied religious music or piano-vocal songs) appear with regularity” (49). These moments of music making provided an image of the “‘ideal’ woman of the time, the image real American women were seeking to emulate” (Meyer-Frazier 46).
even as it generates a rich archival perspective into the material conditions of aesthetic “production” from the period.

My emphasis on the musical aesthetic’s embodied or material presence in American culture consciously returns to the definition of the aesthetic proposed in Elizabeth Peabody’s *Aesthetic Papers* (1849). One of the earliest American works that takes as its title subject the definition of an American aesthetic (its introduction an essay entitled “The Word ‘Æsthetic’”), Peabody’s *Aesthetic Papers* crucially locates the American aesthetic within the everyday landscape of nineteenth-century American lives and in their “human creations” (1).7 Included as the second chapter in Peabody’s *Aesthetic Papers* was John Sullivan Dwight’s “Music” essay which provided a definition of the musical aesthetic that reflected the materiality of Peabody’s own more generalized term. According to Dwight, the musical aesthetic could be broken into “three spheres,” those “of sentiment, of science, and of practice” (“Music” 25-26).8 Dwight’s description outlines what I consider to be the fundamental American experience of the musical aesthetic. As a sentiment, not only was the musical aesthetic a bodily experience, affecting an

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7 As a “watchword we use...to designate...that phase in human progress which subordinates the individual to the general,” Peabody’s definition of the “aesthetic element” becomes a site for understanding how nineteenth-century Americans narrated their lives as a form of negotiation between individual and universal experience (1). While controversial throughout the nineteenth-century, this “aesthetic element” remained implicated in America’s many acts of narration (from visual, literary, and musical culture to political and scientific theories). For Peabody, the aesthetic’s role in American culture had a material presence in the lives of Americans, a fact today’s scholars are finally addressing. Elizabeth Dillon’s *The Gender of Freedom* (2004), for instance, argues that the public presentation of the private female self crucially redefines our understanding of sentimentality’s influence. Critiquing Douglas’s portrayals of the questionable productivity of the sentimental genre’s intervention in American culture, Dillon persuasively demonstrates how “privacy...is constructed and articulated in the public sphere” (4). While “women worked hard to appear ‘superfluous,’” Dillon maintains that this public representation of the unessential private or “leisured” female self ultimately revealed how essential this vision truly was, that “this leisure was not itself extraneous but rather related to the political claims of liberalism and citizenship” (203). Yet Dillon is also careful to note the problems arising from the inclusion of women’s private selves into “the workings of the public sphere and the production of liberal subjectivity” (47). As Dillon states, “this very public production subjectifies women as private and apolitical” (47). Their representation or “public production” ultimately defines and categorizes these women’s identities, submitting the sentimental female body to the potential public oppression that many sentimental novels sought to avoid.

8 As he states more extensively: “One class of persons seeks the soul of Music, and dwells in it; another, the laws which reign in its creations; and a third, the form in which it is embodied, the actual beauty as its charms the sense. To one it is a feeling, a sentiment, a passion; to another it is a science; to another, a sensible creation and enjoyment. The heart, the intellect, and the senses; the soul, the body, and the everlasting laws” (“Music” 25).
individual’s senses, it was also, somewhat paradoxically, that which was disembodied, an impalpable experience affecting an individual’s soul. The musical aesthetic was also a science: a systematic compilation of laws or principles that constructed the musical composition’s form (an early American music theory or formal analysis) and regulated the body of the musical performer; it was also a science that attempted to dissect the “deformity” of musical genius—the science behind musical inspiration, or, put differently, the science of what ultimately resisted categorization and representation. Finally, in Dwight’s “sphere” of “practice,” the musical aesthetic was the (arguably pleasurable) interaction between two bodies, the performer and the listener, as well as the complex “marketing” of musical performance, from the selling of tickets to sheet music.

_Composing the Body_ thus traces the intersection of cultures of orality/aurality with those of print. Sensory experience—and its effect on various social, political, and economic formations—has been a frequent theme for scholars invested in the interrelationship of theory, aesthetics, and culture. Largely dominated by an ocularcentric methodology, however, these studies frequently privilege print, or the ascendancy of the visual, as a primary vehicle for inquiry and analysis. Sound historians like Mark Smith, Eric Leigh Schmidt, Richard Cullen Rath, and Jonathan Rée are certainly familiar with the “unresolvable struggles of enchantment and disenchantment” both today’s scholars have and early Americans had with the ear (Schmidt 6). Music’s imprint on American culture proves particularly difficult to scholars interested in developing a tangible archive. The seduction of our other senses—the touch of a page and the crisp lines of print—seek to overwhelm what our more ephemeral sense may offer. However, literary scholars like Eric Lott and Jay Fliegelman both provide convincing models of sound’s translation. Indeed print culture, as Mark Smith reminds us in _Listening to Nineteenth-Century_
America, “was not necessarily a silent medium.” Rather, by listening to how “contemporaries heard their ideological and physical environments and understanding how that aurality was communicated, we rescue the legitimacy of historical aurality…and its social meaning as constituted in the past lives of various people” (262). As Smith continues, “There is no compelling reason why we should ‘read’ the past solely through the visual in order to gain ‘perspective’” (262). This dissertation attempts to continue this work, considering the use of sight, sound, and silence as valid, although at times problematic, method of inquiry: not only should we attend to the rich influence music had in America’s early history, but we should also recognize the complex interactions between sound and print, and, of even more importance for this dissertation, between music and literature. For critical to even “soundscape studies” are the “[s]ubjective appreciations of sound and noise” recorded in written texts (Smith 265).

*Composing the Body* thus narrates music’s emergence in the United States as a technology of print. Musical reformists in the early eighteenth century transformed the sacred musical aesthetic into a more “sophisticated” art by instructing the musical beginner how to sing by musical notation. As a result, texts like Thomas Walters’ *Grounds and Rules of Musick Explained: Or, an Introduction to the Art of Singing by Note* (1721), John Tuft’s *Introduction to the Singing of Psalm-Tunes* (1721) and Cotton Mather’s *The Accomplished Singer* (1721) advocated “regular singing”—a type of musical performance that restrained interpretive license by relying on exact notation. As Richard Crawford and D.W. Drummel explain, “Printing a tune, no matter how few could read it, at least established one form of it, fixing its identity and making it accessible to some—especially to leaders of congregational singing” (“Early American Music Printing” 189). Learning “regular singing” thus required singers to understand music as a textual object with its own grammar. By the antebellum period, major urban centers like New York City,
Boston, and Philadelphia emphasized the importance of music literacy to the nation at large. The increased attention educators in particular paid to music led figures like Lydia Maria Child to write in her *Letters From New-York* (1845) “music, like everything else, is now passing from the few to the many” (Series 2: 180). Music, in some people’s estimation, thus reflected American society’s own movement toward a more equal society.

In the end, however, these narratives emphasizing music’s universality were, of course, mere narratives. While figures like Child argued that music not only escaped but corrected social inequalities, music increasingly became in the antebellum period a conflictual site where American anxieties over issues of gender, race, and class were articulated and explored. Like the commodities that supported the antebellum period’s valorization of sentiment, representations of music and musical practice frequently obscured “the social, collective processes through which commodities are invested with value, as well as the concrete material positioning of individuals with different access to such ‘freedom’” (Merish 11). Publishing houses frequently appropriated music more commonly associated with working class venues, translating the material to fit more middle-class values. In a similar vein, rare publications like Narragansett Thomas Commuck’s 1845 *Indian Melodies* was marketed as a singular example and resembled in form European notions of harmony. Most notable perhaps was the way in which black music was “Americanized” into “whiter” compositions, as blackface minstrelsy—the “most popular form of

Karen Sánchez-Eppler similarly notes that the sympathetic bonds, the “metaphoric linking,” imagined between white women and slaves, for instance, “obliterates the particularity of black and female experience, making their distinct exploitations appear identical” (20). Moments of sentimental experience, in other words, may produce engagement, dialogue, and empathy, yet they also chart the loss of identity as well, the destruction of difference that occurs when two bodies (imaginatively or otherwise) merge. Samuels most pointedly describes this dialectic as the “paradox of sentimentality,” or the “double logic of power and powerlessness” found within cultural manifestations of sentiment and sentimentality (*Culture of Sentiment* 4). In the words of Hendler, the “experience of sympathy depended upon a fantasy that differences could be effaced by defining human identity affectively” (19). Based on sameness and not difference, sentimentality risked the destruction of an individual’s originality.
theatrical entertainment in the United States” in the 1840s and 1850s—became a touchstone for how some Americans understood black culture (Djedje 130).\(^\text{10}\)

The presence of touring virtuosos in the 1840s, however, both introduced and critically redefined American attitudes toward music and black musical production more specifically. Associated with virtuosity, or the technical display of musical genius and/or skill, improvisation expressed the performer’s identity by creating “an arena for interpretation in which the proper characteristics of the particular performer—his ‘own’ and proper creative force—render forth the work” (Bernstein 90). The “passive” or conventional rules of music, in other words, became distorted through an improvisatrice’s own “active” performative flair. Defined by its seeming expression of unrestricted emotion, such music became a suggestive source of power for women in the United States who turned to music as an outlet for public creative expression: deemed the ideal producer of music as a “language of feeling,” the improvisatrice in antebellum discourse performed a Romantic, improvisatory music that released her feelings, giving expression to her own creative force.

Yet this music also advocated a new form of listening that challenged music’s role as an instrument of social regulation, as a cultivator of the heart. As improvisation gained ascendancy in American music practice, some argued that such music unleashed rather than regulated the unruly body. The perceived dichotomy between the balanced form of classical music and the wild, unregulated structure (or absence of structure) of other styles proved to be a point of contention in the 1850s. Critical to this re-evaluation of improvisatory form was the growing interest in black musicality led by the emergence of blackface minstrelsy in the North and a more

\(^{10}\) As Jacqueline Cogdell Djedje explains, while “Africanisms continued to be strongly pervasive” in the nineteenth century and black music performance occurred in a variety of places and moments (from the church services of free blacks in the North to the plantation work songs of slaves in the South), the music that was recorded, reprinted, and replayed in mainstream music culture failed to distinguish between such music and minstrel song (123-130).
general investment in an “authentic” American music. While early accounts of African music performance in North America were relatively scarce in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the “religious proselytization” of African and African American slaves in the mid-eighteenth century encouraged the public’s interest in (an acculturated) black musicality (Cruz 69). By the antebellum period, the association of music with African Americans was so established that John Weir described “the negro” to be, of all races, the most “naturally a musical biped” (qtd. in Tawa, High-Minded 107). This trope of the musical African American continued to prevail throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as Americans depicted musical performance as the primary source of cultural capital that African Americans, both enslaved and free, could claim. As W.E.B. Dubois famously stated in The Souls of Black Folks, “the Negro folk-song” was the “singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people” (163).11

Newly recognizing the “wild, sad strains” of the slave as valuable cultural productions, Northerners in particular evidenced a form of “sound-blindness” that linked these musical performances with the improvisatory sounds of the virtuosic stage.12 The intellectual schemas guiding musical thought in the United States during the antebellum period, in other words, encouraged Americans to hear a kinship between improvisatory virtuosity and the “extraordinarily wild and unaccountable” sounds of the slave plantation.13 From this kinship we

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11 In the preface to The Book of American Negro Poetry, James Weldon Johnson similarly described “spirituals” or “slave songs” as America’s only “folk songs” (xix). And it was this music, Johnson further argued, that gave voice to the “soul of their race” and to “the soul of America” (xix).

12 “Sound-blindness,” according to Franz Boas, indicates the “inability to perceive the essential peculiarities of certain sounds” (Boas 72). Yet it also reflects a larger phenomenon whereby a hearer, as Eric Sundquist explains, “impos[es] his own culturally conditioned patterns upon ones unfamiliar to him” (6).

13 At the heart of their similarity was slave music’s improvisational form. An 1838 article published in the Daily Herald and Gazette, for instance, described “Negro Music” as “improvisatoed,” an “extemporaneous song” whose “mode of singing” was ultimately “impossible to describe” (“Negro Music”). Indeed improvisation embodies Henry Louis Gates’ definition of “signifyin(g)—an act of “repetition and revision,” the ability to “[dwell] at the margins”
can trace what I argue to be music’s impact on American literature. Writing in an era populated by diverse musical sounds and performances—from the sentimental concerts of Jenny Lind to the blackface minstrel show—Caroline Hentz, Augusta Evans, Herman Melville, Lydia Maria Child, and others certainly accentuated the emotive freedom music offered to the sentimental aesthetic. While southerners Hentz and Evans turned to music’s formal properties as a structuring device for their own sentimental compositions, Melville and Child envisioned the improvisatrice as a strategic challenge to the hegemonic discourses that excluded figures of difference: by performing music that resembled the formless melodies of the African American spiritual, the improvisatrice encouraged an American audience to listen with sympathetic ears to the sounds of the slave. Composing the Body thus proposes a reading of sentimentality that reveals an American aesthetic constantly improvising on the often discordant harmonies of American culture.

Chapter one demonstrates how medical and scientific textbooks as well as music treatises, dictionaries, and encyclopedias (1770s-1830s) underscored the importance of the ear’s structure to the transmission of sound. These texts described a musician’s genius as an acute aurality produced by the physical form of the musician’s ear: an individual’s “musical ear,” or his ability to hear, appreciate, and compose excellent music, depended on the ear’s physical form. I suggest that this early investment in music as an embodied aesthetic evolved as proponents for music literacy successfully established music as a “language of feeling” that emphasized music’s sympathetic potential: sound’s vibrations, they argued, both stimulated and regulated a listening body’s nervous system.

(52). Improvisation, in other words, both gestures toward past conventions while simultaneously constructing new traditions.
As the female performer and her music came to be defined as the primary “instrument” of sentimental musical expression in the late 1830s, her improvisatory musical genius was itself deemed irreproducible, impossible to regulate or represent. This perception of female performativity ultimately reveals a critical shift in American music thought reinforced by touring virtuosos in the 1840s. Emphasizing music’s uncontrollable nature, these virtuosos threatened music’s position in American culture as a regulatory aesthetic. In chapter two, I argue that Jenny Lind’s 1850-1851 American tour exposed this threat on a national stage. Managed by P.T. Barnum, the Swedish Nightingale, as Lind was called, inspired a frenzy of admiration previously unseen in the United States. Lind’s affective vocal performances encouraged middle-class American women to participate in a form of “sentimental mimicry” that risked mystifying Lind’s own unique identity, an effect scholars identify as sentimentality’s inherent “paradox.” I suggest, however, that her improvisational musicality, as well as her connection to Barnum’s Gallery of Wonders, called attention to music’s inimitable form, thereby associating Lind’s musicality with a black performativity particularly disconcerting for white audiences conflicted over the issue of slavery.

This resemblance becomes of critical concern for southern sentimental writers like Caroline Lee Hentz and Augusta Evans whose pro-slavery texts are the subject of chapter three. Published in the years leading up to the Civil War, these texts experiment with narrative form and assemble hybrid structures that attempted to mimic music’s improvisatory fluidity. Yet in order to distance the sentimental musical performances from their African and African American counterparts, Hentz and Evans accentuate the incorporeal in this otherwise embodied aesthetic, identifying air—from the music of the Aeolian harp to the “airy” structure of a melodious nightingale’s body—as the ideal atmosphere for music’s affective transmission. By
disembodying the musical aesthetic, these authors, I argue, attempt to distinguish a white, sentimental musicality from the “wild, sad strains” of the slave.

My dissertation’s final two chapters address a nascent music discourse in the 1850s, led by John Sullivan Dwight’s *Journal of Music* in 1852 and the establishment of the American Music Association in 1856, which endeavored to transform music into a democratic aesthetic. These discussions, however, were staged against the backdrop of increasing national discontent over the exclusion of bodies in the nation’s democratic political system. I argue that Herman Melville’s *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities* (1852) demonstrates through Isabel, an improvisatrice, the democratic power of the musical aesthetic (as emotion, narrative structure, and language) only to question the musical aesthetic’s resistance to representation: a body that can not be properly represented both aesthetically and, as Melville implies, politically risks its own social and civil death. It wasn't until the Civil War that Americans discovered a true national or democratic music: newly dedicated to unearthing a distinctly American sound that would unite the fracturing nation, Northerners traveling and working in the south embraced the music of the slave as the ideal model. I argue that Lydia Maria Child’s *Romance of the Republic* (1867) reflects these developments. Against a soundscape of Civil War ballads and the controversial publication of *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867), Child’s novel privileges African Americans as the ideal “musical race” if only to counteract the prejudice that marked the Civil War’s end.

Understanding music’s ascendancy as an important textual and cultural form ultimately requires an awareness of what sounds—or musics—failed to find their way into print. This project thus seeks to listen to those sounds that are not always heard as well as those sounds that become misrepresented as they are memorialized in print. The stakes of such listening, I
feel, are best expressed in the quotation that begins this introduction: “Music is both body and soul, like the man who delights in it. Its body is beauty in the sphere of sound, — audible beauty.” Here Dwight encapsulates the inherent tension in America’s representation of the musical aesthetic: at times, the musical aesthetic was an embodied practice that expressed its material reality in the physicality of an instrument held close to the body and in the vitality of a symphony hall filled with an audience anticipating the opening bars of a musical performance; yet at times, the musical aesthetic was also disembodied, an emotion that eluded capture, the unseen pulses of sound echoing in a hollow cavern.

Dwight’s comment inadvertently draws attention to the elusive nature of translation—the translation of the body into beauty or into sound as well as the translation of music into something we can visualize and embody. Ultimately, in his emphasis on audible beauty, Dwight reminds us of that which remains inaudible, the silence of stories left unsung. He reminds us of the need to make speak, to make “audible,” that which too often remained invisible and forgotten: the relative powerlessness and strength of the female musical form, of the “deformed” and “disproportionate” bodies in American culture. His description of “audible beauty” thus speaks to what Hasting’s Dissertation on Musical Taste argued thirty years earlier: while “discords...are never agreeable to the ear,” Hastings suggested, they still “have an important effect”—“They awaken attention, create expectation, relieve the ear from the monotony of concords, and increase among perfect and imperfect chords, the ever-changing varieties, which give light and shade upon the painter’s canvas, give life and beauty to the strain” (Hastings 141). While the musical bodies of a Billings, a Lind, or an Isabel all provide a dissonant texture to American sentimentality, in their discordant deformities we can ultimately find both “life and beauty.”
Chapter 1

The “Language of Feeling”: Music, Sympathy and the Vibrating Body in Early America

Despite its appeal for “the Critic to be tender” (2), William Billings’ *The New-England Psalm-Singer; or, The American Chorister* (1770) seemed likely to succeed. At the time of *The New-England Psalm-Singer*’s publication, the demand for instructional tune books, psalm-books, and singing schools dedicated to the improvement of church music was great. A series of legislative acts, proposed to discourage public attendance of theatrical productions that often included secular music, limited colonial and American musical practice to the sacred realm. Although the legislative bans were lifted by the late-eighteenth century, they left an imprint easily seen in works such as the 1786 article “On the Power of Sound” which argued that the “most proper use” for the musical aesthetic was to “employ it in acts of piety and devotion” (161). Billings was certainly aware of the potential success any music collection dedicated to the improvement of religious worship could claim, finding it unnecessary in *The New-England Psalm-Singer* to rationalize sacred music’s presence in churches. As Billings wrote in his

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14 As Charles Hamm explains, by the late-eighteenth century, “the trickle of tunebooks compiled and published by Americans became a flood” as “hundreds of tunebooks” were produced, a trend continuing well into the early nineteenth-century (152).

15 “Effects of the Stage” (1792) denounced the style of music popular in European musical culture—or “all unintelligible Italian airs, trills, affected squeaks and quavers”—in favor of the “deeply-felt voice of nature” (qtd. in Sonneck 140). When properly combined “[w]ith the animating descriptions of the stage,” such music would “[lend] her aid divine” and “[soften] the savage heart,” awaking the “sympathetic powers of love and melting pity” (qtd. in Sonneck 140). The musical aesthetic’s close connection to an individual’s inner emotions ultimately transformed the aesthetic into a highly personal and private experience. In the “Preface” of *Grounds and Rules of Musick Explained*, Walters argued that music literacy promoted both public and private worship: “Hoping that the Consequence of it will be, that not only the *Assemblies of Zion* will *Decently & in order* carry on this Exercise of PIETY, but also it will be the more introduced into the private *Families*, and become a part of our *Family-Sacrifice*” (ii). This discourse inscribed the musical aesthetic strictly within a sacred sphere, either the sanctuary provided by the structure of a church or that provided by the home.

16 Oscar Sonneck’s influential *Early Opera in America* (1963) explains that “[t]he Americans of the eighteenth century were treated almost exclusively to ballad-operas, using this term here, for want of a better one, not only for such English operas in which popular ballads, airs, folk-songs were pressed into service, but for all light English operas in which the plot is carried on in spoken dialogue instead of by recitative” (3). However, the Antitheater act of 1774, finally repealed in March of 1789, made it difficult for even ballad-operas to thrive. In fact, many early
preface, “It would be needless in me to attempt to set forth the Usefulness and Importance of Psalm-singing, which is so universally known and acknowledged, and on which depends no considerable Part of the Divine Worship of our Churches” (2).

Designed to encourage both those “unskill’d in the Art” and those “more experienced in it” to “prosecute the Study” of “the modern Air and Manner of Singing” (2), The New-England Psalm-Singer also ensured its marketability by embracing an early model of musical instruction first introduced to the colonies in the 1720s. Attacking the “common way” of singing (also known as “common singing” or the “usual way”) popular in congregational psalmody, musical reformists in the early eighteenth century transformed the sacred musical aesthetic into a more “sophisticated” art by instructing the musical beginner how to sing by musical notation, or “by Rule” (Chase 23). Texts like Thomas Walters’ Grounds and Rules of Musick Explained: Or, secular productions disguised themselves as a “Lecture” or a “Lecture Moral and Entertaining” (qtd. in Sonneck 73). [Although the “use of stars in 1817” suggested that Americans of the early nineteenth-century were taking operatic music “more seriously” (Alhquist 36), Italian and French opera remained nearly invisible in American musical culture until 1826, when the Garcia family officially introduced Italian opera to America (Alhquist 41). By 1832, the Italian Opera Association was established (Alhquist 123). For more on the presence of opera in America, see Sonneck’s Early Opera in America, Karen Alquist’s Democracy at the Opera, and Katherine Preston’s Opera on the Road.] Richard Crawford explains, “the most important sacred music, at least by the 1780s, was a distinctly native expression, provincial and rural in spirit; while secular music was characteristically European in content, cosmopolitan and urban in spirit” (“Early American Music” 186).

Although the American musical aesthetic, in its infancy, often lacked the cultural sophistication of its European counterpart, many Americans defended the value of American compositions, often through backhanded compliments. For example, in Andrew Law’s defense of American compositions published in the Musical Primer (1793), he describes a “considerable part of American composition” as “faulty” (5) if only to point out its suitableness for American voices: because “it consists more of the sweet and perfect cords, than European music,...American music will better bear the harshness of our singing” (5). Although Boston was to become one of the more influential centers of American music in the nineteenth-century, in the eighteenth-century the city “remained a negligible quantity in matters theatrical and operatic until towards the end of the century...owing to the stringent act passed...in 1750” (Sonneck 10). Similarly, the Antitheater Act passed by Congress in 1774 not only “discouraged” such theatrical performances but also aligned the “exhibition of shows, plays and other expensive diversions and entertainments” with the “extravagance and dissipation” of “horse-racing,” “all kinds of gaming,” and “cock-fighting” (qtd. in Sonneck 52). In 1779, the Continental Congress proclaimed a ban on “Play Houses” and “theatrical entertainments” for public officials because of their “fatal tendency to divert the minds of the people” (qtd. in Hamm 93).

As Richard Crawford explains, the “common way” of singing was a “highly improvisatory practice” that lent sacred music a creative although discordant flair (“Early American Music Printing” 189). Because the psalms were “sung with decorations at extremely slow tempos,” this improvisatory ornamentation and reduction of tempo threatened the melodic shape of the psalms (Crawford, “Early American Music Printing” 189). Prior to the 1720s, such musical instruction was relatively scarce. Although music notation was added to the 1698 edition of the Bay
an Introduction to the Art of Singing by Note (1721), John Tuft’s Introduction to the Singing of Psalm-Tunes (1721) and Cotton Mather’s The Accomplished Singer (1721) instead advocated “regular singing”—a type of musical performance that restrained interpretive license by relying on exact notation. As Richard Crawford and D.W. Drummel explain, “Printing a tune, no matter how few could read it, at least established one form of it, fixing its identity and making it accessible to some—especially to leaders of congregational singing” (“Early American Music Printing” 189). Learning “regular singing” thus required singers to understand music as a textual object with its own grammar.

![Diagram from William Billings' The New-England Psalm-Singer](image)

Fig. 1.1: A diagram from William Billings’ The New-England Psalm-Singer designed to explain the “several Moods of time” (9), or the rhythmic relationship of various musical notes. The New-England Psalm-Singer: or, the American Chorister. Containing a Number of Psalm-Tunes, Anthems, and Canons. In Four and Five Parts. [Never before Published.]. Boston: Edes and Gill, 1770. Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800. America’s Historical Imprints.

The New-England Psalm-Singer promoted this early form of music literacy. In addition to the psalm-tunes, anthems, and canons collected within, The New-England Psalm-Singer also

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Psalm Book (titled The Psalm Hymns and Spiritual Songs, of the Old and New Testament, Boston), even this edition included only a small instructional section labeled “The TUNES of the PSALMS” (419). Advising its readers to “observe how many Notes compass the Tune is,” or “how many Notes [are] above & below” the first, in order to “begin the Tune of your first Note as the rest may be sung in the compass of your and the peoples voices,” this instructional section—if it even earns that designation—was merely intended to decrease the chance for “Squeaking above, or Grumbling below” in a congregation’s musical performance (419).
included an “Introduction to the Rules of MUSIC, with such Directions for Singing, as is most easy and necessary for Learners” (9), or ten chapters instructing a beginner in the technical aspects of music, from the musical scale (or gamut) to the “several Moods of time” (9). Complete with charts and diagrams (see Figure 1.1), *The New-England Psalm-Singer’s* introductory chapters mixed images, poetry, and prose in an attempt to educate a public possessing only a rudimentary understanding of the science behind the art of music. While these introductory chapters demonstrated Billings’ promotion of “regular singing,” *The New-England Psalm-Singer* diverged from its earlier models in its depiction of the musical body, perhaps earning Billings’ description in John Moore’s *Complete Encyclopaedia of Music* (1854) as a “reformer” who has “given a new impulse to music generally in our country” (140). In short, Billings placed between *The New-England Psalm-Singer’s* preface and introductory chapters “An Essay on the Nature and Properties of Sound.”

Written by a “Gentleman who has honored [Billings] and this Book with his learned *Philosophical Essay on Sound,*” the essay was “designed only to give a general Notion of the Nature and Properties of Sound to those, who have not had the Advantages of a philosophical Education” (3). Like many of the late eighteenth century’s descriptions of the physics of sound, “An Essay on the Nature and Properties of Sound” emphasized the role of the body in stimulating the “Perception...excited in the Mind” (5) that produced a listener “affected by *Music*” (8). As the anonymous author stated, “In order the more effectually to comprehend the Nature of Sound, and conceive of the manner in which that Perception is excited in the Mind, it

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19 For example, Billings’s advice that “[i]n Order to make good Music, there is great Judgment required in dividing the Parts properly, so that one shall not over-power the other” (18) was reinforced by a poem that preceded it: “[once] all the Parts are join’d: / Then rolls the Rapture thro’ the Air around / In the full Magic melody of Sound” (10).
will be necessary to have some Knowledge of the Mechanism of the Ear, which, of all the Organs of Sense is the most wonderful and complex” (5).

Citing the “elastic body” (3), “tremulous body” (3), “sonorous body” (4), “sounding body” (4), and “vibrating body” (6) multiple times throughout its argument, “An Essay on the Nature and Properties of Sound” reduced the power of music to a series of vibrations or agitations of the body. In The New-England Psalm-Singer, then, music literacy was more than merely recognizing notes on a page; music literacy was also learning to match these notes with the singer’s own bodily functions, or the vibration of his vocal chords. For Billings, understanding the science of the body was of as much importance as understanding the science of music. While The New-England Psalm-Singer may be one of the first official original collections of American music by a native-born composer, it is also one of the first collections invested in music as an embodied aesthetic, as an aesthetic deeply interested in bodily functions. Indeed, according to “An Essay on the Nature and Properties of Sound,” it was the listeners’ “Bodily Exercise” that produced the feeling of “Grace in their heart.” In other words, for The New-England Psalm-Singer, the bodily science of sound effectively produced music’s sacred appeal. The inclusion of “An Essay on the Nature and Properties of Sound” thus transformed The New-England Psalm-Singer into a text that accentuated what became in the late 20

Prior to The New-England Psalm-Singer, music’s more immaterial qualities were emphasized. Indeed, not only was the human voice “the most perfect instrument for giving expression to the inwardness of the soul” (Reè 60), in early colonial discourse sound’s transitory and seemingly incorporeal nature marked it as the ideal form of spiritual expression. As Eric Schmidt argues, “invisible yet resonating in the flesh, fleeting yet charged with presence, sounds and words were the apt media of such in-between experiences” (Hearing History 229). An act that would “consecrate, / That too too much profaned Art” of music (Tufts 13-14), psalmody not only made vocal music purer but also purified the mortal and material body of the worshiper. Too much attention to the bodily science of music would thus prove destructive to psalmody’s larger purpose. As Walter’s Grounds and Rules of Musick Explained states, psalm-singing as “Bodily Exercise” in fact distracted its practitioners from properly feeling the psalms: “At the same time we would above all Exhort, That the main Concern of all may be to make it not meet Bodily Exercise, but sing with Grace in their Hearts, & with Minds Attentive to the Truths in the PSALMS which they Sing, and affected with them, so that in their Hearts they may make a Melody to the LORD” (“Preface” ii-iii). When too inscribed in the body, psalm-singing became a mechanical exercise both uninspired by, and uninspiring for, the Lord.
eighteenth and early nineteenth century the troubling source of music’s affective power: the human body.

Although a nebulous aesthetic itself—how does one capture the transitory nature of sound?—I would like to suggest that the early American musical aesthetic left distinct imprints on the American conception of the body as an affective instrument. This chapter first turns to the vibrating body, a discourse on music that emphasized music as an affective art. I argue that early American texts on acoustics, ear anatomy, and music theorized the production of sympathy as analogous to the production of sound: the vibrations sound produced, they argued, both stimulated and regulated a listening body’s nervous system. As proponents for music literacy defined music as a “language of feeling,” however, that produced a different type of sympathetic feeling, this early investment in music as an “embodied” aesthetic evolved. Although becoming the ideal sentimental aesthetic by the antebellum period, music’s portrayal as an imitative art paradoxically recommended a vision of musical genius that proved resistant to reproduction and representation.

I. Vibrating Bodies; or, The Physics of Sound

With its inclusion of “An Essay on the Nature and Properties of Sound,” Billings’ The New-England Psalm-Singer may have been one of the first American texts to conceptualize music as an embodied aesthetic, yet it was far from the first to imagine music’s affective power.

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21 I thus foreground music’s relationship to the field of a feeling, a dubious framework for scholars who criticize the study of affect as “eradicat[ing] meaning” in its reliance on the “unpredictable and potentially solipsistic motions of the body” (Thrailkill 4, 2). Yet as scholars such as Lauren Berlant, Julie Ellison, Christopher Castiglia, and Jane Thrailkill among others have amply shown, “feeling is not opposed to interpretation but is part of it” (Thrailkill 4). Although the study of emotion in American studies has been examined through a variety of frameworks—most notably as sensibility, sympathy, or sentimentality—throughout all, bodily feeling remains a crucial component in the production of American culture. In Cato’s Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion (1999) Julie Ellison argues that “emotion, including personal emotion felt to be inward and private, is a social phenomenon, though one not separable from bodily response” (5). By focusing on the musical aesthetic, I hope to reveal how, through music, the production of sympathy becomes, to use Lauren Berlant’s description in the introduction to Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion (2004), a “social and aesthetic technology of belonging”—or how the musical aesthetic itself becomes, in Berlant’s terms, “emotion in operation” (Berlant 5).
Fifty years earlier, Cotton Mather’s *The Accomplished Singer* described sacred music’s more affective properties. “Hearts are melted,” Mather suggested, through the “cries” of “spiritual Songs” (Mather 9). 22 Joseph Seaccombe’s *An Essay to Excite a Further Inquiry into the Ancient Matter and Manner of Sacred Singing* (1741) similarly argued that psalmodists who “apply every Christian Song to themselves” ultimately “warm their Hearts” as they “raise their Voices to God their Saviour” (11). Like his predecessors, Billings too accentuated music’s affect on a listener’s heart in his insertion of a poem by “Philo-Musico” entitled “On MUSICK.” Here, the “Power of Sound” makes “sweetly subject” “all the nicer Passions of Man / and Every coarser Instinct of the Brute,” its “enliv’ning beams” “melt[ing] the icy Fibres of [the ‘Savage’] Heart” (19). Indeed, by the late eighteenth century music proved to be a sympathetic art. As John Wheelock stated *An Essay on the Beauties and Excellencies of Painting, Music, and Poetry* (1774), a commencement address for Dartmouth College, not only did “the more noble Art of Music…humanize the savage Breast” (11), the “Power of Music” was also “a Spark, which can inflame the friendly Mind with Sympathy and Compassion; inspire a Lover’s Breast with a rising Ardour of Affection; and kindle in the Soul the long Train of tender Emotions” (11).

These descriptions certainly coincided with the early-nineteenth century’s investment in the cultivation of feelings. In *Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2001) Glen Hendler argues that “in the eighteenth-and early-nineteenth-

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22 Notably, however, the “Feeling” psalm-singing created emerged not from bodily processes but from an individual’s transcendence of his or her body. 22 John Tuft’s *Introduction to the Singing of Psalm-Tunes*, for example, opens with a poem entitled “On the Divine Use of Musick” that dedicated the work’s psalms to God: “We sing to thee whose Wisdom form’d / The curious Organ of the Ear” (front matter). Paying particular attention to the body’s anatomy, from the “Ear” to the “Tongue” to the “Heart,” “On the Divine Use of Musick” depicted the sacrifice of the singer’s bodily center, her “flaming Heart” (front matter), as necessary in order to evoke psalmody’s affective power. By “off’ring up with ev’ry Tongue, / In ev’ry Song a flaming Heart” (front matter ), the poem charges this religious experience with a “flaming” emotional fervor that idealized the emotional or sympathetic relationship psalmody encouraged between each worshiper and God. Consigned to the flames, however, was the singer’s body. Tuft’s “On the Divine Use of Music” thus disembodied its psalm-singers if only to provide them with a “bodily” form more apt at expressing their innermost desires, or the form of vocal music.
century Anglo-American culture of sensibility, feelings were not primarily the sorts of unique, individualized, interior emotions they are in our more psychologized culture. Rather, sentiments required the cultivation of a moral and proper repertoire of feelings, a sensibility” (2). As a feeling to cultivate, sympathy was a matter of choice. Indeed, it is important to remember that underpinning Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* was a vision of sympathy or “fellow-feeling” (5) produced not by some uncontrollable surge of emotion but by an individual’s “imagination” (4), a mental process that remained largely under an individual’s own control. Although Smith claimed that with sympathy “we enter as it were into” another’s “body, and become in some measure the same person with him” (4), this bodily connection was merely produced by the imagination of the sympathizer, not by the object of sympathy: “Sympathy... does not arise so much from the view of the passion, as from that of the situation which excites it. We sometimes feel for another, a passion of which he himself seems to be altogether incapable; because, when we put ourselves in his case, that passion arises in our breast from the imagination, though it does not in his from the reality” (Smith 7). In other words, the sufferer had no control over the feelings of the sympathizer; the sympathizer could only conceive of “a passion somewhat analogous to what is felt by the sufferer” (Smith 23).

During the 1830s, however, the American medical profession underwent a series of changes that altered how medicine was practiced in the United States and the American

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23 Moreover, the act of judgment—that which decides whether an individual sympathizes with a sufferer or not—required this independence of bodies. In his discussion on the self-regulation of our own emotions, Smith argues that it is necessary to “survey our own sentiments and motives” not “from our own natural station” but instead “at a certain distance from us” (161). Even the decision of whether or not an individual’s own emotions were worthy of sympathy came from a split in identity; as Smith argues, “in all such cases, I divide myself, as it were, into two persons” (164). The proper cultivation of sympathy thus depended upon two independent bodies, or, in an individual’s own emotional “survey,” an act of extreme self-regulation divorcing an individual from his more instinctive feelings.
conception of the human body. Focused on the human body and its nervous system, medical textbooks sought to anatomize the production of sensations and feelings. Although produced in a culture that portrayed the human body as an object easy to regulate, either through the clinical gaze of the physician or the self-regulating “will” of an individual, these medical developments revealed one bodily faculty that violated such control—the moral sense. Challenging Smith’s definition of sympathy, these medical developments downplayed the role of choice, emphasizing instead sympathy’s more transgressive nature. Although the medical practices promoted by Benjamin Rush, or heroic therapies encouraging bloodletting, purging, sweating, and the like, were accepted well into the start of the nineteenth century, Rush’s influence on American medicine began to decline by the 1820s and early 1830s as American physicians sought better medical instruction. While Edinburgh and London were both popular centers of alternative medical instruction, American doctors also turned to France and its Parisian clinical model during the 1820s. Between the period of 1820 and 1860, “over seven hundred American doctors” traveled to France to gather medical experience (Rukow 45). As a “respite from the speculative theories of the day” (Haller 4), the Parisian clinical school offered young American physicians the chance to follow the work of figures like Philippe Pinel, Jean N. Corvisart, and Pierre J. G. Cabanis who represented the theoretical foundation of this Parisian model (Haller 4). Moreover,

24 For more on American medical practice in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, see Cynthia Davis’s Bodily and Narrative Forms, Ira Rutkow’s Seeking the Cure, Joan Burbick’s Healing the Republic, John Haller’s Kindly Medicine, Laura Behling’s Gross Anatomies, Michael Sappol’s A Traffic of Dead Bodies, Regina Morantz Sanchez’s Sympathy and Science, Thomas Cooley’s The Ivory Leg in the Ebony Cabinet: Madness, Race, and Gender in Victorian America and Stephanie Browner’s Profound Science and Elegant Literature.

25 In effect, these changes represented a “problematization of government” which Mitchell Dean defines as “calling into question of how we shape or direct our own and others’ conduct. Problematizations might thus equally concern how we conduct government and how we govern conduct” (27).

26 Not only were “America’s hospitals...few in number, poorly managed, and unable to provide administrative support to an affiliated medical school” (Rutkow 43), the opening of the College of Medicine of Maryland in 1807 “signaled the start of an indigenous American phenomenon known as the proprietary medical school, separate from any university or parent institution” (Haller 2). No longer affiliated with a university, hospital, or a medical society, some American medical schools in the early nineteenth-century provided merely a theoretical understanding of the human body.
the Parisian clinical school’s emphasis on bedside learning and its access to cadavers for dissection provided American physicians with the opportunity to experience the human body firsthand, an option many American medical schools failed to provide.

This transformation in medical practice introduced into the American medical profession a series of textbooks that anatomized the human body and sought to explain some of the more mysterious bodily functions, from childbirth to the body’s nervous system; more importantly, as Michael Sappol explains, the study of human anatomy became “public domain” (169).27 Medical

27 Although an earlier American audience for this “anatomico-physiological discourse” remained “small and elite,” by the 1830s the American audience was eager for these representations of the human form (Sappol 173). By the 1850s, in fact, human anatomy popularly circulated in American culture. Not only were “lectures, pamphlets, home manuals, and newspaper and magazine articles on anatomy and physiology, illustrated by engravings and lithographs...being produced in large numbers, for an avid mass audience” (Sappol 173), this “deluge of cheap and easily accessible anatomical picture books and textbooks” effectively transformed the human body into an object that could be “read” (Sappol 176). As Stephanie Browner further argues, the human body was no longer that “idiosyncratic, open, and fluid expression of the complex physical, spiritual, and social forces shaping an individual” but rather a “discrete object that was not an extension of the self but rather a material possession owned by the self” (31). These representations of the human form were influenced by the clinical practices emerging from foreign medical centers and by those “speculative theories,” or pseudo-sciences, many medical doctors traveling to Edinburgh, London or Paris sought to avoid. As “medical licensure all but disappeared” in the mid-nineteenth century (Haller 3), there emerged “two competing discourses of health”—or what Joan Brubick describes as “a language of common sense that establishes its authority with reference to the inherent power of the individual in community, and a language of physiological law that legitimizes specialized forms of authority over the ‘common’ man and woman” (6). Despite their differences, both discourses turned to the “representation of the body” in order to validate their “vision of society” (Brubick 3).

Although alternative American medical practices, from allopathy to phrenology, challenged the authority of the clinical medical model, they still reduced the human body to a series of “laws” (Brubick 7) that encouraged the American perception of the body as that “discrete object” easily regulated by an educated public. More importantly, these speculative theories emphasized the relationship between moral virtue and health. “Formulating universal dictates about the body that the educated citizen could understand and must obey,” alternative medical textbooks and instruction manuals like John C. Gunn’s Domestic Medicine, Catherine Beecher’s Treatise on Domestic Economy and Letters to the People on Health and Happiness and Physiology and Calisthenics for Schools and Families as well as William Alcott’s Laws of Health “diminish[ed] the importance of who controls knowledge of the body,” as Brubick explains (35). Brubick argues that childhood education provided an opportunity for the dissemination of the “laws of health”: “Physical education through calisthenics and outdoor exercise would become a necessary part of the need to teach the principles of hygiene to the next generation of American citizens. If a healthy body could be produced through the process of education, then the sectional and factious divisions between Americans could be subdued through a new grammar of right behaviour” (Brubick 97). This emphasis on the regulatory impulse surrounding childhood education resonates with the teaching practices of Lowell Mason whose influence of music education in public schools was widely felt in American culture. However, this control was merely “reframed into a problem of moral consensus that [could] be known and understood by the people” (Brubick 35). Indeed the nineteenth-century connection of the regulation of the body to morality in its many presentations—from moral virtue to the moral sense—was not uncommon. Although attempting to invalidate phrenology as a science, Thomas Sewall’s Examination of Phrenology (1838), for example, revealed the transparency that phrenology assumed between the body and an individual’s moral sense; citing one of phrenology’s foundational members, Baron Swedenborg, the Examination of Phrenology stated: “should the education be neglected, or no sudden misfortune,
texts influenced by the Parisian clinical model moreover focused on the human body’s nervous system and its production of sensation and feelings challenged not only this vision of the body but also Adam Smith’s definition of sympathy. A “faculty” defying an individual’s will, the moral sense was not so easily regulated. Indeed, rather than possessing a moral sense, an individual’s body was, in this early nineteenth-century discourse, potentially possessed by the moral sense. For example, Pierre Jean George Cabanis’s *Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme (On the Relations Between the Physical and Moral Aspects of Man)*, originally published in 1802, described the nervous system as comprised of two different experiences, “impressions” and “sensations.” Sensations, Cabanis argued, were similar to impressions as they both “come from external objects” (92). However, unlike the more instinctive impression, rational thought intervened in the body’s experience of a sensation: it is an “impression” that “the organ of thought distinguishes, envisages, and combines” (Cabanis 92). Conversely,
impressions were “the unperceived operations of the sensibility” and thus remained unmediated by rational thought (Cabanis 92).

In addition, in its study of the nervous system, On the Relations Between the Physical and Moral Aspects of Man took as one of its primary subjects that “faculty” some “believe to depend on a sixth sense”—or the “origin and nature of a faculty that plays the most important role in the ethical system of man” (Cabanis 69). Called “SYMPATHY, which in fact expresses very well the phenomena that it produces and that characterize it,” this faculty, Cabanis argued, was an impression, not a sensation: “the moral ideas and determinations do not depend solely on what are called the SENSATIONS” (97). Although occasionally evoked by “distinct impressions” (or, a sensation by Cabanis’ definition), Cabanis argued that impressions unmediated by the “organ of thought” not only “contribute to [the moral ideas and determinations] in a greater or lesser degree” but “in certain cases appear to produce them alone” as well (97). Unable to “excite or suspend” or even “produce the slightest change” in an individual’s experience of the impressions (87), an individual’s will—his center of choice—not only failed to control these bodily sensations but was incapacitated by his moral faculty, or by his experience of sympathy. Sympathy, in Cabanis’s description, was an involuntary and transgressive experience forbidding any neat regulatory practice.

Pierre Auguste Béclard’s Elements of General Anatomy (published in America in 1830) similarly emphasized the compulsory nature of sympathy. In Béclard’s description, the “Nervous System”—the “chords (nerves,) enlargements (ganglia,) and ...central mass (the brain in general,) formed of a white grayish substance”—contained both the “conductors and receptacle of the sensations” and “the point of departure and the conductors of volition” or what Béclard described as “the material instrument of intellect” (457). The nervous system was thus
the site where freedom of choice, or volition, co-existed with restriction or compulsion. Citing Xavier Bichat, a French physiologist and anatomist, Béclard argued that the nervous system contained “two distinct nervous centres, the one (the cerebral, or encephalic and spinal) subservient to the sensations accompanied with consciousness, intellect, and voluntary motion; the other (the ganglionary) subservient to the functions which are performed without consciousness and volition...the seat of passions” (462). Notably sympathy, Béclard argued, represented the “co-existence” of these two seemingly opposite actions: the voluntary and the involuntary, or the combination of “sensation” and “volition” (474). Although suggesting sympathy was partially indebted to the will, Béclard’s _Elements of General Anatomy_ still emphasized sympathy’s influence on the body. Anatomized, the moral sense produced feelings outside the sympathizer’s control.

These developments, I argue, critically re-theorized the importance of the musical aesthetic to American culture. While music’s emergent description as a “language of feeling” came to fruition in a “culture of sensibility” that emphasized sentiment as a feeling to cultivate, the science behind the production of music ultimately anticipated and effectively fulfilled this early-nineteenth century discourse describing sympathy as a transgressive act, or an experience that physically altered an individual’s body. In the late-eighteenth century, music’s sensations were typically defined as pleasurable. A 1789 article, “Music Physically Considered,” published in Philadelphia argued, “the pleasure and emotions produced by music are always of the exciting kind” (97). Similarly, an excerpt of Charles Burney’s popular _General History of Music_ (1789), reprinted for _The New York Magazine_ in 1793, claimed that “music may be defined [as] the art of pleasing by the succession and combination of agreeable sounds” (171). By the early nineteenth century, however, music’s affective influence evolved into a more general “sentiment.”
Hastings’ *Dissertation on Musical Taste* (New York, 1820), the first dissertation on the musical aesthetic published in the United States, contended that any “composition or performance...deficient in sentiment” thereby “cease[d] to deserve the name of music” (12). Most theories, treatises, method books, encyclopedias, and dictionaries on music followed suit, underscoring music’s more “sensate” qualities. In the opening words of William Gardiner’s *The Music of Nature* (Boston, 1837), “There is nothing in nature that arouses our attention, or impresses our feelings more quickly, than a sound” (13).

Holding dominion over the bodies of the parishioners, music cultivated and controlled an individual’s emotions. As Edwin Atlee’s *An Inaugural Essay* (Philadelphia, 1804) argued, “the passions of the mind are peculiarly affected by music. Indeed there is scarce an emotion that may not be excited or suppressed by it” (9). Hastings similarly suggested that music, as “the language of feeling,” was capable of cultivating a multitude of emotions (*Dissertation* 290):

> When cultivated merely for the purposes of personal gratification, emolument, distinction or display, it is of course liable, in many instances, to awaken among its patrons and devotees some of the baser passions of the human heart; but when it is cultivated strictly for social and beneficent purposes, and especially for the promotion of the praise and glory of God, and the edification of his people, its tendencies are necessarily and decidedly of the opposite nature. (Hastings, *Dissertation* 290)

A proponent for the American practice of the sacred musical aesthetic, Hastings unsurprisingly encouraged this form of musical production, arguing, “Music, in such cases, readily becomes a sweet harmonizer of the affections” (Hastings, *Dissertation* 291). Lowell Mason, writing a few years after the publication of the *Dissertation on Musical Taste*, would echo these sentiments. As a “refined species of elocution,” Mason urged in his *Address on Church Music* (1826) the
“faithful preacher” to use this “powerful auxiliary” (7) for “[t]hrough the medium of music, truth is presented to the heart in the most forcible manner; the feelings are aroused—the affections elevated” (6).

This emphasis on music’s relationship to the “affection” reflected a European debate over the primacy of melody or harmony to the basic foundation of music that emerged from the French school of composition—specifically the disagreement between the music theory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (and his Dictionary of Music) and composer Jean-Philippe Rameau. Most Americans experienced this debate only indirectly, through Burney’s reliance on Rousseau’s Dictionary of Music. Yet its influence seems widespread if only in the American obsession with music as a “language of feeling.” Perhaps introduced by Law’s 1814 Essays on Music, which argued that the “Music is the language of the heart; and almost every passion of the human breast may be excited by this art” (10), music’s position as a “language of feeling” was fully established by Thomas Hastings’s Dissertation on Musical Taste (12).

29 Michael O’Dea explains that Rameau’s Traité d’harmonie (1722) established the composer as not only the “dominant figure of French musical life” (7) but also a theorist who privileged “the harmonic system based on the discovery of the basse fondamentale” (8). Rousseau’s developing taste for Italian music turned him against Rameau’s theories, arguing instead that “vocal music must have primacy over instrumental, and melody over harmony, which is not an end in itself but a support to the melodic line” (O’Dea 19). Rousseau ultimately argued that “harmony offers pleasure to the senses while melody communicates emotion to the human heart” (O’Dea 54). Unlike Rameau’s use of “scientific observation” to build his music theory, Rousseau relied heavily on a historical perspective that traced the relationship of music to the development of language (O’Dea 20).

30 The influence of Rousseau on American music history is relatively messy to trace. Prominent American composers like Andrew Law owned and referenced Burney’s General History of Music. Burney’s text heavily relied on Rousseau’s Dictionary when addressing music’s sentimental appeal. For example, Burney writes, “upon the whole, it seems as if poetry were more immediately the language of the head, and music that of the heart; or, in other words, as if poetry were the properest vehicle of instruction, and modulated sound that of joy, sorrow, and innocent pleasure. ‘Let the musician,’ says M. Rousseau, ‘have as many images or sentiments to express as you please, with a few simple ideas: for the passions only sing, the understanding speaks’” (85). Furthermore, some eighteenth-century American articles on music had a tendency to quote Burney quoting Rousseau.

31 Rousseau’s definition of music as a language of passion connects it to the development of language in general. In Essay on the Origin of Languages in which Melody and Musical Imitation are Treated, Rousseau argues that “the origin of languages is not at all due to men’s first needs” but from the “passions”: “the first languages were tuneful and passionate before being simple and methodical” (294).

32 Hastings also published music instruction books like The Musical Reader: or, Practical Lessons for the Voice; Consisting of Phrases, Sections, Periods, and Entire Movements of Melody in Score. To which are Prefixed The Rudiments of Music (1819) and collections of music like The Mendelssohn Collection (1849), edited with William
By the 1830s, music indeed had earned this title, proving to be the ideal producer of sympathy. The musical aesthetic acted “in the most forcible manner” so that the “passions of the mind” were not merely engaged but “peculiarly affected” (Atlee 9). Indeed, no “passion of the mind” influenced by music could escape being “excited or suppressed” (Atlee 9). Even Cabanis argued that sensations caused by the musical aesthetic were “far from being subsumed under sensations perceived and compared by the organ of thought” (595). Instead the “effects” of music—or the “associations of sounds...which fully impress the sensitive faculties” and “give rise in the soul to certain feelings” (Cabanis 595)—“obviously enter[ed] into the domain of sympathy” (Cabanis 596): “there is in these emotions something more direct” than in those “sensations perceived and compared by the organ of thought” (595). As Cabanis further suggested, “[t]enderness, melancholy, somber pain, vivid gaiety, playful joy, martial ardor and fury can be awakened or calmed by songs of remarkable simplicity” (595).

This definition of the musical aesthetic largely stemmed from the scientific descriptions on the physics of sound posed by texts like The New-England Psalm-Singer’s “Essay on the Nature and Properties of Sound.” Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century American texts on acoustics, ear anatomy, and music argued that the sensation of hearing depended upon three types of “bodies”: the sonorous body, the intermediary body, and the receiving body. As A Dictionary of Arts and Sciences’ (1816) entry on “Sound” stated, “sounds should be considered in three different views; first, with respect, to the sonorous body; which produces it; secondly, as to the medium which transmits it; and, thirdly, as to the organ which receives the impression.”

B. Bradbury. This latter work demonstrates the popularity of Mendelssohn in American culture. Not only does it take the composer’s name as its title, the work also includes a “Biographical Sketch.” It also emphasizes the musical tenets Hastings ascribed to, arguing that in musical performance “[t]here should be just expression. A performance which is destitute of this property, however faultless it may be in other respects, will fail to exert an appropriate influence” (34). Thus Americans who did not read Hastings’s Dissertation would still have been familiar with Hastings’s description of the musical aesthetic.
Crucial to these early sound theories was the role of “intermediaries” like air that effectively became the bridge linking the sonorous body to the receiving body. While Joseph Togno, in his “A Popular Essay on the Law of Acoustics” (1834), argued that the “sense of hearing” was caused by “air repeating merely the vibratory movements which the sonorous body experiences” (19), he suggested that this vibration can only be “perceived” if an “intermediate body should repeat and transmit them to the ear” (23). Similarly, Encyclopædia Americana’s (1829) entry on “Acoustics” noted the “necessity of some medium for the transmission of sound” (36) yet explained that since “sound does not readily pass from one medium to another” (37), some bodies “are bad conductors of sound” (27). While air was often the preferred conductor, wood, water, metal and the like were also described as effective (see Figure 1.2).

Significantly, these early texts argued that an individual’s sense of hearing was caused by the intermediary’s successful transmission of vibrations between two bodies, the sonorous body and the receiving body. The intermediary allowed the vibrations from one body to be reproduced as vibrations in the other, physically altering the receiving body. As An Inquiry into the Nature and Design of Music (1831) argued, the vibrations caused by a sonorous body must ultimately evoke a similar “series of changes in the organ” of the receiving ear (9): “certain corporeal changes must necessarily precede sensation;...these changes are but the effects of external causes operating on the organs of the ear; that a series of pulses, or vibration of the air, produces a series of changes in the sensorial organs of the ear, and afterwards on the mind” (Inquiry 11). Although separated by both time and space, the receiving body replicated the vibrations of the sonorous body. The physics of sound not only connected two disparate bodies, transmitting one vibration to the other, but also allowed the sonorous body to produce corporeal changes in the receiving
body. Sound triggered the formation of sensations that the receiving body could not control, thus violating the body of the listener.

The sensation created through hearing music followed a similar process: a musical instrument (including an individual’s voice) produced sustained vibrations, which became transmitted to a listener’s ear and mind. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Design of Music* traced the actions of music on a listener’s passive body all the way to the “watery fluid” of the ear: “The vibrations of the air act upon the drum, and thus set in motion the series of small bones in its cavity; these communicate the vibrations to the membrane which separates the drum from the labyrinth, and this...produces vibrations in the watery fluid, in the several parts of the labyrinth, the vibrations originally produced on the drum” (14).33 Even though how music produced sentiment—or how the vibrating fluid became a sensation registered by the brain’s nervous system—remained unclear, the effect of musical sound on the listener’s body was certain: the vibrations of music were capable of making two bodies literally “become in some measure the same”—vibrating concurrently.

More importantly, the listener had no choice but to receive these vibrations and to vibrate herself. Emphasizing the musical aesthetic as the agential influence in this “cultivation” of emotion, these texts and others highlighted a crucial facet of music’s effect on an individual, namely, the inability for an individual to resist its influence. The physical effects music produced could only be stopped by plugging the ears. Notably absent is the element of choice implicit in Adam Smith’s definition of sympathy. With the musical aesthetic, a person could no longer

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33 *An Inquiry* also emphasized the musical aesthetic’s effect on the body as physical, rather than mental. Like the theories of sensation and sympathy of the 1830s that emphasized the moral faculty as divorced from an individual’s will, *An Inquiry* claimed that the “mental power of volition is not capable of willing, at pleasure, certain agreeable affections of the mind to succeed certain specified causes; and that, however much we may be persuaded in our judgment of what ought to be, our feelings and various powers of susceptibility, have a peculiar standard of their own to estimate and decide all cases in which they are involved” (13).
choose how he or she felt. The musical aesthetic either aroused feelings of virtue or, if misappropriated, of vice. As a “language of feeling,” music thus physically evoked what Adam Smith’s definition of sympathy produced only imaginatively in the body. As Lowell Mason would write of music’s moral influence in 1836, “This is not theory or imagination, but fact” (Manual 21).

Fig. 1.2: An engraving from Charles Bell’s The Anatomy of the Human Body Containing the Nervous System, with Plates. Vol. III. As “Section III. Of the Labyrinth,” explains, “The labyrinth is the internal ear; the proper seat of the sense of hearing. It consists of the vestibule or middle cavity; of the semicircular canals; and of the cochlea” (424-425). The image above is of the cochlea (428). “Section III” also describes the transmission of external sound to the internal nerve thus: “We understand that the cavities hitherto described in the human ear contain air, and communicate with the atmosphere: but, in the cavities we have now to describe, the nerve is expanded, and there is, in contact with it, not air, but an aqueous fluid” (425). See chapter three for more on the relationship of “air” and “aqueous fluid” to the (musical) ear. London: A. Straham, 1803. Google Books. Web. 10 August 2011.

II. “It alone of all arts and languages....”

As John Sullivan Dwight reminded readers in 1838, music’s influence extended beyond these sensate qualities, beyond sound’s momentary vibrations. “The pleasure derived from music,” he argued, is “more than a physical pleasure. It is more than an agreeable sensation; it’s
not all over when the excited nerve has ceased to vibrate; it lives on in the mind; it becomes an idea there, a feeling. It is not without its lasting influence upon the heart, the imagination, the whole upward striving of the soul” (“Art. II” 26). Music shared with poetry, painting, and sculpture the designation of being “beautiful” and, like these other arts, possessed a “language of thoughts, feelings, and sentiments” (Dwight, “Art. II” 30). Throughout the early nineteenth century, proponents of music literacy like Mason, Hastings, and Dwight emphasized music’s affinity to its “sister arts” in order to argue for music’s adoption in the United States as a worthwhile aesthetic. Mason’s *Manual of the Boston Academy of Music* (1836), the academy it was written for the first of its kind in the United States, defined music literacy as an essential requirement for every child’s education. “The business of common school instruction generally,” Mason writes, “is nothing else than the harmonious development and cultivation of all the faculties of children; hence, music as a regular branch of education, ought to be introduced into schools” (*Manual* 15). In *The Mother’s Nursery Songs*, an 1853 collection of music composed for the nursery, Hastings presented a similar argument, pinpointing “infancy” as “undoubtedly the most favorable period for commencing” musical instruction (“Introduction” ix). Such an early introduction to music encouraged children and adults to a study of music that could only be, according to these early American music manuals, advantageous to the family structure as well as to the nation at large. In the words of Hastings’ *Dissertation on Musical Taste*, music “strengthens the social principle. It awakens sympathy, cherishes affection, and contributes to mutual gratification and refined enjoyment” (290). Music, in other words, “increases the bonds of affection” (Hastings, *Dissertation* 290).

By acknowledging music’s affinity to other aesthetics, texts like Hastings’ *Dissertation on Musical Taste* and Mason’s *Manual for the Boston Academy of Music* crafted music in a
manner that strove to furnish music literacy with a familiar rather than foreign feel, a decision
most likely prompted by the prevalence of English music in the eighteenth century and of
European music more generally in the nineteenth century. As an aesthetic form still very much in
its infancy in the early nineteenth century, music presented a particular challenge to its
advocates, its notational system difficult to learn for those unversed in the art. While early
psalmists like Andrew Law turned to experimental models of notation in the form of shape
note singing, by the 1830s most American music method books used a seven syllable notational
system practiced even today. Musical collections like *The Mother’s Nursery Songs* moreover
included short chapters that introduced its reader to the basics of music. Throughout all, the
authors, composers, and music theorists publishing up through the antebellum period worked to
portray music literacy as a natural complement to, if not precursor of, learning to read and write.
Like language, music had an alphabet as well as a grammar, a fact John Callcott’s *A Musical
Grammar, in Four Parts* (1820) gestured toward in its title. Like Mason likewise wrote in the
*Manual of the Boston Academy of Music* that the “scales occupies a similar place in music, to
which the alphabet does in written language. As in reading, we are able to give the proper sound
to each letter, we must also acquire such a readiness that we can, at once, give the proper sound
to each note we see” (106). Like literature, music was composed in a comparable manner. As
Dwight asserted, “The whole process by which music is composed, is analogous to that of
literature. It is prompted by a heart full to necessity of utterance; it is conceived in the mind, like
thought; it is written down, and read, and meets responses in other minds and hearts; and, when
made popular, it tinctures more or less the popular thinking and feeling and living” (“Art. II” 27).

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Music thus offered what literature, painting, and sculpture already provided: an influential medium through which feeling could find expression.

In order to defend music as an aesthetic that deserved the public’s attention, however, writings on music also emphasized music’s more inimitable qualities. Unlike literature, painting, sculpture and other fine arts, music was a different type of language. An expressive aesthetic from the nineteenth century onward, music in American practice was an effect. As John Fétis clarified in his *Music Explained to the World* (1842), “When it is said that music expresses the affections of the heart, it is not pretended that it is capable of rendering an account of what such or such an individual experiences” (Fétis 262). Rather, music “does more” (Fétis 262). Unlike language and other aesthetic mediums “capable of expression only to the mind,” music “excites emotions in the hearer, creates at will impressions of sadness or of joy, and exercises over him a sort of magnetic power, by means of which it places him in relation with external sensible objects” (Fétis 263, 262). While certainly expressive, music’s effect ultimately produced what other aesthetic mediums were incapable of generating. In the words of Fétis, “Music, therefore, is not merely an art of expression; it is also the art of producing emotions” (262-263). Put more concisely, music “appeal[ed] directly to the feelings” (Dwight, “Art. II” 30).

Indeed, integral to the musical aesthetic’s reception in American culture was its peculiar designation as a “language of feeling.” Although conceptualized as a “language” because of its expressive capacity, music, according to texts predominantly read in the United States in the early and mid nineteenth century, represented a form of pre-linguistic expression. An individual who sought to learn music was of course required to learn music’s own “arbitrary” language, the

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35 Originally published in Paris, *Music Explained to the World* was reprinted in England and the United States. The American edition was published by Benjamin Perkins (his publishing firm Perkins & Marvin was established in Hanover, Massachusetts; see “Finding Aid for Perkins Family,” William L. Clements Library’s Manuscript Division) in 1842. I am using, however, a modern reproduction of the 1844 London edition.
alphabet and grammar that would allow her to become a proficient musician as well as composer. Music performed, on the other hand, was universally understood; no pre-knowledge of music was immediately necessary. As Dwight explained at length,

This, then, is what is most characteristic of music: It alone, of all arts and languages, is a direct expression of the feelings of the heart. So that, were this part of our nature developed, the most obvious and spontaneous utterance of feeling would probably be not words, but music...Music is quicker understood than words. Words are arbitrary, and require to be learned before they mean anything...But music is a universal language;--the same tones touch the same feelings the world over. Spoken languages address the understanding; when they would interest the feelings, they pass at once into the province of music; then it matters not so much what is said, as in what tones it is said. When an emotion would utter itself, words are nothing, tones are everything. We instinctively recognize the peculiar notes of joy and anguish, triumph and despair, consolation, pity, and entreaty; they need no words to interpret them. (Dwight “Art. II” 31).

Bypassing thought, music instead entered directly into the domain of feeling. This feature fashioned music an aesthetic capable of connecting different nationalities, earning music its “universal” status. As Lydia Maria Child wrote, “Words being of truth, are divided into many dialects, and nations cannot understand each other’s speech; and so it is with the opinions and doctrines of mankind. But the affections are everywhere the same; and music, being their voice, is a universal medium between human hearts, exciting the same emotions in the Italian and the Swede” (Letters, 2nd series, 115).36

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36 Accessible by all ages, classes, and races, music was also a democratic aesthetic, a description that gained resonance in the United States during the 1850s, a phenomenon chapter 4 and 5 will address.
Music’s universality (as performed), however, also gestured toward what was in fact the quality that both Dwight and Fétis argued to be the source of music’s exceptionality: a representational aesthetic that operated without representation, music relied on emotion, rather than descriptions, to express. As Dwight more forcefully explains, “Music through feelings calls up the objects with which those feelings are associated; painting and sculpture through objects call up feelings. Music appeals directly to the feelings; these set the imagination to work, recalling and supposing scenes and images. Painting and sculpture appeal at once to the imagination; the scene or the form before us, then we begin to feel. Music describes through emotions; painting and sculpture move through descriptions” (30). With music then, the discernable features of an object—Dwight used the example of a cottage—no longer matter; rather the emotions connected with these formal properties took center stage.

In arts like literature and painting, a cottage, to continue with Dwight’s example, was first a form (the “scene or form before us”)—a concrete, specific object created by a series of descriptive sentences, perhaps, or the gentle strokes of a brush; each outlined the cottage’s size, shape, and color. The cottage “then” became a feeling, the emotion (nostalgia? warmth? love?) that a “cottage” expressed more generally to its reader or viewer. These emotions depended upon the experiences of the individual as well as on the cottage’s familiarity: if it resembled an

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37 As Dwight more concisely explained, “Music describes through emotions; painting and sculpture move through descriptions” (“Art. II” 30). While music certainly possessed formal properties (in the first sense of “form,” as in an overall shape or organizational scheme), we become aware of this form only after we feel music’s effect (the second sense of “form”). Fétis critiques this property of music as a disadvantage to the aesthetic’s advancement as a higher art form; his chapter “Of the Analysis of the Sensations Produced by Music” argues that “in hearing music, one who has not studied this art, and who is ignorant of its processes, receives nothing more from it than a simple sensation” (276). While this “simple sensation” was ultimately music’s effect, Fétis advocated a more thorough study of music in order to allow these initial “sensations [to] become complicated” (276). Although he claims that “as an artist,” he possesses “certain enjoyments in music...which will never be shared by people in general” (277), increasing effect of music can only happen unconsciously: “The education of his ear goes on insensibly; at length he distinguishes the ari from the accompaniment, and forms notions of melody and harmony. If his organization, physical and mental, is well adapted to the purpose, he will soon be able to distinguish the differences in tone of the instruments composing the orchestra, and to recognize, in the sensations which he receives from the music, that which belongs to the composition, and that which is the effect of the talent of the performers” (276). Indeed, “all these things will affect him only by instinct, and the habit of comparing his sensations one with another” (276).
individual’s own home, for instance, the emotion would be intensified. Conversely, music presented a specific emotion (from nostalgia to warmth or love) that “then” led the listener to think of an object; one listener could associate that emotion with a cottage akin to that found in an painting or story while another could visualize an “object” entirely different—a hearth, a bedtime story. The point being, music first expressed an emotion; what followed—cottage or bedtime story—was no longer relevant. Music replaced form with function, making inconsequential the materiality more representational aesthetics like literature and sculpture depended upon.38 What a person’s cottage looked like was inconsequential; rather the “emotionality” of that person’s experiences became vital.

It was this emotionality that proved the foundation for sympathy for even the most divergent of people. As Theo Davis points out, sentimentality and sympathy—two “closely related psychological processes”—foreground the question of “whether experience can be shared or not, and thus whether the claims of sympathy are those of genuine understanding of the other or of a dehumanizing cooptation of that other’s experience and subjectivity as indistinguishable from one’s own” (141). To a certain degree, the musical aesthetic bypassed these concerns. The spectator (i.e. listener) to the emotion music and/or the musician inspired certainly felt—music “wakes the feeling, which is one in all”—but only through a representational schema of her own choosing. Two individuals could therefore “feel alike” without needing to necessarily imagine, understand, or identify with the other’s experiences. Emotion, through music, could be shared without a prior shared experience. To return to Fétis’ description then, music may not have been capable “of rendering an account of what such or such an individual experiences”; yet music did

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38 As Dwight states, “Everything which intently occupies the mind, the mind paints to itself again in images; it translates all its notions into vision, and that so rapidly as almost to fancy that it sees them in the first instance. It is by some such law of the mind as this that music becomes descriptive. But it does not directly describe, like speech or painting. It interests the feelings first; these the imagination, and then come up the scenes, the forms, the faces” (“Art. II” 34).
place an individual “in relation” to another’s emotions, the feelings her experiences inspired. Music therefore suggestively freed emotion from the particular experience, from that which defined difference among individuals.

Music offered thus, I would like to suggest, an alternative to and critique of literature’s (and language’s) reliance on sympathetic representation. Like music that “appeal[ed] directly to the feelings,” sympathy in antebellum discourse was characterized as “a kind of affective contagion, communicated by the immediacy with which suffering was depicted” (Hendler 36). Implicit to sympathy’s shared state was the expectation of collective experience, the surrendering of the particular experience to the general. Sympathy functioned through a “presumption that there is a structure of relevancy, address, and absorption” that “enables the consumers of ‘women’s culture’ to feel that their emotional lives are already shared” (Berlant, Female Complaint ix). As Berlant explains more extensively, “the singular materials of a specific life are readable only as particulars that are exemplary not of the individual’s life but of that kind of life” (Female Complaint x). Sympathy was “both a cure and a violation” (Boudreau 9), where individual readers could “lose their individuality in the flow of sympathetic identification” (Hendler 36).

Moreover, music prevailed throughout the late eighteenth and mid nineteenth century as an aesthetic medium appropriate for the female gender. Most of the music published in America during the antebellum period was marketed to a female clientele. For instance, Benjamin Rush’s Essays, Literary, Moral, and Philosophical argued, “Vocal music should never be neglected, in the education of a young lady, in this country” (80). Particularly instrumental to married women, the musical aesthetic calmed the chaotic home: “Besides preparing her to join in that part of public worship which consists in psalmody, it will enable her to soothe the cares of domestic life.
The distress and vexation of a husband—the noise of a nursery, and, even, the sorrows that will sometimes intrude into her own bosom, may all be relieved by a song, where sound and sentiment unite to act upon the mind” (Rush, Essays 80). Within a year of Hastings’s Dissertation, an article entitled “Music as a Pursuit for Men” (1821) moreover described “performance upon an instrument” as ultimately “derogatory to character, both as belongs to a man and gentleman” in part because it belongs to “pursuits purely domestic” (27). As music became more a “language of feeling,” it also became less an aesthetic for men.

The ideal expression of music’s emotional power, melody was long considered the “most noble part of the art” (Rousseau, Dictionary 191). Representing the core component to music as a “language of feeling,” the importance of melody to American musical discourse heightened the role of the female voice in musical performance. Even Billings’ The New-England Psalm-Singer relegated music’s melodic strain, or the “Treble,” to the female voice, arguing in its introductory chapters, “a Man cannot sing a proper Treble without counterfeiting a Woman’s Voice, which is very unnatural, and in the Ears of most Judges very Disagreeable” (11). While The New-England Psalm-Singer’s second poem, “On MUSIC,” emphasized the importance of harmony—the “Altus” “flies” “thro’ Harmony’s sublimest Sphere”—it was the “Sympathetick Strains” of melody that “join’d” the various parts (“Bass,” “Treble,” “Tenor,” and “Altus”), not harmony (10). In fact, according to “On MUSIC,” the “Rapture” that “rolls...thro’ the Air” during a musical performance emerged from the “full Magic melody of Sound” (emphasis added, 10).

Unlike harmony whose “beauties” are only “ingenious beauties, which please only persons versed in the art” (191), melody succeeded at “expressing sentiments” (Rousseau, Dictionary 191). Although most tunebooks in the eighteenth century gave the melody to the tenor, or masculine voice, by the nineteenth century it became increasingly common to describe
the feminine voice as melodically ideal. For example, *A Musical Catechism* (1824) by Henry Eaton Moore taught the rudiments of music as a series of questions and answers and included a description of the different voices:

Q. In Harmony, what part is considered the *foundation*.
A. The Base...

Q. In what *voice* should it be sung?
A. The Lowest voices of men ...

Q. For what is the *Air* designed?
A. For the highest female voice. (8)

Not only reserving the "*Air*" or principal melody for the "highest female voice," Moore’s *A Musical Catechism* gave the less emotive role—or the harmonic "*foundation*"—to the masculine gender. In the words of Lydia Maria Child, “Music is the soprano, the feminine principle, the *heart* of the universe. Because it is the voice of Love” (*Letters*, 2nd series, 25).

Thus, by 1836, when Lowell Mason argued that the ideal “instrument” for the “control” of an individual’s “moral character” was none other than “vocal music” (*Manual* 21-22), he also inadvertently suggested that it was the female musician who, “through the medium of feelings,” best “affect[ed] the moral character” (*Manual* 21). The May 1849 issue of *The Southern Literary Messenger* similarly described music’s emotive power as the particular province of women. In “Advice to Young Ladies,” the author suggests that an “accomplishment” “very desirable” for

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39 Perhaps one of the earliest American proponents for the female voice was Andrew Law. In a rebuttal to an accusation by W. B. published in the *Philadelphia Repository*, Law reveals his preference for the female (or treble) voice over a male (or counter) voice to carry the melody in a musical composition. He writes, “in the early part of my attention to the art of singing, I was convinced that a just stile of music would give the principal melody to the Treble; and that a second Treble would be more melodious than a Counter” (qtd. in Crawford, *Andrew Law* 153). Yet Law faced American opposition as he “soon found that the prevailing taste in this country was such as would render it very difficult to stem the current of opposition to this method” (qtd. in Crawford, *Andrew Law* 153). Foregoing what he considered to be a more powerful compositional arrangement, in order to “gratify the Tenor singers” Law instead chose to give the tenors the “second best” vocal line” (qtd. in Crawford, *Andrew Law* 153).
young ladies to possess was that of music because “[t]he highest triumph of song is...to charm the senses, and subdue the heart” (250-251). In the many sentimental novels, poems, short stories, and advice columns popularly published in the United States during the antebellum period, music appeared most often as a persuasive aesthetic, inspiring “involuntary” responses in its listeners. Harper’s New Monthly 1853 sentimental story, “Berthalde Reimer’s Voice,” depicted this “so strange a power” of music: “Men who had not prayed for years bent their knees involuntarily, and bowed their heads, awed by its solemn and unutterable beauty” (670).

Music’s portrayal as a “language of feeling” in antebellum discourse thus accentuated its resemblance to another “language of feeling.” A popular mode of address, behavior, and affect in American writing and thought, sentimentality was disseminated through a variety of mediums, from advice books to the novel or poem. Sentimentalism—or “the aesthetics of sentiment” (Samuels, Culture of Sentiment 6)—was both a literary genre and a cultural practice, the establishment, to use Lauren Berlant’s phrase, of an “intimate public” where “the personal is refracted through the general” (Female Complaint viii). Designed to “reveal the loveliness of nature, the endearments of home, the deathless strength of the affections, the noble aims of disinterested virtue, the power of that piety which plucks the sting from death,” the sentimental aesthetic’s “chosen themes” valorized “affectional connection and commitment” (Sigourney xiii; Dobson 267). 40 For at the heart of sentimentality was sympathy, “the coin of the emotional realm in the antebellum period” (Weinstein 17). It was within these “unutterable sympathies” which, as Lydia H. Sigourney suggested in her “Essay on the Genius of Mrs. Hemans,” “ripen and raise woman to her climax,” that sentimentality found its focus (xi). A “sweet art,” sentimentality

40 As Joanne Dobson explains in “Reclaiming Sentimental Literature,” “The principal theme of the sentimental text is the desire for bonding, and its affiliation on the plane of emotion, sympathy, nuturance, or similar moral or spiritual inclination for which sentimental writers and readers yearn” (267).
ultimately “join[ed] mute nature to ethereal mind / And made that link a melody” (Sigourney xiv, xi).

The tension between sympathy’s impulse toward identification and its requirement that differences become erased has long been recognized as sentimentality’s inherent irony. Perhaps most famously framed in Samuel’s “paradox of sentimentality”—that “double logic of power and powerlessness” (4)—literary sentimentalism functioned through “contradictory relations” where particular bodies and their particular experiences stood in as “national symbol” (Samuels 4). Sentimentality provided a “space of mediation in which the personal is refracted through the general” (Berlant viii); yet it also became a space where certain racial and gendered bodies were necessarily excluded. With music, these particular bodies were universalized (or “nationalized”) in a process that preserved, rather than erased or challenged, their particular experiences. Music was thus similar to but more powerful than the sentimentalism that literature evoked. While literary sentimentalism “envisions the self-in-relation” (Dobson 267, emphasis mine), music produced a “self-in-relation.” The way in which an African American mother felt for her child, for example, was comparable to the feelings a white mother felt for her own; even though their respective experiences—slavery versus freedom—were different the emotionality of each individual’s past experiences marked their similarity. Music, avoiding the representational pitfalls that made certain experiences seem foreign and unsympathetic to a potential reader, instead targeted what all Americans shared regardless of gender, class or race: emotion.

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41 As Samuels states at length, “The paradox of sentimentality, like the paradox of the ‘separate spheres’ ideology with which it is often associated, is this combination of the national symbolic and particular embodiments, an obligation at once to national respectability and to private virtue removed from national power. This double logic of power and powerlessness meant [that]...in the case of sentimentality, separation from political action nonetheless meant presenting an affective alternative that not only gave political actions their emotional significance, but beyond that, intimately linked individual bodies to the national body” (4).
III. Musical Expression

No longer associated with a specific description—“the scene or form before us”—music proved to be a more powerful aesthetic: “Music too is vague; and therefore describes even the more powerfully. It wakes the feeling, which is one in all; but it leaves each individual heart to clothe its feeling in its own hues and forms” (Dwight 34). And of all musical forms, imitative music proved the most expressive. Rousseau’s Complete Dictionary of Music defined imitative music as that which “expresses all the passions, paints every picture, renders every object” in a manner that ultimately “conveys to the soul of the man those sentiments proper for moving it” (259). Although John Moore’s Complete Encyclopaedia of Music (1854) broadened the definition—the “Imitative” in musical parlance was a “term applicable to that music which is composed in imitation of the effects of some of the operations of nature, art, or human passions” and that “exerts some of its sublimest energies; transports us to the very scenes it describes, or kindles the feeling whose expressions it copies” (446)—most antebellum discourses instead emphasized the imitative as a type of music that “touches the heart, and asserts its empire over our sensations” (Moore 446). Interested more in the transmission of emotion than the transmission of “scenes” or sounds that mimicked nature (i.e. bird calls, rushing water, and the like), the American definition of imitative music envisioned a form of music that, of all musical forms, best expressed a “language of feeling.”

Significantly, however, this transference of emotion from the sonorous body (music’s origin) to the listener did not “directly represent things, but excite[ed] in the soul the same movement which we feel in feeling them” (Rousseau, Dictionary 199). The resistance to exact representation ultimately became defined by the start of the nineteenth-century as music’s “real source of pleasure,” or “the association of ideas” imitative music evoked (“Thoughts on the
An Inquiry into the Nature and Design of Music similarly defined “the association of ideas” as “the influence of perceptible objects, in awakening associated thoughts, and associated feelings” or “the ideas thus produced, where one has a tendency to introduce another” (20). The act of hearing music thus developed a chain of associated feelings that never exactly portrayed the emotion the music attempted to evoke; it instead elicited a richer backdrop of sympathetic feeling, a variation on the initial emotion or an improvisation on a single theme.42

These associations not only originated in the listener but also influenced the compositional practice. Discussing the role of interval music in an operatic production, Michael O’Dea writes that for Rousseau,

music must continue, so as not to weaken the spectator’s illusion, but what is the music to imitate when there are no actors, no voices, no words on the empty stage? Rousseau’s solution is to radicalize and realign the interpretation of an obvious answer. The obvious answer is that the music should be consonant with the scene just ended and with the emotions just expressed...The interval music is thus an imitation of the spectator’s emotion, and the setting of the composer’s art moves off the stage and into the auditorium. (65)

42 Charles Rosen writes of the late eighteenth-century European move away from imitative music: “when we move from music as a representation of feelings to music as an expression of ideas...we part company with an imitative art and find one that is a model for the logic of the imaginative power” (131). His definition of the “imitative” musical aesthetic conflicts with the definition embraced by Americans during this period. For Americans, imitative music did not merely “represent” feelings but also expressed the very “logic of the imaginative power” Rosen describes. However, despite this definitional discrepancy, Rosen’s description on this new musical “model” does resonate for American musical culture: “Music represents sentiment only ambiguously, vaguely, and uncertainly. Music does not communicate emotions or even, properly speaking, express them. What it does is inspire and stimulate emotion. It acts directly on our nervous system and bypasses all conventions or codes of meaning” (132). In American discourse, musical sensation was unmediated by an individual’s will; in addition, Americans understood music’s emotional power not as a language that could “talk” but rather as an aesthetic that translated emotion, that filtered emotions first into vibrations in the air and then again as sensations in the body, thus “bypass[ing] all conventions or codes of meaning.” It was these physical sensations that, in turn, produced (emotional) meanings—not the music itself.
A good composer of imitative music takes into consideration the role of the listener—his or her active experiences—in his composition. Or, as An Inquiry more succinctly states, “It is not...the whole duty of a musical performer to be able to execute music simply, but to know also the character of his audience before he can expect success, in adaption” (21). The proper musical experience of imitative music not only imposed the composition’s or the performer’s intended musical expression (or emotion) on the listener but also implicated in the act of composition and musical performance the listener’s ability to freely associate on that expression. The musical aesthetic (its performance and its reception) thus became a sort of duet between the music and the audience.

As the experience of each musical performance differed, depending on the associations the listener developed, music’s imitative nature provided listeners with an original experience. While an individual listener’s body was forced by the physical effects of the transmission of sound to transform, this initial transgression was tempered by the freedom of association imitative music encouraged. In a single performance, then, while the emotions created by the music was to a certain extent shared by the performer and the listener, ultimately the emotional connection between the two individuals in concord remained composed of two distinct voices—two emotional textures. This emphasis on an imitative musical aesthetic thus redefined music—both physically and symbolically—as an aesthetic capable of producing different levels of associations: physically, music became the transmission of sound that produced two similarly vibrating bodies; it also, less specifically, allowed one body (the performer) to evoke certain emotions, a form of association, in another body: by manipulating a sonorous body (her instrument), the musical performer ultimately produced and controlled a sensate listener. More
symbolically, music evoked that train of ideas that, in turn, created new associations that connected both listener and performer.

The preference for “imitative music” in all its emotive appeal was particularly pervasive in America from the 1840s on. No longer an aesthetic relegated to sacred worship or merely dabbled in by a wealthier upper class, by the 1840s the American musical landscape was dominated by middle-class Americans eager for both sacred and secular music. Although sheet music published prior to the 1830s was marketed to wealthier Americans (Crawford, “Early American Music” 210), by the 1840s American music publishing companies like Oliver Ditson & Company began producing “low-cost sheet music and scores” accessible for “most wage earners” (Tawa 69). Manufacturers also targeted the American market for musical instruments which was growing at a remarkable rate. As an 1852 issue of American Musical Almanac stated, “A SINGLE piano manufacturer in Boston, makes *one hundred and fifty* pianos each month, and yet cannot supply the demand” (19).

In this welcoming climate, music not only flourished but also became institutionalized as an aesthetic practice pervasive in American lives. In 1833, George H. Snelling, T. Kemper

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43 Margaret Fuller writes in *Summer on the Lakes in 1848* of the popularity of pianos even on the prairie, despite the owners’ inability to keep the instrument in tune: “The piano many carry with them, because it is the fashionable instrument in the eastern cities...they never know how to tune their own instruments, and as persons seldom visit them who can do so, these pianos are constantly out of tune, and would spoil the ear of one who began by having any” (51).

44 Kenneth Kreitner’s *Discoursing Sweet Music: Town Bands and Community Life in Turn-of-the-Century Pennsylvania* explains that the “development of the piston valve in the 1830s and 1840s and its application to all sizes of brass instruments...suddenly created a new and wonderful instrumentation—inexpensive, relatively easy for amateurs to play, loud and spectacular, beautiful to hear and see,” thus ushering in the widespread popularity of brass bands (1-2). The addition of the minstrel show to popular culture also provided opportunities for Americans to attend musical performances. William Mahar’s *Behind the Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* describes minstrel music as the “first popular American musical product exported to England and the Continent” (6). Highly popular in the 1840s, minstrel shows were accessible to a wide audience; “opera attendance cost four to eight times as much as did attendance at the typical minstrel show” (Mahar 5). In addition, early minstrel shows (including the first in 1843) included “lectures” that combined musical performance with informational skits on “magnetism, phrenology, women’s right, and the typical commemorative addresses delivered on social and historical occasions” (Mahar 59). These scientific and medical lectures would have further emphasized the musical aesthetic’s connection to the body, presenting both theories of the body and minstrelsy— itself a very much embodied art—on the same stage.
Davis, Samuel A. Eliot, and Lowell Mason established the Boston Academy of Music. By 1837, the Academy successfully petitioned the Boston School Committee to include music instruction in its curriculum that followed the principals set forth by Lowell Mason (Pemberton 114). Arguing that “the feelings are as much of the subject of training as the mind” (Manual 24), Mason’s specific vision for musical education was founded on the belief that the musical aesthetic, if properly employed, “can and ought to be made the handmaid of virtue and piety” (Manual 20). What better way to “cultivate the feelings” than music (Mason, Manual 24)? Indeed, as an aesthetic form that could be manipulated, the musical aesthetic offered a powerful instrument to individuals seeking a way to regulate the unruly moral senses. Through an external “application” of music, an individual’s internal moral faculty would be not only awakened, as Cabanis suggested, but also regulated and ordered. As Mason’s *Manual for the Boston Academy of Music* argued, “The mind is exercised and disciplined by [the study of music], as by the study of arithmetic; and the voice as by reading and speaking. It tends to produce habits of order, both physical and mental” (23).

Influenced by European musical culture, Americans during this period moreover embraced what we would now define as Romantic forms of music. Nancy Reich, for example, points out that by 1848, Robert Schumann’s *Das Paradies und die Peri* became one of the “first major Schumann work given in New York City” (11). Also accessible was Schumann’s music, the first American edition appearing in 1850 (Reich 15). Including preeminent European composers like Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Mendelssohn, and Schubert, Ditson’s *Catalogue of*

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45 Moreover, Mason’s *The Juvenile Lyre* (1831) widely circulated Mason’s belief, itself influenced by Swiss educator Johan Pestalozzi, that “music develops children’s moral, physical, and intellectual capacities” (Mark 40). As Michael Mark notes, the preface for Mason’s *The Juvenile Lyre* posed a “rationale for music instruction so pervasive that it supported the introduction of music education in schools throughout the country for almost half a century” (Mark 40).

46 Also performed were “his Andante and Variations for Two Pianos, op. 46, performed on 17 March 1849” (Reich). By 1860, “All four Schumann symphonies, all the string quartets, the Piano Quintet, op. 44, and the Piano Quartet, op. 47, were premiered in the city” (Reich 11).
Sheet Music also provides a list of the musical forms included in traditional European repertoire popularly consumed by American musicians. In a section entitled “Rondos, Fantasies, Operatic Airs, Etc,” the Catalogue lists sixty-four “Fantasies,” fifteen “Nocturnes,” and thirteen “Romances.” Not only did the ever popular “Variation” have its own section, this section contained over nine hundred entries.

Thus by the time the musical aesthetic became an accepted and practiced aesthetic in American culture, the “dream-like” impression of musical expression was compounded by the form of music popularly brought, studied, and performed in America. Influenced by these European models, Americans indirectly experienced what William Weber, in The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms, described as a “fundamental transformation in values, practices, repertoires, and institutions” occurring in the European centers of music, from Vienna to Paris, by the late 1840s (85). Termed “musical idealism,” or a “utopian vision of music-making rooted in Romantic thinking” (87), this “new musical order,” Weber argued, “reform[ed] and reshape[d] musical culture fundamentally” (86). Demonstrated in the Romantic music of Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, Felix Mendelssohn and others, this “musical idealism” sought to mix “introversion and extroversion both in the music and in the listener’s experience” (Weber 93).

Furthermore, Charles Rosen explains that the musical texture often found in these Romantic compositions “altered the relationship between the delight in sound and the delight in structure” (40). While Beethoven, an early Romantic composer, utilized the pedal “either for sustaining important structural notes or as a form of dynamic contrast” (Rosen 20), by the 1830s, the piano’s pedal took on a different role as it was “expected to vibrate fairly constantly” (Rosen 24). In a culture already susceptible to the vibrations of sound, the addition of the pedal
magnified this vibratory effect. Moreover, the musical structure of Romantic compositions privileged an improvisational musical texture witnessed in the song cycle, where “a gradual unfolding and illumination” replaced the “Classical insistence of initial clarity” (Rosen 194), and the “Fantasie” which Moore’s *Complete Encyclopedia of Music* defined as a “continuous composition, not divided into what are called movements, or governed by the ordinary rules of musical design, but in which the author’s fancy roves under little restraint” (290). Much like those compositions “marked agito, acapriccio, con passione, con anima, and in all kinds of Cadenzas, Organ-points, and Preludes” that Mocheles’s *Studies for the Pianoforte* argued were the “[e]xceptions to this rule” that “Time is the soul of music” (ix), the compositional models emerging out of Weber’s “great transformation of musical taste” often left the performer “to the dictates of his own fancy” (Mocheles ix). In their emphasis on continuity, such compositions relied heavily on melody over harmony, designed as a series of unfolding emotional textures rather than structured harmonic sounds. This continuity also gave the music a formless feel. Not only were variations and fantasias marked by their seemingly dream-like characteristics, they were designed to sound—like Moore’s definition of melody—impromptu, a performance that “emanate[d] more directly from the feelings and emotions” (586).

Although Billings refused to be “confin’d to any Rules for Composition,” indeed advocating for a “Composer to be his own Carver” (20), most composers followed a set of basic rules designed to produce harmonious chordal arrangements. Rousseau’s *Concise Dictionary of Music* described these “rules of Harmony” as akin to those of “Grammar” (75). However, like “Grammar” which alone fails to provide an orator with an inspiring speech, merely abiding to these “rules of Harmony” would be insufficient—“a sense is wanting” (Rousseau 188). Instead,

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47 Such music effective reintroduced to musical performance the “humane imposition” or musical invention the early psalm-books discouraged. With their reintroduction, the musical body also became a central figure.
“we must discover in ourselves the beautiful airs of the greater harmony, the painting, the expression” (Rousseau 75). Melody—although certainly reliant on harmony—was this expression. To evoke the “associations,” that duet between listener and performer that produced impassioned sensations, the musical performance must have the “force of Musical Expression” (Avison 6). Only then would the “natural Effect of Melody or Harmony on the Imagination” be “greatly increased,” providing the musical aesthetic with the “Power of exciting all the most agreeable Passions of the Soul” (Avison 6). However, achieving such expression could not be taught. In fact, representing the “greatest obstacle to eminence in composition” (Hastings, Dissertation 134), the “Energy and Grace of Musical Expression is of too delicate a Nature to be fixed by Words” (Avison 32). When asked, “But what is expression,” even Thomas Hastings could only explain it as “an essence too subtile for analysis—too incommensurable for definition” (Dissertation 59). Unable to solve the “great secret of musical expression,” Hasting finally vaguely argued that it was “the heart of genuine sensibility,” or where “[f]eeling begets feeling” (Dissertation 62).

This feeling was moreover relegated to the melodic line in music, a decision that further emphasized the affective power a female performer in particular possessed. As Moore’s Complete Encyclopaedia of Music argued, melody was a “succession of simple sounds so regulated as to produce a pleasing effect upon the ear” (585). Melody also had “[o]ne peculiarity”—“that it more easily takes the stamp of individuality than the more complex branches of the art” (586). As Moore further explains in his entry on Melody, “The conception of melody, owing to the singleness of its nature, is more immediate, and emanates more directly

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48 Significantly, the difference between harmony and sound is one of time. As Moore notes, “Harmony is the agreeable result or union of several sounds heard at one and the same time” whereas melody “is produced by the succession of musical sounds” (369). Melody unfolds sound over time whereas harmony collapses and combines sound in a single instant.
from the feelings and emotions, than the complexities of harmony and counterpoint, which demand more consideration and calm reflection” (586).

Possessing “the stamp of individuality,” melody was—or at very least created in its performance the feeling of—spontaneous expression, a singular moment that got its inspiration not from an accessible musical “Grammar” easily reproducible as rules, but from the inaccessible mind of genius. What was lacking in “beauties purely harmonic”—which Rousseau defined as “ingenious beauties”—was musical expression, the element of musical performance and composition that allowed an imitative or associative melodic music to emerge (191). As Rousseau stated, “harmony furnishes no imitation by which the music, forming images, or expressing sentiments, may be raised to the dramatic or imitative genius, which is the most noble part of art, and the only one energetic” (191).

Ultimately, the “heart of genuine sensibility” was the heart of a musical genius. According to Rousseau’s definition, such genius was one who “paints every piece by sounds” and “gives language even to silence itself” (Dictionary 182). A master of the imitative art, a musical genius “renders ideas by sentiments; sentiments by accents” (182): “his genius will enflame yours; you will form a creation after his example” (Rousseau, Dictionary 182).

Significantly, however, with all the power to affect the moral faculty of the listener, such genius could not be taught, represented, or reproduced. As such, it resisted the regulatory impulses that sought to break down the body into easily categorized parts: musical genius—or the embodiment of musical expression—escaped representation.49 As Dwight would write in Moore’s Complete Encyclopedia’s entry on “Frederic Chopin”, the heightened musical expression Chopin’s music achieved ultimately owed its inspiration to Chopin’s refusal to “imprison the wavering, never

49 Thus, despite its abnormal nature, musical genius resisted what Dana Nelson described as the “perceived need to identify, categorize, and regulate ‘abnormality’... accompanying this occult scientific authority” (125).
sharply defined outlines, which [lent] his thoughts their highest charm, within the stiff, angular framework of a precise pattern” (200). Such music—resisting formal structure—became “[a]udacious, shining, seductive,” “[clothing] their profundity with so much grace, their art with so much charm, that one has difficulty to disentwine himself from their transporting, magic clasp, so as to judge them in cold blood from the standpoint of their theoretic worth” (200).

By the antebellum period, this paradoxical position—this split between powerlessness and power—became gendered as American musical culture became inundated with two previously underemphasized figures of musical genius, the male virtuoso and the female improvisatrice. Although American discourse early emphasized the body of a musical genius as abnormal—the American obsession with the deformed body of William Billings providing the most striking example—by the 1840s, the physical deformity of a William Billings had transformed: from mere physical difference emerged a musical figure more animalistic than human, more instrument than man. While critical reviews of their performances often emphasized the virtuoso musicians’ technical proficiency, many also highlighted the musicians’ bodies as deformed. Like Josiah Holbrook’s depiction in his Familiar Treatise on the Fine Arts (Boston 1833) of the renowned Niccolò Paganini, these virtuosos had “something extremely striking and grotesque” about their musical personalities (277). However, starkly contrasting the grotesqueness inherent in the descriptions of Billings and De Meyer was the famed Swedish nightingale Jenny Lind. Far from deformed, Lind’s body was the epitome of beauty, preserved and circulated in the graphics plastered on sheet music covers, in the pages of women’s

50 See chapter 3 for a more thorough discussion on musical form as it pertains to improvisational music.
51 The emphasis on the non-human aspects of musical performance (figures like De Meyer were both musicians and performers) can be partly understood through the period’s concern with the growing popularity of virtuosic music. In a review of a performance by violinist Ole Bull, music critic John Sullivan Dwight describes Ole Bull’s virtuosity as “restless, fragmentary, wildly aspiring, and without repose” (“Musical Review. Ole Bull’s Concert” 44). A virtuoso’s emphasis on technical skill further undercut what many Americans felt to be the real purpose of the musical aesthetic: of all arts, music should bring order to chaos in its emphasis on feeling, or genuine emotion. Music requiring extreme technical skill was necessarily devoid of such emotion.
periodicals, and in the many newspaper musical reviews Americans daily consumed. Yet Lind’s musical body and her body of music, I will argue, reinforced the elusive nature of musical genius. Like the genius of Chopin, so too did Lind’s musical aesthetic break free.
Chapter 2

“The Most Interesting Monstrosity”: Jenny Lind’s 1850-1851 American Tour

On a rainy July night in 1851, Jenny Lind performed at the Old Edwards Church in Northampton. Having already toured much of the United States to unprecedented acclaim, the Swedish Nightingale’s performance was unsurprisingly well received by the “[s]ixteen to seventeen hundred pairs of eyes” that welcomed her (“Jenny Lind at Northampton” 1). On the program were two regularly performed songs from Lind’s concert series, “The Bird Song” and “The Echo Song,” that featured Lind’s virtuosic mimicry of the charming trills of a bird and the resounding echoes of a cavern. Both songs were consistently popular with American audiences, inspiring “bravas [that] were loud and long” (“Jenny Lind” 2). As one newspaper reported, the “famous echo song” produced an “effect...magical” to hear: “the audience seemed hardly to breathe, and the delicious music stole over the senses with a power which it was impossible to resist.” Soliciting a “thrill of sympathy” in their listeners, both pieces featured what the American public had come to identify as Lind’s unique talent, a “sweet voiced...warbling” that was “truly wonderful” (“Jenny Lind’s First Concert” 2).

Yet at the Old Edwards church, such “trills” failed to “thrill” all. One audience member, poetess and pianist Emily Dickinson, left the concert somewhat under-impressed.52 In a letter to her brother Austin, Dickinson wrote of her lukewarm response to this “night of Jennie Lind.” Although attracted to the “air of exile in her mild blue eyes,” Dickinson found Lind’s “manner of singing” to be distasteful. What the songstress needed, according to Dickinson, was a good musical editor: “take some notes from her ‘echo’—the Bird sounds from the ‘Bird Song’ and

52 For more on the potential influence of Jenny Lind on Emily Dickinson, see Virginia Jackson’s discussion on Dickinson’s use of bird imagery in Dickinson’s Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading, 16-21, 223-238.
some of her curious trills” and her performance would become “very fine” indeed. Carefully distinguishing between the Swedish Nightingale and the music that had made her famous—“how we all loved Jennie Lind, but not accustomed oft to her manner of singing didn’t fancy that so well as we did her”—Dickinson’s criticism reveals a troubling aspect to Lind’s otherwise affective performance. In these moments of musical mimicry, Lind became something else, a transformation that threatened to sever the sentimental bonds developing between poetess and songstress. As Dickinson readily admitted, it was “Herself” (and not this something else) that “we all came to love” (Dickinson to Austin Dickinson 120-121).

Dickinson’s letter thus offers insight into the curious phenomenon of Jenny Lind. Totaling ninety-five concerts, producing over seven hundred thousand dollars in revenue, and managed by the famous impresario P.T. Barnum, Lind’s tour inspired a “Lindomania” that traveled from Boston, Massachusetts to Havana, Cuba and “silenced” all other conversational topics, including the “business of the nation” and “the intrigues of individuals” (Rosenberg 86). Usurping celebrities as famous as Daniel Webster, Lind exposed and intensified the “cultural apparatus” supporting celebrity culture in the United States during the early and mid nineteenth century, creating an excitement in the American public relatively rare for a female performer (Mole 4). Although celebrity culture became increasingly feminized in the early-nineteenth century, creating an excitement in the American public relatively rare for a female performer (Mole 4).

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53 Even though Dickinson seems to disparage the two musical pieces that highlighted Lind’s imitative skill, Dickinson’s letter produced its own imitation of Lind’s performance: arriving on a “stage” in the middle of a downpour of rain that fell “—in drops—sheets—cataracts,” Dickinson suggestively aligned herself with Lind’s arrival on the church’s stage where “boquets fell in showers, and the roof was rent with applause” as it “thundered outside, and inside with the thunder of God and of men” (Dickinson, Letters 121). A musician herself, Dickinson also demonstrated a proclivity for musical improvisation—the “weird & beautiful melodies, all from her own inspiration” (Kate Scott Anthon to Martha Bianchi, qtd. Sewall, 407, footnote 4).

54 Although often considered a twentieth century phenomenon—Richard Schickel’s oft-cited Intimate Strangers: The Culture of Celebrity argued that “there was no such thing as celebrity prior to the beginning of the twentieth century”—recent scholarship traces a prior history (22). Challenging Schickel’s assertion that these earlier periods were unable to produce and support the mass media without which celebrity culture could not exist, Edward Berenson and Eva Giloi argue that celebrity culture emerged as early as 1790 when the production of copper engravings and lithographs offered public access to images of the famous. By the early nineteenth century, “the advent of mass newspapers” transformed celebrity into a “common cultural type, constituting a new and powerful
The presence of female celebrity, considered “more provocative than male celebrity,” remained minimal, unpopular in its inherent challenge to traditional gender roles (Roberts 103). As Tom Mole explains, “While celebrities of both genders experienced gender-specific constraints, the assumption that women of virtue did not draw attention to themselves meant that a female celebrity could seem like a contradiction in terms” (187). While Lind’s connection to P.T. Barnum and his Gallery of Wonders certainly lent her an eccentric aura, rather than undercutting “true womanhood,” Lind very much expressed it (Adams 42). Marketed “as an escape into the woman’s sphere” (Douglas 11), Lind’s American tour relied on the cult of domesticity to support its success, leading scholars like Sherry Linkon to argue that Lind’s tour perpetuated the political and economic oppression—the “silence” imposed on the female sex—encouraged by the separate spheres ideology (98). Indeed, as Blueford Adams argues in *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman and the Making of U.S. Popular Culture*, “the Lind tour...was not about female power” (Adams 46).

Marketing themselves as “eccentrics,” European female celebrities often embraced their non-traditional roles, blatantly committing “mortal sins against true womanhood” in order to manage their fame (Roberts 106).

Linkon argues that Lind may have “soothed fears about women’s emergence in the public realm at a time when women activist and public speakers still made many Americans nervous,” yet she did so at the cost of her own voice: “Lind demonstrated that a woman could appear in public but nonetheless represent feminine virtue and remain almost entirely silent” (98). Although much has been written on Lind’s American manager, P.T. Barnum, little work has been done on what Barnum considered to be his most important project: Lind. Most texts that mention Lind only do so to provide an example of Barnum’s showmanship (or failure of showmanship) as in Blueford Adams’ *E Pluribus Barnum* or to comment on Lind’s American tour’s sentimental framework, as Linkon’s short article does. Gustavus Stadler’s *Troubling Minds: The Cultural Politics of Genius in the United States, 1840-1890*, however, does provide an insightful reading of Jenny Lind’s connection to the racial politics of the antebellum period. Yet Lind’s musical performances—her vocal feats—are strangely disregarded by current scholarship. Linkon acknowledges that “nearly
This chapter, however, takes a somewhat different stance. I argue that by examining the American reception to Jenny Lind’s 1850-1851 American tour, we recover an account of female celebrity in the antebellum period that contested popular representations of the sentimental female body. Structurally analogous, sentimentality and celebrity both emphasize the importance of creating identificatory bonds. A “set of cultural practices designed to evoke a certain emotional response,” sentimentality produced an “emotional and philosophical ethos that celebrate[d] human connection” (Samuels 4; Dobson, 266). Celebrity culture relied on a similar system, evoking “emotional responses and attachments on the part of followers and fans” (Berenson and Giloi 9) that maintained the “illusion of intimacy” through which celebrity culture thrived (Schickel 4). Yet scholars of both sentimentality and celebrity locate this production of intimacy between strangers as potentially destructive in nature. From the “undercurrent of anger” at unacknowledged fan letters to the violence of a “last despairing attempt to get the loved object to acknowledge the lunatic’s fantasy of intimacy as reality” (Schickel 5, 6), celebrity culture’s obsession with illicit access mirrored as it highlighted sentimentality’s purported “dark side,” or “the uncomfortable thematic commingling of power, unauthorized desire, and family feeling” (Dill 711)—how being “bound up” with another was potentially as constraining as it was liberating.

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every account of Lind’s tour described her singing, yet argues that “only the music periodicals gave her voice primary attention,” thereby proving, she argues, “that American audiences were not simply interested in Lind’s music” (96). Even Stadler, who aptly notes the “complete identification between Lind and her expressivity in song,” reads this conflation as the American public’s construction of Lind into a symbol for whiteness rather than an effect of Lind’s musically performative body (39, 42). While Stadler certainly considers the importance of Lind’s corporeality—citing Richard Dyer’s description of whiteness, “to be seen as white is to have one’s corporeality registered, yet true whiteness resides in the non-corporeal” (quoted in Stadler 41), both Stadler and Linkon ignore what I find to be a critical component of the American public’s understanding of Lind, namely the bodily transformation she underwent with each musical performance. While the many accounts of Lind may not have given “her voice primary attention,” I argue that the attention they did give was telling: not only was Lind’s subjectivity—as Stadler indicates—located in her voice, so too was the transformative power that, as I will argue, removed her from an appropriative sentimental discourse.
Uniquely positioned as a “sentimental celebrity,” Lind certainly offers scholars an opportunity to examine the intersection of sentimentality and celebrity culture in the United States during the antebellum period. This convergence—of sentimentality and celebrity, of private domesticity and public musical performance, of sympathetic attachment and erotic desire—was central to what I argue was Lind’s redefinition of the sentimental body. As celebrity and sentimentalized in the popular press, Lind inspired a multitude of material goods designed to provide middle-class American women the opportunity to become “like Lind”—a figure of domestic womanhood expressing popular sentimental ideals, from benevolence to Christian piety and restraint. While such play acting would seem to mystify and restrict (or, to use Linkon’s term, “silence”) Lind’s own sentimentalized body, reproducing what Gillian Brown and others have described as the “paradoxical feminization of self that excludes as it encompasses women,” this chapter suggests that Lind’s position as “sentimental celebrity” and her performance of music like “The Bird Song” and “The Echo Song” presented a somewhat paradoxical, if not revisionary, representation of the sentimental body.

I suggest that Lind’s musical performance revealed these sympathetic acts to be mere mimicry, a performance that “must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (Bhabha 86). Encouraging her female audience to possess, “like Lind,” a sentimental yet individuated subjectivity, Lind’s musical body—recognized by the American public as the site of Lind’s sentimental power—ultimately remained unknowable, both resisting material reproduction and rupturing the sentimental bonds that threatened to engulf her identity. Lind’s musical performances thus produced the sympathetic identifications that advocates of sentimentality imagined negotiating the differences disrupting an otherwise “harmonious”
society while resisting the bodily commodification that both sentimentality and celebrity culture encouraged.

While Lind’s musicality thus fulfilled the American conception of the ideal “language of feeling” that developed out of a late eighteenth and early nineteenth century American music “theory,” its performance, this chapter suggests, was haunted by a black musical performativity that doubled the virtuosic, improvisatory performances earning Lind her fame. Although Thomas Jefferson would argue as early as 1781 that African and African Americans “in music” were “more generally gifted than the whites with accurate ears for tune and time” (233), by 1850 the association of the black body with musicality was so established that John Weir described “the negro” to be, of all races, the most “naturally a musical biped”: “we have scarcely ever seen one who could not sing well, catch a tune at the first hearing, and [improvise] equal to any Italian poetaster” (qtd. in Tawa 107). This “natural gift for music” was particularly strong for “Southern negroes” who, possessing a “kind of sixth sense—that is a musical sense,” epitomized the ideal expression of “authentic” black music in their composition and performance of the Negro Spiritual (Wilson 366).

While the American attempt to institutionalize music as an American practice arguably started with the educational reform of Lowell Mason in the 1830s and was further expanded through the establishment of the American Musical Society in the 1850s, those invested in cultivating and entertaining a musical sensibility was forced to contend not only with the United States’ own “native” musical aesthetic (epitomized in the Negro Spiritual) but also with the perceived “musicality” of the racialized body more specifically and the institution of slavery more generally. This chapter thus ends by suggesting that Jenny Lind’s 1850-1851 American tour inadvertently exposed a form of “listening”—a distinctly American dialogue composed of
music, text, performance, and body—that complicated music’s placement as the ideal “language of feeling,” where blackface minstrelsy, improvisational virtuosity, and the “colored melodies” of the African American slave were heard as if they were merely variations on a single theme.

I. Sentimental Celebritydom: “Everything was Jenny Lind”

On 1 September 1850, Jenny Lind arrived in America aboard the Atlantic. Thanks to the hard work of her American manager, P.T. Barnum, Lind was legendary before singing a single note on American soil. Nearly seven months prior to her arrival, Barnum recounted his surprise at learning how “unknown on this side of the water” the Swedish songstress was and worried, having already engaged Lind to tour in America, that there was not time enough to “[enlighten] the entire public in regard to her merits” (Barnum 303). However, after a marketing campaign that heightened American anticipation “nearly up to fever heat,” when Lind stepped off the steamer in the New York City harbor, she was greeted by a crowd of over twenty thousand cheering Americans so full of the “wildest enthusiasm” that “one man, in his zeal to obtain a good view, accidentally tumbled overboard amid the shouts of those near him” (Barnum 306-307). This “somewhat savage exhibition of enthusiasm” marked the start of the mass admiration and near frenzy the American public displayed for Lind, her tour quickly becoming a full-blown “enterprise” and “musical campaign” that targeted the growing interest in the United States for popular entertainment and its concurrent presentation of celebrities (Barnum 315). As Thomas Baker explains, the “market for access to renown” grew rapidly in the early nineteenth century, encouraged by new technologies of print that “capitalize[d] on psychic bonds and links of desire forged between the reading public and the objects of its fascination” (4-5). By the 1840s the demand for musical and theatrical entertainment was so great that America began to attract and sustain artists of international acclaim. “The notion of America as an appreciative and wealthy
consumer of music grew as the European music press assiduously reported the bountiful reception of more visiting artists in the United States” (Lott 4). Introduced into this culture of celebrity by a man who possessed the “unique ability to combine short-term sensations with a profitable, long-term strategy” (Whalen xi), Lind quickly became, according to the Albany *Weekly Argus*, “the most popular woman in the world” (qtd. in Ware and Lockard 19).

The “ceaseless curiosity of the people...to get a sight of” Lind kept “well-dressed idlers” outside her hotel through the day (Rosenberg 13). Tickets auctioned off for Lind’s first concert—attended by nearly fifteen hundred New Yorkers—averaged over six dollars apiece (Ware and Lockard 20). Infected with “Lindomania,” Americans clamored for the opportunity to attend Lind’s concerts well throughout her tour: “[e]very Hall or Chapel in which she has sung, has been thronged by hearers. The very streets lying around them, have been crowded by those who lingered there for the sake of catching the few notes of her voice which might steal to them through the walls or the opened windows” (Rosenberg 224-225). Fans unlucky enough to be sold out could relive the performance the next day as narratives of Lind’s musical feats and everyday activities constantly circulated in gossip columns, women’s journals, published memoirs and poems. As Alice B. Neal noted in “A Reminiscence of Jenny Lind,” “Each item of her conversation was jotted down by some industrious penny-a-liner” (353). Even Barnum, understanding the importance of such narratives to the success of Lind’s American tour, employed “’printer’s ink’...in every possible form, to put and keep Jenny Lind before the public”

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58 Ware and Lockard’s work presents a biography of Lind’s tour and relies heavily on the work of Willis and Rosenberg.
59 Ware and Lockard, *P.T. Barnum Presents*, 20. While the first concert’s highest ticket was auctioned off to “Genin the hatter” for $255, the highest priced ticket sold during Lind’s tour was a hefty $650 to a Colonel William Ross. See Barnum, *The Life*, 312; Ware and Lockard, *P.T. Barnum Presents*, 38. These prices were unusual for an American musical performance. Lott explains that a common admission price to a concert by visiting musicians was one dollar yet even this cost was contested as some “stubbornly refused to attend concerts with such a price tag when admission to programs of local performers was still only fifty cents” (Lott, *From Paris* 23).
By 1851 three biographies of Lind were published, Samuel Avery’s *The Life and Genius of Jenny Lind* (1850), Nathaniel P. Willis’s *Memoranda of the Life of Jenny Lind* (1851), and C.G Rosenberg’s *Jenny Lind in America* (1851). In addition, Americans had access to Rose Ellen Hendriks’s *Jenny Lind: A Novel* (1848), Thaddeus W. Meighan’s *The Jenny Lind Mania in Boston, or, A Sequel to Barnum’s Parnassus* (1850), and a wide selection of Jenny Lind music collections, from David Paine’s *The Jenny Lind Glee Book* (1851) to Samuel Beman’s *The Nightingale; or, The Jenny Lind Songster* (1850).

Spreading news of Lind’s concerts throughout the United States, the popular press sensationalized Lind’s celebrity status with headlines that emphasized her fame (“The Jenny Lind Excitement,” “Jenny Lind Mania,” and “Jenny Lind Furore”), her generosity (“Jenny Lind’s Benevolence,” “Jenny Lind in the Almshouse,” and “Jenny Lind Charities”) and her overall sentimental appeal: as “Women of America to Jenny Lind” poetized, “We greet thee—we love thee—for virtues untold / Thy nature so kindly and warm” (Col E). Indeed, what made Lind so popular at her early introduction to America was not merely the “puffery” of the great P.T. Barnum but the image of Lind that Barnum constructed. Published in New York newspapers as early as February of 1850, Barnum’s “first letter to the reading community,” or Lind’s

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60 In his autobiography’s advice to aspiring entrepreneurs, Barnum states that “whatever your occupation or calling may be, if it needs support from the public, advertise it thoroughly and efficiently, in some shape or other that will arrest public attention.” He continues by admitting that “what success I have had in my life may fairly be attributed more to the public press than to nearly all other causes combined” (Barnum 396).

61 The most popular Jenny Lind biography came from the pen of Fredericka Bremer. Read widely throughout America and often published in Lind’s concert programs, Bremer’s biography gives us unique insight into the common narrative tropes Americans associated with the Swedish Nightingale. In Bremer’s narration, Lind—a “poor and plain little girl...lonely and neglected”—through patronage and hard work grows into a woman “no more poor, no more plain, no more neglected.” Grown rich financially and in feminine grace, the once “plain little girl” becomes the Lind America had come to expect: a “slender person with the power to charm and inspire multitudes” (“Jenny Lind” Col E). Read widely throughout America—republished in newspapers, magazines and memoirs on the Swedish Nightingale—Bremer’s narration was also published in Lind’s concert program. Structured as a sentimental *Bildungsroman*, Bremer’s narration evokes Nina Baym’s description of the characteristic traits of a sentimental novel that still remain a guiding definition of the sentimental novel’s formal structure, from a plot line that features a poor and friendless child to the need to earn one’s own living to the emphasis on “functioning religious values” that calls to mind Lind’s own charitable nature (35-41).
introduction, emphasized not only Lind’s interest in the United States—“she has great anxiety to visit America”—but also her benevolent inclinations: “In her engagement with me, (which includes Havana,) she expressly reserves the right to give charitable concerts whenever she thinks proper.” It was this vision of a charitable, albeit famous, female that Barnum “felt sure” would attract “multitudes of individuals in America...to attend her concerts by this feeling alone.” As Barnum notes in his autobiography, “I may as well here state, that although I relied prominently upon Jenny Lind’s reputation as a great musical artiste, I also took largely into my estimate of her success with all classes of the American public, her character for extraordinary benevolence and generosity” (304-307). Barnum’s assumption proved correct. As the Memoranda of the Life of Jenny Lind claimed, “without her purity, her angelic simplicity” as well as her benevolence, Lind “would have found excitement, only at the footlights of the stage” (Willis 142). Godey’s Lady’s Book similarly reported in February 1851 that Lind’s “simplicity of demeanor, and her ingenuous countenance, give double effect to the sweet sounds breathed from her lips” (“Jenny Lind” 134).

Sentimentalized in the popular press, Lind became a symbol for domesticity, an idealized vision of femininity that commingled religious piety with social compassion and inspired sympathetic identifications within Lind’s audience members. It was this symbolic placement that Barnum deliberately attempted to achieve; as he stated in a conversation with the piano virtuoso, Henri Herz, “I count on making her pass as an angel descended from the skies, and present her as a pure and radiant symbol for young America” (30). Not only was Lind “more truthful and touching” than popular Italian opera singers like Guilia Grisi, she was more “sympathetic” as well: “We sympathize with Lind; we wonder with Grisi” (qtd. in Willis 87). “[A]ttacked by some strange pain for which they were not able to account,” concert-goers attending Lind’s musical
performances wrote of developing a “mysterious sympathy” that left them “heaving with emotion” (Willis 33). Lind, I suggest, thus proved adept at cultivating the sympathetic identifications that sentimentalists proclaimed as key to national harmony; as Harriet Beecher Stowe famously argued, “An 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 benefactor to the human race” (385). Representing the “wonder of this new era” and belonging, as the Daily American suggested, “not to nations, but to the age” (qtd. in Ware and Lockard 68), Lind had the potential to unite Americans, speaking “a language unto all, so full of faith, and hope, and charity—so instinct with divine light and love, that its gentle tones would pierce the hardest heart, and raise the most drooping and desolate spirit” (Willis 53). As The Memoranda of the Life of Jenny Lind noted, “Jenny Lind is evidently most herself and most inspired when she sings most for all” (Willis 126).

It is my contention that Lind, functioning as public performer and sentimentalized woman, presents a unique opportunity for examining American sentimentalism through a celebrity framework in her tour’s necessary disclosure of the inherent tensions that emerged through its public promotion of a popular domestic ideology. In The Feminization of American Culture, Ann Douglas emphatically condemned sentimentality’s association with domesticity as a “continuation of male hegemony in different guises.” Protesting “a power to which one has already in part capitulated,” sentimentalism’s positioning of women in the private sphere (the domestic home) left them in charge of cultivating “passive virtues...sorely needed in American life” yet restricted in cultural value, tending to limit “the possibilities for change in American society” (Douglas 12-13). More recent scholars of sentimentality—Shirley Samuels, Lauren

62 For more on the relationship between sentimentality and sympathy, see Glen Hendler’s Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature.
Berlant, Kristen Boudreau, Glen Hendler, and Elizabeth Dillon, to name a few—have provided ample critique of Douglas’s thesis, demonstrating not only the political relevance of emotion but also de-stabilizing the purported boundaries separating the private from the public. While Lind certainly demonstrated Douglas’ “passive virtues,” she did so on a public—indeed national—stage, following a concert schedule that began in New York City and included stops in Boston, Providence, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Richmond, Charleston, Memphis, Nashville, Natchez, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Madison, Wheeling, Pittsburgh, New Orleans, and Havana, Cuba.

Producing a highly visible and vast archive of sentimentality and celebrity culture’s intersection, Lind’s tour revealed the American public’s fan-atic response to sentimentality as it heightened the stakes of sentimentalism itself. As “sentimental celebrity,” Lind’s transformation from “private individual” into “public spectacle” not only staged domestic womanhood as a “public, national tableau” but also put pressure on the separate spheres ideology commonly associated with sentimentality (Goldsmith 22, 25).

Presenting a “powerful public [image] of femininity” that allowed “white woman’s position in the domestic sphere” to become “sacralized,” Lind’s American tour offered an example of how a middle-class American woman could preserve her sense of femininity while outside the home and, indeed, while on a very important stage.

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63 For more recent work on emotion, sentimentality and the private/public spheres, see Lauren Berlant, The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture; Dana Nelson, National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men; Milette Shamir, Inexpressible Privacy: The Interior Life of Antebellum American Literature. Recent work has also been done on the management of emotions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; see in particular Christopher Castiglia’s Interior States: Institutional Consciousness and the Inner Life of Democracy in the Antebellum United States; Shirley Samuels, Romances of the Republic: Women, the Family, and Violence in the Literature of the Early American Nation; Kristen Boudreau’s Sympathy in American Literature: American Sentiments from Jefferson to the Jameses. For two thorough studies on the public performance of the private self in early America, see Jay Fliegelman, Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance; Christopher Looby, Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States. For more on the public presence of sentimental authors in America, see Mary Kelley, Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America.

64 The “extraordinary elasticity of the celebrity image, coupled with its ability to foster strong emotional identification” made celebrity an “ideal technology for the shaping of national consciousness” (Goldsmith 33).
public stage (Dillon 5, 18). Simultaneously exposing the cultural relevance of sentimentality—reaching a wide audience and “piercing the hardest hearts”—while disrupting the social norms that restricted middle-class American women to the domestic home, Lind’s American tour vitalized sentimentality with celebrity culture’s thrilling pulse.

Certainly Lind’s expression of sentimental ideals and production of sympathetic identifications undercut the negative associations attributed to feminine public display; her placement as sentimental celebrity also gave middle-class American women in particular an opportunity to understand, connect with, and become the domestic ideals Lind represented. A “performed effigy” of sorts Lind was converted into a “medium” through which sentimentality found material expression (Roach 36). Indeed, the “illusion of intimacy” supporting Lind’s celebrity and sentimental identities was partially produced and undoubtedly maintained by the commodities circulating around Lind’s American tour. Inundated with Jenny Lind goods, stores sold a wide array of objects associated with the famous singer: “Jenny Lind gloves, Jenny Lind bonnets, Jenny Lind riding hats, Jenny Lind shawls, mantillas, robes, chairs, sofas, pianos—in fact, every thing was Jenny Lind” (Barnum 309). Notably, most of the merchandise lucratively sold throughout Lind’s tour—sheet music, hair pins, hats, handkerchiefs and the like—was marketed to a female clientele. More than a mere keepsake, these souvenirs became a critical component of the consumer’s self. As Lori Merish explains in Sentimental Materialism, middle-class American women, classified as the “new consumer subject,” turned to material objects as an expression of their domestic womanhood (92). Exemplifying “sentimental possession” where the “experience of objects constitutes the individual’s subjective endowments, so that these things are interwoven with the emotions they shape” (Merish 117), the feminine impulse to own

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65 Such effigies “provide communities with a method of perpetuating themselves through specially nominated mediums or surrogates: among them, actors, dancers, priests, street maskers, statesmen, celebrities, freaks, children, and especially, by virtue of an intense but unsurprising paradox, corpses” (Roach 36).
objects associated with Lind illustrated the extent to which middle-class American women not only emotionally identified with the songstress but also incorporated Lind’s identity into their “conception of self” (Young 641). As Harvey Young reminds us, a “souvenir” in its “memorial function” ultimately “anchors itself in its ability to bring the sensation of the other—an other person or an other place—into one’s own body” (641). The material culture circulating around Lind thus encouraged American women to perform—and performatively become—the ideals that Lind represented. While wearing a Jenny Lind hairpin, a housewife could play a Jenny Lind piano and sing a Jenny Lind song, before resting on a Jenny Lind sofa and offering her husband a Jenny Lind cigar.

Although the seemingly insatiable desire for Lind memorabilia demonstrated the importance of material culture to the perpetuation of the cult of celebrity—Berenson and Giloi describe the “consumption and manipulation of material culture” as “vital in allowing fans to live out their celebrity identifications” (11)—the demand for a memorial was also a demand for Lind herself, a fact Lind was all too aware of: writing to her friend Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer about her performances in Vienna, Lind notes that she “was really torn to pieces there” (Lind to Pfeiffer in Ware and Lockard 165). While Lind’s American tour publicly reinforced and reproduced sentimentalism’s vision of true womanhood, Lind’s celebrity status electrified this image with titillating appeal. More that mere role-playing the desire to become “like Lind” expressed a type of “sympathetic absorption” tinged with sexualized longing as Lind’s fan base

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66 In Sentimental Materialism, Lori Merish explains how “middle-class consumption was produced in tandem with a new ideal of domestic womanhood”: “During the early nineteenth century, Protestant and liberal-capitalist traditions were forged into a novel synthesis of ‘pious materialism,’ in which luxury goods were seen as a primary means to civilize and spiritualize the self.” Producing a “range of antebellum texts about home life, including home decorating texts, conduct books, and domestic fiction,” the “conception of tasteful domesticity” transformed the antebellum woman into a “new consumer subject... inseparable from an emerging ideal of (‘unproductive’) domestic womanhood” (2, 91-92). See also Gillian Brown, Domestic Individualism, 52.

67 Baker similarly describes the importance of a celebrity’s commodification: it was the “self-sustaining conjuncture of social, commercial, and emotional impulses and interests” that created the “modern culture of celebrity” surrounding a figure like N. P. Willis (4).
clamored for more than a simple souvenir (Hendler 36). Not only did shopkeepers “lose no time in making the most out of the popular taste for novelties” by producing Jenny Lind merchandise, they often falsely marketed the goods as Lind’s own: “Now, these had no legitimate claim to the title, inasmuch as we do not believe Mademoiselle Lind had ever seen, much less worn, the articles in question.” Despite this “barefaced shopkeeping ruse,” the shopkeepers kept up a sturdy business (“Chit-Chat” 388); souvenirs directly associated with the Swedish Nightingale were in high demand. Even a peach pit allegedly thrown by Lind off of a balcony was hungrily grabbed up by a crowd gathered below who had erroneously assumed it was a valuable souvenir (Willis 97). A dropped shawl quickly succumbed to an equally somber end: “In less than a minute it was torn into fragments, which were distributed to all who were standing near enough, to be preserved as a slight memorial of the songstress” (Rosenberg 84).

From peach pits to handkerchiefs, such souvenirs promised to provide intimate, if not erotic, access to Lind’s body. An article as simple as a glove rumored to have been worn by Lind afforded fans a moment of fetishized intimacy. According to a London newspaper reporting on American “Lindomania,” the glove’s “fortunate finder” not only charged fans money to access the glove, he also distinguished between an object merely owned by Lind and one that brushed against Lind’s own body, “charging...1s. for an outside kiss, and 2s. for an inside kiss of the article” (Willis 99). While we can only imagine the erotic appeal of brushing one’s lips across the soft cotton that once rested against Lind’s delicate wrist, the double value ascribed to the glove’s “inside” revealed the heightened demand for the sensational experience of bodily intimacy—even if that intimacy was merely constructed from Lind’s residue. Baring more than celebrity culture’s obsession with the illicit, the appetite Lind-o-maniacs demonstrated for a piece of Lind ultimately reflected as it intensified sentimentalism’s inherent thrust toward the
development of sympathetic feeling. Intensely scrutinized by audience members and the press both inside and outside the United States, Lind’s American tour exposed how sympathy was itself always an act of surveillance, the (self-)destructive impulse to make concordant the discordant. More than just the regulation of the emotions, learning to “feel right”—to be “like Lind”—was a literally a re-fashioning of one’s body into another’s body, from wearing another’s clothing to mirroring another’s mannerisms.

From the erotic ownership of Lind memorabilia to the (sexualized) sympathy Lind’s emotionally inspired and inspiring performances produced, the re-production of Lind’s sentimental body in print and on stage promoted a vision of sentimentality that threatened middle-class women’s identities. In its attempt to reform heterogeneous women into a homogeneous “Woman,” sentimentalism produced a form of sentimental mimicry that risked the destruction of an individual’s originality. The reproduction of the female body like those found in the popularly read Godey’s Lady’s Book further supported this impulse toward similarity, presenting a collection of women who, in their sentimental sameness, seemed more “like a species” than distinct individuals. This “repetitious representation” of the female body extended to Lind’s own bodily presentation as sheet music iconography captured her image both on stage and in domestic settings (see Figure 2.1) (Lehuu 81). Teacups and other household items (decanters, curtain ties, wastebaskets, and gravy boats) further reproduced her image, projecting a vision of ideal womanhood to be used both literally and symbolically in an everyday way.

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68 As Dill notes, “sentimental works often link themes of self-destruction, erotic discipline, and the power of surveillance to formulations of agency and (often female) moral authority” (711). It was this incongruous “dark” and “light” side of sentimentality that defines Shirley Samuel’s oft-cited “paradox of sentimentality,” or the “double logic of power and powerlessness” (4).

69 Hendler reminds us that the experience of sympathy so crucial to the sentimental aesthetic could also destroy difference: the “experience of sympathy depended upon a fantasy that differences could be effaced by defining human identity affectively” (19). Boudreau makes a similar argument, noting that while “sympathy...relies on difference—either original or produced—in order to create a need for itself,” this need is merely an opportunity “for the imagination [to conquer] difference” (12).
Objects like a bronze oval dressing glass (1850-1860) encouraged this sentimental mimicry: held up by two female figures designated as Jenny Lind, the dressing glass reproduced Lind in the figures’ reflected symmetry and, presumably, in the reflection of the viewer who sought to mirror the Nightingale herself (see Figure 2.2).

Overwrought with excessive affect, Lind’s audience—“heaving with emotion”—thus performed a form of emotional “cross-dressing” that risked obscuring the identities of Lind and the women who sought to become her. This “exhibition and commercialization of the self” (Douglas 245) was further intensified by Lind’s celebrity status where the desire to be “like
Lind”—to “know” Lind, to have “internalized” Lind—removed what boundaries remained differentiating self and other. As Richard Schickel argues, the “shyness” we normally retain that “protects both ourselves and the stranger from intrusion” disappears “when we are dealing with celebrities.” Because of the media frenzy surrounding celebrity culture, we feel we “know them, or think we do. To a greater and lesser degree, we have internalized them, unconsciously made them a part of our consciousness, just as if they were, in fact, friends.” Yet such knowing is ultimately dangerously transgressive—a “confusion of realms” that mistakes imagination with reality, as self and other slip into one and the same (Schickel 4). The many representations of Lind’s sentimental body—like the performative “putting-ons” of Jenny Lind’s clothes, mannerisms, and music—reinforced the illicit identifications sentimentalism constructed, encouraging middle-class American women (and men) to seek out erotic connections with a woman who had by chance, as it were, just lost a glove.

II. Virtuosity as Musical Mimicry: “Something like Beauty, But of a Deeper Class”

Magnified by celebrity culture’s fetishism for the souvenir, the impulse to be “like Lind” may have threatened to transform her celebrity body into a rarefied object easily possessed by the American public, a translation of body into object that exposes the problematic conflation of identities sentimentalism by definition evoked. However, the market for souvenirs also revealed the impossibility of a perfect translation and, by implication, a perfect mimicry. Always removed from the initial moment of inspiration that produced the desire for sentimental mimicry, the memorabilia associated with Lind inadvertently exposed the ephemeralness of the original event. As Susan Stewart writes in On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection, “The souvenir is by definition always incomplete,” existing as a “sample of the now-distanced experience, an experience which the object can only evoke and resonate to, and
can never entirely recoup” (136). In fact, the very “need and desire” for souvenirs, as Stewart suggests, reveal the beloved object as possessing a “materiality [that] has escaped us,” to be, in fact, that which cannot be possessed (135). While the material culture surrounding Lind’s tour magnified her celebrity status, providing middle-class American women in particular an opportunity to live out their fantasies of domestic perfection, even the commodities associated with Lind, from dinner plates emblazoned with her image to hats styled in Jenny Lind fashion, disclosed the illusory nature of the intimacy supporting celebrity culture. The imprint of the erotic kiss on the cotton lining of Lind’s lost glove, while sensuous in and of itself, merely called attention to Lind’s own “partial presence,” a form of melancholic desire resounding with sentimentality’s yearning for (bodily and emotional) resemblance (Bhabha 88).

Dissatisfied with the inability to capture even Lind’s likeness in the many portraits of Lind circulating in women’s journals, store windows, and sheet music covers, Americans complained when such souvenirs failed in their memorial function. As an article in Home Journal reported on 28 September 1850, “It seems to us that no one of the dozen engravings purporting to represent Jenny Lind has any reasonable likeness to her, as we have seen her.” Noting the inconsistency in the public’s impression of Lind’s physiognomy, the article continues, “And, indeed, the longer we live, the more we are convinced that people see the same features very differently, and that one face may make two as different impressions on two beholders as if they had been all the while looking on two different faces” (qtd. in Ware and Lockard 29). The frustration the American public expressed over their inability to “capture” successfully—from portraiture to poems—Lind’s persona was certainly a symptom of celebrity culture; however, the “different impressions” Lind produced were also critically a symptom of her musical

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70 As Roach explains, “What remains physically present to spectators in the theater is the natural body of the performer with its momento mori of pockmarks, strained lungs, and fat and in fact transforms the effigy into “a monstrosity” that “reconnoiters the boundaries of cultural identity” (82).
performance. As the *Daily American* reported, “Indeed, when she is inspired by the passion of sentiment of the air she is singing, something like beauty, but of a deeper class, makes its visibility on her brow and then perchance we felt—it was, however, but a moment—that report had scarcely done more than justice to her personal attraction” (qtd. in Ware and Lockard 81). Transformed from a “so shrinking, so almost repelling, so colorless and unsensual creature” into a woman who could “impassion men of all kinds,” Lind’s body achieved its sympathetic power not from the marketing strategies of Barnum or even Lind’s own good will (although these certainly helped), but from her body’s musical expression. Although concert-goer Frederic Hall’s “first impression” of Lind was “that of a highly dressed fatigued old vestal” (“awkward, ugly looking—i.e., plain—and anything but lovely in appearance as she stands before the audience”), this impression quickly changed after Lind began to sing: all it required, he readily confessed, was “one song to work me out of my disappointment” (qtd. in Ware and Lockard 109).

In her performance of a musical style that called attention to the inherently transient nature of music itself, Lind, I will, not only “impassioned” her audience, she also presented a sentimental body that made the souvenir forever incomplete, a “‘secondhand’ experience” filled only with insatiable longing (Willis 141; Stewart 135). Although Lind performed a variety of music throughout her American tour, she favored the Italian aria and the sentimental ballads. Both musical forms certainly showcased Lind’s virtuosoic talent while preserving her sentimental

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71 This “one song” typically took place after an orchestral overture and a solo piece that frequently featured Giovani Belletti, a baritone accompanying Lind on her American tour. The third piece was often a solo sung by Lind who performed, during the program’s first half, almost exclusively selections from popular Italian operas—the arias of Vincenzo Bellini, Gioacchino Rossini, and Gaetano Donizetti in particular. After the intermission, Lind performed the sentimental ballads and songs that had become so popular with American audiences, namely “The Bird Song” and “The Echo Song.”
While representing the peak of Lind’s technical vocal skill, both the ballad form and the Italian aria presented imitation—impersonation, mimicry, improvisation—as fragmentary, the quintessential Romantic musical structure where “the form is not fixed but is torn apart or exploded by paradox, by ambiguity” (Rosen 51). Such imitative music revealed in its mimicry that which could not be imitated, how “mimicry” would always be a “partial presence,” an act of “substitution” where the replica can never become the real.

Although coming to signify in the United States by the mid-1850s one “who feels delight in, and possesses taste for, the musical science,” the term virtuoso in earlier discourse indicated a musician possessing advanced musical “tricks” (Moore 964). As the Daily National Intelligencer reported in 1830, a virtuoso’s use of “lege-de-main [sleight of hand] in his most serious passages” failed to “give you time for the full enjoyment of his beautiful clear tone.” As the writer continued, “These tricks certainly astonish, for they were never heard before, but the tender, melancholy feeling is interrupted, and nothing but astonishment is left” (“Paganini” Col C). Two musical reviews on virtuosos touring in America published in the mid-1840s by John Sullivan Dwight, the preeminent antebellum music critic, similarly emphasized virtuosity’s problematic showmanship of technical skill. Describing Norwegian violinist and virtuoso Ole Bull’s musical performance as “dissipated,” Dwight argued that Ole Bull represented virtuosity’s “worst side” in his “exhibition of personal skill” (“Musical Review. Ole Bulls’ Concert” 44). The second review—this time of virtuoso pianist Leopold de Meyer—argued that De Meyer’s virtuosity not only “degraded the art,” it also lacked “spirituality” and “deep intellectual

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72 Indeed, Lind’s adaptability when it came to musical style set her apart. As Benedict stated, “It would not be easy, in our time, to meet any cantatrice whomsoever, who could play and sing to you from memory, from the first notes to the last....the operas of Mozart, Weber, and Meyerbeer, the oratorios of Handel and Haydn, all the melodies of Mendelssohn, of Franz Schubert, of Schumann, the Mazurkas and Etudes of Chopin, without counting a very extensive dramatic repertoire, comprising the scores of Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi...It would, perhaps, be yet more difficult to name an artist who could appreciate and comprehend these great schools, become penetrated with their genius, preserve their local colors, and appropriate to herself their styles....Mlle. Lind unites these precious qualities” (Benedict, “Jenny Lind” 520).
expression” (“Musical Review. Leopold de Meyer” 396). His display of musical technique, in other words, remained a performance without substance.

In their focus on the incongruent relationship between musical “tricks”—musical feats requiring technical skill, speed and agility—and “tender, melancholy feeling” that real artists evoked, these musical reviews reproduced an European critique of musical virtuosity that emerged in the eighteenth century and was sustained throughout the early nineteenth century in the United States and abroad. Although initially connected to virtue in “both theory and practice,” virtuosity became associated in the eighteenth century with “display and spectacle” that critics claimed undercut rather than expressed “true creativity.” More important perhaps was the way virtuosity’s investment in technical showmanship privileged sound over rhetoric, obscuring from the musical art both “meaning” and “reference” (Samson 69, 43). Only “touched with sweet visitations of melody,” virtuosic compositions were “deficient in coherence of structure,” lacking a “settled design.” Producing an “impulsive and striking” sound, such improvisational music seemed at odds with the American preference for music as a “language of feeling” (“The Biographical Sketch of Ole B. Bull” Col E). However, virtuosity’s insistence on the fluidity of form, the improvisational quality that revealed a virtuoso’s technical skill, aurally performed what imitative music was assumed to evoke physically in its listeners: variations of musical motifs that mimicked the initial musical statement.

As a female musician, Lind’s vocal performance would have made her an ideal candidate for the production of expressive music. Although most tunebooks in the early-eighteenth century gave the melody to the tenor, or masculine voice, by the turn of the century it became

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73 The early-nineteenth century, musical virtuosity had become nearly synonymous with anti-sentimental and anti-expressive performativity, problematically showcasing, as Gillen Wood argues, “an automated body detached from the heart and sensibility” (3). Indeed, confronted by “the most intense period of anti-virtuosity backlash in the history of instrumental music,” musicians designated as virtuosos in the 1830s and 1840s often faced severe criticism for their lack of emotional expression (Gooley 13).
increasingly common in tunebooks, as well as in general music instruction books, newspaper reviews, and music theory texts, to describe the feminine voice as melodically ideal. However, as an improvisatrice, Lind’s performance of virtuosic passages threatened to align her with the other virtuoso musicians touring America around the time of Lind’s introduction—Ole Bull, Leopold de Meyer, and Henri Herz were arguably the most famous—and thus open her performance to similar critique. Yet rather than undercut her music’s “deep intellectual expression,” Lind’s virtuosic ability uniquely supported this expression. As Jules Benedict, the musical director of Lind’s American tour, stated “With an inexorable rigor towards herself, she punishes the slightest imperfection, which she thinks she has discovered in her execution, by a redoubled, tripled labor” and by thus “enrich[ing] her repertoire with a new piece,” Lind “gives free scope to the resources of her genius so rich and various” to impressive ends: “who can remain cold and insensible?” Indeed, making a “conscience of her art,” Lind’s combination of virtuosity’s technical skill and musical expression (i.e. a sentimental “imitative music”) produced the sympathetic responses that defined and intensified the appeal of Lind’s musical performances, the “sacred flame [that] communicates itself to her audience” in a “thrill [that] runs through the seats; a profound emotion [that] is engraved upon all countenances” (Benedict 520).

Lind’s musical repertoire moreover encouraged this balance of virtuosity and musical expression. While early nineteenth century Italian opera de-emphasized the “expressive ardour

74 Perhaps one of the earliest American proponents for the female voice was Andrew Law. In a rebuttal to an accusation by W. B. published in the Philadelphia Repository, Law reveals his preference for the female (or treble) voice over a male (or counter) voice to carry the melody in a musical composition. He writes, “in the early part of my attention to the art of singing, I was convinced that a just stile of music would give the principal melody to the Treble; and that a second Treble would be more melodious than a Counter” (qtd. in Crawford, Andrew Law 153). Yet Law faced American opposition as he “soon found that the prevailing taste in this country was such as would render it very difficult to stem the current of opposition to this method.” Foregoing what he considered to be a more powerful compositional arrangement, in order to “gratify the Tenor singers” Law instead chose to give the tenors the “second best” vocal line” (qtd. in Crawford, Andrew Law 153).
and sensibility” of the bel canto style in favor of the “frenzied technical prowess” associated with nineteenth century virtuosity, the Italian operatic selections from Lind’s repertoire remained emotively expressive in structure and subject matter (Celletti 107).\footnote{Rodolfo Celletti explains that “terms like ‘bel canto’ and belcantismo’ were unknown in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They spread, in Italy and abroad, between 1820 and 1830, precisely at a time when bel canto opera was on the wane” (13). As Simon Maguire further explains, bel canto “is intended to be understood to refer to the traditions of the type of singing that was taught in Italy during the periods dominated by the castrato singers. This has now become synonymous with the cultivation of the purest techniques of singing without regard to ideas of expression. This is not a view that would have been accepted by Italians in the early nineteenth century” (44). Although “the voice par excellence for bel canto opera [was] that of the castrato,” by the early nineteenth-century women sopranos and contraltos performed the bel canto roles: “lyrical ecstasy, or the delicate, refined, and subtly sensuous melodies of some arias and some love duets, as well as the acrobatics of virtuosos passages [associated with the bel canto style], rule out male voices (baritone-tenor or bass) as being too harsh and crude in sound for a type of singing that called for agility, flexibility, nuance, and a pellucid and languorous tone” (Celletti 7-8). Although Rossini stated that “I shall always be inébranlable in my contention that Italian musical art (especially the vocal aspect) is entirely ‘ideal and expressive’, and never ‘imitative,’” his definition of the “ideal and expressive” coincided with the nineteenth-century American understanding of “imitative” music: “Bear in mind that expression in music is not the same as in painting, and that it consists, not in representing to life the external manifestation of inner emotions, but in arousing this in the listener” (qtd. in Celletti 136). Celletti privileges Rossini as the ideal composer of bel canto, arguing that Donizetti and Bellini represent a movement away from the bel canto style; Maguire, however, points out that “there may be more to bel canto than Celletti offers us,” arguing that the operas of Bellini and Donizetti follow the bel canto style (Maguire ix).} Lind’s most famous (as well as her first) performance was the “Casta Diva” from Bellini’s Norma. With this one performance, repeated throughout her American tour, Lind’s “triumph was complete”: “Towards the last portion of the cavatina, the audience were so completely carried away by their feelings, that the remainder of the air was drowned in a perfect tempest of acclamation” (Barnum 314). A “liturgical aria,” “Casta Diva” would have resonated with an American sentimental audience. Praying to the “chaste moon goddess” to “calm...too ardent hearts,” the title character seeks to redirect her effusive passion from an illicit love into its proper channel (Kimbell 32). Designed to produce sympathetic emotions in the audience, the musical form of the “Casta Diva” further encouraged Lind’s listeners to identify with the sentiments the lyrics expressed. As David Kimbell explains, “Gradually the singer and audience alike are drawn into a sonorous ecstasy by the swaying and syncopated rhythms into which the harmony is dissolved, and by the spell cast by the weaving, dipping and vaulting of the soprano line” (55).
While Lind’s ballads were more explicitly sentimental in style—her performance of “Home Sweet Home” doubly reinforced the idealization of the domestic sphere in its famous refrain “There’s no place like Home / There’s no place like Home”—both ballad and Italian aria alike combined virtuosity with sentimental expressivity. More importantly, they both drew attention to the way in which (musical) performance would always be a virtuosic “improvisation on borrowed themes” (Roach 33). The ternary structure of the “Casta Diva,” for example, emphasized a form of musical mimicry of “almost the same, but not quite.” Defined by the Oxford Dictionary of Music as composed of three “parts or sections” (typically described as ABA’), ternary form “is the form of a movement in 3 sections, the 3rd being exact or near-exact repetition of first.” While the musical motifs presented in the first section (A) are revisited in the last (A’), this last section added improvisational and virtuosic elements, “high notes, elegant graces, Chopinesque chromatic coloratura, and ‘con abandono’ virtuosity,” that destroyed as it referenced its resemblance to the first (Kimbell 56).

Although not bel canto in style, two of Lind’s most popular ballads from her concert series—“The Echo Song” (occasionally titled “The Herdsman Song”) and “The Bird Song”—followed a similar structure. Notable for its echo effect, “The Echo Song” created a “natural echo” that “reverberated from the opposite wall.” This act of self-imitation—the echo Lind’s own imitation of herself—transformed Lind into a ventriloquist of sorts, a throwing of voice that never failed “to mystify” her audience. Although demonstrating Lind’s ability to impersonate herself, “The Echo Song” proved that such mimicry could only be evoked by the original: as W.S. Rockstro wrote in A Record and Analysis of the “Method” of the Late Madame Jenny Lind-

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76 In fact, it was this sentimental music that the American audience appreciated most. In December of 1850, the Message Bird reported that “Whatever may be the range of Jenny’s powers as an artist, there is little doubt that her popularity is mainly founded on her execution of those less legitimate melodies, the Bird Song, Herdsman’s Song, Home Sweet Home, and others of the Tyrolean stamp” (qtd. in Ware and Lockard 49).
Goldschmidt (edited by Lind’s husband, Otto Goldschmidt), this “wholly different effect...was produced in the *Norwegian Echo Song* by a peculiar tightening of the throat, which Madame Goldschmidt once tried to explain to the writer, though the process was so purely subjective that she said it was almost impossible to describe it in words” (7). “The Bird Song” similarly escaped classification. Referencing yet removed from Lind’s persona as “Nightingale,” “The Bird Song” was playfully structured around mimicry: opening with the question, “Birdling! Why sing in the forest wide? Say, why? Say, why?” the question appears to mock itself—the identity of the “Say, why?” belonging either to the questioner or the bird who refuses, ultimately, to answer. And despite the song’s suggestion that it was for sentimental reasons that the bird sings (“Call’s thou the Bridegroom or the Bride?” or from one’s heart “overflowing?”), the bird denies “knowledge” and instead states, “I warble free.” Although full of joy (“My heart is full, and yet is light; / My heart is glad in day or night”), the bird’s song/“The Bird Song” refused to be pinned down to one interpretation, instead emphasizing a type of freedom that—in its musical and lyrical variability—remained unrestricted.

With each performance, Lind thus highlighted what Joseph Roach identifies as an inherent element of performance in general, a type of “behavior” that “cannot happen exactly the same twice” (3). Producing instead a “monstrous double” that mimicked as it mocked any attempt to preserve, resemble, or reproduce the moment (5, 82). Lind’s musical performances carried with it a haunting reminder of what Susan Bernstein describes as music’s resistance to translation: “Music cannot be translated; it stands as a limit to language’s ability to master and contain the power of translation” (65). In *Letters from New York*, Lydia Maria Child would write

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77 As Jim Samson similarly writes, “A performance...is itself an activity; it is time-specific, singular and expressive, asserting the work, but at the same time instantiating it in a unique and particular way. It realizes one of the many possible worlds prescribed by the text, and it does so within certain contextual constraints, including the skills and personality of the performer” (67).
of music in a similar manner: “Music, whether I listen to it, or try to analyze it, ever fills me with thoughts which I cannot express—because I cannot sing; for nothing but music can express the emotions to which it gives birth. Language, even the richest flow of metaphor, is too poor to do it” (1st Series: 175). Lind’s performance of a virtuosic music—from the embellishments to her bel canto arias to the trillings of her famous “Bird Song”—intensified the musical aesthetic’s seemingly spontaneous and momentary form; as Bernstein suggests, “The virtuoso performance can never be dissociated from the time and space of its occurrence” (Bernstein 11).

Lind’s performance of music like “The Bird Song” and “The Echo Song” thus tempered the intense attraction the American public expressed for the Swedish songstress in its challenge to the representational models supporting both sentimental and celebrity culture. Although Dickinson complained that the excessive musicality of Lind’s improvisational virtuosity somehow severed Lind from herself, her distaste—I would like to suggest—for those extra notes, “Bird sounds,” and “curious trills” reveals instead how Lind’s musical performance disclosed an individuated body somehow resistant to, as it called attention to, the sentimental mimicry resulting from the “love” Lind’s performance paradoxically inspired. By turns “full, sympathetic, tender, sad, or brilliant,” Lind’s musically performing body not only “adapted itself so perfectly to the artistic conception of the song it was interpreting, that singer, voice, and song were one,” in that process of adaptation, Lind’s musical body “set analysis at defiance” (Rockstro 7). Indeed with her performance Lind—as singer, voice, and song—“writer”—was most “Herself;” presenting in that moment a sentimental body that could not be copied. As one observer remarked of Lind, “Detached from what surrounds her, abandoning herself entirely to her inspiration, she impresses on the music that she sings a stamp of originality that is irresistible” (Benedict 520).
Lind’s American tour and the mass-media spectacle that perpetually placed Lind’s likeness before the public thus disclosed a sentimental body that resisted the “referentiality and representativeness” implicit in sentimentalism’s emphasis on sympathetic sameness (Stadler 63). Presenting to the American public a somewhat paradoxical vision of the sentimental body, Lind’s body-as-performative-body both constructed sentimental identifications—the heaving emotion, the mysterious sympathy—and simultaneously denied sentimentality’s impetus toward reproduction. Dwight argued that this phenomenon was the source of Lind’s success, that which “has won the world to Jenny Lind.” As he continues, “it is that her whole soul and being goes out in her song, and that her voice becomes the impersonation of that song’s soul if it have any, that is, if it be a song” (qtd. in Willis 113). Enacting its own form of teasing play-acting, of being “like” sound and “not like” sound, Lind’s musical performances staged the very process that sentimental mimicry ignited. However, uncertain of what this “impersonation” of Lind (or was it her music?) produced, Dwight’s description concludes with ontological ambivalence: “if it be a song.”78 Calling attention to the way in which (musical) sounds negotiated the boundary between the corporeal and the incorporeal, Lind’s “form” became both body and (disembodied) music. Like a musical theme whose variations become a “grotesque” mimicry of the original (“the exaggeration of its internal elements, the turning of the ‘inside out’” [Thomson 104]), Lind’s body, once repelling, awkward, and anything but inspiring, not only exposed the excess such mimicry entailed—under the footlights of the stage, it became something else.79

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78As Bhabha argues in his discussion of “mimicry,” a term arguably synonymous with the act of “impersonation,” “the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence” (86).
79While this something else, as I argued at the start of this chapter, threatened to sever the sentimental bonds developing between Dickinson and the Swedish Nightingale, many Americans reporting on Lind’s American tour argued that Lind was most “Herself” when she performed this very music. As the New York Daily Tribune reported only fourteen days after Lind’s arrival in America, “we still feel that it is not easy to separate the singer from the person. She sings herself” (qtd. in “Barnum’s Gallery of Wonders” 198).
III. The Sentimental Body’s “Monstrous Double”

Nowhere was this “something else” more noted than in Lind’s connection to P.T. Barnum’s Gallery of Wonders. By the time Barnum engaged Lind to tour in America, he was famous for an impressive list of lucrative marketing stratagems that capitalized on the public presentation of the anomalous, from the Feejee Mermaid to, perhaps his largest and most famous endeavor, the American Museum. Having signed a contract with a man who was well known for the marketing of oddities, Lind became implicitly inscribed within a discourse that challenged not only the authenticity of public showmanship but also her role as the sentimental ideal. While many Americans had come to conceptualize Lind’s body and body of music within a specific sentimental discourse, Lind also paradoxically became one of Barnum’s freaks, a connection reinforced by Lind’s own animal-human hybridity (as Nightingale) and her status as virtuoso.

The criticism virtuosos faced both in the United States and abroad in the early 1840s certainly targeted, as I have suggested, virtuosity’s reliance on technical skill; often emphasizing the mechanization of the human form, popular caricatures of virtuoso performers touring the United States in the 1840s and early 1850s presented images that resonated with musical texts like William Gardiner’s *The Music of Nature* (1837) and Lowell Mason’s *Manual of the Boston Academy of Music* (1836) that described the human body as a series of musical parts. As Gardiner wrote, “The nose and roof of the mouth may be regarded as the sound-board of the voice. The teeth form a bridge or barrier upon which the lips and tongue are constantly playing” (36). An 1846 depiction of virtuoso pianist Leopold de Meyer and virtuoso violinist Camillo Sivori (Figure 2.3) emphasized this potential hybridity—part-instrument, part-man—of the virtuoso musical body. In fact, the grand piano caricatured here lacks its musical machinery (strings, sounding board, keys), displacing the instrument’s music-making capability onto the
human form. This transposition also suggestively undercut music’s sacralized appellation as a “language of feeling.” Now “instruments” of either victory or defeat, the violin Sivori rides and the few parts of the piano attached to De Meyer’s body propel both virtuosos forward in a race toward, it would seem, lucrative fame.

When applied to the virtuoso, this mechanization, rather than regulate, instead unleashed the unruly body. Contemporaneous reviews frequently emphasized the animalistic element of virtuosic musical performance. Famed virtuoso violinist Paganini, with “swarthy complexion” and “black, disheveled hair,” attacked his music as if he was “fighting, with some wild animal, tearing, struggling, and finally triumphing” (Holbrook 277). Leopold de Meyer, America’s first “bona fide piano virtuoso,” received similar reviews (Lott 11). Not only did caricatures of De Meyer, popular known as the “The Lion Pianist,” regularly feature him as a lion (see Figures 2.4 and 2.5), musical reviews, like the New-York Tribune’s 20 October 1845 “Leopold de Meyer,” consistently associated De Meyer’s musical performance with animalistic savagery: De Meyer “reminded us irresistibly of an infuriated tiger maddened by the sounds itself had made, tearing

Fig. 2.3: Published in the Oct 17th 1846 issue of Yankee Doodle. American Periodicals Series Online. Web. 2 May 2012.
the instrument in its rage, yet by some mysterious chance producing nothing but a series of perfect harmonies.”

Yet the attention Americans paid to the body of the virtuoso, heavy in its animalistic strangeness, exaggerated music’s own movement between the corporeal (the structured, the tamed, and the cultivated) and the incorporeal (the unstructured, the untamed, and the uncultivated) that characterized Lind’s performances as well—“if it be a song.” These depictions moreover proved a precursor to the Swedish Nightingale’s own animal-hybridity (see Figure 2.6). The virtuoso’s body, in all its creature-like attributes, thus merged with the sentimental body, lending the latter some of its own “freakery.” Barnum’s Gallery of Wonders, his shows and museum certainly featured a cast of hybrid characters: the bearded lady, the FeeJee Mermaid (a woman-fish hybrid that was, in fact, a baby monkey torso sewn to a fish’s tale), and the
indeterminable “What Is It?,” are perhaps the most famous. Framed by these discourses, Lind’s musical body suggestively became one freak among many, thus “posing to the spectator,” as Rosemarie Garland Thomson argues of the freak, “the implicit political question of how to interpret differences within an egalitarian social order” (Thomson 17).

Such depictions, I would argue, also associated the musical body with racial excess: from the “swarthy complexion” of Paganini to the lion’s mane of De Meyer, these white bodies became racialized in their musical performances, a mixture that—according to one description of Paganini—produced “something extremely striking and grotesque” and connected virtuosity and blackface minstrelsy through a shared discourse (Holbrook 277). Considered a “formidable rival to other forms of American popular theater” and evolving from brief burlesques featuring

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80 Recognizing the symbolic tension that American society placed on its representation of the sentimental, an article in the Daily Ohio Statesman targeted Lind’s dual status as a woman and the proverbial “angel of the house”: “If Jenny is an angel, --and nobody, of course, doubts that, --nevertheless, she now and then shows the spirit that indicates something of the woman also, as well as of the angel. In the last Castle Garden Concert, our musical critic called attention to the fact that a favorite Pianist of hers she would have in the bills to take two long parts, --and as the audience manifested a decided indisposition to hear, the angel-woman was as determined they should hear...She took the thing so much to heart, that it was not at all certain she would not have boxed any body’s ears, that persisted in hissing a Pianist, whom she willed thus to have heard” (“The Cause of the Dissolution” Col B). Lind, once demure and gentle—an angel in her benevolence—here transforms into an “angel-woman,” the hyphenated term emphasizing Lind’s hybrid nature. While feminine in some regards, Lind suggested a masculine “will” that ends in violence as her emotions (“She took the thing so much to heart”) finds expression not in sympathy but in suggestive violence, the threat of boxed ears looming on the horizon. A pamphlet designed to exploit these connections was published in 1850. William Allen Butler’s Barnum’s Parnassus; Being Confidential Disclosures of the Prize Committee on the Jenny Lind Song takes as its occasion the ode-writing contest Barnum hosted for Lind’s first concert. Including satirical commentary and a collection of poems aimed at playfully exposing the curious Barnum-Lind merger, the pamphlet included “Barnumopsis” that, written as a musical “recitative,” sought both to mimic the music associated with Lind’s popular Italian operas and to mock Lind’s connection to Barnum’s famous exhibitions using Lind’s own voice: “O thou illustrious man, / Gladly I heard the summons to come to join / Myself the innumerable caravan!” (Butler 25).

81 John Moore’s Encyclopædia would echo Holbrook’s comment in 1854, writing that Paganini “frequently indulges in grotesque turns, which seem quite in harmony with his eccentric nature” (699). Aligned with Barnum’s Gallery of Wonders, Lind’s musical body, while sentimentalized in the popular press, was similarly racialized. Her contractual agreement with Barnum not only threatened Lind’s ownership over her body but also stressed its commodity status: as an object that could be exchanged in a monetary transaction, Lind (her body and her musical talent) became property that could potentially be “encaged.” Willis’ Memoranda of the Life of Jenny Lind emphasized the inherent problems such contractual “ownership” encouraged, including a poem (“Jenny Linden”) originally published in London papers that staged a disagreement between a contract Lind signed with her former manager, Bunn, that appeared unbreakable, despite the “Two thousand pounds she offer’d so / That he would only let her go.” Bunn—“who would have her bond”—not only “said No” but, in his refusal to break a contract that bound Lind to perform at his “wild beast’s show,” attempted “to cage” the Swedish Nightingale (qtd. in Willis 31).
solo songs and dances in the 1830s to a full-blown show in the 1840s, blackface minstrelsy appeared on the American stage the very same year the American public welcomed its first virtuosic performer, Ole Bull.\(^2\) A popular song for the minstrel stage, “Ole Bull and Dan Tucker,” capitalized on this connection, presenting the caricatured African American Old Dan Tucker’s performance alongside the virtuosic performances of Ole Bull (see Figure 2.7). Although now recognized as racist caricatures of the African American performer, “the minstrel show,” William Mahar argues, “was the first point of intersection between an African American culture with a rich musical heritage that included African retentions and largely derivative English and Italian stylistic tradition mixed occasionally with Anglo-American folk materials” (4). Indeed, the American public often failed at the time to recognize blackface as a white mimicry of African American culture. Offering a wide range of responses to the minstrel stage, not all entirely “derisive of African Americans or their culture,” audiences even occasionally mistook the white performers as truly back, thereby experiencing the minstrel show as true “black culture” (Mahar 15, 25). For those interested in black music, as The Ohio Statesman reported in 1843, performances by the Virginia Minstrels were ideal: “Truly, they out nigger the darkies in singing and dancing, if not in looks” (“The Virginia Minstrels” Col B).

Fully established by the early 1850s, blackface minstrelsy arguably paved the way for the success of Lind’s American tour, her repertoire oddly reminiscent of the minstrel stage. As Mahar explains, blackface minstrels performed “operatic choruses, mock versions of popular and folk songs, and comical concerts ‘signifying’ on the performances of foreign visitors” (11). A means of “Americanizing” the foreign arrangements, the minstrel stage moreover produced

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\(^2\) In February 1843, New York City’s Bowery Amphitheatre welcomed Dan Emmett, Dick Pelham, Billy Whitlock, and Frank Brower to its stage in the form of the Virginia Minstrels, “blackface delineators” whose performance at the Bowery represented the “first recorded use of minstrel to refer to a musical group performing in blackface” (Foster 147).
burlesque versions of the music by composers regularly featured in Lind’s own tour (Bellini, Donizetti, and Rossini) while popular Jenny Lind music was occasionally performed as part of the repertoire; a playbill for Campbell’s Minstrels II performance in New York in October 1848, for example, listed as its finale a “Jenny Lind Polka” (Mahar 145, 46). Indeed, Lind appeared on the minstrel stage even before she set foot in America. A “Grand Scene from Italian Opera” included in the New Orleans Serenaders’ September 1849 program promised the appearance of Lind and other opera stars, Anna Riviere Bishop, Teresa Truffi, Rosalie Laborde and Marietta Alboni, through the piece’s “Imitations of various singers” (Mahar 47). Against this backdrop, Lind’s performances could not be but compared to their burlesque “originals.”

Fig. 2.6: A porcelain Jenny Lind figurine (1850-1860). The Jenny Lind Collection of Leonidas Westervelt. eMuseum. New York Historical Society.

Fig. 2.7: The central picture depicts Ole Bull, with a violin, and the “Congo Melodist,” with a banjo. The surrounding images caricatures each figure as an animal—predominantly a frog (the “Melodist” and a bull (Ole Bull), although it is difficult to fully ascertain their identities as the frog also plays on the violin. New York: Firth & Hall, 1844. Sheet Music Consortium. UCLA Digital Library Program.
Even in the midst of her tour, Lind found herself compared with the musicality of the African American. When Elizabeth Greenfield made her New York concert debut in 1851, she was immediately heralded as the black counterpart to Lind (see Figure 2.8). Popularly known as the “Black Swan,” Greenfield’s tour produced its own “Jenny Lind rush,…showing that man ‘prefer darkness rather than light’ especially when darkness and melody are combined” (“There was a regular” Col A). Frequently compared to the Swedish Nightingale, this “Swan of Africa,” as the Liberator wrote on 1 November 1851, contributed to the “musical furor” infecting the United States: “A new candidate for fame in the world of song has arisen in the West. It is a bird of African extraction, though not exactly a black bird; and she has spread her wings under the euphonious title of the ‘Black Swan’” (“The Swan of Africa” 175). Possessing a “voice of great purity and flexibility and extraordinary compass—singing notes in alto with brilliance and sweetness, and descending to the bass notes with a power and volume which is perfectly astonishing,” Greenfield’s musical talent seemed a natural complement to Lind’s soprano (“The Swan of Africa” 175). Sharing many of the same songs with Lind’s, Greenfield’s repertoire established her—like Lind—as a “musical prodigy,” at least according to one notice published in The Cleveland Herald; audience members flocked to her concerts in order to evaluate the comparison for themselves. As The Cleveland Herald further stated, “to-morrow evening our citizens will have an opportunity to judge now nearly she approaches the Nightingale” (“Black Swan” Col B).

The comparison between Lind and Greenfield largely centered on their shared vocal power. One report on “The Black Swan’s Concert” on 6 February 1852, for example, described Greenfield’s vocal “compass” as “a few notes above even Jenny Lind’s highest” while the Liberator noted that Greenfield’s voice was “remarkable for its sweetness, compass, flexibility
and power,” attributes commonly associated with Lind herself (Col B; “First Concert of the ‘Black Swan’” Col E). What was lacking, according to the Liberator, was merely training for “with proper training and practice, the ‘Black Swan’ may become as renowned as the ‘Swedish Nightingale’” (“First Concert of the ‘Black Swan’” Col E). Yet Greenfield was a controversial figure, her race motivating many to distinguish the “Black Swan” from her white double. As an 1855 article originally published in The Daily Cleveland Herald derisively remarked,

There is an Austrian swan which is black, and this Miss Greenfield is so black that charcoal will make a white mark on her. The music of a swan, as we understand it, is a cross between the quacking of a duck and the hissing of a goose, but this black swan can pour out musical sounds like an ebony musical box—and with just as much genius or soul. Her form is of the squat order, and her mien of the waddle style. The editor in the interior, who said that the Black Swan rivals Jenny Lind, forms his estimate of music from quantity, not quality. The ‘Swan,’ like so many other good singers, has any amount of music in her lungs, but little in her soul. (“Will any person” Col B)

Emphasizing Greenfield’s color throughout, the article’s attention to the Black Swan’s body, however, located what seemed to be the most critical difference. Answering the question “Is the negress of beautiful form and graceful mien” with a resounding no, the article indirectly praises Lind’s bodily form when contrasted to this “squat” and “waddle[ing]” woman. Even Greenfield’s remarkable vocal skill could not overcome the “disappointment”—to return to Frederick Hall’s “first impression” of Lind—her physical appearance and blackness inspired.
Lind’s comparison to these “black” musicians—Elizabeth Greenfield and the blackface minstrels of the 1840s—is a reminder of virtuosity’s connection to a black musicality commonly associated with the African and African American slave. Indeed, critics of Greenfield’s performances accentuated Greenfield’s own virtuosic talent, pinpointing the “ventriloquial power” we find in Lind’s more famous “The Echo Song” and “The Bird Song” as a shared talent. As the *Utica Gazette* (reprinted in *The Cleveland Herald*) asserted, “When Jenny Lind first sang in New York, the musical critics remarked that the most wonderful part of her performance was accomplished by means of a certain ventriloquial power with which she was gifted. The ‘Black Swan’ has in like manner been endowed by nature with a voice so peculiar and extraordinary that it must astonish every audience” (“Concert of the ‘Black Swan’” Col B). While minstrelsy, the untrained voice of Greenfield, and the highly trained voice of Lind were all different, how Americans heard these performances, I would argue, were often the same; the intellectual
schemas guiding musical thought in the United States during the antebellum period, in other words, encouraged Americans to hear an kinship between virtuosity and the “extraordinarily wild and unaccountable” sounds of the slave plantation (Kemble 218).

Early accounts of African music performance in North America were relatively scarce in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.\(^3\) What do remain are short, fragmentary descriptions culled from advertisements, diary entries, newspaper articles and letters that reveal the difficulties associated with accessing a form of music whose record perpetually recreated the power inequalities that marked race relations in the colonies and the United States. Largely comprised of distinctly African musical practices and performances, from African drumming and patting juba (handclapping) to the popular African dance *la calinda*, black musical performance in these early accounts was not recognized as anything but unseemly “*noise*”—that is, as strange, unfathomable, and incomprehensible” (Cruz 43). By the mid-eighteenth century, the “religious proselytization” of African and African American slaves began the transformation of this “*noise*” into “*music*” in two significant ways (Cruz 69). First, introduced to the practice of hymnody—considered the “more effectual way of fixing their attention...than any other that can be devised” largely due to “the Negroes...natural turn to music” (qtd. in Epstein 108)—African and African American musical style became more recognizable to its white observers in its acculturated form.\(^4\) Transformed from black noise, the “screeching improvisation” of unconverted “negroes,”

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\(^3\) As Dena Epstein explains, “almost nothing about their music has been found before the end of the seventeenth century, when they were already playing the fiddle” (21). For the history on Black Music, see... “evidence [that] makes it abundantly clear that African music and dancing not only were transported to the New World but also persisted there for generations” (Epstein 74).

\(^4\) Emphasizing the need for the Bible and *Watts’s Psalms and Hymns*, Samuel Davies explained in 1751 that “the *Negroes*, above all the Human Species that I ever knew, have an Ear for Musick, and a kind of extatic Delight in *Psalmody*; and there are no books they learn so soon, or take so much Pleasure in” (qtd. in Epstein 104).
into “spiritual” sound, acculturated black music to the ears of its white observers became evidence of a disciplined, rather than “lawless,” life (Bremer 248).85

This emphasis on black “song” as evidence of a successful conversion reveals the second major effect of “religious proselytization.” As Jon Cruz explains, “black music in the American context began to be re-cognized within an emerging modern humanistic orientation” that required abolitionists “to comprehend and grasp black music as something more than alien and barbaric noise” (10-11). By “attributing savable souls to slaves,” this appropriative orientation transformed the African and African American slave into potential producers of culture, an early example of the proto-“ethnographic” mentality that too often became a site of cultural appropriation and theft (Cruz 69). As early as 1855, Putnam’s Monthly Magazine of American Literature, Science, and Art, for example, published “Negro Minstrelsy—Ancient and Modern,” an article that called for the preservation of “negro songs” (72). The anonymous author estimates that of the “thirty thousand slave plantations in the United States” there might be “on each of these plantations, one song...of undisputed genuineness and excellence” whose quality would earn it a place in a collection of “several volumes, handsomely bound in Turkey morocco, and superbly embellished” (“Negro Minstrelsy” 72).

It was not until 1867, however, that such a collection emerged—in pale brown cloth instead of Turkey morocco— with the publication of Slave Songs of the United States (1867). Edited by William Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison, Slave Songs of the United States is a landmark collection, the first systematic attempt to preserve the music of the

85 In fact, by the early-nineteenth century, as Dena Epstein relates, “reporters were beginning to refer to African music in the past tense” as the music produced by both free and enslaved blacks took on a distinctly African American style that became both the heralded Negro Spiritual as well as the subject of derision in the popular black minstrel performances of the 1840s (86).

86 As Cruz further explains, “by the mid-nineteenth century the interpretive framework shifted considerably in ways that not only enabled white observers to expand and showcase their sympathetic recognition of slaves as having deeper feelings, but also made it possible for them to link black meanings and black cultural practices” (62).
African American slave.\textsuperscript{87} *Slave Songs of the United States* also marked a critical juncture in the interpretive framework through which a dominantly white public considered black music. Although “first viewed as a social and political testimony” useful to the abolitionist movement, the Negro Spiritual (a form of slave song), “was increasingly considered as a modern scientific artifact, a specimen fit for capture by the spreading nets of an emergent ethnoscience,” an evolution of function that problematically split black music from the social and political conditions of its inception (Cruz 125).

While latter chapters will address the increasing tension between the formation of music that contained and expressed a diverse population of music makers and a “democratic” music that was purported to transcend all social and political difference, what remains of interest in this current chapter is the way in which debates over authenticity and cultural theft of black music that largely characterized the folklorist movement of the 1880s can be traced not only to the appropriative and racist perspectives of the work of even anti-slavery advocates like Ware, Allen, and McKim Garrison but also to the complicated ways in which Americans in the 1840s and early 1850s heard different types of music. Indeed, throughout this dissertation, I emphasize the “intellectual schemas” through which Americans—largely white, middleclass men and women—heard, understood, and responded to the musical aesthetic. Thus it becomes crucial to be aware of the power dynamics that influenced many of the published reviews and private remembrances of black music as well as how these descriptions were pitched to and framed by an American listening public who, in the 1840s and 1850s in particular, possessed a still developing music literacy that often failed to differentiate not only between “high” and “low”

\textsuperscript{87} For more on the Port Royal Experiment, see John Cruz’s *Culture on the Margins* (124-25) and especially Dena Epstein’s *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals* (303-342). Although “first viewed as a social and political testimony,” the Negro Spiritual (a form of slave song), “was increasingly considered as a modern scientific artifact, a specimen fit for capture by the spreading nets of an emergent ethnoscience” (Cruz125).
musical aesthetic forms but also between music producers (as performers) and music makers (as composers). Although many listened to the various sounds, noises, and music produced in America with Euro-influenced ears, the average observer encountered various musical performances without the cultural “savvy” that characterizes a more modern music sensibility.

This “deafness” of sorts became compounded when presented with music deemed outside the norm; struggling for a language through which the foreign (because new) sounds of virtuosity as well as the foreign (because racialized) sounds of slavery could be described, many musical representations employed a discourse that failed to distinguish between a black music produced under the oppression of slavery and the lucrative performances of virtuosos like Leopold de Meyer and Jenny Lind and the racist caricatures of the minstrel stage. Thus we have the strange intersection of two seemingly disparate musical forms like that found in Putnam’s “Negro Minstrelsy—Ancient and Modern,” where the melody of a “negro song” and that of Donizetti and Auber seemed to be one and the same: “In its vivacity and liveliness, the music occasionally reminds us of some of Donizetti’s happiest efforts, while its simplicity and quaintness at times breathe of Auber.” The anonymous author’s association of black music with Italian arias certainly exemplified the type of cultural appropriation—the uncomfortable stretching for a cultural heritage that would place “American” music on the same level as its European precursor—that uneasily collapsed a unique black musicality into a more “socially acceptable” form, erasing the enslaved body’s presence and pain in the melody’s own “vivacity.”

Yet the article also suggests how many Americans expected to hear something familiar in the music of a race that—although oppressed and represented as inferior through a matrix of religious, scientific, and legal frameworks—still produced a music that many observers found to be affective. This interplay of genres and subjectivities colored American musical practice with a
murky although fascinating array of interpretive responses to the musical aesthetic where the performances of virtuosos like Lind, De Meyer and Ole Bull were heard on the same “stage”—the same musical register—as blackface minstrelsy and plantation slave songs. At the heart of their similarity were the strange sounds produced by the music’s improvisational form, the “free musical forms, allowing virtually limitless scope for improvisation, for the admixture of the vocal leaps, glides, moans, yells, and elisions that gave to African American musical expression its characteristic rhythmic and tonal complexity” (White and White 24). American audiences—both Northern and Southern—emphasized this improvisatory structure. An 1838 article published in the *Daily Herald and Gazette* described “Negro Music” as “improvisatored,” an “extemporaneous song” whose “mode of singing” ultimately “impossible to describe” (“Negro Music”). As Robert Mallard similarly recalled of the musical performances of slaves harvesting rice in *Plantation Life Before Emancipation*, “The rhythmical beat of the numerous flails is accompanied by a recitative and improvised song of endless proportions, led by one musical voice, all joining in the chorus, and can be heard a mile away” (22).

In its lengthy introduction, *Slave Songs of the United States* foregrounds the difficulty such improvisational music posed for those attempting to preserve the effect of the music. Not only do the “voices of the colored people have a peculiar quality that nothing can imitate,” the music’s improvisational structure made it nearly impossible to “reproduce” the “intonations and delicate variations of even one singer” (Allen iv-v). Although published after slavery ended—and before, as “Negro Minstrelsy—Ancient and Modern” worried, “another generation may sweep [them] from the face of the earth forever”—*Slave Songs of the United States*’ description of African American musical production reflected a discourse common to the many informal records populating diaries, journals, letters, narratives, and newspaper articles circulating in the
early and mid nineteenth century. These responses critically reveal how white Americans heard similarities between the improvisatory productions of Jenny Lind and the “negro” or “colored” melodies that were sung on plantations and in the streets, outside churches, and in the celebratory festivals found in both Northern and Southern urban areas. Indeed, the “elasticity of form” that the *Knickerbocker Magazine’s* “Who Are Our National Poets?” in 1845 argued was “peculiar to the negro song” was also associated in many contemporaneous depictions to the improvisational quality of virtuosity more generally and to the musical production of Lind more specifically, from the “elasticity of form” inscribed in musical pieces themselves to the “elasticity of form” of Lind’s own ever-changing body (170). As a Northerner teaching in the South explained in an 1853 letter published in *Dwight’s Journal of Music*, “listening to a negro singing his melodies accompanied by his banjo” was an experience akin to one of Lind’s own famed performances: “When I heard Jenny Lind sing “Home, sweet Home,” it caused such an emotion as I never before experienced; it might be *exquisite homesickness*. ‘Old Folks at Home,’ as I hear it shouted from house to house, from the fields and in the vallies, has an effect scarcely inferior. I find myself often humming the chorus and even dream at night” (qtd. in Tawa 109).

While Lind’s connection to Barnum encouraged her presentation in the American press as “engaged” to a marketer of contracted bodies, the indeterminacy associated with the “strange, unfathomable, and incomprehensible” of slave music itself echoed—or was echoed by—Lind’s own peculiar vocal talent that “set analysis at defiance.” As Reverend Lowery in *Life on the Old Plantation* stated in a description that—while referring to slave songs—held true to many of the

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88 Although there was “relative silence about slave music” in the eighteenth-century, “southern whites and numerous travelers to slaveholding states recorded their varying impressions of the music slaves made” increasingly in the nineteenth century (White 25). Of course what Americans heard differed with their Northern and Southern perspectives. Southerners were likely to emphasize the “jollity” of the music while Northerners more readily emphasized the “mournful” character of the music. As Frederick Douglass stated in *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, “I have often been utterly astonished...to find persons who could speak of singing among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake. Slaves sing when the most unhappy...” (20).
representations of Lind’s own musical performances, “It was not done by notes nor always by words, but it was from the heart, and the melody seldom failed to stir the soul” (73). Jenny Lind’s American tour thus inadvertently exposed a form of “listening” that complicated music’s placement as the ideal “language of feeling,” where blackface minstrelsy, improvisational virtuosity, and the “colored melodies” of the African American slave were heard as if they were merely variations on a single theme.

While Lind’s domestic appeal became a venue through which the sentimental body was reproduced and integrated into the domestic home, Lind’s presentation of a musical body and body of music that was irreproducible revealed the “monstrosity” implicit in sentimentality’s impulse toward normalization, from the unnatural conjoining of two identities into one to the play acting and impersonations implicit in sentimental mimicry. Yet it also revealed the sentimental body’s own “monstrous double,” an improvisatory musicality whose “excess” mirrored the musicality produced by racialized bodies. This resemblance becomes of critical concern for southern sentimental writers like Caroline Lee Hentz and Augusta Evans, whose pro-slavery novels the following chapter addresses. Published in the years leading up to the Civil War, these texts experimented with narrative form and constructed their own hybrid structure that attempted to mimic the musical aesthetic’s improvisatory fluidity and yet were troubled by the figure of the slave.

IV. “The Most Interesting Monstrosity”: Sympathy’s Dual Unity

After ninety-three grueling concerts, the contract between Jenny Lind and P.T. Barnum was dissolved on 9 June 1851. Lind’s American tour, however, did not officially terminate until late May 1852 when Lind, now self-managed, returned to the Castle Garden for her final performance. A few days later, Lind left the United States much in the way she arrived, waving
from the *Atlantic* to a large crowd that “saluted [her] with repeated cheers” (“The United States Steamer Atlantic” Col E). Accompanied by a new husband secretly married three months earlier, Jenny Lind’s return home marked the relative end of her professional singing career as well; performing only occasionally in public, Lind instead raised three children and never returned to the United States.

However, fourteen years after Lind ended her tour the American public was presented with the opportunity to hear a “Nightingale” once again when Barnum contracted singer and dancer Millie-Christine McKoy to perform as an exhibit at his American Museum for the entire month of July. Born into slavery in 1852, the year of Lind’s departure, Millie-Christine toured much of the United States and even enjoyed success overseas—visiting “the principal cities and towns in England, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Holland and Russia” (McKoy, *Biographical Sketch* 79). Described by the *Liverpool Mercury* as an “extraordinary person” who “astonished and pleased” her audience, Millie-Christine not only danced “with freedom” but also sang—“for one of her race”—with “considerable taste and expression” (McKoy, *Biographical Sketch* 75). Self-titled the “Most Wonderful Being Alive,” Millie-Christine McKoy was perhaps more famously known as the “Two-Headed Nightingale” (McKoy, *Biographical Sketch* 60).

Conjoined twins, Millie-Christine (occasionally called Christine-Millie) lived for most of her life as a member of various freak shows, presented to a curious audience and examined by doctors who attempted to explain scientifically Millie-Christine’s bodily divergence from the norm. A stark reminder of Lind’s own connection Barnum’s Gallery of Wonders, Millie-Christine is also a symbolic expression of the “monstrosity” of musical performance and of
sentimentality itself. A “compound monster of duplex development,” according to one doctor who published his invasive examination on the twins in 1871, Millie-Christine existed in what Jonathan Elmer describes as the “social limit,” her “extraordinary body” not only reflected the constrictions society placed on both bodies and subjectivities but also revealed, as Thomson argues, that “potential for individual freedom denied by cultural pressures toward standardization”: “Freaks are above all products of perception: they are the consequence of a comparative relationship in which those who control the social discourse and the means of representation recruit the seeming truth of the body to claim the center for themselves and banish others to the margins” (Thomson 68, 62-3).

Performing in Barnum’s museum in 1860, the same year Barnum presented his “What Is It” (an African man Barnum advertised as a link between monkey and man, capitalizing on the publication a few months earlier of Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species*), Millie-Christine performed to an American public overtly concerned with an ongoing debate over racial definition. Like the “What Is It” whose non-descript title was merely a veil for a body prominently displayed, described, and wondered at, Mille-Christine presented an “extraordinary body” that challenged the sentimental impulse toward normalization while symbolizing the “Dual Unity” sentimentality sought to achieve.

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89 Although initially owned by the McCoy family, Millie-Christine eventually became the property of James Smith who paid $6,000 for the twins and exhibited her as an infant, headlined as the “South Carolina Twins” or the “double headed girl,” throughout the South (*The History of the Carolina Twins* 41). At Smith’s death in 1860, Millie-Christine remained under the guardianship of Smith’s wife because, as Millie-Christine claimed in *The History of the Carolina Twins*, “We can trust her, and what is more, we feel grateful to her and regard her with true filial affection” (46). American newspapers however associated Millie-Christine with Barnum’s production. In 1888, the *Milwaukee Daily Journal* described Millie-Christine as having “acted as a leading card for Barnum’s Circus” (Col D) while the Raleigh *News and Observer* incorrectly attributed Millie-Christine’s discovery to Barnum: “Of all the curiosities ever unearthed by the immortal Barnum, none can compare in the most minute degree with Millie Christine, a daughter or daughters—whichever the fastidious please—of the State of North Carolina” (10).
Although an “outsider” in many ways, Millie-Christine also represented the ideal manifestation of social harmony. Describing herself as a “Dual Unity,” Millie-Christine constructed her identity as the bodily symbol for what I have argued was Lind’s own presentation of sentimental musical mimicry: existing in a “simultaneous state of singularity and multiplicity,” Millie-Christine possessed “an identity of two women who simultaneously constitute one being, one united emotional and spiritual force” (Frost 17). In fact, while her initial autobiography, The History of the Carolina Twins Told in “Their Own Peculiar Way” by “One of Them,” Millie-Christine acknowledges that “we speak of ourselves in the plural,” she notes that “we feel as but one person...We have but one heart, one feeling in common, one desire, one purpose” (McKoy, History 48).

By the publication of Millie-Christine’s second biography, The Biographical Sketch of Millie Christine, the Carolina Twin, Surnamed the Two-Headed Nightingale, and the Eighth Wonder of the World, the multiplicity of identities the text’s title page embraces—“The Two-Headed Lady, the Double-Tongued Nightingale, the Eighth Wonder of the World, the Puzzle of Science, the Despair of Doctors, the Dual Unity”—became reduced to a singular voice. No longer a “we,” Millie-Christine transformed in the Biographical Sketch into a “she”—a “girl,” a “child,” and a “daughter” (McKoy, History 62-3, 70). As Millie-Christine states in a poem penned for both biographies, “Two heads, four arms, four feet, / All in one perfect body meet.” This “one perfect body” formed, according to a letter signed by five doctors, “the most interesting monstrosity, morally and physically considered, on record.” Although an exemplar of sentimental sympathy—in her own words, Millie-Christine possessed “two sets of brains” that “always agree in forming the same conclusions”—Millie-Christine’s “Dual Unity” was regarded by the American public as monstrous, a perversion of form despite its expression of the
sentimental ideal. As the “Double-Tongued Nightingale,” Millie-Christine thus represented a reminder of the way in which music could bring together two disparate identities, emotions, and sensibilities, the way in which music could speak with two voices at once. And all-the-while Millie-Christine revealed how monstrous such unification could be—if extended to the black body.
Chapter 3
A Southern Literature of Music: Caroline Hentz and Augusta Evans

“There is nothing that bears the name of music, that can be compared to the negro’s singing; he sings all over; every muscle quivers with melody; it gushes from every pore. The sounds seem to roll from the white of his eyes, as well as through his ivory teeth...”

--Caroline Lee Hentz, Linda; or The Young Pilot of Belle Creole

Long before Jenny Lind’s 1850-1851 American tour made the Swedish Nightingale a household topic of conversation, the nightingale claimed a spot in European and American discourse as the preeminent musician. As an article published in The Literary Magazine, and American Register in 1805 observed, “the nightingale seems to have been fixed upon, almost universally, as the chief among singing birds” because it possessed a tone “infinitely more mellow than that of any other bird” and because it demonstrated “superior judgment and taste” in its musical selections (418). The inspiration for a variety of music collections published in the United States in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, The Nightingale, or Charms of Melody (1798), The Nightingale. A Collection of the Most Popular, Ancient, & Modern Songs, Set to Music (1804), and The Nightingale, or, New Collection of the Most Admired American, English, Irish, Scotch, &c. Songs (1815) to name a few, the nightingale was also the subject of imitation in piano music and ballads of the 1840s and 1850s. Sheet music compositions like

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90 Musical texts like William Porter’s The Musical Cyclopedia: or, The Principles of Music Considered as a Science (Boston 1834) and Gardiner’s The Music of Nature argued that composers like Handel, Beethoven, and Rossini frequently turned to birds for inspiration, the “sweet warble of their woodnotes wild” the subject of imitation for the “most pleasing and diverting compositions” (Porter 362). Of these many birds, the nightingale, however, proved most expressive, “universally considered the most capital of singing birds” (Porter 360).

91 The nightingale was often featured as a symbol of virtuous creative expression. An early-nineteenth songster, The Nightingale: or Rural Songster (Deham, 1800) turned to the nightingale’s “innocent notes” in order to “add a tincture of virtue, rather than the deadly poison of vice, to the thoughts and actions of every juvenile reader” (Preface n.p.). The Nightingale; or, A Melange de Literature; A Periodical Publication (Boston, 1796) similarly employed the nightingale name to signify its own dedication to the preservation of “integrity and purity, when surrounded with artful seducers, and the alluring sirens of guilty pleasure” (“Address” 1). Its cover page included a quote from Milton that identified the bird with virtue: “Sweet bird that shun’st the noise of folly / Most musical... /
E.M.P’s *The Nightingale and the Rose Ballad* (1842), L. Glime’s *The Nightingale Waltz* (1848), and Maurice Strakosch’s *The Nightingale, a Woodland Scene* (1852) included variations that transposed thematic motifs into different musical registers, favored scale-like runs, and often ended with decorative cadenzas designed to mimic the nightingale’s creative process. As an 1829 essay on the “History of the Nightingale” explained, “What peculiarly constitutes the charm of this bird is, that it never repeats itself, like other birds; it creates at each burden or passage, and even if it ever resume the same, it is always with new accent and added embellishments” (372).  

A subject of poetry and prose alike, the nightingale also made its way into the sentimental texts of the antebellum period, an addition that for novels published after Lind’s tour would certainly have a double valence, suggesting an affinity both with the nightingale tradition that marked literature of the past few decades and with the sentimental trillings of the Swedish Nightingale’s famous performances. In the Southern sentimental novels this chapter emphasizes, Caroline Lee Hentz’s *Eoline: or, Magnolia Vale* (1852) and *The Planter’s Northern Bride: A Novel* (1854) and Augusta Jane Evans’ *Beulah: A Novel* (1859), the nightingale appears in a variety of forms, its sound associated with the musical performances of the sentimental heroines, Eoline Glenmore, Eulalia Hastings, and Beulah Benton: Eoline sings just “like a nightingale” (43; see also 51, 163, 171); Eulalia similarly possesses a “nightingale voice” (44) that “needed no accompaniment” because “the nightingale has none” (99); even Beulah, whose “natural gift” of singing was “like that conferred on birds” (128), evokes the (Swedish) nightingale,
performing one of Lind’s most well-known pieces, the “Casta-Diva” from Bellini’s Norma (244).93

Music, of course, was a frequent presence in sentimental novels, both Northern and Southern, of the antebellum period. Mr. Lindsay of Susan Warner’s The Wide, Wide World (1850), for instance, complains that his niece, Ellen Montgomery, sings only hymns. “That’s the only fault I find with you,” he tells her, “—you are too sober” (Warner 260). Music, in Mary Jane Holmes’ Tempest and Sunshine (1854), defines Fanny’s suitability for marriage, her future husband gifting her with an “elegant rosewood piano” for her to practice her music lessons on: “It was very hard, and with untiring patience she played it over and over” (Holmes 64). An example of piety and patience, musical proficiency in these novels often symbolized the sentimental heroine’s moral goodness and self-discipline, a sign, in other words, of her worthiness for love. As Gertrude Flint reminds Fanny Bruce in Maria Cummins’ bestselling The Lamplighter (1854), “Do you remember...what your music-master told you about learning to play with expression? I should give you the same rule for improvement in politeness”—“You must cultivate your heart, Miss Bruce; you must cultivate your heart” (Cummins 268).

While not all sentimentalists recognized the possibilities that music afforded, it is my contention that at least a few did.94 Authors like Augusta Evans and Caroline Lee Hentz—and in

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93 Like many of their contemporaries, Hentz and Evans found the music of birds to be appealing. Hentz wrote frequently in her diary of the sounds of birds, from the “first mocking bird of the season” (Diary 355) to the “sweet notes of the blue bird in the morning” (Diary 351). For Hentz, “[n]ething call[ed] up a train of pleasanter thoughts than the song of a bird in the... [midst?] of winter” (Diary 351). Birdsong for Evans was one voice among many that composed the “mighty musical box of nature” (Beulah 9), the sounds of “birds, and trees, and flowers, sunshine and stars, and the voices of sweeping winds” evidence of God’s presence in the world. As Evans wrote in a letter to her brother, “Oh! Nature is a grand musical instrument, whose key-notes are ‘God’ and ‘Labor’” (qtd. in Fidler 52).

94 Most of the scholarship on Hentz and Evans focuses on their anti-slavery novels, The Planter’s Northern Bride and Macaria. See Heidi Jacob’s “Speaking the Silences of Slavery: Caroline Lee Hentz’s The Planter’s Northern Bride and Harriet Ann Jacobs’s Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl”; Johanna Shield’s “The Dynamics of Southern Friendship in the Civil War Novels of Augusta Evans and Jeremiah Clemens”; Suzy Clarkson Holstein’s “‘Offering up her Life’: Confederate Women on the Altars of Sacrifice”; Carme Manual Cuenca’s “An Angel in the Plantation: The Economics of Slavery and the Politics of Literary Domesticity in Caroline Lee Hentz’s The Planter’s Northern Bride”; Amy Cummins’ “‘Loyal and Devoted Attachment’: Anti-Abolitionist Rhetoric of Southern Women of
later chapters, Lydia Maria Child and Herman Melville—certainly produced sentimental novels invested in the musical aesthetic. Centered on a female character defined by her musical performances, novels like *Eoline, The Planter’s Northern Bride*, and *Beulah* especially encouraged readers to consider the relationship between music and sentimentality. Many of the novels’ most sentimental scenes occur during the female musician’s performance: Horace Cleveland and Russell Moreland both fall in love with their future wives (Eoline and Eulalia) as

Letters.” For articles that explore the (sentimental) representation of women in Hentz and Evans, see Nancy Alder’s “Women’s Rights in Three Novels by Augusta Jane Evans”; Jan Bakker’s “…the bold atmosphere of Hentz’ and Other’s: Fast Food and Feminine Rebelliousness in Some Romances of the Old South” and “Twists of Sentiment in Antebellum Southern Romance”; Elizabeth Barnes’s “Mirroring the Mother Text: Histories of Seduction in the American Domestic Novel”; Bradley Johnson’s “Dueling Sentiments: Responses to Patriarchal Violence”; Elizabeth Trubey’s “Emancipating the Lettered Slave: Sentiment and Slavery in Augusta Evans’s *St. Elmo*”; Karen Day’s “From Dependency to Self-Reliance: The Phenomenology of Feminism in August Evans Wilson’s *Beulah*”; and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese’s “Religion, Meaning, and Identity in Women’s Writing.” Suzanne Ashworth’s “Reading Mind, Reading Body: Augusta Jane Evans’s *Beulah* and the Physiology of Reading” presents an insightful essay on *Beulah’s* presentation of its title character’s body.

Music’s presence in sentimental fiction is perhaps unsurprising if only for is representation in American discourse as an appropriate form of (public) creative expression for the “softer” sex. As Mason argued in the *Manual of the Boston Academy of Music*, citing Benjamin Rush, “He particularly insists, that vocal music should never be neglected in the education of a young lady” in part because of “its salutary operation in soothing the cares of domestic life” (16). Sentimental authors, as scholars such as Mary Kelley, Glen Hendler, and Lori Merish have noted, struggled to balance “true womanhood” with feminine creativity and taste. The sentimental novel’s “ostensibly exclusive address to women,” as Hendler argues, “brings out the conflict between the evidently public task of appealing to a mass readership and the ideological status of this particular readership as the guardian of the private sphere” (117). This conflict was particularly apparent to Evans who wrote in a letter to her friend Rachel Lyons of the incompatibility of the two: “I have spoken of the two as antagonistic; I believe them to be so. No loving Wife and Mother can sit down and serve two Masters; Fame and Love. It is almost impossible” (Evans, *Letters* 18).

Aesthetic pursuits like “Novel-writing” could provide “a deep peace and satisfaction” (*Letters* 18); nonetheless “literary women” were still “not as happy, as women who have Husbands and Children to engage their attention and monopolize their affections” (*Letters* 18). Haunted by the “spectre Fame” that took “bodily possession of you; and set you to grinding at that everlasting mill,” “Novel-writing,” Evans warned, could prove “treacherous”—“Fame don’t pay,” except in “luscious looking, glossy, rosy, fragrant Apples of Sodom” (*Letters* 18). This “spectre Fame” haunts Beulah’s “treacherous” path, her literary strivings—the “longing desire of fame [that] took possession of her soul” (359)—earning her little but headaches and a (brief) loss of faith. Although an unusual tale—Mary Forrest’s *Women of the South Distinguished in Literature* (1860) explained that *Beulah* “did not run in the usual groove” (328)—Beulah’s story still concluded with the typical sentimental end. Worn out by fame, Beulah eventually concentrates on more nobler aspirations: “She still studied and wrote, but with another aim, now, than mere desire of literary fame; wrote to warn other of the snares in which she had so long been entangled, and to point young seekers after truth to the only sure fountain” (*Beulah* 395). No longer ensnared by the “grim puzzles of philosophy,” Beulah instead returns to the “love of beauty,” immersing herself in the “books, music, painting, flowers” that “all contributed largely to her happiness” (395-396) before finding her way to the domestic home where her story finishes: “Reader, marriage is not the end of life; it is but the beginning of a new course of duties; but I cannot now follow Beulah. Henceforth her history is bound up with another’s” (437). Evans explained Beulah’s transformation thus: “She found that erudition and tireless research availed nothing; that without Divine aid, Man as Man was too finite to cope with the secrets of the universe, to solve the great questions of God!” (qtd. in Fiedler 65).
she sings. Dr. Hartwell and Beulah’s courtship similarly takes shape around a “plaintive prelude” 
(Beulah 128, 430) that he initially requests “to hush my cursing mood” (Beulah 127). This 
prelude later becomes the music that sets the scene for their engagement; Hartwell, “hearing the 
melodeon, followed the sound” and discovers in Beulah “a wife, a companion, who loves me for 
myself alone” (Beulah 433). Reinforcing the female character’s “angel of the house” 
nomenclature—according to Uncle Ben, Eoline “sings like an angel, like a choir of angels” 
(Eoline 51-52)—music also underscored sympathy’s more mournful effect, where “pain is an 
avenue toward achieving that desired state of oneness” (Noble 62). As Clara notes of Beulah’s 
singing: “Your singing fascinates me, yet, strange as it may seem, it very often makes me weep. 
There is an unearthliness, a spirituality that affects me singularly” (Beulah 163).

It is with music’s “unearthliness” that this chapter takes its focus. I begin with musical 
criticism’s emergence of in the United States as a heralding in of a genre of literature whose 
objective was to capture music’s “marvelous effects” in writing (Dwight, “Art. II” 23). 
Restricted merely to the description of music’s formal features, a “literature of music,” according 
to music’s advocates in the United States, could either describe music’s scientific properties or 
attempt, through linguistic imitation, to replicate music’s own organizational form. I argue that 
the novels of Hentz and Evans assembled this latter “literature of music” by mimicking 
specifically the musical aesthetic’s improvisatory form. Their experimentation, I argue, revealed 
the importance of formlessness to music’s organizational structure—what I term a freedom in 
form—that heightened the “affectional bonds” sentimentality and music both were alleged to 
encourage. This freedom in form, moreover, manifested itself in the sentimental bodies of 
Eulalia, Eoline, and Beulah, lending them an “unearthliness” that proved the source of their

96 Little Bessy describes Eoline’s singing as “so sweet it makes me feel sad” and Uncle Ben, with “ecstacy...beyond 
words,” has “tears gathering into his eyes” as he listens to the “heavenly strains...flowing” from Eoline’s “rosy lips” 
(Eoline 51-52).
sentimental and musical power. I argue that Hentz and Evans thus accentuated the incorporeal in this otherwise embodied aesthetic, identifying air—from the music of the Aeolian harp to the “airy” structure of the melodious nightingale’s body—as the ideal “atmosphere” for music’s affective transmission and for the production of sympathy, a southern variation of Stowe’s “atmosphere of sympathetic influence.” However, this turn to an “incorporeal” music and musical form also revealed Hentz’s and Evans’ desire to distance the musical performances of their white nightingales from their African and African American counterparts. By thus disembodying the musical aesthetic, these authors, I argue, attempted to distinguish a white, incorporeal musicality from the “wild, sad strains” of the embodied slave.

I. The “Literature of Music” and the “Literary Musician”: Beulah’s “Plaintive Prelude” and Eoline’s “Anthem of Praise”

Published in Dwight’s Journal of Music in 1852, “Literary Musicians” addressed the increased presence of music in the literary arts. It was no longer uncommon, the article argued, to find musicians and composers explaining, discussing, and critiquing the musical aesthetic. Once possessing “small power to write or talk about” his music, the musician now proved to be a “creature of to-day”: “he has a theory of his art, he criticizes his work even in the performance, he finds his way into the newspapers, he journalizes, he analyzes his compeers, he speculates about the music of the Future” (“Literary Musicians” 110). Musical criticism was indeed an emergent art in the antebellum period. As Mark Grant explains, musical magazines date back to the late eighteenth century yet these efforts lacked traditional criticism, including only printed music (33). It was not until 1835 with the publication of the Musical Magazine in New York that musical criticism for a wide audience appeared in the United States. Edited by Thomas Hastings, whose Dissertation on Musical Taste was printed over ten years earlier, the Musical Magazine
lasted a mere two volumes (Grant 33). In the 1830s and 1840s, however, musical magazines became more prevalent as music literature more generally—sheet music, music collections, and literature on music—was in higher demand. In fact, in his September 1838 review of William Gardiner’s *The Music of Nature*, John Sullivan Dwight suggested that Gardiner’s text offered not a “theory of music,” but rather a “literature of music”—“almost the first specimen we have had of its kind” printed in the United States (“Art. II” 23-24).

Of course music and literature had long been entwined prior to musical criticism’s blossoming in the United States. Primarily concerned with the translation of language into music, writings on music like Hastings’ *Dissertation on Musical Taste* emphasized the importance of language to music’s expression, suggesting that poetry could provide music with a more “durable” language (21). Poetic devices like rhythm and accent seemed a natural complement to music’s own organizational structure. Gardiner’s *The Music of Nature* even included chapters devoted to “Speaking,” “Language,” and “Oratory” in order to affirm music’s natural resemblance with the sounds of speech; its chapter on “An Analysis of the Alphabet” in fact turned to “musical characters” in order “to express every shade of difference which this letter [the double vowel I] assumes” (see Figure 3.1) (467). The relationship between music and literature, however, was also potentially contentious. Hastings warned that poetry too “didactic” or “descriptive” would not be “fit for lyric purposes” (*Dissertation* 19); the lyric poet should instead aim for the “sentimental” but only if the “feeling...be within the bounds of moderation” (Hastings, *Dissertation* 19). In fact, if not properly employed the “union of poetry with music” could destroy music’s effect: “it clogs the free movements and deadens the charm of music” (Dwight, “Art. II” 33). It was not until the antebellum period that Americans became largely
invested in the translation of *music* into language. When they did, music critics like Dwight called such work a “literature of music.”

In “Thoughts on Art” (1841) Emerson claimed that “all arts” were analogous as each possessed “laws” that were “convertible into the laws of every other” (376). This statement held true in theory only. In *Virtuosity of the Nineteenth Century*, Susan Bernstein suggests that with “the poetic translation, or metaphorization of music, something is lost” (65). Not only can it not be “translated,” music also “stands as a limit to language’s ability to master and contain the power of translation, the ability to carry across, common to both language and music” (Bernstein 65). Mid nineteenth century writings on music similarly emphasized music’s un-translatability. In the words of Lydia Maria Child, “Music...ever fills me with thoughts I cannot express—because I cannot sing; for nothing but music can express the emotions to which it gives birth. Language, even the richest flow of metaphor, is too poor to do it” (1st series: 175). The “most mysterious, vague, and evanescent form of beauty,” the musical aesthetic in antebellum discourse proved “baffling” to “all attempts of the understanding to hold it fast and define it” (Dwight, “Art. II” 24). As Dwight explained at length, the “essential nature of music” was difficult to analyze for it “has to do with feeling, emotion” (“Art. II” 27). “This is the secret of its spell,” Dwight argued, “[i]t reveals to the ravished listener so much within him, it whispers to him the possibility of embracing so much of the infinite world without him, that he abandons himself to the high influence, and ever after aspires to something nobler” (“Art. II” 32).

Music’s “metaphorization” was, however, an inevitable result of the aesthetic’s growing popularity in the United States. Composers, musicians, musical critics as well as literary writers

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97 The lack of attention to music description was in part due to the unreflective personalities of those who know it best—“they who feel most, reflect least” (“Art. II” 27). Dwight also argued that music’s close affinity to poetry has made “[p]ure music” go un-remarked and it is only with this music that a “true philosophy” can evolve: “Music in the ancient time was but the handmaid of poetry...It is only in the realm of instrumental music that the true philosophy of music can be found” (“Art. II” 27)
like Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Child openly advocated for the musical art in print and consequently struggled to find a language that best expressed music’s affective power. Although each type—critic, composer, and literary author—proved a proponent for music’s acceptance in American life and culture, the style in which they approached music’s translation often differed. For instance, as Ora Saloman explains, Fuller “discussed concert activities with less description of musical style and a more poetic tone than did Dwight” (431-432). Two forms of musical criticism—music’s suggestive metaphorization into language—prevailed in the United States by the 1840s. One approach “was that of the technical analyst” and resembled the work of Dwight and Hastings (Grant 25). Focused on the physical, scientific, and natural properties of music, these texts merely described music’s formal properties. The other approach was that of “the impressionistic poet-rhapsodist” who “attempt[ed] through language to evoke for his readers something of the emotional quality of the sounds without resorting to vague gaseous expatiations” (Grant 25).

Despite their differences, each approach was ultimately constrained in its descriptive capacities. As Dwight explained in his review of Gardiner’s text, while writing could capture music’s “marvelous effects” it surely failed to capture music’s “essence” (Dwight, “Art. II” 23-24). Largely due to music’s anti-representational nature—its direct appeal to the emotions by bypassing descriptive thought—any “literature of music” was restricted to music’s form. Although a musical text like Gardiner’s *Music of Nature* presented “an approach...not wholly unsuccessful, to a power of translating music into words,” it only demonstrated that “the outward form and feature of the thing [music], if not its essence, may be described” (Dwight, “Art. II” 23-24). Music’s metaphorization, in other words, only gestured to music’s exterior characteristics—a representation of music limited to the imitation of its sound (music’s shared aurality with
language) and its form (music’s organizational principles, from theories on the production of sound to imitations or descriptions of a musical composition’s “form”).

Music, of course, always had a “form.” Early American music treatises like Hastings’ *Dissertation on Musical Taste* described music’s form or “design” in detail: “There are, as we formerly observed, three general classes of composition, such as are designed for instruments, for voices, and for both united; and in each of these classes there are several species which are distinct and characteristic” (Hastings, *Dissertation* 181). Loosely organized into two categories—“pieces as are intended for improvement in practice, or for display of talent; and such as are designed as a direct appeal to the sensibilities of the auditor” (Hastings, *Dissertation* 181)—the formal structure music adopted often determined its character. The “march,” Hastings explains, “requires a species of rhythm adapted to the steps of the soldier” while “sonatas, concertos, and other lessons for practice or display...should be brilliant and cheerful, and be so constructed as to embody specific difficulties of execution” (*Dissertation* 185). This design moreover made the piece recognizable to its audience; an aria, symphony, sonata and ballad, for example, each had structural elements that differentiated one from the other. Music’s form also articulated a composition’s “principal subject.” *The Musical Cyclopedia* explained in its entry on “Design” that “[u]nity should reign in the principal melody, in the movement, the character, the harmony, and the modulation” (11).

Sentimental novels like Evans’ *Beulah* and Hentz’s *Eoline* and *The Planter’s Northern Bride* drew attention to musical form. Most commonly performed was the vague *song*, or a “short lyric poem set to music” (Moore 881), a favorite of Eoline in particular although she does refuse to perform a “stiff, old-fashioned song” of Miss Manly’s suggestion in favor of “one of those sweet and touching airs which penetrate the soul, like the fragrance of flowers that are so
sweet the ‘sense aches at them’” (Eoline 51). Like the song, an air (used interchangeably with an aria) was a “piece of music adapted to words” (Moore 29); yet unlike the song, the air was characterized by its melody: “the chief excellence of that measured strain of music called air resides in the beauty of its melody, the symmetry of which lays hold of our affections in a peculiar way...its tender expressions are more intelligible than words, of which few are necessary to assist its meaning” (Moore 29). It was also a more flexible form, encouraging its singer to perform improvisational feats, a fact Hentz seemed aware of having St. Leon add a “low flute-like cadenza” to “one of the airs Eoline had been singing” (Eoline 86). Also popular was the traditional hymn, presented both as a variation and, presumably, without alteration. At the request of Miss Manly for a “sacred theme,” Eoline performs a variation on “I know that my Redeemer liveth” (Eoline 53) while Eulalia, favoring the work of Isaac Watts, performs his “Cradle Hymn”—“that sweet cradle hymn” (PNB 142)—as a lullaby and “Before Jehovah’s Awful Throne” (PNB 34). This latter hymn appears twice in the novel, representing the hymn that initially inspires and then becomes a reminder of Moreland’s love (PNB 34, 550).

Of the three novels, Beulah presents the most musical variety. Beulah too sings hymns on three separate occasions (Beulah 11, 187, 439); as does a “whip-poor-will” whose “plaintive night-hymn” seems an echo of Beulah’s own “plaintive prelude” (Beulah 49, 128). The ballad—a “low and inferior composition” appealing to the “lower class of people” that sets to music a “brief, simple tale” (Moore 89, 87)—also appears multiple times. Evans even specifies in one occasion the ballad’s name: “Beulah sang that exquisite ballad, ‘Why do Summer Roses Fade’” (Beulah 350). As a complement to the “lowly” ballad, more “superior” compositions also find their way into the novel. Antoinette Dupres demonstrates her operatic talent by performing “that
favorite morceau from ‘Linda’ (Beulah 243) to which Beulah’s responds with her own rendition of Bellini’s “Casta-Diva” (Beulah 244).

Eoline, Eulalia, and Beulah, however, are also improvisatrices, performing extempore pieces that seem entirely formless, directed only by the whimsy of its performer. Eoline’s “so wild, so sweet a strain,” for example, quickly modulates into a different “key” as “she struck into a gay, flute-like warble, that set the children dancing around her, like magic” (Eoline 82-83). Composed of spontaneous vocal and instrumental variations on known and original musical themes these extemporaneous performances were marked by a formal fluidity exemplified in the music’s elastic quality. Beulah’s “plaintive prelude” invokes “soft, rippling notes that seemed to echo from the deeps of her soul” (Beulah 128); Eulalia’s singing similarly “came flowing out into the sunshine, mingling with and melting into the blue waves of ether” (PNB 44). When Eoline “give[s] full scope to her voice,” her notes threaten to break against the “blue arch” of the atmosphere: “She was not afraid to give full scope to her voice, with such a sounding board above her as that blue arch, and the notes went up, and still up, till the ear feared to follow, lest the clear, crystal sounds should break and shiver like glass” (Eoline 82).

Such performances were a reminder of music’s more “[f]lexile, graceful, and free” attributes (Child: 2nd Series, 26). As an oral/aural medium, music expressed an “immediacy, organismic, and authenticity” (Stewart, Crimes of Writing 104) that proved disruptive to music’s more “formal” properties. Like musical expression that “wakes the feeling” with an immediacy that bypasses external “formal” representations, musical sound unfolded throughout time as a fluid and potentially never-ending movement. Take for example a composition’s melodic phrasing. Both closed and open, musical phrasing followed a set harmonic progression, from tonic (I) to dominant (V) to tonic (I). As The Musical Cyclopedia explained, the “tonic chord
regularly begins and closes a tune; we hence take it as the first and principal chord” (172). Initiated with the tonic, a composition’s harmonic progression “most commonly and satisfactorily” turned to the “dominant chord” which then “most naturally” resolved back into the tonic (Porter 172). However, this harmonic structuring—the “enchaining of chords in their progression”—could take a roundabout way as well, moving after the tonic to the subdominant (IV), or the “next most satisfactory chord following the tonic” (Porter 172). As the piece unfolds, a listener could thus anticipate music’s eventual resolution back to the tonic; this anticipation of final closure—of music’s set “form”—was waylaid as a musical composition lengthened and expanded through various chords, transpositions, and tonalities. A musical thought could therefore be elongated through deceptive cadences, passing chords, added grace notes, cadenzas, variations, repetitions and other musical devices. Music’s form, in other words, was always built around the appearance of formlessness—of musical play.98

Improvisational music particularly accentuated the interplay between form and formlessness, presenting what I would describe as freedom in form. In an improvisational piece, the act of performance figured simultaneously as the act of composition; music’s “form” or overall structure was thus balanced by music’s more “formless” or unfolding qualities. Producing what Bernstein describes as music’s “nondistinction between form and its instantiation” (49), an improvisational performance represented the collision of “repetition and originality” (35). A performer extemporized by following music’s set rules, the grammar and

98 Like musical composition, musical performance also had a “form.” Always fixed within a single, historical moment, musical performance was attached to the conventions that defined what musical performance should look like (placement of the instrument on stage, costume design, lighting, etc.) and to the materiality of performance more generally. As Bernstein explains, the musical performance “takes place in a foundational relationship to its instrument and is constituted by the physical contact with the stage, the audience, and the ambiance” (11). Yet even this “foundational relationship” was disturbed by musical performance’s insistence on originality—the way in which, as my previous chapter argued, music was never performed exactly the same twice. In the words of Bernstein “there is no pure performance of a musical work, and to identify accuracy with the essence of the work is to misunderstand music completely” (99).
rhythm that often defined music’s harmonic and melodic structure. Yet composed of “unpremeditated effusions of fancy” (John Moore’s definition of the term Extempore), an improvisational composition broke from these formal properties, giving the piece a “timeless” or formless feel. In the words of Iganz Mocheles’ Studies for the Pianoforte (New York, pre-1860), “That ‘Time is the soul of music’ is an adage approved by all ages in which music has been truly cultivated.” For this reason, he advises the performer “to accustom himself to an exact and regular observance of the true time of the piece which he executes; and to pay the utmost attention to the nice degrees of acceleration or retardation which are marked by the Author himself, without allowing his own fancy the liberty of introducing others” (ix). While this strict regulation of musical time held true for most music, the extempore pieces like “Cadenzas, Organ-points, and Preludes, even when they are divided into measures” prove “Exceptions to the rule” (Moscheles ix). In these latter cases, “the performer is left to the dictates of his own taste and fancy” (Moscheles ix).

It was this “form” of music that proved most affective. As Czerny wrote to Miss Cecilia in Letters to a Young Lady in the chapter entitled “On Extemporaneous Performance,” “You are aware that music is in some measure a species of language, by which may be expressed those passions and feelings with which the mind is burthened or affected” (74). Within the act of improvising, the “momentary and accidental inspiration,” these “passions and feelings” found release (Czerny 74). More than anything else, such musical performances (and spontaneous acts of composition) expressed the performer’s identity by creating “an arena for interpretation in which the proper characteristics of the particular performer—his ‘own’ and proper creative force—render forth the work” (Bernstein 90). Here, musical themes, motifs, harmonies and melodic structures spoke to pre-existing conventions that dictated music’s more formal
properties. Within this formal framework the performer also had the freedom to alter these musical “rules,” thereby expressing her individual identity. Thus the “passive” or conventional rules of music became distorted through a musician’s own “active” performative flair. As Czerny suggested, “Such extemporaneous performances cannot naturally, and indeed ought not to assume the strict forms of written compositions; nay, the very freedom and inartificial nature of such productions give them a peculiar charm” (74).

Beulah in particular featured this extemporaneous form of music in its emphasis on the prelude. Moore’s Complete Encyclopedia of Music (Boston, 1854) took its definition of the prelude from The Musical Cyclopedia, a work edited by William Smith Porter who obtained research materials from the library of Lowell Mason. According to both texts, the “Prelude” was “a short introductory composition or extemporaneous performance, to prepare the ear for the succeeding key and movements” (Porter 318; Moore 749). Around the time Evans wrote and
published *Beulah*, most preludes published in the United States followed this basic definition. John Zundel’s *Preludes and Interludes for the Organ* (1848), William Vincent Wallace’s *Scales and Preludes* (1855), and William Mason’s *Trois Préludes*, Op. 8 (1856), for example, present preludes for each musical key and reflected what Jeffrey Kallberg described as typical of the prelude’s musical features (see Figure 3.2): “block chords, rapid scalar or arpeggiated figuration, and sudden deflections toward other keys” (Kallberg 147). These musical devices exemplified improvisational performance more generally. In *Letters to a Young Lady*, Czerny described the extempore composition/performance as building from “short movements” like “preludes or cadences” to larger works through the inclusion of “longer melodies, brilliant passages, arpeggioed chords, &c.” (75-6).

Combining technical proficiency with musical interpretation, the prelude-form encouraged its practitioner to make the leap from the rudiments of music (scales and tonal relationships) to their interpretation, a form of improvisation that Beulah seems quite capable of producing. In *Beulah*, the prelude, as previously mentioned, appears in two strategic moments. In the first, Hartwell requests Beulah to “go and play something; no matter what” (*Beulah* 127). Initially, Beulah performs on the melodeon “a German air, of which he was very fond” but at its conclusion, when Hartwell commands “‘Sing,’” Beulah then performs a “plaintive prelude,” a musical piece that layered the melodeon’s sound against her own “magnificent voice” (*Beulah* 127-8): “it swelled deep and full in its organ-like tones; now thrilling low in its wailing melody, and now ringing clear and sweet as silver bells” (*Beulah* 128). The prelude reappears toward the end of the novel as well, as a precursor to Hartwell’s and Beulah’s reunion. “The house was very quiet; not a sound came up from below; she raised the lid of the instrument, and played a plaintive prelude. Echoes, seven or eight years old, suddenly fell on her ears; she had not heard
one note of this air since she left Dr. Hartwell’s roof. It was a favorite song of his; a German
hymn he had taught her” (Beulah 430). In both instances, the prelude was presumably
improvised on this “German hymn,” a practice common enough in the nineteenth century.
Czerny advised that “If, in default of ideas of your own readily offering themselves, you should
avail yourself of such as you have learned from other compositions, such assistance is always
very excusable” (76).

In the novel, the first presentation of the hymn—or “German air,” a difference in name
that could represent Evans’ desire to heighten the hymn’s affective quality or be a reminder that
the ballad, song, air, and hymn were considered interchangeable because of their equal
suitability for women —precedes her performance; it becomes the inspiration for the prelude that
follows. In the second example, the prelude functions more traditionally, as the preparation for
the hymn. Gustave Blessner’s Preludes and Voluntaries, Book I (1846) a collection of music that
could be used “as studies for those who have Pianos with Æolian attachment, Reed Organs,
Seraphines, Melodeons, or any of this class of instruments, in their parlors, [and] must meet the
cordial approbation of every lover of Sacred Music,” defined the prelude as a form of music
appropriate for “Divine service” where musical technique was balanced against the development
of “devotional sentiments” (Blessner 2). As the introductory letter stated, “Independently of its
effect in exciting and sustaining religious and devotional sentiments, this branch of musical study
seems to me better adapted than any other, to exercise and develop the powers of the performer,
and to impress and affect deeply the feelings of an audience” (Blessner 2). Such preludes
“tend[ed]…to bring the mind into a suitable frame” for worship, as The Musical Cyclopedia
explained (423).
Evans’ attention to the *prelude* form can be read as merely another indication of the way in which music permeates the sentimental novel; I would argue, however, that its placement in two of the more critical scenes in *Beulah* demonstrates its greater significance. The prelude Beulah plays symbolizes in both instances her own religious faith; although a skeptic for a good portion of the novel, Beulah begins and ends a Christian. Moreover, the prelude, a devotional device that provided the “suitable frame” for worship, also indicates Beulah’s own position in the novel as the “framer” for Hartwell’s tenuous faith. At the novel’s end, Beulah’s role as wife of Hartwell is to insure his eventual conversion: “To save her husband from his unbelief is the labor of future years” (*Beulah* 437). Like the prelude that Hartwell asks her to play to “hush my cursing mood,” Beulah eventually “softens” his “cynicism” by the novel’s end: “Dr. Hartwell’s face lost its stern rigidity, and his smile became constantly genial. His wife was his idol; day by day his love for her seemed more completely to revolutionize his nature. His cynicism melted insensibly away; his lips forgot their iron compression” (*Beulah* 438). Hartwell has become at least open to the possibility of faith—his “soft hand wandered over her head, and he seemed pondering her words” (*Beulah* 440).

Music’s “softening” effect was frequently featured through the nineteenth century. Envisioning music as a powerful aesthetic, the sentimental novels of Evans and Hentz emphasized what many Americans had come to believe to be music’s inherent quality—its ability to “improve the heart” (Mason, *Manual* 17). For Lowell Mason, this quality of music was patently obvious; he argued in the *Manual of the Boston Academy of Music* that music’s “effects in softening and elevating the feelings, are too evident to need illustration” (17-18). In the novels of Hentz and Evans, music’s “softening” effect takes center stage, the prelude offering only one example. In *The Planter’s Northern Bride*, Eulalia uses music to calm Effie’s difficult
temperament, proving, as Petra Meyer-Frazier suggests, “her worthiness as a mother while simultaneously instilling core feminine values into her stepdaughter” (PNB 55). Evans similarly describes music’s mitigating effects in her later novel Macaria. With the sounds of “Home, Sweet Home” and “Comfort ye my people” in the background, a minister recalls music’s impact on his own stubborn disposition: “I remember once, when I was a child, I had given my mother a great deal of trouble by my obstinacy...That evening she sat down to the piano and sang a hymn to my father. The instant the strains fell on my ear I felt softened, crept down stairs to the parlor-door, and before she had finished was crying heartily, begging her forgiveness” (Evans, Macaria 78-79). Like Mason, who argued that music could be a “sure and excellent means of national improvement” (Manual 18), Evans’ minister expounds on music’s social affectiveness: “When a sublime air is made the vehicle of a noble sentiment there is no computing the amount of good it accomplishes, if properly directed” (Evans, Macaria 80).

Yet the prelude-form also exemplified what I earlier argued was improvisatory music’s embrace of individual expression. The prelude, like music more generally, unfolded throughout time, its arpeggiation, for example, broke a single harmonic chord into separate notes. These notes, while separate, were unified by sound’s overlapping, through artificial devices like pedaling and through the ear’s remembrance of previous tones. The prelude, as an extempore piece, also expressed the individual performer’s identity, the composition marked by her unique compositional decisions, while retaining elements of the original piece, recognizable to a listener. The form of the prelude thus gestured toward the way in which the individual could be conflated with the general, a union of sounds that connect notes to notes but also performer to listener. The prelude in Beulah possessed, I would argue, a freedom in form in two senses: the composition’s structure contained a freedom in its musical measures that still essentially led to a
single, recognizable form; the prelude also contained a freedom *in* form in its suggestive balance of two identities that come together in one unified listening experience.

This latter example was more clearly demonstrated in the *prelude’s* use of voicing. Two of the more popular secular composers of preludes in the United States were Mendelssohn and Chopin. Mendelssohn’s *Six Preludes and Fugues for Piano, op. 35* (1832-7) and Chopin’s *24 Preludes, op. 28* (1836-9) were both published in the United States prior to *Beulah’s* publication and were featured in separate occasions in *Dwight’s Journal of Music* as well as in various musical performances throughout the 1850s. R. Larry Todd’s “Piano Music Reformed: The Case of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy” describes the arrangement of Mendelssohn’s *Six Preludes and Fugues* as a “tonal plan based on alternating minor and major keys” (201). Technically difficult, Mendelssohn’s *Preludes* had a “three-part texture” or a “duetlike texture” (Todd 210)—a collection of outer and inner voicing popular in early nineteenth century prelude form. Chopin’s *Preludes* possessed a similar “voicing.” Like Mendelssohn’s “contrapuntal” structure, Chopin’s prelude had its own voiced “counterpart”—“projection of a single line over different registers” or the “creation of individual lines in the inner parts and the bass of such great expressive power that every part of the texture of his music seems alive” (Rosen 302).

The prelude’s form thus suggested one way in which two seemingly separate voices (or melodies) could play with and off one another. Although posing one harmonious composition, the *prelude* presented two unique voices, figured both within the music’s formal structure—its “improvisation” on borrowed themes—as well as in the *prelude’s* melodic texture, the contrapuntal or duetlike voicing reinforced by Beulah’s own layering of voice and melodeon. We see a similar use of musical form in Hentz’s *Eoline*. For Magnolia Vale Seminary’s musical examination, the students, St. Leon, and Eoline perform an “anthem of praise” (*Eoline* 174). As
in *Beulah*, the performance of the anthem represents one of the novel’s primary (if not central) climaxes. As Hentz states, the “Examination was a kind of pivot, on which every thought and action now turned” (*Eoline* 150). Long immune to Eoline’s charms, Horace Cleveland’s “coldness” (*Eoline* 9) warms—or, rather, enflames—to Eoline as she sings: “He was as one waking out of a deep sleep, by a flash of conviction, intense as the lightning, and almost as scorching” (*Eoline* 174). Hentz emphasizes the simultaneous nature of the event, pairing the “anthem of praise” with this “moment that revealed Eoline to him”: “and all the time he was gazing, music was gushing forth and filling the hall and sweeping out into the starry night” (*Eoline* 174). Music thus provided the backdrop (and I would argue the catalyst) for Horace’s love.

Like Beulah’s prelude, the “anthem of praise” in *Eoline* gains melodic texture through its layering of voices. Tunebooks published in the United States during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries featured a variety of musical forms, including the set piece, fuging tune, and plain tune, of which the anthem was one, “the lengthiest and most elaborate type of composition...being written for performance by a choir rather than for congregational singing” (Crawford, *Andrew Law* 14). Thorough-composed, and thus technically not an extempore piece, the anthem was based, however, on sacred themes rather than on a specific sacred text.99 It thus presented a “freer treatment of the scriptural prose text” as well as a “greater variety of texture than that employed in the basically four-part, chordal style of psalm tunes” (Daniel x). The

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99 As the *Musical Cyclopedia* explained, the anthem was “adapted to passages taken from the psalms and other parts of scripture” (Porter 24). Central to the anthem’s formal structure was the “problem of creating musical coherence”: “Since prose text contains symmetrical patterns only coincidentally, the composer of an anthem was obliged to divide an unmetrical text into phrases by his musical setting. The form an anthem is thus determined by its music, while the form of the plain tune, fuging tune, tune with extension, and set piece depends heavily, though in varying degrees, on the form of the text” (Crawford, *Andrew Law* 17).
anthem in Hentz’s novel, moreover, was a “solo anthem,” or an anthem “consisting of solo and chorus” (Porter 24). It therefore featured the interplay of multiple voices:

They were singing an anthem of praise. *Hosanna* was the burden of the strain—

‘Hosanna,’ ascended clear and high, as the highest warblings of the flute, from the lips of Eoline—‘Hosanna,’ repeated the youthful bard, in their sweet, bird-like contralto—

‘Hosanna,’ breathed St. Leon, in his deep melodious tenor—‘Hosanna, Hosanna,’

resounded the whole choir, in one strong burst of jubilant harmony, while the keys quivered and sparkled under Eoline’s jeweled fingers. Horace listened with an interest, an intensity that amounted to agony. (*Eoline* 174)

The scene suggestively plays with the concept of voicing, of layering of voice with music (in the voices of children, St. Leon and Eoline against her piano accompaniment) as well as voices within voices (soloists vs. choir). Even against this backdrop of music we find the “voice” of Horace’s thoughts, his startling recognition of his own feelings for Eoline. Throughout all, these various voicings, Hentz suggests, are individuated: Eoline, then the “youthful bard,” and finally St. Leon each have their separate moments of musical utterances; yet they also come together finally in “one strong burst of jubilant harmony” as—“one by one, and then all in one”—they join in unison (*Eoline* 175).

By accentuating the *prelude* and the *anthem*, Hentz’s and Evans’ two novels emphasize the confluence of the “passive” and “active” in music, that interplay between formal structure and freedom of expression, of two voices that become (almost) one. Their turn to music’s *form* furthermore signals their own participation in a “literature of music”—not quite the musical criticism that prevailed throughout the antebellum period but a literature whose investment in music was reflected in an attention to and specific use of musical form. As Dwight advised, it
was only music’s “outward form and feature” that could be described. Yet I would also argue that we see in Hentz and Evans a more specific application of musical form that, like the “impassioned poet-rhapsodist,” attempted to “evoke...something of the emotional quality of sounds” and pushed at the boundaries separating musical and narrative forms. Take one example from *Eoline*:

> He [Horace] sat leaning against the piano, shading his eyes, feeling, as the sweet voice of Eoline stole around him and glided within him, as if he were reclining on some green bank, swept over by long, swaying boughs, through which the summer sunshine shot a golden glance here and there, while a silver stream ran murmuring and gurgling and rippling, diffusing a kind of haziness over the soul, like the delicious languor of a dream. Then, again, his spirit seemed a moonlit lake, curling and undulating as the breath of music floated over it, then swelling high under a full breeze of melody. (*Eoline* 67)

The alliterative lines in the above passage lengthen Hentz’s prose and possess a musicality as they unfold: the movement of the image (swaying, murmuring, gurgling, curling, undulating), reinforced by the alliterative diction, resembles music’s own melodic movement which expands and contracts with each musical phrase.

The sentence, “He sat leaning” moreover imitates a musical sentence or *period*. According to *The Musical Cyclopedia*, a musical *phrase* was “a regular course of notes, with a commencement and close more or less complete” that “corresponds to a collection of words separated by a comma” (305). These phrases in turn build into a musical *period*, which “answers to a full stop in language” (Porter 305), finalized by a harmonic cadence that concludes most compositions. In Hentz’s prose, “He sat leaning” similarly builds around a series of phrases that playfully tease around the word “feel.” The commas in the sentence function like poetic
enjambment as “He sat leaning against the piano, shading his eyes, feeling” ends momentarily on the word feeling, interrupted by the comma and the conjunction “as” that follows. Like a musical phrase, however, which, “more or less complete,” often melodically extended into a subsequent phrase, Horace’s “feeling” too lengthens—reading “He sat leaning against the piano, shading his eyes, feeling...as if he were reclining.” And like a musical composition that builds around a single leitmotif, the passage eventually returns to this theme of “feeling,” its final cadence possessing an abruptness that contrasts sharply with the earlier sentence’s effusive style before finally “resting”—musical rests were defined as “marks of silence” (Porter 70)—in nothingness: “Thus Horace felt, but he said nothing” (Eoline 68).

Music here functions as a reinforcement to the “affectional bonds” that the sentimental novels more formal conventions encouraged (Dobson 267). The scene also evokes Dwight’s description of music’s effect. Blinded to any “scene or form before him,” Horace listens to Eoline’s music through the shade of his hand. And like Dwight’s suggestion that “[m]usic through feelings calls up the objects with which those feelings are associated,” Horace’s feelings “call up” an “object” of his own choosing, an imaginative projection that transforms the school room where Eoline performs into “some green bank,” the “delicious languor of a dream.”

More important, perhaps, is the way in which this movement from feeling to imagined “object” is interceded by the suggestive union of Eoline and Horace. The phrase, “as the sweet voice of Eoline stole around him and glided within him,” not only interrupts the sentence’s flow, it also imitates the emotive power Eoline’s music holds over Horace. Just as this phrase breaks into Horace’s imagined “as if,” separating the act of feeling from his daydream, so too does Eoline’s

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100 As Dobson contends, “Violation, actual or threatened, of the affectional bond generates the primary tension in the sentimental text and leads to bleak, dispirited, anguished, sometimes outraged, representations of human loss, as well as to idealized portrayals of human connection or divine consolation” (267).
101 See chapter 1 for a more thorough discussion on Dwight’s analysis of music’s “language.”
“sweet voice” enter into Horace’s body as it “stole around him, and glided within him.”

Although Eoline’s and Horace’s experiences are not the same, their feelings are.

The use of musical form in this passage speaks to music’s affective power generally—its “softening” effects—and to its more specific instantiation as a “language of feeling.”

Momentarily becoming music (its “outward form...if not its essence”), Eoline’s own form demonstrates an “immediacy, organicism, and authenticity” that challenged the depiction of sentimental writing as “inherently false in sentiment and/or unskilled in expression” (Dobson 263).102 Yet the passage also articulates sympathy as a process that preserved Eoline and

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102 The sentimental novel’s form has long been a site of contention. As Dobson explains, “For many of the critics who have approached American sentimentalism over the past fifty years (and many earlier critics as well), sentimental writing is inherently false in sentiment and/or unskilled in expression. It is, quite simply, not literary” (263). In order to correct this scholarly tradition that too often disparages what literary sentimentalism has to offer, we should first recognize an individual text’s placement within what Dobson describes as the “sentimental idiom,” a “written imaginative mode defined by a cluster of conventional subjects, themes, characterization modes, narrative and lyric patterns, tropes, tonal qualities, and linguistic patterns focused around relational experience and the consequences of its rupture” (268). Both Evans and Hentz utilized this “imaginative mode”; their texts are distinctly sentimental in style, centered on the growth and development of a overly independent female character (exemplified in Eoline’s “pale, calm, and self-possessed” appearance “with ‘cannot’ on her lips, and ‘will not’ in her clear, blue eye” (11), Eulalia’s abolitionist upbringing, and Beulah’s skepticism) who learns, while outside of the domestic home, piety, discipline and sympathy (or love) for “objects” initially deemed objectionable (Horace Cleveland, slavery, and faith).

Contrary to popular attitudes toward sentimentality and the sentimental novel, authors like Hentz and Evans were both aware of the importance of “form” (as style and as genre) to the sentimental novel. Toward the end of her career, Evans bemoaned the lack of respect the American public demonstrated for any non-Realist genre in a letter thanking W.S. Wyman for his defense of her own literary style: “Why should the friends of kind of diversion quarrel with the lovers of another kind? That is good which is good for each of us; and shall we ‘crab’ and underrate any genre because it chances not to be that which we are best fitted to admire? The pretension that all modern novels should be composed in this genre [Realism] and that all others are of the nature of original sin, seems to be an impossible pretension” (171). Like Evans, Hentz similarly defended sentimentality’s “realistic” portrayal of an individual’s life and emotions. In Hentz’s sentimental novel Ernest Linwood, Gabriella—the novel’s first person narrator—questions the form her story takes: “Book!—am I writing a book? No, indeed! This is only a record of my heart’s life, written at random and carelessly thrown aside, sheet after sheet, sibylline leaves from the great book of fate” (EL 69). Gabriella’s dismissal of her “novels” genre (“am I writing a book?”) as well as its organizational structure (“written at random and carelessly thrown aside”) certainly resembles the critique the sentimental novel faced on both contemporary and contemporaneous fronts. However Gabriella’s dismissive remarks also suggestively align her non-book with the musical aesthetic’s own formal and experiential properties. Early describing music as “the breath of heaven, the language of angels” (121), Gabriella eventually learns to unlock her “locked, closed as with Bastille bars” heart when she writes “as if moved by the Holy Ghost” (417): “Then words came like water rushing through breaking ice. They came without effort or volition, and I knew not what they were till I saw them looking at me from my paper, like my own image reflected in a glass” (EL 417).

Moved by an emotion that she professes was heaven sent, Gabriella discovers her voice and, symbolically, herself. Feeling first, understanding second, Gabriella’s narrative style does not, as she first professed, sketch her “living form” onto the canvas of the page; rather this “living form” emerges in the aftermath. Gabriella instead
Horace’s identity. Like the prelude- and anthem-forms that permitted two (or more) voices to blend and yet remain individuated, so too does Eoline’s voice find its complement in Horace’s “spirit.” Eoline’s “sweet voice” initially transgresses the borders of Horace’s body, suggesting a form of bodily possession in its “gliding within” movement. This transgression however finds relief in Horace’s own imaginative projection: “his spirit seemed a moonlit lake” (Eoline 67). Through music, then, Eoline’s “sweet voice” and Horace’s spirit collide and intertwine, “curling and undulating as the breath of music floated over it, then swelling high under a full breeze of melody” (Eoline 67). It is a merging of feeling that accentuates Horace’s own “awakening” affection where neither Eoline’s nor Horace’s identities are forced to surrender to the other (Eoline 174). As Horace eventually declares to Eoline’s father, “We love each other...we love each other with our whole hearts, minds and souls; we love each other as we always would have done had we been left to our own free will” (250).

Form, though, I would argue, plays yet another role. Central to the passage’s movement is the way in which Horace and Eoline, by the passage’s end no longer possess bodies. Indeed music’s freedom in form here becomes reflected in Horace and Eoline’s own bodily “forms.” Music in these novels thus demonstrates a “softening” effect that affects not only an individual’s emotions but also his very body. Affecting the very “fibre” of the listener’s body, the music of these improvisatrices in turn exploded the listening body’s boundaries, altering its very makeup. In the words of Uncle Ben, “She has almost sung my soul out of my body” (Eoline 52). Transforming the most unfeeling (and “stiff”) body into a mass of quivering emotion, these female musician’s vocal and instrumental performances produce “ecstacy” (Eoline 51), “rapture” expresses (as opposed to represents) and through this “shower” of feeling then “drafts” herself. Resembling what Dwight argued separated music from other aesthetic mediums—“Music through feelings calls up the objects with which those feelings are associated; painting and sculpture through objects call up feelings” (30)—these “random” sheets, through feeling, “calls up” Gabriella.
(PNB 35), and amazement (Beulah 244) in their listeners. Even the “iron-framed and iron
hearted” (Eoline 68) Miss Manly could not remain immune: “Though Miss Manly had no ear for
music, and could hardly tell one note from another, she felt through every fibre the majesty of the
loveliness of Eoline’s music” (51). As one of Eoline’s pupils noted, “She looks as if she is
purring” (68).

In the following section I argue that these images of “softening” are better understood
within a larger musical discourse. I examine popular theories on the role of the body in the
transmission of and production of sound and argue that musical texts like Gardiner’s The Music
Taste suggested that it was a body’s elasticity that determined what type of music was heard and
produced. Throughout the early and mid nineteenth century, elasticity became a frequent topic,
from theories on the acoustic of sound to instruction manuals regulating a performer’s body.
These texts among others turned to air as an illustration of the ideal elastic body, proposing that a
body that “bent” was one that took on the quality of air. I argue that this depiction of the musical
body (as both a listening and performing body) informed the writing of Hentz and Evans. In
Eoline, The Planter’s Northern Bride, and Beulah, the bodies of their sentimental musicians are
associated with two “forms” marked by their affinity to air: the nightingale and the Aeolian harp.
Hentz and Evans, I eventually argue, thus turned to the incorporeal as a true expression of
music’s affective power. To begin, however, we must first turn to the single body part from
which most of these discussions on music commence, or the musical ear.

II. “The Art in Taking the Breath”: The Nightingale and the Aeolian Harp

Originally published in England in 1832, William Gardiner’s The Music of Nature; or,
An Attempt to Prove that What Is Passionate and Pleasing in the Art of Singing, Speaking, and
Performing Upon Musical Instruments, Is Derived from the Sounds of the Animated World found its way to the United States in 1837. Advertised in its American edition to a “general public, especially to professors, students, and amateurs in music” interested in learning more about a “science or art, which is daily receiving increased attention” (Advertisement), The Music of Nature promised to be an original text (“Preface” n.p.); “It would be difficult,” its advertisement claimed, “to name a work in the language, combining in so high a degree of acute observation, philosophical analysis, and apt illustration” as that found within Gardiner’s explanation of the “true principles of musical taste and expression” (“Preface” n.p.).

Although singular in many regards, The Music of Nature nevertheless rehearsed a common debate ordering American music theory and thought from the late eighteenth-century to the advent of The Music of Nature’s publication. Like the medical textbooks and music dictionaries, encyclopedias, and treatises that came before, The Music of Nature argued that musical taste, what Gardiner termed the “formation of the musical ear” (15), largely depended upon the human body’s “most curiously wrought” organ, or the ear (13). Designed to help the amateur “ear” mature, early musical texts published in the United States often attacked the public’s lack of music taste, a deficiency in judgment that they suggested stemmed for poor hearing. The “undisciplined” (63) or “untutored” (173) ear, according to Hastings’ Dissertation on Musical Taste, failed to distinguish between the different sensation’s sound produced. Lowell Mason’s Manual of the Boston Academy of Music even advised “Infant Classes” to pay particular attention to the ear’s cultivation: early “exercises should aim chiefly at the formation of a musical ear” and require students to “apprehend [and] distinguish...individual sounds” (Mason 24).

103 Portions of Gardiner’s text appeared in American newspapers as early as October 1832.
Gardiner’s *The Music of Nature* presented a similar argument. Reiterating what *An Inquiry into the Nature and Design of Music* had posited in 1831, that “the want of a musical ear cannot be justly ascribed to mental but to organic causes” (11), Gardiner’s *The Music of Nature* turned to the physics of sound and suggested that it was the ear’s receptivity to sound’s vibrations that influenced musical taste: if an individual could develop the ability to discriminate between the “delicate vibrations” of sound (Gardiner 19), he would thus learn to hear the “finest gradations” of harmony and “acquire what is termed a musical ear” (Gardiner 21). Moreover, the development of the “discriminatory powers of the ear” largely depended upon the relative elasticity of the organ; the ear’s own flexible make-up permitted sound’s vibrations to carry from the outside in (Gardiner 14). As *The Musical Cyclopedia*’s entry on the *Ear* explained, “To have an ear for music” was “to have a delicate sense of hearing” (136) because “a delicate ear, capable of vibrating exceedingly quick, will be thrilled with a very acute sound, while a dull ear, not capable of vibrating so quick, will perceive no sound at all” (135).

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104 Both Thomas Hastings’s *Dissertation on Musical Taste* and F.J. Fétis’ *Music Explained to the World* included a chapter that addressed public taste, or rather the public’s lack of taste. In “Of Design in Reference to Public Taste,” Hastings warned that “the fashionable world require[d] music for the same reason they require[d] light poetry and romance,” preferring “trivial compositions” to those of a higher art (169). This fondness for “stale romance” was an offense to music’s “higher aim” and should therefore be squashed (Hastings 170). In “Of the Prejudices of the Ignorant,” Fétis similarly railed against the lack of public taste, targeting in particular the tendency of the musically ignorant to feign knowledge: “To speak of what one is ignorant of is a mania which affects the whole world, because no one is willing to appear ignorant of anything” (259). Noting that “there is more than one degree of ignorance of art,” Fétis advised, however, that only one proved forever deaf to music’s enchanting strains: “The first, which consists in a repugnance to it, and is the most rare, is incurable (253). The others, conversely, were salvageable. Therefore the objective for music texts like *The Dissertation on Musical Taste* and *Music Explained to the World* was to help the amateur American “ear” mature. To appreciate or “hear,” in other words, good music. When “fully developed,” the *musical* ear demonstrated a “knack for listening” (Gardiner page) absent in its less cultured cousin, the unmusical or “undisciplined” and “untutored” ear (Hastings 63, 173). Failing to appreciate the full “effect of the art of music” (Fétis viii), the unmusical ear experienced only the “simple sensation,” an “incomplete perception” of the “most vivid” sounds (Fétis 276-277). Some musical compositions, however, broke through the barriers the unmusical ear set up against sound. These compositions—from the “very highest of human genius” (Hastings 237)—affected even the most hearing-impaired ear, if not of the “incurable” variety. In fact, an ear normally resistant to the “delicate vibrations” of sound could not defend against the enchanting strains of this higher order of music. As Hastings wrote of Haydn’s oratorios, “Haydn’s music is too enchanting to have anything to fear from criticism. Any one who has taste cannot turn a deaf ear to such minstrelsy; and listening, he cannot but admire” (238). Music like Haydn’s, in other words, forcibly opened a listener’s ear to musical expression.
Equally important was the elasticity of the various bodies that formed and transmitted sound’s vibrations to the ear. *Elasticity*, in regards to music, was understood to be “an epithet applied to that quality of bodies, by which, when they are acted on by any force, they tend to restore themselves to their natural form and position” (Porter 137). Any body possessing a proper elasticity proved an effective producer of and conduit for sound. As John Fétis’s *Music Explained to the World* (1844) clarified, “[it] was for a long time believed that the air alone possessed the degree of elasticity which is necessary to convey sound to the ear; but it is now known that liquids, and some solid bodies, have the same property” (77-78). Air however remained the only “body” “perfectly elastic in its natural state” (Porter 137). Elasticity—of the sounding body, of the intermediary that carried sound, and of the listening ear—materialized as the primary determinant to whether a sound was created and heard as noise or music. Noise became “a confused mixture of sounds produced by the concussion of non-elastic bodies” (Gardiner 23). “[M]usical sound,” on the other hand, was “a pure harmonious effect emanating from a simple elastic body, as the tone of a bell” (Gardiner 23). *The Music of Nature* thus classified the various objects of nature into two primary categories: the inflexible “bodies” capable of producing only cacophonous noise and the more malleable “bodies” whose plasticity resembled the “grand medium through which sound [was] conveyed”—air (Gardiner 18).

Critical to the production of a musically pleasing voice was the “art in taking the breath” (Gardiner 30, footnote). Fétis’ *Music Explained to the World* similarly argued, “it is not enough to possess a fine voice; though this gift of nature is an invaluable advantage, which no degree of skill can possibly supply” (184). Rather, a musician must first study the “art of regulating his voice with firmness,” learning to adapt, in other words, “as perfectly as possible the motions of

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105 As *The Musical Cyclopedia* explained, “A solid body may vibrate, either in consequence of its inherent elasticity, by which, when forcibly deranged, it tends to return to its own proper figure and state; or in consequence of an external tension” (Porter 303). A solid body thus “deranged” became elastic
respiration to the emission of sound, so as to bring out the power of the latter, as much as the quality of the organ and the conformation of the chest will admit” (Fétis 184). Thus, Fétis suggested, “the most useful training, in the art of singing, especially for the female sex, is that of the respiration” (187). The ability to bring air into the body as well as the amount of air a musician’s body could sustain determined the tone and quality of sound produced; a musician’s windpipe fashioned the vibrations through which sound became music, the “slight percussion of the breath through the windpipe” providing the “free and easy passage” without which sound became noise (Gardiner 29).

We find a similar analogy in a series of essays on “Acoustic Architecture” published in Dwight’s *Journal of Music* in 1852. According to one of the essays, the structure that framed a musical performance altered the attributes of sound: “every musical performance is modified essentially in its quality by the character of the structure in which it is given” (“Acoustic” 26). These framing structures were needed to contain sound; however they also risked disturbing sound’s transmission. As a later essay of the same name explained, “Doubtless the conditions most favorable for the distinct perception and full appreciation of music are to be found in the free air, where the medium through which the sound passes is without admixture, and nothing interposes or bounds to alloy the purity of tone, to absorb, interrupt or dissipate the sonorous waves” (“Acoustic Architecture,” emphasis added 49). Air free from form thus proved the ideal conductor of sound.

Particular attention must be paid then to “the choice of materials, and the manner of constructing the walls of an apartment built for musical effect” (“Acoustic” 26) in order to approximate, as closely as possible, the formal freedom air provided to sound’s vibrations. So critical was this outer framework that, if improperly devised, it could alter the quality of
projected sound. Bodily elasticity therefore defined a solid body’s flexibility; if a body could momentarily take on the form of air, to “de-form,” if you will, it was then deemed “elastic.” As one of the essays on “Acoustic Architecture” argued, “in their passage through a bland and pure atmosphere, inharmonious sounds even, will amalgamate and strike upon the ear with a pleasant accent. Space or distance, in this case, seems to act as a purifier of sound, sifting out and absorbing the discordant portions, and allowing those without alloy only, to pass through” (26). Although speaking of the intermediary—that “bland and pure atmosphere”—the essay’s description held true for the sonorous body as well: a body that possessed “atmospheric” elements produced music because it “sift[ed] out and absorb[ed] the discordant portions” of sound. An inelastic body, on the other hand, was either mute (struck “dumb”) or, as was more often the case, unpleasant on the ears.

In order to produce a “free and easy passage” for air in the body, however, a musician had to practice proper bodily control. A good vocal tone, in other words, was not “simply the gift of nature, as many suppose” but rather the “result of cultivation” (Hastings, Dissertation 33), a “peculiar method of training” that allowed “each of the several organs its due share of vibration” (Hasting, Dissertation 34). Improper control transformed sound into the “harsh and disagreeable voices” that were evidence of “organs too much contracted” (Gardiner 29). As Gardiner explained, “sound thus resisted is tortured by overcoming the obstacles by which it is impeded” (30). Through proper discipline an individual learned to regulate the relative elasticity of his or her body—the “phenomena of a well-constructed sound-board”—thereby maintaining control over sound’s “gentle vibrations” (Hastings, Dissertation 35).

Of all the “bodies” in nature the nightingale proved most adept at controlling sound’s “gentle vibrations.” This “chantress of the grove” owed its musical sweetness to more than its
musical taste and improvisatory skill; the surprising vocal power of “so small a creature” evolved in part from its curious bird body (Gardiner 222). The nightingale’s entire body was a windpipe of sorts, a nearly hollow structure whose chief purpose was to frame air. As Gardiner explained, “a recent discovery has shown, that in birds the lungs have several openings, communicating with corresponding air-bags or cells, which fill the whole cavity of the body, from the neck downwards, and into which the air passes and repasses in the progress of breathing. This is not all; the very bones are hollow, from which air-pipes are conveyed to the most solid parts of the body, even into the quills and feathers” (Gardiner 223).\textsuperscript{106} Seemingly composed more of air than body, the nightingale possessed the proper “machinery” to produce its impressive “vocal powers” (Gardiner 223). Boasting “a voice of the greatest harmony, variety, and compass” (“History of the Nightingale” 372), the nightingale had indeed mastered the “art in taking the breath” (Gardiner 30), showcasing—in its act of “respiration”—“as much judgment as an opera singer” (“The Nightingale and Mocking Bird” 418).\textsuperscript{107}

Within this small bird can be found the complexities of sound—an early theory on acoustics that outlined the at times circular relationship between bodies and air, between the non-elastic and elastic, and everything in-between. Yet the nightingale’s popular association with the musical performances of women also offers us an opportunity to consider the female body’s own affinity to the nightingale. I would argue that the novels of Hentz and Evans associated the musical and bodily forms of their improvisatrices with that of the nightingale, a conflation that Jenny Lind undoubtedly popularized (see Figure 2.6). During a May Day frolic, Eoline even

\textsuperscript{106} This feature held true for other birds as well, such as the mockingbird whose “pipe comes nearest to the nightingale” (“The Nightingale and the Mockingbird” 419).

\textsuperscript{107} Gardiner’s description was reprinted throughout various magazines and journals in the United States both prior to and after the publication of \textit{The Music of Nature}’s American edition: \textit{The Daily National Intelligencer}, “Varieties,” November 1832; \textit{The Boston Investigator}, “The Vocal Machinery of Birds,” 1833; \textit{The Rural Repository}, “Article 1” June 1833; \textit{The Baltimore Literary Monument}, “Gardiner’s Music of Nature; Birds,” 1839; and \textit{The Journal of Belles Lettres}, “Birds,” 1841, are a few examples. Gardiner’s text was also frequently cited in music encyclopedias as well as in popular musical journals like \textit{Dwight’s Journal of Music}. 
sings in the nightingale’s home, performing under a large magnolia tree—“an arbor, within an arbor, formed of freshly-gathered boughs, and festooned with garlands of wild flowers” *(Eoline 80)*—shading the day’s festivities: “She felt inspired by the influences surrounding her, and never sung so wild, so sweet a strain” *(Eoline 82)*.

Eoline’s, Eulalia’s, and Beulah’s representation as “nightingale-women” certainly reflected prevailing attitudes toward the female body in the antebellum period. Both musical and medical discourses published in the early and mid-nineteenth century stressed the female body’s ability to emote, not because women were more artistically talented but because their bodies—like the nightingale’s—were more malleable. Like the “intermediary” air that transferred the vibrations of the sonorous body to the receiving body, the female body proved to be acutely receptive to sound’s vibrations. In short, the female body was the body of least resistance. With “fleshy fibers...weaker and the cellular tissue more abundant” *(Cabanis 221)*, the female body had a “softness” that Cabanis described as valuable when immersed in a sensate environment:

In the woman, the cerebral matter shares the softness of the other parts. The cellular tissue that covers this matter, or that enters its divisions, is more abundant. The envelopes that it forms are more mucous and looser. All the movements here are made more easily and, consequently, more promptly...Now, the promptness and the liveliness of action in the nervous system are the measure of the general sensibility of the subject...Thus whereas in the man the vigor of the nervous system and that of the muscular system increase through each other, the woman will be more sensitive and more mobile, because of the texture of all her organs is softer and weaker and because these initial organic
constitutions are at every instant reproduced by the way in which the sensibility is
exercised in her. (227)\textsuperscript{108}

Of all the musically vibrating bodies, the woman’s own soft, fleshy tissue perfectly preserved the
vibrations or sensations transmitted, “at every instant reproduced,” by sound. Thus tickled by
music, the female’s body transformed—from fleshy fibers to a sympathetically vibrating bodily
instrument, the female body sang.\textsuperscript{109}

Music manuals, primers, and general textbooks published in the late eighteenth and early
nineteenth century similarly underscored the importance of bodily “elasticity,” especially in
regards to the art of performance. Warning against “awkward gestures” (Law, Select Harmony
“Preface”), early American psalm books argued that a lack of “stiffness” in musical performance
was critical to maintaining music’s affective impression. As Andrew Law explained in his
Musical Primer (1793), “[music’s] principal prerogative is to rouse and animate the passions,
and in that way, to influence and direct the heart. But in order to produce this effect, must be well

\textsuperscript{108} Similarly, F. J. Fetis’s Musical Explained to the World; or, How to Understand Music and Enjoy its Performance not only argued that the “human voice [was] the basis and model of music” (45)—“Whatever degree of perfection an instrumentalist may arrive, it will always be difficult for him to exercise over popular masses a power equal to that which results from the human voice, when directed by a proper sentiment, and perfected by proper studies” (Fetis 98)—it also argued that the female body was the perfect vehicle for the transmission and reception of music: “The delicate constitution of females adapts them to experience more vivid sensations than men from the hearing of music; and it is in them that the action of this art carries the delirium of the senses to its greatest height” (Fetis 2).

\textsuperscript{109} Within this discourse, the female musical body and the musical aesthetic became what La Roy Sunderland, in Pathetism: with Practical Instructions (New York, 1843), described as, respectively, a “panthetikos,” or “that which produces emotion or feeling” (2) and that “Agency by which one person by manipulation, is enabled to produce emotion, feeling, passion, or any physical or mental effects, in the system of another,” or his definition of “Pathetism” (3). Indirectly channeling the discourse of Spiritualism, a “popular psychological movement, but also a religious revival on the margins of Protestantism” (Taves 167), the musical aesthetic’s religious imprint becomes retranslated in this new pseudo-religious environment. The female musical body in this more modern parlance became the intermediary implicit in the nineteenth-century definition of a “medium.” In The Philosophy of Spiritual Intercourse (originally published in 1851), A. J. Davis argued that the “medium,” connecting the physical world with the spiritual—a “natural entry way into the spirit realm” (Taves 180)—was one “through whom ‘sounds’ are made” (Davis 97). As Davis continues, “The spirits...are enabled through these mediums, or conductors, to attract and move articles of furniture, vibrate the wires of a musical instrument, and, by discharging by the power of their wills, currents of magnetism, they can and do produce rappings” (27). This image of “mediumship” continued to haunt the female musical body; Davis explains that one of the necessary attributes that medium must possess is “little gross electricity”—as a medium’s job was to create—through the communication of these spirits—an “electrical atmosphere” (Davis 27). In the sentimental novels of this chapter, the musical aesthetic evokes this very atmosphere.
performed. Ease and freedom must be studied, that stiffness and formality may be avoided; the teeth and throat freely opened, that the voice may be clear and sonorous” (4). Evoking a language that Gardiner’s *The Music of Nature* would later echo, Law’s emphasis on “ease and freedom” as opposed to the “stiffness and formality” of some performative styles supported a vision of a pliant body whose “freely opened” mouth produced, with a voice both “clear and sonorous,” music instead of noise (*Musical Primer* 4).

In the 1830s and 1840s the demand for such music instruction books increased. As the 1852 *American Musical Almanac* noted, “Within the twenty years just past, an increased attention has been paid to musical education. This has of course increased the demand for elementary and other music books” (27). These method books were not only accessible to a large audience but also overwhelming in number. Oliver Ditson & Company’s *Catalogue of Sheet Music* (1861) inventoried musical publications of the antebellum period. In addition to the work published by its own company, the *Catalogue* included those “formerly published by Messrs. Atwill, Jollie, Dubois, Rile, Waters, Daggett, Jacques & Brother of New York.—Prentiss & Clark, Wade, A. & J. P. Ordway, Martin & Beals, C. Bradlee & Co. Howe, Keith, and Marsh, of Boston.—Fiot, Gould, and Bellack, of Philadelphia.—Hewitt, of New Orleans.—Oliver Shaw, of Providence.—Jones, of Indianapolis, S.T. Gordon, of New York, and Beck & Lawton, of Phil” (title page). Mapping music’s geographic circulation, from New York to New Orleans, Ditson’s *Catalogue* more importantly listed over forty method books for piano alone, from the still

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110 While limited in the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century to correcting a congregation’s “squeakings” and “grumblings,” the musical instructions read by the mid-eighteenth century musicians were more in-depth. Thomas Jefferson owned a copy of Francesco Geminiani’s *Rules for Playing in a True Taste on the Violin German, Flute, Violoncello, and Harpsicord* (1751) which provided instruction for achieving “Variety” in music; it encouraged “Melodious Variation...in order to awaken the Imagination of the performer, whether he Sings or Plays, and at the same Time to give pleasure to the Hearer” (Geminiani n.p) Jefferson’s copy also included an annotation from “Burney’s journ.” on producing the vibrato effect on the violin: “The Beat upon the unison, octave, or any consonant sound to a note on the violin, which so well supplies the place of the old close-shake, if not wholly unknown, is at least neglected by all the violin performers I heard on the continent, tho’ so commonly and successfully practiced in England by those of the Giardini school” (qtd. in Salgo).
popular method books by Bach and Czerny to the less remembered Herz, Heller, and Duvernoy.  

Instruction books like Mocheles’ *Studies for the Pianoforte*, J. B. Duvernoy’s *Ecole du Mecanism*, Carl Czerny’s *110 Exercises Faciles Et Progressifs Pour Le Piano*, and Neville Challoner’s *Instructions for Playing the Pianoforte* all emphasized the need for a student’s mastery of basic techniques: scales, fingerings, chromatic work, chordal progressions. As Mocheles writes, “The player must possess such control over his fingers, as, by the weight and pressure of their extremities, enables to produce every shade and gradation of tone, from the most delicate to the most powerful” (iv). Bodily control not only allowed the performer proper execution of the musical material but also helped the performer avoid any unnatural or ugly behaviors. For example, Czerny’s *Letters to a Young Lady* was addressed to an imaginary Miss Cecilia whom Czerny instructs not only in the rudimentary elements of musical literacy but also in musical poise: “Before any thing else, I earnest entreat you, Miss Cecilia, to acquire a graceful and appropriate position, when sitting at the pianoforte” (3).

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111 These texts were also aimed to a specifically female audience as early as the 1830s. Much sheet music was designed with the hope of showcasing feminine accomplishments. Outlining the development in sheet music from early in the eighteenth century through the late nineteenth century, Richard Crawford explains that one of the significant changes was the development of instrumental accompaniment for song. While American music publishers in 1800 typically notated their sheet music featuring songs on only two staff lines—the “keyboard performer doubled the melodic line of the singer in the right hand, adding the bass and chords in the left” (Crawford, “Early American Music” 207)—by 1810, “the layout was almost always on three staves, the singer often being left on his or her own, while the pianist added interesting and usually more complicated pattern work in both hands” (Crawford, “Early American Music” 207-208). This change introduced a new independence to the role of the piano accompaniment and to the singer—giving more importance to an accomplished female musician who could either accompany her own singing, join in as a singer, or accompany a group of singers without merely ‘doubling’ their parts, giving her musical education both a domestic and social appeal. This trend continued not only in sheet music and music collections but in the form of magazine music. As Bonny H. Miller argues, magazine music demonstrated a preference for music arranged for two or more instruments (the voice being one): “By at least twenty to one, songs with piano accompaniment, or occasionally with guitar or harp accompaniment, constituted the favorite genre of magazine music, with piano dances as the second most popular genre” (159-160).

112 In the final letter, Czerny, as the imagined instructor for the young Miss Cecelia, announces his impending visit. “I announce to you, to your terror, that I shall very shortly be in your neighbourhood, that I shall visit you, and, with an awful, judge-like mien, convince myself in person of your diligence. That you will be greatly alarmed at this, I take to be a matter of course” (82). Although obviously in jest, Czerny’s tone still creates an almost panoptic authorial control over his student that many instructional manuals assumed. The American Miss Cecelias were
Many of these instruction manuals explicitly outlined the effect of such practice, accentuating the importance of the performer’s regulation of her body. In order to look natural, the performer must carefully train her body to hold what seems at first to be an unnatural pose. In his “General Instructions on Fingering,” Challoner precisely explains, “1st Your Seat at the PIANO FORTE, must be of sufficient height, so that by curving your Fingers and resting the extremities of them on the KEYS, the Hand and Arm will form a direct line from the Elbow; care must be taken not to sink the wrist below this direction, as it should be rather above than below the Fingers, and the Thumb should be brought near to the black Keys” (8). There is hardly a body part that goes un-positioned in these texts. Neither “stiff nor bent” (Czerny 4), this bodily positioning ultimately promoted a specific musical style. “It is not merely that an awkward position is disagreeable and ridiculous, but it also impedes, if not prevents, the development of a free and elegant style of playing” (Czerny 4).

Moreover, a female musician could choose among five instruments to master to avoid awkward positioning because, as Beth Macleod explains, “a woman could play an instrument but only if she looked attractive” (21). While the human voice remained the ideal instrument for a female performer, the pianoforte (and its variations like the harpsichord, organ, and melodeon), harp, guitar, and lute were also acceptable as each possessed a volume “relatively soft and delicate sounding” with a “melody...in a high range, corresponding to the soprano voice” (Macleod 10). Such instruments also permitted the female musician’s body to maintain a “natural and graceful” poise: “she did not have to sit awkwardly or distort her features” (Macleod 10). In fact, early nineteenth-century texts on musical performance emphasized the body’s position as pure instrument. In these texts, the body’s primary function was not to give life but to make expected to follow precisely the dictates of each method book; not to do so came at a price—public humiliation by a poor musical performance or, as Czerny intimates here, a more private although still public chastisement by the “awful, judge-like mien” of the great Czerny himself.
sound. While instruction manuals like Mason’s *Manual of the Boston Academy of Music* suggested the need for a performer to properly feel her music—“Musical expression depends chiefly on the feeling which the singer possesses and imparts to the performance” (*Manual* 241)—they also concentrated on the need for the performer to become an instrument herself. As Mason argued, “Our method of producing vocal sounds is similar to that of a wind instrument” (98). Similarly in *The Music of Nature*, Gardiner argued, “The nose and roof of the mouth may be regarded as the sound-board of the voice. The teeth form a bridge or barrier upon which the lips and tongue are constantly playing” (36). Thus, the nineteenth century vision of the musician’s body largely ignored the body’s organic nature (its function as “body,” or a container providing life to an individual) in favor of a representation of the body that emphasized its regulatory potential: an instrument can be easily tuned. The human body as body disappeared.

Equally important to a musician’s bodily positioning was her touch, how she “fingered” her instrument. General musical instruction manuals, method books, Psalters, and “letters” of musical advice in the antebellum period argued that a musician’s “touch”—the way in which a performer plucked, stroked, and handled her instrument—also affected her display of a composition’s sentiment. In its entry on “Touch,” *The Musical Cyclopedia*, for example, listed the “piano forte” as the best “display” of “the taste and feeling of the performer” because “[any] want of ease, on the part of the performer, will show itself in execution” (397); therefore, “attention should be paid to the position and ease of motion of the fingers and hand” (Porter 397). The suppleness of a musician’s fingers was of importance for the guitar and harp as well. In method books like *Boscha’s Introduction for the Harp* amateur and intermediate harpists could expect to find a “pedagogical method, as noted in his playing instructions” that emphasized not only the “finger placement” but also the belief that the “nuance of a sound must
come from a finger stroke” (Zingel, *Harp Music* 29). The way in which a pianist stroked or “touched” her instrument thus established the music she produced.

This hyper-consciousness of the female form ultimately provided performers with what most instructors deemed essential to music proficiency: the ability to forget one’s body while performing. Learning proper bodily carriage ultimately contributed to the effect the musical performance had on its audience (see Figure 3.3). As Porter advised in *The Musical Cyclopedia*, “In true expression, the composer and performer are lost sight of; the attention is riveted and the feelings are enraptured in view of the sentiment” (Porter 145). Czerny similarly promised that with daily practice and “untiring diligence and the greatest attention” all the various Miss Cecilias in America would one day develop “small and delicate, though still sufficiently powerful fingers,” having acquired “pliability, independence, and volubility” (*Letters* 9).

In *Eoline, The Planter’s Northern Bride*, and *Beulah*, all three female musicians prove gifted performers on these “socially acceptable” instruments (Macleod 10). Eoline sings and plays the harp, guitar, and piano; also a vocalist, Beulah plays the melodeon—an inexpensive organ with foot bellows and a keyboard—as well; Eulalia, initially only a songstress, eventually learns to play the piano and guitar, practicing with “the assiduity of a school-girl” (*PNB* 362), but only at the request of her husband: “Will my wife become a pupil, for my sake?...Will she learn

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113 Oliver Ditson’s *Catalogue of Sheet Music, and Music Books*—a list that incorporated work “formerly published” by other music publishing companies as well as Ditson’s—inventoried a wide range of instruction manuals for piano, as well as a series of method books for the harp and guitar, including *Bochsa’s Instruction for the Harp* and *Carulli’s Method for Guitar*.

114 “True expression”—that which gives “to music that force and feeling which the sentiment requires” (Porter 141)—in fact depended upon the “concurrence” of “expression” and execution” (Porter 143). Devoid of this “sensibility,” an “accurate musician, may with propriety be compared to a marble statue, the symmetrical proportions of which please the eye, but, wanting in animation, compel us, tired of its vanity, to turn away after a while, to the contemplation of some less beautiful object” (Porter 141). The reverse was also harmful. A musician or composer with only sensibility and no technical talent or knowledge would fail to “give expression to his works” (Porter 143). Thus as the *Musical Cyclopedia* concisely explained, “There is expression in composition as well as in execution; and it is from their concurrence, that the greatest effect is produced” (143).
the use of those now silent keys and loosened chords?” (PNB 306). Heeding the advice of music instruction manuals like *Letters to a Young Lady* and *The Musical Cyclopedia*, Eoline’s, Eulalia’s, and Beulah’s musical performances only called attention to their most feminine body parts—Eulalia’s “lips” and “fair face” (PNB 36), Eoline’s “white fingers, “rosy lips,” and “arm of unrivalled beauty” (*Eoline* 51-52, 177), and Beulah’s “trembling lips” (*Beulah* 10).

Yet Eoline, Eulalia, and Beulah also proved masters of “true expression,” their performatve bodies obscured, producing music so spellbinding that the listener, as Hentz writes of Horace Cleveland, “forgot the songstress in the emotions she inspired” (*Eoline* 68). Although Eulalia’s hands, protected from the “drudgery of housekeeping” by a “pair of thick woolen

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115 In *The Planter's Northern Bride* a piano was a luxury that Northerners like Eulalia’s father could not afford: “I have always signed for such advantages, but I never expressed the wish. I knew my father toiled to supply us with the comforts of life. How could I be selfish enough to beg for its luxuries?” (306). Supported by a southern slave system, however, Moreland’s household owned a “superb piano that stood...silent beneath its crimson cover” as well as a “guitar swathed in green” (306)—both (female appropriate) instruments that (the inappropriate) Claudia, Moreland’s first wife, had mastered.
mittens,” are “fastidiously” studied by Moreland while at dinner at her father’s house (PNB 65), Eulalia’s performative body remained hidden from view. Moreland’s first impression of Eulalia—indeed, that which makes him “irresistibly attracted” to her (PNB 43)—is of her voice: “His ear was gratified before his eye” (PNB 34). Eulalia’s “rolling and warbling” music may have seemed on the verge of materializing into “something visible, as well as audible” (PNB 35); however Eulalia’s body—like a “sweet bird of song [that] had folded its wings behind that green enclosure”—remains a mere echo of what came first, the musical vibrations of sound (PNB 35).\footnote{116} Indeed, while the listening bodies of Colonel Manly, Uncle Ben, Horace, Moreland, Hartwell all vibrate in response to the musical performances of Eoline, Eulalia, and Beulah, this fluidity of form (this trembling and shaking and pulsating) merely mirrored the fluid nature of Eulalia’s, Eoline’s, and Beulah’s own identity, the “soft, rippling notes that seemed to echo from the deeps of her soul and voice its immensity” (Beulah 128). Becoming mere “voice,” “sound,” and “notes” instead of singers, musicians, and improvisatrices, these nightingale-musician’s forms are dematerialized in their act of performance.\footnote{117}

\footnote{116} The musical performances of Eoline, Eulalia, and Beulah demonstrated the importance of the confluence of expression and execution. As Porter’s encyclopedic entry of “Expression” explains, musical expression “[gives] to music that force and feeling which the sentiment requires” (141). Devoid of this “sensibility,” an “accurate musician, may with propriety be compared to a marble statue, the symmetrical proportions of which please the eye, but, wanting in animation, compel us, tired of its vanity, to turn away after a while, to the contemplation of some less beautiful object” (Porter 141). The reverse was also harmful. A musician or composer with only sensibility and no technical talent or knowledge would fail to “give expression to his works” because he must first “understand the connexion between the sentiment to be conveyed, and the powers of music. He ought to know and to feel the effect of the different combinations, in order to convey to the sentiment he has chosen, a character suitable to it” (143-144). Thus as Porter more concisely explains, “There is expression in composition as well as in execution; and it is from their concurrence, that the greatest effect is produced” (143).

\footnote{117} Although Evans argued against the fragrant fame literary pursuits could offer, she was still a staunch supporter of women’s engagement in the development of Southern Art, her Macaria arguably the “first offering of Southern art” and a “nucleus around which nobler and grander pictures...shall cluster” (Macaria 462).\footnote{117} Evans argued that (Southern) women were the ideal “instruments” through which such art could find expression. As she wrote to J.L.M. Curry in 1863 in a debate over whether “the character of Southern women [were] prejudicially affected by Slavery” (Letters 65),\footnote{117} “In tropical climes (where slavery flourishes) women were generally more richly endowed than in colder latitudes; their imagination more vivid and glowing, their susceptibility to emotions or impressions of beauty, or sublimity, infinitely keener; and nature seems to stamp them devotees at the shrine of Aesthetics; noble, perfect instruments for the advancement of the Art” (Letter 66). Evans’ emphasis on a woman’s “susceptibility” to the arts, to the “impressions of beauty” expressed in aesthetic objects, reflected a nineteenth-century position that
Nowhere was this disembodiment more notable than in *Eoline*. While music certainly was, as Miriam Shillingsburg argues, “an expression of Eoline’s self” (131), Eoline’s body also possessed an elasticity that resembled the nightingale’s own elastic form. Unlike Louisa, whose “pallid cheek, and feeble frame, and weary step” (*Eoline* 66) makes her an unsuitable inspiration for love—“I never expect to inspire love in any one” (*Eoline* 65)—Eoline has a “radiant bloom, elastic form, and buoyant spirit” (*Eoline* 66) that makes her “seem born for love and happiness” (*Eoline* 65).  

A talented harpist, Eoline would certainly need an elastic touch. As Gardiner’s *The Music of Nature* argued, “of all the instruments the harp requires to be treated with the greatest tenderness. Its character is not that of force and loudness. It speak with a lisping tongue, and its greatest excellence is that airy lightness which lies in its pianissimo” (331). So delicate an instrument as the harp required the gentle touch of a woman: “Men handle it too roughly; their mode of clawing it destroys its beauty, and it is only by the soft touch of the female hand that its delicate notes are drawn out” (Gardiner 331). Accentuating the importance of bodily elasticity in the “soft touch of the female hand” over the rigidity of man’s own “rough claw,” *The Music of Nature* thus warned that without the properly pliant body the “airy lightness” of this sacred instrument would be destroyed.

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118 Eoline’s “young and elastic” (138) body is further contrasted to the “iron-framed and iron hearted” Miss Manly (66).

119 Gardiner’s description of the harp is reprinted nearly verbatim in Porter’s *Musical Cyclopedia*, see page 190.

120 Eoline only performs religious music on her harp and considers her musical talents God-given: “It was a beautiful gift of God, and the owner had no cause for vanity or pride. She knew that she possessed this gift herself, and she was grateful for it. Her mother, a lovely, pious woman, used to tell her, when she was a child, that she must praise God for having given her a voice to sing His praise; that the angels sang divine hymns to their golden harps, and that one day her angel child would be enrolled in that glorious choir. Eoline never seated herself at the harp without remembering the words of the mother, whose spirit-tongue now warbled the melodies of eternity. She never liked to play upon it any but holy anthems. It seemed sacrilege to her to mingle with the sacred associations of her childhood, the light and fashionable songs of her day” (95-96).
The harp, a sounding body, thus interacted with two different “bodily” forms. The first was of course the elastic body of the musician, whose supple fingers bent (or “deranged”) the strings, creating the impulse through which sound was initially created. The second elastic “body” was air itself that transmitted those impulses to the listening body. Music therefore originated in the “soft touch of the female hand” which forced elasticity into the harp’s string, before finally finding its way to the “freedom” of air. In this three-part process musical sound could easily go astray; a string improperly plucked sounded “dead,” its vibrations “interrupted” (Porter 52). A musician with a nuanced touch and fingers appropriately elastic, however, exhibited a body that became the “grand medium” of Gardiner’s imagining. Although moving from one medium to another, the vibrations a harpist fashioned ideally remained unaltered, as if they never left the harpist’s body in the first place. In this latter scenario, all three musical bodies suggestively contained the same elemental elasticity: air, string, and body, in other words, were one.

This elastic “affinity” inadvertently suggested a resemblance between the elasticity of the harpist’s sounding body and the density of air, an analogy further intensified in the association of the harp with its close cousin, the “Eolian” or “Aeolian” harp (see Figure 3.4) Here the musician literally became air. As the Musical Cyclopedia succinctly stated, the “Eolian Harp” was “a stringed instrument whose tones are not produced by art, but by the direct action of the wind” (139). Music did not come from the “sonorous body” but rather from air’s “refraction” through the body (of an instrument): “music is in air as colours are in light. When any body inflects the rays of light or refracts them, it does not give the colours that are seen, but it makes the light give them: so a sonorous body does not give musical sounds, but makes the air give them” (Jones 338). This effect was largely a reflection of the Aeolian harp’s formal properties. Constructed “of
a rectangular box, made of very thin deal, of the same width as the window in which it is placed” (Moore 26), the Aeolian harp was traditionally sounded by the flow of the wind over its strings; “the upper surface of this box, which is pierced with sounding holes, like the sounding board of the fiddle” are “stretched” to a “slight degree of tension” (Moore 26), the proper amount of elasticity needed to produce the “most agreeable combination of wild and melting sounds”:

“When these strings are in unison, and the instrument exposed in the window to the action of a gentle breeze, they will emit the most agreeable combination of wild and melting sounds, changing from one harmonic of the string to another, according to the varying impulse of the wind, and its unequal action on the different parts of the vibrating strings” (Moore 26). Like the body of the nightingale where “air passes and repasses” through its more “solid” parts, the Aeolian harp’s body became the medium through which air became music.

Hentz’s decision to name her title character “after the eolian harp” (90) therefore positioned Eoline/Eoline within a musical discourse that emphasized the importance of air to the production of music and reflected the body of the nightingale itself: “My name is Eoline, and when the winds play around me, I feel, indeed, like an eolian lyre” (Eoline 90).121 Just like the Aeolian harp that represented a gateway between the “wild” sounds of the natural world and the “melting” sounds of the domestic home, Eoline—and her fellow nightingales—sounded a music composed from the interplay between the private, secluded heart and the open “airiness” of the outside world. Eoline, Eulalia, and Beulah certainly reveal, as Petra Meyer-Frazier suggests, the domestic novel’s tendency to use music to “paint the ‘ideal’ woman of the time, the image real American women were seeking to emulate” (46). But I would also argue that by emphasizing the

121 Some notes on Hentz’s use of the Aeolian harp: Hentz’s spelling of “eolian” was commonly used interchangeably with Aeolian. While the lyre and the harp have different bodies, it also seems normal to interchange the Aeolian lyre with the Aeolian harp. When Eoline does perform on a harp, Hentz notably drops the “Aeolian/Eolian”—presumably indicating a different form of harp, one conventionally played by humans, rather than wind.
“formlessness” of the performing bodies of Eoline, Eulalia, and Beulah, Hentz and Evans underscored music’s own de-accentuation of the discernable features of an object. Displacing the reader’s (and, in the text, listener’s) attention away from music’s form (as both music’s structure and as bodily form), Hentz and Evans instead featured the emotions their texts expressed.

Becoming a “medium” through which (Northern) “prejudices” may be “softened” (PNB 40), the improvisatrice’s elastic body and her musical performance produced the “electric spark” through which love could travel. As Eoline declares, “love will be the lightning’s flash,” sending “electric wires...to bridge the abysmal distance between our hearts” (Eoline 73). So too, I argue, does music in these novels seemingly bridge the gap between strangers and, in Hentz’s The Planter’s Northern Bride at least, the geographic and ideological differences separating the Northern and Southern climes, the “reverberations” of the “voice of the South” reaching its “full, spontaneous strain” all the way “to the green hills and granite cliffs of New England’s ‘rock-bound coast’” (“Preface,” PNB 11). Hentz in particular was concerned with literature’s tendency for misrepresentation. Her anti-abolitionist novel, The Planter’s Northern Bride, frequently takes to task the Northern representation of Southern slavery. As she contends in the final few pages of the novel, “We believe the Southern character to be misunderstood, misrepresented, and wronged, and that it is the duty of those in whose minds this conviction is rooted, to vindicate it, as far as their influence extends, from calumny and animadversion” (PNB 578). Yet ending with the sentiment that “We love the North” (579), The Planter’s Northern Bride’s objective was both to correct the South’s misrepresentation by the North and to foster “affectional bonds” between these two divergent ideologies. Music, I would suggest, encouraged these bonds; a reading Hentz advances with in the marriage of the Northern Eulalia to the Southern Moreland, their love inspired by Eulalia’s “sweet and soft and feminine beyond expression” music (PNB 34). Of
course this process worked only in *theory*, for, as I will argue, Southern sentimental authors like Hentz and Evans turned the particular bodies of the white female musician and the black performer in order to differentiate between a white, ethereal musicality and, what they suggested, was the noise of the undisciplined, embodied African American.

III. “Black as a Nigger” and “White as a Corpse”

Halfway through *The Planter’s Northern Bride* Moreland and Eulalia spend the night at a “log-cabin, whose dark and dingy walls were unrelieved by a single pane of glass” (*PNB* 321). The home of a Southern farmer, his wife and two children, the cabin has little of the comforts of home; “[t]umblers and goblets were unknown luxuries to this family of primitive habits” (*PNB* 324). Escaping from the unappealing offerings the hospitable family extends, Eulalia and Moreland take a walk where they discuss the family’s “lonely life” (*PNB* 327). Such a life, Eulalia ventures, “seems like living in a wilderness,” an observation Moreland, a wealthy plantation owner himself, quickly agrees to but with this qualifying remark: “and yet, you see, this life has its own peculiar enjoyments...This man, energetic and intelligent, is breaking in, as they say, a new portion of the country, and by and by the wild places will show the beauty of cultivation. He has already made money enough to purchase some negroes, who assist him in the field” (*PNB* 327). With time, Moreland explains, this farmer, who claims “I wouldn’t changes places with nobody—I wouldn’t give a snap for a fine house” (*PNB* 325), would “be rich” (*PNB* 327).

Magnolia Vale Seminary’s most objectionable inmate, Jerusha Spots, grew up in a comparable “log cabin” (*Eoline* 223). Like the farmer’s daughters whose hair was “short, thick, [and] coarse” hanging “in masses over their eyes” (*PNB* 322), Jerusha is a “stout coarse-looking girl, in a blue-checked bib apron with short, sandy hair, that fell over her eyes like a thick, flaxen
fringe, holding in her hand a long green pickle, whose truncated end exhibited the print of her incisors” (*Eoline* 224). For most of the novel, Jerusha stands for everything that Eoline is not. She “craunch[es]” apples (122), stuffs her face with ginger-cake (129), snores (132) and chews on the leaves of Eoline’s roses, “like a ruminating animal, making a very unpleasant sound with her teeth” (134). Jerusha is, in short, a bodily creature. Her ravenous appetite—“I eat all the time at home” (129)—and habit of dipping (133) prohibits her from becoming a refined lady, at least according to Eoline who states, “It is not at all genteel or refined to eat all the time, and it will make you look very coarse” (130). Restricting her food intake would help Jerusha “grow pretty and delicate” (*Eoline* 130). Her desire to eat motivated by her mother’s advice that “eating will make me [Jerusha] look nice and fat” instead of “scrawny and have all my bones show” (*Eoline* 130), Jerusha’s corporeality in fact distinguishes her as “lower-class, unspiritual, and unfeminine” (Noble 42). Although out of place within the well-mannered walls of Magnolia Vale Seminary, Jerusha still insists on her equality to her fellow school children, a fact she corroborates with the announcement of her father’s own reliance on slavery: “Pa’s as rich as any body, and has got as many niggers, too” (*Eoline* 122).

Both the Spots family and the unnamed farmer’s family exemplify the possibilities the Southern “social system” affords. Slavery proves the means through which poor white families gain economic as well as social advantages. As Jerusha unashamedly proclaims, “Pa says he dont care about my learning books much, just so as I learn manners. That’s what he sent me here for, ‘cause folks say, Miss Manly teaches the girls how to behave, and makes them smart too” (*Eoline* 133). If Jerusha “be ambitious,” as Eoline advises her, she “cannot fail to improve” (*Eoline* 226). And Jerusha appears to be on the right path, her father’s wealth certainly providing
her with the proper instruments of success: “‘I’ve got a piano coming!’ hallooed Jerusha, after them. ‘I’m going to practice hard what you learned me. I can most play a tune’” (Eoline 226). The “beauty of cultivation” thus spoke not only to the transformation of a land overrun by the “red man” and the “wild beast” into a civilized nation (PNB 327), but also to the “cultivation” of the people contained within. Jerusha’s excitement for a piano indicates both her desire for and the inevitableness of her acceptance in society as an accomplished and refined woman. As Moreland states of the farmer’s daughter, “His children, I doubt not, will be rich, and be associated with the magnates of the land” (PNB 327).

Notably, the Southern slave-based “social system” that Hentz—through Moreland—defends has a visual component to it as well. Through the metaphor of a tree, Moreland suggestively indicates a classist and racial hierarchy characterized not only by the lack of social grace and wealth but also by a body’s physical features. The Spots family and the unnamed farmer’s family both visually illustrate their placement on this “tree” of Southern life. At the root is the “ugly black self” of the slave (PNB 291), whose dark skin tone marks his proper place “hidden in the earth” (PNB 328). As Moreland—the novel’s spokesperson for the South—explains, God made a “boundary line between us, as distinct, yea, more distinct than that which severs the noonday from midnight” by providing “this subservient and benighted race, with lineaments so devoid of beauty and grace, and swathing them in a skin whose hues is of the blackness of darkness” (PNB 84-85). The lighter but still “brown and substantial” trunk (PNB 328) is represented by the “hard-favoured and sun-browned” farmer families (PNB 321), whose skin tones were “of mahogany” (PNB 322). Finally, society’s “green foliage” belonged to the wealthy plantation, home to the “birds of the air” (PNB 328)—indicative of Eoline and Eulalia,
two nightingales whose beauty includes a “peculiar and spiritual loveliness...at home in the midst of the refinements and elegancies which wealth only can command” (PNB 211).

Literalizing the economic and social climbing the Southern social system encouraged through its tree metaphor, Moreland’s sketch not only depicts slavery as the foundation for a poor white farmer’s children eventual hobnobbing with the elite; it also suggests that the Southern system promoted a “beautifying” or “whitening” of the self that distinguished a white body from a black body. Like the “ugly black self” of the African American, Jerusha and the farmer’s family too were “ugly” and suggestively blackened by the sun (PNB 323; Eoline 224). Yet with proper cultivation they could become “white” as well. Commenting on Jerusha’s penchant for running wild at home, Jerusha’s aunt complains, “I can’t make Jerusha keep her bonnet on, no how in the world, and she gets as black as a nigger. She did whiten up mightily while she was at the sinimenary, and improved wonderfully” (Eoline 225). With the disciplinary influence of the Magnolia Vale Seminary, in other words, Jerusha cultivates a “whiter” form.122

Critical to this “whitening” was the effacement of the body, its de-materialization suggesting its owner’s self-possession and self-discipline. If Jerusha learns proper restraint, curbing her ravenous appetite, she could become not only “pretty and delicate” but also “white.” The attention Hentz gives to a poor character like Jerusha Spots thus serves as a reminder of an implicit attribute of “true womanhood,” or the “ideology of noncorporeality” (Noble 39).

Throughout all three novels, Hentz and Evans place particular pressure, as I have argued, on the importance of control, a type of bodily denial most notably seen in Eoline’s, Eulalia’s, and

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122 “Without being positively wicked or bad,” Hentz states, “Jerusha was mischievous and mischief-making,” a common description of the African American slave (Eoline 136). Indeed, Jerusha’s exterior, “black as a nigger,” could not hide the “coarse, hard texture of her vulgar mind” (Eoline 136).
Beulah’s performative bodies. Like the “[c]onduct books, sermons, magazines, novels—even physiology textbooks and popular health manuals” that “represented stasis and tranquility as ideal feminine attitudes” (Noble 42), Magnolia Vale Seminary’s disciplinarian, Miss Manly, too insists on bodily regulation. Magnolia Vale’s student’s primary lesson is in bodily comportment, their meals taken under the watchful eye of the upright Miss Manly: “‘Young ladies,’ said she, in a clear, decided tone of voice, ‘heads up—chins down—shoulders back—backs in—elbows close—and toes out’ (Eoline 39). Just as a music instruction manuals positioned the musician’s various body parts, so too does Miss Manly direct her children, “measur[ing]. . .the time of their answers with the rule and plummet” (41). Jerusha, on the other hand, runs free, proving to be “as wild and uncultivated an animal as ever was caught in the deep pine woods of the South” (Eoline 128). The “substantial members” of Jerusha’s “red” hands indicates her affinity to a more “savage” race and thus her divergence from Eoline, whose hands were “fair as the ivory, and far more beautiful” (Eoline 136).

The body’s whitening, a process that indicated both a literal removal of color from the skin and a denial of bodily form, ultimately made the sentimental body more beautiful; the willingness of figures like Eoline, Eulalia, and Beulah to sacrifice their body infused them with a bodily spirituality that, like air, seemed nearly translucent. Eulalia, for instance, gains beauty by her obedience to her father’s decree. Initially forbidden to marry Moreland by her abolitionist father, Eulalia displays a “deadly pallor” in her “complexion” that revealed her “unutterable

123 In Noble’s argument, sentimental women were forced “to negotiate the contradiction between her own embodiment and the ideal of bodilessness through a self-effacing form of presence, acting as though she lacked a body” (Noble 37). Perhaps most resounding example is Beulah’s renunciation of selfhood that occurs toward the novel’s end. Foreswearing her “proud intellect” and independence of spirit, Beulah cries, “My God, save me! Give me light! Of myself I can know nothing” (Beulah 387).

124 The passage continues even further: “Now beware of opening your mouths two wide while you are eating—it imparts an appearance of greediness, as unladylike as it is unbecoming. In moving your elbows, avoid making a sharp angle, but form the curved line of grace in every motion. In masticating your food, be careful of making any audible manifestation of the process in which you are engaged—in quenching your thirst, allow no gurgling sound to be heard in the throat” (Eoline 39).
anguish” (*PNB* 121). Her submission, however, only makes her more attractive to Moreland: “She was thinner than when he first saw her—and so exquisitely, so delicately fair! The faint blue meandering of her temple veins was visible through her alabaster skin” (*PNB* 147).

Choosing to nurse those stricken with yellow fever, Beulah similarly puts her own body in peril and, “determined to do [her] duty,” proves to be “nobly unselfish” in the act (*Beulah* 170). The work destroys her bodily strength—“[h]er limbs trembled” and her head had a “dull pain...which she could not banish”—as well as her appetite which had “long since forsaken her” (*Beulah* 172). Yet the sacrifice is transformative: “Looking into the glass, she could not forbear smiling at the face which looked back at her, it was so thin and ghastly; even the lips were colorless, and the large eyes sunken” (179-180). Although becoming “white as a corpse” through her own self-denial, Beulah eventually morphs into a more striking figure by the novel’s end (*Beulah* 96).

Her “rather homely, nay, decidedly ugly” physical form becomes a body that no longer “contrasted strangely with those of her companions” (2). As Evans writes, “She was a finely formed, remarkably graceful woman, with a complexion of dazzling transparency...She had been an ugly child, but certainly she was a noble-looking, if not handsome woman” (427).

Perhaps most striking is the comparison between Eulalia, Eoline, and Beulah to the bodies of Claudia Moreland (*PNB*), St. Leon (*Eoline*), and Antoinette Dupres (*Beulah*), three figures whose musical talents rival those of the nightingale songstresses. St. Leon declares music to be the “idol of his boyhood—the passion of my manhood” (*Eoline* 95) and “sings like a nightingale as well as [Eoline]” (*Eoline* 171); Antoinette boasts a “remarkably sweet and flexible” voice, with a “clear, silvery” tone that “carolled through the most intricate passages” having been “thoroughly trained” (*Beulah* 243); and Claudia, the daughter of Italian parents and “itinerant minstrels” (*PNB* 374) proves masterful at the piano, “running her fingers running her
fingers over the keys, produced a wild, passionate burst of harmony, in which a minor note of wailing softness strangely mingled, then, dashing into a gay reckless strain, the ivory seemed to sparkle under her touch” (PNB 367).

Like Claudia, St. Leon and Antoinette are each associated with Italian music. Eugene informs Beulah that Antoinette “is equal to the best prima-donna of Italy” (Beulah 195) while St. Leon demonstrates a proclivity for the “sweet impassioned songs of Italy” (Eoline 141). The Italian language was frequently described both within and without the United States as possessing a musicality more affective than the harsh northern “tongues” of the English and Germanic languages. As The Music of Nature stated, “The northern tongues are less pleasing than those of milder climes. The severity of the regions in which they are spoken keeps the mouth constantly closed, and the act of speaking is principally performed in the throat” (46). Indeed the “English language,” Gardiner contends, “though more copious in words” was also “more powerful than beautiful” (Gardiner 49). Abounding “in rougher tones,” the English language proved “deficient in those of delicacy” (Gardiner 49). Lacking the “softness and flexibility” displayed in the Italian language, the English language was, conversely, “stubborn, and [did] not work so kindly in musical construction as the Italian” (Gardiner 49).125

Although talented musicians, St. Leon, Antoinette, and Claudia lack discipline, exhibiting a wildness of disposition reflected in their overt corporeality. St. Leon, the “son of a Creole planter, in Louisiana” (Eoline 162), is “singularly engaging in appearance” (Eoline 82), yet he displays “a fineness of nerve and sensitiveness of temperament” that proves “incompatible with a

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125 As an 1830 article published in The Euterpeiad; an Album of Music, Poetry & Prose on “Italian Music” explained, “The language of the Italians is more favorable to music than that of other people, and the custom of performing almost continually the most refined and expressive compositions in their churches and theatres, cannot but produce a general rectitude of taste among all ranks of people, and afford a most perfect model of imitations, to all who have a distinguishing ear and flexible voice” (Col. 2).
strong will and an unswerving purpose” (*Eoline* 162). Cursed with a “constitutional weakness” “altogether physical” and “hereditary,” St. Leon appears “unmanly” in the eyes of Eoline (*Eoline* 159-160). In fact, this physical flaw not only “deprives [St. Leon] of strength and elasticity,” it also makes him “nerveless and weak” (*Eoline* 156), leaving him at one point entirely “voiceless” and on the verge of fainting (*Eoline* 158). Like St. Leon, *Beulah’s* Antoinette comes from a Louisiana plantation home. “[F]alse, heartless, utterly unprincipled,” she is all body and no soul: “Certainly, Antoinette Dupres was beautiful, but it was such a beauty as one sees in wax dolls—blank, soulless, expressionless” (*Beulah* 209).

Born into a “wild, gipsy life” (*PNB* 374), Claudia Moreland lives as an “alien and an outcast” (*PNB* 366), her “willful, passionate temper” having “never known correction or management” (*PNB* 374). More creature than woman, Claudia moves “with the fierce grace of a leopardess” (*PNB* 365). Her physicality not only spoils her beauty, it also exemplifies the distinguishing characteristic separating Moreland’s first wife from his second. Full of “impassioned gestures” and “wild paroxysm of mirth or anger,” Claudia’s body reveals her inner ugliness and thus displays a “striking...contrast” to Eulalia’s own “divine sweetness of...voice, the heavenly serenity of her countenance, the simplicity and tranquility of her manners” (377). Both women beautiful, Claudia’s beauty, however, maintains a materiality at odds with Eulalia’s own spiritual form: “The repudiated wife and Northern bride of Moreland,—two of the most striking images that womanhood can present, of material beauty and spiritual loveliness They

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126 St. Leon’s initial appearance in the novel was heralded first by a “beautiful dog” who steals a basket of food (83). Hentz suggestively aligns beautiful St. Leon with his dog, his inability to control his dog a reflection of his inability to control his own “physical weakness” (160). Although St. Leon is eventually accepted as a regular visitor and music teacher at the Magnolia Vale Seminary, his dog is restricted because “he bade defiance to all her [Miss Manly’s] rules, and created an anarchy in the school-room that threatened the destruction of her dynasty” (100).

127 Claudia’s eventual downfall and death is reflected in the objects around her, including the instruments that once had been her most glorious adornment: “The reckless character of the mistress seemed stamped on everything around him....A harp, with broken strings dangling on the carpet, stood in one corner; a guitar, in the same neglected plight, was thrown carelessly in another. A piano, with uncovered keys, and burdened with music books, confusedly piled together, stood between two windows” (463-4).
were both beautiful, but evil passions had darkened and marred the brilliant face of the one, while purity, goodness, truth, and love had imparted to the other an almost celestial charm” (PNB 363). When forced to be in Claudia’s presence, Eulalia’s more “airy” personality suffocates. She exclaims, “The air is oppressive! I cannot breathe freely!” (PNB 370). Indeed, “the eyes of Claudia, so dark and sultry, like the lurid dog-star, seemed surrounded by a hot, stifling atmosphere” (PNB 370).

The bodies of St. Leon, Antoinette, and Claudia thus resembled that of the “free negro.” The African American’s undisciplined nature required the “firm, yet gentle sway” of slavery in order to repress its more “degenerate” attributes (PNB 201). In the words of Moreland, “the free negro is generally far more degraded, more low in the scale of being, than the slave. The air of freedom, which gives luxuriant growth to his vices, does not foster his peculiar virtues. His social character degenerates” (202). Like the “free negro” whose luxurious life tarnishes his virtue, St. Leon, Antoinette, and Claudia are also suggestively “blackened” or, in the case of Claudia “darkened and marred,” as their bodies degenerate into a lowlier race. While St. Leon’s Creole heritage and Antoinette’s Louisiana plantation background mark them as racially ambiguous, Claudia Moreland most clearly aligns with the “ugly black self” of the slave. As Heidi Jacobs writes of Claudia, “it is difficult to declare that Claudia is of African descent; however, the roles she plays are those that white writers commonly gave to black characters in plantation fiction” (81). Hentz certainly recommends this reading, suggesting that Claudia’s monstrous behavior is—like St. Leon’s constitutional dread of electricity—“hereditary”: “The taint was in Claudia’s blood” (377). At very least Claudia feels as if she is a slave. Shirking

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128 Hentz explains more at length: “Evil qualities, like physical diseases, are often hereditary, and descend, like the leprosy, a clinging, withering curse, ineradicable and incurable” (377). Her warning—“Let the man who, infatuated by passion, is about to marry a woman taken originally from the dregs of social life beware, lest he entail upon his offspring the awful judgement pronounced by a jealous God” (377)—also seems to echo Moreland’s own
under the expectations of her married life, Claudia defends her “bitter hatred” and desire for “revenge” (365) as a natural outcome to Moreland’s dominating persona: “I thought I married a lover! he turned into my master, my tyrant!—he wanted me to cringe to his will, like the slaves in the kitchen, and I spurned his authority!—I defied his power!” (366).

Within Claudia, St. Leon and Antoinette we thus see the “beauty of cultivation” reversed. This “blackening” of the musician’s form, I would argue, demonstrates the Southern sentimental novels’ attempt to distinguish the musical performances of Eoline, Eulalia, and Beulah from their African and African American counterparts. The distinction between a white improvisational musicality and black music was certainly blurred during at the time Hentz and Evans wrote. Although Moreland’s defense of the Southern slave system ends with a “mocking-bird singing”—its “wild overtures and cavatinas” of this “nightingale of the South” blessing the “social system” Hentz’s anti-abolitionist novel famously defended—the nocturnal song of the Southern nightingale also proved in the mid nineteenth century to be more than a mere “ornament” to the “deep, sonorous bass” of slavery (PNB 328). Indeed, this “Jenny Lind of the wildwood” came to signify a black musicality in antebellum discourse (PNB 328). A popular blackface minstrelsy troupe, the Nightingale Serenaders (1844-1855), even adopted the nightingale’s appellation for their own use, performing such popular tunes as “De Banks ob de Ohio” and “Brack Eyed Susiana.”

Like the “wild and melancholy dirge” of the slave (Vol. II: Stowe 161), the nightingale’s song was one of sorrow, based on the “old poetic fable of Philomela...that terrible and pathetic story of great wrong, and of a fearful retribution...which follows the nightingale wherever it goes, and makes the bird of mournful interest” (“The Nightingale” 273). The “emotions” the denunciation of interracial marriages. As Moreland suggests, these marriages incur “the ban of society” for a “white woman who marries a negro, makes herself an outcast, a scorn, and a byword” and a “white man who marries a negress forfeits his position as a gentleman, and is excluded from the social privileges of his brethren” (203).
nightingale’s song inspired in fact “partake more of the nature of grief than of gladness” (“The Nightingale 273). As Lucy McKim would note in an article published in Dwight’s *Journal of Music* in 1862, there was also a certain natural affinity between the musical performances of slaves and that of the Aeolian harp and the singing of birds: “The odd turns made in the throat, and the curious rhythmic effect produced by single voices chiming in at different irregular intervals, seem almost as impossible to place on score as the singing of the birds or the tones of an Aeolian harp” (qtd. in Ware, *Slave Songs* vi). Emphasizing the very music that Hentz and Evans would associate with their own nightingale-musicians, McKim’s comments remain a reminder of the close affinity from which Americans heard the “wild, sad strains” of the slave (qtd. in Ware, *Slave Songs* vi) and the “so wild, so sweet a strain” of a white musicians like Eoline, Eulalia, and Beulah (*Eoline* 82).

Indeed, sentimental novels like E.D.E.N Southworth’s *Retribution* (1849) and Lydia Maria Child’s *The Romance of the Republic* turned to the nightingale as an apt symbol of the musicality of the slave. Southworth’s Minny Dozier, “the most lovely little creature” (Southworth 76), is the daughter to interracial parents, her father, a “French West Indian sugar planter” and her mother “not his wife, not his willing mistress, but his slave” (Southworth 98). A talented musician, she learns to sing by listening to the bird’s song: “I knew no song with words—not one. I only knew the bird-notes, and trilled away at them” (Southworth 100). Indeed taught to “sing a sweeter song—though a sadder one” from a nightingale who lives above her mother’s grave (99), Minny’s musical performances are as “spell-binding” as those found within the novels of Hentz and Evans. Hester claims to be “entranced, spell-bound” as she listens to

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129 The nightingale’s resistance to its imprisonment—“they always die shortly after captivity” (Bremer 301)—resonated with the stories of infanticide commonly associated with African American mothers; just like rumors of the nightingale mother who would fly to her captured young and “give them poison” (Bremer 301), Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* stated that “[t]here are those living who know the mothers whom this accursed traffic has driven to the murder of their children” (Vol. II: Stowe 315).
Minny sing; indeed the “air” seemed “suddenly...sentient and vocal” as Minny’s “voice rose, low, sweet and clear, and filling the volume as it soared, like a bird that flutters out of its nest, floats away upon the atmosphere, quivering, pauses, and broods an instant in mid air, then soars to heaven” (Southworth 92). Child’s interracial Rosabella similarly earns the “nightingale” title (Child, Romance 28), a pet name her father gives her for those “snatches of wild melody” (Child, Romance 75) that seemed to infect even her bodily frame: “her whole nature seemed to partake the fluid character of music. Beauty born of harmonious sound ‘had passed into her face,’ and her motions reminded one of a water-lily undulating on its native element” (Child, Romance 26).

The overt presence of black musicality in Beulah, Eoline, and The Planter’s Northern Bride remains minimal at best, the music of slaves, in the latter, restricted to southern stereotypes of the happy slave—from the “merry voices singing in the fields” (PNB 51) to the “joyous songs and exhilarating laughter of our slaves” (PNB 52). Yet in Hentz’s earlier novel, Linda; or, The Young Pilot of Belle Creole, the music of the “negro” earns a more extended place that, I would like to suggest, offers us a way of navigating the depictions of music that these latter sentimental texts employ. In its description of a “harvest festival,” Hentz’s novel emphasizes the physicality of slave music as that “which none of the pale race can imitate” (Linda 157):

There is nothing that bears the name of music, that can be compared to the negro’s singing; he sings all over; every muscle quivers with melody; it gushes from every pore. The sounds seem to roll from the white of his eyes, as well as through his ivory teeth. His shoulders, elbows, knees, all appear instinct with song. He winks, he grins, stamps with his feet, taps with his heel, pats with his toes, raps with his knuckles—in short, gesticulates in every possible manner the human form admits. (Linda 158)
Like Eoline’s black servant Gatty whose teeth “gleam[ed] large and white as the ivory keys of the piano” (*Eoline* 227), the African American’s body here seems infused with sound. The music he produces emerges from the “taps” of his heels, the “pats” of his toes, and the “raps” of his knuckles. Indeed, music even materializes from body parts commonly unassociated with sound—eyes, teeth, shoulders, elbows, knees, muscles and the skin’s pores. The slave, in other words, becomes an expression of music’s embodied nature in the most literal sense. Hentz similarly writes in a later depiction of an “old negro woman” who, “rocking backwards and forwards,” was “singing in a broken, tremulous, but devout tone, the favourite hymn of the negro Christian” (*Linda* 230). Like the negro of the harvest festive who “quivers with melody,” so too does this older woman quiver with emotion: “every time the burden of the hymn quivered on her tongue, the old negress shook all over with inward ecstasy and devotion” (*Linda* 231). An example of the affective nature of the African American, this woman’s “monotonous chanting” inspires Hentz to comment, “Who does not love to hear an African sing, has no music in his soul. Who does not love to hear from their lips the strains familiar to his childhood, when sitting under the stranger’s roof, has no feeling in his heart” (*Linda* 231).

And yet it is the voice of Linda that eventually silences this music: “It was long before the sweet voice of Linda could be heard above the din. It was not till she stood within the door, like a fair spirit of light stealing on their darkness, that they checked their wild notes and listened to her accents” (*Linda* 158). In fact, the emphasis on whiteness in both accounts (the “white of his eyes” and the “ivory teeth” of the negro and Gatty) is also suggestive of black music’s “debt” to white music, the song of the “old negress” a Christian hymn. Bringing order back to the “vehemence and glee” and the “physical joy and strength” of the harvest festival’s music, Linda’s body poses a striking contrast to the “black visages of about forty or fifty negroes” at
work shucking corn (*Linda* 157). “Her unexpected appearance in the midst of their revels,”
Hentz writes, “looking so alabaster white in her black dress, with the crimson glare of their
flambeaux streaming on her face, struck some of them with superstitious terror” (*Linda* 158).
Her ethereal form contrasting the physicality of those gathered, one slave even believes Linda to
be “a spirit” (*Linda* 158).

I would argue that Linda’s whiteness and suggestive lack of bodily form differentiated
her “sweet voice” from the “monotonous chanting” of the slave, his body all “instinct with
song.” These attributes also suggested Linda’s resemblance to the sentimental bodies of Eulalia,
Eoline, and Beulah. Unlike the “airy” forms Hentz’s and Evans’ nightingales, the slave’s “large,
black, dripping form” was grotesque, his sound a “monotonous chant” (*PNB* 188). Indeed, so
striking was the physical difference between Eulalia and the African American, for example, that
Moreland “shudder[ed]” with “inexpressible loathing” as he “looked on the delicate, graceful
figure walking before him, and imagined it placed in such close juxtaposition with the rough,
gigantic negro” (*PNB* 41). I would like to end with this juxtaposition of “form” and suggest how
the white musical “form”—as both body and body of music—in the Southern sentimental novel
dissolved the “Nightmare” of slavery.

After her marriage to Moreland, Eulalia travels South through the “dark night,” voyaging
in a steamboat across a river that “looked of inky blackness” (179). Above her head is “black
smoke,” produced by the steamboat’s “fiery bowels,” that “rolled...in long, serpentine
convolutions” (179). Surrounding by blackness, Eulalia finds herself symbolically placed already
in the Northern’s vision of the South; the “imprisoned steam howled in its iron tubes” (179) like
the screams of the enslaved held captive by their iron chains. This steamboat of slavery is one of
death for, upon arrival, Eulalia and Moreland discover the drowned form of a runaway slave.
“Nat, The Giant,” the “gigantic negro whom [Eulalia’s] father had once made his guest,” lay on the boat’s deck as a “dripping form” (180). Ushered into the steamboat’s cabin, Eulalia faces an equally frightening figure, an old woman whose unusual appearance makes Eulalia uneasy (182): “A loose wrapper enveloped her person, and over this a large blanket shawl was pinned, so that the folds rose above the ears, making her appear as if her head were sinking out of sight. A broad strip of flannel passed over the top of her head and was pinned under her chin. As her face was very pale and long and meager, this band gave her a most shocking and corpselike appearance” (182). Her “corpselike appearance” a reminder of Nat’s drowned body, this “Nightmare embodied” appears to be the physical manifestation of slavery itself, her dead-yet-alive body “pinned,” enveloped, and oppressed by her clothing (182).

Attempting to escape the old woman’s presence, Eulalia quickly retires to her “airy bed,” from which she perches “in triumph” over the “flannel-girdled head, sinking in its dark recess” (187). Yet unable to sleep, Eulalia lays listening to the “murmur of the waters, and the heavy plunging sound of the engine, so monotonous and dreary” (188) and thinks of “that large, black, dripping form, with glazed, half-opened eyes, and mouth through which the ghastly ivory gleamed” which “seemed lying before her, huge, cold, and still” (188). Indeed, the “heavy plunging sound of the engine” recalls Nat’s own fateful “plunge” into the river, its “monotonous and dreary” tone an echo to the “monotonous chant” of Linda’s slave music. While certainly a gesture to readers of the novel of the North’s inadequate ability to aid the slave in bondage, Nat’s death—in Eulalia’s mind—also seems to be “an evil omen” for her own Southern happiness: “There it lay—a black, gigantic barrier between her and the fair, flowery land to which her bridegroom’s hand was leading her” (188). With the cabin’s “close, oppressive air” slowly
closing in around her, Eulalia, quite frankly, panics as she “tried to rid herself of the hideous image that haunted her couch” and that haunts *The Planter’s Northern Bride* more generally.

In this trying moment, relief does come, although not in the form of her Southern husband, who Eulalia frequently turns to for comfort and protection. Rather, the engine’s “so monotonous and dreary” noise modulates into a different type of sound—that of music:

At length, a mistiness stole over her mind, and it seemed as if she heard low, soft, sweet strains rising on the rising blast,

> “Softening the raven down of darkness
> Till it smiled.”

The melody, at first indistinct as a mist, condensed into a rich cloud of music, and then came down in a shower of divine words—words such as often ascended from her own household shrine, breathed by her mother’s gentle voice and Dora’s cherub lips. She fancied she could hear them gliding in that close, stifling cabin, bringing messages of heavenly love...“Oh! how sweet! Oh! how comforting!” though Eulalia...Let me sleep when such blessings make a golden guard around me. (189-190)

Contrasting the close confinement of the cabin, the “mistiness” that infuses Eulalia’s mind is a blessing that transports her Northern home to this “Southern” cabin. The music moreover conveys the (spiritual) bodies of her mother and sister to the exiled Eulalia. “[T]hou art following in spirit,” Eulalia exclaims, “thy wandering daughter” (189) and soon feels the “little arms” of Dora “entwining [her] neck,” her “loving head nestling in [Eulalia’s] bosom” (190).

Proving to be the medium through which the North and South could be reunited, this white, spiritual hymn’s “low, soft, sweet strains” carries a blessing from God and reminder of God’s glory: “Through all the changing scenes of life, / In trouble and in joy, / The praises of my God shall still / My heart and tongue employ” (189). Replacing the “black, gigantic barrier”
with God’s own “golden guard,” Eulalia’s desired South materializes in a morning “resplendent” with beauty (PNB 190) and full of “congenial charm” (PNB191). The howls of the imprisoned no longer echo through the cabin; the “large, black, dripping form” of Nat the Giant recedes into obscurity; and slavery—that “raven down of darkness”—is softened by comforting strains of an ethereal music. “And sweetly, soundly did the young traveler sleep, till the awakening day” (PNB 190).

Hentz’s and Evans’ attempt to distinguish a black musicality from their own white improvisatrices ultimately allows each author to avoid the danger posed by the “black, dripping form” of the African American slave. Yet as Americans became more invested in the cultivation of a truly national music, the figure of the black musician could no longer be ignored. Written in a period just beginning to value the “authentic” slave spiritual, Melville’s Pierre; or, The Ambiguities and Lydia Maria Child’s Romance of the Republic—as I will argue in the chapters that follow—certainly demonstrate a discomfort with the aesthetic’s growing connection to an American democratic system that sought to marginalize difference, particularly in regard to issues of gender and race. Yet in order to address the prejudices that directed both Northerners’ and Southerners’ resistance to racial amalgamation, Melville and Child turn to ambiguities of the interracial body and the improvisatory music she produces to envision a form of sympathy that embraces, rather than evades, the racial differences separating black from white.
Chapter 4

_Lusus Naturæ_: The Melodiousness and Mournfulness of Herman Melville’s _Pierre_

Late in October of 1842, members of the Boston public called a meeting at Faneuil Hall. Placards posted throughout the city the day before announced the rally’s central theme to be the “RESCUE OF LIBERTY,” or “to consider the subject of providing additional safeguards for the protection of...personal liberty” (“Case of George Latimer” November 17). Organized by Samuel Sewell, Henry Bowditch, Francis Jackson, Wendell Phillips, and Frederick Douglass, the somewhat impromptu rally responded to the recent arrest of George Latimer, a fugitive slave from Virginia. Initially charged with larceny, Latimer was ordered held by Justice Joseph Story and then later denied a writ of habeas corpus by Massachusetts Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw, the future father-in-law of Herman Melville. Although Shaw was known for his anti-slavery stance, particularly his ruling in favor of freeing slaves brought to Massachusetts by their masters, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 required Shaw, as Robert Wallace notes, to “send any runaway back to the state from which he or she had fled” (39). Abolitionist presses, however, still loudly disputed Latimer’s arrest, declaring Massachusetts a “slaveholding State” and Shaw a “perjured man” for failing to uphold his “oath to sustain the Constitution” (“Our Condition as a People”). Slavery, according to William Lloyd Garrison’s _The Liberator_, was now no longer a “local institution,” but rather an institution “sustained by the public sentiment, legal co-operation and physical force of all the United States” (“Our Condition as a People”).

While Latimer was eventually manumitted, having been purchased from his owner James B. Gray for four hundred dollars, his imprisonment lasted nearly a month and remained a source

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130 For more on Shaw’s involvement, see Robert Wallace’s “Fugitive Justice: Douglass, Shaw, Melville” and Brook Thomas’ _Cross-Examinations of Law and Literature: Cooper, Hawthorne, Stowe, and Melville_ (see pages 94-95).
of debate and contention throughout Boston. The rally held on Latimer’s behalf was thus unsurprisingly well attended, despite its late notice. One Boston newspaper reported that the “body of the Hall was crowded, while the galleries literally groaned beneath the weight of the assembled multitude” (“From the Boston Daily Bee”). Yet not all who attended were there in support of Latimer. As the *Emancipator and Free American* reported, within the crowd were a “few white slaves and hired bullies [who] were allowed to disturb us without restraint” (“The Case of George Latimer” Nov. 3). These few nevertheless proved loud enough to drown out the rally’s primary speakers. Sewall’s address was “continually interrupted by cries of ‘we’d like to see you with darkies for a week,’” as one newspaper related. Things fared poorly for Edmund Quincy as well, who used Latimer’s light skin as a visual reminder of slavery’s colorblind grasp. Echoing the placard’s warning that “the color of the skin has ceased to protect any of us from the doom of slavery,” Quincy announced that each man and woman present was “liable to be dragged before a judge upon the perjured oath of one man, and be sent to the South a slave.” Insisting, however, on the distinctness of their racial category, the audience yelled back in opposition, “we’re white” (“From the Boston Daily Bee”).

By the time ex-fugitive slave and future author Frederick Douglass stood to speak, the atmosphere in Faneuil Hall had reached a fevered state. Like those who came before him, Douglass’ speech was stifled by the “uproar” of the crowd. Unlike the rowdy cries of “‘shut up’” and “‘whar-yah-boo’” that greeted Latimer’s white supporters, Douglass’ presence on stage solicited a different type of response. According to the Boston *Daily Bee* (reprinted in the *Liberator*), “Rings were formed upon the floor, and the popular dances of ‘Jim along Jo,’ ‘Take your time, Miss Lucy,’ and ‘Clare de Kitchen,’ were broken down in the most approved style” (“From the Boston Daily Bee”). The audience, in other words, jumped Jim Crow.
Nine years later, in the wake of the controversial passing of a revised and more restrictive fugitive slave law, Boston again found itself embroiled in a debate over the arrest of a runaway slave, this time Thomas Sims. As a test case of the newly passed act in a state known for its anti-slavery sentiments, Sims’ suit was brought before Chief Justice Shaw, whose son-in-law was busily contemplating his next novel—what would become *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*—at Arrowhead. Amid fierce criticism, Shaw ruled that Sims “should be given up to his claimant,” James Potter (“Thomas Sims Again in Chains”). Having failed to rescue Sims from slavery, his supporters gathered at the wharf the night he was to return to Georgia and sang the hymn “O! there’ll be mourning, at the judgment seat of Christ!” with “solemn effect.” Singing their way through town, they eventually joined in one last song at the Anti-Slavery Office, performing the words “Repeal, repeal, repeal” to the tune of “Auld Lang Syne.” Those present agreed that this music—one piece a popular slave hymn and the other an improvised version of a traditional folk song—should be “repeated at every Fugitive Meeting until the bill [was] repealed, or [became] a dead letter” (“Proceedings”).

The rally at Faneuil Hall and the vigil at the wharf each illustrate, although in different ways, what Gregg Crane broadly describes as the “social ferment provoked by slavery and racial discrimination” in the antebellum period (6). The “crisis over slavery”—including the heated discussions over the Fugitive Slave Acts of 1793 and 1850—certainly “prompted a nearly universal debate about the justness of the nation’s law” (Crane 6). Yet it also revealed the tenuousness of the social categories that differentiated black from white. Sims’ and Latimer’s light-colored bodies spoke to a mixed lineage that lent credence to their assertions that they were both free men. But their failure to bring forth material evidence demonstrated not only the dire consequences of lacking adequate “proof of racial whiteness” for those of questionable
“compositional purity” (Heneghan 133, 132), but also of such proof’s vulnerability—the ease in which an individual’s identity could be misread. The “ambiguous nature” of the interracial slave, in other words, threatened to “disrupt the slave’s socially constructed status” as it called attention to the instability of whiteness itself (Edwards 7). As the placard so prominently displayed in Boston in 1842 decried, “No citizen is safe” while “kidnappers infest our community!” (“Case of George Latimer” November 17).

The two performances following the arrest of Latimer and Sims—jumping Jim Crow at Faneuil Hall and the hymn singing at the wharf—ultimately expose the anxieties such racial ambiguity raised. While the “white slaves and hired bullies” at Faneuil Hall turned to music and dance to differentiate their white bodies from the marked bodies of Latimer and Douglass, the very need to perform a song and dance attributed to marginalized blacks inadvertently revealed the precariousness of their position: only through the performance of blackness could these apologists for Southern slavery and Northern discrimination confirm their own white identities, their own “superior” difference.131 Similarly, the hymns sung at Sims’ vigil memorialized his return to slavery while simultaneously calling for change. Seeking to disrupt the social and legal barriers that disenfranchised the African American, the singers turned to a revised folk song to imagine a new future and to consecrate slavery’s past violence. By 1852, the hymn “O! there’ll be mourning at the judgment seat of Christ” also would come to play a significant role in the United States literary scene. It was this hymn that Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Simon Legree hears when haunted by the memory of his dead mother:

131 As Vera Brodsky Lawrence explains, “Jim along Jo” (“Jim Along Josey”) was “one of the most popular of the innumerable pseudo-Negro songs of the ‘Jump Jim Crow’ ilk that anticipated the advent in 1843 of the burnt-cork minstrel show era” (75 n. 27). Indeed, establishing its authenticity as true black music, “Jim Along Josey” opens with the song’s origin—“I’se from Lucianna”—and dedicates the chorus to what the singer (or “de nigger that don't mind my troubles”) claims is a traditional plantation song: “Dem niggars all rise when de bell does ring, and dis is de song dat dey do sing.” The performance at Faneuil Hall is also accompanied by a variation of a traditional West African “ring shout” commonly found in Southern slave plantations.
A wild, pathetic voice, chants a hymn common among the slaves:

“O there’ll be mourning, mourning, mourning,
O there’ll be mourning, at the judgment-seat of Christ!

[...]

Parents and children there shall part!
Parents and children there shall part!

Shall part to meet no more!” (Vol. II: Stowe 324)

The “strange and ghostlike” voice of the suffering slave here blends with the memory of Legree’s mother who had “cradled” him with “prayers and pious hymns” (Vol. II: Stowe 322). The music thus gestures toward their common humanity while warning of the retribution slave owners would face for their crimes.

In this way, each incident reveals how white Americans reinforced and challenged, respectively, the dominant cultural narratives on race and identity framing antebellum culture. In these two examples, music and, at Faneuil Hall, dance epitomize what Christopher Small defines as “a ritual in which is acted out the mythology of a social group” (75). Although presenting competing mythologies—narratives of self and other—each performance relied on bodily gesture and sound to counteract and contest the ambiguities that haunted, like the spirit of Legree’s mother, the “tyrannical” slave-holding American public (Vol. II: Stowe 323). Indeed, the protestors as Faneuil Hall jumped Jim Crow in an attempt to erase the evidence of amalgamation that Latimer’s white skin bore witness to while the hymns sung at the wharf warned of the slave’s impending freedom, through either emancipation or death. These two examples thus demonstrate how such mythologies—genealogies, lineages, and histories—were developed and disrupted by mere sound.
Herman Melville’s *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*, I argue, turns similarly to music in order to question and challenge an American system that excludes individuals lacking a clearly defined lineage. Framed by the antebellum debates over racial hybridity and identification, Melville’s novel rejects the legal definition of kinship in favor of a sympathy built from the heart’s emotions, thereby critiquing a national system too reliant on the material—an individual’s external and physical proof of identity—in favor of an alternative history, or an alternative mythology, rooted in immaterial sound. Through Isabel’s improvisatory musical performances, Melville not only demonstrates music’s democratic power but also poses a strategic challenge to the hegemonic discourses that excluded figures of difference: by performing music that resembled the formless melodies of the African American slave, Isabel suggestively encouraged Pierre—and the novel’s American audience—to listen with sympathetic ears to the sounds of the slave. While Melville suggests that such sympathy lands one figuratively and literally in jail, outcast and fated to die by the heart’s own hidden poison, the novel ultimately envisions a democratic world that—through such death—comes new life.

I. *Lusus Naturæ*; or The Dark-Eyed One

In a letter written to Sarah Moreland in the fall of 1851, Melville thanks her for a gift of books but apologizes that he lacks the time to read them, for “the Fates have plunged me into certain silly thoughts and wayward speculations” (138). These “silly thoughts and wayward speculations” eventually become his seventh novel, *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*. Although *Pierre* was composed in the wake of the controversial passing of the Fugitive Slave Act and the Compromise of 1850, most critical scholarship on Melville and race—recently, for instance, *Frederick Douglass & Herman Melville: Essays in Relation*, edited by Robert S. Levine and Samuel Otter—emphasize the work Melville produced before and after *Pierre*, namely *White
Melville’s seclusion at Arrowhead and the novel’s domestic themes certainly seem far removed from the political and social landscape Melville was writing in. However, the heated conversations over the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and the subsequent Boston arrests of runaway slaves Frederick Wilkins (also known as Shadrach) and Thomas Sims in 1851 undoubtedly reached Melville even while living in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. One newspaper reported that in Pittsfield a meeting was called in mid-November the year before “for the purpose of taking into consideration the so-called ‘Fugitive Slave Law.’” Those present (Melville was not among them) agreed, “we, as religious and moral men, cannot give approval to the said law, in any of its revolting features” (“Action on the Fugitive Slave Law”). Melville’s close friend Richard Henry Dana also volunteered to defend Shadrach, a runaway slave who became the first test case of the new law. Presenting a petition for habeas corpus to Melville’s father-in-law, Judge Shaw, Dana complained that Shaw had “treated me in his worst manner, & refused the writ on a series of the most frivolous pretexts you can imagine” (qtd. in Parker 1: 817). A few months later, Shaw would refuse a similar writ in the case of Thomas Sims.

Scholars that do position Pierre within this political and social milieu turn to the novel’s “exilic global perspective” as evidence of Melville’s interest in some of these key issues raised and disputed in the antebellum period (Spanos 20). Pierre, as William Spanos suggests, is certainly a “novel of social critique” (25); yet this critique does not merely “anticipate certain concerns about the politics of ontological representation” as Spanos suggests (25), but reflects

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132 John Stauffer, for instance, argues that in Moby Dick “Ishmael’s friendship with Queequeg highlights the power that a sublime person, in the form of a racialized ‘Other,’ can have over a white subject and narrator” (145) while Eric Sundquist argues that Melville suggested in Benito Cereno “that there was no future, as it were, for the experiment of American democracy so long as the paralysis of inequality continued” (139). See also John Ernest’s “Revolutionary Fictions and Activist Labor.” For a discussion on music and race in Melville’s writing, see Sterling Stuckey’s “Cheer and Gloom: Douglass and Melville on Slave Dance and Music.”

133 Spanos notes the tension in the novel between the “dominant American cultural imperative to Identity” (24) and a “decentered de-differentiation that can manifest itself only in a resonantly ambiguous silence” (25).
contemporaneous debates over racial difference in the antebellum United States. In the decades preceding the novel’s publication, both Northerners and Southerners alike manifested an increasing concern with racial hybridity. Just as the “white slaves and hired bullies” at Faneuil Hall jumped Jim Crow in an effort to mirror and thereby de-authorize the grotesque body of the (interracial) slave, “the debates about hybridity during the 1830s…all maintained the uncomplicated racial divisions of blacks from whites by arguing that racial mixture was ‘unnatural’” (Edwards 6-7). By the 1850s, thirty-eight states instituted laws that banned interracial relationships (Raimon 30); the 1850 census was subsequently revised to record not only the number of slaves but their color as well (Raimon 90). In an effort to document, and presumably discourage, miscegenation, such questions betrayed “the sexually reprobate nature of Southern plantation life” (Raimon 90). In so doing, they also unfailingly provided evidence of the inherent danger the fugitive slave acts posed not only to runaways but to darker-skinned whites as well.

Melville addresses these antebellum debates over racial identity through Pierre; or, The Ambiguities’ central theme. In a conversation with Mrs. Glendinning and Reverend Falsgrave, Pierre critically asks, “Should the legitimate child shun the illegitimate, when one father is father to both?” (101). The answer given is ambiguously framed, Falsgrave noting that “it is one of the social disadvantages which we of the pulpit labor under, that we are supposed to know more of the moral obligations of humanity than other people” (102). By the end of the novel, however, the more pressing question—the “grand point” (353)—becomes not whether one should “shun the other” and “refuse his highest sympathy and perfect love” (101), but rather who was worthy of that “perfect love.” As Melville finally asks of his readers, “How did [Pierre] know that Isabel was his sister?” (353). Isabel’s uncertain parentage precludes Pierre from ever fully becoming
her brother, encouraging instead ambiguous feelings that most reviewers of the novel read as incestuous. As *The American Whig Review* asserted in its November 1852 review of the work, Pierre “entertains towards this weird sister feelings which Mr. Melville endeavors to gloss over with a veil of purity, but which even in their best phase can never be anything but repulsive to a well constituted mind” (“Pierre, or the Ambiguities”). As such, Isabel’s contested heritage not only “threatened the solidity of family structures and the ‘purity’ of bloodlines” (Kennedy 165), but also called attention to the many illegitimate births the slave system promoted. For an American public increasingly concerned with evidence of racial blending in the Northern and Southern United States, her ambiguous past inadvertently exposed the “fictions embodied in boundaries of race and status created by the legal narratives of birth” (Kennedy 165).

Abolitionists emphasized the difficulties such “legal narratives” created in their exclusion of the illegitimate slave. As *The Liberator* proclaimed in an 1832 “Slavery Record,” “There are born every year more than SIXTY THOUSAND infant slaves who are illegitimate! A large proportion of whom have white fathers.” Lydia Maria Child underlined the consequences of these illegitimate births in *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833), stating, the “doctrine of the common law is that the offspring shall follow the condition of the father; but slave law…reverses the common law, and provides that children shall follow the condition of the mother” (37). As a result, the father is given the right to “sell his child” and “the brother [to put] his sister up at auction!” (Child 19). In his 1837 *Slavery Illustrated in its Effects Upon Woman and Domestic Society* (1837), George Bourne similarly argued that slavery “abolishes all the ties of consanguinity,” allowing the son to “defile his own sister” (64). In such a system, “all the distinctions of domestic life are commingled in one indiscriminate assemblage of unnatural monsters” (Bourne 64). Indeed, Isabel’s contested heritage allows Pierre to live with
her in an unsanctified marriage. Finally made complete with the addition of Lucy, the “domestic life” of Pierre, now with wife and mistress, resembles the plantation home although in a perverted form, light Lucy the mistress and dark Isabel the wife. As Mrs. Tartan states to Isabel, “I have no words for the woman who will connivingly permit her own husband’s paramour to dwell beneath her roof” (329).

Like the illegitimate offspring of the master and the slave, Isabel is material “evidence of a father’s sin,” as one review noted of the novel (“Notices of New Works” Sept. 1852). Melville sets *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities* in Northern New York, but unites the Glendinning name to a history of conquest and enslavement that implicates the family in Southern crimes of “violence” and “incest,” “blood and slaughter” (“Slavery Record”). Pierre’s grandfather, the “mildest hearted, and most blue-eyed gentleman in the world,” readers are told, had “annihilated two Indian savages by making reciprocal bludgeons of their heads” (29-30). An “American gentleman of substantial person and fortune,” this “sweet-hearted, charitable Christian,” standing six feet four inches tall, moreover built his fortune on slavery (29-30). As the narrator states (presumably ironically at this point), he was the “kindest of masters to his slaves” (30). Grandson and namesake to this historical giant, Pierre (the third) remains the “only surnamed male Glendinning extant,” thereby inheriting—as the readers soon discover—the sins of all the Pierres that came before.

Pierre’s immaculate lineage, so carefully described in the novel’s early pages, abruptly ends, however, with Isabel’s single shriek. At the sound, “he stood bewildered” (45). The purported daughter of Pierre’s father and a “beautiful young girl,” Isabel resembles the Glendinning line in lineaments only; in her face, Pierre sees “his then youthful father, strangely translated, and intermarryingly blended with some before unknown, foreign femininess” (112).
Descending from a series of blue-eyed men, Isabel by her own admission is “dark.” She emphatically declares to Pierre, “Look: see these eyes,—this hair—nay, this cheek;—all dark, dark, dark” (314). Indeed, the “unknown, foreign feminineness” of her face introduces into the Glendinning line a blackness that tarnishes their compositional purity and aligns the family to an admittedly ambiguous history of interracial “intermarrying.” In *Negro-Mania: Being an Examination of the Falsely Assumed Equality of the Various Races of Men*—published the year Melville was writing *Pierre*—John Campbell provided antebellum readers with an extended description of the mulatto’s body, presumably as a means of distinguishing the white body from its unnatural variations. Noting that by “intermarriage [between a Dutch family and the African race in Campbell’s description] an individual is produced…partaking of each parent” (220), Campbell describes this individual as “more or less yellow, brown, or tawny,” lacking a “redness of the cheek” with hair “curled and black” and “iris…dark” (92). Like the mulatto, Isabel too possesses a “dark, olive cheek…without a blush” (45). Her “ebon tresses” (313), or “the jettiest hair” (118), further is doubled in her “ebon eyes” (314). Notably, these eyes emanate a “Nubian power” (145).

Melville fortifies Isabel’s (symbolic) blackness in the narratives he presents of Isabel and her mother’s past. Journeying to the United States in a forced migration resembling that of the runaway slave, Isabel’s mother, a “French emigrant” (75), escapes a “cruel, blood-shedding”

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134 Indeed, Isabel’s history includes a moment of self-awakening that resembles the slave’s awakening awareness of his own subjecthood, frequently found in slave narratives published during the antebellum period. Writing on Douglass’ *Narrative*, Leonard Cassuto, for instance, asserts that the slave “occupied a liminal site between human and thing, bearing elements of both” (7). The slave’s narrative thus becomes “a story of how the slave as grotesque (a liminal human/beast) becomes wholly human” (Cassuto 87). Like the slave, Isabel undergoes a similar transformation. Gazing at a “beautiful infant” and filled with the “sweet idea of humanness,” Isabel soon extends that “humanness” to herself—becoming “sensible of myself as something human,” as “something different than stones, trees, cats” (122). She becomes, in other words, no longer an object or pet. For more on ownership in *Pierre*, see Wai-Cee Dimock’s chapter in *Empire For Liberty*: “To make ownership the constitutive essence of selfhood is already to commit the self to a theater of eternal warfare, in which everyone, operating as a personified battlefield, is ceaselessly invaded and defended, possessed and dispossessed” (148).
place, claiming sanctuary in the northern United States; she soon vanishes mysteriously, potentially “kidnapped,” as some claimed, by “emissaries” (76). Using language akin to Northern descriptions of slave catchers sent by the south to retrieve their runaway slaves, Melville frames Isabel’s mother’s tale as one of contested identity—“no one on this side of the water certainly knew her history”—and eventually capture. Like the fugitive slave’s own loss of liberty when returned South, Isabel’s mother, a “refugee” (77), is the victim of similarly “dark things” (76). Her daughter narrates a comparable history: first cared for by an old man whose “face was almost black with age,” Isabel lives in a “wild, dark house” and eats only “dark bread” before journeying by ship to a land filled with “nearly all pale people” (115-120). Born into blackness and traveling to a land of whiteness, Isabel’s journey suggests the slave’s migration from a black Africa to the white United States. Yet her history also resembles the movement of a fugitive slave: from a slave-filled South, Isabel travels to a Northern “asylum,” filled with people fanatical in their debates but “sluggish” in action (121). Here, Isabel is finally freed, rescued from “captivity” by Pierre (105).

Progeny of an unnatural pairing, Isabel certainly attests to, as Melville suggests, the aberrant intermixing of two distinct races. As such, she is outcast from the Glendinning home. As she tells Pierre, “I feel I am an exile here” (119). Her inability to assimilate into the Glendinning family—Pierre’s mother would “spurn” and “denounce” her (231)—defined her in the antebellum public’s eyes not as an “exotic,” an immigrant of Caucasian origins, but as a product of a different, non-“white” race. Although opposed to the fugitive slave laws and the

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135 Robert Levine further notes that “with their emphases on discipline, hierarchy, and custodial isolation, the new asylums, prisons, and other self-contained ‘familial’ total institutions resembled not only the slave plantation but also the institution afloat the nautical romance—the well-ordered ship at sea” (175).
136 Declaring “I am Pierre, and thou Isabel, wide brother and sister in the common humanity” (371), Pierre inadvertently echoes the abolitionist rhetoric first put forth by Bourne’s Slavery Illustrated in its Effects whose frontispiece asks, “Am I not a woman and a sister?”
137 Robert Levine suggests a similar reading, arguing that “we could speculate that pierre’s father (whose own racial identity remains ambiguous) was happily in love with a ‘black’ woman” (“Genealogical Fictions” 242).
Compromise of 1850, William Henry Seward argued in his “Higher Law” speech during the Senate Debates of 1850 that the United States could not “assimilate” or “absorb” the African American as it did the “Exotic”:

The population of the United States consists of native Caucasian origin, and Exotics [immigrants] of the same derivation. The Native Mass rapidly assimilates to itself and absorbs the Exotic, and these therefore constitute one homogenous people. The African race, bond and free, and the Aborigines, savage and civilized, being incapable of such assimilation and absorption, remain distinct, and owning to their peculiar condition constitute inferior masses, and may be regarded as accidental, if not disturbing political forces. (qtd. in Crane 49)

Unlike the “shared kinship symbolized in the Constitution” that linked Northern and Southern whites, African Americans and American Indians did not “by definition, bear any resemblance to the national family” (Crane 48). As a result, they were necessarily excluded, like Isabel, from the national/Glendinning home.

Seward’s comments reflected the emergent influence of a polygenic theory of human origins on antebellum thought as it indirectly denounced the growing number of amalgamated bodies Americans increasingly could not ignore. Referring to the “physical commixture of the white and colored races,” amalgamation in antebellum discourse was evidence of “different race bloods…blending in the way that molten metals do” (Lemire 4).138 While such intermixing would suggest the potential assimilation of the (part-) African body into the national fabric, racial theorists like Samuel George Morton, Josiah C. Nott, and John Campbell, among others, emphasized the “deleterious effects” this intermixture posed (Raimon 29). In an 1843 article

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138 Miscegenation,” conversely, did not appear in American discourse as a term until 1864, where it was “coined in New York City from the Latin miscere (to mix) and genus (race)” (Lemire 4).
published in the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, Nott argued that the “Mulatto or Hybrid” was a “degenerate, unnatural offspring, doomed by nature to work out its own destruction” (“The Mulatto a Hybrid”). Campbell similarly maintained that “the mulatto man or woman is a monstrosity of nature” (94) for to maintain such a mulatto race “would require a systematic course of intermarriage, with constant draughts from the pure races, whence the mixed race derives its origins” (220). A truly interracial body, in other words, was a perversion of both races, unable to sustain a natural lineage (Campbell 94).

Despite her resemblance to the Glendinning family, Isabel remains socially and racially “distinct.” The “degenerate, unnatural offspring” of an un-“suitable” match (Melville 76), Isabel too is doomed “to work out [her] own destruction.” For readers of the novel, Isabel certainly proved to be monstrous. As *The Literary World* reported, Isabel was a “lusus naturæ,” a freak of nature (“Pierre: or, The Ambiguities”). A “disturbing” force in the novel, she threatens and consequently destroys the domestic stability of the Glendinning home. As Pierre’s mother somewhat melodramatically proclaims, “My own only son married to an unknown—thing! My own only son, false to his holiest plighted public vow—and the wide world knowing it! He bears my name—Glendinning. I will disown it; were it like this dress, I would tear my name off from me, and burn it till it shriveled to a crisp!” (193). Her “inconsolable grief” at such a loss eventually drives Mrs. Glendinning first “into insanity” and then finally to death (285).

Melville frames this destruction of the Glendinning line, however, as a natural component of United States’ social fabric and of democracy more generally. In an early discussion on the “democratic element,” when compared to various lineages of England, Melville suggests that the Glendinning family was an aberrant growth in an otherwise democratic landscape:
For indeed the democratic element operates as a subtile acide among us; forever producing new things by corroding the old; as in the south of France verdigris, the primitive material of one kind of green paint, is produced by grape-vinegar poured upon copper plates. Now in general nothing can be more significant of decay than the idea of corrosion; yet on the other hand, nothing can more vividly suggest luxuriance of life, than the idea of green as a color; for green is the peculiar signet of all-fertile Nature herself. Herein by apt analogy we behold the marked anomalousness of America…how wonderfully to her, Death itself becomes transmuted into Life. (9)

In this framework, “America,” Melville continues, “seem[s] to possess the divine virtue of a natural law; for the most mighty of nature’s laws is this, that out of Death she brings Life” (9). While such an analogy would seem to suggest that, without “chartered aristocracy, and no law of entail,” the “democratic element” in the United States would forestall “any family in America [from] imposingly perpetuat[ing] itself” (8). Yet this, Melville intimates, is not so. Relying on a natural metaphor, he explains, “The grass is annually changed; but the limbs of the oak, for a long term of years, defy the annual decree. And if in America the vast mass of families be as the blades of grass, yet some few there are that stand as the oak; which, instead of decaying, annually puts forth new branches” (9). It was from this oak that Pierre thus descends, a member of the “great genealogical and real-estate dignity of some families in America” that possess a “richly aristocratic condition” (12). Like the “subtile acid…producing new things by corroding the old,” Isabel proves similarly caustic, democratically leveling the Glendinning aristocratic family tree. As Mrs. Glendinning proclaims, “I feel my blood chemically changing in me” (131). Her presence exposes the “deed of shame” that Mrs. Glendinning mistakenly transposes from father to son; in doing so, Isabel has “swiftly…extinguished” a “race”: “I feel now as though I
had borne the last of a swiftly to be extinguished race. For swiftly to be extinguished is that race, whose only heir but so much as impends upon a deed of shame” (131). Introducing a flaw into a “pedigree” that hitherto contained “no flaw,” Isabel (“some slut!”) encourages Pierre to mix “the choicest wine with filthy water from the plebeian pool,” thereby “turning all to undistinguishable rankness” (194).

Melville thus frames Pierre’s impulse to offer Isabel “brotherly” fellowship to be a democratic act. As the narrator warns, “And believe me you will pronounce Pierre a thorough-going Democrat in time; perhaps a little too Radical altogether for your fancy” (13). For an American readership, Pierre did indeed prove to be “too Radical.” His rejection of all socially recognized norms—declaring, “this day I will forsake the censuses of men, and seek the suffrages of the god-like population of the trees, which now seem to be a nobler race than man” (106)—sat uneasily with Melville’s readers. As The Literary World argued, “The purpose of Mr. Melville’s story, though vaguely hinted, rather than directly stated, seems to be to illustrate the possible antagonism of a sense of duty…to all the recognized laws of social morality.” Yet this “immoral moral” was, as The Literary World continued, merely a “dismal falsehood” (“Pierre: or, The Ambiguities”).

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139 The tears Isabel drops onto her letter to Pierre similarly “chemically acted upon the ink,” turning the words a “strange and reddish hue—as if blood and not tears had dropped upon the sheet” (64-65).
140 Of course, Pierre’s “deed of shame” is in fact first his father’s; unaware of Isabel’s purported parentage, Mrs. Glendinning places the sin of the father onto the son.
141 Knowing that the “world would denounce him as infamously false to his betrothed” as well as “feckless of the most binding human vows,” Pierre early accepts a life that “would, in the eyes of the wide humanity, be covered with an all-pervading haze of incurable sinisterness” (176). Although Pierre’s decision, Melville asserts, was born out of virtuous feelings, he can not escape the “perils and the miseries” that follow anyone who “steppest aside from those arbitrary lines of conduct, by which the common world, however base and dastardly, surrounds thee for thy worldly good” (176).
142 As The American Whig Review similarly stated, when Melville “dares to outrage every principle of virtue; when he strikes with an impious, though, happily, weak hand, at the very foundations of society, we feel it our duty to tear off the veil with which he has thought to soften the hideous features of the idea, and warn the public against the reception of such atrocious doctrines” (“Pierre, or the Ambiguities”).
A seeker after truth who sacrifices family, wealth, and eventually life for his cause, this “thorough-going Democratic” exemplified what Ralph Waldo Emerson defined in his lecture series on the *Mind and Manners of the Nineteenth Century* as a “natural aristocrat.” Emerson first delivered the lecture series to the Literary and Scientific Institution in London in 1848. He then repeated five of the six lectures in America the following year (Bosco and Myerson 120). In his letters, Melville indicates that he attended one of these lectures in Boston at the Freeman Place Chapel on Beacon Street early in 1849 (Bosco and Myerson 129). As Ronald Bosco and Joel Myerson estimate, the lecture Melville most likely heard was on “Natural Aristocracy” (131). Despite Melville’s general disdain for transcendental thought, his comments on the lecture were positive. As he wrote to Duyckinck on February 24th, 1849, “I have heard Emerson since I have been here. Say what they will, he’s a great man” (77). In a follow-up letter composed a week later, Melville elaborated on Emerson’s “greatness”: “I think Emerson is more than a brilliant fellow. Be his stuff begged, borrowed, or stolen, or of his own domestic manufacture he is an uncommon man” (78). Having expected Emerson to be “full of transcendentalisms, myths & oracular gibberish,” Melville was pleasantly surprised to find his lecture “quite intelligible,” and the man himself “elevated above mediocrity” (78-79).

Only reviews remain of Emerson’s lecture. The *Boston Evening Transcript* briefly summarized Emerson’s definition of a “natural aristocracy” as “the highest form of human character, founded on genuine probity, and exhibited in a life, whether artistic, literary or practical, which made good all its pretensions, and legitimated its claim to mastery by the excellence of its work” (“R. W. Emerson’s Lecture”). A review printed in *The Daguerreotype* on Emerson’s London performance provides a more detailed “outline.” The “upper class,” Emerson argued, “should be distinguished by merit” rather than rank or lineage. For “any class not so
distinguished, ceases, in fact, to be the upper, whatever its conventional rank.” Furthermore, the “aristocratic man” would “thoroughly respect truth,” even risking social censure in his pursuit of that truth. As Emerson supposedly asserted, “Would we thus devote ourselves to great ends, we must give up the approbation of people in the street.” Indeed, the “natural aristocrat” must be willing to sacrifice himself for his cause, for, “Who would not freely die, that there should be a better man?” (“Mr. Emerson’s Lectures”).

A bildungsroman, *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities* ultimately traces one man’s struggle to become a true “aristocrat” of Emerson’s imagining--an aristocrat that earns his rank not by his family’s lineage, but rather through his own actions. Yet Pierre’s repudiation of the Glendinning name also provided an allegory for the increasing tensions between the North and the South. Nicola Nixon, for instance, argues that *Pierre* reflects the “ideological fissures in the Union that were concretized by the incendiary rhetoric” of the Compromise of 1850 (720). As Nixon asserts, “Pierre’s decision to reject one social order and embrace another is not a complete rejection or even really a subversion; instead, it ultimately proves an uneasy compromise, a false marriage of irreconcilable ideals that cannot succeed because he opts to leave both intact” (727). Nixon is correct to suggest that Pierre’s fictitious marriage to Isabel allows Pierre to evade, as Melville states, “stubbornly flying in the marble fact of the Past, and striving to reverse the decree which had pronounced that Isabel could never perfectly inherit all the privileges of a legitimate child of her father’ (174). As such, Pierre never fully challenges the moral deformity he finds in his mother’s harsh decision to exclude all illegitimate children from the legal and social rights of their father. Yet this act is not, as Nixon would have it, merely a compromise, but rather a full-scale assault against his family line. Although never verbalized between mother and son, Mrs. Glendinning recognizes Pierre’s marriage for what it is: “at one gross sensual
Pierre has “ruthlessly…cut off…the fair succession of an honorable race!” (194).

Breaking all affective bonds with the Glendinning name, Pierre burns his father’s portrait and mementos of past familial ties: “He ran back to the chest, and seizing repeated packages of family letters, and all sorts of miscellaneous memorials in paper, he threw them one after the other upon the fire.” Proclaiming himself without kinship or history, Pierre dramatically states, “Henceforth, cast-out Pierre hath no paternity, and no past” (199).

Pierre has, in effect, seceded from the Glendinning family. Pierre’s renunciation of his family line, of a history built through conquest and enslavement, would have resonated with an American public concerned with the continual threat of the South’s secession. In the senate debates of 1850, Daniel Webster argued that disunion was a “betrayal of family ties” (Crane 48). Maintaining that the “idea of separation of these states” was a “moral impossibility,” Webster contended that there are “natural causes that would keep and tie us together, and there are social and domestic relations which we could not break, if we would, and which we should not, if we could” (287). It was these very same “social and domestic” bonds that Pierre so adamantly breaks. His decision, moreover, is foretold by his early reaction to Isabel’s “long-drawn, unearthly, girlish shriek” (48): “the sudden shriek seemed to split its way clean through his heart, and leaving a yawning gap there” (45). With this one sound, Pierre’s heart—and the Glendinning family as well—has split in two.

II. Humanness Among the Inhumanities; or, The Quick Spark of Melody

At the novel’s end, Pierre has become a “thorough-going Democrat.” Imprisoned and condemned to die, full of “mental confusions” (354), Pierre accepts his fate as a “compend[ium] of all infamous things” (357). He soon realizes, however, the impotency of this position, announcing, “Pierre is neuter now” (360). An impulsive trip to an art exhibit with Lucy and
Isabel reveals all: “By some mere hocus-pocus of chance, or subtly designing knavery, a real Italian gem of art had found its way into this most hybrid collection of impostures” (350). “Imported from across the seas…to be sold at public auction,” painting “No. 99”—“Stranger’s Head” by an “Unknown Hand”—depicts “a dark, comely, youthful man’s head, portentously looking out of a dark, shaded ground, and ambiguously smiling” (351). To Isabel, there were “certain shadowy traces of her own unmistakable likeness; while to Pierre, this face was in part as the resurrection of the one he had burnt at the Inn,” not in “features” but in its “pervading look” (351). Facing “The Stranger” and complementing its own dark history hangs “The Cenci Guido.” Taken together, these two images suggestively gesture toward an American history blackened by slavery. In its resemblance to Pierre’s youthful father, “The Stranger” hangs as a reminder of the ease in which identities can be mistaken and ultimately sold to the highest bidder. In a similar manner “The Cenci of Guido” accentuates how illegitimacy, and the slave system that perpetuated it, promoted “two of the most horrible crimes…possible to civilized humanity—incest and parricide” (351). Indeed the “wonderfulness” of this later portrait comes from the suggestive racial blending these two crimes encourage: while the Cenci’s “golden” hair, “blue eyes and fair complexion” suggest that “physically… all is in strict, natural keeping”; she is “double-hooded…by the black crape” of the crimes and thereby becomes “half-identical with” and “half-analogous to” the “supernatural…maidens of tropic nations,” whose “soft and light blue eyes” are “vailed by funereally jetty hair” (351). This “seraphically blond…being,” in other words, unveils a darker history (351).

These paintings effectively cast doubt on the “shadowy points” and “nebulose story” of Isabel and her mother’s past histories (353). Now illumined by the “unscrupulous light of real naked reason,” these histories were “any thing but legitimately conclusive” (353): “how did he
know that Isabel was his sister?” (353). Isabel’s proof is indeed limited. She offers first to Pierre a handkerchief she claims belonged to her father. Inscribed with a “fine faded yellowish writing,” the handkerchief spells Pierre’s last name” (146-147). For further proof, Isabel presents her mysterious guitar, an instrument engraved with her mother’s assumed name (also Isabel) and traced to Pierre’s ancestral home (147-149). These objects represent Isabel’s connection to the Glendinning’s pure line.¹⁴ Yet even these objects become marked with Isabel’s colored body: the “white” handkerchief is “soil[ed]” by Isabel’s tears and made “dusty by lying on the uncarpeted floor” (146); the guitar similarly is “faded” by her continual use (148). For readers of the novel these objects failed to provide adequate evidence of her kinship to Pierre. As one review of the novel stated, Isabel’s “testimony…would not pass current in any court of law” (“Pierre: or, The Ambiguities”). Isabel herself echoes these sentiments, confessing to Pierre, “I have no slightest proof” (149). Instead, she bases her case on feeling: “the guitar was hers, I know, I feel it was” (149).

For Pierre, however, these feelings are enough. Rejecting the “oaths, and holy writ proofs” required by “cold courts of justice” in favor of “untestified memory’s spark” (71), Pierre accepts, at least until the novel’s final chapter, the alternate genealogy that Isabel—in body and in voice—presents. As such, the novel offers a vision of fellowship based not on kinship but on feeling. Isabel’s right to sympathy, to absorption and assimilation, materializes not through physical evidence but through the immateriality of sound. From the unearthly shriek of her first long, drawn-out cry to the supernatural performances on the guitar, Isabel’s music demonstrates how a mythology—Pierre’s genealogy, lineage, history—could be and was disrupted by mere sound.

¹⁴ Isabel exists in a “racially liminal position” and thus requires a “collection of things clean, unstained” to prove her right to a shared lineage with Pierre (Heneghan xxii).
As Samuel Otter writes, Herman Melville’s *Pierre, or The Ambiguities* “is not, as many of its critics would have it, a parody of the sentimental novel” (209). Rather, the novel is “a sentimental text taken to the nth degree” (Otter 209). *Pierre*’s use of “overblown prose, hyperbolic rendering of domestic manners, and exaggerated portrait of genteel magazine culture” has led scholars such as Robert Forsyth and Ann Douglass, among others, to read *Pierre* as a “satiric production” (Silverman 348). Melville, however, certainly expected his novel to be successful with an American sentimental audience, designing the novel to be, as David Reynolds asserts, “broadly representative of American popular culture” (159). In a letter to his London publisher, Robert Bentley, Melville described his “new book” as “very much more calculated for popularity than anything you have yet published of mine—being a regular romance, with a mysterious plot to it & stirring passions at work” (150). In the words of Pierre, “The heart! the heart! ‘tis God’s anointed; let me pursue the heart!” (91).

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144 Most authors, however, agree that this text was very much a response to the American literary, social, and political landscape from which Melville was writing. Nicola Nixon, for instance, argues that *Pierre* reflects the ideological fissures in the Union that were concretized by the incendiary rhetoric” of the Compromise of 1850 (720) while scholars such as Samuel Otter, Jennifer DiLalla Toner, and Gillian Silverman demonstrate the novel’s engagement with a variety of aesthetic themes, from the “picturesque project” of the antebellum period (Otter 57) to Melville’s apparent obsession with literary plagiarism (see Silverman 348, Toner 252). Elizabeth Dill, for instance, argues that Melville constructs the “anti-novel” (712), a text where sensationalism and sentimentality comingle. Here, sentimentality becomes less about “feeling right” and more about “feeling wrong,” as Melville reveals how such “wrong feelings become a means of selfhood and community” (Dill 711).

145 The form of the domestic novel as we now define it was still an emerging form. Widely read sentimental texts like Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Fanny Fern’s *Ruth Hall*, and Maria S. Cummins’ *The Lamplighter* were yet to be published. Melville does appear to reference Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* in Isabel’s cry to Pierre: “here I freeze in the wide, wide world” (64).

146 *Pierre* thus reflected the potential influence of Nathaniel Hawthorne on Melville’s compositional strategies. The preface to his *House of Seven Gables*, published in 1851, opens with a now famous comparison between the “Novel” and “Romance.” Each is concerned, according to Hawthorne, with the “truth of the human heart” (ix), yet unlike the “Novel,” which describes the “probable and ordinary course of man’s experience,” the “Romance” attends to the heart only “under the circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer’s own choosing or creation.” (ix). A genre both ambiguous and creatively liberating, the “Romance” was free to use exaggeration—as well as seemingly impossible situations—in its illustrations, if only to reveal more clearly the intricacies of the heart. Both *The House of Seven Gables* and *Pierre: or, The Ambiguities* certainly fall under Hawthorne’s description of the former’s “truth,” or that the wrongdoing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief” (x). For more on the influence of Hawthorne on Melville, see *Hawthorne and Melville: Writing a Relationship*, edited by Jana L. Argersinger and Leland S. Person.
While *Pierre* certainly stretches the definition of sentimental fiction put forth by scholars such as Nina Baym, the portions of the novel most scholars turn to for evidence of *Pierre’s* satiric framework—namely the “Young Author” sections—were actually late editions, written in the wake of *Moby Dick’s* harsh reviews. As Hershel Parker explains, the manuscript Melville initially submitted to Harpers (after failing to establish a contract with Bentley) was 150 pages shorter than what eventually appeared in print (2: 71). There is no reason to assume that the trajectory of the narrative, specifically the Pierre-Isabel-Lucy love triangle that ends tragically, shifted as Melville revised.147 Indeed, “chances are,” as Parker argues, “the essentials of the plot [in this shorter version] were just what was published, except that the manuscript contained no passages on Pierre as an author and lacked the bit of late fiddling required to fit those passages in” (2: 71). Melville furthermore affiliated *Pierre* with the domestic genre, writing to Sophia Hawthorne that, unlike his sea-faring novels, this one would be a “rural bowl of milk” (146). Although perhaps a sentimental novel “taken to the *nth* degree” as Otter suggests, *Pierre* is still a novel of sentiment, one that narrates the potential danger of “ungovernable emotion” (Melville 154). In the words of the narrator, “When once this feeling had him fully, then was the perilous time for Pierre” (54).

Of course, Melville was mistaken in his assumption that *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities* would be a success. As *The Albion* remarked in August of 1852, the novel “must…be pronounced a dead failure” (“Notices of New Work”). These early reviews of the novel, however, did offer limited praise. Despite being an “objectionable tale, clumsily told,” the novel’s opening scenes—namely, Isabel’s disruptive entrance into the Glendinning pastoral landscape—were “wrought up cleverly enough.” These scenes in fact presented, as one reviewer

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147 As a result, as Hershel Parker explains in his extensive biography of the author, “Chances are that the essentials of the plot were just what was published, except that the manuscript contained no passages on Pierre as an author and lacked the bit of late fiddling required to fit those passages in” (2: 71).
argued, a “fine dramatic starting point…for the hero of a play” (“Notices of New Work”). Fit more for the stage than the study, Pierre contained melodramatic qualities that an American public associated with the high drama of the Italian opera, which was gaining popularity throughout the 1840s and early 1850s especially in urban centers like New York. As Nancy Fredericks contends, Pierre’s “rhetoric of excess” and “valorization of music” (13) demonstrates Melville’s “generic interest in the melodrama,” particularly in the genre’s thematic concern with the “unrepresented and voiceless—the underclasses, women, and ethnic minorities” (4).

Residing in New York from 1844 to 1848 and living adjacent to Broadway and its bevy of theaters, Melville would have been aware of Italian opera’s success with a New York public. As an 1847 “Music” review published in The Literary World declared, “We feel deeply interested in the successful establishment of the Italian Opera in this city…for we regard it as one of the greatest promoters of social improvement that exists, if not even the greatest,” largely due to its combination of music and language: “Music in combination with true Poetry is, in our opinion, the most perfect form of utterance Man is capable of” (“Music” Feb. 13). Melville regularly read The Literary World, which was edited by his friend, Evert Duyckinck. He even continued his subscription while at Arrowhead, at least until Duyckinck publishes a harsh review of Moby Dick. An avid consumer of newspapers and magazines alike, Melville presumably would have come across either this article or one of the many similar reviews praising the recent rise of opera in New York. Despite its melodramatic inclinations—which some Americans viewed with distrust—Italian opera, as the New-York Spectator argued, was “among the most innocent…exhibitions” on the stage for “a fine taste for music seems to imply a refinement not only of mind but of moral feeling” (“Opera”).
Although spending his days writing *Mardi*, Melville did join Lizzie and her half-brother, Lem, a Harvard student visiting the family in New York, for a night out at the opera. The group attended the February 4th, 1848 performance of Donizetti’s *Lucrezia Borgia*, then playing at the Astor Place Opera House and featuring Teresa Truffi and Settimio Rosi (Parker 1: 583). In early November 1849, Melville would again hear Donizetti’s work, attending a Drury Lane Theatre Promenade Concert, conducted by Louis Antoine Julien, that included in its concert program selections from *Lucrezia Borgia* (Harrison, ed. *Journal* 261). First premiering in New York on November 25, 1842, *Lucrezia Borgia* featured Eufrasia Borghese (as Lucrezia) and Rosina Pico.
(as Maffio Orsini). The performance left the audience “agog,” largely due to the in-house competition between the two prima donnas who each worked to surpass the other (Lawrence, Resonances 266). While the opera was included in various repertoires in New York and elsewhere throughout the 1840s, its value was still debated in American circles by the 1848 Astor Place performance. Its libretto based on a drama (Lucretia Borgia) by Victor Hugo, the opera narrates the tragic death of Lucrezia and her illegitimate son, Gennaro. With a storyline that includes murder, suicide, and the potentially incestuous feelings between mother and son, Lucrezia Borgia was almost too melodramatic for American tastes. Writing for the Harbinger, Charles Anderson Dana (signed “C.A.D.” in the review) admitted he found “much beauty in the music” but that the opera’s storyline was “perhaps the most horrible and revolting ever put on the stage.” Decrying the combination of music with “such a history of depravity” to be “a prostitution of that divine art, utterly unworthy of any composer,” Dana argued that “the monstrous and unnatural crimes of Lucrezia Borgia should have been consigned to all possible forgetfulness, and never made the vehicle of perverting the Opera, that concentration of all that is beautiful in art, into a mere collocation of melodramatic horrors” (C.A.D. “Art Review”).

In its condemnation of the opera’s “monstrous” plot, Dana echoed an 1836 review of Hugo’s drama, published in The American Monthly Magazine. Like Dana, the anonymous reviewer censured Hugo’s juxtaposition of “moral deformity” and “pure sentiment.” He begins by quoting extensively from Hugo’s preface:

Take (we are quoting his words) the most hideous, the most repulsive, the most complete moral deformity, and place it where it will be most apparent, in the heart of a woman gifted with those advantages which give such prominence to crime, physical beauty, and the grandeur of royalty, and still mingle with all this moral deformity a pure sentiment,
the purest sentiment that woman can experience—maternal feeling; in your monster place
a mother; and the monster will interest you, the monster will make you weep and the
creature who created fear will create pity, and that deformed soul will in your eyes
become almost beautiful.

Feeling neither pity nor admiration for Lucrezia’s pure maternal sentiments, the reviewer argues
that Hugo ultimately “failed to create a compassionate interest for the polluted heroine of his
drama.” As Dana unforgivingly states, “Though the monster have a love for her incestuous
offspring, she is no less a monster” (“Victor Hugo’s Lucrezia Borgia”).

Despite these harsh critiques, Lucrezia Borgia, at least in its operatic form, was
eventually embraced by the American public. Indeed, recanting his earlier evaluation, Dana
admitted that after hearing the opera a few more times, he experienced a change of heart: “we
can no longer deny that it is genuine tragic music, and that in a very high degree. That the
heroine is a criminal, to modern eyes a monstrous one, and that the action of the opera turns upon
murder, do not render it the less truly tragic as distinguished from what we last week called
melodramatic” (“Art Review. The Opera at Astor Place”). In Dana’s estimation at least,
Donizetti’s lyrical music ultimately overcame the “monstrous and unnatural crimes” that made
Lucrezia so hideous in the American eyes. No longer repulsive, this story of incest, murder, and
suicide became “truly tragic.”

Melville’s Pierre; or, The Ambiguities presents a similar tale of murder, illegitimacy, and
incest. Like the “phial hidden in [Lucrezia’s] breast (Hugo 23), Isabel carries her own “secret
vial” of poison that determines the final fate of Pierre (360). Perhaps inspired by Lucrezia
Borgia’s eventual success, Melville may have assumed that his own tale would be read as “truly
tragic.” For Melville, music was indeed a sentimental and highly sympathetic art. Writing to Evert Duyckinck in February of 1850 of his regret in declining an invitation to a concert, Melville confesses, “I should have gone—as I love music” (*NN Cor.* 155). Although Melville was not a musician, his home was often filled with music. His mother, Maria Ganesevoort, received piano lessons as a child (Robertson-Lorant 5) and a piano imported from London gifted to her by her father became a household fixture in the Melville home. Accompanying the Melvilles through their many moves, the instrument eventually landed at Arrowhead where it stayed until discarded by Allan and Jane Melville. Its memory, however, was preserved by Lizzie who “managed to save some of its wood for use in memorial picture frames” (Parker 2: 637). Her own musical background identifying her as one of the instrument’s primary players, Lizzie, like Melville’s mother, had been educated on the piano as a youth and presumably played for her family once married. Educated at George Emerson’s School for Young Ladies from 1835 to 1841, Lizzie and her classmates learned not only how to become “good daughters and sisters, good neighbors, good wives, and good mothers,” but also the value of the fine arts to the stability of the domestic home (*Reminisces* 66). In a “Lecture on the Education of Females” reprinted in the *Ladies’ Magazine and Literary Gazette* on March 1832—the year Emerson founded the School for Young Ladies—Emerson asserted that a woman’s “accomplishment” in the fine arts like music should not be “thrown aside” after marriage but instead employed to “cheer her own solitude, to enliven and compose the spirits of her husband and children, and to gratify her friends” (“A Lecture on the Education of Females”). At Arrowhead and on Maria’s piano, Lizzie

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148 Melville appears to gesture toward the opera in Pierre’s ambiguous relationship to his mother as well. Moreover, the Borgia family in American representations was described as the “abhorred race,” language that reflected an American discourse on slaves and slavery (“Art Review. The Opera at Astor Place”).
most likely performed popular ballads and sacred hymns, having a subscription to the *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (Robertson-Lorant 199).

In addition to Lizzie’s performances on the piano were the spontaneous musical performances that accompanied social gatherings in and around Arrowhead. In August of 1851, for instance, a “nephew of Susan Melvill played the guitar and sang for the guests” (Parker 1: 750); Sarah Morewood frequently hosted musical parties that Melville attended as well, despite his reclusive habits while writing (Parker 1: 859). The Melville family moreover had access to musical concerts in the near-by town of Pittsfield. For instance, “The Alleghanians” performed for a Pittsfield public in August of 1850 (*The Pittsfield Sun*); a “popular teacher of music” also provided a “course of instruction on Sacred Music” that same month (“No Headline. Advertisement”). Even the musical fervor for Jenny Lind reached the Pittsfield public; the town’s newspaper frequently published reviews of her concerts in Boston and New York, noting not only the “sweetness of tone” and the “thrill of sympathy” that accompanied her performance (“Jenny Lind’s First Concert”), but also her bewitching effect: as one article noted, she was an “enchantress” and “siren” whose music held all “captive” (“From the New-York Herald of Thursday”). The Melvilles may have been particularly interested in these reviews as Herman’s sister, Helen, had twice heard “the warbling Jenny” (qtd. in Parker 1: 797).

Melville’s representation of music—and its application in *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*—moreover reflected the potential influence of Madame de Staël’s *Corinne*, a novel Melville purchased while in London. Like Melville’s own novel, *Corinne* “tells the story of passionate, artistic youth in conflict with social conventions” (Fredericks 74). Corinne and Isabel, both “improvisatory musicians and singers,” resemble each other in characterization as well, both

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149 By May of 1850, *Godey’s Lady’s Book* included “several waltzes...in addition to the songs so numerously supplied,” namely sentimental ballads and psalms like “The Bridal. A ballad,” “The Mountain Psalm,” and “I have no joy but in thy smile” (“Musical Editor’s Department”).
“dark, emotionally volatile, Latin types who are contrasted with mild blondes” (Fredericks 74-75). Yet the influence of De Staël’s novel on Melville’s text is more clearly articulated in De Staël’s description of the musical aesthetic. Of “all the fine arts,” De Staël writes, “none act so immediately upon the soul” as music (159). Indeed music “alone addresses the very source of life, and transforms the whole being at once, humanly speaking, as Divine Grace is said to change the heart” (De Staël 159). It inspires us to the “noblest efforts” and “teaches us to march towards death with enthusiasm” (De Staël 159). This description would have resonated with Melville, who similarly wrote in his earlier *Redburn* that music was a “holy thing, and its instruments, however humble, are to be loved and revered” (312). Possessing a “subtle power,” music invades “our inmost beings, and shows us all hidden things” (*Redburn* 312). Melville of course would return to music’s “subtle power” in *Pierre; or, the Ambiguities*. Listening to the “supernatural tides” of Isabel’s music, Pierre’s “whole soul was swayed and tossed” by the sounds (150).

Indeed, Pierre’s attraction to Isabel—and consequently the “ambiguous” feelings and actions such attraction encouraged—is an unavoidable response to Isabel’s own genuinely tragic music. It is moreover an attraction that discourages Pierre from doubting Isabel’s narrated history. Seeking proof from Isabel of her kinship to him, Pierre receives only sound, the musical voice of Isabel’s dead mother. “Hark now,” she tells Pierre, “thou shalt hear my mother’s spirit”: in low, sweet, and changefully modulated notes, so barely audible, that Pierre bent over to catch them; breathed the word *mother, mother, mother!* There was profound silence for a time; when suddenly, to the lowest and least audible note of all, the magical untouched

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150 Nancy Fredericks suggests that De Staël’s *Corrine* was based on an Italian improvisatrice, Isabel Pellegrine, lending more credence to the novel’s influence on Melville’s text (74-75).
guitar responded with a quick spark of melody, which in the following hush, long
vibrated and subsidingly tingled through the room. (149)

Like the “one single, untested memory’s spark” that first suggested to Pierre Isabel’s kinship
to him, the guitar’s “quick spark of melody” divests Pierre of all doubt of the accuracy of
Isabel’s story, of her role in the Glendinning mythology. Indeed, this music creates a contract of
relation no law or bloodline could sever. Not only did “Isabel seemed to swim in an electric
fluid” to Pierre’s “dilated senses,” she also maintained “a certain still more marvelous
power…over himself and his most interior thoughts and motions” (151). In that “first magnetic
night,” Isabel and her music “bound [Pierre] to her by an extraordinary atmospheric spell—both
physical and spiritual” (152). So strong was this spell that “henceforth it had become impossible
for him to break” (152).

Critical to this spell is Isabel’s instrument of choice. In the United States, the guitar
became “widely popularly” during the 1830s as an instrument particularly suited to the feminine
sex (Gura, C.F. 17). As the Daily National Journal asserted, male guitarists possessed
“attenuated figures” as the instrument was unbecoming for “men who weigh more than fifteen
stone, from the difficulty of assuming an appropriate troubadour air” (“Fashions in Music for the
New Year”). While the instrument was “masculine in Spain,” it was ultimately “feminine in
every other part of the globe” (“The Guitar” National Advocate). Noted for its “general use with
the voice,” the guitar rivaled the ever-popular harp with its “fine, quaint spirit of music” (“Harp
and Spanish Guitar”). Known for its more mystic qualities, the guitar was thought to speak with
a human voice. As The Globe advertised in a review of William Gardiner’s Music of Nature in
1832, the guitar’s “intonation is in some keys inferior to the piano forte’s: but the piano forte
cannot warble, or articulate, or sigh, or wail, or tremble like the human voice, under emotion, as
the guitar” (“The Guitar”). Thus expressive, the guitar was “the interpreter of sentiment” (“Musical—The Spanish Guitar”).

Melville accentuates these specific qualities of the guitar in Isabel’s performance. In Pierre, as Aaron McClendon argues, “it seems right that…music emerges as an alternative form of expression, for at that time, music was considered the ideal human expression, the means by which to achieve the most perfect and profound philosophical utterance” (23). Indeed, Isabel turns to music to articulate and confirm the more ambiguous elements of her history. For hidden inside the guitar is more than Isabel’s etched name but the “secret” and mystery of Isabel herself: “unseen, unsuspected, always vibrating to the heart-strings—broken heart-strings,” Isabel too is an “extraordinary conceit,” representing the intangible, or the unrepresentable, in her performances. These performances certainly possess a supernatural quality that affects Pierre with physical force. Her call, “Mother—mother—mother,” answered by the instrument, Isabel and her guitar tell her/its story with an “abandonment, and suddenness, and wantonness” (126) that leaves Pierre over-heated: “Now a strange wild heat burned upon his brown” (127). Sexually charged, both Isabel and her guitar “quiver” and “spark” until the “entire casement” she stands against “was suddenly and wovenly illumined” (150). And while Isabel’s story may remain a “mystery,” never fully verbalized or confirmed, Pierre’s sympathy for her—his brotherly feeling and sexual desire—are cooled only by the “soft, enthusiast tears” that fill “his sympathetic but still unshedding eyes” (152).

In a story obsessed with lineage and heritage, Isabel’s music conversely speaks to an original creative force. As improvisatrice, Isabel not only creates her own music but also lacks knowledge of music as a technical science. When she announces her desire to offer lessons for money, Pierre exclaims, “My poor poor Isabel!...thou are the mistress of the natural sweetness of
the guitar, not of its invented regulated artifices” (334). Isabel even claims that it was the
instrument, and not the systematic instruction offered in popular method books like Elias Howe’s
_Instructor for the Guitar_ (1846, 1851) and Ballard’s _Elements of Guitar-Playing_ (1838), that
taught her how to play: “I knew there was melodiousness lurking in the thing, though I had
never seen a guitar before, nor heard of one; but there was a strange humming in my heart that
seemed to prophesy of the hummings of the guitar” (125). With time, the guitar teaches Isabel to
play,

Then I murmured; sung and murmured to it; very lowly, very softly; I could hardly hear
myself. And I changed the modulations of my singings and my murmurings; and still
sung, and murmured, lowly, softly,—more and more; and presently I heard a sudden
sound: sweet and low beyond all telling was the sweet and sudden sound. I clapt my
hands; the guitar was speaking to me; the dear guitar was singing to me…The guitar was
human; the guitar taught me the secret of the guitar; the guitar learned me to play on the
guitar. (125).

Becoming a “heart friend” to the guitar,” Isabel discovers that “Love is not all on one side with
my guitar” (125). An equal to her—“It sings to me as I to it”—Isabel’s instrument presents a
vision of sympathy based on equality; and it is through this guitar that Isabel builds her history
and her future: “Sometimes it plays to me the mystic visions of the confused large house I never
name…and sometimes it strikes up in me rapturous pulsations of legendary delights eternally
unexperienced and unknown to me” (125).

With Isabel’s musical performances, Melville thus demonstrates music’s democratic
power while simultaneously challenging the hegemonic discourses that excluded figures of
difference. Indeed, Isabel’s performances reveal why antebellum Americans understood music to be a privileged aesthetic. As an 1849 article “What is Music?” proclaimed, music “is a truly
democratic art” in its ability to “[belong] to high and low, poor and rich” for “all are alike under its influence.” Yet this “democratic art” owed its power not to its ability to represent but to its evasion of such representation. As the article continues,

Music is not destined to reproduce, by imitation, certain known sensations; it has no model, after which to form itself, nor has it one to compare itself to. Independent it stands there, the pure fabric of the imagination…music makes never a deeper impression than
when it absolutely resembles nothing; when it creates, at one and the same time, the principal idea and the accessory means which serve to develop it. (“What is Music?”)

An emblem of originality, music creates emotional sympathy not through any shared likeness—lineage, genealogy, or history—but through its powerful sound: “in its strains it conveys those indefinite feelings to others which, arousing in their hearts the same indefinite emotions, still give evidence that the one has been understood by the other” (“What is Music?”). Although an outcast from society, the mysterious Isabel and her musical performance inspire these very same indefinite—ambiguous—feelings. With “sounds of melodiousness, and mournfulness, and wonderfulness” (126), Isabel’s music binds Pierre to her in body and in sympathy. As Melville writes, the “wonderful melodiousness of [Isabel’s] grief had touched the secret monochord within his breast, by an apparent magic, precisely similar to that which had moved the stringed tongue of her guitar to respond to the heart-strings of her own melancholy plaints” (173). With such a calling, “there seemed no veto of the earth that could forbid her heavenly claim” (173).

Significantly, Isabel’s music and her own ambiguous racial background encourages Pierre to listen with sympathetic ears not only to her own tale of woe but to those of a mixed ancestry as well, a reading Melville reinforces through Isabel’s racially ambiguous past and through her proficiency on the guitar for, like Isabel, the guitar too had a contested history. In early American musical culture, the guitar was associated with both white middle-class feminine performance and black(face) musical performance (see Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4). Moreover, while most early Americans associated the instrument with Spanish musical practices—John

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151 Isabel’s performance on the guitar moreover linked her music the “wantonness” of the African American musical body. Like Isabel, “Colored people,” the American Phrenological Journal reported, “are natural singers, and often, especially at the south, make hill and dale resound with peals of thrilling music, yet rarely ever learn to sing or play by rule, but instinctively, or by the natural exercise of this easily cultivated faculty” (“Article II”). As such, the “character of their songs is peculiar, so that a practiced ear can discriminate between an African tune and other tunes” (Chapter II). Her own music marked by its peculiar quality—“it seemed not like any song; seemed not issuing from any mouth” (127)—her performance resembled the “natural lewdness of the race” (qtd. in Kennedy 52). In the words of Mrs. Glendinning, Isabel is “some slut!”
Moore stated that “The Spaniards” were “the reputed inventors of the guitar” (“The Guitar”)—the instrument was closely associated with the banjo as well, an instrument most commonly linked to black musical production. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, claimed in his Notes on the State of Virginia that the “banjar” (or banjo) was the “original of the guitar, its chords being precisely the four lower chords of the guitar” (233). At best, the banjo, variously called the strum-strum, the Bangil, the merry-wang, and the banshaw, was understood by an early American listening public to be a close cousin to the guitar. As Thomas Grainger stated, it was a “rustic guitar, of four strings” (qtd. in Gura, America’s 13). Nicholas Creswell similarly described the banjo in the mid eighteenth century to be “in the imitation of the Guitar…with only four strings and played with the fingers in the same manner” (qtd. in Gura, America’s 16). At the time of Pierre’s publication, both the banjo and guitar were prominently featured in the blackface minstrel show. Indeed, the musical form Isabel’s performance takes is that of the call and response, a structure associated with Southern plantation life. To her call of “mother, mother, mother!” the guitar responds with its own modulation (149).

Melville’s Pierre; or, The Ambiguities thus demonstrates through Isabel the democratic power of the musical aesthetic if only to question the musical aesthetic’s resistance to representation: a body that can not be properly represented both aesthetically and, as Melville implies, politically risks its own social and civil death. Indeed “Painting No. 99” confirms what Isabel’s music obscured: Pierre’s doubts of Isabel’s parentage. Yet both aesthetics—one visual

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152 The representation of the banjo to be a distinctly African American instrument was reinforced by the blackface minstrel shows of the 1840s and 1850s. As Philip Gura argues in America’s Instrument: The Banjo in the Nineteenth Century, “for early audiences nothing defined the minstrel show so much as the banjo” (24).

153 An affordable instrument accessible to lower and middle class Americans, the guitar did not require the advanced technical skill that other instruments seemed to demand. As The National Advocate explained as early as 1824, the guitar “has never been ranked with those full-toned and effective instruments which could exhibit the harmony, science, taste, and execution that belong to those of a higher order” (“The Guitar”). Rather, the guitar, the article continues, “was invented as a substitute, for convenience and simplicity” to the more difficult string instruments, notably the “lyre” and the “harp” (“The Guitar”).
and the other aural/oral—also expose the inability of any (aesthetic) object from ever fully representing—legally or otherwise—an individual’s identity. While music may fail to save Isabel, Lucy, and Pierre from death, Melville challenges and contests through Isabel’s performances a lineage based on a legal definition of identity. Isabel may lack the necessary “proof of whiteness,” yet, unlike Latimer and Sims, her body remains free. Through her music, Isabel reveals “the mere imaginariness of the so supposed solidest principle of human association,” transforming from a lusus naturæ, to the “object of the ardentest and deepest emotions of [Pierre’s] soul” (142).

Ultimately, Isabel’s integration into Pierre’s domestic home is not altogether lethal, despite the novel’s end in murder, death-by-shock, and double suicide. As Pierre ruminates on his “untimely, timely end,” “Had I been heartless now, disowned, and spurningly portioned off the girl at Saddle Meadows, then had I been happy through a long life on earth, and perchance through a long life on earth, and perchance through a long eternity in heaven!” Yet now “’tis merely hell in both words” (360). Rather than bemoan his fate, Pierre states, “Well, be it hell. I will mold a trumpet of the flames, and, with my breath of flame, breathe back my defiance!” (360). Like the “most mightly of nature’s laws,” “out of Death” Pierre “brings Life” (9). Pierre

154 While both Latimer and Sims asserted their rights as free men, they lacked material proof. Although “there was no warrant or proof that he was a slave,” Latimer, as one newspaper reported, was “dragged forcibly to a Court House,” made to defend his free status. Even his skin color and facial structure could not, however, fully establish his identity. As the New York Observer and Chronicle noted, “He is of very light complexion. In certain views of his face, and under certain lights, especially when standing in the pulpit presenting his full face to the congregation, he would pass at once for a member of the Caucasian race” (“The Latimer Case”). However, as the article continues, “In other positions and under other lights, his African descent is clearly revealed” (“The Latimer Case”). He thus lacks the compositional purity that would undeniably prove him to be free. His mistress’ heirs moreover destroyed his only legitimate evidence, his free papers. Thomas Sims similarly argued that he—the son of a Spaniard—possessed these papers. Yet like Latimer’s, they too were out of reach: “his free papers are now in the possession of Morris Potter, of Savannah” and while he “desire[d] delay to obtain them” (“Another Fugitive Case in Boston”).
has (ambiguously) inaugurated, like Emerson’s natural aristocrat, a new race by becoming a new and “better man.”

Exercising over Pierre a magnetic power, Isabel’s music thus becomes a strategic challenge to the hegemonic discourses that excluded figures of difference, a reading Melville reinforces through Isabel’s racially ambiguous past and through her musical stylings. So thoroughly has Pierre embraced his sister in his rejection of his family name that he becomes, like her, suggestively blackened and feels as if he were “[d]ragging ball and chain.”

Transforming from a “docile” son (20) into an “outlawed human being” (360), Pierre de-evolves into an “infant in the eye of the law, incapable of personally asserting any legal claim” (180). He becomes, in other words, illegitimate. In so becoming, Pierre receives the mark of the slave by his cousin Glen whose “cow-hide smote Pierre across the cheek, and left a half-livid and half-blood brand.”

Without legal, familial or social ties to sustain him, the newly seceded Pierre wrecks havoc on the Glendinning line, shooting the last remaining heir to the Glendinning fortune. A rebellious force, Pierre mirrors the insurrectionary slave Americans had come to fear, “spattering…his own kindred blood” (360). From secessionist to insurrectionary, Pierre ultimately bears on his hand the trace of the slave-holding master and the slave; it is “scorched” black with a “murderer’s powder.” Taking aim at a heritage based on conquest and slavery, Pierre fills his gun with nothing else but music: “Is the music in ‘em?—No?—Well, then, here’s powder for the shrill treble; and wadding for the tenor; and a lead bullet for the concluding bass!” Having fired a final fatal shot into the society that spurned him, Pierre ultimately dies for his crimes, ending his days in a dismal jail cell.
The novel concludes with the death of its three main protagonists, Lucy from shock and Isabel and Pierre in a double-suicide. While these deaths demonstrate the inefficacy of Pierre’s democratic impulses, the novel does offer one final critique of the society that rejected them—voiced in the dying words of Isabel. She cries, “All’s o’er, and ye know him not!” Accentuating the ambiguities that haunted a slave-holding public, Isabel’s final words are a sharp reminder of our inability to determine with utmost certainty the identity of another. Falling upon Pierre’s heart in a last embrace, her long black hair “arbored” around him like “ebon vines,” the two die cloaked in blackness. A warning to the United States’ own precarious future, Melville’s democratic novel of murderous revolt and rebellion thus ends: the “black vein in this Glendinning” family has finally “swelled” and “burst” (358, 362).

While Melville’s vision of a democratic music failed to convince his readership to recognize the sympathetic potential of the interracial body, the public’s interest in developing a distinctly democratic and national music only increased throughout the 1850s. While figures like John Sullivan Dwight and William Henry Fry argued over the value of American music to the eventual cultivation of a high musical art in the United States, Northerners newly dedicated to unearthing a distinctly American sound that would unite the fracturing nation turned to the music of the slave as the true expression of the United States’ national spirit. Unlike the freedom of expression and form found in the improvisatory musical performances of the interracial Isabel, this music—once wild and free—becomes regulated through the “civilizing” influences of a more classical musical form, thereby erasing the danger Isabel’s more emotive music posed.
Chapter 5

Discovering a Musical Race: Lydia Maria Child’s *A Romance of the Republic*

Two months prior to the publication of Herman Melville’s *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*, antebellum music critic and transcendentalist John Sullivan Dwight distributed the inaugural issue of *Dwight’s Journal of Music: A Paper of Art and Literature* (1852-1881) to a Boston public. Its “Prospectus,” outlined on the front page of the 10 April 1852 issue, dedicated the journal’s content to the “art of MUSIC,” with “occasional glances at the whole world of Art and of polite Literature, indeed at every thing pertaining to the cultivation of the Beautiful.” Throughout its thirty-year run, *Dwight’s Journal of Music* provided its readership with a variety of material that ranged from critical reviews of musical concerts performed throughout the United States and in Europe to notices of music publications recently made available at publishing houses like Oliver Ditson’s. Exemplifying what would become the eclectic nature of the journal, the first issue included an article on “Jenny Lind’s Devotion to her Art,” a “Sonnet to my Piano” by C.P. Cranch, a notice on the publication of Beethoven’s piano sonatas, and advertisements for music instruction, including “Mrs. Rosa Garcia de Ribas, Teacher of the Pianoforte, Singing & Guitar.”

The initial issue also included an article by Dwight that outlined more extensively what would become a common motif for his *Journal of Music* and for music journalism of the 1850s more generally, such as that found in *The New-York Musical World*, edited by Richard Stors.

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155 At the time of *Dwight’s Journal of Music*’s publication, Dwight was an established music critic, having written 110 music articles for *The Harbinger* in the previous decade (Irvings 252). He initially conceived of the *Journal of Music* in 1851 and by February 1852 had developed a circular that outlined the journal’s purpose to potential subscribers (Cooke 147). Despite its thirty year run, the *Journal of Music* failed to attract a wide, general audience for Dwight “had no gift for appealing to merely popular tastes” (Cooke 157).

156 In his biography of Dwight, George Cooke notes that this first issue was in fact circulated “several weeks earlier” (150).
Willis, and the music columns of the *New York Daily Tribune*, edited by William Henry Fry.157 “Music,” Dwight declares in this “Introductory” article, maintained a “most intimate connection with the social destiny of Man” for it was only through the adoption, preservation, and promotion of the art that “Liberty and Order” could be “fully typed and made beautifully perfect in each other.” The “ovations” and “homage” the American public paid to Lind proved to be an “encouraging” sign in this otherwise “dark and wild” time for this “growing love of deep and genuine music” suggested that a “musical movement” had finally come to America. Still in its infancy—“confused, crude, heterogeneous”—such a movement nevertheless promised to be a “saving influence in this rapid expansion of our democratic life.” All that was needed was a proper “organ, a regular bulletin of progress,” to “represent the movement, and at the same time to help to guide it to the true end” (“Introductory” 4). *Dwight’s Journal of Music*, its editor asserted, was that organ.

Dwight’s journal ultimately envisioned an American soundscape intimately intertwined not only with the “social destiny of Man” but with the destiny of the United States as well. As the *Journal of Music* argued later in 1853, of all social systems, democracy proved most in need of the “harmonizing, humanizing, liberalizing and refining influences of Art” (“Music for the People” 94). In a lecture on music delivered in 1852 and reviewed in the *Daily Tribune* as well as in *Dwight’s Journal of Music* and *The Musical World*, William Henry Fry would similarly emphasize the importance of the fine arts, particularly music, to America’s political institution, describing the relationship as mutually constitutive. The development of the United States into a “refined and artistic nation” certainly depended upon the cultivation of a “native” music, he argued; yet “Democracy” was also “essential” to the “progress of High Art” for it encouraged

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music’s growth “more broadly and popularly” than other political systems (“Sketches of Lectures”).

Throughout the antebellum period, prominent music figures like Fry, Dwight, Willis, and George Bristow frequently returned to this description of music as a democratic aesthetic, an art form explicitly designed to help regulate “this great, fearfully large, heterogeneous, democratic people” (“Music for the People” 94). As an article on the “Social Significance of the Growing Taste for Music” (originally published in an 1845 issue of The Harbinger then reprinted in an 1853 issue of Dwight’s Journal of Music) suggested, the “practical” American’s “respect [for] Music as an Art” ultimately brought the United States closer to its “greater destiny”—the eventual “Unity of the race” (74). Lydia Maria Child’s Letters from New-York similarly understood the advancement of music to be a positive sign for humanity: as music “pass[ed] from the few to the many,” so too would the “the golden band of brotherhood” march “slowly, slowly” around the world until “the earth comes to its place, and makes a chord with heaven” (1st Series: 180).

In the following chapter, I argue that these discussions over the development of a national music were staged against a backdrop of increasing discontent over the type of music performed. While music intellectuals like Dwight and Willis emphasized the importance of European classical form to the evolution of American music practices, music nativists like Fry and Willis insisted that such music desecrated American art. As music theorists, critics, enthusiasts, and composers publicly debated and quarreled over the value of American music, they began to

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158 Fry would famously disagree with Dwight and the editor of The Musical World on what this progress should entail. In short, Fry argued that the production and performance of American compositions would transform the United States into a “refined and artistic nation” whereas Dwight and Willis would argue that the appreciation of European music was evidence of the “progress of High Art” in the United States. Section one of this chapter outlines this disagreement in more depth.

159 “Social Significance of the Growing Taste for Music” was originally printed as an 1845 article for The Harbinger. Like the 1852 “Introductory,” “Social Significance” announced a “Musical Movement in this country” (74). Apparently, the movement took a few years to get underway.
wonder if Americans were ever destined to become what they termed a “musical race.” I suggest, however, that by the late 1850s American hearing practices shifted. Newly dedicated to unearthing a distinctly American music that would unite the fracturing nation, Northerners traveling and working in the south turned to the music of the slave as a potential model for the development of a national art. It was here—against a backdrop of Civil War ballads, “contraband songs” and the publication of Slave Songs of the United States (1867)—that Dwight’s musical movement was realized, not in the form of European music but in that of the slave. Lydia Maria Child reveals this musical movement in her anti-slavery novel, A Romance of the Republic (1867). I argue that Child privileges African Americans as the ideal “musical race” if only to counteract the prejudice that marked the Civil War’s end. Imagining a world where musical “inbreeding” gives birth to a trans-racial America, A Romance of the Republic advocates the adoption of a musical form where the emotive and wild improvisations of the slave find structure in the “civilizing” influence of Euro-American classical form. Demonstrating the ease in which black and white music collide, Child’s novel ultimately envisions a world where “Liberty and Order” find their final balance in sound.

I. “A Declaration of Independence in Art”: Developing a National Music

In the preface to his Complete Encyclopædia of Music: Elementary, Technical, Historical, Biographical, Vocal, and Instrumental (1854), John Moore praised the “very extraordinary” progress music had made in the past few years in the United States. The “rapid extension of the art” had “produced a remarkable effect in raising the standard of musical taste and spreading the science and practice of music over the land.” While notable, this promotion of music education and appreciation nonetheless failed to spark an equal reaction in the development of a distinctly American musical tradition. There was no need, however, to mourn
this apparent “want of a national music in America,” Moore insisted. It was merely an extension of the social conditions that made the United States unique. Americans could not develop a national music because they lacked the “insulated life and feeling” necessary for its construction. The very cosmopolitan nature of the United States in fact made it “impossible” for Americans to “do more than reproduce the music of other ages and nations”: “We are too open to the world, too receptive of all influences from abroad, too much a nation made up of others to possess a music of our own.” Rather than strive for the unobtainable then, Americans should focus on what they were capable of producing: as “learners,” Moore submits, Americans should embrace, rather than “fear,” the “charge of imitation” because “one of the surest tests of a refined and elegant state of society” was that society’s music: if truly refined, Americans would embrace the “better music” produced by the “high schools of musical composition” (Moore 5).

Moore was not alone in his estimation of the musical art. As the admiration for European music, artists, and musical styles grew among elite circles comprised of figures like Dwight and Moore, so too did that music’s “sacralization” (Levine 132). Music may have been associated with the “social destiny of Man,” yet this alliance merely served to pull the “humdrum world” into the “higher, purer and more genial atmosphere” of music (“Introductory” 4). While the categorical differences separating a high art from its popular or vernacular counterpart were nearly non-existent in early American musical practices, by the antebellum period “music began to be regarded as ‘art’ and some composers as ‘artists,’” a definitional development that significantly altered the “traditional view of music as craft and musicians as craftsmen” (Preston, “Art Music” 191). Endowed with “unique aesthetic and spiritual properties that rendered it inviolate, exclusive, and eternal,” such music was distinguished from the more popular sounds found in the minstrel styles of Stephen Foster or the psalmody of Andrew Law (Levine 132).
While Dwight was “too astute not to recognize that value in music is not a matter of doctrine, not an antinomian proposition of good music versus bad music, of emotion versus intellect, or of content versus virtuosity,” as Mark Grant asserts (49), his *Journal of Music* nevertheless described the “better music” to be works by German composers.\(^{160}\) So apparent was Dwight’s bias that his readers complained that the *Journal of Music* ignored other nationalities. Dwight’s answer to such critique is telling, “We confess we are partial to German music. We find more food for thought, more inspiration of the higher sentiments, more outlet of emotion” (“Letter” 5). Like Dwight, the wider musical culture also embraced German music as the ideal. The “Teutonic bias of performing ensembles,” as Katherine Preston explains, “became more obvious in the 1850s when more American composers began to produce large-scale works (symphonies, operas, oratorios), only to discover that although there were plenty of American ensembles that performed such works, few (if any) were interested in their compositions” (“Art Music” 209). Even the “eclectic and varied” repertoires of singing schools “reinforced the promotion of European art music compositions” over native works (Preston, “Art Music” 206-207). The lack of attention to American born composers—despite the repeated insistence on the intimate link between Americans and music—did not go unnoticed. One writer, for instance, complained that figures like Dwight forwarded an anti-American musical agenda: “It seems to be the impression of most of our musical critics, that no production, whatever its merits or pretensions, is worth their serious notice, unless it be an article of foreign manufacture” (“American Composers” 140).

\(^{160}\)Mark Grant notes that “Beethoven’s music, more than that of any other composer, embodied for Dwight the transcendentalist ideal of exalting the spirit in sound, and his published writings began to reflect that” (Grant 42). For more on Dwight’s appreciation of Beethoven, see Ora Frishberg Saloman’s *Beethoven’s Symphonies and J.S. Dwight: The Birth of American Music Criticism.*
Nowhere was this favoritism more noted than in the repertoire of the New York Philharmonic Society, whose concerts Dwight unreservedly praised as being the “first in America” (“Philharmonic” 2). Established in 1842, the Philharmonic was the “country’s most prominent permanent orchestra” (Preston, “Art Music” 210). Its one failing, according to some, was its apparent refusal to include instrumental works by American composers in its programs. Of the seventy-four instrumental pieces presented by the Philharmonic from its establishment through the mid-1850s, only one was by an American: George Bristow’s Concert Overture in E-flat (Preston, “Art Music” 210). In order to alleviate the favoritism the Philharmonic and other music institutions manifested toward a European art, a group of American composers and musicians—Jerome Hopkins, Charles Hommann, Louis Gottschalk, William Mason, Bristow and Fry—established the New York American-Music Association in 1855 and offered to the New York public the first concert dedicated solely to American music in 1856. Its fundamental object, the Association declared, was to “further the interest of musical composers residing among us, by having their works effectively presented to the public, in order that they may be fairly criticized and impartially judged” (qtd. in Swenson-Eldridge). Despite its best intentions, the American-Music Association lasted only three seasons. Dwight announced its closure in his 27 February 1858 column of “Musical Chit-Chat.”

Of the American composers and musicians who advocated an American national music, most publicly vocal was William Henry Fry, the European correspondent and eventual music editor of the New York Daily Tribune. While Fry never “advocated a complete break with the cultural heritage of Europe” in either his writing or in his lecture series, he did advocate “more independence and self-determination on the part of American composers, as well as more encouragement and support from the American cultural establishment” (Chase 308). In his
lectures on music delivered in 1852 and 1853 to a New York public, Fry addressed the perceived partiality for European musical forms. Announcing in his third lecture that “New York” was a “bigger name to me than Vienna” for the “city now has more good artists than the Austrian capital had thirty five years ago,” Fry complained that American repertoires privileged European music over American: “The opportunity, …in which American composers or artists can be heard at all in public, is rare; while Europeans at home and here, are not lost sight of” (“Mr. Fry’s Third Lecture”). Fry would later expand on this critique in his final lecture on “American Music” (Chase 308). According to a critical summary printed in *The Journal of Music* on 12 March 1853, Fry’s last lecture “stirred up some feeling in New York by the novelty and boldness of his positions,” namely by his “Americanism”—“as if it were part of the ‘manifest destiny’ and duty of this republic to accept the teachings of the old world quite as little in Art and Music as in political and social life” (“Mr. Fry’s” 180). Calling for a “Declaration of Independence in Art,” Fry advised the “American composer” to “only reverence his *Art*, and strike out manfully and independently into untrodden realms” (“Mr. Fry’s” 181).

Fry’s attack on European musical forms and the negative response it solicited from figures like Dwight would lead to a more extensive debate in 1854 on both the value of American music and the definition of classical form. In one of the “most extraordinary public correspondences in the annals of American music” (Chase 313), Fry and Willis, editor of *The Musical World*, exchanged a series of letters debating the formal structure and value of Fry’s *Santa Claus* symphony.161 Composed for an orchestra, *Santa Claus* followed a simple narrative that Fry outlined in a synopsis he provided to his audience. Opening with “glad tidings of the Saviour’s coming birth” and the “Festivities of a Christmas Eve party,” *Santa Claus* ends with its

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161 The letters between Fry and Willis appeared in multiple issues of *The Musical World* and were partially reprinted by Dwight, who added his own commentary to the debate by siding with Willis.
namesake’s arrival and the singing of “the Christmas Hymn, *Adeste Fideles.*” Although it included recognizable melodies, particularly the lullaby “Rock-A-By Baby,” *Santa Claus,* as instrumental program music, was modeled after a high art form that distinguished it from music of more popular fare (“A Literary Curiosity”). Performed by a respected orchestra under Louis Antoine Juillien’s direction, *Santa Claus* should have merited praise from Dwight and Willis as a valuable composition. As Katherine Preston explains, “It was performance venues rather than compositions *per se* that were viewed as hierarchical: one type of activity might be considered more ‘high class’ than another, but the evaluation was of the music’s *function,* not its inherent quality” (“Art Music” 190). At the time of its performance, however, the “nature and function of music began to undergo significant and long-lasting changes” that led some, most notably music critics like Dwight and Willis, to determine musical value based not on venue but on a piece’s intrinsic value (Preston, “Art Music” 191).

For Dwight and Willis, that value was determined by a piece’s form. The quarrel between Willis and Fry began with Willis’ claim that *Santa Claus* was not a symphony but a “Fantasia” or “extravaganza” because it lacked the formal unity of a true symphony like Beethoven’s *Symphony* in C Minor (“Reply to Mr. Willis” 146). Annoyed by Willis’ assertion, Fry offered in response an extended statement on form—“for *Santa Claus* I claim that it possess the unities, which in the classic symphonies have no existence whatever, notwithstanding the folios of ink shed concerning them” (“Mr. Fry’s Letter” 138)—that quickly dissolved into a harsh analysis of the Philharmonic: “the Philharmonic Society of this city, consecrated to foreign music, is an incubus on Art, never having asked for or performed a single American instrumental composition during the eleven years of its existence, but which has greedily sought for and eagerly thrust before the public every pretentious emanation from the brain of Europeans” (“Mr.
Fry’s Letter” 138). Distancing himself from such European affectation, Fry pronounced his work in “common cause with Americans, born or naturalized, who are engaged in the world’s Art struggle, and against degrading deference to European dictation” (“Mr. Fry’s Letter” 138). George Bristow—a friend of Fry and the only American composer to grace the program of a Philharmonic concert—seconded Fry’s attack, accusing the institution of putting forth a “‘systematized effort...for the extinction of American music’” (qtd. in Chase 308).

Fry’s letter unsurprisingly provoked a negative response from Dwight and Willis, both of whom had publically championed the adoption of European forms. Willis asserted that the “Temple of Art is an universal temple; and that you are an American is no reason that you shall have free admission there, and be privileged to come and go as you like” (“Willis’ Second Reply” 87). Fry’s “championship for American Art...because it is American Art” was ultimately misled, he argued: “This is the wrong view of Art—decidedly so. It is one-sided and contracted. Let us strive for Art—universal Art” (“Willis’ Second Reply” 87). Dwight echoed Willis’ sentiments, charging Fry with a misguided patriotism: “Like him [Willis], too, we have necessarily, by the whole tone and spirit of our criticism, and our whole Art creed, implied or spoken, drawn down upon us the displeasure of this ‘manifest destiny’ native American, or anti-European party in music, which deems it an insult to suppose that anything attempted by an American, upon as a great a scale, in composition is not as worthy of attention and of fame as any great work of the greatest masters” (“Mr. Fry and his Critics” 141). Taking issue with Fry’s disparagement of classical European composers, Dwight further admonished that the term “classical” was “not a question of schools and authorities, of following or discarding models” but rather a “question of genius. And genius can be perennially fresh in old forms, or draw us intimately near to itself and make us feel at home with it in whatsoever new forms” (“Mr. Fry
and his Critics” 141). Unfortunately for Fry and other American composers, their work failed to measure up.

Despite Dwight’s insistence that so-called “classical music” could take any form, both he and Willis insisted that such music needed to demonstrate a “unity of form,” a coherent structure easily identifiable by any connoisseur of music. In an article on “What is ‘Classical’ in Music?” Dwight’s Journal of Music admits that the term was still “various and vaguely used” in American circles, yet to earn the “sanction of the whole musical world” and gather the title of “classical,” such music must first manifest “certain peculiarities of Form and Structure” (“What is ‘Classical’” 262). As an 1852 article on the same topic stated more extensively,

In them [classical composers] natural music became scientific learned; that is, in their works we find the principles, the eternal laws of music best illustrated. It is no longer a vague, wild, aeolian harp-like phenomenon, floating about the world in mysterious snatches of melody; but its principle of order has been found and logically developed: and now a piece of music is connected discourse, in which a melodic theme is unfolded, treated, brought into relation with kindred themes, and woven as a motive or primitive fibre into a complex organic texture. (“The Term ‘Classical’ in Music” 100).

Unlike the “vague, wild” musical form of lesser compositions (like Fry’s Santa Claus symphony/fantasia), classical music possessed “order.” No longer “primitive,” such music became “complex” in its balance of various themes.

The perceived dichotomy between the balanced form of classical music and the wild, unregulated structure (or absence of structure) of other styles proved to be a point of contention between Fry and Willis as well. Taking a much more organic definition of musical form, Fry complained that he did “not feel complimented…that you should think I am influenced by such
irreligious or atheistic views of Art, as to adapt my music to any style in vogue. I consult my soul in writing, and nothing else” (“Mr. Fry’s Letter to Mr. Willis” 139). Yet Willis remained unimpressed with such Romantic notions. Contradicting Fry’s assertion that his Santa Claus was the “longest unique symphony ever written” (“Mr. Fry’s Letter” 138), Willis simply stated that Santa Claus was “not a symphony” but an “Orchestral Fantasia” (“Reply to Mr. Fry” 37-38). Indeed Fry failed to understand what “classical unity” really meant: “This unity is embodied in each separate movement. It implies some distinct musical theme, or themes, clearly and intelligently developed” (“Reply to Mr. Fry” 38). In sum, Willis argued that to qualify as a symphony with “classical unity” a musical piece must have these characteristics: it must be “an intelligent, connective, proportional work of Art; a work that has a beginning, a consequent middle, and an inevitable end;--not a vague, disconnected, illogical, plan-less composition like a Fantasia, where the only unity ever attempted is that of ending in the same key in which one began” (“Reply to Mr. Fry” 38). Framed thus, “Santa Claus,” Willis unequivocally asserted, “is a Fantasia” because “Santa Claus has no musical unity” (“Reply to Mr. Fry” 38).

The condemnation Willis and Dwight express for the “vague,” “wild” and “disconnected” music of a fantasia or extravaganza reveals a larger shift away from specific musical forms privileged in the 1840s. In an 1843 letter to Lydia Maria Child, Dwight found much to praise in the virtuosic music of Vieuxtemps, whose “wild, nervous, and electrifying” melodies were anything but regulative: “They were like spirit disembodied: they did not contradict or limit my soul…My soul was free with them” (Collected Correspondence [CC] 529-2; 529-1). Indeed the music of both Vieuxtemps and his fellow virtuoso Ole Bull represented the “perfection of art, if nothing more” (CC 529-1). By 1852, however, this music no longer held the same power. When Ole Bull returned to the United States in the early 1850s, his performances received little praise
in *Dwight’s Journal of Music*. “Most cultivated music-lovers,” Dwight wrote, “do not like his compositions as such, but find them disjointed, fragmentary, confusing, and oftentimes…false.” Particularly distasteful were Ole Bull’s melodic themes—his use of “hacknied popular melodies” “cheap expedients of effect that are below himself.” What his compositions lacked was a sense of “unity as a whole” (“Ole Bull” 69). Without this formal unity, even the most “expressive” and “skillful” music proved distasteful. Unrestrained emotion, while “intense in feeling,” would always fail to become the musical ideal (“Ole Bull” 69).

No longer in vogue, virtuosic music was replaced by a music more ordered in its structure and regulated in its emotion. This movement away from the extreme Romanticism and individualism of improvisation had larger ramifications for the American perception of musical expression as well. Seeking distance from the Romantic concept of melody as the epitome of musical expression and sympathy, *Dwight’s Journal of Music* suggested in an 1853 article that the more structured “harmony” was in fact “the heart, the mainspring and origin of music” (“Harmony and Melody” 118). Unlike melody’s “escape from unity…[and] tendency to individuality and variety,” harmony sounded “the expansion of the ONE” (“Harmony and Melody” 118). If music were to lead, with the help of *Dwight’s Journal of Music*, America’s free people toward their greater destiny, or the “Unity of the race,” this journey would have to be made through the well-ordered form of a Beethoven symphony or a Mozart sonata—not through the “vague, wild, aeolian harp-like phenomenon” of improvisatory sound.

While Fry, Dwight and Willis may not have agreed on Santa Claus’ position in the new hierarchy, each reflected in their comments and compositional practices this changing attitude toward music. In an address delivered to the Harvard Music Association in 1851 and reprinted in a multi-issue format for his *Journal of Music* in 1852, Dwight denounced the “novelties of our
time” in favor of a higher art. Music produced by “small troupes,” such as the “Ethiopian Serenaders,’ Sable Minstrels, ’Æolian Vocalists,’ and the like,” not only had become “from their endless number, and the peculiarity of their song and designation, a national characteristic of the United States,” this type of music ultimately threatened America’s artistic progress, representing “a class whose wide-spread influence, it cannot but be feared, has been detrimental to the purity and dignity of the Art” (“Music of the Past Half-Century” 91). Dwight reiterated this position in what criticism he offered American compositions. When asked to defend his classification of one American work as “conceived in quite a German spirit,” Dwight argued that the description was designed as praise: “the motive of the term ‘German’ partly was to save it from the questionable praise of classification with what are commonly understood to be songs of the American stamp, that is to say ‘negro melodies,’ or namby-pamby sentimental ditties, sung and manufactured by the numerous singing ‘families’ that traverse the States” (“A Complaint” 95).

Failing to meet the standards of the “high schools of musical composition,” these “negro melodies” and “namby-pamby sentimental ditties” lacked what Dwight and others defined as essential to the development of American musical art, the formal structure and lasting power of a more “classical” music. Unfortunately the United States was overrun by these music impostures, Dwight’s Journal of Music complained: “The country swarms with enterprising fellows who can put together notes and make up little pieces, that will sell (“Native Musical Talent. Second Article” 61). These “enterprising fellows,” however, did not deserve the name of composer for they “would not be considered as composers in any other country” (“Native Musical Talent. Second Article” 61). Although abundant, none in fact produced a national art: “Who can point us to one American composition, great or small, with much assurance that it is destined to become classical and to be treasured in the world’s musical repertory?” (“Native Musical Talent. Second
Article” 61). If only the public would take a “modest and reasonable” look at American music, rather than approach music in a “boastful, shallow patriotic, ‘manifest destiny,’ all-the-world-annexing, Yankee Doodle way,” they would be forced to admit that the United States was a “nation of beginners” (“Native Musical Talent” 54), Americans—one article on “Native Musical Talent” argued—in fact were “not sprung from a particularly musical race” (“Native Musical Talent” 54). As another article on the “Musical Talent of the Americans” confirmed, “However mortifying the confession may be…. Americans are NOT a musical people” (82).

II. “The Relation of War to Music”: The Contraband Song

While Americans were progressing in their appreciation of traditional classical forms, the majority of the listening public still expressed a decided interest in what was increasingly defined as this “lower” art. As a result, the gap between those who lectured and wrote on music and the audience they sought to edify gradually widened. One “Young Gent,” for instance, expressed the wish that Dwight would embrace a more plebian view of music: “If he could once break through the shell of his library and mingle a little with the world, he would become a glorious fellow—yet after all, perhaps, not so precious as now” (qtd. in Tawa 18). At the start of the Civil War, however, the listening public—from the average American to the elite music critic—agreed on at least one thing: the United States was sorely in need of a spirit-rousing national music: the “Yankee Doodle way” of looking at music was now in vogue. No longer would “Mrs. Columbia” favor “Italian music” over “Yankee Doodle,” as one article in The New York Herald declared. Neither would Americans “[ape] the foreign aristocracy in everything but their titles.” Rather the public “will be more American and less foreign” in their tastes (“The Coming Revolution”).
The patriotic feelings the war inspired influenced musical practices throughout the North and South. To raise money for the war effort, benefit concerts, with their fair share of patriotic pomp and circumstance, became a fixture in musical societies traditionally dedicated to foreign music. A “grand concert” at the Academy of Music for the “benefit of the Volunteer fund,” for instance, sought to entice concertgoers with “an unusually attractive” program with a “patriotic motive” that would “insure an overflowing house” (“The Patriotic Fund”). Critics were also less inclined to find fault with these nationalistic repertoires, leaving to the “discriminating and patriotic public”—as one review explained—“the task of criticizing the performance” (“Concert for the Soldiers.”). 162 Journals and newspapers like Dwight’s Journal of Music and the New York World even staged music-writing competitions to encourage Americans to compose their own version of a national hymn, a form of music “almost as indispensable an appanage [sic] of nationality as a national flag” (“National Hymns” 257). 163 At very least, Dwight expected the war to have a positive effect on American musical life if only in the “changes” it offered to “our national and individual associations” (“Relation of the War” 196). As an article on “The Relation of the War to Music” declared, these changes could alter the musical landscape, allowing a true national art—the “high schools of musical composition”—to emerge: “May it not be seriously asked, if there is not in the passing events, that which is ample material for Symphonies, Marches, Funébres, or Triumphales, and vocal works of the dramatic character?” (“Relation of the War” 196).

162 The review does, however, reveal its taste for American music over European, declaring “Were not comparisons invidious, we might speak of the execution of ‘gems’ last evening in a style of which many foreign professionals might take a lesson, but we forbear, and leave to a discriminating and patriotic public the task of criticizing the performance on Tuesday evening next” (“Concert for the Soldiers”). For more on these types of patriotic concerts, see Olson, p. 262.

163 To be popular with the public, the national hymn “must of all things proclaim, assert, and exult in freedom” as well as demonstrate these characteristics: “let it be brimful of loyalty to the flag, which is our only national symbol, and for that all the dearer; let its allusions embody our distinctive traits of nationality; let it have a fine rhythmical flow” (“The National Hymn” 132).
While Marches and Triumphales were certainly popular with the concert-going public, much of the music produced during the Civil War was of a less ambitious nature. Northern and Southern armies relied on bands to raise morale and organize military maneuvers (see Figure 5.1).\textsuperscript{164} Soldiers also filled their free time playing music with “any instruments they might have made or brought with them from home,” from violins and guitars to bugles, fifes and drums (Cornelius 82).\textsuperscript{165} Rapidly distributing songsters, music collections, and sheet music to the public, publishing houses solicited and printed a wide range of material, from The Patriotic Song Book, Words and Music, Containing the Star Spangled Banner and Fifth Other Pieces (“The Patriotic Song Book”) to “Jeff Davis’ Retreat March” (see Figure 5.2).\textsuperscript{166} Sheet music iconography typically featured famous generals, military battles, soldier life, and sentimentalized images of home. Used as “community-building strategies” (Roote 39), popular songs reflected the progress of the war, depending on what was deemed to be the nation’s mood at the present moment.\textsuperscript{167} Sentimental ballads like “You are Going to the Wars, Willie-Boy” and “A Soldier’s Vision,” however, were popular throughout the war, sung at home and on the front (see Figures 5.3 and 5.4). A critical part of camp life, such music captured the emotional toil enlisted men and

\textsuperscript{164} As Stephen Cornelius explains in more depth, civilian and military brass bands rallied “spirits on the march in battle” and bestowed “grandeur upon military spectacles in general” (203). Enlisted field musicians “sounded calls to initiate basic camp duties” and were used to regulate military maneuvers (Cornelius 174).

\textsuperscript{165} Generating an increase in instrument sales, the war also encouraged the invention of a vast array of brass instruments, with neo cors, bombardones, and saxotrombas only a few of the “colorfully named creations” that emerged throughout the war (Olson 257). Most popular, of course, were trumpets, bugles, fifes, and drums. It was these instruments and the music they produced that southern slaves in particular associated with the advancement of the “Yankees.” As one South Carolinian ex-slave insisted, “I nebber hear such a drum in my life! De people like music, dey didn’t care nothing bout de Yankees, but dem bands of music!” (“Interview with Ex-Slave”). Even the Emancipation Proclamation could not compare to “dat band music ringing in my ears”; as another ex-slave asserted, “At dat time I was so young at all I cared about on dat day, was the brass band that led out so much music” (“Interview with Pick Gladdeny”).

\textsuperscript{166} Music publishing houses flourished until paper shortages and transportation difficulties made it challenging for Confederate presses to continue their work (Kelley 31). Deemed the South’s “unofficial national anthem,” “I Wish I was in Dixie’s Land” was the most popular song in the South; Northerners frequently sang “John Brown’s Body”—in its multiple variations—throughout the war (Cornelius 30). For an extended discussion on the origin of these two songs, see Cornelius 25-30.

\textsuperscript{167} In his inventory of Civil War music, Cornelius notes that music published in the early years was nationalistic in character while the middle years focused on death and the final years on homecomings (25).
their families experienced on a daily basis. When asked if a civilian band visiting a Union camp would perform “Home, Sweet Home,” for instance, the colonel in charge “hesitated, saying he had never dared to ask them to play that, since he saw, early in the war, a regiment stand in tears, around a band while it played ‘Home’” (Letters from Home 153).

As Union soldiers moved south, they were introduced to authentic slave culture as well, from “fanciful productions of Ethiop art”—“pork and oysters and sweet potatoes and rice and hominy and corn-bread and milk; also mysterious griddle-cakes of corn and pumpkin”—to popular songs and dances like the “shout” (Higginson 21, 198). These interactions ultimately encouraged some proslavery Unionists to embrace the abolitionist cause. As one enlisted solider wrote for the Vincennes Gazette in 1862, “I came here a proslavery, Democrat and am no longer one. If the war lasts much longer I shall be an Abolitionist of the Massachusetts stripe. And I shall not be alone in this” (“The Contrabands at Norfolk”). At very least it prompted Northerners to rethink the common stereotypes popularly found in the North. Encountering slaves on plantations and working with them in their camps, enlisted soldiers discovered that many of these representations were unfounded. Edward L. Pierce, a Massachusetts soldier serving at Fortress Monroe, for instance, contested the “lazy slave” caricature, writing for the Atlantic Monthly that the refugee slaves “worked well, and in no instance was it found necessary for the superintendents to urge them” (“Experience”). Far from being “savages,” they in fact proved “quite equal to the mass of the Southern population” (“Experience”).

The Civil War also shifted how Northerners heard black music. As Steven Cornelius explains, “One of the war’s little-noticed consequences was that for the first time authentic African-American music making, rather than the various caricatures meted out through blackface
Fig. 5.1: Photograph of the 8th New York State Militia in Arlington, Virginia, June 1861. Civil War Band Photo Gallery. Band Music from the Civil War Era. Web. American Memory Project. Library of Congress.

Fig. 5.2: Music memorialized significant events during the war. “Jeff Davis’ Retreat March: Don't Provoke the President, He Might Hurt Somebody,” printed in Philadelphia, was one example. Capitalizing on a popular story that Davis fled Union troops dressed as a woman, the music’s iconography depicts a cross-dressing Davis running from Union soldiers. Popular American Sheet Music. Spencer Collection. Baylor University.
Fig. 5.3: A Southern ballad, “You Are Going to the Wars, Willie Boy” was composed by John Hewitt and published in Savannah by John C. Schreiner & Son in 1863. The lyrics, like many of the ballads published during the civil war, mixed patriotism and sentiment. Journeying to the “wars far a-way, / To protect our rights and laws,” “Willie-boy” leaves behind those he loves who worry of his safety: “I’ll often think of you, Willie-boy, Willie boy / And ever for your life and glory pray.” Historic American Sheet Music. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library. Duke Universities.

Fig. 5.4. In “The Soldier’s Vision,” a soldier dreams of a reunion with his wife and children while his surroundings—an open tent and smoking fire—remind viewers of the comforts he lacks: home, or where “the bliss of earth is found,” as the lyrics state. “The Soldier’s Vision,” C. Everest, Johns Hopkins University, Levy Sheet Music Collection.
minstrel shows, was heard by large numbers of white Northerners” (122). While music critics like Dwight, Willis and Fry quarreled over the value of American music in the early 1850s, others were turning to “negro melodies” as a source of musical pleasure and interest. In the years prior to the Civil War, black song making in fact “became the object of new interest among northern intellectuals” (Cruz 68). As a result, Northerners began to redefine how they heard (as well as what qualified as) black music. Unlike the “gay laugh and cheerful song” that characterized blackface minstrelsy, a more authentic music reflected the “soul of the slave” who “throws into his music all that gushing anguish of spirit which he dare not express” (“The Black Opera” 107). This alteration in hearing practices—which says more about a transformation in those who listened than in the music they heard—justified the adoption of a more authentic “negro minstrelsy” as a “national” art (“The Black Opera” 107). As Thomas Nichols, writing in the 1860s, stated, “As to a national music, I can say little. The negro melodies are nearly all we have to boast of. These have a charm that has made them popular everywhere” (qtd. in Tawa 11).

168 Northerners were provided with the opportunity to hear southern African American music for two main reasons: “First, emancipated slaves carried their music with them as they moved northward or attached themselves to the invading Union armies. Second, many Northerners traveled to the slave South for the first time.” (Cornelius 122)

169 Notably, the author of “The Black Opera” attributes Northern minstrel song to southern plantations, arguing that the changes in type of music were due to the development of the slave: “Southern traveler of to-day” would notice a “striking change in the mental characteristics of this unhappy people. The gay laugh and cheerful song are not heard with former frequency; there is less of that noisy exuberance which not long since was regarded as a trait in the African disposition” (107). The author’s inability to separate the negative racial stereotypes found in the blackface performances of the 1840s from more “authentic” representations of the slave in the late 1850s reveals the lingering prejudices toward the race.

170 Although Northern intellectuals were newly invested in discovering a more authentic slave sound, many Americans still conflated minstrelsy with genuine slave music (heard in the south by Northerners and performed by African Americans), using the general term of “negro melodies.” We do see, however, a shift in the popular “coon songs” of the late 1840s and early 1850s. Moving away from the racial stereotypes of “Jim Crow” and “Zip Coon,” composers like Stephen Foster imagined African American music as possessing more sentimental—rather than comic—traits. As Scott Gac notes, “The sentimentalism of later minstrelsy, such as the songs of Stephen Foster and the toned-down appearance of minstrel sheet music in the late 1840s (which made it more appealing for parlor display), attest to the shift toward a domesticated, more scrupulous musical form” (7). It also revealed a shift in American perceptions of the African American in such music’s emphasis on characteristics traditionally identified as “white” over those (like traditional “negro dialect”) that marked African Americans as an “inferior” race.
Even before the war some Americans suggested that slaves provided what white Americans had failed to offer—a musical race. As an anonymous letter (signed “Evangelist”) printed in the 1856 and 1859 issues of *Dwight’s Journal of Music* declared, the “only musical population of this country are the Negroes of the South” (“Songs of the Blacks” 51). “Compared with our taciturn race,” the letter continued, “the African nature is full of poetry and song”:

Inferior to the white race in reason and intellect, they have more imagination, more lively feelings and a more expressive manner. In this they resemble the southern nations of Europe. Their joy and grief are not pent up in the heart, but find instant expression in their eyes and voice. With their imagination they clothe in rude poetry the incidents of their lowly life, and set them to simple melodies. Thus they sing their humble loves in strains full of tenderness. We at the North hear these songs only as burlesqued by our Negro Minstrels, with faces blackened with charcoal. Yet even thus all feel that they have rare sweetness and melody. (“Songs of the Blacks” 51)

If Americans wanted to become a musical race, they should learn to imitate the unguarded expression of feeling witnessed in African American music performance. “Let us not be ashamed to learn the art of happiness from the poor bondman at the South,” the “Evangelist” declared”—“If slaves can pour out their hears in melody, how ought freeman to sing!” (“Songs of the Blacks” 51). As another author writing on the importance of black music to the development of a national music advised, a budding composer would do well to “draw inspiration from a tour through the South and West”—mingling with the “originators,” rather than the Northern imitators, of the minstrel song (“The Black Opera” 180).

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171 Not only are these “Songs of their Captivity…sung with a touching effect,” the music of slave surpassed even the best music found in a critically acclaimed music hall: “No song of a concert room ever thrilled us like one of these simple African airs, heard afar off in the stillness of a summer night” (“Songs of the Blacks” 51).
The Civil War ultimately delivered this tour, offering Northern music enthusiasts like Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Charles Pickard Ware, Lucy McKim Garrison, and William Francis Allen intimate access to a soundscape inflected by African American music practices. Here, they could record “like some captured bird or insect” the “rhythmical barbaric dance the negroes call a ‘shout,’ chanting, often harshly, but always in the most perfect time, some monotonous refrain” (Higginson 198). Nowhere was this soundscape more remarked than in the contraband camps established throughout the southern states. On May 24, 1861, Major General Benjamin Butler declared three fugitive slaves seeking asylum at Fort Monroe “contrabands” of war. A few months later, the United States Congress passed the First Confiscation Act, which allowed all rebel property used to promote the war effort—including slaves—to be seized by Union forces. The First Confiscation Act (and the ensuing Second Confiscation Act) proved controversial for it interfered with the slaves’ status as property, effectively discharging slaves from their labor to their Southern owners. Indeed, some Northerners worried that the Confiscation Acts embraced an “abolition programme” that would eventually lead to the emancipation of the slave (“Negro Slaves as Contraband”). Yet as the number of black fugitives seeking asylum increased, the Union Army began to “employ the runaways in army camps and on army fortifications,” where they served as “servants, laborers, cooks, laundresses, and informants” (Tomblin 5). Recognizing the value of contrabands to the war effort, many Northerners were forced to embrace these shifting definitions of property. As

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172 The number of Northerners serving in the navy that interacted with African Americans also increased. As William Gould writes in the introduction to Dairy of a Contraband: The Civil War Passage of a Black Sailor, “As early as 1861, [the navy] had accepted many runaway slaves, and ultimately, back sailors accounted for 20 percent of the navy’s total enlisted force, a proportion that was nearly double the representation of black soldiers in the army” (67). For more on the presence of African Americans in the navy, see Barbara Brooks Tomblin’s Bluejackets and Contrabands: African Americans and the Union Navy.

173 For more on the Confiscation Acts, see Silvana Sidaali’s From Property to Person: Slavery and the Confiscation Acts, 1861-1862.
The Daily Cleveland Herald stated in 1861, “We have no doubt this detention of the indispensable negro will ‘fire the whole Southern heart’” (“Contraband Goods”).

As thousands of blacks sought refuge with Northern armies, it became difficult to provide adequate shelter, food, and clothing. Those sympathetic to the plight of the contraband wrote home of “their lack of proper clothing, their poor diet, and the destitute condition in which many slaves found themselves after being abandoned by their white owners” (Tomblin 80). As one enlisted solider wrote for The Charleston Mercury, “There appears to have been no exaggeration in the accounts already given in regard to the condition of the negroes at the various contraband camps in the Mississippi Valley” for “without employment, deprived of the food to which they have been accustomed, and often without shelter or medical care, these hapless creatures perish as if swept off by pestilence” (“Shocking Scenes”). Lucy Chase, a Quaker missionary who worked as teacher and general organizer at the contraband camps at Craney Island and Roanoke Island, similarly emphasized the poor conditions of the new arrivals: “There are not eighteen hundred negroes here; and they continue to arrive. They come almost wholly destitute of clothing, covered with vermin, and extremely ignorant, and incompetent for noble, self-originating action of mind or body” (24).174

Northern philanthropic societies quickly responded to these calls for aid, collecting “funds and supplies for the contrabands, which they shipped to camps at Point Lookout, Fortress Monroe, Craney Island, Washington, D.C., and other locations” (Tomblin 93). As volunteers traveled south as nurses, schoolteachers, and organizers to these makeshift camps, they were

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174 As such, the contrabands originally seemed unfit for soldier life. Ware wrote in a letter dated May 11, 1862, “I don’t believe you could make soldiers of these men at all—they are afraid, and they know it” (42). With time, however, these Northern prejudices lessened. Ware would eventually write in 1863, “Now it is a matter of fact, not opinion…that they will fight in open warfare, and will succeed in a certain sort of expedition when white men would fail, thus being too valuable an aid in putting down the Rebellion for us to give way to the prejudices of the mass of the soldiers” (164).
overwhelmed by what they found. As Northern volunteer Harriet Ware, working at Port Royale, wrote in 1862,

> We are not used to these people—it is even very difficult to understand what they say. They have been born and brought up just here; in the most isolated way, for generations, with no chance of improvement, and there is not a single mulatto—on the place—they are black as the blackest, and perfect children—docile. (21)

With the help of Northerners, these “ignorant” contrabands soon grew more educated and disciplined in body. As Chase wrote of her Savannah students, “How much I wish you could see my school! A more earnest, fine looking set of scholars could not be found—than I could show” (193). No longer destitute, “the people here [are] more tidy and thrifty than in any place I am acquainted with—though many are intensely poor” (Chase 193).

Interacting with contrabands on a daily basis, Northern volunteers like Chase and Ware frequently wrote home of their experiences, many of which involved music. In the contrabands’ barracks, Chase found men and women “singing and dancing” (24); at a “dress-ball” she witnessed a “real Virginia Break-down, on Virginia soil” (34); in church, she noted that it was “very common for a large congregation to accompany the preacher, or prayer, by a wailing chant, swaying their bodies all the time, and often drowning the voice of the speaker” (124). Ware likewise recorded hearing music during a wake: “As I went upstairs to bed there began, at first quite low, then swelling louder with many voices, the strains of one of their wild, sad songs”

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175 As Barbara Tomblin explains, “By the fall of 1862 abolitionists, philanthropists, and Quaker missionaries had established about thirty schools on St. Helena Island as part of what became known as the ‘Port Royal experiment’” (93). While there were similar schools throughout the south, Port Royal proved to be the largest endeavor and eventually led to the publication of the *Slave Songs of the United States* in 1867.

176 Higginson would also comment on the blackness of his regiment: “all looked as thoroughly black as the most faithful philanthropist could desire; there did not seem to be so much as a mulatto among them” (7). Like Ware, Higginson too got used to the sight and began noting comparisons between these “thoroughly black” men and the whites: “Already I am growing used to the experience, at first so novel, of living among five hundred men, and scarce a white face to be seen,—of seeing them go through all their daily processes, eating, frolicking, talking, just as if they were white” (9).
(253). She also observed the “hymn-singing” during a Church service that transformed into a variation of the religious “shout”: “one of the young girls struck up one of their wild songs….It was not a regular ‘shout,’ but some of them clapped their hands and they stamped in time” (26-27). While Ware found it “difficult to understand the words,” the music was even more “indescribable, and no one person could imitate it at all” (27).

Like Chase and Ware, who frequently recorded their encounters with contraband music culture, Northerners traveling and working in the south were particularly attracted to black religious music. As Jon Cruz explains, “it was not black music in general that was catching the ears of more and more white observers; it was the Negro spiritual” (68). Such music offered to Northerners an opportunity to identify with a group of people that many—like Ware—found unfamiliar. The spiritual, in its resemblance to Christian hymnology, crossed these social barriers, “bridg[ing] the chasm that separated black noise from meanings relevant to white listeners” (Cruz 68). In the published articles and letters dedicated to contrabands and contraband music—Dwight would publish at least three in the first two years of the war—most emphasized the religious nature of the slave song (see Figure 5.5). In article published in the *Journal of Music* in 1862, J. McKim notes that “Negro songs” “are all religious, barcaroles and all. I speak without exception” (148). An 1861 article on “Contraband Singing” similarly stated that “one of the most striking incidents of this war [was] to listen to the singing of the groups of colored people in Fortress Monroe, who gather at their resorts after nightfall”:

There were hundreds of men of all ages scattered around. In one tent they were singing in order, one man leading, as extemporaneous chorister, while some ten or twelve others joined in the chorus. The hymn was long and plaintive, as usual, and the air was one of the sweetest minors I ever listened to. It would have touched many a heart if sung in the
audiences who appreciate the simple melody of nature, fresh and warm from the heart.

(“Contraband Singing” 182)

Evidence of “an underlying and authentic slave culture there to be uncovered and appreciated,” the slave spiritual had become, in other words, “meaningful music” (Cruz 68). In the words of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, “These songs are but the vocal expression of the simplicity of their faith and the sublimity of their long resignation” (222). Americans, it seems, had finally discovered their musical race.

As these articles and letters suggest, Dwight’s “musical movement” indeed had come. Yet the United States’ “growing love of deep and genuine music” was not a love for European music but for that of the slave. Unlike blackface minstrelsy which capitalized on the humorous antics of the Jim Crow and Ol’ Dan Tucker stereotype, this more authentic black music possessed an expressiveness that made it seem of a higher art. As the article on “Contraband Singing” explained, “There was no confusion, no uproar, no discord—all was as tender and harmonious as the symphony of an organ” (“Contraband Singing” 182). It thus represented an appropriate model for those determined to unearth an American national music. The first collection to systematically record this music was the Slave Songs of the United States, edited by William Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison (see Figure 5.6). Published in 1867, Slave Songs of the United States sought to preserve for future generations “these relics of a state of society which has passed away” (iii).

177 Such music also gave voice to an underrepresented race. As Higginson wrote of a New Years festivity celebrating the Emancipation Proclamation, “there suddenly arose, close beside the platform, a strong male voice (but rather cracked and elderly), into which two women’s voices instantly blended, singing, as if by an impulse that could no more be repressed than the morning note of the song-sparro” (40). Listening to the newly freed race sing “My Country, Tis of Thee,” Higginson was overwhelmed by the power of their music: “I never saw anything so electric; it made all other words cheap; it seemed the choked voice of a race at last unloosed…the life of the whole day was in those unknown people’s song” (41). Harriet Ware also records this event, noting that after the song Higginson claimed that “he could give no answer so appropriate and touching as had just been made. In all the singing he had heard from them, that song he had never heard before—they never could have truly sung ‘my country’ till that day” (130).
Fig. 5.5 (right): The contraband camps inspired minstrel composers to write their own “contraband songs,” like “Ole Shady, The Song of the Contraband” whose sheet music cover is depicted here. The cover provides a striking contrast to the popular racialized caricatures of the Jim Crow songs of the 1840s. Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1861. Baylor University, Frances G. Spencer Collection of American Sheet Music.

Fig. 5.6 (below): An example of one of the “slave songs” from *Slave Songs of the United States*. In their attempt to transcribe the music of this “half barbarous people” in modern notation, Allen, Ware, and McKim reduced the music to mere melody and tried to preserve elements of the slave’s improvisation in the “variation” bar above the second line.
First conceived of while visiting the contrabands at Port Royal, *Slave Songs of the United States* reflected one way in which the Civil War renewed interest in an authentic plantation sound. As the introduction to the collection asserts, “The public had well-nigh forgotten these genuine slave songs, and with them the creative power from which they sprung, when a fresh interest was excited through the education mission to the Port Royal islands, in 1861” (i). Unlike the “spurious imitations manufactured to suit the somewhat sentimental taste of our community,” *Slave Songs of the United States* collected authentic examples of the “musical genius of the race” (i); the “greater part of the music here presented has been taken down by the editors from the lips of colored people themselves” (iii). Concerned with the accuracy of their translation, the editors included “Directions for Singing” that outlined the average *tempo* of the music—“The spirit of the music will determine the *tempo* within these limits [of 100-120]” (xliv)—as well as the potential lyrical variations heard in many performances: “the words of the verse are changed at the pleasure of the leader, or fugleman, who sings either well-known words, or, if he is gifted that way, invents verses as the song goes on” (xliii). Noting that the “difficulty experienced in attaining absolute correctness is greater than might be suppose by those who have never tried the experiment” (iv), Allen, Ware, and Garrison blamed the performer’s tendency toward improvisation as the fundamental barrier: “The voices of the colored people have a peculiar quality that nothing can imitate; and the intonations and delicate variations of even one singer cannot be reproduced on paper” (iv-v).

*Slave Songs of the United States* preserved this “rich vein of music that existed in this half-barbarous people” (ii) if only to reveal those aspects that proved more “civilized in its

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178 The editors of *Slave Songs of the United States* were especially concerned with proving the authenticity of their recorded music. When the music seemed to belong to a non-African American tradition, they justified their inclusion with an explanatory note. See, for instance, the explanatory note included for “On To Glory”: “We should be tempted, from the character of this tune, to doubt its genuineness as a pure negro song. We are informed, however, that it was sung twenty-five years ago in negro camp-meetings, and not in those of the whites” (66).
character—partly composed under the influence of association with the whites, partly actually imitated from their music” (vi). Indeed it was this mixture of “native Africa” with the refining influences of “the more cultivated race” that gave slave songs their unique quality (viii). As the editors state in full,

The greater number of the songs which have come into our possession seem to be the natural and original production of a race of remarkable musical capacity and very teachable, which has been long enough associated with the more cultivated race to have become imbued with the mode and spirit of European music—often, nevertheless, retaining a distinct tinge of their native Africa. (viii)  

Slaves Songs of the United States thus highlighted what its editors found to be such music’s greatest contribution to the United States. The native African elements—the “thread of melody…that cannot be precisely represented by the gamut” (v)—possessed an inimitable originality that made the music both desirable and uniquely American when combined with the more ordered and recordable sounds of (European) music modes, especially Christian hymnology. The music of African American slaves, in other words, retained its distinctive nature even under the potentially overpowering influence of other musical models. It was, as one review of the collection noted, “an original and peculiar music” (“Slave Songs of the United States”).

Such evidence of the musical “genius” of African Americans promised to deliver a rich American music tradition in the future, that neither “aped the foreign aristocracy” nor fully gave way to the “high schools of musical composition.” For some, this tradition would only

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179 Throughout the collection, the editors include commentary in an attempt to explain the odd performance practices of the slave as well as to note the influence of European/Christian hymnology on the music. For “Sabbath Has No End” they write the following: “This chorus was written down as exactly as possible from the lips of the singer, and illustrates the odd transformations which words undergo in their mouths. It is a verse of a familiar hymn: ‘fore-half’ is ‘forehead’; ‘harpess’ is harp” (69)
materialize when the “barbaric” elements of African American music—the “pure negro” sounds found in the secular music of “Becky Lawton” and “Round the corn, Sally”—were intermixed more fully with its “civilized” counterpart (viii). As the article on “The Songs of the Blacks” published for Dwight’s Journal of Music argued, all that was needed was a system of musical amalgamation: “If that love of music which is born in them, could be inbred in us, it would do much to lighten the anxiety and care which brood on every face and weigh on every heart” (51). It was this very notion of musical “inbreeding” that Lydia Maria Child would turn to in the Romance of the Republic to manage the prejudices that remained in the aftermath of the Civil War.

III. Addressing the “Discords of Society”: Lydia Maria Child’s A Romance of the Republic

A self-proclaimed music enthusiast, Child first developed a love for music while living in New York in the 1840s. In an letter to her friend Anna Loring sent in 1846, Child proclaimed herself so much “in the musical disposition” that her friend “would laugh to see how the sheer force of untutored enthusiasm, of unaffected feeling, has carried me on in this matter” (CC 655-2). Having bought a piano for her home, Child attracted musicians like Henry Christian Timm to her house who asked “as a favor” that Child “allow him to come and play to me, on my piano!” (CC 655-2). Declared the “Queen of Song” by American composer Anthony Phillip Heinrich, Child “seiz[ed] every opportunity of hearing good music” (CC 655-2) for, she claimed, “music possesses me, like a spirit. Nothing else interests me. I cannot make anything else interest me, any way I can fix it” (CC 655-3). Immersing herself in musical texts like Burney’s General History of Music and Fétis’ Music Explained to the World, Child sought to understand “why my whole soul melts and flows onward with the stream of sound” (CC 613-3). In a letter to Augusta King, Child writes, “You would smile to see my table piled up with History of Music, Music Explained, Musical Dictionary, &c.” (CC 584-3). Presumably the first two refer to popular works by Burney.
music’s power, however, eluded her. As she wrote to Augusta King in 1844, “all these books, though they tell me somethings, do not tell me half as much as music itself” (CC 584-3).

The effect of music’s power, however, was clear, especially in the virtuosic music of Ole Bull. Having developed a friendship with John Sullivan Dwight in the early 1840s, she wrote to Dwight of Ole Bull’s performances in 1844: “I will not thus ask you of your opinion of Ole Bul; but I shall be grieved if you do not deeply feel the beauty and power of his music” for it had “awakened in me a new sense—it has so stirred the depths of my soul, and kindled my whole being, that my heart bounds forth to meet one that sympathizes with me” (Selected Letters [SL] 214). Describing Ole Bull’s music as the “strongest enthusiasm” of her life, Child asserted, “nothing but genius, and transcendant genius, too, could take such possession of my soul” (SL 214). Child’s passion for Ole Bull would encourage her to correspond with him and, complimented by her uncritical praise of his music, the violinist would visit Child throughout his time in the United States, calling on her “in her little parlor at the Hoppers’, where he played his violin for her private enjoyment and composed music on her piano” (Karcher 315).

It was Ole Bull’s “wild and wayward” melodies that most attracted Child’s attention. The musician’s “departures from established rules” were the very thing that marked him as true genius (SL 214). As she wrote in a review of Ole Bull published in her Letters from New-York and Féris. Despite her determination to learn more about the musical art, Child considered herself to be an amateur. “I cannot judge of music as a science, or of difficulties in execution,” she wrote to Anthony Philip Heinrich, because music was for her not a science but a feeling: “The expression of music comes to me I know not how—by a sort of passionate intuition. I feel whether tones are clear and distinct, and whether they are round or angular” (CC 670-2-3).

181 Child corresponded with Dwight on a seemingly regular basis in the 1840s, even though he did not always respond to her letters. She also attended his lectures on music in 1864, writing to Anna Loring, “I have been enchanted with John Dwight’s lectures. I have not been so taken off my feet with delight, since the first evening I heard Ole’s violin, and when I say that, you know that imagination can no farther go” (CC 655-3).

182 Child cherished a “broken string of his violin” and claimed to “wear it as a relic, with a half superstitious feeling that some mysterious magic of melody lay hidden therein” (2nd Series: 24). On Ole Bull’s birthday, she would decorate a statue of him with garlands, even daring to kiss his marble cheek on one occasion. (315). As she wrote to Anna Loring, “I am not altogether clear in my own mind whether I am not a little insane on the subject of music” (CC 655-3).
series, “when I heard this man, I at once recognized a power that transcends science” (2nd Series: 23). “Flexile, graceful, and free,” Ole Bull’s improvisatory music epitomized what Child viewed as the musical aesthetic’s primary attribute. As she wrote in her December 28th, 1844 review of Ole Bull, “I felt that my soul was the first time, baptized in music; that my spiritual relations were somehow changed by it, and that I should henceforth be otherwise than I had been” (2nd Series: 23). Like Dwight, Child too believed in music’s intimate connection with the “social destiny of Man.” Although she noted in a later April 15, 1844 letter that one “cannot easily define the relation between political and social changes, and the character of music,” anyone who “observes them well,” she continued, “will see that they always bear the most expressive relation to each other” (2nd Series: 116). Music offered, in Child’s mind, a universal language that overcame the differences found in those of different “dialects” and “nations.” As the “heart of the universe,” music was the “highest symbol of the infinite and holy” (2nd Series: 25). As such, it was “the voice of Love” (2nd Series: 25).

Music thus overcame the “opinions and doctrines of mankind”: “the affections are everywhere the same; and music, being their voice, is a universal medium between human hearts, exciting the same emotions in the Italian and the Swede” (2nd Series: 115). Of all music, Ole Bull’s proved most expressive of this transcendent ideal: “While I listened, music was to my soul what the atmosphere is to my body…I heard it moan plaintively over the discords of society, and the dimmed beauty of humanity. It filled me with inexpressible longing to see man at once with Nature and God” (2nd Series: 25). Refreshed and rededicated to bettering humanity by her own listening experience, Child proclaimed that “it seemed to me that such music should bring all the world into the harmonious beauty of divine order’ (2nd Series: 23). The voice of sympathy, music like Ole Bull’s was the conduit through which strangers met and grew alike: as
she wrote in another review of Ole Bull, published on October 14, 1844, “Influences that pass into the soul from the outer world, inevitably transmit themselves through music, even more than through the other arts; and thus transmitted, they reproduce their images in the soul that hears” (2nd Series: 230).

Yet others also shared this musical power. Noting in the October 14th letter that the “spiritual expression of music is heard in very different degrees by different people, and by some not at all,” Child points her audience to the music of the “poor African” whose “simple melodies, so full of wild animal gaiety, so easily subsiding into mournful modulations” were a reflection of his sorrowful life (2nd Series: 233). Like Dwight, Child too saw that the United States was on the cusp of a musical movement. Yet this movement belonged not to the music of Europeans or even white Americans but to the African race. Noting that the “gift of song is universal with Africans,” she argued in a December 1841 letter that this “fact is a prophetic one”:

Sculpture blossomed into is fullest perfection in a Physical Age, on which dawned the intellectual; Painting blossomed in an Intellectual Age, warmed by the rising sun of moral sentiment; and now Music goes forward to its culmination in the coming Spiritual Age. Now is the time that Ethiopia begins “to stretch forth her hands.” Her so, so long silenced, will yet utter itself in music’s highest harmony. (1st Series: 68).

Child would return to this theme in an 1867 exchange with the editor of the Standard. “In music,” Child explained, African genius “has as yet only been manifested in Ethiopian Songs, breathing the deep sadness or the reckless merriment of human souls in bondage” (“A Chat”). Yet soon “it will find grander utterance”: “Some future composer will give us the Prayer of a black Moses in tones as inspired as those of Rossini. Operas will embody the romantic adventures of beautiful fugitive slaves; and the prima donna will not need to represent an
Octoroon, for men will come to admire the dark, glowing beauty of a tropical flora, as much as the violets and lilies of the North” (“A Chat”).

Child’s *Romance of the Republic* fictionalized this coming genius, imagining an American octoroon’s triumphant operatic performance on an Italian stage. Music was indeed much on Child’s mind as she wrote the novel. In the novel’s early stages, Child contacted Dwight and requested that he send the libretto for Bellini’s *Norma*. “I want to borrow, for a week, a libretto of Norma, Italian with an English translation,” she wrote. In addition, she asked that he “mark with a pencil those portions where are favorite gems with the public.” These editorial marks would help her remember elements of the opera for it had been “so long since I heard it, or any other music, that I have nearly forgotten about it.” The reason for her request was simple: “I want to make a little incidental use of it in a story” (CC 1741).183 This “incidental use” of the opera became the *Romance of the Republic’s* narrative framework.

Staging the conflict between two “races”—one pagan and one civilized—*Norma* provided a fitting framework for Child’s own story of a forbidden love. Following their father’s unexpected death, Rosa and Flora Royal discover that their mother was a slave and—“by the laws of Louisiana”—are slaves themselves (54). Threatened with the auction block, Rosa and Flora escape under the protection of Gerald Fitzgerald, who marries Rosa in a ceremony she believes legally attaches her to her husband. Fitzgerald’s eventual infidelity—he marries and brings home a Northern bride—reveals the dangers of such “temporary connexions” and allows Child, as Dana Nelson argues, “to critique the racial and gender privileges that all white men enjoy in the United States under slavery” (“Introduction” x). Fitzgerald’s treachery drives Rosa

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183 Child would follow up this letter with another nearly six months later, asking Dwight whether it was “very uncommon for a singer to rise to G in the altissimo scale with care?” (CC 1767-1). In 1866, she also would ask Sarah Shaw to answer a series of questions about the opera house in Rome, from its appearance (“What is the name of the principal opera house? What street is it in? Is it lighted by a chandelier in the centre?”) to its audience—“What airs were encored? Were the audience enthusiastic?” (SL 466).
to switch her husband’s two children, replacing her own mixed-race son with his identical half-brother. It is this decision that leads to the novel’s primary tragedy: unaware of his true heritage, Rosa’s son, Gerald, helps slave catchers capture his half-brother, falls in love with his sister, and eventually dies in the Civil War; his half-brother fares slightly better—sold into slavery as a baby, he eventually marries a mulatto named Henriet and, with the help of the Rosa’s husband, Mr. King, finds employment in Marseilles where he will learn to become “industrious, temperate, and economical” (436). The novel, however, ends happily enough for its primary heroines, Rosa and Flora. Adopted by Mr. Royal’s first love, Mrs. Delano, Flora eventually marries her long-time friend Florimond Blumenthal. Rosa, escaping from Fitzgerald’s plantation, becomes a famous songstress under the name of Señorita Campaneo and eventually marries the Northern Alfred King.

The plot of Child’s novel thus parallels Bellini’s opera in many ways. Like the Romance of the Republic, Norma too warns of the dangers of illicit love. The opera opens on the eve of war between the pagan druids and the Roman people. Motivated by her secret marriage with the Roman Pollione, Norma—the High Priestess—warns that the time is not yet ripe for rebellion. Yet discovering Pollione’s infidelity—he courts Norma’s young charge, Adalgisa—Norma seeks revenge, first through a threat to murder her and Pollione’s children and then through the declaration of war against the Roman people. Unlike A Romance in the Republic, however, the opera ends tragically: both Norma and Pollione are executed. Norma’s final request is that her father agrees to extend protection over her illegitimate and orphaned children.

Child’s use of Norma’s plotline serves two primary purposes in the novel. The first allows Child to establish Rosa’s unmatched musical talent when she débuts as the title character in an Italian performance of Norma. Like Lind who earned her celebrity through her
performance of *Norma*’s “Casta Diva,” Rosa achieves both fame and fortune through her
performance of the same aria: “She was very pale, and her first notes were a little tremulous. But
her voice soon became clear and strong; and when she fixed her eyes on the moon, and sang
‘Casta Diva,’ the fullness and richness of the tones took everybody by surprise” (230). With this
one performance, Rosa Royal offers proof of an octoroon’s ability to rival even the greatest
songstress Americans would recognize.

Yet Child’s reliance on *Norma* as the shaping frame for her novel also allows her an
opportunity to critique the immorality of the southern slave system. This critique becomes clear
as the opera and novel storylines collide on stage. During a duet with Adalgisa where Norma
discovers Pollione’s treachery, Rosa “chanced to raise her eyes to a box near the stage” and
catches a glimpse of her unfaithful husband and his wife “bending eagerly toward her” (230).
Overcome with emotion—“She shuddered, and for an instant her voice failed her”—Rosa
appears to her unknowing audience to be acting: “Her look, her attitude, her silence, her tremor,
all seemed inimitable acting” (231). From there, the opera and the story of Rosa’s life become
one as Rosa/Norma sings of her hatred for Fitzgerald/Pollione,

Again she glanced at Fitzgerald, and there was terrible power in the ones which she
uttered, in Italian, “Tremble, perfidious one! Thou knowest the cause is ample.”

Her eyes rested for a moment on Mrs. Fitzgerald, and with a wonderful depth of
pitying sadness, she sang, “O, how his art deceived thee!”

The wish she had formed was realized. She was enabled to give voice to her own
emotions, forgetful of the audience for the time being. And even in subsequent scenes,
when the recollection of being a performer returned upon her, her inward excitation
seemed to float onward, like a great wave.
Once again her own feelings took her up, like a tornado, and made her seem a wonderful actress. In the scene where Norma is tempted to kill her children, she fixed her indignant gaze full upon Fitzgerald, and there was an indescribable expression of stern resolution in her voice, and of pride in the carriage of her queenly head, while she sang:

“Disgrace worse than death awaits them. Slavery? No! never!” (231)

Bellini’s opera ultimately offers an example of how easily the “romantic adventures of beautiful fugitive slaves” could translate to the stage. Yet this translation, a later conversation between Rosa and her future husband Mr. King reveals, should not be read as a compliment to the United States’ political and social system. An opera, Rosa complains, contains “something I cannot exactly define, that troubles me”—“If I could perform only in pure and noble characters, I think it would inspire me; for then I should represent what I at least wish to me; but it affects me like a discord to imagine myself in positions which in reality I should scorn and detest” (249). Mr. King agrees, “It seems to me the libretti of operas are generally singularly ill conceived, both morally and artistically. Music is in itself so pure and heavenly, that it seems a desecration to make it the expression of vile incidents and vapid words” (249). It was this very desecration of the pure and heavenly that made it a fitting frame for the United States’ own sordid history.1

Conceived of in the midst of the Civil War yet not published until its conclusion, Romance of the Republic certainly extends Child’s anti-slavery sentiments to its pages. After the publication of Romance of the Republic in 1867, Child wrote to Francis George Shaw of her objective for composing the book. “Having fought against slavery till I saw it go down in the Red Sea, I wanted to do something to undermine prejudice; and there is such a universal passion

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1 In the words of William Percival, Mrs. Delano’s abolitionist advisor, “I have long been aware that the most romantic stories of the country have grown out of the institution of slavery; but this [Flora’s story] seems stranger than fiction. With all my knowledge of the subject, I find it hard to realize that such a young lady as that has been in danger of being sold on the auction-block in this republic” (157).
for novels, that more can be done in that way, than by the ablest arguments, and the most serious
exhortations” (CC 1789-1). Child would reiterate these sentiments nearly a year later in a letter
to Robert Purvis that justified her choice of the novel form, “In these days of novel-reading, I
thought a Romance would take more hold of the public mind, than the most elaborate arguments;
and having fought against Slavery till the monster is legally dead, I was desirous to do what I
could to undermine Prejudice” (CC 1847-1).

Child had long been an advocate for the African American race and openly
promoted amalgamation as a solution to the slavery problem. While American prejudice forbade the
legal intermixing of the two races, Child argued in An Appeal in Favor of That Class of
Americans Called Africans such prejudice failed to prevent more “temporary connexions”
(“Prejudices Against” 162). A petition to the Legislature of Massachusetts signed by Child and
others in 1839 similarly stated that the “the law barring intermarriages between people of
different complexions has no tendency whatever to restrain vice” (SL 110). It was these
“connexions”—between a white (slave owning) man and (interracial) slave woman—that
inspired Child’s fiction, from her short fiction like “The Quadroons” to her longer novel, A
Romance of the Republic.

Child’s interest in abolition formally began with her introduction to William Lloyd
Garrison in 1830. In an editorial column of Genius of Universal Emancipation, Garrison had
labeled Child “the first woman in the republic” for her work in David Lee Child’s Massachusetts
Journal (Karcher 172). Provided with the opportunity to meet Child in June of 1830, Garrison

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185 For biographies of Child, see Carolyn Karcher and Deborah Pickman Clifford. For more on Child’s views on assimilation in her early work, see Susanne Opeferman, Julie Husband, and Michael Pierson. For more on Child’s vision of sympathy, see Travis Foster and Heather Leland Roberts on Letters from New-York and Bruce Mills on Child’s perception of female receptivity. For further readings on A Romance of the Republic, see Debra Rosenthal, Margaret Kellow, and Mark Patterson.

186 An “interference with domestic institutions,” this law instead sought “to control by legislative action a connexion which, above all others, ought to be left to private conscience and individual choice” (SL 110).

187 Child frequently turned to the figure of the quadroon in her short fiction. “The Black Saxons,”
attempted to convince her to join the antislavery movement. His argument proved persuasive. In a letter describing this initial meeting Child writes, “He got hold of the strings of my conscience, and pulled me into Reforms” (qtd. in Karcher 175). By 1833, Child was thoroughly dedicated to the cause. That year she published *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* and, in the process, ruined her literary reputation. As Carolyn Karcher explains in her biography of the author, “Although the *Appeal* destroyed Child’s literary popularity and evicted her from Boston’s salons, it propelled her to the forefront of the abolitionist movement, elevating her to a position of unparalleled political influence for a woman” (192). Less than a year later Child joined the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society and quickly begin work on *The Evils of Slavery, and the Cure of Slavery*, published in January of 1836.

Child continued her advocacy for the rights of African Americans throughout the rest of her literary career, first as editor to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (from 1841-1843) and then later as author of *The Freedmen’s Book* (1865). Throughout her activism, Child emphasized the importance of using moral persuasion as a means of improving the conditions of the race. For Child, the “legitimate work of anti-slavery” was not to target the legislation that supported slavery but rather to extend a “moral influence” that worked on “public opinion” instead ("Talk About Political Party" 223, 226). Growing more uncomfortable with the United States’ willingness to ignore the rights of the African American race, however, Child eventually came to accept the need for more direct action; the once “dreaded” Civil War appeared to be the only option for emancipation, especially in light of the “insults and outrages” committed by the Southern people against the North (SL 287). As Child wrote to Henrietta Sargent in February of 1861, “If the Republicans do not yield up all they have gained, I suppose the alternative is civil war” for “if we go on in the shameful path we have so long travelled, our free institutions must
be everywhere and entirely crushed” (*SL* 374). Believing that the Civil War would “shorten the existence of slavery,” as she wrote to John Greenleaf Whittier in 1861, Child advised, “we ought to be willing to suffer anything to bring about *that* result” (*SL* 379).

Throughout the war, Child continued to work for emancipation; she also encouraged the recruitment of black troops and participated in assistance programs for refugees (Karcher 444). Yet Child was troubled by her suspicion that most Unionists did not support the war for the right reasons, namely the abolition of slavery. In 1862, Child wrote to William P. Cutler of the “horror many people have of future social equality, and intermarriage of the races,” noting that these prejudices would take time to uproot—the change must be “so gradual that it will be unperceived, and consequently it will cause no shock” (*SL* 414). Child herself could not embrace the war unless this proved to be its goal (Karcher 446). Still believing that “moral influence” rather than legislative pressure would change public opinion, Child wrote to John Greenleaf Whittier in September of 1861 of the positive effect music could make on Union soldiers:

“Nothing on earth has such effect on the popular heart as Songs, which the soldiers would take up with enthusiasm, and which it would thereby become the fashion to whistle and sing at the street-corners.” Such music would aid the war effort, largely by directing the soldiers’ reasons for fighting to more proper channels. “If the soldiers only *had* a Song,” she continued,

> to some spirit-stirring tune, proclaiming what they went to fight for, or *thought* they went to fight for, --for home, country, and liberty; and indignantly announcing that they did *not* go to hunt slaves, to send back to their tyrants poor lacerated workmen, who for years had been toiling for the rich without wages; if they *had* such a song, to a tune that excited them, how rapidly it would educate them! (*SL* 394)
This “spirit-stirring tune” would raise morale while correcting many of the prejudices that made Northerners unwilling to fight only for the slave.

This change in sentiment proved much more gradual than Child anticipated. Child wrote to James Thomas Fields in 1866, “I feel very anxious and despondent about the prospects of my poor protégées, the freedmen. There was such a capital chance to place the Republic on a safe and honorable foundation, and we have lost it, by the narrow prejudices and blind self-will of that ‘poor white’!” (CC 1739-3). Indeed the war did little to address the prejudices many Americans felt toward African Americans. Although an article in The Christian Recorder found much to be “hopeful” for in 1866—due to the “change in the animus of the legislation of the nation, of political and religious sentiment”—this optimism was short lived (“Signs of the Times”). “Of what use is victory over a pro-slavery rebellion,” an 1868 article asked, “to those who so abuse their advantages? What is gained if the result of our costly war is but to encourage and confirm the arrogance of those who planned it, and to re-establish those principles of caste which in our republic are so paradoxical as to be the sure germs of new political convulsions in the future?” (“Issues Before the People”). Responding to what she described as an “irrational” prejudice toward African Americans (SL 483), Child turned to novel writing as a means of continuing the struggle for the freedman’s rights.

For Child, racial assimilation offered an opportunity for Americans to overcome their prejudices toward different races and she turns to this theme in A Romance of the Republic. Transplanted to the North, Rosa and Flora each pass as white and integrate into Boston society. While neither family is ashamed of their mixed ancestry, both decide to continue in the Royal tradition, hiding from their children their interracial heritage “till time and experience had matured their characters and views of life” (287). Most scholarship on the novel emphasizes
Child’s vision of an assimilated nation. In Child’s early work, as Robert Fanzuzzi argues, “the political and social situation of the mixed-race person” became “the virtual standard of international justice” (77); the quadroon thus represented Child’s vision for a “brand new, transnational, trans-historical Americanist tradition” (Fanzuzzi 75). It is unsurprising, then, that Child would return to interracial marriage in her post-Civil War novel. As Child’s biographer Carolyn Karcher notes, “For a country riven by racial conflict since its very origins and still undergoing the aftershocks of bitter civil warfare, interracial marriage would seem to be a perfect symbol for reconciliation” (511).

Yet as scholars like Karsten Peip, Alice Rutkowski, and Julie Nerad point out, Child’s depiction of reconciliation poses its own problems. In her reading of the novel, Peip rightly argues that *A Romance of the Republic* fails to “seriously challeng[e] the ideological assumptions that continued to marginalize recently freed African Americans” (169). The options for freed slaves in *A Romance of the Republic* certainly remain slim. While accepted into the King-Blumenthal households, black figures like Henriet and Tulee remain, as Rutkowski argues, “subordinates to whites, who choose relations with blacks and thus rescue them” (88). As Rutkowski further notes, of the “two methods for blacks to escape slavery” depicted in the novel, both—“marriage and adoption”—ultimately hide the individual’s interracial heritage from the

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originally printed in *Liberty Bell* (1841) and then reprinted in *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories* (1846), describes the danger of keeping interracial individuals in slavery—they become “one of that numerous class, which southern vice is thoughtlessly raising up, to be its future scourge and terror” (189). “The Quadroons” appears to be an early version of *A Romance of the Republic*, outlining the infidelity of Edward: married first to the quadroon Rosalie, he then remarries—much like Fitzgerald of Child’s later novel—for money. Rosalie and Edward’s child ultimately dies a maniac, having been sold into slavery and watched her lover shot to death by her master.

188 Alice Rutkowski similarly argues that Child “offers an individual and emotional” solution to slavery, rather than “a national, legislative” one: “Black characters, adopted and married, literally become part of American families” (87).

189 In the novel, Henriet’s “imitative” nature helps her to adopt “the language and manners of those around her” (433); however, she cannot hide her “not handsome” darker features (433). Neither is she offered the same advantages provided a white woman of wealth; taught “to read and write” and to play the piano, Henriet is educated only “in a degree somewhat suitable to her husband’s prospects” (414).
outside world (87). So fully do Rosa and Flora live like white Americans that readers are left to “question…the extent to which Rosa and Flora are black or white” (Nerad 821).

The two Royal sisters certainly seem “raced white,” as Julie Nerad suggests (821). Provided with all the comforts and advantages of upper-class southern women, brought up “with the greatest indulgence” by their father, Rosa and Flora are “elegant, accomplished young ladies” undeserving, the novel seems to suggest, of a slave’s fate—unlike Tulee, whose darker skin can not mask her racial identity (69). In the words of Madame Guirlande, “We are all white, and if we can get a few miles from here, we shall have no further trouble. But if we had a negro with us, it would lead to questions, perhaps” (55). However, while Rosa and Flora’s skin color identifies them as white to those unaware of their mother’s bloodline, not all in the novel share this perception. When questioned on her racial identity, Flora adamantly asserts, “I am a colored girl” (101).

Indeed it is Flora who most typifies the admixture of white and black racial characteristics. A master of imitation, Flora possesses an artlessness that inspired her performances with their own unusual charm. When she danced, “Every attitude seemed spontaneous in its prettiness, as if the music had made it without her choice” (8). When she sang, she imitated “all sorts of birds or musical instruments” (85). Earning her declaration of blackness, she proved equally capable of playing the role of “Jim Crow”: “and often, when Gerald invited her to ‘trip it on the light, fantastic toe,’ she would entertain him with one of the negroes’ clumsy, shuffling dances” (85). 190 The ease in which Flora shifts from black to white

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190 Flora ultimately evokes what later writers defined as the African American’s primary attribute. As Zora Neale Hurston declared in her “Characteristics of Negro Expression,” “The Negro, the world over, is famous as a mimic” (28). Yet rather than damage African Americans’ potential for originality, this imitative quality represented their unique genius. “It has been said so often that the Negro is lacking in originality that it has almost become gospel. Outward signs seem to bear this out. But if one looks closely its falsity is immediately evident.” Hurston further argues: “What we really mean by originality is the modification of ideas…So if we look at it squarely, the Negro is a very original being. While he lives and moves in the midst of a white civilization, everything that he touches is re-
suggests her own position as a new race. The apparent contradiction between the balanced form of classical music and the wild, unregulated structure of negro song here dissipates.

Combining the emotional texture and feeling of the African American race with the order structured of European classical forms, Rosa—described by her father as a “musical ventriloquist” for her ability to “play tricks…with her voice” (10)—and the “roguish” (7) Flora give birth to a new musical form—one that lends authenticity to the artificiality of the opera and removes the negative caricatures of blackface minstrelsy. In the musical performances of the two sisters, readers discover a musical form (as sound and practice) where the emotive and wild improvisations of the slave find structure in the “civilizing” influence of Euro-American classical form. As Flora teasingly states to Mrs. Delano, “you know I fancied myself a great musical composer in those days,—a sort of feminine Mozart; but the *qui vive* was always the key I composed in” (440).

Child’s integration of Rosa and Flora into normative white households thus is neither an admission of their inherent whiteness or their intrinsic blackness; rather *A Romance of the Republic* is a commentary on their superiority to either race. Rather than destroy the Royal line, the interracial nature of Rosa, Flora, and their children merely serve to strengthen their charms. As Flora remarks to her husband, “They are a good-looking set, between you and I…though they are oddly mixed up” (432). Flora and Rosa’s hybridity certainly increases their value to a white public—especially a Southern plantation public—by lending them the refining influences of a Caucasian bloodline. Yet this hybridity, Child’s novel suggests, also offers to white Americans interpreted for his own use” (28). Embodying Gates’ definition of “signifyin(g),” black mimicry or imitation was an act of “repetition and revision” (52) that both referenced past stereotypes and conventions while reworking and/or recreating them as well. Such imitation moreover implicated the viewer/listener within the performative act. As Hurston explains, referencing the dancing of African Americans, “It is compelling insinuation. That is the very reason the spectator is held so rapt. He is participating in the performance himself—carrying out the suggestions of the performer” (26). This understanding of the black imitative body also suggestively reflects an early American discourse on the imitative in music, which creates—as I argued in chapter one—a sympathetic connection between musician/music and listener in its encouragement of the listener’s own daydream-like fantasy.
an artistic refinement missing in the North’s more “taciturn race.” The interracial “inbreeding” *A Romance of the Republic* envisions ultimately produces a new “musical race.”

And it is with this new race that the prejudices of a white America will be overcome. While the slave dealer, Mr. Bruteman, insists that the business of selling slaves is not a matter of sentiment but of business—“We are not here to talk sentiment, my lad…We are hear to transact business” (69)—it is through musical expression that Rosa and Flora win over Alfred King, whose family was noted for its prejudice against those of the African race: “My good mother shares the prejudice. How could I introduce them to her?” (14). Yet it is Rosa’s music that first impresses King with feelings of love:

> With a gentle touch, she drew from the keys a plaintive prelude, which soon modulated itself into ‘The Light of other Days.’ She played and sang it with so much feeling, that it seemed the voice of memory floating with softened sadness over the far-off waters of the past. The tune was familiar to Alfred, but it had never sung itself to his heart, as now.

(10)

As the “universal medium between human hearts,” Rosa’s music suggestively bypasses the prejudice that mars the relationship between the races.

*A Romance of the Republic* ultimately ends with a symbolic vision of a united America in its choice of song. Celebrating the end of the war with a tableau that features the children of Rosa and Flora, the family gathers for a final musical performance as the novel ends. First a “colored band” comprised of Tulee, Tom, Chloe, and their children sing with Mr. Bright a parody of “Hail to the Chief.” A piece of music traditionally reserved for white Americans, the lyrics are altered to express the emotions and feelings of the now freed slave—“Blow ye the trumpet abroad o’er the sea, / Columbia has triumphed, the negro is free!” (441). The characters
then transition into “Whittier’s immortal ‘Boat Song’” (441). Inspired by the contraband at Port Royal, this music of the slave—written in slave dialect—finds translation in the lines of a white poet’s hand. Linking black to white, the novel’s final music literally and symbolically joins the nation into one as “all the family, of all ages and colors” hold hands in a rousing rendition of “The Star-spangled Banner” (441). *A Romance of the Republic* thus ends with its own “Hymn of Thanksgiving” (*CC* 1767-1), symbolized in the singing of Mendelssohn’s “Song of Praise” (442) whose text celebrates the end of darkness: “The night is far gone, / Day is at hand. / Let us cast of the works of darkness / And put on the armor of light...”¹⁹¹ In this final musical utterance, Child’s novel expresses its hope for a future trans-racial America, where black and white find “Liberty and Order” in the unembodied and sympathetic power of sound.

¹⁹¹ Child wrote to Dwight in March of 1867, “If you wanted to represent a family, with several members returned from the war, uniting, *servants* and all, in a good solid, worthy Hymn of Thanksgiving, grand, yet not beyond popular appreciation,—what hymn would you choose?” (1767-1). Judging by the novel’s end, Dwight presumably suggested Mendelssohn as an appropriate hymn.
Coda: The Great National Peace Jubilee

“Music becomes noise the more so when it unfolds upon, invokes, negotiates, and thus renders transparent social tensions.”

-Jon Cruz, *Culture on the Margins*

The Great National Peace Jubilee opened in Boston on June 15th, 1869 and lasted five days. Organized by Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore, an Irish immigrant and founder of the Boston Brigade Band, the Peace Jubilee was a “mammoth festival” featuring orchestras, bands, and choral organizations from all parts of the United States (“Great National Peace Jubilee”). In addition to an anvil chorus comprised of one hundred local firemen (see Figure C.1), the multi-day event featured a large drum especially made for the festival from “the hides of two mammoth oxen” and over 1300 other instruments, including three hundred pieces from sixteen brass bands and one thousand string and wind instruments contained in two orchestras, a smaller “select” orchestra for the performance of symphony music and a larger “grand” orchestra for the performance of oratorios and popular music (“The Peace Jubilee”). Over ten thousand singers were assembled into one choir and, on the last day of the Jubilee, eight thousand school children gathered to perform the Russian National Hymn (Broyles 233; Gilmore 377).

For some, the Peace Jubilee was a testament to the advancement of music in the United States. The programs planned throughout the five days included patriotic songs like the “Star Spangled Banner,” “My Country, ‘tis of Thee,” and “Hail Columbia” as well as classical music that ranged from the overture to Rossini’s *William Tell* and selections from Handel’s *Messiah* to the chorus “He, watching over Israel” from Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* and Beethoven’s Fifth.

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192 The National Peace Jubilee was a “monster concert,” or “multi-day events that involved orchestras with players numbering in the hundreds, and choruses that sometimes reached several thousand” (Broyles 232). An established event in Europe, the monster concert first appeared in the United States in the mid-1850s but gained popularity after the Civil War (Broyles 232). Gilmore organized his first monster concert in 1864 in New Orleans, “to celebrate the inauguration of Michael Hahn as Governor” (Broyles 233). For more on the National Peace Jubilee concert, see Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore’s *History of the National Peace Jubilee and Great Musical Festival*, Richard Crawford’s *America’s Musical Life: A History* (pages 289-292) and Michael Broyles’ “Art Music from 1860 to 1920” (pages 232-235).
Symphony (Gilmore 432-435). Drawing immense crowds into a specially built coliseum that held fifty thousand people, the music festival attracted the attention of a general public who gathered to witness this spectacle and participate in the musical celebration. While the festival outraged some—the stodgy Handel and Haydn Society refused to participate—others argued that the Peace Jubilee was evidence of music’s full integration into the lives of everyday Americans. No longer abused by the untutored ear of the average American, music and musical culture more generally was encouraged and performed by individuals fully versed in the art. As an article on the Jubilee asserted of the festival’s singers, “These people were not a promiscuous assemblage of indifferent vocalists; every individual was a trained and experienced singer” (“The National Peace Jubilee” Col. A). Even John Sullivan Dwight, who largely disapproved of the event, wrote that the festival proved that music, once a “superfluous refinement of an over-delicate and fashionable few,” was now “the birthright of a free American” (qtd. in Crawford, America’s Musical Life 291).

For many, however, the Great National Peace Jubilee and Music Festival was a celebration of the end of the Civil War. An “immense assemblage from all parts of the country,” the festival was designed “to commemorate the joyous return of Peace,” as Gilmore explained in his 1871 record of the event (1). Newspapers reporting on the Jubilee further emphasized this patriotic message. The Daily Central City Register, for instance, announced that the festival would be “a fitting celebration of the restoration of peace and good will throughout the land” and noted that “Statesmen, orators, devines, and indeed all classes of Americans are to be there”

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193 The festival not only made back the hundreds of thousands of dollars spent to organize it but also achieved a profit of over one hundred thousand dollars, most of which went to “soldiers and widows and children of deceased soldiers” (“Balance Sheet”).
194 In his record of the festival, Gilmore states that he commemorated the Jubilee to the “restoration of peace” in the hope that it would “strike a chord whose vibrations would reach from Maine to California” for “no demonstration of a national character had taken place, no general rejoicing that the war was over and the Union restored, after the terrible four-years’ struggle” (15).
(“Sixty Thousand Dollars”). By the end of the first day, some reports went so far as to suggest that the Jubilee had “soothe[d] into coveted oblivion those animosities and hatreds which once distracted and divided a nation, and then reddened its soil with the best blood of its people” (qtd. in Gilmore 471).

All, however, did not share these words of acclamation. One reviewer refused to “pronounce the experiment of this Jubilee as altogether satisfactory” (“The Peace Jubilee. The First Day’s”) while another stated that the Jubilee was not “by any [means] a success” if looked at “critically, and from a musical point of view” (“In a Musical View”). The coliseum’s acoustics were so poorly planned that the performances were difficult to hear, drowned out by the “rustle of dresses, the tramp of feet, and the hum of tongues” (“The Peace Jubilee. The Third Day”). Overcome by the cacophonous sounds of restless bodies ill at ease in the crowded hall, the melodies of Beethoven, Handel, and Mozart as well as the patriotic “Star Spangled Banner” were lost to background noise. While the effect of bringing together so many performers was certainly striking, the Jubilee ultimately failed in its promise to deliver a quality performance. As one review simply stated, “Ten thousand singers cannot be held together” and any attempt to do so would result in “conspicuous blemishes” and a “noteworthy lack of precision and of unity” (“In a Musical View”). Rather than celebrate the coming together of the “sons and daughters of America,” as Gilmore suggested in his retrospective of the festival (1), the Peace Jubilee instead demonstrated the difficulty of producing, let alone preserving, unity and harmony.

The Great National Peace Jubilee and Music Festival thus stands as a reminder of the use of music and sound in American society. More specifically, it is a record of the importance of hearing—along with other forms of sensory experience—to the construction and negotiation of

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195 Even in its planning stage many discouraged and actively opposed Gilmore’s “visionary scheme” (Gilmore 11). Rather than embrace a celebration declaring peace, the “public mind”—Gilmore instead found—was instead “much disturbed by the unsettled condition of affairs in many of the Southern States” (Gilmore 14).
identity. Those who praised the festival and the peace it proclaimed actively chose to ignore the sounds that marred each performance, from the noises apparent in the rustling of the crowd to a more suggestive dissonance sounded from a political and social landscape far from peaceful. Conversely, the critics of the festival turned an unforgiving ear to the Jubilee’s music, pointing out those “blemishes” and noises that inevitably resulted from any attempt to harmonize such a diverse people. In this way, the Jubilee disclosed how sounds both shape and are shaped “by the cultural, economic, and political contexts in which they are produced and heard” (Smith, *Listening* 7). As John Sullivan Dwight wrote of the festival, “the imagination of the People…has adopted it and made it is own, transforming it as it were into its own likeness” (“The National Peace Jubilee”).

Yet perhaps more important than this disclosure of what can be termed selective hearing is the way in which the Great National Peace Jubilee gestures toward the “irreclaimable”: like the music drowned out by the coliseum’s ineffective architecture, music and its archive will always be plagued by silence, by a “world of unrecorded sounds” (Schmidt, *Hearing Things* 15). Indeed silence is as important to music as sound. While this dissertation has sought to understand music’s emergence in the United States as a conflictual site, it has only presented a partial tale. My narration of music’s emergence in the United States as a technology of print fails in many ways to acknowledge what sounds did not make their way into print—what happens, in other words, when music travels from the concert hall or music store to the home, to a make-shift dance hall, or a religious revival. While accounts of this movement are certainly available—and represent an archive I have sought to at least partially access—much has been (at times unintentionally) left out, silenced.
In particular, the project currently focuses solely on the representation of music from a white, middle-class perspective emerging from the urban centers of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Charleston, and New Orleans. Despite my dissertation’s focus on race, I do not have any representations of music from an African American perspective; nor is my archive on black music very diverse. This limited scope partly reflects the project’s evolution, the difficulties involved in imagining and producing an archive that both constructs and is constructed by the narrative *Composing the Body* tells. Yet it is also a reflection of the difficulty of accessing sound, perhaps most clearly articulated in the contentious rise of black musical experience in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As scholars Jon Cruz, Dena Epstein, and others have pointed out, listening to black music as an experience worthy of recording was a new phenomenon for Americans in the 1850s. A similar statement could be made toward other forms of marginalized music as well. Indeed too often it is only when such music begins to resemble more dominant (and largely European) forms that it finds its way into print. Oliver Ditson’s *Catalogue of Sheet Music and Music Books* is a case in point. While revealing the diversity of music culture in the United States as well as the geographic spread of this culture, the *Catalogue* inadvertently discloses a selection criteria, shared by other music publishers as well, prejudiced toward Euro-Romantic and Classical musical forms.

This is not to say, of course, that these forms of music and sites of publication solely dictated how people heard and understood music. In their attention to all forms of musics and noises, soundscape scholars like Mark Smith, Leigh Eric Schmidt, Peter Hoffer, Jonathan Rée, Richard Cullen Rath and others have challenged how we hear the United States, exposing how musicians, composers, critics, and other listeners and sound-makers both preserved and destroyed certain sounds. Such work reveals how the decision to hear and record sounds defines
not only what music is but also how we understand the people and things that make this music. In early American culture, and of course even today, these decisions have larger social, economic and political implications. As Jon Cruz states in the quotation that opens this coda, “Music becomes noise the more so when it unfolds upon, invokes, negotiates, and thus renders transparent social tensions” (64). In my attention to musical feeling—the musical forms and sounds that shaped and was shaped by a culture in contention over what and who deserved to be heard—I have attempted, at least in part, to begin the work of listening.

Fig. C.1: “The Great National Peace, Jubilee, Boston, Mass.—One Hundred Boston Firemen Practicing for the Anvil Chorus.” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* 19 June 1869: Col. A. 19th Century U.S. Newspapers. Web. 27 May 2012.
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