

## *Introduction*

What exactly did performing anti-slavery sympathy mean, not for ladies who merely read sentimental literature about slaves to pass the time, not for literary men who suffered sublimely for slaves they dreamed up, but for black and white women with a direct, on-the-street involvement in the immediate abolitionist movement in the antebellum United States? What performance strategies did these activists forge, on what sorts of “stages”? As disciples of black radical David Walker (1785–1830) and white editor William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879), women in what is typically called the “Garrisonian” wing of the transatlantic anti-slavery movement used various performance tactics to lambast the Constitution, the state, the church. They forged outlier political organizations disguised as literary societies, sewing circles, prayer groups, free produce associations, and anti-slavery societies. Transforming their homes, churches, and civic halls into stages, they adapted everyday performances – after-dinner conversations, neighborly visits, social events, and religious traditions – toward anti-slavery goals. They recited poems, transposed them into hymns, and sang them within family circles and at monthly “concerts” for the slave. They staged activist dialogues and plays, read essays aloud, gave speeches, and used silence productively onstage. Dividing their towns and villages into districts, they canvassed neighbors, telling anti-slavery stories door to door while gathering signatures on petitions against a democracy tethered to the business interests of Southern slaveholders and their Northern and British bankers. For four decades, black and white women debated the most efficacious strategies for performing activism, and their anti-slavery repertoire remains worth scrutiny.

They faced a difficult challenge. As they launched their efforts in the late 1820s, mainstream audiences were routinely invited to sympathize with a suffering slaveholder rather than a slave. The slaveholder was purportedly “shackled” to an inherited institution that, despite all odds, saved the souls of “insentient” slaves. Women activists’ first performance intervention was to invert this scene: to recast the suffering slaveholder as a barbaric

man-stealer and to represent the slaves as fully human, capable of actually feeling pain. After a short while, however, the women refined their anti-slavery practice by envisioning enslaved individuals as “partisan spectators” who judged not only man-stealers’ behavior but also abolitionists’ own shortcomings. This partisan spectatorship, from the imagined slave’s viewpoint, revealed the limits of America’s sham democracy and taught black and white women activists to build their performances more on self-scrutiny than on fellow feeling with others. Faced with an emerging biopolitical legal concept of race, black women started focusing on a compassion for themselves that deepened into a concern for others. For radical Quakers accustomed to predicating their behavior on an ethical “inner light,” this shift toward selfhood meant reimagining the self as provisional, pragmatic, capable of altering the customs bolstering racism and slavery. And that improvisational impulse led some anti-slavery activists to perform cosmopolitan self-possession as a key anti-slavery strategy. Analyzing activist women’s diverse performance strategies within the antebellum anti-slavery movement reveals new ways to harness affect for political purposes. It revises the established historiography of the anti-slavery movement and expands performance history to include black and white women’s dialogues about activist performance strategies. It holds practical implications for ongoing efforts to stage the relationship between the self and others. And it raises thorny questions about ongoing anti-slavery efforts.

By the mid-1830s, a network of hundreds of cross-racial female anti-slavery societies surfaced in the United States, as women helped to transform the most persistent American performance practice – a Judeo-Christian sympathy with suffering others as a pathway toward (partial) citizenship – into a more efficacious activist practice focused on dismantling systemic violence. These female societies, working within a transatlantic web, tried to overturn the Enlightenment charting of racialized, gendered bodies on a colonizationist grid. As Susan Leigh Foster argues, “the history of sympathy and then empathy when placed in parallel with the history of colonization helps to explain how the British evaluated and responded to the foreigners whom they encountered in North America, Asia, and the Pacific,” how they were “mobilized, in part, to rationalize operations of exclusion and othering.”<sup>1</sup> Working *against* those colonizationist impulses that represented slaves as insentient or merely sympathized with them to experience the sublime, Garrisonian women radically revised strategies for performing affect within an anti-slavery political movement that functioned, paradoxically, outside of the state. Linked to each other as well as to their transatlantic

counterparts, particularly in Great Britain and France, they gradually altered mainstream affective practices – particularly the practice of sympathy.

In his analysis of sympathy, Enlightenment philosopher Adam Smith (1723–1790) had posited that as individuals sympathize with others, they imagine an “impartial spectator,” modeled on themselves, judging them, determining whether or not their course of action with regard to those others is apposite. However, instead of following Smith’s practice and judging themselves from the standpoint of the governing body politic of a counterfeit democracy, black and white women in Walker and Garrison’s wing of the anti-slavery movement imagined a *partisan spectator* judging them: in fact, they imagined a slave – or a more deeply committed abolitionist than themselves – judging their efforts at activism. That scrutiny forced them to keep adjusting their performance strategies. As free black women launched anti-slavery initiatives, for instance, they contemplated the newly unfolding fragility of their own material circumstances, performing a compassion for themselves that enlarged into a concern for slaves. This threw the emphasis on the self rather than the other, on systemic structures rather than suffering. Fellow abolitionists responded, proffering their own strategies, moving beyond their childhood traditions, improvising their critiques of slavery, and trying, with varying degrees of success, to stanch the Christianized glorification of pain.

Many of the women’s affective practices stemmed from a radically revised practice of sympathy, which must be distinguished from empathy. The precise constellation of concepts and performative acts that comprise “empathy” did not emerge until the late nineteenth century, long after the end of the anti-slavery movement, but abolitionist scholars routinely use the terms “sympathy” and “empathy” interchangeably, or attribute the later performance of empathy to early nineteenth-century abolitionists. Marcus Wood, for example, uses the terms “empathy” and “sympathy” as synonyms: “sentimental empathy and stoic endurance,” he claims, ground the classic 1759 text *Theory of Moral Sentiments* by Adam Smith. But Smith’s analysis of sympathy, as Chapter 1 demonstrates, depends upon the idea that individuals *cannot* know what another human being is feeling, while “empathy” means precisely that individuals *can* know. This difference between sympathy and empathy matters a great deal, particularly as it is experienced in live performance contexts.<sup>2</sup> The black and white women within Walker and Garrison’s camp performed a self-critical sympathy, not empathy: for example, as black poet and lecturer Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825–1911) recited an 1854 poem onstage, she represented an enslaved wife gazing lovingly at her husband “with anguish *none may*

*paint or tell.*"<sup>3</sup> Harper acknowledged that no one, certainly not herself or the members of her audience, could represent, much less encompass, the "anguish" of the slaves. Hers was a self-critical sympathy cognizant of its boundaries. She forced spectators to witness the limits of their own clumsy efforts to imagine others' situations; and over time, these limits were built into women's performances of sympathy. Anti-slavery activists, then as now, performed variously, and while some practices reinforced unhelpful notions of sentiment, others simultaneously and *necessarily* created new, resistant – and institutionally productive – pathways toward holding the state as well as the slaveholders responsible for the violence of slavery.

Restoring an awareness of the performative differences between sympathy and empathy, this volume also distinguishes among disparate types of performances of anti-slavery sympathy. Evangelicals and the liberal religionists within the Garrisonian wing of the movement performed sympathy differently, and individuals within these two wings developed their own signature approaches. Furthermore, individual activists built upon each other's approaches. Evangelical performances of sympathy typically celebrated pain and redemption, reinforcing the ideology of a "free" but blameworthy, sinful Christian citizenry. Liberal religionists, such as black and white Unitarians and Quakers in the Garrisonian movement, in contrast, performed sympathy by rejecting the crucifixion and highlighting the dangers of assuming that the state, through citizenship or conventional political action, could fully address violence against the individual. For them, the performance of sympathy came to mean acknowledging that they could *not* know the pain experienced by the slave and that the slave's pain was caused by the state, not the general condition of sinful humankind. It meant inhabiting the knowledge of that failure of sympathy, exercising self-judgment, recognizing one's complicity in slavery, and building a collective politics based on an awareness that "we live with and beside each other, and yet we are not as one."<sup>4</sup>

Certain "periperformatives" surfaced around these black and white women's performances of sympathy with the slave. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick coined the term "periperformative" to describe the unruly forces clustering around authoritative performances mandated by words like "sympathize." In nineteenth-century mainstream culture, sympathetic performances undergirded citizenship: full citizens either denied feelings to the dispossessed to justify oppressing them, or felt sympathetically for others as a substitute for granting them equality. However, within the "mobile proscenium" of certain anti-slavery stagings of sympathy with the slave, disruptive periperformatives emerged. Particularly within

Garrisonian women's performances, counter-performances cropped up: naming suffering as a man-made breach rather than a divine opportunity for redemption; inciting a real state of emergency, exercising self-judgment, feeling a compassion for oneself as well as others, traveling beyond one's own customs toward an outlier, cosmopolitan love. These activist periperformatives worked to "warp, transform, and displace" the centrality of sympathy in radical abolitionist culture.<sup>5</sup>

### Staging a real state of emergency

The black and white anti-slavery radicals who followed martyred black activist David Walker and white editor William Lloyd Garrison saw themselves poised at the end of a decadent empire. Unitarian minister Theodore Parker (1810–1860) encapsulated their vision in an 1850 sermon, when he asked congregants, "Do you know how empires find their end? . . . Aye, how do the *great States* come to an end? By their own injustice and no other cause."<sup>6</sup> Garrisonians believed that an unprecedented political crisis started surfacing in the 1830s: Southerners, aligned with the Northern and British bankers holding mortgages on their plantations, held the United States hostage, justifying the systematic violence of chattel slavery through the spectral emergency of a bloody national slave revolt. Ruling through a state of exception, President Andrew Jackson (in office 1829–37) annexed Florida against international law; forced an entire population of Native Americans to relocate west of the Mississippi through the Trail of Tears (1830–38); and justified the ever-more-violent oppression of Southern slaves and their Northern allies by warning constantly of slave revolts and retaliation. Black and white anti-slavery women viewed "the class-based, racially segregated, gender-exclusive slugfest of the Jacksonian public sphere" with derision and horror.<sup>7</sup> They were appalled, when – in the aftermath of Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion in Virginia – governmental officials across the South aided President Jackson, trading on the fear of bloody slave revolts to tighten "security."

The emergency that these Garrisonian abolitionists perceived, the end of empire that they felt themselves witnessing, was not identical to what Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben now calls a "state of emergency," but there are uncanny traces of abolitionists' rhetoric in present-day critiques of democracy. Agamben defines a state of emergency as a situation in which a sovereign power rules not through law or discipline but through creating a constant state of crisis that transforms lawmakers' power into pro-forma approval after the fact. Justifying constant alerts

through the idea that the present moment is an exceptional time, a time of emergency, the sovereign hails the spread of democracy even as lawmakers' powers shrink. In the distinctly 1830s abolitionist version of this phenomenon, sovereign Southerners and their British allies misprision Northerners and the United States as a whole by worrying over slave revolts, thereby justifying chattel slavery. Radical abolitionists' urgent desire to transform mainstream affect into a *real* feeling of crisis, in order to end slavery immediately – as well as their sense that the United States “empire” was about to implode – reverberates with Agamben's vision. Attempts to create a *real*, counter-state of emergency are not new within the circum-Atlantic fold.<sup>8</sup>

Central to the transatlantic performance of this counter-state of emergency, black and white American women emulated British counterparts who had staged a 1790s West Indian sugar boycott and had lobbied the British parliament through an 1833 petition signed by nearly 300,000 citizens. An Englishwoman, Elizabeth Coltman Heyrick (1769–1831), launched the immediate abolitionist movement through the publication of an influential 1824 pamphlet. Within the year, the first female anti-slavery society surfaced in Birmingham, England. By the 1830s American women, first within the large free black community in Salem, Massachusetts, and then in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, and hundreds of other cities and small towns across the Northern and midwestern states, followed their British correspondents' lead – but American women quickly surpassed their English counterparts in experimenting with public performances, including appearances on British stages.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, as James Forten, Jr. (b. 1811), a young black abolitionist, explained in a 1836 lecture for the Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia, American women's particular province was to exhort their men during a state of emergency: “examine the records of history, and you will find that woman has been called upon in the severest trials of public emergency.”<sup>10</sup> For women who championed the abolitionist views of Walker or Garrison, embracing this sense of public emergency meant rejecting day-to-day “democratic” politics, including the sham of voting, as ineffectual. It meant rejecting the state-supported violence embedded in the Constitution and the law. To be a radical abolitionist was to shun the semblance of democracy altogether, to show the inextricable tie between democratic freedom and slavery, in order to bring about a real democracy.

To the extent that Garrisonian abolitionists, schooled by black leaders, refused ersatz democracy, they rejected abstract citizenship and what

Saidiya Hartman calls the state's concept of the "blameworthiness" of the freed citizen.<sup>11</sup> They denied the state's definition of the individual as the responsible party in a zone of biopolitical violence. Instead, they held the state responsible by trying to live materially and affectively outside of its boundaries, sometimes within microeconomic units based on free produce, even as they petitioned for change. They wanted slaves, who were, in their view, barely allowed to live, to be incorporated into the polis, and they wanted that polis transformed by a politicized, cosmopolitan love. They tried to sensitize privileged whites and blacks to the ways in which their complicity in slavery limited not only slaves' political status but also their own.

In the eyes of these abolitionists, President Jackson and his Southern and white working-class allies were not representatives of the common man, nor were they democratic champions. In fact, they were the opposite. Through the gruesome biopolitics of slavery and Indian removals (not to mention the oppression of women), Jacksonians transformed many Americans into the walking dead: they passed state and federal edicts to tighten slave regulations and eviscerate the rights of free blacks. They singled out Northern abolitionists as well, instituting a gag rule to stifle women's anti-slavery petitions and enforcing early laws requiring Northerners to return fugitive slaves to Southern masters.

Anti-slavery advocates, in turn, viewed the United States Constitution as invalid because of its compromises with Southern pro-slavery sentiment and its inability to shut down President Jackson's sovereign usurpations of power. To sidestep the Constitution and Jackson's power, then, these black and white abolitionist women tried to instate a *real* state of emergency, to let it be known that something was truly wrong in the way in which American democracy had come to function. As Agamben explains, Walter Benjamin's eighth thesis on the concept of history sets the frame for this conversation about "exceptional" emergencies: Benjamin writes that:

the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of exception" in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of exception, and this will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism.<sup>12</sup>

Benjamin's "Critique of Violence," as Agamben notes, calls for violence "beyond the law," violence to "shatter the dialectic between lawmaking and lawpreserving violence," revolutionary violence which properly "neither makes nor preserves law, but deposes it and thus inaugurates a new historical epoch."<sup>13</sup> Initially, Garrisonians simply strove to live outside of the law, in

both their circulation of affect and their material, daily lives. They refused to recognize the Constitution as the law of the land, even as they continued to utilize the remnants of citizen-based power available to them: petitioning, presenting memorials to lawmakers, forming political parties. They simultaneously improvised performances that propelled them beyond state-centered, legally-based modes of imagining citizenship.

The black and white women within the Garrisonian wing of the abolitionist movement rejected the notion that the slave was a figure who could legally be killed but not valued or “sacrificed” – a figure that Agamben calls “homo sacer.” Through their performances, they valued slaves’ lives – early on, paradoxically and problematically, by metaphorically “sacrificing” them and slowing down time to mourn them in same-sex societies; later by recognizing slaves’ resistance and independence and by imagining their own “privileges” extended to the emancipated, even as they simultaneously critiqued those same privileges. As homemakers, the inner core of activists adopted microeconomic policies that sidestepped the nineteenth-century version of the biopolitics of death: instead of consuming slave-produced goods, they purchased free-trade cotton, rice, and sugar. They cleaned and combed free cotton for weaving, tended sugar beet farms, set up microeconomic loans for free produce shops that traded across the eastern United States. They performed poems and plays in their parlors, sang hymns in their anti-slavery meetings as at church, and delivered speeches in town halls, inviting audiences to reassess, through the eyes of the subaltern, what Sara Ahmed calls the “stickiness” of emotions circulating in any given social gathering.<sup>14</sup> Some simply tried to widen the family contract within “natural law” to embrace slaves as “sisters,” but many imagined past Enlightenment structures.

Eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers had developed the theory of natural law, arguing that it preceded all social contracts. “Natural” law rested upon a family compact in which the woman and child promised to obey the husband and father, who would purportedly represent their interests and protect their rights. This family contract modeled nationhood: the “whole people” of a nation (like the family members) promised to obey the propertied men who comprised the “body politic” (like the head of the family). This “body politic” purportedly represented the interests and protected the rights of the whole. John Quincy Adams (1767–1848), the sixth President of the United States (1825–29), explained this Enlightenment social contract as follows, revealing the limits of natural law: the whole people were “men, women, and children, *born or unborn*, natives, or foreigners, bond, or free” who were not “capable of



contracting” and could “have no direct agency in the formation of the social compact which constitutes the body politic.” Only those “*most capable of contracting*” could covenant “for the whole,” and they could “never amount to more than one in five of the whole.”<sup>15</sup> From the first, the United States operated on this natural law, modeling itself on the family compact. It was never, in Adams’s view, a true democracy, nor was it ever meant to be. Black and white American women organized female anti-slavery societies to end slavery and combat this view.

These anti-slavery societies differed from one another on ideological, religious, and practical grounds, which led the women within them to adopt different activist strategies. Furthermore, individual leaders within each wing of the movement developed their own specific performance tactics, adapting and adding to each other’s approaches. Garrisonians, especially Quakers and Unitarians, supported women’s participation in their denominations’ democratic processes, so many of them emerged as anti-slavery leaders.<sup>16</sup> This volume analyzes the performance strategies of the Garrisonian wing of the female anti-slavery movement, retrieving leaders’ strategies for creating a real state of emergency.

Many anti-slavery activists rejected the Enlightenment model of democracy, but their political challenge was complicated: they had to develop a performance practice that would prove that slaves, including female slaves, were fully human and capable of contracting, of their own accord, with the state. At the same time, they had to reveal the violent underpinnings of that state, predicated on a sovereign power that designated only one in five residents as part of the true polis, relegating all others, including themselves, to various gradations of bare life. And they had to abrogate the supposedly natural law that provided the “rational” basis for the state: as daughters and wives, as sisters and nieces and cousins, they had to demand that their menfolk, their relatives, their neighbors and fellow church-goers, as well as the strangers upon whose doorsteps they stood, validate their activities and act with them as outliers, as immediate abolitionists rejecting the legalized violence of the state. As they gathered signatures on petitions, they abrogated natural law by valuing equally all the members of wildly disparate kinds of households. For instance, they routinely aggravated their neighbors by making the “request that domestics be called to give their signatures.” To conservatives, these radical female abolitionists signaled “the destruction of the domestic constitution.”<sup>17</sup> They reimagined the body politic and the family. Some quietly embraced same-sex relationships. This book explores their varied repertoires, which haunt present-day theatrical stages as well as ongoing efforts to end human trafficking and forced labor.

### **Revising genealogies of anti-slavery performance to embrace a combination of strategies**

Historians traditionally separate American abolitionists into three wings. The first wing, usually described as William Lloyd Garrison's group, built in part upon David Walker's radicalism and included middle-class Unitarians, Quakers, and members of various African Methodist Episcopal churches centered in Philadelphia, Boston, greater New England, and far-flung midwestern towns and cities and linked to a transatlantic network. In Philadelphia and even more strikingly in Boston, these Garrisonian female anti-slavery societies tended to revise performances of American republicanism. In their "Address of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society to the Women of New England," for instance, Garrisonian women referred themselves as "the true descendants of the pilgrims" and called on Christian "freedom." They did not, as evangelicals did, call themselves Christian sinners or redeemers.<sup>18</sup>

While twenty-first-century scholars might be more interested in the racial and class differences that were addressed within female anti-slavery societies, nineteenth-century women were equally struck by the difficulties of overcoming religious, denominational differences, because those differences anchored attitudes toward affect. Both Unitarians and Quakers embraced affective practices that emphasized reason and an outlier viewpoint. They were skeptical of sentiment and rejected evangelical notions that blacks were the cursed children of Cain or of Ham, the wayward son of Noah; instead, they viewed all humans as of the same origin.<sup>19</sup> Unitarians typically embraced the emergent Universalist notion that all humans were saved because no reasonable God would require suffering.

In fact, many Garrisonians did not see humans as sinful, or view Christ as a crucified savior. They viewed the crucifixion as a breach in man's reason and did not valorize salvation as the goal of human existence. Presaging the arguments of the contemporary human rights theorist Talal Asad, they came to critique the idea that a suffering, sympathetic Christianity could offer a pathway toward full humanity, and they tried to imagine other ways to force the state to recognize the rights of all. As Garrisonian activist Lydia Maria Child (1802–1880) explained to colonizationist Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1789–1867), she had "ceased to shed tears" over the slaves and "the emotions that used to produce them now boil up and create steam to supply my indignation and energy, till they move at the rate of steam cars."<sup>20</sup> Rejecting both sentimental suffering and the Constitution, they championed moral suasion, even as they openly

criticized non-abolitionist clergy and theatrically staged their (for women, symbolic) decision not to vote.

These black and white Garrisonians viewed the second anti-slavery wing, often associated with Arthur Tappan (1786–1865) and his brother Lewis (1788–1873), as an evangelical faction congregating primarily in New York City and Oberlin, Ohio. These “Tappanites,” a cross-class group that eventually embraced the vote, were more likely to emphasize Christian sinfulness, suffering, and redemption. Many of their associations, particularly in New York City, were segregated. They were typically composed of wealthy merchants’ wives, the relatives of evangelical clergy, and small-town women who had participated in evangelical revivals before moving to the city. Energized by revivals like those sponsored by Oberlin College’s Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875), these Tappanite abolitionists, often Congregationalists, Methodists, Baptists, or Presbyterians, entered anti-slavery activism believing in inherent gender differences. New York women, heavily influenced by evangelical views, were not only slower to take up public activities in support of anti-slavery but also much less likely to do so in integrated associations. For instance, black women in Rochester initiated a female society in 1834, but white women waited until 1837 to follow suit – separately. Most New Yorkers joined abolitionist ranks through revivalism and emphasized, like the women of the Chatham Street Chapel society, the sinfulness of slavery and “the principles laid down by our blessed Savior Himself.”<sup>21</sup> Accepting a quiescent role as pious practitioners of the faith, Tappanite women retreated somewhat after violent anti-abolitionist riots surfaced in the 1840s. Their political agency was muted by their decision to work through their menfolk, and by their continuing focus on Christian suffering as the route to a common citizenship.

Both the black and white evangelical press glorified female suffering in the 1830s: in 1839, for instance, the *Colored American* claimed that “Man is great in action – Woman in suffering.” Tappanite women believed fervently in the efficacy of this suffering; they hoped to rescue slaves from a sinful institution by sympathizing with their suffering and redeeming them. Too often, their practices stand in for the anti-slavery movement as a whole.<sup>22</sup>

Religious differences among women, often tied to class differences, indeed led them to different conceptions of gender and different notions about how to attack slavery. While the Unitarian and Quaker Garrisonians typically focused on the similarities between men and women and envisioned equal access to political power outside the state, the Tappanite Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists concentrated on presumed gender differences, exalting women as more moral, and positioning the

mother as the primary figure of anti-slavery advocacy.<sup>23</sup> This, in turn, reinforced heterosexism. Tappanites also moved gradually, advocating political action solely within the state. Eventually this religious and political split led to a fracture in the anti-slavery movement, a fissure echoed even within the Quaker movement, as the more radical Hicksites split off from the Orthodox Friends. Garrisonians complained bitterly of the Tappanites' provincialism and racism, though they themselves had much to learn.

The third wing of the abolitionist movement, rooted in upstate New York, was tied directly to a political party: initially called the Radical Abolitionist Party and aligned with Gerrit Smith (1797–1874) and other upstate New York farmers and merchants, this party eventually morphed into the Liberty and Free Soil Parties. Over time, it entertained concessions to non-abolitionists.

The tripartite description of the anti-slavery movement, handy as it is, elides overlaps and crossovers: to cite just one example, a nineteenth-century Quaker named William Adams (1779–1858), who followed Lucretia Mott's anti-slavery sermons closely as a fellow member of the Cherry Street Meeting House in Philadelphia, not only attended both Garrisonian and Tappanite anti-slavery meetings but also repeatedly voted for the Liberty Party.<sup>24</sup>

As nineteenth-century abolitionist Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) described these early ranks, “the body comprehends men and women of every shade of color, of every degree of education, of every variety of religious opinion, of every gradation of rank, bound together by no vow, no pledge, no stipulation but of each preserving his individual liberty; and yet they act as if they were of one heart and soul.”<sup>25</sup> Partly because this diverse set of women could not legally vote, they were most active in the Garrisonian and Tappanite wings of the movement rather than the Liberty Party wing. Many abolitionists in these first two factions were the wives and daughters of the urban middle-class New England set, but a number of the most active abolitionists, those who signed petitions in both wings, were young factory workers in their twenties and thirties, women without property, often in smaller towns. They were women who spun, wove, bound shoes, tended machines, and identified as wage-bound. The best-known female abolitionists, those who took leadership positions within “promiscuous” or mixed-gender as well as female-only anti-slavery societies, were Garrisonians. In this book, black Garrisonians Sarah Louisa Forten (1814–1883), Maria W. Stewart (1803–1879), Sarah Mapps Douglass (1806–1882), and Ellen Craft (c.1826–c.1897), as well as whites Elizabeth Margaret Chandler (1807–1834) and Lucretia Coffin Mott (1793–1880) figure prominently.<sup>26</sup>

Abolitionist histories typically (and paradoxically) cast these “radical Garrisonians” as comprising the most conservative of the three wings of the movement because of their supposedly apolitical approach, but the present study argues that their affective performance strategies were, in fact, highly politicized, precisely *because* they rejected the Constitution, political parties, and the vote. They were trying to make visible the lawmaking and law-preserving violence of the state and to combat President Jackson’s tactic of creating an ersatz state of emergency. Garrisonians tried to refuse the liberal democratic state even as they occasionally justified their tactics in terms of natural law or republicanism or exercised rights granted by the state: the right to petition, the right to free speech, the right to gather, the right to bear arms and protect their homes. Despite their disparate individual investments in a variety of religious and philosophical traditions, black and white women Garrisonians understood more fully than their counterparts in the Tappanite and Liberty Party wings how deeply embedded violence was, both within the laws of the state and the customs of religious demoninations.

In fact, as their efforts to assist slave refugees became increasingly subject to state violence and Southern litigation, Garrisonians practiced what they called “non-resistance” to the state. As Adin Ballou (1803–1890), a pacifist minister, explained, non-resistance meant that “we can neither fight for [government], legislate in it, hold its offices, vote at its elections, nor act any political part within its pale.” This proclamation of a *real* state of emergency through non-resistance alarmed politicians because, as one opined, it challenged “the right of a nation to govern its members.”<sup>27</sup>

When they refused to recognize the Constitution as a governing document, when they refused to pay taxes, when they engaged in affective practices in which they refused to recognize Southerners’ right to compensation for lost “property,” or kidnappers’ right to recapture slave refugees, or Northern sheriffs’ right to imprison refugees in public jail cells, or colonizationists’ right to relocate all blacks, slave and free, in Africa, these abolitionist women were performing as outliers. The authorities recognized that fact: Garrisonian women’s political moves triggered anti-abolitionist riots “by gentlemen of property and standing.” Neighbors suddenly issued threats against their lives and livelihoods. Friends dropped them, clients avoided their businesses, and adversaries attacked their homes and persons. Their children’s educational and professional opportunities evaporated. Detractors threatened to send them South, to courtrooms that would aim state violence against them, white or black.<sup>28</sup>

Garrisonians’ abolitionist performances, their “specific acts of opposition,” in fact “remain[ed] complicit in what they oppose[d],” but that is so,

as Mark Sanders explains of efforts to end South African apartheid, because these acts of resistance are “dependent on a generalized complicity that is irreducible.”<sup>29</sup> Casting Garrisonians as apolitical conservatives, scholars often view as more radical and more effective those who – like Frederick Douglass, the Tappan brothers, and Gerrit Smith – abandoned Garrison’s principles in the 1840s to embrace Constitutional arguments against slavery. There is no disputing that this was a useful move at that particular historical juncture. However, it was also useful for Garrisonians in the 1830s to set the stage for that move – and it was especially efficacious for them to continue to expose the sham democracy within which the Tappanites and Douglass worked in the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s.

This *combination* of performance strategies – working simultaneously within and outside of the state – may still be helpful in the fight against human trafficking and forced labor, because the tension among them shows what is and what is not possible in the way of establishing human rights within democracy. The traditional narrative in which Garrisonians pose as the most conservative of the three factions of abolitionism typically mutes an awareness of the often dangerous conservatism of the prophetic Christianity within the Radical Abolitionist and Liberty Parties. It muddies the problematic nature of evangelical performances of empathy (as distinct from sympathy) with the slave – performances, for instance, that led an 1846 black abolitionist newspaper to announce, without any qualification, of a white abolitionist: “Gerrit Smith is a colored man!”<sup>30</sup> Garrisonians such as Chandler, Forten, Stewart, Douglass, Mott, and Craft, as well as Maria Weston Chapman (1806–1885) and Susan Paul (1809–1841) in Boston or Grace Bustill Douglass (1782–1842) in Philadelphia, adopted a different notion of politics than evangelical Tappanites such as Mary S. Parker (d. c.1840–41) and her black and white followers, but it was not more conservative. Evangelicals believed in the Constitution, the state, the family; Garrisonians rejected the Constitution, the state, and many aspects of traditional family structures. Some lived within same-sex relationships, as Chapter 2 demonstrates. And whether they were black or white, Garrisonians tended to believe in woman’s rights as well as anti-slavery. One of their central challenges was to explore the relationship between themselves and the slaves through a revised notion of fellow feeling and reason.

Holocaust scholar Dominick LaCapra demonstrates that fellow feeling need not necessarily lead to the conflation of the self with the other as “symbolic capital in memory politics.”<sup>31</sup> In an effort at thwarting this process of appropriation, Garrisonians refused Enlightenment philosopher

Adam Smith's notion of the "impartial spectator." They did not envision like-minded equals or superiors as the impartial spectators of the slaves' circumstances. Instead, they imagined *slaves* as the *partisan*, *outlier* spectators of their activism. This transformed Adam Smith's Enlightenment notion of sympathy into a very different sort of act. Imagining slaves, even imperfectly drawn ones, as judges of one's behavior interrupted one's "felt proprietary power over the racial body."<sup>32</sup> It intervened in sympathy and unnerved auditors into an awareness of the limits of their knowledge of "appropriate" behavior. It challenged activists to acknowledge their complicity in slavery, as in abolitionist Abigail Kelley Foster's closing salvo: after a first-person retelling of an imaginary slave's circumstances, Foster turned to her audience and demanded, "when I see you and others standing by to witness, what do I hear from your lips?" The question was not simply what are you going to feel or think, but what are you going to say – and more importantly, do?

The traditional tripartite narrative about American abolitionism, which casts Garrisonians as ineffectual moralists, too often ignores, then, the *different* political attack that Garrison's followers launched by shunning state practices to try to call a real state of emergency into being. It also ignores the contradictory forces within each faction: Garrisonians did engage in politics, despite their disclaimers: they actively lobbied, petitioned, wrote memorials, and shaped public sentiment through newspapers, organizations, fundraising. They helped overturn the gag rule and expand free speech rights. The traditional narrative casting Garrisonians as conservatives forecloses a consideration of the potential as well as the dangers generated by the *intertwining* of *contradictory* approaches. Finally, this narrative sometimes mutes the role of the disparate live performances within the movement and the ways in which they redirected the circulation of affect. Throughout, Garrisonian women relied upon live performances as well as performances in print to move their audiences toward action through an embodied, reasoned emotion.

### Performing against race

This book approaches black and white women's abolitionist performances through the interdisciplinary methods of performance studies, critical race theory, American studies, and feminist critiques of the Enlightenment. It differs from previous studies of women's abolitionism by historicizing and theorizing black and white women's cross-racial performances as activists, poets, lecturers, and daily actors within a transatlantic political movement, the female anti-slavery society movement.

As Heather Nathans demonstrates, nineteenth-century sentiment entered the theatre proper as well as activist anti-slavery performances during the antebellum period, disproving Thomas Jefferson's argument that Africans' sentiments were cloaked behind an impenetrable and unfeeling "veil of black."<sup>33</sup> Nathans acknowledges the dangers of sentiment but argues that it offered whites a way "to push through traditional social and cultural barriers" and imagine slaves as full-fledged democratic citizens. Pushing through these barriers, however, did not lead to a democracy extricated altogether from notions of slavery and racism, and Daphne Brooks demonstrates how many nineteenth-century anti-slavery performers tried to address this fact through a "spectacular opacity" that layered out-sized identities on top of one another, to reveal race as "an optical, illusionistic, phantasmagoric stunt" and to make their bodies unreadable or multivalent.<sup>34</sup> Within female anti-slavery societies, however, black and white women improvised other sorts of practices to contest racialized democracy, responding to each other's tactics and revealing individual styles of approaching anti-slavery performance.

An examination of the black as well as the white press of the time makes it clear that it was not a simple matter for black and white women to work together. Blacks and whites were equally likely to find interracial gatherings unwelcoming. Slavery was dismantled gradually in the north, and while some free blacks had no memory of progenitors of slave lineage, a number either remembered their parents' or grandparents' enslavement or knew of someone who had been enslaved. A few Northern blacks, including Sojourner Truth (Isabella Baumfree, c.1797–1883), were still enslaved in the mid-1820s; others lived as bonded servants. And many whites would have been able to remember a time when slavery existed in the North. Surely free blacks and whites at anti-slavery gatherings could not entirely ignore this fact, though there is ample evidence that they performed amnesia. Their recitations on abolitionist stages, however, were in part acknowledgments, indictments, and exorcisms of their complicity in slavery.

Black and white women abolitionists made their bodies present to one another in a new way in the anti-slavery movement: they gathered together in the same space, typically for their first time as fellow activists, often in sites that had previously been experienced as racially homogeneous. They were noticing the press of one another's bodies as well as the touching urgency of the slaves' imagined bodies. As Eve Sedgwick has explained in *Touching Feeling*, "even to talk about affect virtually amounts to cutaneous contact," so on both sides, these black and white women had to overcome their apprehension, their distrust – even, at times, their mutual repulsion.



In her first appearance in print, for instance, black abolitionist Sarah Douglass offered a vision of a utopian future in which “I see black and white mingle together in social intercourse, without a shadow of disgust appearing on the countenance of either.”<sup>35</sup> Blacks had to try to overcome their antipathy toward whites as whites had to try to overcome their racism. They all had to be aware of the “stickiness” of various historical performances of affect, but they also had to develop self-conscious practices, overarching strategies and provisional tactics that would enable them to reach their anti-slavery goals, often despite the customary workings of affect. This volume takes affect, as circulation, into account, even as it focuses on women’s mindful strategies to reshape it for abolitionist ends.<sup>36</sup>

Performance was central to black and white women’s anti-slavery activism, especially within the Garrisonian wing of the movement. Women consciously shaped their daily conversations around anti-slavery themes, recited abolitionist poems, delivered lectures, and staged dramatic dialogues, playlets, and play readings. When a Garrisonian activist, black or white, stood at a lectern and assumed the role of an imaginary slave in the recitation of a poem or the retelling of a slave narrative, she understood herself to be performing a revised sympathy rather than an empathy with the slave. She did not “transform” into the imagined slave, or assume that she felt what the slave experienced. She remained aware that she was herself, complicit in the institution of slavery, even if she practiced free-produce advocacy, petitioned against slavery, and daily dedicated her time to the movement. She wore her own clothes, not the costume of a slave; spoke in her own voice, not some presumed slave dialect. Audiences, furthermore, were aware that she was, still, herself. They perceived her as a speaker, even as they witnessed her incomplete characterization of the slave, slaveholder, or abolitionist.

Furthermore, unlike the solitary, silent white reader, these black and white women activists who recited poems or delivered lectures about slaves monitored their awareness of the gap between their performances of imaginary slaves and actual Northern as well as Southern slaves’ lives. They knew slaves like Sojourner Truth, spoke at the same gatherings, and routinely aided slave refugees fleeing North. As they performed, they gauged disparate audience responses, particularly in the 1830s, when they were unaccustomed to jointly organized interracial gatherings. As they watched themselves from the imagined slaves’ place of judgment, they considered their spectators’ responses, from reserved silence to anger. Gradually, they realized the dangers of representing the slave’s pain and began to represent her agency. This practice worked against voyeuristically appropriating the pain of the

other, against collapsing the self into the other. In intimate spaces such as parlors, Sunday school rooms, and town halls, the community judgment of their anti-slavery efforts was immediate, pressing, and palpable. As they tracked the audience, noticing the diverse impressions they left behind, women improvised a way forward, a way out of a pretend state of emergency into a real state of emergency and a cosmopolitan love.<sup>37</sup>

Abolitionist activists carried within their performances an awareness of previous gatherings, previous efforts to formulate community across difference. They sensed the movement, either forward or backward, of the cause. And at the end of most poetry readings, dramatic dialogues, speeches, and non-professional abolitionist-sponsored theatrical productions, abolitionist performers, either implicitly or explicitly, challenged audience members to *do something* about the plight of the slave. Often they demanded that audience members dismantle privilege. Sometimes they demanded that those privileges be extended to slaves. Usually there was a petition to sign, a sign-up sheet for door-to-door solicitation of signatures, a set of dues to pay, a book to purchase, an anti-slavery fair to plan.

From 1820 to 1865, female abolitionists routinely performed across racial and class boundaries to stage their activism. White women from working-class mill towns as well as the urban elite met with black women from the ranks of slave refugees, freed women, the middle class, and the black elite. While some female anti-slavery societies were composed of only black or only white members, many, like the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, were cross-racial from the first, and others integrated over time. For example, black women founded the first female anti-slavery society on February 22, 1832, in Salem, Massachusetts, but the president of that organization, Clarissa C. Lawrence, later became an officer of the integrated Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society, as well as a delegate to the cross-racial 1839 Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women.<sup>38</sup> Some groups started as white organizations and then became cross-racial: when Garrison castigated the all-white Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society for its racism, its leaders responded by coaxing a commitment to an interracial association from their more recalcitrant members. Although most of the 250 women on the final Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society membership list were white, as many as twenty-five of the seventy-five to one hundred *actively involved* members – those who “passed out petitions and anti-slavery tracts, made items for sale at fairs, or helped in society-sponsored schools and orphanages” – self-identified as black or “colored.” Somewhere between one-fourth and one-third of the active members of the Boston society were black. They, too, recited anti-slavery poems, shared stories of runaway slaves, and sympathized with the slaves.

Many studies of sentiment ignore the fact that many of the abolitionists who sympathized with the slave were free blacks, performing live within a political movement housed outside the state. The present study attempts a re-evaluation of these actual abolitionist performances, not silent readings, by focusing on young free black women's recitations and speeches as well as performances by whites – and by insisting upon historicizing abolitionists' disparate performances of “sympathy.”

Even before gathering in societies, abolitionist women drew upon established performance traditions such as reading aloud, first in their own homes, then in others' homes, and eventually in public gatherings within church basements and civic halls. Families particularly embraced the pastime of after-dinner reading. Importantly, a family might comprise a brother, sister, and aunt, as with abolitionist Elizabeth Chandler; of two sisters, as in the case of activist Frances Wright (1795–1852); or of members of a boardinghouse such as the one run by evangelical Mary S. Parker; or of a couple like Lucretia and James Mott (1788–1868), who invariably housed refugees, anti-slavery agents, and traveling Friends. Group reading was an intergenerational pursuit in these polyglot homes: loosely conceived “families” passed long evenings by gathering around the fire or tea table to listen as someone read aloud. These rituals were viewed as occasions for discussion, in the United States and beyond: in an American report of how Icelandic families practiced this custom, for example, a reporter noted that family members interrupted their reader with remarks and questions. Valuing the roots of this practice within their own childhoods, readers in the late 1820s recalled how women were allowed to voice their views in these settings. One writer remembered, for instance, how her cousin Frank read aloud to cousin Martha, “and we heard, well pleased, her varied remarks and shrewd observations on men and things.”<sup>39</sup> As author Maria Edgeworth (1768–1849) advised:

a paragraph read aloud from the newspaper of the day, a passage from any book which parents happen to be reading themselves, will catch the attention of the young people in a family, and will, perhaps, excite more taste and more curiosity, than could be given by whole volumes read at times when the mind is indolent or intent upon other occupations.<sup>40</sup>

Building upon the strategy of American actress and educator Susanna Haswell Rowson (c.1762–1824), who composed playlets for her female students to enact, Edgeworth advised women to read aloud, particularly “dialogues, dramas, and well-written narratives.”

As they gathered outside the family circle, women adapted this sort of reading toward activist goals, incorporating certain theatrical strategies.

Early anti-slavery societies, like the literary and benevolent associations that fostered them, provided women with new opportunities to speak with each other and also “as” each other, through newly theatricalized versions of reading aloud. The emphasis on performance in black literary groups “fostered an environment in which a truly democratic ‘sharing’ of texts could take place, and it ensured that cohesive groups could be formed from individuals with widely divergent literacy skills.”<sup>41</sup> The same thing was true for white women, particularly in the frontier communities establishing abolitionist societies, as they, too, possessed various levels of access to education. These performances enabled women to practice public speaking, engage in reasoned debate, and learn political skills, from formulating a constitution and electing officers to defending and rethinking their political views. And these stagings of anti-slavery radicalism enabled black and white women to transform sympathy to new ends.

### **A note on methodology**

To locate effective performance strategies, theatre artists and historians, like political activists, must be able to think through varied and conflicting notions of time. It is efficacious to imagine time simultaneously through a “circum-Atlantic fold” and through “segmented,” time-bound narratives.<sup>42</sup> The Epilogue of this volume embraces the fold, collapsing past and present to examine the ongoing repertoire of anti-slavery, even as it highlights useful practices disappearing from view. The fold collapses time zones, accenting the continuance, the similarities, and the experiential qualities of performance practices. It is particularly helpful in highlighting genealogies of ongoing structural violence. It is not the only important methodology in approaching time, however. Temporarily separating the past, present, and future – provisionally establishing discrete frames or movable prosceniums for purposes of analysis – illuminates more clearly the differences, disruptions, and distances among performance practices. This approach to time is particularly useful in foregrounding short-term tactics and in clarifying the distinctive performance contours of a particular moment in time. Importantly, it enables us to see the limits of our own endeavors, and forces us to try to see our moment in time not as the center of all time and the residue of all repertoires, but as a dangling moment, just a random moment among trillions. Focusing upon time-bound practices sharpens an awareness of the disparate, novel ways in which activists have intervened in state-sponsored violence over time. It also provides present-day scholar-artists with fresh angles of vision on their own activist techniques. What we

trace in the past is not just a version of or precursor to our own moment, but a distinct moment, with its own logic that challenges and mutates our own. This notion of time shapes the successive chapters of this book.

By juggling two notions of time, this book hopes to honor the differences among discrete past events even as it insists upon the impossibility of separating past and present. It reveals the distinctness of past performances of activism, even as it gestures toward the ways in which they bleed into the present-day fight against the trafficking of persons. It offers a cautionary tale and a set of new possibilities for fighting modern-day human trafficking and forced labor.

### Four chapters and an epilogue

By revising anti-slavery sympathy, the women in the Garrisonian wing of the anti-slavery movement launched what has become an ongoing effort to refine strategies for staging the relationship between the self and the other. Instead of asking audiences to sympathize with and rescue suffering, enslaved others, they not only depicted slave agency but also turned their attention to working on the self as a means of connecting with the other. They transformed sympathy for slaves into a critical act of self-judgment and a consideration of non-Western notions of the self. They staged a compassion for these newly constituted selves as a means of deepening their activist commitments to others. For some, this meant a love of the self-same. This self-reverence set the stage for a consideration of the importance of traveling metaphorically beyond one's childhood to improvise a provisional rather than a stable activist self. In traveling beyond the traditional behaviors of childhood, they achieved cosmopolitan self-possession within transatlantic communities.

Chapter 1, "From sentimental sympathy to activist self-judgment," distinguishes sympathy from empathy and reveals how women transformed sympathy into "metempsychosis," a practice wrenched from East Indian roots. Nineteenth-century women understood themselves to be exercising sympathy with, not empathy for, slaves. In fact, the English term "empathy" was not coined until 1909: a British psychologist named Edward Bradford Titchener (1867–1927) translated a German aesthetic term, *Einfühlung*, as "empathy" and then transferred that concept into psychoanalytical studies.<sup>43</sup> For early abolitionists, "sympathy" still evoked medical notions of involuntary responses among body parts and people. In the 1830s Garrisonian women converted this idea of sympathy as involuntary correspondence into a voluntary exercise that necessitated

a particular kind of *critical and partisan* spectatorship, distance, and self-judgment, as well as an activated awareness of another's material circumstances. For them, sympathy was not simply an emotional engagement with another's situation, nor an attempt to compass the other's very being.

Anti-slavery women's performances of sympathy were shaped by a fluid sense of time and personhood that Timothy McCarthy and John Stauffer identify as "romantic," but which was equally rooted in Eastern religious traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. From 1820 to 1840, as Western missionaries spread across Asia, and as abolitionists followed news of the British colonization of India, hundreds of articles on the Hindu practice of "metempsychosis," or the transmigration of souls at death, appeared in over thirty different United States journals. By 1840, the number of East Indians subjugated by the British exceeded the number of slaves freed in the British Caribbean, and many transatlantic abolitionists, outraged at British imperialism, nonetheless grew curious about Eastern practices in the far reaches of empire. Some encountered metempsychosis or transmigration of souls through their classical readings in Pythagoras, some through Jeremy Bentham's widely heralded 1789 defense of animals' rights. Others first learned of metempsychosis through travel literature. Many Americans inchoately merged Hinduism with Buddhism. For instance, a Boston woman read about metempsychosis in Howard Malcom's *Travels in South Eastern Asia*, and penned in her diary a detailed description of the "transmigration of souls" within the "Buddhist" tradition "believed by half the human race": Buddhism, she recorded in her somewhat clouded journal, is "continual transmigration according to the merit of the last life," as "beings . . . are doomed . . . to live, forever changing their form."<sup>44</sup>

In the performance of metempsychosis, souls merged, at the moment of death, into an unstable "all-soul." From this amorphous soul, which demolished individualized suffering and redemption – and indeed the very concept of the individual – newly unanchored souls broke off to travel into new bodies. The nature of that body depended upon their prior behavior. One's deeds determined what would happen after the merger with others into the "all-soul": a beggar might evolve into a king or devolve into a rat. Encountering Hindu practices encouraged black and white Garrisonians to rethink their notions of the individual as well as the relationship between bodies and souls and to re-evaluate the practice of identification. They called their own anti-slavery practice "metempsychosis" to highlight the fragility of human existence, the mutability of human inter-relatedness, the transitory and fragmentary nature of identity, and the importance of good deeds.

Abolitionist women combined, in a sort of cultural stew, Eastern notions such as metempsychosis with notions of Buddhist and Christian suffering and outrage. The more fluid sense of time that stemmed from this stew incorporated sacred time, the slow time that they encountered in the world of East Indian religious traditions. At times these anti-slavery borrowings from Eastern notions seem startling, as when black radical David Walker writes that if God does not send a deliverer to end slavery, the reason is that “the world in which we live does not exist, and we are deceived with regard to its existence.”<sup>45</sup> Through this Buddhist-inflected statement, as Robert Forbes has noted, Walker calls “the entire ontological structure of the world” into question. Metempsychosis, which differs from both sympathy and empathy, morphed anti-slavery sympathy into a more radical enactment of inter-subjectivity.

As Chapter 1 demonstrates, Quaker Elizabeth Margaret Chandler learned from the failures of her predecessor, experimentalist Frances Wright: instead of embracing capitalism and rejecting sympathy, Chandler rejected capitalism and transformed sympathy into metempsychosis. Initially, as the editor of the “Ladies’ Repository” in the abolitionist newspaper *The Genius of Universal Emancipation* (1821–39), she asked readers to practice free produce “Conversations” in which they convinced untested, risk-averse acquaintances to join the anti-slavery cause. By 1830, Chandler advised readers to practice metempsychosis, to place themselves mentally into the concrete circumstances of slaves’ lives as they could best imagine them. But Chandler’s followers did not imagine a gentleman “of property and standing” as the “impartial spectator” to this imaginary scene, as Enlightenment scholar Adam Smith had suggested. Instead, they envisioned a *partisan spectator*, either a slave or a more radical version of themselves, passing judgment on their activism. As a result, over time they learned to imagine the slave not as a generic, abject trope but as an independent or resistant individual naming the limits of abolition. This development, launched through the practice of metempsychosis, was particularly useful at the very outset of the anti-slavery movement, when it was difficult to gather testimony from actual slaves and risky for refugees to take the stage. Metempsychosis became such a central part of early nineteenth-century performance culture that in 1836 Robert Montgomery Bird, one of celebrated actor Edwin Forrest’s playwrights, published a lively satire of it.<sup>46</sup>

In a series of poetic publications between 1831 and 1834, Philadelphians Elizabeth Chandler and Sarah Louisa Forten debated the practice of metempsychosis, and their public dialogue serves in Chapter 1 as a comparative investigation of early approaches to abolitionist practice. Together Chandler

and Forten offered their audiences poetry, speeches, essays, and dialogues, revising each other's notions of how to embody abolition.<sup>47</sup> By contemplating how they directed women to perform anti-racism as well as anti-slavery through their poems, speeches, and dialogues – and by examining their exchange of views itself as a public performance – Chapter 1 demonstrates that Sarah Forten's more individualized, resistant slaves gradually replaced the generic suffering slaves of Chandler's earliest efforts, as Chandler herself adopted new representational strategies that highlighted slaves' performances of self-possession.

Chandler and Forten's "virtual" exchanges, their complementary contributions to *The Genius of Universal Emancipation* and the *Liberator* (1831–65), respectively, served in 1831 as a rehearsal for actual interracial gatherings within free produce societies later that same year. This formative time period, between the growing acceptance of immediate abolition among radicals in 1830 and their organizing in literary and intelligence societies as well as in interracial female anti-slavery societies in 1833, deserves careful attention because it reveals the dangers as well as the potential implicit in performing certain kinds of activism.

Chapter 2, "From the suffering of others to a 'compassion for ourselves,'" investigates how black women further revised the performance of sympathy by adding the periperformative of self-care. At a time when Northern officials proposed "pass laws" to monitor free blacks' movements – and colonizationists hoped to resettle blacks in Liberia, Mexico, or Canada – women incorporated a concern for their individual and collective selves into their anti-slavery activism. To grasp the crucial nature of this move within the free black community, consider that free blacks had voted in Pennsylvania for forty-one years as of 1832, but within five years the Pennsylvania Reform Convention adopted a new state Constitution to disenfranchise them. This juncture required a new approach, and women responded immediately. Instead of focusing solely upon slaves' bodies, free black women, in particular, started becoming more conscious of their own fragile situations, their own particular connectedness with slaves' plight. They regarded self-reverence as a crucial periperformative, but they disagreed about its nature. Boston's Maria W. Stewart demanded that women "feel interested for ourselves," advocating a self-advancement grounded in sisterly black unity, militant Christian righteousness, and democratic freedoms. She imagined a concern for the self *within* the church and state, through a Black Nationalist lens. In contrast, Philadelphia's Sarah Mapps Douglass asked women to recognize the precariousness of their own situations and endorse a "compassion for ourselves" as well as a keener



awareness of their interconnectedness with slaves. Hers was a compassion existing *despite* the state, linked to a desire to redress grievances *against* the state.<sup>48</sup>

Both Stewart and Douglass delivered lectures, but Stewart appeared on the public dais as an individual, lobbing direct attacks on multiple targets within her diverse town hall audiences, while Douglass spoke in more protected zones, sponsored by a recognized women's group. Partly as a result of the negative reception that Stewart faced, black and white women started assailing slavery indirectly rather than directly and collectively rather than individually. They formed these collectives within their homes, neighborhoods, churches, and, later, their free produce, literary, and anti-slavery societies. These societies, in turn, fostered a "compassion for ourselves."

As Chapter 2 demonstrates, between October 1831 and October 1832, Stewart and Douglass debated their competing views in the *Liberator*. Both Sarah Forten and Elizabeth Chandler continued to publish poems during this period, and gradually their performances altered in response to Stewart's and Douglass's appearances: they, too, incorporated into their poems a compassion for the self and a renewed commitment to free blacks' rights and privileges.

By caring for themselves as well as the slaves, Stewart and Douglass refocused their audiences on their own material circumstances. This led women to perceive the dangers they themselves faced, but also prompted them to consider further the wider material circumstances surrounding slavery and their complicity in these structures. Furthermore, it created an awareness of differences *within* the self and prompted them to foster a love of the self-same: within the self, the black community, and the larger anti-slavery community. This embrace led to the possibility of validating same-sex love. This potentiality may be traced through the union of Mary Grew (1813–1896) with Margaret Jones Burleigh (d. 1891), and the bond between Sallie Holley (1817–1893) and Caroline F. Putnam (1826–1917), who flourished within the affective umbrella of the Garrisonians.

Chapter 3, "Beyond our traditions' to a provisional, practical activism," investigates how this notion of embodying a concern for the self gradually developed into a more mobile performance of one's relationship to the self and others. Quaker Lucretia Coffin Mott transformed abolitionist practice through her belief that through their "inner lights," women would develop provisional selves, "would be carried beyond our education, beyond our traditions, beyond the religion of our childhood."<sup>49</sup> Focusing on a provisional selfhood altered the relationship between activists and slaves as well as among activists themselves. This chapter, along with Chapter 4, asks how

this figurative traveling beyond a stable self, as well as the women's amplified, transatlantic travel to the British Isles and Europe in the 1840s and 1850s, altered the ways in which American women staged anti-slavery. The abolitionist world-traveling of a pivotal leader of the female anti-slavery movement, Lucretia Mott, a delegate to the 1840 World's Anti-Slavery Convention, helped Garrisonians develop new, more flexible and practicable anti-slavery tactics.

Quaker women provided leadership in many facets of the female anti-slavery movement, so this analysis of Mott's real and imaginary travels broadens scholars' understanding of abolitionist performances as a whole. Mott was a follower of Elias Hicks (1748–1830), whose *Doctrinal Epistle* (1824) argued that American Quakers should not, in an eagerness to gain civic acceptance alongside other mainstream Protestant denominations, follow the lead of British Orthodox Quakers and adopt a uniform doctrine, church hierarchy, and set ritual. Instead, Hicks urged Quakers in the United States to develop a performance-based, practical ministry grounded in ever-shifting, half-perceived "truths." In fact, Hicks was reluctant to record his thoughts about Quaker principles, because he feared that they would become set doctrine. He believed in the efficacy of performance, particularly improvisation.

Unlike evangelical Christians, Hicks's followers did not value the image of the crucifixion; they did not valorize pain or suffering as a road to redemption. Nor did they expect others to agree with them. These facts figure prominently in how they staged their commitments to abolitionism: Mott's Hicksite focus on the provisional and imperfect nature of her performances informed her 1840 appearances in British Orthodox Quaker territory and translated into useful anti-slavery strategies in the transatlantic movement as a whole.

Chapter 4, "From anti-slavery celebrity to cosmopolitan self-possession," focuses on the improvisations of Ellen Craft, a slave refugee who disguised herself as a white master to flee with her husband from rural Georgia to Boston in the 1840s. Craft transformed travel into an extemporaneous performance of self-ownership and cosmopolitan citizenship, eventually settling in the British Isles. At pivotal moments in her travels, she capitalized on the power of remaining, paradoxically, *still in motion* onstage. As she began to move within an elite circle of British abolitionists, Craft staged a series of disruptive performance interventions, using "her tongue with considerable effect" to question others' biases.<sup>50</sup> These moments kept reverberating or "speaking" even when she moved out of the "mobile prosceniums" that encased them, allowing her to be *still speaking* even

when she was silent. While Lucretia Mott advocated traveling past childhood traditions, Craft demonstrated how childhood customs, such as a master and slave's traveling together, could be adapted to new ends. Importantly, she used improvisation to shield herself not only from the slaveholders of her youth but also from the sentimental abolitionist "family." And just as crucially, she rejected Lydia Maria Child's abolitionist vision of a reproductive, "hybrid" future in which intermarriages between "mulattas" and whites purportedly solved the problems of slavery and race.

Instead, Craft improvised her own version of a compassion for the self, her own notion of cosmopolitan citizenship, interrupting spectators' secret pleasure in the "National Thing," that disparate set of beliefs and practices that constitutes national citizenship. By investigating the paradoxical performance of stillness in motion, this chapter takes seriously the work of both Harvey Young, who writes tellingly about the power of stillness, and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who identifies the importance of travel and exchange. By examining Craft's performances not only of racial ambiguity but also of racial identification, it also engages the call by Tavia Nyong'o for an "untamed hybridity" that collapses time within the circum-Atlantic fold.<sup>51</sup> And it explores, too, the paradoxical way in which Craft's moments of outspokenness echoed through her silence onstage.

The Epilogue, "The repertoire of anti-slavery," reveals how nineteenth-century American anti-slavery performances haunt present-day efforts to fight against forced labor and the trafficking of persons, illuminating the fractures in the ongoing production of democracy as well as anti-slavery. Present-day performances of anti-trafficking are ghosted, to use Marvin Carlson's evocative term, by their nineteenth-century predecessors. These hauntings illuminate the shortcomings of present-day efforts to end the trafficking of persons, shortcomings that often surface, as well, in activist performance pieces. As a number of scholars of the Holocaust argue, current critiques of empathy fail to envision a *critical harnessing* of emotion.<sup>52</sup> Reconsidering certain aspects of nineteenth-century sympathy (not present-day sympathy or empathy), as transformed by Garrisonians, may aid performance scholars and artists in this complex, thorny task.

### In closing

This analysis of nineteenth-century performances of sympathy invites further study of present-day performances of inter-subjectivity on activist stages. It reveals how nineteenth-century black and white women transformed imperialist performances of sympathy and Enlightenment democracy into

productive activist critiques of the state. The precise constellation of concepts and practices that comprise “empathy” did not emerge until the late nineteenth century, and when they surfaced, they erased many of the critical interventions investigated in this volume. The current-day term “empathy,” in fact, is what linguists call a “repair term” – it recuperates part, *but not all*, of what was meant by the practice of “sympathy.” What fell away was, in part, the critical interventions of black and white Garrisonian women. By analyzing the ways in which these activists transformed Enlightenment philosopher Adam Smith’s notions of sympathy, by mapping the potential as well as the dangers in their sympathetic practice of “metempsychosis” and its successors, *Performing Anti-Slavery* recuperates certain useful periperformatives, particularly self-awareness, self-judgment, a compassion for the collective self, and a self-possession that deepens into cosmopolitan love.

### Notes

1. Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 11.
2. On “sentimental empathy,” see Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 101. Many scholars have focused on a solitary white reader who “empathizes with” the slave’s pain. Shirley Samuels summarizes the early scholarship: critics of the term “sympathy” (often used synonymously with “empathy”) warn that in this solitary reading “‘exhibition and commercialization’ stand in place of a ‘genuinely political and historical sense.’” Others note that sentimental silent reading uncovered “the brute facts of political and economic oppression,” altered readers’ “political as well as emotional values,” and swayed public sentiment toward anti-slavery. Quoted in Shirley Samuels, ed., *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4. Marcus Wood borrows from Karen Halttunen to lambast the pornographic “empathy” evoked by romantic writers who voyeuristically “empathized” with slaves’ suffering only to blame them for inflicting that pain. See Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography*, 13, 101; Karen Halttunen, “Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture,” *American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (1995): 303–34. Karen Sanchez-Eppler, similarly, speaks of “the precariousness of empathy,” arguing that abolitionist literature trades on “the allure of bondage” within “the same psychic ground as slaveholding itself”: Karen Sanchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 4, 25. Saidiya Hartman and Elizabeth Barnes agree, similarly eliding sympathy and empathy and focusing on white abolitionists: Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York

and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19; Elizabeth Barnes, *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 17. John Stauffer, in contrast, celebrates abolitionist “empathy”: John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 39. Janet Gray imagines the abolitionist as solely white: Janet Sinclair Gray, *Race and Time: American Women’s Poetics from Anti-Slavery to Racial Modernity* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), 73. As Carolyn Dean explains, Žižek and Agamben see “empathy and dignity” as belonging to “to a moral framework that defines suffering and persecution in tragic terms, relying on a thematics of heroism and redemption already exhausted by twentieth-century crimes.” See Carolyn J. Dean, “Empathy, Pornography, and Suffering,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2003): 88–124, at 94. In the face of these crimes, it is pornographic, theorists argue, to empathize with the sufferer, because to do so is to transform the other into the self and thereby obliterate the other through a rehearsal of Enlightenment universalism – or, alternatively, to validate a culture of universal victimization. This is a compelling argument about twenty-first-century practices, and it has sustained some brilliant critiques of nineteenth-century anti-slavery practices. Applying present-day theories, *whole cloth*, to past practices, however, blinds us to certain of their aspects, particularly their periperformative aspects: in this case, it blinds us to the diverse, individual ways in which black and white women adapted sympathy (not empathy) to their own ends. It also blinds us to activists’ rejection of individual suffering and salvation, to their embrace of self-judgment, awareness of complicity, and active commitment to redress wrongs.

3. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, “The Slave Auction,” in Frances Smith Foster, ed., *A Brighter Coming Day: A Frances Ellen Watkins Harper Reader* (New York: Feminist Press, City University of New York, 1990), 64 (italics mine).
4. For a discussion of how slavery creates the very notions of individual freedom and responsibility, capitalism, and proprietary notions of the self, see Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Fruits of Sorrow: Framing Our Attention to Suffering* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 7, and Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 117. On sentimental consumerism, see Lori Merish, *Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity Culture, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 2. At their best, Garrisonians were, like Ahmed’s witnesses, “open to being affected by that which one *cannot know or feel*.” Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 30. Ahmed reveals how emotions move, stick, slide, and connect bodies (*ibid.*, 4–14, 30, 39). Like Peggy Phelan before her, she exhorts readers to “inhabit the blank” between the self and the other in pain. See Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 33. On Protestant abolitionists, see Elizabeth J. Clapp and Julie Roy Jeffrey, eds., *Women, Dissent and Anti-Slavery in Britain and America, 1790–1865* (Oxford University Press, 2011). On compassion’s centuries-old emergence within

- performance, see Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). On contemporary evangelicalism, see Jill C. Stevenson, *Sensational Devotion: Evangelical Performance in Twenty-First-Century America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), and John Fletcher, *Preaching to Convert: Evangelical Outreach and Performance Activism in a Secular Age* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).
5. As Sedgwick explains, periperformative, “ordinary” utterances occur within “the mobile proscenium,” “the itinerant stage, the displaceable threshold” and are “complex, heterogeneous, reflective, mobile, powerful, and even eloquent”: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 73–75.
  6. “Theodore Parker’s Thanksgiving Sermon,” *Emancipator and Republican*: 33 (Dec. 12, 1850), S&AS.
  7. Robert Fanuzzi, *Abolition’s Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xxxiv.
  8. Tavia Nyong’o uses the term “circum-Atlantic fold” to fuse present and past in the triangular geopolitical zone that Joseph Roach calls the circum-Atlantic. By adapting the “fold” from Michel Foucault (not to mention Gilles Deleuze and Martin Heidegger) and by linking it to hybridity, Nyong’o complicates hybridity and time as well as American notions of “race” and sexuality. Tavia Amolo Ochieng’ Nyong’o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 4–5; Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
  9. Scotswomen funded British abolitionist George Thompson’s 1834–35 United States tour, which launched female anti-slavery societies across New England: Claire Taylor, *Women of the Anti-Slavery Movement: The Weston Sisters* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 23. Although British women abolitionists did not typically speak in public, they funded male speakers and assisted American female anti-slavery societies, particularly through contributions to anti-slavery fairs and advisory correspondence with United States officers. See Maurice Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), on transatlantic abolitionist activity in Philadelphia. On black abolitionism in the Midwest and West, see Eric Gardner, *Unexpected Places: Relocating Nineteenth-Century African American Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009). On Southern blacks’ abolitionism, see David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, *Beyond Bondage: Free Women of Color in the Americas* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 127.
  10. James Forten, Jr., *An Address Delivered before the Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia, on the Evening of the 14th of April, 1836* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1836), 13, Birney Anti-Slavery Collection, Johns Hopkins University; Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/> (accessed Nov. 1, 2013). On state-supported violence, see, for instance, Maria Weston Chapman, *How Can I Help to Abolish*

- Slavery? Counsels to the Newly Converted* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1855), pamphlet, S&AS; also in David Walker, *Walker's Appeal with a Brief Sketch of His Life* (1829; New York: printed by J. H. Tobitt, 1848).
11. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 6. Frances Wright and Maria W. Stewart prove the exceptions to this "rule." On bare life, see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford University Press, 1998), 4–11.
  12. Giorgio Agamben, in *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (University of Chicago Press, 2005), 57, is quoting Walter Benjamin. This passage from Benjamin may be found in his *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 257.
  13. Agamben, in *State of Exception*, 53, comments on Benjamin; the passage he comments on may be found in Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence" (1921), 183/239 (this is Agamben's citation). See Uwe Steiner, *Walter Benjamin: An Introduction to His Work and Thought*, trans. Michael Winkler (University of Chicago Press, 2010). On "homo sacer," see Agamben, *State of Exception*, 53. On contemporary performance and violence, see Patrick Anderson and Jisha Menon, *Violence Performed: Local Roots and Global Routes of Conflict* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
  14. Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 4–14.
  15. Cornelia Wells Walter, "The Lectures of the Boston Lyceum," *Daily Evening Transcript* 13 (Oct. 7, 1842): 2.
  16. Prominent Quakers included Philadelphians Grace and Sarah Douglass and Angelina (1805–1879) and Sarah Grimké (1792–1873), Abby Kelley Foster (1811–1887), who stumped miles in the 1830s and 1840s; Anna Elizabeth Dickinson (1842–1932), who delivered fiery talks in the 1860s; and Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823–1893), who founded *The Provincial Freeman* (1853–57) to support fugitives fleeing to Canada to escape the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. Speaking from her own experience as a free black woman espousing anti-slavery, Cary reveals the special dangers associated with women's leadership at mid-century: "Abbey Kelly [sic], Lucretia Mott and Lucy Stone, Anti-Slavery Lecturers, took their lives in their hands each time they attempted to urge freedom for the slave, and from this a faint idea can be gleaned as to the danger that threatened a colored woman, who publicly sought to aid the fugitive slave to seek a home in Canada, and offered the means to carry them there." See Mary Ann Shadd Cary, "The Foremost Colored Canadian Pioneer, in 1850," 4, Mary Ann Shadd Cary Papers, folder 1, "Biography," Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. Unitarians also contributed a number of distinguished women to the leadership of the female anti-slavery societies, including author and editor Lydia Maria Child (1802–1880); poet and essayist Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825–1911); children's author Elizabeth Lee Cabot Follen (1787–1860); editor and organizer Maria Weston Chapman, one of six sisters committed to the cause; physiologist Harriot K. Hunt (1805–1875); minister Antoinette Brown Blackwell (1825–1921); and economist Caroline Healey Dall (1822–1912).

- The term “Unitarian” describes those Christians who, after the Council of Nicea in 325 first established the concept of the Trinity as dogma, continued to hold that God was a divine *unity* and that Jesus was simply a prophet. The first American Unitarian Association was formed in 1825.
17. On domestics, see Maria W. Chapman, *Right and Wrong in Boston: Annual Report of the [Boston] F[emale] A[nti]-S[lavery] S[ociety]; with a Sketch of the Obstacles Thrown in the Way of Emancipation by Certain Clerical Abolitionists and Advocates for the Subjection of Woman in 1837*, vol. III (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1837), 58, LC. For “the domestic constitution,” see Hubbard Winslow (1799–1864), pastor of Boston’s Bowdoin Street Congregationalist Church (1832–44), who linked all abolitionist women with radical Frances Wright: “enough of Fanny Wrights; whether they appear in the name of avowed infidelity, or of *civil* and *human rights*, or of *political economy*, or of *morals* and *religion*, their tendency is ultimately the same – the alienation of the sexes, the subversion of the distinguishing excellence and benign influence of woman in society, the destruction of the domestic constitution” (quoted in Chapman, *Right and Wrong*, 54).
  18. Amy Swerdlow, “Abolition’s Conservative Sisters: The Ladies’ New York City Anti-Slavery Societies, 1834–1840,” in Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women’s Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 31–44. One-third of the founding members of the American Anti-Slavery Society were Quakers: of sixty-two founders, twenty-one were Quakers; all four women present at the initial meeting were Quakers, Lucretia Coffin Mott among them. Three black men helped found the Society, and many more joined.
  19. Herbert Aptheker, “The Quakers and Negro Slavery,” *The Journal of Negro History* 25, no. 3 (July 1940): 331–62. For the story of the curse of Ham, see Genesis 9:20–25: Ham sinfully glimpses his father’s drunken nakedness, causing the curse on him and his descendants. Noah’s son, Ham, settles in Egypt after the flood.
  20. Lydia Maria Child, letter to Catharine Maria Sedgwick, May 31, 1834, Catharine Maria Sedgwick Papers, part III, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. See Carolyn L. Karcher, ed., *A Lydia Maria Child Reader* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 14. Asad identifies two main sources of human rights theory: John Hedley’s idea that it is rooted in Renaissance humanism and Lynn Hunt’s notion that it is grounded in Enlightenment sensibility. He argues that eighteenth-century sympathy ignores difference, imagining suffering others simply as potential Christian converts. This insight is borne out by evangelical Tappanite performances of anti-slavery. However, the liberal religionists who shunned the crucifixion and missionary spirit and instead embraced a rational, historical stance as outliers determined to reform the state, offer a different approach, as this volume demonstrates. Talal Asad, “Reflections on the Origins of Human Rights,” lecture, Georgetown University, Sept. 28, 2009; see also Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and*



*Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). For a broad-based overview of global anti-slavery, see Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

21. On Tappanite demographics, see Swerdlow, "Abolition's Conservative Sisters," 33, 36. On Tappanite women's retreat, see Leslie M. Harris, "From Abolitionist Amalgamators to 'Rulers of the Five Points: The Discourse of Interracial Sex and Reform in Antebellum New York City,'" in Patrick Rael, ed., *African-American Activism before the Civil War: The Freedom Struggle in the Antebellum North* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 250–71, at 257.
22. "Man is great" is quoted in James Oliver Horton, "Freedom's Yoke: Gender Conventions among Antebellum Free Blacks," in Rael, ed., *African-American Activism before the Civil War*, 168–87, at 171. Marcus Wood reveals how dangerous abolitionist art is when it attempts to glorify black suffering and white rescuers, as in Tappanite performances. Marcus Wood, "Emancipation Art, Fanon and the 'Butchery of Freedom,'" in Brychan Carey and Peter J. Kitson, eds., *Slavery and the Cultures of Abolition: Essays Marking the Bicentennial of the British Abolition Act of 1807* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), 11–41. Dana Luciano focuses upon mourning as a response to long-standing, institutionalized violence: Dana Luciano, *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York University Press, 2007). Lauren Berlant identifies the "national sentimentality" maintaining privilege in the George W. Bush era (2001–09), examining the ongoing repertoire of the Tappanites: Lauren Berlant, "The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, and Politics," in Sara Ahmed, Jane Kilby, Celia Lury, Maureen McNeil, and Beverley Skeggs, eds., *Transformations: Thinking through Feminism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 33–47, at 33; and Lauren Berlant, "Introduction: Compassion (and Withholding)," in Lauren Berlant, ed., *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 2–4. Building upon Jacques Derrida's insight that the law cannot overcome the gap between its own universalism and the challenges issued to it, Berlant concludes that the trauma–victim–reparation cycle, tied to a sentimental optimism, necessitates an ever-receding future that encodes (heterosexual) reproduction. "The cost of the contract" of compassion, she explains, "is the muffling of an analytically powerful and political rage, an equivocation of demand and radical critique, and a concession to short-term coalition building of a politics of the long haul." Lee Edelman, similarly, lambasts "compassion's compulsory disavowal of its callousness – a sacrifice to its fantasy of holding the other in love's embrace." The present study maintains that these scholars are responding to lingering traces of the Tappanite performance of suffering and sympathy, which disallow the love of the self-same that surfaces among Garrisonians in the nineteenth century. This is another reason to shift attention to Garrisonian performances of activism. On the trauma–victim–reparation cycle, see Berlant, "The Subject of True Feeling," 44, and Lee Edelman, "Compassion's Compulsion," in Lauren Berlant, ed., *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 159–218, at 162.

23. Debra Gold Hansen, *Strained Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 143–49, 11. See also Beth A. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005); Taylor, *Women of the Anti-Slavery Movement*.
24. William Adams, "Reminiscence No. 41 [Extracts from the Manuscript Biography and Diary of William Adams, from 1779 to 1878, Continued]," *The Journal* (Aug. 26, 1874): 195; diary entry, 10 Mo. 12th, 1841.
25. Harriet Martineau, *The Martyr Age of the United States* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan & Co., Otis Broaders & Co.; New York: John S. Taylor, 1839), 3, LC.
26. On anti-slavery demographics, see Edward Magdol, *The Antislavery Rank and File: A Social Profile of the Abolitionists' Constituency* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 37–38. Organized abolitionist movements surfaced within the United States, England, France, Brazil, and Cuba, generating disparate performances in each country. For a comparative analysis of anti-slavery movements, see Laird W. Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States* (Cambridge University Press, 2007). For overviews of the three wings of the abolitionist movement, see Lawrence J. Friedman, *Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830–1870* (Cambridge University Press, 1982); Michael Bennett, *Democratic Discourses: The Radical Abolition Movement and Antebellum American Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Steven Mintz and John Stauffer, eds., *The Problem of Evil: Slavery, Freedom, and the Ambiguities of American Reform* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007). Throughout this book, Forten, Stewart, Douglass, and Craft figure as "black" women because of their performances of self-identification with the black community. Their contemporaries viewed them variously: as "colored" (the "polite" term), as "Negro" (a term that Douglass found painful), or as "mulatta" (of mixed-race lineage). By 1830, almost 14 percent of the black population in the United States comprised free blacks, numbering 319,599. In Northern cities, middle-class blacks owned businesses and occupied a variety of skilled trades: see Gaspar and Hine, *Beyond Bondage*, 128.
27. Quoted in Fanuzzi, *Abolition's Public Sphere*, 1–2.
28. For "by gentlemen . . .," see [Maria Weston Chapman], *Right and Wrong in Massachusetts* (Boston: Dow & Jackson's Anti-Slavery Press, 1839), 153. For a discussion of anti-abolitionist mobs, see Leonard L. Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971). On detractors' threats, see Martineau, *The Martyr Age*, 23, 26.
29. Mark Sanders, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 10. I thank Gibson A. Cima for introducing me to Sanders's work: see Gibson Alessandro Cima, "Resurrecting *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* (1972–2008): John Kani, Winston Ntshona, Athol Fugard, and Postapartheid South Africa," *Theatre Survey* 50 (2009): 91–118.
30. Quoted in Stauffer, *Black Hearts*, 15, 175.

31. Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 38–39.
32. Merish, *Sentimental Materialism*, 199. On Foster, see Dorothy Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Anti-Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 32–33.
33. Heather Nathans, *Slavery and Sentiment on the American Stage, 1787–1861: Lifting the Veil of Black* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 8. Nathans expands Jeffrey Richards’s insight that eighteenth-century representations of Africans elicited anti-slavery interpretations (*ibid.*, 34). See Jeffrey Richards, *Drama, Theatre, and Identity in the American New Republic* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). On representing blacks, including children, as “things,” see Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York University Press, 2011), 20.
34. Daphne A. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 42.
35. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 17; Zillah [Sarah Mapps Douglass], “Ladies’ Department: Female Literary Association. To a Friend,” *Liberator* 2, 26 (June 30, 1832): 103, APSO.
36. On “sticky” affect, see Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 91. Ahmed compares experiencing an emotion to feeling “the ‘press’ of an object, the very affect of one surface upon another” (*ibid.*, 7). Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg similarly define affect as “the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world’s apparent intractability.” Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” in Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 1–25, at 1.
37. The repertoire of cosmopolitan love lingers in the theories of contemporary scholars Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, who champion “a material and political love.” Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 351–52.
38. Dorothy Sterling, ed., *We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), 109. Female societies often differed ideologically from male organizations: the women in the New York Chatham Street Chapel society, for example, did not seek, as their male counterparts did, to “improve the minds, the character, or the morals of the free black population,” nor did they, in their constitution, seek to “join hypocrisy to persecution by *dictating* to them how they are to improve their character and their prospects” (Swerdlow, “Abolition’s Conservative Sisters,” 36; italics in original). On “actively involved” members, see Hansen, *Sisterhood*, 64–65.
39. “Variety” (“Winter Evening in Iceland”), *The Ladies Garland* 3, no. 7 (Mar. 25, 1826): 27, APSO. “Reminiscence,” *Ladies’ Magazine* 1, no. 7 (July 1828): 315, APSO.

40. Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education* (1798; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835), 255. On the early nineteenth-century pedagogical emphasis on training in reading aloud, see Richard L. Venezky, "The American Reading Script and Its Nineteenth-Century Origins," *Publishing Research Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (June 1990): 16–28.
41. Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 54–56. Many women justified their abolitionism as an extension of their work in benevolent societies. When the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society suffered a mob attack in 1835, for example, Maria Weston Chapman asked the editor of the *Boston Courier*, "when before, in this city, have gentlemen of standing and influence, been incensed against a benevolent association of ladies, for holding their annual meeting, inviting a lecturer to address them, and requesting their friends to attend, after the custom of benevolent societies?" Quoted in Ruth Bogin and Jean Fagan Yellin, "Introduction," in Yellin and Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, 1–19, at 1. As Chapman's detractors knew, however, even a deeply problematic relationality such as "benevolence" can in certain situations create an "inter-subjective or relational citizenship" that binds individuals "to one another rather than the state" – though, as Susan M. Ryan acknowledges, benevolence cannot dismantle privilege. Susan M. Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race & the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 8.
42. Tavia Nyong'o identifies a "circum-Atlantic fold" of time in his study of hybridity in the antebellum era. Like Lauren Berlant and Leon Edelman, he collapses past, present, and future together within the fold, to analyze ongoing affective practices. Nyong'o's fold, like Tracy C. Davis's "performative time," surfaces widely in recent works: for example, in Harvey Young's analysis of critical stillness as a means of combating racism within the fold. Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz*, 18–19; Tracy C. Davis, "Performative Time," in Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait, eds., *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 142–67, at 145; Harvey Young, *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 50–63.
43. Lauren Wispe, "History of the Concept of Empathy," in Nancy Eisenberg and Janet Strayer, eds., *Empathy and Its Development* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 17–37, at 18.
44. Immediate abolitionism, in McCarthy and Stauffer's view, was not based in rational Enlightenment thought but in the Romantic thought that celebrated inner freedom and thwarted convention, that shunned linear time, and that believed in interracial cooperation. These editors see abolitionism as emerging from African American men's print culture. The present study attempts to recast black abolitionists through a performance genealogy that includes women. See Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer, eds., *Prophets of*

- Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism* (New York and London: New Press, 2006), xxvi. On East Indians, see Carey and Kitson, eds., *Slavery and the Cultures of Abolition*, 1–2. On animal rights, see Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation Printed in the Year 1780 and Now First Published* (London: T. Payne, 1789), ccix, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, <http://gdc.gale.com/products/eighteenth-century-collections-online/>, doc. no. CW3304763965 (accessed Oct. 14, 2013); Louisa Lee Waterhouse, journal, 1839–41, 177, entry, Apr. 1840, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
45. Walker, *Walker's Appeal*, 18; Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 236.
  46. Robert Montgomery Bird, *Sheppard Lee* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1836), LC. When Bird's title character dies, his spirit occupies other bodies, as in the Hindu practice of metempsychosis. Bird inverts expectations: as Lee tumbles from one embodied existence to another, he becomes a Quaker who fails to perform anti-slavery activism and a slave who is relatively content with his situation. Chandler edited the "Repository" from 1829 to 1834.
  47. Janet Sinclair Gray compares and contrasts the rhetorical strategies of Chandler in "The Kneeling Slave" and Forten in "An Appeal to Woman," but I investigate their ongoing, extended, public performances. Gray, *Race and Time*, 74–75. See Margaret [Elizabeth Margaret Chandler], "The Kneeling Slave," in "Literary: The Kneeling Slave," *The Genius of Universal Emancipation* 1, no. 3 (June 1830): 44, APSO; Ada [Sarah Louisa Forten], "An Appeal to Woman," in "Literary [sic]: Hymn of the Slaves," *Liberator* 4, no. 5 (Feb 1, 1834): 20, APSO. On the Female Literary Association of Philadelphia, see Julie Winch, "'You Have Talents – Only Cultivate Them': Philadelphia's Black Female Literary Societies and the Abolitionist Crusade," in Yellin and Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, 101–18.
  48. Kathleen Woodard's well-balanced analysis of how current-day legal scholars, philosophers, and literary critics treat the notion of "compassion" reveals how disparate individuals may share common ground despite different angles of vision: Kathleen Woodward, "Calculating Compassion," in Lauren Berlant, ed., *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 59–86, at 65–68.
  49. Lucretia Mott, "This Internal Light of the Soul," in Dana Greene, ed., *Lucretia Mott: Her Complete Speeches and Sermons* (New York: Edwin Mellon Press, 1980), 349–58, at 353.
  50. "Personal," *The Independent, Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social, and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts* 19, no. 946 (Jan. 17, 1867): 4, APSO. For analyses of the Crafts' slave narrative as literature, see Audrey Fisch, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative* (Cambridge University Press; 2007).
  51. On the "National Thing," see Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 202. For a performance-based analysis of this phenomenon, see Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz*, 32, 18–19;

- Young, *Embodying Black Experience*, 50–63; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 19. Craft improvised an “untamed hybridity” within the “circum-Atlantic fold.” Nyong’o, *The Amalgamation Waltz*, 32, 18–19.
52. Carolyn J. Dean, “Empathy, Pornography, and Suffering,” 97; LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing*, 38–39.