

Reading Methodist Characters
The Figure and Politics of Popular Evangelicalism in American Fiction, 1790-1860

by

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Dedication

For my parents, Victoria and Herbert Barnes, and my grandmother, Mary Carmel Colombano

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Abstract

Reading Methodist Characters examines the imaginative appropriation of Methodist and anti-Methodist discourse by U.S. fiction writers working within the Calvinist tradition between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. From the early national novels of Brackenridge and Sedgwick to Hawthorne's romanticism and Stowe's sentimentalism, this dissertation establishes and decodes Methodism's central yet ambivalent significance within American literary history. Whether metonymically representing all evangelical upstarts or metaphorically evoking the enthusiastic, illiterate, and emotional character that distinguished them from their establishment counterparts, Methodism was the figurative vehicle through which authors depicted the dramatic rise of popular evangelicalism and its ramifications for the development of American letters. Controversial from its inception in the 1730s, John Wesley responded to the mockery of his reform movement by declaring the distinguishing mark or "character" of a Methodist to be emotional rather than doctrinal or liturgical. Their emphasis on religious affect set Methodists apart in Britain and would continue to do so in America, but it was the paradox of Methodism that made it so appealing to nineteenth-century fiction writers. "Illiterate" in their lack of literary training or formal schooling, Methodists nevertheless were eloquent and powerful preachers. Often extravagantly emotional, they were also known, as their name implies, for the methodical way they went about securing salvation. Unrepentantly enthusiastic, Methodists nonetheless exhibited an unswerving commitment to practical piety and experimental Christianity. Finally, their fierce opposition to fiction was waged while skillfully employing narrative, imagery, theatricality, and a keen understanding of human psychology in their mission to evangelize every person in the rapidly expanding republic. The Methodist characters this dissertation examines, from Teague O'Regan to Uncle Tom, embody these paradoxical qualities and reflect their creators' conflicting opinions about Methodism's miraculous rise to dominance in the nineteenth-century United States. Reliance on a monolithic evangelicalism has prevented literary scholars from discerning the complex ways these writers employed the ongoing competition and confrontation between Methodists and Calvinists to critique emerging religious attitudes about

literature, inspiration, education, and the means of appealing to a mass audience. *Reading Methodist Characters* rectifies this critical oversight by recovering the literary and political significance of Methodist identity.

Introduction

The Character of an American Methodist

Pleased with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet and talks melodiously,
 Pleased with the primitive tunes of the choir of the whitewashed church,
 Pleased with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist preacher,
 or any preacher....looking seriously at the camp-meeting (ln. 775-77)

Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" (1855)

2014 marks the twentieth anniversary of Jenny Franchot's path-breaking *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism*. Like many other works of American literary history published in the last twenty years, this dissertation has been greatly influenced by Franchot's compelling argument that "anti-Catholicism operated as an imaginative category of discourse through which antebellum American writers...indirectly voiced the tensions and limitations of mainstream Protestant culture" (xvii). Through readings of popular and elite cultural productions ranging from novels and poems to works of history and travel literature, *Roads to Rome* persuasively describes how, in "the three decades prior to the Civil War" and especially in the Northeast, American authors used "Romanism" as a "metaphoric construct and surrogate for Roman Catholicism" (xvii) that frequently captured the simultaneous attraction and repulsion which the "foreign faith" elicited from antebellum Protestants. While affirming Franchot's central claims and modeling its methodological approach on *Roads to Rome*, *Reading Methodist Characters* complicates this influential account of the "Protestant" imagination by recovering a division within American Protestantism that was as culturally pervasive and artistically influential as its encounter with Catholicism. Since before the American Revolution, Calvinists and Methodists confronted one another from across a theological, political, and literary divide that made them fierce opponents despite a shared commitment to evangelicalism. Throughout the nineteenth century they competed for members and contested each other's claims to national religious leadership. Scholars have tended to treat American evangelicalism "as a

monolithic cultural force” (Coleman 286) and, as a result, have missed the many ways in which authors appropriated the controversy between Methodists and Calvinists¹ for their own disparate artistic and political ends. A recent surge in historical studies of early American Methodism makes it an ideal moment to recapture its distinctive character and function within the imagination of the early national and antebellum United States.

Before anti-Catholicism experienced its midcentury renaissance and came to serve the wide variety of imaginative purposes that Franchot discusses, anti-Methodism was a more prominent cultural discourse and offered writers the rhetorical raw materials with which to fashion a creative response to the rapidly changing religious landscape of the early republic. Methodists were at the forefront of the democratization of Christianity that radically altered the Protestantism inherited from the colonial period, making it more evangelical, enthusiastic, and, most importantly, more popular. The religious free market that emerged as a result of the gradual separation of church and state meant that the people, rather than the clergy, came to control and shape the kind of Protestantism that would sweep across and keep pace with a United States rapidly expanding in geographic size and population. As historians such as Nathan Hatch, John Wigger, Christine Heyrman, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark have demonstrated, Methodism’s miraculous rise to dominance signaled the victory of the “upstart sects” over the established denominations of the colonial era, Calvinists chief among them. Congregationalists and Presbyterians were not willing, however, to cede their position as the nation’s spiritual and cultural leaders just because Methodist and Baptist churches eclipsed theirs in size. Calvinists had provided the Revolution with its religious rationale and were not about to hand over guidance of the ship of state to people they believed to be illiterate enthusiasts and corrupt demagogues despite evangelical affiliation. Calvinists still controlled the academies, colleges, newspapers, and other institutions through which a unique national identity was being constructed and disseminated. And as we have been taught by a long line of literary historians from Perry Miller and Sacvan Bercovitch to Ann Douglas, Lawrence Buell, and Gregory

¹ Throughout this dissertation I use the term “Calvinist” to refer to those denominations within the Reformed tradition which comprised the colonial-era religious establishment, primarily Presbyterians and Congregationalists but also Anglicans. This word choice reflects the way early national and antebellum Americans consistently wrote and thought about the relationship between up-and-coming Methodists and the establishment “Calvinists” who strove to maintain their privileged position in the new nation. Likewise, I use the term “Methodists” to refer to Wesleyan Methodist denominations espousing an Arminian theology. The divide between Methodists and Calvinists was as much about class and politics as theological or denominational affiliation and my terminology is meant to recover that dynamic. Baptists, for example, were mostly Calvinist in their theological orientation but here are grouped with other “popular” evangelicals because Baptists, like Methodists, opposed the

Jackson, American literature emerged from the intellectual, literary, and Calvinist tradition of New England Puritanism. Given such facts it is little wonder that scholars of eighteenth and nineteenth-century U.S. culture have been slow to discern the indirect and ambivalent ways that Methodism influenced the development of American letters. This is why Franchot's book can prove so useful, for it offers an explanatory model capable of handling the complexity with which American authors, writing from assorted orientations within the Calvinist tradition, appropriated and deployed anti-Methodism in their poetry and prose.

In *Reading Methodist Characters* I explain how anti-Methodism functioned as “an imaginative category of discourse” through which American authors, and especially fiction writers, mocked Methodism for its excessive emotionalism and untutored simplicity while simultaneously registering the desire for those very same features and the appeal they held for American audiences. Like anti-Catholicism, anti-Methodism was a national phenomenon based in New England and led by Calvinists terrified by the sudden spike in the membership and cultural influence of an antagonistic Christian other. John Wigger suggests the scale of the Methodists' achievement and the astonishment of their establishment competitors when he observes that, “in 1775 Methodists constituted only 2 percent of the total church membership in America. By 1850 their share had increased to more than 34 percent. This growth stunned the older denominations. At mid-century, American Methodism was nearly half again as large as any other Protestant body, and almost ten times the size of the Congregationalists, America's largest denomination in 1776” (1). Like anti-Catholicism, anti-Methodism's roots were European and its imagery and rhetoric grounded in the United States' colonial past. My dissertation argues, along lines similar to Franchot's study, that anti-Methodist discourse was significantly changed when it “encountered novel, intriguingly American, factors,” among the most important being “the establishment of a democracy at once revolutionary and conservative” (xxi). As Methodism achieved numerical superiority and contended with Calvinism for influence over the religious and cultural life of the republic, it developed a distinctly American identity owing to its place within that sociopolitical context. Religious liberty, westward expansion, the slavery issue, the proliferation and controversy of camp meetings, and exposure to African-American religious traditions also contributed to making nineteenth-century American Methodism quite distinct from its British counterpart. Finally, anti-Catholicism and anti-Methodism actually had a history of intersecting. Some of the earliest anti-Methodist publications to appear in eighteenth-century

Britain condemned the religion of Wesley by delineating its similarities with Catholicism, a strategy employed by Methodism's American opponents as well.²

It would be a reductive misrepresentation to argue that authors like Nathaniel Hawthorne and Harriet Beecher Stowe uncritically adopted anti-Methodist arguments and imagery, and in the pages that follow I strive to capture the complexity of their deployment of its tropes, frequently for artistic ends equally or even more critical of Calvinism's shortcomings. In this, too, the phenomenon at issue resembles the vicissitudes of Catholicism in the American imagination. Indeed, Franchot states that the "resurgence of Puritan antipathy toward Rome in antebellum America is less remarkable than its appearance alongside a new wave of sympathetic, and at times voyeuristic, fascination" with the Catholic other, a blend of "extreme prejudice and imitative desire [that] uneasily coexisted in many individual minds" (xxii) and the culture at large. By the 1830s a competing picture of Methodist religiosity began to circulate in American culture, one sympathetic towards its emotionalism, moved by its untutored eloquence, fascinated by its enthusiasm, and somewhat jealous of its popular appeal and ability to captivate audiences despite lacking literary polish. These two portraits would continue to compete with and influence one another through the end of the nineteenth century, often appearing in juxtaposition and sometimes within the same book, poem, or tract. Thanks in part to the influx of Catholic immigrants, the 1830s and 1840s marked a turning point for Methodism in America, both as Protestant denomination and metaphorical construct. Methodists, however, also became more literary. They began founding universities, publishing theological treatises, and generally imitating their Calvinist competitors in the hope of acquiring social respectability and prestige. We start to find fictional portrayals of Methodist preachers that cast them as heroic figures taming the frontier for Christ. Articles begin to appear in literary journals that describe the aesthetic and spiritual enjoyment to be had by attending a humble Methodist meeting. Camp meetings get domesticated, regulated, and increasingly become socially acceptable venues for the public enactment of middle-class piety.

By "abstracting several key Protestant preoccupations with Romanism," (xxiii) such as ceremony, celibacy, and the priesthood, Franchot is able to pinpoint and interrogate their presence in works as generically disparate as "the crypto-pornographic anti-Catholic tales of

² See Lavington, "The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared" (1754) and Philo-Aletheias, "Some remarks on the nature, causes, dangerous Errors, and infectious spread of the present religious Enthusiasm in America" (1779) in the list of Works Cited at the end of this introduction.

abduction and seduction, the sentimental sketches of Italy that filled contemporary magazines, ... [and] the doctrinally ambivalent fiction of Hawthorne, Melville, and Stowe” (xxii). Whether “analyzing confession in Hawthorne’s fiction or monasticism in Melville’s tales of captivity” (xxiii), *Roads to Rome* “reveals how an intricately metaphorized Catholicism” (xxii) served as an ambivalent symbol of American Protestantism’s strengths and weaknesses. In the next section of this introduction I examine the figure of Methodism in detail and delineate the principle preoccupations of its literary deployment, including itinerancy, illiteracy, enthusiasm, and extravagant emotion. “To uncover the cultural importance of the theological debate fiercely waged between American” Methodists and Calvinists, this dissertation, like *Roads to Rome*, “analyzes a range of generically disparate texts” (xviii) but focuses on fiction. *Reading Methodist Characters* examines novels and short stories published by American authors between the 1790s and the 1850s. This emphasis on prose fiction is a result of the frequency with which its practitioners employed the figure of Methodism to comment upon the dramatic changes being wrought upon the religious landscape between the Revolution and the Civil War. Instead of fiction featuring convents and Catholic cathedrals, I will discuss novels containing camp meetings and short stories involving Methodist chapels. Instead of Protestant tourists enjoying “the attraction of repulsion” as they gawk at the imagery and ceremonies of Roman Catholicism, I will discuss Calvinist voyeurs who write about their visits to Methodist camp meetings with a blend of fascination and disgust. I will argue that Methodism, like Catholicism, offered Americans “novel structures of interiority and public conduct” as well as an attractive alternative to Calvinism that was better suited to a liberal democratic society by virtue of its commitments to free will, unlimited atonement, the possibility of perfection, and the necessity of couching such beliefs in language that was accessible and engaging to the average American. Like the Catholic body, the Methodist body became a metaphor for unacceptable levels of emotionalism and the measure of enthusiasm. While the Catholic priest is replaced by the Methodist circuit rider, the latter is similarly portrayed as a hypocritical con artist whose piety cloaks the most unchristian conduct imaginable. We now turn to examples of Methodism in the Calvinist imagination of the early republic that are particularly useful for understanding its metonymic representation of popular evangelicalism.

The Figure of Methodism in the Calvinist Imagination

By Methodists, I mean not merely that particular sect or denomination of fanatics, who are known exclusively by that appellation; but all your itinerant, ignorant, bawling, field and barn preachers, whatever may be their professed tenets, who go about “creeping into men’s houses, leading captive silly women,” exerting themselves to destroy regular and established societies, alienating the minds of the people from their established pastors, and indeed from all clergymen regularly inducted to their sacred office. These wretches are generally demagogues, and the characters of the most of them are stained with abominable vices. (19)

Thomas Green Fessenden, *Democracy Unveiled* (1805)

This dissertation argues that the men and women responsible for the creation of our national literature in the decades after independence turned to the distinctive and controversial character of American Methodism to represent the dramatic rise of popular evangelicalism and critique its literary and political ramifications. By recovering the lost significance of the figure of Methodism found throughout the poetry and prose of the early national and antebellum eras, *Reading Methodist Characters* establishes a new explanatory narrative connecting the contemporaneous rise of American literature and a recognizably modern brand of evangelicalism in large part distinguished by its anti-intellectual, “illiterate” character and defined by its difference from and opposition to the Calvinist religious and educational establishment. The cultural import of the contest between Methodists and Calvinists extended well beyond the confines of religion, and this dissertation is devoted to tracking its literary appropriation by a wide range of writers working between the Revolution and the Civil War. Though the four chapters that follow deal almost exclusively with fiction, here I offer a discussion of a few poems because they succinctly illustrate both the literary phenomenon at issue and its political and religious entanglements.

The epigraph above is taken from a footnote to Fessenden’s Hudibrastic satire of the Jefferson administration and recognizes a number of distinctions and definitions at the heart of *Reading Methodist Characters*. As he so colorfully explains, Fessenden is using “Methodists” metonymically, to represent not just the “fanatics” of that “particular sect” but as a figure for an entire class of religious characters distinguished by common features that have very little to do with faith or theology. It is not because of “their professed tenets” that the Methodists have come

to represent their colleagues, but rather owing to their education, mode of preaching, and relationship to the religious establishment, not to mention their hypocritical personal morality and unstable mental state. And it is primarily to invoke the last of these resonances that Fessenden deploys the figure within his sociopolitical satire. The footnote is linked to a line of the poem in which Jean-Jacques Rousseau is said to be “Mad as our Methodists at least” (19). It seems a strange simile, the yoking together of the infidel philosophe and the evangelical enthusiast. But it is no stranger than the alliance of Jeffersonians and Methodists that actually did form at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a product of political necessity and the strength of the Federalist-Calvinist opposition (Porterfield 169-72). The figure is therefore quite apt, but also stands as an example of the Methodist metaphor, a trope in which “Methodist” stands for a host of interrelated and unflattering attributes such as excessive emotionalism, pious hypocrisy, and membership in the lower classes, not to mention madness. In both its metaphorical and metonymical forms, the trope of Methodism supplies Fessenden with a figurative vehicle for his political satire that his readers would have found quite familiar, especially those of them from New England and the northeast, where the discourse of anti-Methodism had its deepest roots and most long-lasting influence.

Fessenden’s footnote offers the reader an explanation of the meaning behind his use of the Methodist figure. It therefore provides us with a rare opportunity to examine the deployment of the figure in conjunction with an authoritative explication of its poetic and political purpose. While such extratextual interpretive assistance is not to be found in the fictions with which this dissertation principally deals, the present study attempts to offer its readers a similar sort of hermeneutic help. Unlike our eighteenth and nineteenth-century peers, who would have quickly conceived of the meaning of Methodism even without the aid of Fessenden’s footnote, twenty-first-century readers lack familiarity with the discourse of anti-Methodism and the larger, cultural and political stakes of the Calvinist-Methodist controversy. By resituating these fictions within the context of Methodism’s miraculous rise, the Calvinist response, and the literary issues at the center of their sustained competition for control of the evangelical movement, *Reading Methodist Characters* unpacks the complex political, aesthetic, and religious significance of the many Methodist characters and themes found throughout the literature of the early national and antebellum eras.

Fessenden was writing as the son of a New England minister and, as the satire makes clear, a committed Federalist. The “Methodists” of his imagination are an amalgam of Federalist fears over the democratic direction of American politics and Calvinist contempt for untutored and enthusiastic upstarts, held together by healthy doses of class-based condescension and aesthetic repugnance. This literary character – the Methodist as illiterate enthusiast, antiestablishment demagogue, popular entertainer, and emotionally manipulative seducer – had surprising staying power (thanks in no small part to New England’s hegemonic role as American cultural arbiter) and would remain in cultural circulation throughout the nineteenth century.³ If we turn to a poem published a decade later in a Washington, D.C., Federalist newspaper we can see how Methodism’s antagonistic relationship with the Calvinist establishment continued to primarily define its function within the U.S. literary imagination. Entitled “The Call for ‘Union of Parties’ Illustrated,” the central purpose of the 1814 poem’s appropriation of anti-Methodism is to mock those who hide their sectarian prejudices behind the rhetoric of religious toleration. It features a “snarling parson” possessing “neither love, nor charity” who nonetheless preaches toleration, saying that, “various roads are given” but all lead “to the same heaven” (2). Comedy ensues when a neighbor of the parson, aware of his anti-Methodist sentiments, asks him to join him in hearing “A *Methodist Preacher*, of very high standing, / Of learning profound, and language commanding” (2), who will be preaching in the neighborhood that night. By so characterizing the preacher, the speaker implicitly opposes the stereotyped picture of the Methodist as illiterate enthusiast to which he (and the reader) assumes the parson subscribes. This preemptive strategy is unsurprisingly unsuccessful. It simply leads the parson to justify his refusal by turning to another iteration of the Methodist in the Calvinist imagination. Here “Methodist” is synonymous with sexual impropriety and the opportunities for intrigue provided by their itinerant ministry:

“Not I,” quoth the Parson, “I’ll go not near him –
 What; I go hear a *Methodist*:
 A vagabond, a filthy beast:
 Praying in bushes, with the girls, by night;
 Who fall down, at leisure,

³ A future, expanded version of this study will extend its argument from the 1850s to the 1890s and conclude with an examination of Harold Frederic’s *The Damnation of Theron Ware* (1896), a realist novel in which the eponymous protagonist is a Methodist who embodies the intellectualization of popular evangelicalism and espouses anti-Methodist attitudes with dreadful results.

To court carnal pleasure;
 Who dally, hug & kiss with all their might!
 I'd see the filthy rascal to the devil
 Sooner than countenance such evil!
 I go to Camp-Meeting,
 To mix in the greeting
 With matron, maid and demirep;
 To sing and dance the devil's step!
 You'll never catch *me* in that scrape,
 As I would hope from hell t'escape!" (2)

The “*Methodist*” that the parson imagines is a lecherous hypocrite who uses his ministerial office as the means of courting “carnal pleasure.” The itinerating model of the Methodist ministry that made it so well suited to far flung frontier communities marks this member out as “a vagabond” in the orthodox minister’s mind, and the field preaching so often associated with Methodist itinerants becomes “praying in bushes.” Meanwhile the Methodist camp meeting is rendered as an open-air bacchanal in which women of questionable character – “demirep” is short for “demi-reputable” – frolic with men who are ministers in name only and trade on the confidence afforded members of the clergy. Though the newspaper’s readers were not provided with a footnote laying out the connection between anti-Methodism and opposition to the democratic policies of the Madison administration, a few columns over on the same page they would have found the paper’s editors discussing “the ill effect of the policy and measures of democratic rule” (2) and how much better it would be if a Federalist administration was in the White House.

Such imaginative political appropriations of anti-Methodist discourse and the Methodist-Calvinist divide were not restricted to Federalist poets. The same year the “snarling parson” described Methodists as lascivious rogues in rhyming couplets, another establishment minister rhetorically tapped the figure of Methodism to lament the young republic’s descent into infidelity and convince his audience of the powerlessness of illiterate and enthusiastic preachers, no matter how pious, to stop it. In his widely circulated *Address* announcing the formation of a charitable society “to assist in providing for our country a sufficient number of religious instructors” (3), Lyman Beecher provides us with one of the clearest demonstrations of the complex relationship between politics, evangelicalism, and literature in the early republic. Speaking for the society, Beecher explains that the impetus for their efforts is the belief that the United States is “more deplorably destitute of religious instruction than any other Christian nation under heaven” (11),

and that, as a result, the political stability and very existence of the republic is in serious jeopardy. “If knowledge and virtue be the basis of republican institutions,” he writes, “our foundations will soon rest upon the sand, unless a more effectual and all-pervading system of religious and moral instruction can be provided. The right of suffrage in the hands of an ignorant and vicious population, such as will always exist in a land where the Gospel does not restrain and civilize, will be a sword in the hand of a maniac...” (19-20). The solution Beecher and his fellow Calvinist New Englanders suggest is the dispersal “of pious, intelligent, enterprising ministers through the nation” who “would establish schools, and academies, and colleges, and habits, and institutions of homogeneous influence. These would produce a sameness of views, and feelings, and interests, which would lay the foundation of our empire upon a rock” (20). Of course Beecher is referring to the American empire, but it is hard not to read his words as referring to a centrally organized Calvinist one spreading New England values throughout the states. When Beecher speaks of a nationwide network of religious institutions run by “qualified” instructors, he reserves that appellation for graduates of Yale and other orthodox institutions, not Methodist preachers. When he says that “religion is the central attraction which must supply the deficiency of political affinity and interest” (20) in the United States, he is not referring to the brand of popular Christianity which had already swept through the nation and New England by 1814. Even though he proclaims that “the civil welfare of the nation demands imperiously the universal co-operation of religious institutions” (19), Beecher is evidently uninterested in fostering such cooperation between his own establishment Calvinism and the popular evangelicalism of the Methodists.

These inferences are justified by Beecher’s rather blunt denunciation of those who claim the title of minister while lacking any of the literary and theological training he deems essential to the mission of saving the American people, and their country, from the sword in the maniac’s hand. He admits there to be a sizable number of preachers “who are nominally ministers of the Gospel. But they are generally illiterate men, often not possessed even of a good English education, and in some instances unable to read or write. By them, as a body, learning is despised. With few exceptions, they are utterly unacquainted with Theology, and like other men are devoted through the week to secular employment, and preach on the Sabbath, with such preparation as such an education and such avocations will allow” (5-6). Though he does not mention Methodists by name, that is because Beecher did not need to; he could rely on the

readerly familiarity with the figure of Methodism illustrated in the two poems above. For Beecher, Methodism could not exert the same kind of civilizing influence because of its unschooled ministry. Beecher explains that “illiterate men, however pious, cannot command the attention of that class of the community whose education and mental culture is above their own” (6). Neither can they be “the patrons of schools, academies and colleges” (6). Instead, Beecher claims that “education, religious and literary, will be neglected in their hands; civilization will decline, and immoralities multiply. If the influence of such men be better than nothing, if it do not help on the decline caused by human depravity, it is totally incompetent to arrest it” (6). The heavy qualifications Beecher employs rhetorically signal just how complicit popular evangelicalism is in the very problems it purports to oppose and ameliorate.

Like the Methodists imagined by Fessenden and the anonymous poet in the Federalist paper, Beecher’s Methodists are a politically purposeful caricature of the flesh-and-blood individuals and complicated reality that was American Methodism. But two could play at that game. In the Methodist Episcopal Church’s official reply to Beecher, written by Freeborn Garrettson and sanctioned by its leadership, Garrettson defends his presumption that Beecher was referring to the Methodists by relating two anecdotes of how his friends “hinted to me that they thought you had the Methodists in view” (13). The second time they tell him that “they certainly did mean your people” he asks them why. Because, “they spoke so much of a regularly educated, and settled ministry, for they repeated it over and over again” (16-17) is the reply. *A Letter to the Rev. Lyman Beecher containing Strictures and Animadversions on a Pamphlet entitled An Address of the Charitable Society for the Education of Indigent Pious Young Men, for the ministry of the Gospel* was published in 1816, two years after Beecher’s *Address*. Garrettson acknowledges that there are indeed ugly caricatures of Methodism circulating in the public sphere, but he faults Beecher for lending them credence and employing them in his *Address*. He then states that there are also stereotypes of Calvinist clergy, and asks Beecher how he would respond if he read them “in the public print” (12). What would Beecher do:

For instance – were they to say you are a set of unregenerated men, who make a trade of the gospel, and want to crush every other denomination. – That your collegians, undetermined what profession to take till a little before commencement, and then being told...that they have not talents for the bar, were divided for a time, between the Physician and Divine, till at length they preponderate in favour of the latter – [then] come out under a glimmering profession of religion, and say they are called to the ministry.

After studying for a few months a theology which will no more hold together than a rope of sand, they take their saddle-bags, and go in search of a call; when they find a salary to their inclination, they settle down, and read their sermons on the Lord's day, and are more anxious for the fleece, and to persecute and try to drive other denominations out of town, (especially if the Lord should begin to bless their labours) than for the flock. After years are elapsed, not a soul by their means has been brought to the knowledge of Christ; and if awakenings should take place in their vicinity, they are sure to raise disputations, throw cold water on the work, and if possible put out the fire. That though they profess to be learned, they are only smatterers [sic], and have no spiritual qualifications for the ministry. That the Head of the Church never sent them, and that they have nothing beyond an outward profession. (11-12)

It is a harsh representation, but no harsher than that we find in Beecher's address or Fessenden's footnote. Both men condemn the Methodist ministry for its lack of formal education, but Garrettson, using a well-worn move, counters by claiming that schooling has nothing to do with whether one has the authority to preach. For Garrettson, a minister receives his call from God and without it no amount of training and study can produce an individual worthy of leading a Christian congregation. The stereotype of the Calvinist clergyman as a greedy, lazy, and unregenerate priest was as popular amongst the lower and middling classes as the image of the illiterate and uncouth Methodist circuit rider was amongst the upper classes and established denominations.

Nor did Garrettson accept the charge that the Methodist ministry was illiterate or anti-literature. "Literature is not confined to colleges," Garrettson barks back, "there have been, and are, men of celebrity, as statesmen, orators, and ministers, who never spent one month in a college" (28). He then reminds his readers that, "It is a very possible thing for a man to have no more learning than John Bunyan had, and yet be a very successful minister of the Gospel" (25). But to a certain extent this was beside the point, because, as Garrettson angrily attests, it would seem that no sect or denomination outside of the Reformed tradition would warrant recognition from Beecher. "Persons of intelligence," writes Garrettson, "think that your pamphlet would have been better received, had you come out boldly, and said, - There are about three thousand ministers of our sentiments in the United States; we do not believe it possible to have ministerial qualifications without seeing as we see, of course all others are ignorant, and unqualified for the ministry; - at best they carry but a very dim light, like unto a small taper" (10). It's hard not to agree with Garrettson on this point, and many other readers of Beecher's pamphlet felt similarly at the time. Unlike the people of New England, who were flooding into Upstate New York,

Western Pennsylvania, and the new states formerly part of the Northwest Territory, the Calvinist clergy had been relatively slow in extending its influence westward. Nothing illustrates this better than Beecher's 1814 imperious *Address* and the responses he received, which often included lists of the numerous congregations which prejudice had led Beecher to overlook. As Garrettson put it, "Oh! Lyman, where has your prejudiced heart led you" (7)? The relationship between literature, religion, and the republic was at the heart of the Methodist-Calvinist divide and is therefore at the center of the chapters that follow. Methodism would continue to metonymically represent popular evangelicalism and stand for enthusiasm, illiteracy, and excessive emotionalism.⁴ In the next section we turn to a closer examination of the ways that American authors turned the distinctive and paradoxical character of American Methodism into fictional men and women embodying the broader cultural conflict between enthusiasm and rationality.

2 Mock Methodists

In the summer of 1838, having finally managed to get a book of his short stories published, Nathaniel Hawthorne took a solo vacation to the Berkshires in western Massachusetts. One Saturday night during an extended stay at a tavern in North Adams, a small town in the shadow of Mount Graylock, he encountered an inscrutable individual who, he tells his notebook, "might be wrought into a strange portrait of something sad, terrific, and laughable":

In the evening there was a strange fellow in the bar room—a sort of mock-methodist—a cattle drover, who had stopped here for the night with two cows and a Durham bull. All

⁴ Some examples from novels of this period make this abundantly clear. In Robert M. Bird's *The Hawks of Hawks-Hollow* (1835), for example, the narrator explains how he terrified his adversaries and "down they went on their knees, crying and praying, like Methodist preachers." In William Dunlap's *Thirty Years Ago; or, The Memoirs of a Water Drinker* (1836) "a dozen women" are described as "groaning and sobbing like a camp-meeting...." In Henry William Herbert's "A Shark Story," contained in W. P. Hawes' *Sporting Scenes and Sundry Sketches* (1842), the narrator describes how he "sung and ranted to them, now as an actor in a play-house, and now as an elder at a camp-meeting." In one of the tales contained in Charles Briggs' *Bankrupt Stories* (1843) one character insults another by calling him "a weg'lar fool or a weg'lar methodist." The voice of one of the characters in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Redskins* (1846) is described as having "risen to the pitch of a methodist's, in a camp-meeting." In Emerson Bennett's *Oliver Goldfinch, or The Hypocrite* (1850) a character behaved "with such an abstracted mood, such indifference as to success, and with so much silence and reserve, that his old associates often rallied him upon his gravity, and swore he must have the occupation of a Methodist parson in serious contemplation." In *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi* (1853) lawyers are said to be "bawlin' and bellerin', like Methodist preachers at a camp meetin'...." These are only a representative sampling but convey the extent to which "methodist" was metaphorically linked with religious enthusiasm, evangelical zeal, and that most Methodist of cultural institutions, the camp meeting.

his talk turned on religion, and he would ever and anon burst out in some strain of scriptural-styled eloquence, chanted through his nose, like an exhortation at a camp-meeting. A group of universalists, and no religionists sat around him, making him their butt, and holding wild argument with him; and he strangely mingled humor with his enthusiasm, and enthusiasm with his humor, so that it was almost impossible to tell whether he were in jest or earnest. (119-20)

Strange as the fellow may have appeared to Hawthorne, we can recognize him as a fairly familiar character from the fiction of early national and antebellum America, some of it even by Hawthorne himself. Like so many of the Methodist men and women who populate works by canonical and lesser-known novelists and short story writers, Hawthorne's cattle drover is a curious blend of evangelical piety and irreverent comedy, of religious sincerity and performative mockery, that frustrates any easy interpretation. But this does not stop Hawthorne from imagining an explanation to the dilemma the man poses, and in it we find another familiar feature of the fiction published between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. Hawthorne writes that the man's unusual character probably "is an eccentricity, an almost monomania, that has grown upon him—perhaps the result of strong religious excitement; and, having been a backslider, he is cursed with half frenzied humor" (120). This imagined history is inspired by the man's Methodism and its affiliation with a species of enthusiastic emotionalism often thought to lead to insanity. Hawthorne turns the mock-methodist into a cautionary tale illustrating the dangers of such "strong religious excitement." In so doing he also demonstrates the process whereby we read religious "characters," a term I intentionally employ to signify both fictional personas and the linguistic signs of which they are comprised. As he would expect his readers to do with the Methodists in his own fiction, Hawthorne uses his evident familiarity with Methodist culture, as well as the imagined life of an early American Methodist, to construct a plausible if sensational story typical in its imputation of mania and frenzy to the members of that particular denomination. He had already begun to create that character who was "a strange portrait of something sad, terrific, and laughable."

This phrase could serve as an apt characterization of some of the more memorable Methodists, mock or otherwise,⁶ that we find in nineteenth-century American fiction. Hawthorne

⁶ As I will demonstrate, there are a number of pretend or mock Methodists who don the character for assorted, usually duplicitous reasons in nineteenth-century American fiction. *Modern Chivalry*, *The Hawks of Hawks-Hollow*, *Charlemont*, and *The Planter's Northern Bride* are just a few examples of novels from the antebellum era containing phony Methodists.

himself had already published three short stories containing Methodist characters and in all of them he presents the reader with this kind of paradoxical portrait that is simultaneously pathetic, comical, and a little shocking.⁷ In his deployment of Methodist characters in his fiction, Hawthorne was continuing a literary tradition, already well established by the early 1830s, of using Methodist characters to personify popular evangelicalism, its challenge to the Calvinist establishment, including the Puritan intellectual tradition, as well as the implications for the emerging national literature and culture of Methodism's rapidly increasing influence in all parts of the young United States. These issues converge in Hugh Henry Brackenridge's picaresque *Modern Chivalry*, published between 1792 and 1815 and the subject of my first chapter. Throughout the work's seven volumes Methodism is the chief representative of the democratization of American Christianity and the carnivalesque atmosphere of the camp meeting provides the perfect parodic metaphor of unruly democracy aligned with evangelical epistemology. In the 1820s women writers from New England published domestic fictions in which they redirected Calvinist opposition and animosity towards Methodism to their own narrative ends, using it to illustrate establishment bigotry and model the enactment of religious toleration. In my second chapter I discuss how Catharine Maria Sedgwick and Lydia Huntley Sigourney both employed the Methodist invasion of New England as the means of imagining religious resistance to patriarchal authority and a brand of evangelical Arminianism that was acceptable to their nonsectarian sensibilities. Sedgwick's *Crazy Bet* is perhaps the best fictional representative of Hawthorne's "half frenzied" cattle drover, as well as a prime example of how literary critics have overlooked the significance of the Methodist affiliations of major characters to the detriment of their readings of the works in which they appear. Like the well-known Methodist preacher called Crazy Lorenzo Dow, *Crazy Bet*'s eccentric enthusiasm enables her to publicly condemn Calvinist hypocrisy and formalism.

There are also a number of important religious characters who embody the new kind of ministry that Methodism introduced throughout the country, from Boston to the western frontier. The salty and richly imagistic eloquence of *Moby Dick*'s Father Mapple first springs to mind, half preacher and half ship captain. Melville based his character on the famous Father Taylor, a

⁷ Eliakim Abbott, from the *Story Teller* project, is the best example. "Sir William Pepperell" and "The Seven Vagabonds" appeared in *The Token* for 1833, published in 1832, and are the focus of my third chapter. The itinerant and unlettered evangelical preacher who appears in "The Story Teller" (1834) is also, I argue, a Methodist. These three stories are the subject of my third chapter.

Methodist preacher whose prowess in the pulpit eventually drew the likes of Emerson, Dickens, and, it bears mentioning, Hawthorne's future wife. She evidently asked him to attend, for we have his repeated refusals. On the 15th of March, 1840, Hawthorne wrote Sophia Peabody that "it would not be an auspicious day" for him "to hear the aforesaid Son of Thunder," a gently derisive term for overzealous preachers, and reminded her "how difficult" it is for her future "husband to be touched or moved..." (147). Two Sundays later he writes again to ask her forgiveness for not attending, and once again the excuse involves Hawthorne's evident trepidation over how he will react to Taylor's preaching: "Wilt thou promise not to be troubled, should thy husband be unable to appreciate the excellence of Father Taylor? Promise me this; and at some auspicious hour, which I trust will soon arrive, Father Taylor shall have an opportunity to make music with my soul" (159). Hawthorne's hesitancy bespeaks a fear that, given his earlier mentioned image of Methodists as exhorting enthusiasts, would seem to be founded on a first-hand experience with Methodist preaching and performance, a familiarity with anti-Methodist literature and rhetoric, or both.

For Hawthorne, as for many other New Englanders of his generation, "methodist" was nearly synonymous with "enthusiast." But the term also referred to a specific character and could be used adjectively, with a small 'm'. A little later on in his notebook entry about the "mock-methodist," Hawthorne mentions that the man delivered his religious rhetoric with a "methodistical tone" (120). But for literary historians, "methodistical" has no meaning. We have lost the ear to hear that tone, just as we have largely lost the ability to read Methodist characters in the ways their creators intended. The term "methodist" began its life as a lower-case pejorative meant to mock the strictness with which John Wesley and his fellow evangelical Oxford classmates went about methodically living their lives according to the Christian example. In a way, the transition from lower-case to upper-case 'M' symbolizes Methodism's transformation from a maligned movement within the Church of England, to an upstart sect, and eventually to an independent and respected member of the Protestant establishment. But before Methodism became synonymous with "mainline" and "middle-class," "Methodist" was employed metonymically to refer to popular evangelicalism in general, to the Baptists, Mormons, Shakers, and Christians, black and white, who gave the Second Great Awakening its populist character. Their presence and purpose in the literature of the era is still being studied. The Methodist characters examined in this work are men and women from the lower and working classes, white

and black, from North and South, enslaved, disenfranchised, and free. What these maids, slaves, vagabonds, and itinerant evangelists have in common is their affiliation with a religious ideology that was unpopular to an extent vastly underestimated today, and associated with a species of evangelicalism that was anathema to much of the newly minted United States, especially those portions of it, like the northeast and New England, principally responsible for the creation and dissemination of what would become American culture. So when Methodists appear in the literature produced by authors writing from within, and possibly in opposition to, a worldview in which Methodism had such a powerful yet ambivalent charge, it is imperative that we read and interpret these characters through a lens that accounts for the difference between their understanding of that evangelical identity and our own.

Doing this does not mean reading these Methodist characters as if they are real people but rather recognizing the ways that their spirituality and identity, as well as the narratives in which they exist, are structured by Methodist understandings of individual experience in ways that make subtle yet significant differences in how we interpret them. Uncle Tom's Methodism provides an excellent example. The fourth chapter of this dissertation is devoted to the figure and function of Methodism in the abolitionist fiction of the 1850s, and it contains a reading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that delineates Stowe's construction of black evangelical religiosity through typically Methodist forms of speech and thought like the hymn, the exhortation, and the doctrine of perfection. The first section of Chapter Four culminates in a reading of Tom's final moments that reveals how Stowe used the Methodist belief in a second conversion-like experience to imagine Tom's spiritual escape from Legree's control. Termed sanctification, the experience involved the sensible infusion of the Holy Spirit and marked the individual's passage into a state of sinless perfection. Just before his martyrdom on Legree's plantation, Tom undergoes a spiritual transformation that bears a striking resemblance to this experience. An examination of the scene and its staging reveals how Stowe uses Methodism to sanction a species of emotive and supernatural evangelicalism which her own conservative Calvinist background precludes her from uncritically accepting. After a brutal encounter with Legree in which his "atheistical taunts" reduce Tom's "dejected soul to the lowest ebb" yet experienced, he has a "vision" of Jesus "crowned with thorns, buffeted and bleeding" (339). As he stares the "sharp thorns became rays of glory" and he sees Jesus's "face bending compassionately towards him" (339). Tom then hears a voice utter a passage from the Book of Revelations about the rewards that await those

who remain true to the faith despite intense suffering, an obvious reference to the brutality we have seen Tom suffer as well as a foreshadowing of his imminent martyrdom that tells us how we are to interpret it. Stowe never explicitly mentions Methodism during this scene, or its doctrine of perfection, but her evident familiarity with both, proof of which can be found throughout the novel, discernibly shapes Tom's transformation as it has the religious experiences of most of the black characters we meet in the course of the story.

The mockery of Methodism has a different meaning for African Americans, however. Prior to the opening decade of the nineteenth century, Methodists were as fervent in their abolitionism as the Quakers. Wesley was adamantly anti-slavery and the leaders of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America continued to consider slave ownership a sin punishable by expulsion from the church through the turn of the nineteenth century. While many Methodists continued to individually oppose and preach against the institution of slavery,⁸ after 1810 the MEC let the issue be decided at the local level due to ever increasing pressure from slaveholding sections of the country. Southern Methodism soon resembled the other Christian churches that sanctioned slavery with Biblical precedent, but their about-face made Methodists the ideal emblems of evangelical hypocrisy for both white and black writers. Himself a Methodist, Frederick Douglass's discussion of Methodist hypocrisy in his *Narrative* (1845) might be the best known. In addition to discussing the risks he took to attend a camp meeting himself (87), Douglass describes how, in August of 1832, his brutal "master attended a Methodist camp-meeting held in" Maryland "and there experienced religion" (52), but Douglass was disappointed in his hopes that getting religion would render him a kinder master. "It neither made him to be humane to his slaves, nor to emancipate them. If it had any effect on his character, it made him more cruel and hateful" because now "he found religious sanction and support for his slaveholding cruelty" (52). Tired of his impertinence, Douglass's owner hands him over "to be broken" by Mr. Covey, who "was a professor of religion—a pious soul—a member and a class-leader in the Methodist church" (54). But the major reason readers may well remember Douglass's *Narrative* for its mockery of Methodism concerns the parodic poem that concludes the work. Entitled simply "A Parody," Douglass explains that the poem was supposedly written

⁸ In 1818, for example, a Methodist minister preached an abolitionist sermon at a camp meeting in Maryland and was soon arrested, charged with "feloniously counseling, conspiring and attempting, with certain negroes, to raise an insurrection and rebellion in the state" ("Persecution of the Methodists," 8 January 1820, *Hillsboro* [N.H.] *Telegraph*, 3).

“by a northern Methodist preacher, who, while residing at the south, had an opportunity to see slaveholding morals, manners, and piety, with his own eyes” (100). The first and eleventh stanzas offer a representative sampling of the satirical rendering of the Southern Church:

Come, saints and sinners, hear me tell
 How pious priests whip Jack and Nell,
 And women buy and children sell,
 And preach all sinners down to hell,
 And sing of heavenly union.

* * * * * *

Another preacher whining spoke
 Of One whose heart for sinners broke:
 He tied old Nanny to an oak,
 And drew the blood at every stroke,
 And prayed for heavenly union. (100, 102)

Douglass would elaborate upon his discussion of Southern religious hypocrisy, camp meetings, and his own religious life as a practicing Methodist in the expanded version of the *Narrative* he published in 1855, *My Bondage and My Freedom*. But by that time other African American authors had joined him in using Methodism’s about-face to illustrate slavery’s corruption of Southern Christianity. In *Clotel* (1853), widely considered the first novel by an African American, William Wells Brown makes his slaveholding parson a Methodist from the North whose father, “a strict follower of John Wesley,” hoped his son “would one day be as renowned as the great leader of his sect” (71). It is not until his death that the parson’s daughter can fulfill that dream by freeing her father’s slaves. In the next section I turn to the controversial history of the Methodist movement.

3

The Controversial Caricature of Wesleyan Methodism

The title of this introduction is adapted from a 1742 pamphlet written by John Wesley. He published *The Character of a Methodist* in an attempt to control the meaning of the name and the image of his followers in the public mind. If people insisted on calling his followers Methodists – the mocking label applied to them at Oxford - he wanted it to denominate the practical,

rational, and emotional evangelicalism that he actually preached.⁹ After enumerating the many ways that it was not to be defined, Wesley writes that the character of a Methodist, his or her distinguishing mark, was a loving relationship with God. ““What then is the Mark? Who is a *Methodist*, according to your own Account?’ I answer; A *Methodist* is one, who has *the Love of God shed abroad in his Heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him: One who loves the Lord his God with all his Heart, and with all his Soul, and with all his Mind, and with all his Strength. God is the Joy of His Heart, and the Desire of his Soul...*” (5). But Wesley’s essay did not deter those outside and hostile to his movement from printing their denunciations. If anything, Wesley’s definition of Methodist character encouraged British writers and visual artists in their satirical depictions of Wesley, Whitefield, and their followers as deluded fanatics who mistook human emotions for divine communication. In the hands of novelists and cartoonists Wesley’s spiritual love became physical lust and the Methodist characters they created were meant to be read as warning signs of the dangers of modern evangelicalism. For the rest of the eighteenth century Wesley and his colleagues would continue to counter satirical characterizations with published defenses and public addresses.

Started as a revival movement at Oxford in the 1720s and 30s, by the end of the eighteenth century Methodism had become arguably the most powerful and popular form of Protestant evangelicalism in the transatlantic world. It was also, however, one of the most controversial thanks to its leaders’ commitment to lay leadership, a dramatic preaching style, and, most importantly, the belief that feeling and emotion formed the center of religious life. Even though Wesley insisted that the small classes of like-minded Protestants he established throughout the United Kingdom were a reform movement and not intended to challenge the Church of England’s authority, he and his followers found themselves the subjects of sustained public criticism by clergy and secular critics alike. Anti-Methodist diatribes poured from the presses and many of Britain’s best-known artists and authors produced works mocking Methodist emotionalism and supernaturalism as well as caricaturing its leaders as rabbleroising con artists who used Christianity as a mask for the most sinful and selfish of ulterior motives. Even the name “methodists” was originally coined as a term of derision, originally employed by unsympathetic Oxford classmates who scorned the methodical way Wesley, Whitefield, and the

⁹ Wesley stresses the point that “this is not a Name which they take to themselves, but One fixt upon them, by Way of Reproach, without their Approbation or Consent” (i).

other members of the Holy Club modeled every minute of their lives according to Christian precept. Now the term serves as a subtle reminder that today's mainline, respectable denomination has radical roots.

The satiric reaction to Methodism by eighteenth-century British artists and authors has been the subject of several scholarly treatments over the last half-century. In his *Methodism Mocked* (1960), Albert M. Lyles provides the first “exhaustive examination of distinct satires” (11) within anti-Methodism, dividing his book into chapters on the “Satire of Methodist Doctrines” and the “Satire of Methodist Preachers and Preaching.” While Lyles is largely content with explaining the parodies and puns and placing them within the larger context of eighteenth-century satirical writing, later scholars have attempted to demonstrate how Methodism was more than merely the butt of literary lampoons. Richard Brantley, for example, maintained in his *Wordsworth's Natural Methodism* (1975) that “the most distinctive features of Wordsworth's literary practice can be best understood in terms of his pervasive Evangelical idiom” (xi) and that this was shaped by the unacknowledged “extent of Wesleyan Methodism in his heritage” (xi). Almost a decade later Brantley extended his argument in *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism* (1984), maintaining there that John Wesley acted as a cultural mediator between Lockean epistemology and the spiritualized humanism of the British Romantics. Rather than argue for the influence of eighteenth-century Methodism on the development of nineteenth-century Romanticism, G. J. Barker-Benfield examines Wesley's evangelical reform movement as the religious wing of the same sentimental culture which produced Richardson's *Pamela* and Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*. In *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (1992) Barker-Benfield notes how “adherence to both Methodism and the cult of sensibility was demonstrated by the capacity to feel and to signify feeling by the same physical signs – tears, groans, sighs, and tremblings” (268). He then proceeds to delineate a series of additional similarities between Methodism and sentimental fiction including their shared “sexual moralism,” “a similar simplicity of costume, the renunciation of material” wealth, as well as the “obvious parallel between Wesley's views and those expressed in sentimental fiction” regarding “the poor and oppressed” (269). “Above all,” however, “the resemblance between the cult of sensibility and Methodism lay in their identification with the interests of women” (269). Wesley's eventual acceptance and encouragement of exhorting (preaching without a biblical text) by women whom God had given “an extraordinary call” to evangelize paralleled the

appearance of novels by women writers as well as others, written by men, in which female characters embodied Christian virtue and illustrated the reforming power of personal religious experience in the public sphere (270-71). The work of both Brantley and Barker-Benfield convincingly demonstrates the complexity of Methodism's influence on eighteenth and early nineteenth-century British culture, along with the impossibility of analyzing that relationship via some variant of the traditional secular-religious dichotomy.

In the most recent study of Methodism in the eighteenth-century British imagination, Misty Anderson focuses on that very complexity and seeks to bridge the divide between studies that chronicle the satiric reaction to Methodism, like Lyles', and those by Brantley and Barker-Benfield which limn the ways in which Wesley and his followers were motivated by many of the same values as their putatively secular colleagues in the literary world. In *Imagining Methodism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2012), Anderson examines the "paradoxical admiration for and skepticism about Methodism" (2) that she finds in plays, poems, and works of fiction. She argues that this is reflective of the broader cultural anxiety over the transition to modernity and the isolation of the Lockean self it entailed. Artists and authors may have "caricatured Methodism as the conceptual boundary of the reasonable, modern British self" but "lurking in the background of these portraits is a fascination with the Methodist conversion, its instantaneous warming of the heart as a moment of divine contact, and its capacity to remake the self" (2). According to Anderson, this ambivalence, this blend of attraction and repulsion is evidence in support of her argument that "Methodism served imaginatively as a space of intimacy, desire, and even ecstasy for the modern British self even as, and indeed because, it served as a boundary for that self" (3). *Imagining Methodism* is thus less about "the lives of Methodists as it is about the imagined life of the Methodist as modernity's homegrown, mystic-evangelical other" (3). In Anderson's hands the Methodist characters, themes, and cultural forms found throughout eighteenth-century British literature become portals into the period's conflicted understanding of itself and its position on the path to modernity.

There is no parallel critical tradition for American literature, no monographs in which Methodism's place in the American imagination is delineated and interpreted.¹⁰ Until relatively

¹⁰ I do not mean to suggest that there has been no attention paid to Methodism in the American imagination of this period. David Reynolds makes a number of observations regarding Methodist characters and anti-Methodist animus in his *Faith in Fiction* (1981), for example. More recently, Kristin Boudreau published an article in *ESQ* (2001) regarding the possibility that a Methodist minister tried for murder in 1833 was Hawthorne's inspiration for

recently there was not even a substantial body of scholarly historiography on Methodism in America. Aside from the profusion of publications on George Whitefield's role in the First Great Awakening – wherein the significance of the divine dramatist's Methodist affiliations is rarely mentioned let alone interrogated – religious and literary historians all but ignored Methodism's contribution to American culture until the end of the twentieth century. What made this scholarly silence so surprising was that, unlike the Shakers, Mormons, Spiritualists and other religious “outsiders” who had been receiving so much attention since the 1960s shift away from the “Puritan-turned-mainline-Protestant form of Christianity” (Hatch 176), American Methodists were not a statistically insignificant group but the largest denomination of the nineteenth century and “the most powerful religious movement in American history” (177). Or so Nathan Hatch argued, in his 1994 article “The Puzzle of American Methodism,” in which he suggests some reasons for this “glaring omission” and provocatively argues, “that Methodism far more than Puritanism offers insight into the distinct character of religious life in the United States” (178). Such ambitious claims were undoubtedly behind the spike in Methodist scholarship that soon followed Hatch's article. Historians like Ann Taves, Dee Andrews, Cynthia Lyerly, Amanda Porterfield, and Anna Lawrence answered Hatch's call for Methodism to receive the serious scholarly attention it deserved, but their work also spoke to the thesis of one of his earlier publications. In his massively influential *The Democratization of American Christianity* (1989), Hatch chronicles the dramatic changes to the American religious landscape wrought by the forces of disestablishment, democracy, and the popularization of American Protestantism during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century. Methodists were at the forefront of these developments and Calvinists led the opposition, striving to retain the sociopolitical power and influence they exercised in the colonial period. It amounted to what today we would call a culture war, and one in which competing conceptions and definitions of “literature” were as key as the debate over Christ's atonement or the possibility of achieving Christian perfection before death.

Whether or not the triumph of Methodism in nineteenth-century America supports Hatch's claim that it, rather than Puritanism, offers us the best means for understanding the

Dimmesdale, and the October 2013 issue of *PMLA* contained an article (“Soul Matters”) by Joanna Brooks wherein she used Equiano's encounter with Methodism to comment on the recent religious turn in early American studies. Brooks' *American Lazarus* (2003) also contains a chapter on AME Bishop and Founder Richard Allen. To date, however, there has been no book-length study focusing on the figure of Methodism in American literature, the need for which is underscored by these isolated critical engagements.

development of “the distinct character of religious life in the United States” is a question best left to religious historians. This dissertation does not seek to add to the growing body of historical scholarship on Methodism in America but rather to initiate a new line of inquiry concerning its place in the American imagination, in the poems, plays, and works of prose fiction that were published while the Methodist miracle was taking place. Like Brantley, Barker-Benfield, and Misty Anderson, I intend to recover Methodism’s controversial cultural resonance and artistic significance through the analysis of its shifting position in the literary imagination. To date literary and cultural historians have largely focused on the significance of two sectarian controversies, between Catholics and Protestants¹¹ and Unitarians and Calvinists.¹² Meanwhile the Methodist-Calvinist divide and the discourse of anti-Methodism in America have been all but forgotten, even though they comprised a foundational imaginative framework for early and antebellum American culture, fiction in particular. Each of the following four chapters focuses on a fiction writer working in a different period and narrative genre, from a satirical picaresque in the 1790s to pro- and anti-slavery novels of the 1850s. Though largely confined to the work of Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Reading Methodist Characters* situates their engagement with Methodism within the larger context of the many other works wherein its figure and politics were imaginatively appropriated for conflicting literary purposes.

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¹¹ Jenny Franchot’s *Roads to Rome* (California, 1994) is the most influential of a number of similar studies including Paul Giles’ *American Catholic Arts And Fictions: Culture, Ideology, Aesthetics* (Cambridge, 1992), Susan M. Griffin’s *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge, 2004), and Elizabeth A. Fenton’s *Religious Liberties: Anti-Catholicism And Liberal Democracy In Nineteenth-century U.S. Literature And Culture* (Oxford, 2011).

¹² The scholarship devoted to or touching upon the role of this religious divide in the development of U.S. thought and literature, especially in New England, is immense, mainly because so many who became Unitarians or were sympathetic to their brand of rational Christianity also became artists, authors, and noted intellectuals.

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Chapter One

Evangelical Caricature and the Necessity of Literature in the Early American Picaresque

A discussion of the life and literary endeavors of Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748-1816) is the natural starting point for this dissertation for several reasons. Brackenridge was arguably the first author to deploy the figure of Methodism within a uniquely American literary and political context when, in 1779, he published an anonymous anti-Methodist article in his Philadelphia magazine. Beyond accusing Methodist preachers of actively working against the cause of American independence and for the British government, the article offers an excellent illustration of how Methodists could be untutored yet rhetorically adept, illiterate yet skillful in their use of literary devices like allegory and personification, enthusiasts who had no trouble setting aside their divine mission to assist Britain in its military one. As a graduate of Princeton and an ordained Presbyterian minister who served as a chaplain in Washington's army, Brackenridge was also a member of the Calvinist establishment, albeit a largely nonconforming one, and thus stands as among the first in a long line of U.S. authors who were either Calvinist clergymen or descended from them.¹³ But the primary reason I begin with Brackenridge is his 800-page magnum opus *Modern Chivalry*, a seven-volume picaresque novel, modeled on *Don Quixote* and published over the course of twenty-three years, in which he increasingly relies upon the figure of Methodism to represent his fears over the excesses of democratization. Brackenridge thus serves as a transitional figure, one whose career connects eighteenth-century British anti-Methodism with its new, American incarnation and whose major work of fiction extends from the 1790s to 1815, spanning the time period during which American Methodism made its most astonishing membership gains. In this chapter I argue that *Modern Chivalry's* literary and political satire is reliant upon the peculiar character of American Methodism for its figurative ability to suggest the problematic parallels between popular evangelicalism and popular government. After a brief discussion of the 1779 magazine article that examines its anti-

¹³ Thomas Green Fessenden, Timothy Dwight, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Samuel Goodrich, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, to name just those authors mentioned in this dissertation.

Methodist rhetoric in order to delineate Methodism's metaphorical meaning within the Revolutionary period, I turn to *Modern Chivalry*. In part 1 of this chapter I examine the novel's imaginative appropriation of the Methodist-Calvinist divide and track the evolution of Methodist caricature from the first two volumes of Part I (1792) to the first two volumes of Part II (1804-5). In the second section of this chapter I focus on the final, 1815 edition of *Modern Chivalry* in which Brackenridge incorporates Methodist camp meetings into his depiction of democracy on the western frontier. The novel's intricate engagement with the camp meeting controversy is a brilliant, multilayered burlesque of the odd but powerful alliance of Methodists and Jeffersonians that formed at the turn of the nineteenth century in large part because they shared an enemy in the Calvinist Federalists. By modeling a democratic assembly on such a meeting, Brackenridge's book demonstrates how American letters used the unique and controversial character of early American Methodism to fashion a piece of political satire which worries about the eventual outcome of an emerging alliance between democratic politics and popular evangelicalism's faith in personal feeling, supernatural inspiration, and leaders lacking formal training.

In one of the most recent critical statements summarizing his accomplishment in writing *Modern Chivalry*, Samuel Otter echoes earlier scholars when he describes how Brackenridge "uses reason and ridicule to temper what he views as the extravagancies of democracy, particularly the risks of demagoguery and mob rule" (74). But like most of the critics writing before him, Otter's particular interest in "Brackenridge's disorienting satire" (78) leads him to ignore its religious components and the way they help orient the reader within its fictional world.¹⁴ Those who have recognized the importance of religion to the composition and interpretation of *Modern Chivalry* have concerned themselves with the novel's debt to Puritanism (Martin and Elliott 206-10) or how it extends and elaborates upon arguments initially contained in Brackenridge's sermons to Washington's troops (Looby 229-40). As yet no one has discussed Brackenridge's brilliant use of the Methodist-Calvinist controversy and the democratization of American Christianity to satirize excesses on both ends of the political spectrum and make a case for the necessity of literature to the healthy functioning of a

¹⁴ Otter reads *Modern Chivalry* as an example of the Philadelphian novel of manners along with Bird's *Sheppard Lee* (1836). This also naturally leads to his focusing on the first volumes, set in the city, as opposed to the later ones, set in Farrago's hometown and then in the New Settlement Farrago founds on the Western frontier with Teague and several other members of his motley band.

democratic republic.¹⁵ This critical lacuna has formed, in part, because so many scholars have restricted their attention to the novel's first, eighteenth-century half, within which Brackenridge is primarily concerned with mocking post-revolutionary Presbyterians for their willingness to follow the fads of democratization at the expense of the very learning and literary prowess that had enabled them, including Brackenridge, to serve as the spiritual leaders of the war for American independence. The assorted figures of Methodism that are found throughout the work with increasing regularity and narrative significance constitute the unexplored corollary to this line of self-critical satire. Through them Brackenridge conveys the potentially existential threat that evangelical anti-intellectualism poses the republic, even while defending the right of all Americans to enjoy unfettered freedom of conscience. In balancing personal repulsion with unflinching support for public religious freedom and advocating gradual reform rather than radical change, the novel models the kind of critical toleration and political moderation it desires its readers to adopt in their capacity as citizens of a democratic republic.

Shortly after serving as a chaplain and delivering sermons to Washington's troops, Brackenridge settled on another patriotic outlet for his literary talents. He founded the *United States Magazine* in Philadelphia in 1779 hoping it would serve as an accessible and entertaining means of educating the newly enfranchised multitude. Even though it only lasted a year, the magazine amply illustrates Brackenridge's commitment to popular education and the belief that only an informed citizenry could elect wise representatives. Among the many articles Brackenridge managed to publish in that twelve-month period, one especially deserves our attention for its adaptation of anti-Methodism to the American revolutionary moment. While it does not appear that Brackenridge was the author of the anonymous article, his decision to publish it is suggestive, as are the many similarities between *Modern Chivalry* and the article's marshaling of authoritative evidence from British theologians and European philosophers, from Plato to John Locke, in support of an argument linking the success of the American experiment with the public's repudiation of Methodist enthusiasm.

Appearing in the October issue and entitled "*Some remarks on the nature, causes, dangerous Errors, and infectious spread of the present religious Enthusiasm in America,*" the

¹⁵ Emory Elliott's scholarship is a notable exception. In the chapter on *Modern Chivalry* in *Revolutionary Writers* (1982) Elliott offers a superb discussion of some of the novel's comments on the character of Christianity in the young republic, its relationship to literature, and the role of the fiction writer as a kind of modern prophet holding the mirror up to the people.

article is a vituperative, systematic attack on Wesley's Methodist missionaries that applies terms and arguments from the British discourse of anti-Methodism to the problem of a loyalist ministry operating under orders from the British government and all the more threatening due to its itinerant ways and oratorical ability to persuade, excite, and confuse. On the very first page the reader finds a footnote explaining how "a lieutenant and forty-six men in one company only, in this country, have, on turning Methodists, all laid down their arms. If this were universal, enthusiasm would subdue the liberties of our states, more than all the mighty fleets and armies of Britain" (411). It is unclear if the soldiers are supposed to have laid down their weapons out of a commitment to Christian pacifism, as we know some Methodists did in fact do, or because they had switched sides.¹⁶ What is certain is that this mass military recusal was by Methodist design, and while the author claims not to know exactly "how far the English Ministry make war upon us by means of the Methodist Preachers," he spends the rest of the article outlining the menace to independence these men and their enthusiastic evangelicalism have so far proven themselves to be, regardless of whether or not they are acting under direct orders. He is not above relating rumor, however, mentioning that "some say" the Methodists have been "hired by the British ministry to make tories among us" (416) and then, dropping the rumor ruse, declaring that "the methodists are chiefly caressed among the tories, the enemies of our country" (419). By frequently repeating the charge and gradually reducing the qualifications preceding it, the article subtly pushes the reader to interpret as reality what is only hearsay and speculation. In this way the article engages in a kind of rhetorical duplicity similar to that which it blames the Methodists for employing. For, in spite of the author's repeated comments about the Methodists' "want of learning, weakness of knowledge" (415), and their avowal of "a greater hatred to knowledge, and all means of it" (417) than previous enthusiasts, the caricature of these men offered by the article nevertheless highlights their oratorical skill and facility with language.

The article presents the Methodist commitment to reaching the masses through figures and arguments that the uneducated could easily grasp as evidence of their malicious intent and demagoguery. While they "rail against orthodoxy and philosophy, sciences, colleges, academies, learning in general, and all improvements of the mind," they also supposedly maintain that an "illiterate woman, and the most untutor'd mechanic, may understand the scriptures better than

¹⁶ Freeborn Garrettson is the best-known example of an American converting to Methodism and then refusing to fight for American independence out of Christian conscience. He was imprisoned for his refusal.

the most learned doctors” (417). Naturally this results in their popularity among the most ignorant and marginalized, as was the case in Britain. “If Britain had not been so generally and incurably corrupted, the Methodists had perhaps not arisen, or at least would not have increased to the numbers they often boast of. How prodigious the decay of all piety and virtue there...which occasioned the great American revolution; our glory, and their endless disgrace, if not ruin!” (415). But the popularity of Methodism during the struggle for independence therefore signals that the success of the revolution is being undermined by the forces of illiteracy, enthusiasm, and unrestrained emotion. The more Methodist the United States citizenry becomes, the more likely that Britain will emerge victorious. The fact that in Britain “the Methodists prevail’d where the clergy and people were very ignorant and superstitious” (415) means that the solution to the problem lies in education. If “the nation should be better instructed, blind error would decline” and the power “of this methodistic jargon” (415) to persuade the people would be largely eliminated. And thus we see one element of Brackenridge’s rationale for publishing this piece of anti-Methodist propaganda. I would suggest that the relationship between this partisan piece of religio-political commentary and the more balanced literary magazine within which it appeared is itself emblematic of Brackenridge’s appropriation – as opposed to uncritical adoption - of sectarian prejudices and stereotypes in the service of *Modern Chivalry*’s more tolerant, comical, and double-edged novelistic satire. As we will see momentarily, Methodists there are considered to be “the best preachers” (256) by a populace unwilling or unable to judge their leaders’ pronouncements, whether religious or political, by objective standards rather than personal sympathy, thus signaling themselves to be an electorate unprepared for the responsibilities of selecting wise representatives.

We have, however, not yet discussed the most important element of the 1779 article’s caricature of Methodism for our reading of *Modern Chivalry* and understanding of the larger issue of how the character of an American Methodist came to blend rhetorical skill with untutored illiteracy and affective, enthusiastic evangelicalism with a decidedly anti-democratic political agenda. Methodists are misguided readers and preachers. The author does not doubt “that many enthusiasts read the scriptures” and believe they are interpreting them correctly, but in actuality “they pervert them from the plain and common sense...to figurative, parabolical, and allegorical senses, so as totally to misunderstand them, and thereby confirm their errors. They scarce ever affix the same ideas to words as other men; forsake the literal, and run into the

mystic meanings” (415-16). In spite of their lack of literary training or even a basic education, these Methodists are imagined to be skillful, self-interested manipulators of linguistic ambiguity and performative theatricality. “An affected kind of oratory, a dangerous enemy to truth, is a principal cause” of their success, and they employ “a rapturous, mystic, unintelligible way of speaking” (419) which ought to announce to the people that their intention is to confuse rather than enlighten. The people, of course, find it perfectly comprehensible for the Methodist is speaking their vernacular. “Deceivers always differ in their language from other men,” the author explains, “and affect to differ, dealing much in tropes and figures, [such] as metaphors, similes, apostrophes, prosopopoeias, &c. They affect splendid words, and disguise, yea confound the truth” (419). One would guess that the Methodists, lacking the requisite educational background, employ these sophisticated rhetorical devices and vocabulary either unwittingly or incorrectly. But there is nevertheless a paradox contained in “this methodistic jargon”¹⁷ which somehow manages to deploy formal characteristics usually associated with the writing and preaching of “the most learned doctors,” and to evidently do so in very persuasive and emotionally moving ways. Readers of the article can sense the learned author’s professional frustration (and condescension) at the success being enjoyed “by these self-constituted, illiterate, mushrooms of a night” (413). The anonymous author most explicitly suggests his ministerial identity when he tells readers to “beware of these bold allegorizers, dark as the Delphic oracles, in hard Greek, without points, not translated. Beware of all who think their wild cant to be seraphic notions. Let none persuade you that nonsense and raving are sacred” (420). One wonders, however, how many of his readers, especially any of those who would have been likely to enjoy Methodist oratory, would have sympathized with the simile comparing the opacity of Methodist preaching with that of a tough text in ancient Greek. It is an excellent example of why Methodist metaphors, coming, like their creators, from the same socioeconomic sphere as their auditors,

¹⁷ This was frequently the target of satire. A newspaper article from 1789 claims to expose the secret of “the itinerant Field Orator’s Methodist Giberish” (sic) and then offers a parody of Methodist diction and metaphors. The preacher tells the people that they need to “become chickens of grace” who “are cooped up in the hencoop of righteousness” and tells them that “If your hearts are as hard as a Suffolk cheese, or a Norfolk dumpling, my discourse shall beat them, as it were, upon a cobbler’s (sic) lap-stone, until they become as soft as a roasted apple, - aye, even as soft as custard meat, and melt in your bellies like a marrow pudding” (*The Georgia Gazette*, 20 August, 1789, 343, p.4).

were so much more persuasive among the lower and working classes than the unfamiliar figures employed by their classically trained competitors.¹⁸

By referring to Methodists as “allegorizers” who “forsake the literal” in crafting their “legendary conceits, and wild fictions” (421), the author unwittingly suggests a parallel between Methodism and literature, between popular evangelicalism and popular fiction, that resides in their shared commitment to narrative, imagination, audience, and the symbolic or figurative mode of language. In the “raving, affected, wild, enthusiastic oratory of methodists” (419), then, we have an evangelical antecedent to those future American fictions which rely upon appealing to their audience’s affections, imagination, and taste for the sensational and sentimental by means of examples and stories taken from everyday life. When we turn to the sentimental novels of Catharine Maria Sedgwick and Harriet Beecher Stowe in later chapters, we will observe how Methodism’s association with affect, illiteracy, and the sympathetic bond between speaker and audience will lead it to be valued above the cold, rational, and erudite character of orthodox Calvinism. But we now proceed to an examination of a novel that satirizes the emergent form of evangelicalism precisely because it is illiterate, enthusiastic, and emotional. Unlike the novels of Sedgwick, Stowe, or fiction by their eighteenth-century predecessors like *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), *Modern Chivalry* imagines that power to be a politically destabilizing force within the republic, inconsistent with the exercise of disinterested judgment. Written in an ironic mode designed to inculcate readerly skepticism rather than sympathy, Brackenridge’s novel co-opts the caricature of Methodism detailed above, including its anti-American features, and redeploys it in the service of its nonsectarian, sociopolitical satire of the early republic. It is far from a fictionalized version of the article just discussed, for the learned, literate, and logical Calvinists come under almost as much censure as their Methodist colleagues. By attacking the excesses of both “establishment” and “popular” Protestantism, Brackenridge’s narrative exemplifies the moderation and self-awareness it strives to spawn in the mind of the reader.

¹⁸ Nathan Hatch relates how “the first college graduate among the circuit riders of Indiana found his education an actual disadvantage and gave up the regular ministry because of prejudice against him” (89).

I acknowledge, that in the regular churches, such as that of the Presbyterians, there is still kept up some opinion of the necessity of literature. But do we not see that with other denominations; such as the Quakers, the Methodists, and Anabaptists, it is totally disregarded and thrown out? Because when human gifts or acquirements are absent, that which is supernatural more evidently appears. (25)

Modern Chivalry Part 1 Volume I (1792)

Is not learning put down already? the methodists are the best preachers. Take a horse jockey and in two weeks from the jump, he is in the pulpit. No need of Latin, Greek, Hebrew; a polyglot bible; systems of divinity; a commentary, a treatise, an essay or a dissertation. All is plain sailing now. All this tends to put learning down.... Why burn the college? (256)

Modern Chivalry Part 2 Volume I (1804)

While critics are justified in noting the major differences between the two parts of *Modern Chivalry*, juxtaposing these passages allows us to discern at least one significant consistency between its first four, eighteenth-century volumes and the three volumes comprising the novel's nineteenth-century second part. Even though I very much agree with Emory Elliott's contention that "the three volumes of Part II of *Modern Chivalry* cannot be read in the same way or evaluated with the same criteria as the books of Part I" (202), I would point out that as Brackenridge's satirical narrative crosses centuries and changes styles it also continues to employ the figure of Methodism to represent the illiterate, enthusiastic, and irregular character of popular evangelicalism. Anti-Methodism serves as the vehicle for critiquing a strain of anti-intellectualism that threatens the flourishing of American letters and the republic itself. We can also discern the development of the Methodist metonym: "Methodists" become "methodists" in the second quotation and stand in for Quakers, Baptists, and popular Protestantism more generally. Methodists continue to be comically linked with society's denigration of literary education in its leaders, whether political, religious, or cultural. Brackenridge indeed "adopted a new strategy for the second part of his" (Elliott 202) novel, but Methodism's figurative role was retained and enhanced in the new volumes which appeared in 1804 and 1805. In the second half of this chapter we will see how, in its final 1815 form, *Modern Chivalry* made even more use out of Methodism's increasingly prominent and controversial position on the religious, political, and cultural landscape of the early republic. In this section I am only concerned with volumes 1

through 6, and more specifically with their creative appropriation of the Methodist-Calvinist divide in satirizing the more extreme manifestations of the democratization of American Christianity and those forces threatening to destroy the delicate balance of powers struck by his college classmate James Madison in the Constitution.

In the first quotation above, the narrator supplies us with the ideal starting point for a discussion of the religious satire found in the novel's initial two volumes, both published in 1792. We can observe how the narrator suggests an antithetical relationship between the "regular" and irregular, popular churches which is presented as a function of their differing attitudes concerning "the necessity of literature." Furthermore, this repudiation of formal education and training is directly linked to evangelicalism's enthusiastic understanding of the minister's role as conduit for supernatural power, more prophet than priest. Rather than serving as the people's divine representative because specialized training and religious education have distinguished him from his congregation, the popular preacher is as untutored as his congregation. His claim to the sacred office is not judged by his own skills but his ability to function as God's representative on earth, a human vessel filled with the Holy Spirit and channeling supernatural power to his audience through powerful preaching capable of awakening sinners rather than putting them to sleep. Dry, erudite sermons explicating the subtle nuances of scriptural passages may display their speaker's personal wisdom and be edifying to those with the education to understand them, but they cannot compete with the vivid imagery, familiar figures, and straightforward logic that makes Methodist preaching so mesmerizing and emotionally engaging for a popular audience. But it is precisely this ability to play the role of prophet so convincingly that makes the Methodist such a perfect religious analogue for the republican demagogue.¹⁹ And it is the public's willingness, even eagerness to hear such preaching and have such ministers serve as their divine representatives that so concerns Brackenridge because it evinces what he sees as a misperception of literature and learning's central role in democratic governance. It also offers insight into the people's deplorable tendency to choose their political representatives by the same criteria, not because a person is particularly well qualified for the trust but because he has been able to dupe the people into believing that his similarity with them will make him an abler congressman and that he is the ideal conduit for

¹⁹ In the second part of this chapter I argue that the 1815 edition of *Modern Chivalry* depicts the nineteenth-century political alliance between radical Jeffersonians and Methodists as the fulfillment of this earlier metaphorical connection.

their democratic power. The narrator's sarcastic advocacy of the abandonment of literature, like the rest of *Modern Chivalry*, is designed to provoke a skeptical response from the reader, the inculcation of ironic detachment and critical self-appraisal being one of the many benefits of a literary education. By attempting to provide the reader with the rudiments of that education through the entertaining form of the picaresque novel, Brackenridge is among the first American authors to use fiction for the purposes of democratic pedagogy. In the pages that follow I delineate the pivotal roles he continued to assign his evangelical caricatures as he published more volumes and became increasingly convinced of the necessity of literature to a healthy republic.

Over the course of its first six volumes (1792-1805), *Modern Chivalry* satirizes the democratic excesses of the new republic that Brackenridge felt most threatened its health and existence. As stated by the narrator-author in the sixth volume (1805), "These excesses have shown themselves in all democratic governments; whence it is that a *simple* democracy has never been able to exist long. An experiment is now made in a new world, and upon better principles; that of *representation and a more perfect separation, and near equipoise of the legislative, judicial, and executive powers*. But the balance of the powers, is not easily preserved. *The natural tendency is to one scale.*" (507). Brackenridge saw his book as one means by which he could help retain the balance needed for the new world "experiment" to work. Despite such protests against the idea that his work seeks to mock democracy so as to destroy rather than improve it, the reader who detects a somewhat conservative agenda is not mistaken. In the battle between the democratic and the aristocratic, embodied in the persons of Teague and Farrago respectively, the narrator-author usually comes down on the side of the Captain, even if it is with a great deal of sarcasm behind it. "The great moral of this book," we are told, "is the evil of men seeking office for which they are not qualified. The preposterous ambition of the bog-trotter, all points to this" (CMN 611).²⁰ Those readers and critics who have, as a result, come to believe that Brackenridge is on the side of Farrago can be forgiven, especially if they are basing that judgment on Part II. While the Captain is without question a caricature of the classically educated eighteenth-century gentleman, the satire is much more concerned with the excesses of democracy that are contained in the actions and attitudes of the illiterate Teague O'Regan. The three men might be said to represent the three branches of government, Farrago the executive,

²⁰ "CMN" inside a parenthetical citation indicates that it refers to the Claude M. Newlin edition of *Modern Chivalry* (1937) instead of Edward White's 2009 Hackett edition. As I explain in more detail at the beginning of section 2, White's excellent edition does not include the chapters Brackenridge added on to volume 6 in 1815.

O'Regan the representative of "the People," with the narrator acting the part of the seemingly impartial judiciary mediating between them. Like their Cervantean prototypes, Farrago and Teague tour the countryside observing the inane and irrational behavior of the citizenry and reacting to it in ways reflective of their disparate characters. The Captain is a well-read but reclusive bachelor who embodies the ideals of the ancien regime and is always lambasting the people for their faulty logic or preventing O'Regan from putting his plans for social advancement into practice. Teague, on the other hand, is constantly attempting to obtain positions for which he is not qualified, from Congressman to Presbyterian minister, thereby representing the dangers of unchecked self-interest in a democracy.

The text's ambivalent attitude toward both Teague and Farrago has been the subject of a good deal of criticism, and while forty years ago the Captain was deemed the protagonist and moral center of the book (Martin 241), the 1980s and 90s saw the publication of a number of articles and book chapters arguing for a much more balanced reading (Hoffa 293, Patterson 130, Davidson 260-62, Elliott 183-86, Rice 266). Indeed the pendulum has swung so far that one of the most influential readings of *Modern Chivalry* posits that Teague is actually the hero. In *Voicing America* Christopher Looby argues that *Modern Chivalry's* strength lies in its dialogic structure and its double-edged satire of the "emergent democracy" represented by Teague and the classical republicanism of the Captain, characterized by "nostalgia" for a static social order and a "reactionary attachment to a deferential social protocol" (243). While *Modern Chivalry* is "officially committed by its narrative voice to the authority of traditional republican ideals" (243), Looby maintains that "for better or worse" the novel is ultimately "committed to the triumph of Teague O'Regan and all that he represents: Teague has all the fun, his subversive energy is what propels the narrative (and the narrator's pained, cramped animadversions on Teague's transgressions are what block it), and – what is often not noted – Teague eventually overcomes Captain Farrago's resistance to his ambitious striving" (244). While Looby's argument is certainly provocative, its persuasiveness and value depend a great deal on two factors: what part of *Modern Chivalry* one is reading and what register – political, religious, or literary – one is evaluating. By the second part of the novel, when the narrator's pronouncements switch from sarcastic to sincere and the Captain is confronted with an increasingly idiotic populace, it becomes impossible to read the narrative as illustrating anything other than the need for the nation to embrace republicanism and abandon the dangerous dream of a true or "simple"

democracy. Only by educating themselves, electing qualified representatives, and maintaining the balance of powers will the people be able to maintain control of their government.

So while it is true, as Looby points out, that Teague “goes from being the notorious vagabond to holding a series of offices” (White xxi), it is also the case that the narrative gets more pro-republican as a result of the very different circumstances being satirized in the later volumes, as well as Brackenridge’s changing relationship to them.²¹ The three nineteenth-century volumes focus “on the inherent absurdity of modern democracy” and the narrator’s observations are less ironic and “more fundamentally a critical commentary on the desire for social change” (White xxi) than in the four eighteenth-century volumes. As White notes, whereas “the earlier volumes seem to encourage readers to be critical of social conventions, the later volumes press readers to be skeptical of their own beliefs, and to accept the wisdom that has made their society” (xxii). This is in large part owing to the dramatically changed political and professional realities after 1800 and the coming to power of Jefferson’s Democratic-Republicans in Pennsylvania. Brackenridge supported their gubernatorial candidate and when he won Brackenridge was rewarded with a judgeship on the largely Federalist Pennsylvania Supreme Court (Newlin xviii, White xxxv). By 1804-5 Brackenridge found himself fending off attacks upon the bench, and then the state constitution, by the radical wing of his own party. In the 1780s he had vociferously supported ratification of the federal Constitution but in the 1790s he vehemently opposed Federalist politics and defended both the French Revolution and the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania. That the nineteenth century finds him once again realigning himself with more conservative politics simply underscores the interpretive importance of approaching each volume of *Modern Chivalry* on its own terms. But it also

²¹ Looby is not alone in so forcefully arguing for *Modern Chivalry*’s endorsement of republicanism to be read ironically. In “*Modern Chivalry* and the Resistance to Textual Authority,” Grantland Rice makes a similar claim: “I want to argue that in *Modern Chivalry* Brackenridge worked for two interrelated ends. First, he attempted to destabilize and desacralize what both Michael Warner and Robert Ferguson have described as the disciplinary apparatus of republican print ideology.... This desacralization had, in turn, two rhetorical components: to warn the public against the manipulative power of print and to chastise it for its gullibility and blind appetite for sensationalism. Secondly, Brackenridge cautioned his readership about the conventionalizing power of an emerging print culture industry - an industry fueled by economic forces as well as by the philosophical imperatives of republican print ideology - and attempted to disrupt its persuasive and pervasive logic of material, formal, and ideological uniformity” (258). Paul Gilmore agrees with Looby and Rice, writing in 2004 that the picaresque “offers a profound, if covert, refutation of central elements of republican ideology,” but maintains it also offers an alternative to both “supposedly disinterested republicanism and liberal, self-interested democracy” (300) in the form of a proto-Romantic aestheticism.

illustrates Brackenridge's personal commitment to balance and moderation, whether in life, religion, or politics.

The increasing prominence of Methodism in the narrative correlates with the novel's increasingly conservative outlook, but it also corresponds with Methodism's increasingly prominent place in American culture and politics. Methodism is presented as the religious manifestation of a more pervasive problem: the people's belief that the best leaders, political or religious, are those that are most similar to themselves. Methodism would not be such an issue if the populace were not so predisposed to find educational attainments an indicator of corruption or elitism, just as demagoguery would not be a problem if the people were not so easily moved by oratorical appeals to their emotions or sense of self-interest. Teague's illiteracy, inexperience, and selfishness ought to disqualify him for public office but instead the electorate see themselves in these attributes and mistakenly believe that they must be represented metonymically, by someone similar to themselves. As Mark Patterson has brilliantly demonstrated, *Modern Chivalry* tries to get readers to understand that they would be best served by choosing their representatives based on the logic of the metaphor. Patterson explains that "the metonymic representative assuages the constituents' suspicions by creating a likeness of them," but in his novel Brackenridge "posits what we might call metaphoric or figurative representation...., a relationship between representative and constituents based on the representative's autonomy, superiority (natural or acquired), and figurative detachment from the electors" (127). Like the learned pastor who is selected (or called) by an untutored congregation to be their divine representative in his position as intermediary between them and God, political representatives should be selected for their selflessness, aptitude, and education rather than the extent to which they resemble the members of the group they will both lead and serve. But what happens when those in positions of authority start to imitate the misguided logic of the multitude? This is the question that Brackenridge explores through Teague's temporarily successful attempt at becoming a candidate for the Presbyterian ministry.

As discussed briefly above, Methodism first appears in *Modern Chivalry* because it is a prime example of the repudiation of literature by popular Protestantism. In the third book of Volume One (1792), Teague dupes a gullible local Presbytery into believing that he is a good candidate for the ministry. By using "a great deal of what is called Blarney," and contriving to be observed praying in private, he convinces the Presbyterian ministers that he is "in the first stage

of conviction, and likely to become a pious man” (23). The joke would be obvious to any early American. Of all the Protestant denominations, the Presbyterian Church was arguably the most conservative and intellectually rigorous, not to mention among the most socially prestigious. Thomas Jefferson referred to it privately as the “haughtiest of all religious sects.”²² The Church required its ministers to possess postgraduate degrees, conform to strict confessional standards, and deliver erudite sermons to an audience that was often equally well educated. The idea of an illiterate Irish Catholic, prone to employing profanity and prostitutes, becoming a Presbyterian minister is the height of ridiculousness. But equally egregious is the ministers’ mistake in letting their evangelical zeal blind them to Teague’s trickery and reject the objections made by the Captain out of hand. The latter is unable to talk sense into the Presbytery; they believe him to be “a carnal man” (i.e. unregenerate) with little respect for their profession and expertise. As he has done before, Farrago turns his attention to Teague and tries to convince him to give up his pretensions to the priesthood. His arguments further satirize the populist changes to the American religious landscape occurring in the wake of the Revolution and the forming of the federal government.

Farrago’s first move is to ask Teague a series of questions meant to make him realize just how woefully unqualified he is for the job, one which is also not as cushy and prestigious as Teague apparently believes it to be. “Are you apprised of the difficulty of the work?” asks the Captain. “The first thing you will have to do, is to take a text; and when that is done, you will have to split it into parts. There are what are called heads; and these you must divide into firstlys, and secondlys, and thirdlys, and fourthlys, and so on, till you have come to twentieths, perhaps” (24). Brackenridge’s caricature of the standard Reformed sermon, with its carefully structured arguments and traditional formal features, is intended to deter Teague by virtue of its dry drudgery. But this was also one of the literary factors that prevented the Presbyterians from keeping pace with denominations like the Methodists. Such methodical and theologically

²² In the same letter, a reply to Dr. Thomas Cooper dated 2 November, 1822, Jefferson describes how “our country is unquestionably charged with a threatening cloud of fanaticism... I had no idea, however, that in Pennsylvania, the cradle toleration and freedom of religion, it could have arisen to the height you describe. This must be owing to the growth of Presbyterianism. The blasphemy and absurdity of the five points of Calvin, and the impossibility of defending them, render their advocates impatient of reasoning, irritable, and prone to denunciation.” This is also one of the letters in which Jefferson famously declares his clearly optimistic belief that Unitarianism will, “ere long, be the religion of the majority from north to south...” He was wrong. Methodism, rather than Presbyterianism or his own liberal Unitarianism, soon became the largest and most pervasive religious ideology of the nineteenth century.

sophisticated sermons frequently fell on deaf ears, the audience being unable to translate theological distinctions into practical advice. But with the Methodists such translation was not needed because the preacher was not only from the same socioeconomic position as his (or her) listeners, but also employed language and metaphors familiar to the laboring classes.

When the Captain's caricature of a Presbyterian sermon fails to convince Teague of the preposterousness of his ambition, the Captain switches to another argument based in the explosion of preachers in the early republic. If Teague thinks that his scheme will result in a rise in his social position, he has not been paying attention to the dramatic changes to the American ministry happening since the Revolution. While Teague might "think it a great honour to preach now-a days," he is mistaken. "It was an honour once;" explains Farrago, "but the thing is now become so common, that it is of little consequence to preach or not" (24). While the Captain's assessment is a bit premature, his words are founded on fact. Nathan Hatch has written that "the eighteen hundred Christian ministers serving in 1775 swelled to nearly forty thousand by 1845," meaning that, "the number of preachers per capita more than tripled; the colonial legacy of one minister per fifteen hundred inhabitants became one per five hundred." Hatch writes that "this greater preaching density was remarkable given the spiraling population and the restless movement of peoples to occupy land beyond the reach of any church organization. The sheer number of new preachers...was not a predictable outgrowth of religious conditions in the British colonies. Rather, their sudden growth indicated a profound religious upsurge and resulted in a vastly altered religious landscape" (4). But it was the Presbyterian Church more than any other that tried to maintain its honorable position in that new landscape, an endeavor that Brackenridge gently mocks but also ironically defends through the sarcastic voice of the narrator. Eventually the Captain is able to persuade Teague to terminate his scheme, but only after concocting a story about how the Presbytery really wants him so badly because "they carry on a war with the devil, and they wish to recruit you for their service" (24). Once Teague hears about the eternal tortures he will have to endure at the hands of the Devil as a result of doing the ministers' bidding, he abandons his career in religion...for the time being.

Like many scenes to come, the comedy of this one involving the Presbyterians can only come to life if one understands Brackenridge's deployment of denominational identities and stereotypes with which his readers would have been familiar. In the chapter of commentary that follows most narrative chapters in the first part of the novel, the narrator begins by telling us that

“the overtures made by Teague, to be admitted to the ministry, and the simplicity of the ecclesiastics in listening to his pretensions, made a great noise through the neighbourhood; in as much as the young man laboured under a want of education, and was not qualified by theological reading” (25). Readers of *Modern Chivalry* would have seen their own astonishment and amusement mirrored in the neighborhood’s supposed reaction. It is also crucial to note that the people are shocked by the behavior of the Presbyterians; they do not cheer Teague on as they will do in Part Two. Brackenridge is able to use the natural surprise of the people to mount a sarcastic defense of an “illiterate” American clergy, meaning one without any literary training. “I do not see, why it should be thought blamable” that Teague should become a minister, he argues, “provided the matter was not too much hurried, and hastily brought forward. For give him a little time, and he might have been instructed to preach as well as some that I myself have heard” (25). It’s a backhanded compliment to be sure, and it sets up the narrator’s sarcastic assessment of the differences between the literary, “regular” churches of the colonial era and the up-and-coming evangelical sects that were flourishing in the post-Revolutionary period. As discussed above, an unlettered itinerant lacking seminary training who is still able to preach powerfully is more likely to be seen as the conduit of divine inspiration by virtue of his untutored ignorance than a minister with the command of languages, theology, and oratory required by the Presbyterians. But this can hardly be taken as a straightforward endorsement of such shifting educational standards or the diminishing role of literature in ministerial qualification. While the narrator does state that the “Quakers, and Methodists, and Baptists, preach very well,” he immediately adds that they do so “without the aid of any human learning whatever” (25), a derisive overstatement that sets up the final stage of his defense wherein he connects the lack of learning in religion to similar trends in the realm of politics and philosophy. “In state affairs, ignorance does very well, and why not in church? I am for having all things of a piece; ignorant statesmen, ignorant philosophers, and ignorant ecclesiastics” (26). Such sarcastic assertions obviously undermine his putative point, but they also mock those evangelical elements within Presbyterianism, labeled ‘New Lights,’ who were brought into conflict with ‘Old Light’ defenders of orthodoxy and educational requirements when they began to espouse a style of evangelicalism in many ways imitative of their Methodist colleagues.

Teague’s attempt at becoming a Presbyterian minister is not the last time that he manages to convincingly perform the role of the pious evangelical. In the next section of this chapter we

will see him act the part of the camp meeting convert, thereby embodying the deception evangelicals invite by their willingness to interpret physical, emotional, and psychological turmoil as signs of heavenly intervention and Christian conversion. Nor is Teague the only character in *Modern Chivalry* to try to take advantage of the changing standards for entering the American ministry. In Volume Two (1792) Teague and the Captain come across an “ecclesiastical consistory” (62) trying to determine which of the two men before them is the genuine preacher and which the imposter. One of them looks like a minister, exhibiting “a grave aspect” and wearing “a black coat; the other [was] without the same clerical colour of garb; but with papers in his pocket which announced his authority to preach, and officiate as a clergyman” (62-3). The man dressed like a preacher claims that the other stole his papers, while the one with the clerical credentials maintains that the coat is his as well. At the suggestion of the Captain, who invokes the biblical maxim “by their fruits ye shall know them” (63), the two men have a preach-off to demonstrate their identity via their oratorical skills. The contest is a fictional representation and comedic dramatization of the democratization of Christianity that calls to mind Timothy Dwight’s sarcastic comment about those who would “become ministers in a moment; and put on the qualifications for the Ministry as they put on a coat” (qtd. in Porterfield 123). Instead of the Captain condemning the imposter, a failed Irish yarn merchant, as was the case when Teague made a similarly deceptive attempt to enter the ministry, Farrago actually attempts to help him trick the consistory into believing him to be a real man of the cloth. But doing so does not prevent Brackenridge from using the competition to mock emerging mores regarding practical preaching and the growing gap between the taste and intelligence of city and country audiences.

When the man with the black coat takes the pulpit he delivers a miniature version of the highly organized and multi-headed sermon that Farrago used to scare Teague in Volume One. In another move that would be replicated in later volumes of the novel, Brackenridge uses the sermon the man preaches to lecture the reader on the need to study, or, as the text he takes from Psalms puts it, to “Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not” (64). Though the reformed sermon did not deter Teague from trying to become a clergyman, this Irishman is floored by its complexity and cowed by his competitor’s performance of it. “The technical difficulty of taking a text, and dividing it under several heads, and splitting each head into branches, and pursuing each with such strictness, that the thoughts should be ranged under each which belonged to it”

(65) absolutely terrifies him and he decides not to take a text but simply to start with Genesis and make his way to Revelations via the bits and pieces of biblical information he has accumulated. The result is a comically absurd and unintelligible sermon that nevertheless secures the favor of “the lay people present ... and some of the younger of the clergy” while “the more aged, gave the preference to the first” (66) preacher, who had delivered the traditional sermon. The popularity of the imposter’s performance, like the eagerness of the ecclesiastics to admit Teague to the ministry in the previous volume, suggests that the text’s primary satirical target is the society that supports such “preposterous ambition” (CMN 611). As the story proceeds and Teague is able to secure positions of authority, with and without the aid of Farrago, the people increasingly receive the brunt of the blame for behavior and attitudes that threaten the delicate balance on which the democracy rests. This is further illustrated by the way in which the Captain settles the dispute over which man is the true preacher. Employing some of his own blarney, he tells the consistory that “the men seem both to have considerable gifts, and I see no harm in letting them both preach. There is work enough for them in this new country; the first appears to me, to be more qualified for the city, as a very methodical preacher; but the last is most practical; and each may answer a valuable purpose in their proper place” (66). In making the imposter’s nonsensical sermon an example of “practical” preaching, the style associated with the upstart sects, *Modern Chivalry* implies that Methodists are conmen who, in the words of Philo-Aletheias, deceive the people into believing “their wild cant to be seraphic notions.” By demonstrating that such trickery can only succeed with an uncritical audience, the novel strives to make its reader realize his or her complicity in the comedy as well as in the fate of the nation.

In the first volume of Part II (1804) Brackenridge continues this critique, placing Methodism center stage and dealing in more detail with its relationship to the anti-intellectual attitudes he observes. Part II begins with the return of the Captain to his hometown. Teague, who has just returned from revolutionary France, soon joins Farrago and the pair proceeds to get into scrapes and situations similar to those they experienced while on the road. One of the major differences, however, is the increased intensity and pervasiveness of the anti-intellectualism that they soon find in the village, not to mention the irrationality of the residents. A little more than a month after the Captain and Teague arrive, “an incendiary” at a town meeting proposes “to burn down the college. Because, said he; all learning is a nuisance” (256). The narrator explains that, “whether from a wish to see a bon-fire; or from the hatred of the ignorant, to all that places the

informed above them; the proposition however unreasonable and illegal had its advocates. It had been actually carried, and a fellow was now on his way with a brand lighted to set fire to the building” (256). The people have now become the primary promoters of anti-intellectualism, allowing the narrator (and narrative) to take the Captain’s side without it amounting to an endorsement of aristocratic privilege, for the Captain has also become a much more committed democrat than he was in the first half of the novel, albeit one still certain that republicanism is the only type of democracy that has the potential to last.

The nature and extent of Methodist success by the early 1800s provides the Captain with the rhetorical means of convincing the crowd to extinguish their torches. As we saw in the second quotation at the head of this section, the fact that the Methodists are the most popular or considered to be the “best preachers,” despite lacking any of the literary training required by the regular churches, proves that learning has already been “put down” (256). It is therefore unnecessary to burn the building because the hoped for result has already been achieved. The Methodists are not only the best symbol of the separation of formal education from the American ministry, but also of the amazing popular success it has resulted in for them and those evangelical sects following their lead. Farrago’s address does get the mob to disperse, but its members soon start arguing with one another over their actions and decision to retreat, those recognizing the ridiculousness of the resolution berating those who had initially advocated razing the college. But this only serves to once again enrage the contingent intent on attacking the supposed source of social inequality, and they turn their attention to the other institution blamed for similar sins: the Church. Once again the Captain is able to prevent the people from executing their plan, and again it turns out that their desire to burn the Church stems from its being a symbol of institutional and educational oppression, but of a slightly different kind. The mob explains that it does not seek to “abolish Christianity,” as the Captain charges, “but to put down the preacher at this place; who is not an American republican, but quotes the English commentators in his sermons...” (258). Foreshadowing calls for the abandonment of English common law as a precedent in U.S. legal proceedings, the people mention a list of theologians, like “Tillotson and Baxter,” who they reject simply out of nationalist egotism. They mistakenly believe that intellectual freedom and national identity are to be acquired simply by the severing of all ties to Britain. “Are we to be drawing our proofs from under a monarchy, and referring to tracts and essays published in Great Britain? Have we no sense of our own to explain texts of

Scripture, and apply doctrines? It is time to emancipate ourselves from these shackles, and every man be his own expounder..." (258). Like literature itself, the British theological tradition gets in between the people and their sacred text, a mediation which they mistakenly believe to be impeding their freedom of interpretation (presented here as an analogue to political independence) rather than offering it initial support and valuable guidance which can be jettisoned once a native interpretive tradition has been formed. The founding fathers, it is implied, did not need to reject all of British learning in order to achieve independence. Indeed, the opposite was true. They needed British and Continental thought in order to understand their political situation and formulate a rationale for political separation. The people are mistaking the absence of tradition for individual freedom when in reality the complete severing they call for would actually lead to less liberty due to the chaos that would ensue and the tyranny that eventually would reemerge by whoever was powerful enough to consolidate power. The lawyers, churchmen, and other educated professionals who initiated, led the struggle for, and ultimately secured the country's independence are cast aside by a populace that now deems them aristocratic elites intent on reestablishing the deferential and stratified society of the colonial period. Brackenridge believed there to be "a natural alliance between liberty and letters" and laments "that literary institutions are not favoured; that it has become a popular thing to call out against learning, as not necessary to make republicans" (281). "It is not good policy in republicans to declare war against letters; or even to frown upon them, for in literary men is their best support. They are as necessary to them as light to the steps." Why? Because, as the narrator-author goes on to explain, "the knowledge of our rights, and capacity to prosecute, and defend them, does not spring from the ground; but from education and study" (281).

Eventually such nationalist stupidity renders remaining in town an untenable option for Farrago. In the second volume of Part II (1805), his continual opposition to the misguided plans of the town's inhabitants, especially their attempts to make Teague a judge, soon renders him *persona non grata*. He is forced to defend his identity as a self-professed democrat, but in spite of his eloquence he soon deems it best to depart again from his hometown. This time he heads for the frontier, taking Teague and his motley crew with him (357). As they head west the Captain and his companions pass through a number of villages and encounter an increasing animosity

and hostility toward formal schooling and the professions that require it.²³ Eventually they reach the frontier and enter into the “new settlement.” A provisional government is voted into place with the Captain as Governor (393) and Teague as constable (386). Given the prevalence of Methodist ministers on the frontier, it naturally follows that the new settlement’s religious leader should be of that sect, but given the treatment that the Methodists have received throughout the work, it is also no surprise that the one found here has a checkered past: “The preacher of the town was a methodist that had been a horse thief” (392). He apparently lost more than his liberty in payment for the crime, for “when he had taken his text and was warning from the like offence, and telling the danger of it, he would put back his wig, and say, you see I have lost my ears by it” (392). The significance of this rather bizarre figure is initially hard to parse, aside from the obvious suggestion that many Methodist ministers only take up the profession out of economic necessity, or that they only become missionaries in the west to escape prosecution in the east. But this illiterate enthusiast is also a sendup of practical preaching in which its commitment to providing listeners with knowledge applicable to their daily religious lives is rendered as an admonition not to steal horses. The use of personal experience as the source of a sermon is also a veiled reference to the form of preaching most commonly associated with Methodism: the

²³ One of these is called the “Lack-learning settlement” (367). Someone had spread a rumor in the settlement that the Captain’s caravan “consisted of *Scholars and Lawyers*” and “a multitude had got together, with sticks and stones, to obstruct the march into their country” (367). The Captain advances under a flag of truce and tries to guarantee their safe passage through the village. He starts by belittling the learning of the men in his company, but then suggests to the crowd that their fear of literature and letters is unfounded. “After all,” he contends, “what harm could learning do you, provided that you did not learn yourself?... If you do not find your account, or your amusement in literary studies, what matters it, if others do? Learning, is not a thing that will grow upon you all at once,” he explains, “In fact, it requires some resolution, and much perseverance, to become learned,” which is why it was once “thought a great matter to get to be a scholar. Peculiar privileges were attached. Hence what is called ‘the benefit of the clergy’” (367). At the Captain’s mention of the clergy, a German immigrant and leader of the mob breaks in, claiming, in heavily accented English, that of scholars and clergymen, “De Clergy are de biggest rogues of de two. An honest Sherman minister widout larning, ish better. But de lawyers are de tyvil; wid deir pooks, and deir talks in de courts; and sheats people for de money.... Laming ish goot for noting; but to make men rogues. It ish all a contrivance to sheat people” (368). After having his say, this “Demagogue...who had excited this opposition to learning and the learned,” (368) lets them pass after he realizes that “there were really no literati” (368) among them. After passing through a few more villages the Captain finally leads his merry band into the latest and most westerly town to be founded on the frontier: the new settlement (379). Brackenridge presents the new settlement as an isolated and infant society not far removed from the state of nature. Everyone must fend for themselves in the absence of laws, courts, and the host of other institutions that maintain order in society. It is not long before “a code of laws, a court, and advocates” (381) are called for, much to the Captain’s surprise given the hostility to lawyers and scholars that he has encountered throughout the country. “In the mid-land settlements, they are going to burn the lawyers, as they did the witches in New-England; and as to judges, it is as much as a man’s life is worth to resemble one” (381). Apparently they had the crazy idea that “courts of justice were the best preservatives of a republic; and barriers against monarchy, and despotism” (381). Brackenridge is clearly using the new settlement to offer his readers an image of what society would actually look like if the anti-intellectual elements had their way and eliminated the professionals from society along with the institutions they maintain.

exhortation. Unlike the formal sermon that is grounded in the interpretation of a biblical passage, the exhortation is a more informal, narrative account of one's religious experience and spiritual battle with sin and for salvation. As such it was a genre of preaching available to anyone with a moving story to tell and the ability to relate it in a compelling fashion. The existence of the exhortation as a distinct genre within Methodism was one of the key factors in making the denomination appealing to women and people of color because they were often allowed and even encouraged to exhort congregations after the minister had finished preaching, especially in the south in the eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century.²⁴

It is not long, however, before we are again offered a sectarian contrast that allows the reader to discern the differences between rational and enthusiastic Christianity. The Methodist is soon joined by a Lay Preacher from the Governor's hometown who readers were introduced to several chapters earlier. The Captain encounters him while taking a tour of the insane asylum. It is naturally filled with the few sane people left in the town, two of whom are recognizable stand-ins for Brackenridge himself (or more accurately, his younger selves). In addition to the Lay Preacher, there is a mad poet composing a versified travesty of the Captain's travels (271). The narrator even asserts that he has gotten hold of a copy of the poem and will offer his readers selections from it. The Lay Preacher is a less obviously self-referential figure, but he nevertheless delivers sermons we can recognize as consonant with the underlying argument of the novel. While still in the asylum he preaches to the Captain on the text, "In those days there was no King in Israel; and every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (270). He uses it as the basis for a sermon arguing, "it is an evil that men should do that which is right *in their own eyes*. A man is not a proper judge of right in his own cause. His passions bias his judgment. He cannot see the right and justice of the case" (271). Published just after the Pennsylvania Supreme Court was impeached, the Lay Preacher's asylum sermon is a thinly veiled rebuttal to the

²⁴ Christine Heyrman writes that, "women were more visible as religious virtuosos in the South because the forms of evangelicalism predominant in that region differed from those in the North. Among northerners, evangelicals remained overwhelmingly Congregationalist and Presbyterian until the 1830s. In those churches, the clergy encouraged women to develop outlets for their religious energies by forming single-sex voluntary associations to promote personal spiritual growth and moral reform. Although women sometimes testified to their experiences in those churches, they did not pray or exhort in sexually mixed settings until the 1830s, which meant that for many decades after the Revolution, most northern men did not routinely witness public displays of female religious virtuosity. By contrast, Baptists and Methodists quickly emerged after the Revolution as the majority of evangelicals in the South. Both churches permitted women to prophesy, pray, and exhort at mixed gatherings, thus creating many opportunities for southern men to observe the talents of spiritually proficient women" (194).

radicals leading the efforts to remove the Federalist judges and replace them with Republicans. When the Lay Preacher arrives at the New Settlement, the Captain, now Governor, immediately makes him his chaplain (just as Brackenridge himself was a chaplain during the war) and has him preach to the assembled inhabitants shortly thereafter.

The 1805 edition of *Modern Chivalry* ends with a sermon given by the Lay Preacher and “preached to a numerous congregation, in a chapel in the woods” (408). He begins by explaining that he will be addressing practical matters of moral behavior, such as indolence and intemperance, rather than spiritual ones because that is the province of the Methodist minister of the settlement. “It falls to my function to see what good advice I can give you, for it is by admonition only that I can serve the commonwealth. I shall leave spiritual things to my brother, the Methodist, who is as busy as a bee in a tar barrel yonder, raising the affections, and disturbing the imagination” (409). This short description of the Methodist’s ministerial activities continues the novel’s critique of the enthusiastic cast of popular Christianity, but it also foreshadows the camp meeting that would be added to the volume ten years later. The Lay Preacher’s sermon does this as well, for not only is it an example of the laity assuming control of Christianity, but it is delivered in a “chapel in the woods” that is nothing more than a clearing in the forest, the narrator explaining that “the woods was all the chapel that they had; and a rising ground for the pulpit” (410). And so *Modern Chivalry* ends, at least in 1805, with the opposition between the Lay Preacher and the Methodist minister, the rational Christian and the illiterate enthusiast, concluding the work’s commentary on the need for religious moderation and a popular Christianity that appeals to the understanding rather than the emotions and the imagination. Ten years later Brackenridge would change the ending, adding several more chapters to Volume Six as well as a completely new, seventh volume which would provide a much different ending to his magnum opus.

Whether Teague was caught with the contagion, or by his natural sagacity saw that it attracted attention to the individual who appeared to be most moved, and projected from his proper positions; he did not hesitate to participate in this tumult. –Standing sometimes on his head; walking on his hands, with his feet upright; or rolling himself into a ball, with his head between his feet, and tumbling himself down a hill, which he had been accustomed to do in Ireland, by way of bravado, amongst his fellow bog-trotters. This brought him into great account with the religious. He was helped up after his feats, his temples chafed, and his lips kissed by young women. The preachers, as they called themselves, pronounced him one of the converted. (CMN 609)

Modern Chivalry (1815)

In his introduction to the most recent edition of *Modern Chivalry*, Ed White calls it “a complicated monster of a text” (x). Beyond its immense length, the fact that Brackenridge made changes to previously published volumes when adding new ones, White explains, presents the would-be editor with a major dilemma. Should the novel’s seven volumes, which appeared at irregular intervals between 1792 and 1815, be reprinted as originally published, or should the 1815 edition, the last printed in the author’s lifetime but the first to include the entire text in one edition, be considered the novel in its final form and the editorial master text? White chose to follow the former philosophy and as a result Teague’s tumbling routine and conversion, not to mention the camp meeting at which they occur, do not appear in his 2009 Hackett edition.²⁵ In the rest of this chapter I strive to show that this camp meeting and the ones that follow it are critical to understanding the novel’s satire of the religious and political developments that occurred during the decade since the 1805 volume was published. Those years saw the controversial introduction of Methodist camp meetings to the northeastern states, including Brackenridge’s home state of Pennsylvania, and an increasingly polarized political atmosphere exacerbated by the War of 1812. Based in New England, Federalist opposition to the Republican administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison led to the solidifying of the Republican alliance with Methodists, Baptists, and assorted up-and-coming sects competing with Calvinists for members while fighting with them to end the state support of Congregationalism in the New England states where it still stubbornly persisted. Camp meetings were a primary means by

²⁵ The exclusion of the new 1815 ending to volume 6 is the result of a perfectly justifiable editorial decision and is thus a regrettable narrative casualty of the paper age.

which Francis Asbury (1745-1816) sought and achieved a tactical advantage over his establishment rivals like Lyman Beecher and Timothy Dwight, both of whom were integral in the proliferation of anti-Methodism across the United States but especially in New England.

Camp meetings also came to be a primary means by which U.S. authors, Brackenridge first among them, portrayed the uniquely American character of the evangelicalism that swept the country during the Second Great Awakening. Even though the first camp meetings were interdenominational, it is also true that they were held under Presbyterian auspices. But as word spread east of what had transpired at these enormous, enthusiastic events in Kentucky and Tennessee, the Presbyterian Church quickly distanced itself from them. When Lorenzo Dow brought camp meetings to England shortly later, the British authorities also banned them. But U.S. religious liberty and separation of church and state meant that camp meetings could not be stopped and they quickly became tourist attractions, examples of the disorderly and popular character of American evangelicalism, set amidst that most American of settings: a clearing in the forest. Spectators, participants, and assorted people intent on making either money or trouble flocked to these events. Their popularity did not mean that camp meetings were not controversial. Pamphlets, poems, and newspaper articles poured from the presses and were endlessly reprinted. A truly national conversation ensued over whether camp meetings were pious evangelical rituals or promiscuous gatherings where illicit emotion masqueraded as religious affect and enjoyed the cover of forest and tent. Whichever view one took, it was undeniable that camp meetings were providing the country with a topic and discursive space within which to debate the character of American Christianity that was emerging at the turn of the nineteenth century. Brackenridge was the first to tap the potential of the camp meeting as an emblem of American democracy and its peculiar blend of popular evangelicalism and popular government.

The camp meeting described above takes place not in the east but at a frontier settlement “approaching to a state of nature” (413) that Brackenridge uses to stage the formation of a new republican government at the beginning of Volume Seven. When the settlers debate “how a republican government should begin” (415) at the beginning of the next volume, they quickly agree to hold “a convention of the people” and to model it on “what is called a camp-meeting: This is a gathering of fanatics, of which we have seen examples, in almost all parts of the United States” (415). Implicitly referencing Teague’s performance, someone asks about “the danger of

the same tumblings, and jumpings, and contortions of body, and agitations of mind, as [occur] at those congregations” (415). But it is not judged to be a legitimate concern “because the female part of the society would be excluded. These are not only convulsionists, but the cause of convulsions becoming general among the multitude, by sympathy of feeling, and extasy (sic) of vision. Keep these away, and the meeting might be kept sober, unless indeed spirituous liquor was introduced” (415). While the exclusion of women and wine fails to ensure an orderly convention of male voters – “great confusion ensued” (416) – this dialogue establishes the novel’s primary interest in camp meetings to be both political and religious in nature. They are man-made symbols of disorderly democracy that illustrate the dangers of a popular sovereignty that mistakes human sympathy and amorous energy for the supernatural, thereby inviting the kind of demagoguery and claims to authority which will bring about the downfall of the republic. Teague’s self-interested, sexually charged “burlesque” (CMN 629) of Methodist exercises illustrates just how easy it is to imitate behavior that an audience will interpret as divinely inspired.

Teague may be the first but is by no means the only early American picaro to pretend to be a Methodist as the means of seducing women. In *The Life and Adventures of Obadiah Benjamin Franklin Bloomfield, M.D.* (1818), the young protagonist, after washing out as a Presbyterian minister-in-training, becomes a Methodist in order to fulfill his father’s wish to hear his son preach. The old man, a staunch Calvinist, is scandalized to learn that his son has gone over to the hated Methodists. He is spared, however, the knowledge that his son uses his position to commit the sins of fornication (25, 31) and adultery (35-40) before relinquishing the mantle of Methodist circuit rider. Five years later, John Neal published *Errata, or the Life of Will Adams* (1823), another rambling work of picaresque-like fiction involving an adventurous and somewhat immoral young man on the make. One of the more memorable of his escapades involves his trip to a Methodist camp meeting. He manages to get “a pretty, little, rosy, dimpled country girl” alone and writes of how they “sat there, under the candle and starlight; and talked, lovingly, I own, but not wickedly, or licentiously, till the night dew had drenched her black hair” (275). Will and the young woman are soon discovered by a pair of Methodist elders, who begin “to rebuke” (275) him for sexual misconduct, whereupon he launches into a full-throated denunciation of camp meetings. “*There,*” he exclaims, “lasciviousness is sanctified – indecency consecrated – and prodigal exposure becomes a commendable indifference to the world, the

flesh, and the devil” (277). His words must be taken with a large grain of salt, of course, because they are coming from a man who has just told us that he went to the camp meeting hoping to encounter, “religious people; particularly them that wear petticoats, and tumble, and roll about, in their extacies” (274). But such ironic, even antithetical assertions are actually representative of the picaresque, a genre that revels in “unreconciled contradictions” (Davidson 249). All three of these works of fiction take great pleasure in imagining evangelical religiosity as the perfect cover for sexual relations, but *Modern Chivalry* and *Errata* also employ the controversial figure of the camp meeting, with its mixture of sin and sanctity in a uniquely American setting, as a symbol for democratic dysfunction and the confusing of sympathy with the supernatural. In doing so both Brackenridge and Neal register their recognition of the aesthetic, emotional, and performative elements underpinning an emerging popular culture attempting to fuse evangelical emotionalism with enlightenment rationalism. With its blend of enthusiasm and empiricism, Methodism embodied the young nation’s split personality and provided the perfect vehicle for metaphorizing the unlikely alliance between Jeffersonian Republicans and evangelical Christians that came to control the country after 1800. Brackenridge’s novel deserves our primary attention, however, because of the sophistication of its deployment of the character of Methodism in its parodic depiction of early national politics.

On August 5, 1808 the *Carlisle Weekly Gazette*, Brackenridge’s hometown paper, ran an announcement for an upcoming camp meeting to be held in nearby Shippensburg. After briefly noting the date and location, the advertisement declares that, “this Camp-Meeting is intended for the worship of God and the Salvation of precious Souls,” and its organizers “therefore protest against everything that might militate against this divine order, such as selling or drinking spirituous liquors on or near the ground where this Meeting is to be held. We also trust, that all the lovers of Religion and polite order who may attend there, will contribute to the credit of this Meeting by behaving decently, both to their own honour and that of their country” (“Communication”). Readers would thus not only have been alerted to the approach of the meeting but to the potential for scenes of drunken disorder and indecent behavior. The effect of such well-intentioned statements on the part of the organizers is debatable when one considers that they were read by the pious as well as the curious, the devout as well as the dissolute. They also fanned the flames of controversy by publically acknowledging that some of the worst fears voiced by camp meeting opponents were well founded. What more damning evidence could

there be than that their organizers needed to combine announcements of such meetings with pleas for order and decency?

That was one of the questions posed by the author of an article, running right next to the camp meeting announcement, that charged them with “the profanation” of the Sabbath rather than its “sanctification” (“Camp-Meeting”). Is there biblical precedent for such events? “Can the disorders and irregularities common to such promiscuous assemblies be reconciled to the Divine rule[,] ‘Let all things be done decently and in order?’” “It may likewise be asked, what real worth or goodness can be imagined in the bodily agitations, the noise, hallooing, jumping, and falling, which, on these occasions are so eagerly looked for, which the Preachers are at so much pains to excite and encourage, [and] which are so highly commended and gloried in?” (“Camp-Meeting”). In their contemptuous tone and invocation of scriptural support, as well as their derisive depiction of Methodist exercises, these rhetorical questions typify the dozens of likeminded denunciations that were published and reprinted in newspapers from Georgia to Maine during the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

The extent, intensity, and duration of the public debate over camp meetings, fueled by both sides,²⁶ almost certainly resulted in increased interest and attendance. But it also suggests that camp meetings raised concerns and tapped issues well beyond those respecting religious worship. Like the Catholic convent, the Methodist camp meeting inspired Calvinist indignation and served as the imaginative space for the dramatization of political and cultural conflict grounded in theological differences. Secluded coves stood in for monastic cells and the intimacy of the tent replaced that of the confessional, but the illicit activities imagined to be taking place within them were similar, as was the political threat they posed the young republic. Their

²⁶ A response was published in the *Gazette* a month later and some of its particulars are relevant to the upcoming discussion of Brackenridge’s adaptation of the camp meeting controversy. Signed “A Friend to Camp Meetings” the author argues that there are ample Biblical precedents for open-air preaching events involving tents and lasting several days or more. Wasn’t it, a camp meeting, he asks, “when the people of God left Egypt...[and] encamped many years in the wilderness worshipping God in, and at their tent doors?” “It certainly was,” he exclaims. The writer then proceeds to show how the New Testament also endorses camp meetings. He argues that Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount was a kind of camp meeting, and notes that when the crowds followed Jesus and his disciples into the countryside, “instead of upbraiding them, as a promiscuous assembly, [he] gave command, and they all sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and fifties, on the green grass, and after blessing the five loaves and two fishes, five thousand men” ate and were full. As Christians, “we are commanded to preach the Gospel, to baptize & administer the holy sacrament, and this we may do in any place we may think most proper,” whether indoors or out, in the “mountains, deserts, by the rivers [*sic*] side, and the ocean shore....” The author also has no doubt that “God had in view the Gospel visitations of America, when he speaks thus by his prophet, ‘I will make with them a covenant of peace, and I will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land, and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods’” (“To the Editor” 2 September 1808).

popularity, theatricality, and enthusiasm, coupled with the “promiscuous” mixing of the sexes in an environment offering ample opportunity for escaping clerical oversight and consuming alcohol, meant that camp meetings could easily serve as symbols of evangelical excess and democratic disorder, of the threat to popular sovereignty posed by popular evangelicalism. We will return to the camp meetings in *Modern Chivalry* and *Errata* in order to examine how their authors co-opted this controversy for their narrative designs and offered an assessment of these events that reveals their reliance upon sympathy and aesthetics, and thus their participation in the culture of sentiment.

The *Carlisle Weekly Gazette* offers us the chance to observe how directly *Modern Chivalry* engages with contemporary debates in the public sphere over the actual goings on at these meetings. But it also allows us to discern the ways in which the novel diverges from them and offers its readers an aesthetic and psychological interpretation of these events. Like the author of the article accusing camp meetings with profaning the Sabbath with “the noise, hallooing, jumping, and falling” that takes place there, the narrator questions how “bellowing with uncouth sounds, and gesticulations” can even be considered religion. Regarding the issue of scriptural sanction raised by the article’s author, the narrator of *Modern Chivalry* admits that “the sermon on the mount was delivered to what might be called a camp-meeting, and was somewhat like it in the numbers congregated; but in nothing more” (CMN 628). Unlike these contemporary events, there “all was decency and order” and Jesus did not preach a sermon designed to move the “extravagant passions, but divine sentences calculated to reach the understanding.” Nowhere in the New Testament do we find mention of meetings involving “falling down, and tumbling over each other, men and women like layers of fish in the same barrel” (CMN 628). While the article author asks what “goodness can be imagined in the bodily agitations, the noise, hallooing, jumping, and falling” that one encounters at camp meetings, Brackenridge uses the figure of a barrel of fish to graphically imagine the impropriety and invitation to sexual misconduct that these “promiscuous assemblies” presented the general public, and under the cloak of religious experience.

Before offering the reader the account of Teague’s conversion quoted at the head of this section, the narrator provides a description of a camp meeting even though “the nature of this convention is well known in our times” (CMN 608). Supposedly “for the sake of posterity,” the

description actually initiates the text's adaptation of the controversy for the purposes of political commentary:

They encamp usually in a wood near a stream of water, for days together; forming this assemblage for the purposes of religion; exercising their minds, and in proportion, their bodies, all at once, and in expectation that by mutual sympathy, their zeal may be increased, and their devotion rendered more fervent. Certain it is, that this assembling has the effect of agitating the mass greatly. Convulsive gestures and gesticulations are symptoms of a mind conceiving new ideas. Shouting, falling down, and tumbling are concomitants of a reform, and an evidence of a right conception of things. The more extravagant the actions, the surer signs of being in the true faith. Philosophers, and some physicians, think it a disease of the mind, and call it an epidemic phrenzy. (CMN 608-9)

By first calling the meeting a “convention” and then referring to it twice using variations on the term “assembly,” the narrator surreptitiously suggests that these meetings resemble those formed for political purposes. It is in the explanation of what happens at these gatherings, however, that the narrator provides the biggest clue concerning the novel's interest in camp meetings as vehicles for representing the dangers to stable democracy posed by radical Republicans and their Methodist colleagues. By taking God and the supernatural out of that explanation, he mocks the Methodists' “narrative tendency to attribute all ‘outward symptoms’ of true Christians to the power of God,” a practice that was “developed and promoted in classes, bands, and love-feasts,” (Taves 74) as well as camp meetings. Adopting a tone of faux seriousness that belies the passage's parodic intent, the narrator ridicules the notion that physical movements correspond with and can be interpreted as signs of spiritual commitment or intellectual assent. By using diction evocative of empirical reasoning - “in proportion,” “concomitant,” “evidence,” “signs” – the text is able to imply the irrationality of arguments supporting such assemblies. Indeed, it is suggested that the very act of assembling is the actual cause of the bodily exercises, thanks to the effects of “mutual sympathy” and “epidemic phrenzy.” By representing Methodist religiosity as it would appear to physicians, philosophers, and the narrator of the story, this passage parodies the enthusiasm of popular evangelicalism, with its claims of supernatural communion via the emotions and its willingness to read extemporaneous and purportedly uncontrollable bodily movement as manifestations of divine intervention bordering on the miraculous, as the acting out of inspiration.

A few chapters later the narrator again attributes camp meeting exercises to the power of sympathy, expanding on the idea that these meetings operate according to a logic of

sentimentality: “it was not unusual to go out, whole families with their provisions, and to remain days and nights together, lights trimmed and lamps burning in the woods, so that by the gloom of the forest encircling them, and the small space in which their voices were combined, a sympathetic feeling might be excited, and a phrenzy generated the very opposite of what becomes the nature of man” (CMN 628-9). Once again agency is attributed not to God or even piety but to aesthetic and dramatic factors like setting, lighting, and sound. Like a play or a poem, the camp meeting is designed to elicit sympathy in the audience, a feeling that overpowers intellectual opposition by moving the heart in much the same way that sexual emotions turn intelligent individuals into irrational animals operating on impulsive (or convulsive) instinct.

The significance of Teague’s tumbling routine can only be accurately interpreted within this theatrical context. Like *Modern Chivalry* itself,²⁷ Teague’s performance is a burlesque, a parodic imitation meant to mock, yes, but also to reform, to be both entertaining and enlightening. Farrago endeavors to stop Teague from performing at camp meetings, “where from his late exhibition, he was in great request,” because the Governor “could not approve of his exhibiting himself as a burlesque on religion; if the exercises of these camp-meetings could be called religion, which, in his opinion, were but symptoms of a diseased understanding” (CMN 628). The question is if Teague is making a mockery of genuine, “true” religion, or simply imitating men and women who are already acting as unwitting caricatures of sincere Christians.

In *Errata* John Neal presents the reader with a similar interpretive dilemma, although that picaresque is more explicit in its rhetorical use of sympathy and the stage to phrase the question. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Will Adams, the picaro, attends a camp meeting with romantic intentions and manages to get an attractive young woman alone and talk to her “lovingly...but not wickedly, or licentiously, till the night dew had drenched her black hair” (275). These and other claims to the innocence of his intentions – “The poor girl was imprudent; but she was in the keeping of one, that never *did*, and never will, harm a woman, putting her trust in him” - must be judged in conjunction with the many contradictory statements juxtaposed to them. When we are first introduced to the woman in question, for example, Adams tells us that she was “a nameless girl; or, at least, one that was very near losing her name, one night” (274). The indeterminacy of his character, reminiscent of Hawthorne’s mock-methodist, is in part a

²⁷ The narrator-author frequently refers to his story as a burlesque, sarcastically denies it to be one, or has his characters charge one another with engaging in the genre (18, 54, 83, 129, 174, 200, 235, 238, 243, 264, 274, 348, 354, 417, 424, 440, 456, 505, 525).

function of the setting and its unusual admixture of sacred and profane, a point driven home by the specific location Adams chooses for his evangelical assignation. He leads the woman to the very center of the campground and uses the romantic setting to assist him in his advances, thereby implicitly suggesting, like Brackenridge, that the spiritual emotions evoked at these meetings are the product of human design rather than divine intervention. “The enclosure was large,” he writes, “and, in the centre, was a circular place, boarded in with rough boards; benched with the same; and arched with the magnificent ceiling of God--the blue midnight. [...] I led her to the centre of this boarded solitude. It was soon to become populous. It was the place of prayer; and the hour was close at hand” (275). Selecting the holy of holies as the scene for their romantic interview is as provocative as possible. Reminiscent of the monastic cells imagined to be the sites of unseen and illicit sexual congress in anti-Catholic discourse, the solitude of the sacred space invites readers to imagine Methodist camp meetings as intentionally designed to foster such encounters, whether in the woods, in a tent, or even in the very epicenter of the exercises. Is such behavior making a mockery of religion, or is the real travesty the camp meeting itself and the Methodists who continue to claim that these events promote piety?

This is the question debated when the elders discover Adams and the woman and reprimand him for “disturbing their solemnities” (276). “Their *solemnities!* -- tents full of legs and arms -- for nothing else was to be seen; their hysterical sobbing and blasphemy -- for nothing else was to be heard. And this was their *religion!*” (276). Like Brackenridge’s barrel of fish, these tents, so packed with people that individual bodies cannot be discerned, graphically caricature the sensationalism of Methodist worship accompanied by sacrilegious sounds aurally reflecting the sinfulness and confusion of the image. Clearly the blame lies with the organizers and not the well-meaning rogue having some innocent fun while all around him he sees scenes of religious hypocrisy, sexual seduction, and the frenzy associated with the enthusiastic exercises. Neal, like Brackenridge, has his narrator-author counter the supernatural narrative of the Methodists with a secularizing explanation in which the workings of natural sympathy are behind the spectacular and contagious displays of mass enthusiasm one observes at camp meetings. But there are some significant differences in *Errata*’s conception of sympathetic feeling, and these affect the way we interpret the picaresque’s caricature of camp meeting revivalism and its statement as a work of sociopolitical satire. For Neal, “natural sympathy”

(276) is instinctual, imitative, and mysterious, as well as a characteristic trait of the behavior of crowds:

Armies are panick-struck, in the same way: one cries quarter; and all are cowards; another rushes to the breach; and the whole follow him. A man yawns; and all that are about him, follow the example; a woman weeps, or laughs; and a multitude, as at the theatre, do the same. Why? No living creature can tell. It is sympathy; that nervous, constitutional sympathy, which distorts your countenance, and sets you a stuttering, when you see another convulsed; or hear him stutter. And this --- *this*, which the very animals hold in common with you --- *this*, which the weak and foolish are most conspicuous for, is the divinity stirring within you! Impious, indeed! (276)

This is a different kind of sympathy than that which we find valorized by the sentimental literature of the early republic for its ability to overcome self-interested individualism and be the force binding society together through imaginative identification. While sympathy is represented as a natural force it emanates from the nervous system and is dumb in terms of moral direction, void of ethical agency. As in *Modern Chivalry*, it is contagious and associated with mass hysteria. We are, it seems, hard-wired to follow the crowd and sympathy names that force producing identification and imitation. It is herd mentality and thus antithetical to the kind of moral stand or principled opposition we find it fueling in the hands of Sedgwick and Stowe. The variety of disparate contexts within which sympathy is said to operate – armies in battle, audiences at the theater, groups of people yawning, stuttering, laughing, crying – illustrates how elemental the emotion is, and therefore how sacrilegious the suggestion that such physiological responses are the signs of salvation.

While *Errata*'s assessment of the role of sympathy in the behavior of crowds and camp meetings comes eight years after *Modern Chivalry*'s, it can help us interpret the latter's use of the figure of the camp meeting for the purposes of political satire. In the block quotation above we see sympathy represented as uncontrollable sentiment activated by others that supersedes or prevents rational decision making by individuals in group settings. Even though Neal does not explicitly analogize the camp meeting to a discordant and confused democratic assembly, the implications regarding the effects of sympathy on the thinking and behavior of the American masses are readily apparent. For Brackenridge, Neal, and other anti-romantic writers, sympathy, like sexual attraction or alcoholic inebriation, impedes a person's ability to exercise independent judgment. Neal's detailed explanation of sympathy works equally well for the concept as used by Brackenridge in *Modern Chivalry*. The link we find there between sympathetic feeling and a

frenzy “the very opposite of what becomes the nature of man” is clarified by *Errata*’s assertion that we share sympathy with the animals. The frenzy is animalistic, instinctual, and therefore the antithesis of that which distinguishes beasts from people: the ability to reason. We can now turn to the democratic assembly modeled on a camp meeting in the final volume of the 1815 edition of *Modern Chivalry* and reassess its significance in light of our revised understanding of the way sympathy is defined and functions in the picaresque. But it’s worth mentioning here that American fiction writers would continue to be fascinated by camp meetings, especially but understandably interested in their parallels with secular culture like the theater and sentimental literature. The associations with sex, seduction, and performative sincerity would continue to provide narrative opportunities for novelists from Sedgwick, Hawthorne, and Stowe, studied in this dissertation, and, in the postwar years, Mark Twain, Harold Fredric, and a number of their colleagues. But prior to the publication of the 1815 edition of *Modern Chivalry*, the imaginative mockery of camp meetings was restricted to poetry.²⁸ Teague’s tumbling routine and the novel’s subsequent deployment of camp meetings to satirize calls by radical Republicans for rewriting the Pennsylvania constitution mark the beginning of a tradition among nineteenth-century novelists of using the camp meeting as the narrative space for dramatizing the convergence of evangelical religion, popular democracy, and theatrical spectacle.

We have already seen how in earlier editions *Modern Chivalry*, from 1792 to 1805, Brackenridge mocks the democratization of American Christianity and employs the popular caricature of Methodism – with its blend of enthusiasm, emotion, and illiteracy – as a satirical symbol of the new populist character of American Christianity. As with earlier editions, the new books and chapters added to the novel in 1815 respond to recent events, and specifically efforts by radical Republicans to rewrite the state constitution so as to help them in their goal of wresting power away from the Federalist party. Brackenridge had been rewarded for his service to the Democratic-Republican Party in Pennsylvania with a judgeship on the Supreme Court. Along with the assistance he and many other individuals provided, Jefferson’s Democratic-Republicans received a major boost thanks to the backing of the sects and denominations associated with popular evangelicalism, Methodists and Baptists principle among them. While an alliance between Jeffersonians and upstart evangelicals seems improbable, Amanda Porterfield

²⁸ See, for example, “A Poetical Description of a Methodist Camp-Meeting” (1807, reprinted 1819), “The Camp Meeting” (1810) by the Druid of the Lakes, and “The Call for ‘Union of Parties’ Illustrated” (1814).

has recently offered a compelling explanation, one that provides us with the final piece to the parodic puzzle. Towards the end of her *Conceived in Doubt: Religion and Politics in the New American Nation* (2012), Porterfield describes the shared interests and ideological perspectives that brought Methodists and liberal Republicans together: “Passion for liberty was an important point of convergence between Methodists and Jeffersonians. Both celebrated the will power of ordinary people and argued against restraining it. While Methodists explored supernatural worlds with relatively unrestrained enthusiasm, Jeffersonians claimed liberty over the land and its resources as a natural right” (171). She adds that, “by 1810 Methodists in Kentucky, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Ohio, and Indiana had emerged as reliable supporters of Republican political policies and resisters of Federalist elitism” (171-72). It was this sociopolitical process, I maintain, that Brackenridge was referencing by combining radical republicanism with camp meeting Methodism. The camp meeting turned constitutional convention at the beginning of the final volume of *Modern Chivalry* is a representation of what happened “when this phrenzy took the direction of politics” (CMN 629). As a close friend of James Madison while at Princeton, and as a supporter of ratifying the constitution he crafted, Brackenridge knew that constitution making took considerable training and talent. He also believed that his classmate had hit upon the key to the longevity of republics: the counterbalancing of powers. Maintaining equipoise would protect the republic and prevent the descent into despotism that invariably resulted from simple democracy. As the narrator phrases it, “democratic power unbalanced, is but the despotism of many instead of one” (486).

Owing to their associations with insanity, duplicity, and disorder in the public mind – associations that Brackenridge had been instrumental in creating – camp meetings presented him with the perfect figure for an unruly assembly deranged in its understanding yet adamantly confident in its warrant and validity. Methodist fanatics are also the ideal representatives of radical Republicans because of their political alliance in western Pennsylvania as well as the states adjacent to it. Doing away with women will prevent the kind of convulsions from occurring which are so common at camp meetings, but even the absence of contagious enthusiasm cannot supply the deficiency caused by the Methodists’ lack of formal learning of the kind that Madison used to create the federal constitution. Before long the new settlement descends into absurdity with animals being given the vote, a turn of events that must be interpreted as a concluding commentary on the issue that had inspired the picaresque in the first

place: the electing of individuals to offices for which they are not qualified. This, as the narrator takes pains to explain repeatedly at the end of the tome, is the moral of the book (336, 337, 338, 440).

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Chapter Two

Calvinist Tyrants, Methodist Mothers, and Judicious Sympathy in *A New-England Tale*

Right! pretty judges of right to be sure. She a hired girl, and a Methodist into the bargain. I don't know how she dares to judge over my head...; and you, Miss, I tell you once for all, I allow no child in my house to know right from wrong.... (37)

A New-England Tale (1822)

In *States of Sympathy* (1997), her otherwise superb study of early national and antebellum fiction, Elizabeth Barnes mistakenly identifies Jane Elton, the orphaned heroine of Sedgwick's *A New-England Tale* (1822), and her mother, as Methodists (82, 80). In so doing Barnes actually obscures one of the more radical ways that the novel illustrates sympathy's power to overcome difference and unite individuals and communities in affective bonds. Since the 1980s and the Douglas-Tompkins debate, critics have disagreed over sympathy's ability to perform this social function despite the sentimental novel's portrayal of it as the ideal means for creating and cementing unions, both personal and political, and affecting reform. In studies of sentimental fiction the deployment of sympathy has become the "litmus test for assessing a text's politics" (Weinstein 1). Does the sympathy celebrated by sentimental novels make them a force for social change and political empowerment, or does placing so much emphasis on the transformative power of fellow feeling and imaginative identification encourage the reader, and citizen, to believe that "feeling right" is much more crucial than actually doing right, that mentally and emotionally sympathizing with the orphaned young girl or the enslaved black man is more important than offering her a home or him his freedom? Does the sentimental novel really trigger change along with all those tears, or are we justified in our critical condemnation of it as a masturbatory exercise in readerly self-consolation and conscience clearing?

In 2004 Cindy Weinstein wrote that Ann Douglas had won the battle because the vast majority of critical studies of the sentimental novel since the 1980s had maintained it to be narcissistic and imperialistic, to employ sympathy in the service of an ultimately reactionary political program (2-3). But Weinstein also persuasively argues that much of this scholarship has treated sympathy in a "monolithic" fashion and ignored the debate over the politics of sympathy

that was actually waged within the pages of sentimental literature itself, “a debate...that anticipates the substance of current critiques” (3). I concur, and in this chapter demonstrate how Catharine Maria Sedgwick deployed the character of Methodism in the New England mind to imagine two competing kinds of Christian sympathy: one that is enthusiastic, performative, self-absorbed, and finally ineffectual as a force for reform, and another that is rational, dutiful, practical and, as a result, successful in creating lasting sociopolitical change. Even though Weinstein never mentions Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s first novel, I contend that *A New-England Tale* is an ideal example of how some sentimental fictions directly confront the problem of sympathy while still advocating it as a power capable of reforming both social and religious institutions. I maintain that Mary Hull and Crazy Bet, both Methodists, respectively embody these related yet antagonistic forms of evangelical sympathy, and that Sedgwick divides the schizophrenic character of early American Methodism into its rational and enthusiastic halves, personifying each in the form of a woman who desires to serve as a mother figure to the orphaned heroine. In watching Jane choose between them, the reader observes Jane herself exercise what Weinstein terms “judicious sympathy” (45).²⁹

In contrast to their eighteenth-century predecessors, which linked the power of sympathy to the dangers of seduction and the corruption of republican virtue, nineteenth-century domestic novels depict sympathy as the emotional bond capable of holding a heterogeneous nation together in the absence of consanguinity resulting from a common ancestry (Barnes 9-10). Already a figure for political union for centuries, the family that the orphaned heroine of domestic fiction is able to reconstitute via the power of sympathy serves to represent the ability of Americans to create a stable country held together by bonds more powerful than blood. Sympathy’s ability to create such affective bonds between individuals ordinarily at odds with one another means that its power is best demonstrated by the overcoming of external opposition, whether in the form of class, religious, or racial difference. In *A New-England Tale* one of the central oppositions that sympathy is able to surmount is that between Calvinism and Methodism, a denominational divide Sedgwick uses to distinguish between class positions and perspectives on parenting as well as religion. By misidentifying Jane and her mother as Methodists rather than Calvinists, therefore, Barnes inverts and unwittingly obfuscates a primary vehicle for the novel’s

²⁹ Weinstein adapts this term from the eighteenth-century moral sense philosophy of Adam Smith and his concept of the judicious spectator. See Part III of Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), wherein he talks about the ideal spectator in relation to the exercising of imaginative sympathy.

narrative illustration of sympathy's sociopolitical power, for, as this chapter will demonstrate, the Methodist-Calvinist divide is one of the novel's central sources of social and ideological conflict. The fact that Jane, the descendent of "worthy [Calvinist] divines" (13) and "no methodist" (123), is guided in her spiritual and social maturation by two Methodist mother-figures – Mary Hull and Crazy Bet – would have been interpreted as a commentary on the transcendent power of sympathy and affect, as well as a corollary to the withering critique of Calvinist tyranny and formalism embodied in the character of Mrs. Wilson.

The epigraph to this chapter captures Mrs. Wilson's anti-Methodist animus at a moment when it is entangled with her attitudes on proper parenting and the place of servants within the hierarchy of the household. Wilson's outburst is triggered by her learning that Mary Hull had presumed to countermand her instructions to Jane, and that Mary did so because she judged those instructions to be dishonest. The fact that the competition between Methodists and Calvinists is rendered as a conflict over child rearing, over the moral guidance of the orphaned Jane Elton, makes it an excellent initial illustration of the novel's deployment of Methodism's controversial presence in New England for the purposes of imagining a practical and sympathetic alternative to unfeeling orthodoxy. As in the 1850s sentimental novels of Stowe, Warner, and Cummins, religious and political affiliation is judged by the measure and quality of fellow feeling it either promotes or impedes. Indeed, the capacity for sympathy is one of the principle traits that distinguish Jane's Methodist mother figures from her cold, Calvinist aunt Wilson who has taken her in. So while Barnes is right to note the interpretive importance of recognizing that the domestic novel arose "in the midst of America's Second Great Awakening" (79) and "owes its imaginative framework, at least in part, to a rising evangelicalism that pervades nineteenth-century sentimental culture" (78), the fact that she does not accurately identify or adequately differentiate between the Methodist and Calvinist forms of that evangelicalism leads her to overlook one of the principle ways that the novel's framework creatively appropriates seams and fissures within the evangelical movement to educate the reader on the judicious, and thus more effectual exercise of Christian sympathy.

Crazy Bet and Mary Hull are exemplars of the kind of sympathetic feeling that, the novel suggests, is the essence of New Testament Christianity, the hallmark of effective parenting, as well as the foundation for a healthy marriage. But, as we will see, the way Mary and Bet embody and enact that sympathy is very different and corresponds with the bifurcated and paradoxical

character of the Methodist as, to use the label applied to Wesley by one of his biographers, a “reasonable enthusiast” (Rack). “Mary’s wise suggestions and sincere sympathy” (123) are a constant source of moral support for Jane, and her quiet fortitude in the face of Mrs. Wilson’s goading serves as an example for Jane’s own patient resistance to her aunt’s corruptive influence. In contrast to Mary’s practical, sober yet affectionate evangelicalism, Bet’s is the Methodism of camp meetings, itinerancy, supernaturalism, and impassioned opposition to the Calvinist establishment. In many ways Bet is a fictional representative of the handful of unmarried Methodist women who crisscrossed New England during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, exhorting often hostile crowds to repent and recognize that salvation was open to all rather than the small remnant described by their orthodox pastors.³⁰ Bet’s identity as a “crazy” Methodist, largely ignored by critics,³¹ is linked to an overabundance of sympathetic feeling, and we are informed by Mary that Bet has “such a tender heart, that there seemed to no way to harden it. If she sees a lamb die, or hears a mournful note from a bird...she’ll weep more than some mothers at the loss of a child” (184). This maternal analogy simultaneously suggests the source of Bet’s sympathetic defense of Jane and the reason why Bet is best read as a

³⁰ In at least four significant ways, Bet is evocative of these women preachers. Like Bet, these women “frequently faced ridicule and verbal abuse” (Billington 374). Catherine Brekus writes that, “Whether white or black, northern or southern, female preachers often faced ridicule and hostility from the men and women they tried to convert,” explaining how “they were insulted, locked out of churches where they were supposed to preach, and harassed by spectators who tried to intimidate them. Like male Methodists, they angered many conservatives because of their ‘disorderly’ style of worship and their theological challenge to the Calvinist orthodoxy” (159). “Women preachers always faced the unrelenting opposition of the socially dominant churches,” writes historian Louis Billington, mainly because they “had worked out a different and subordinate sphere of activity for their women members” (391). Second, Bet’s itinerant ways are also reminiscent of the constant travelling of those women who answered the call they heard to preach and exhort. “The predominant role of woman preachers,” writes Billington, “was as itinerant evangelists, often without pastoral responsibility, and the more famous preachers like Clarissa Danforth, Nancy Towle and Harriet Livermore specialized in this work...” (381). Brekus makes a similar claim, explaining that, “because female preachers could not be ordained or installed as settled pastors, they travelled as itinerants instead. Constantly travelling from one town to another, they preached outside in the fields and forests as well as in churches, schoolhouses, and private homes” (153). The third parallel concerns her insanity. Women who preached were often labeled enthusiasts and deemed mentally unstable or outright insane. In language that could have been lifted from one of the pages of *A New-England Tale* describing Bet’s character, Billington writes that Harriet Livermore (1788-1868), “was constantly viewed as a lunatic, ‘a kind of gentle, inoffensive crazy woman,’” (387). Fanny Butterfield Newell (1793-1824), “perhaps the best known of the New England Methodist female exhorters” (Billington 376) is another case in point. Newell, like Bet, “was an enthusiast,” notes Billington, “but she accepted the doctrines and discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church” (376). The fourth and final correspondence between Bet and the women preachers of the early republic concerns the issue of inspiration. Like many Methodist women and men, Bet bases her authority to preach on inspiration, on God’s call. Throughout the story Bet is depicted as believing herself to be in intimate communion with the divine and that her statements are grounded in her unique access to the spirit world.

³¹ David Reynolds is the only critic who has noted, in passing, Bet’s Methodist associations, calling her “an amalgam of Methodist enthusiast and Wordsworthian lunatic seer” (51).

cautionary character whose position as prophet is the result of her removal from the domestic sphere due to the tragic death of her betrothed. Shortly after Mary makes this remark the novel ends when Bet's corpse is "discovered in the churchyard, her head resting on the grassy mound that covered the remains of her lover" (185).

In spite of this ending, Bet's oracular and spirited opposition to Wilson's hypocritical tyranny, coupled with her independent and itinerant lifestyle, has led several scholars to read Bet's character as embodying a "powerful feminist" message that "competes successfully...with the heroine's marriage plot and thereby decentralizes the cultural object marriage" (Clements 45, 47). While I would agree that Bet can and should be read as "a protest against the condition of patriarchy" (Clements 47), I do not believe that protest encompasses the institution of marriage. And while I certainly agree that Bet offers Jane, and the reader, an example of resistance to the pernicious "Calvinist attitudes" of Mrs. Wilson, I do not think that Bet successfully plays the part of "Jane's maternal guide" (Brusky 156). On the contrary, I find that there is a decided lack of filial affection between Bet and Jane, and it is because of the former's enthusiasm, her narrative function as the personification of "experiential religion and excessive emotionality" (Harris xviii). I argue below that while the two women defend one another from Wilson and have fleeting moments of fellow feeling, ultimately Jane rejects Bet as a maternal guide in favor of the more rational Mary Hull, and that this is a reflection of the novel's liberal moral in that Mary's Methodism, the brand of evangelicalism the novel valorizes, is depicted as the working-class equivalent of the author's Unitarianism. Furthermore, the novel's choice of Mary over Bet as a model of republican motherhood (Kerber 269-88) and productive sympathy is an example of the way it directly addresses a monolithic understanding of the politics of sentimental literature. *A New-England Tale* began its life as a Unitarian tract advocating rational Christianity and illustrating the dangerous social consequences of irrational, orthodox Calvinism. Sedgwick kept her novel true to those underlying imperatives and the Methodism that, via Mary Hull, serves as the major influence on the heroine's maturation looks suspiciously like a less literary version of its upper-class competitor.

Bet has been the darling of critics while Mary Hull has remained in the margins.³² Whether or not one believes that Bet is Sedgwick's most "socio-politically subversive" character, it is a mistake to ignore the ways that Mary subverts prevailing paradigms and patriarchal authority as well. I have already mentioned how contemporary readers would have interpreted the Calvinist heroine being raised by a Methodist as a politically suggestive move, but I would now point out that contemporary critics would not – indeed, did not – fail to notice that this was also flying in the face of received wisdom on both sides of the Atlantic concerning what was deemed best for the bourgeois child at the turn of the nineteenth century. In one review of *A New-England Tale* that appeared the same year the novel was published, the critic³³ reads Mary Hull as an illustration of the argument for universal childhood education and the sort of publically funded school system found in New England. Once the working classes are given their rightful "share of literary and moral instruction," the critic explains, "we shall not have our children's first language and sentiments taught by ignorance, vulgarity, and vice; we shall not require the caution, we now hear and disregard, not to suffer our children to spend a single hour with servants" (Anonymous 369). The critic cites Maria Edgeworth's *Practical Education* (1798) as an example of such cautionary arguments, but he does not note that *A New-England Tale* is also dedicated to Edgeworth and shares with her writings a good many ideas about pedagogy and parenting.³⁴ There is more significance to Mary Hull's character than modern critics have noted and here I argue it lies in her class position as well as her denominational identity. In this chapter I demonstrate the significance of Sedgwick's decision to make "a hired girl, and a Methodist," the novel's major model of Christianity and the heroine's primary mother figure. Like those

³² Since 2000, critics have noted Mary Hull's influence on Jane Elton, though such acknowledgments have not been followed by further analysis or discussion. Sarah Brusky labels Mary one of two important mother figures then proceeds to focus almost exclusively on the other "othermother," Crazy Bet (155). Brusky's skimpy treatment of her is all the more surprising given her accurate observation that "Mary Hull is almost never mentioned" by critics, citing the work of Susan K. Harris and Victoria Clements (174 n. 16). More recently (2005) another critic eloquently pointed out how Jane Elton "takes as her model the more active, spirited example of Mary Hull, the Methodist nursemaid who preaches an Arminian gospel of good works and perfectibility of the soul, in direct opposition to the Calvinist teachings of predestination and innate depravity" (Sweet 113). Accurate and illuminating as this observation is, it is used to underscore the anti-Calvinism of the novel rather than to begin a discussion of Sedgwick's deployment of Methodism or the larger significance of Mary Hull.

³³ Victoria Clements believes this anonymous critic to be James Fenimore Cooper but offers no evidence in support and I have been able to find none.

³⁴ The dedication reads: "To Maria Edgeworth, As A Slight Expression Of The Writer's Sense Of Her Eminent Services In The Great Cause Of Human Virtue And Improvement, This Humble Tale Is Respectfully Dedicated."

scholars who have found clues to “the riddle of Crazy Bet” (Kelley xiii) among Sedgwick’s personal experiences as a single woman, an author, and a Unitarian dissenter from Calvinist orthodoxy (Clements 42), I believe that Sedgwick’s life can shed light on Mary Hull’s character by providing us a possible persona upon whom her character was based, and some explanation concerning why Sedgwick’s first novel would applaud such a pedagogical arrangement.

Given her admiration of Edgeworth, Sedgwick’s decision to make Mary Hull Jane’s principal guide and confidante can be interpreted as a conscious artistic choice tied to the novel’s republican ideology. In contradicting Edgeworth, one of the period’s foremost authorities on education and one of Sedgwick’s main models for employing fiction to dispense educational advice, Sedgwick exhibited the independence of judgment that would also mark her future heroines.³⁵ The basis for Sedgwick’s decision can be traced back to her own youthful education and mothering by her father’s black servant, Elizabeth Freeman.³⁶ The Sedgwick children referred to Elizabeth, or Bet, as Mum Bet, or Mumbet. In a journal entry dated 29 November 1829, seven years after she published *A New-England Tale*, Sedgwick offers a celebratory description of Mumbet’s character that reminds one a great deal of Mary Hull:

Mumbet – “Mother” – my nurse – my faithful friend...is finishing her career – a life marked by as perfect a performance of duty – perhaps I should say more perfect than I have ever known. Her talents were not small nor limited: a clear mind – strong judgment – a quick and firm decision – an iron resolution – an incorruptible integrity – an integrity that never for a moment parleyed with temptation – a truth that never varied from the straight line – an unexceptionable fidelity to her engagements ... a strong love of justice stern as Brutus ... a productive, intelligent industry – an astonishing capacity of labor and endurance – a severe economy – and affections stronger than death were the riches of her character. (“Journal,” 125)

Elizabeth Freeman died a month later and was buried with the rest of the Sedgwick family in their section of the Stockbridge cemetery. And yet her values would live on in the character of Mary Hull; the similarities are striking. Over the course of the novel Mary is described as “watchful” (51), “judicious,” “industrious,” “anxious and assiduous” (65). She has a “plain and

³⁵ For more on the relationship and correspondence between Sedgwick and Edgeworth see Jenifer L. B. Elmore’s dissertation, “Sacred Unions: Catharine Sedgwick, Maria Edgeworth, and Domestic-Political Fiction,” The Florida State University, 2002.

³⁶ Freeman was the first enslaved African-American to sue for and win freedom by arguing that the revolutionary rhetoric of the nation’s founding documents guaranteed it. The Massachusetts Constitution, like the Federal one, proclaimed all men and women to be free and equal. Freeman sued for her freedom in court, and the lawyer who took and won her case was Theodore Sedgwick, Catharine’s father. After winning her freedom Freeman went to work in his house and helped raise Catharine and her many siblings.

neat appearance” (19), an “ingenuous sensible countenance” (38) that displays an “habitual sobriety” (65), and exhibits “zeal and perseverance” (65) as well as “obedience to the strictest dictates of honesty” (19). And all of this before we even mention that Mary is continually teaching Jane lessons about duty. Though a servant and a former slave, Freeman became Sedgwick’s surrogate mother and guided her moral development. In her short autobiography, Sedgwick writes of how Mumbet consoled her when her biological mother died and how Mumbet was the biggest influence on her moral development. It is a passage important for its illumination of both Mumbet’s character and Sedgwick’s philosophy of domestic education. “I believe,” she explains, “that the people who surround us in our childhood, whose atmosphere infolds³⁸ us, as it were, have more to do with the formation of our characters than all our didactic and preceptive education. Mumbet had a clear and nice perception of justice, and a stern love of it, an uncompromising honesty in word and deed, and conduct of high intelligence, that made her the unconscious moral teacher of the children she tenderly nursed”³⁹ (qtd. in Harris xix-xx). This is the primary pedagogical philosophy of *A New-England Tale*, albeit shorn of its transgressive racial component because Mary Hull is white, unlike Elizabeth Freeman, and unlike her possible namesake, Agrippa Hull, another African-American servant in Sedgwick’s father’s house. Whether or not Mary Hull was actually inspired by Freeman (or Hull), I endeavor to demonstrate that her character is best read as a personification of the same values, traits, and pedagogical principles we see Sedgwick enumerate and praise in her memories of Mumbet, her “Mother.” Sarah Brusky has already identified Mary Hull as one of two mother figures to Jane Elton, but she also maintains that Crazy Bet is “more vital to Jane’s maturation” (155). I disagree, and will now demonstrate Mary to be the more critical mother figure by analyzing the nature and extent of Mary’s influence over Jane, the parallelism of their lives, and the multiple instances at which

³⁸ There is some dispute over whether this word should be “infol” or “unfolds.” In Harris it is “unfolds” but many others it is “infolds.” I believe “infolds” to be a more logical action for an “atmosphere” and so spell it here with the “i.”

³⁹ I think it necessary to include the second half of this quotation: “She was a remarkable exception to the general character of her race. Injustice and oppression have confounded their moral sense; cheated as they have been of their liberty, defrauded at wholesale of time and strength, what wonder that they allow themselves petty reprisals – a sort of predatory warfare in the households of their masters and employers – for, though they now among us be free, they retain the vices of a degraded and subjected people.” Sedgwick’s comments on African Americans are in keeping with the theory of moral development that one finds in the novel. It is because of their treatment and education, or lack thereof, that blacks are, in Sedgwick’s eyes, lacking the virtuous character which must be instilled in youth and through example or “precept” as she might say. In these views Sedgwick is actually similar to Maria Edgeworth, who viewed the Irish as a backward and degraded people because of their lack of moral and educational training. Edgeworth’s novel *Castle Rackrent* (1800) offers a fictionalized narrative that accords with this perspective and seeks to rectify the situation.

Jane refuses the lessons and example Bet offers her. We will see Mary to be Jane's working-class twin and that Sedgwick, noting the shared Arminianism of Unitarians and Methodists, imagines in Mary a kind of Methodism, and in Lloyd a kind of Quakerism, that fits the novel's liberal, Unitarian agenda.

From the beginning of the novel to its end, Mary Hull is presented as Jane's surrogate mother and Jane's principle role model. We might begin with the more obvious evidence. The narrator informs us that Mary is "continually watching over her with maternal kindness" (43) and over the course of the novel Mary continually refers to Jane as "my child" (18, 38, 65, 122x2) or "my dear child" (63). As Mrs. Elton's maid, she helped nurse Jane (8) and "seconded Mrs. Elton's efforts" (24) at raising her to be a good Christian. Knowing she is near death, Mrs. Elton passes on the responsibility for overseeing her daughter's development to Mary Hull (23-24). The unusual amount of faith that Mrs. Elton places in her servant is rendered both realistic and palatable to middle-class readers by the narrator's frequent reminders that Mary is no ordinary domestic. While a representative example of republican servitude, Mary "was endowed with a mind of uncommon strength, and an affectionate heart" (8), the combination of which makes her the ideal sentimental foster-mother. Significantly, and unlike the rest of the characters in the story,⁴⁰ Mary was raised well: "She had been *brought up* by a pious mother, and early and zealously embraced the faith of the Methodists" (8). The good mothering that Mary received prepares her to care for and wisely advise Jane, just as her Wesleyan Methodism prepares Mary to guide Jane towards a practical Christianity based in moral action and balanced between head and heart.

More than any other character save the heroine herself, Mary embodies and enacts the kind of selfless, dutiful, and sympathetic Christianity valorized by *A New-England Tale* and its many sentimental successors. As we will see in Chapter Four, Mary is a precursor to Uncle Tom, another Methodist servant figure who sympathizes with his social superiors, models an idealized evangelicalism for them, and places their salvation before his own earthly desires. Tom is a better Christian because of his lowly status (and, unlike Mary, his race), and we are encouraged by Sedgwick's narrator to read Mary's character in precisely this way. The narrator explains how

⁴⁰ Examples of poor parenting abound in the novel, from Mrs. Wilson's obviously detrimental governance of her three children to less flagrant examples such as Edward Erskine's father instilling in his son an irrational prejudice against Quakers (126) and the overly indulgent parenting that Mary Oakley receives from her grandparents (99).

Mary “looked upon herself as a humble instrument; but she was a most efficient one. She had a rare and remarkable knack at applying rules, so that her life might be called a commentary on the precepts of the Gospel” (24). In keeping with what we saw above to be Sedgwick’s views on the relative value of “didactic and preceptive education” versus the education of example, Mary teaches Jane how to behave by modeling it for her. When Jane, in turn, is presented with tests of her Christian humility and duty they become opportunities for her to follow Mary’s example, which is also suggested to be the example of Jesus. Indeed, in being forced to take on the role of a servant in the house of her aunt, the same occupation and social position as Mary, Jane is ideally situated to benefit from her Methodist example and, like Mary, do her best teaching through example. Later, when she says that the way Jane lives her life is “better than preaching,” (122) Mary actually identifies the rationale underpinning her own character and the novel itself.

But while Mary does model the kind of Christianity that Jane comes to embody and defend in the face of repeated threats and antagonism from Mrs. Wilson and her children, Jane does not become a Methodist. In fact, throughout the novel her identity as a Calvinist and “no methodist” is critical to the significance of her story and the role of sympathy within it. By making the Calvinist Jane’s mother-figure a Methodist, and by having Jane convert to Quakerism at the end of the story, Sedgwick demonstrates the relative insignificance of sectarian association and, by extension, the ridiculous waste of time that is disagreement over doctrine. Despite their many differences, *Modern Chivalry* and *A New-England Tale* share a commitment to demonstrating the irrelevancy of denominational affiliation in comparison to how it affects behavior and thought, both public and private, in terms of the nation and the individual. The true or meaningful distinction that should be made is between those who practice what they preach and those who do not. Sedgwick uses Jane’s inherited Calvinism for similar ecumenical ends when Jane quotes John Wesley – to whom she refers as “your great Mr. Wesley” (73-74) – to Mary in order to make her point about the urgent dictates of duty. Mary’s response, filled with motherly pride, is to point out how Jane tends to “pick fruit from every good tree, no matter whose vineyard it grows in” (74), thereby underscoring the artificiality of denominational distinctions. Despite the prevalence of this theme, however, Sedgwick uses those same distinctions to structure the religious landscape of the fictionalized Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and render her portrait of it more realistic. This strategy is especially evident when it comes to class. Like the vast majority of Methodists in New England and the rest of the United States,

Mary is working-class and a woman. Her Methodism is continually aligned with her occupation, and we are told that Mary possesses “the virtues of her station in an eminent degree: practical good sense, industrious, efficient habits, and *handy ways*” (8-9). The man she marries at the end of the novel is also a Methodist and member of the working classes. Mr. Lloyd, the man that Jane marries, on the other hand, is an enormously wealthy Quaker, a denomination known for having many such individuals among its members despite its commitment to Christian humility and simplicity in dress and language. But in 1820s New England, as in the previous two centuries, Calvinism sat at the head of the Christian social order and maintained that position thanks to tradition and a system of state sponsorship that would not officially end until the following decade. It is Mrs. Wilson, therefore, and her brood of duplicitous reprobates who occupy the privileged position atop the social hierarchy. Despite being unofficially relegated to the role of domestic in her aunt’s household, Jane retains her Calvinist identity until she chooses to convert to her husband’s Quakerism.

It is the only conversion we see Jane undergo, and in keeping with the rational yet sentimental Christianity the novel espouses, it is the result of reason and affection, of her previously stated preference for Quakerism’s creedless reliance upon the Bible and emphasis on good works (127) coupled with her love of her husband and desire to grow in sympathy by sharing a common church (182). Jane’s decision to become a Quaker is nevertheless a concession by Sedgwick that fellow-feeling flows most naturally between members of the same group, even though it is also the force which can surmount those obstacles. We also know that Jane did not experience conversion prior to the start of the novel, for the book opens with a discussion of that issue which serves to illustrate the unfeeling character of contemporary Calvinism and contrast it with the sympathetic evangelicalism embodied by Mary Hull and Crazy Bet.

Mary is unable to attend Mrs. Elton’s funeral because, like the exemplary daughter she is, she is off tending to her dying mother (9). As a result she is not there to comfort Jane when the unfeeling Calvinist clergyman, trying to use her mother’s death as the means of warning his listeners to repent before it is too late, launches into a sermon on original sin and the eternal torment awaiting those who die unregenerate. Had he instead used it as an opportunity “of illustrating the duty of sympathy,” and had his weekly “preaching usually been in conformity to the teaching of our Saviour” (10), then, laments the narrator, the callous treatment Jane receives

from her three aunts might have been avoided. Instead, and in front of Jane, the three of them take turns explaining why each could not possibly afford to take in their only brother's only child. The conversation quickly devolves into a piety contest completely lacking in the kind of sympathy that the narrator has just suggested to be the essence of Christianity. In its place we find recriminations, ungenerous insinuations, and rationalizations for rejecting the young orphan. It is at this moment that we first meet Crazy Bet, whose "quick eye" immediately "detected, through their thin guise, the pride and hypocrisy and selfishness of the sisters" (15). As is usually the case when she enters the narrative, Bet sings a hymn that conveys a complimentary message to the one she offers via her prophetic, biblical language. In this case, it is a stanza from Doddridge's "Law of Love": "Oh! be the law of love fulfilled / In every act and thought, / Each angry passion far removed, / Each selfish view forgot" (15). Intended as an ironic criticism of the sisters' behavior towards Jane, the stanza also acts as a subtle reminder of the duty of sympathy via its connection with the other four stanzas. The "Law of Love" begins with the speaker asking God to remove "the unfeeling heart" of humanity so that we may, in "our sympathizing breasts / The generous pleasure know, / Kindly to share in others' joy, / And weep for others' wo!" (Doddridge #164). Many contemporary readers of *A New-England Tale* would have known the source of the quoted stanza and registered its broader message about sympathy's central role in the life of a Christian. Here, however, I would note the correspondence between the character of Bet and the sympathizing subject described in Doddridge's hymn. If anyone embodies "the generous pleasure" of sympathizing with the joy and woe of others, it is Bet, who, we will see, ultimately sympathizes herself to death because she is unable to discipline and regulate her sympathetic identification with the world around her. In her scholarship on antebellum literature, Cindy Weinstein employs the term "judicious sympathy" to describe the ability of a character in a work of sentimental fiction "not only to recognize and respond to the multiple claims people make upon her sympathy, but more importantly, to prioritize those claims and to mete out her sympathy accordingly" (45). While her insanity and enthusiasm render Crazy Bet unable to exercise such emotional discretion and ultimately result in her early death, in this scene and several more to follow they empower her to give voice and song to that sympathy. Bet speaks evangelical truth to power via a gospel warning commonly associated with the abuse of children:

“Offend not this little one; for her angel does stand before my Father. It were better that a millstone were hanged about your neck” (16).⁴¹

Delivered with even more than her usual amount of theatricality, Bet’s injunction strikes “a momentary chill to the hearts of the sisters” (16), one of whom takes Bet’s words to mean that Jane has “experienced religion,” or undergone a conversion experience in which she was born again in Christ. In and of itself, the question she voices implies a corrupted form of Christianity that only sympathizes with fellow saints. But it is Mrs. Wilson’s answer to that question that establishes the unchristian, unsympathetic, unloving character of the orthodox Calvinism to which they each subscribe and personify. Like her local clergyman, Wilson sees the death of her sister-in-law as a pedagogical opportunity to scare sinners to repentance and tells Jane that she should understand her mother’s early death as conveying “the judgments of an offended God” (16). Then, in true Hopkinsian fashion, she seeks to determine the strength of Jane’s faith by asking whether or not Jane would still love God’s if she were certain that God had sent her mother to hell, or even if Jane knew that a similar fate awaited her and there was nothing she could do about it. Adherents to Hopkins’s version of Calvinism believed that the distinguishing mark or “character” of true Christians was their ability to retain their faith in and continue to love a God who had already condemned them to hell. Apparently, because Jane unsurprisingly bursts into tears at the idea of such an irrational and unfeeling God, her aunt deems her lacking in the “gracious understanding” (17) supposedly imparted upon conversion and thus, like her own children, unregenerate. As a convert who has undergone a church-certified conversion experience, Wilson believes herself to possess the “gracious understanding” to discern right from wrong that the rest of her household lacks. It is because of this orthodox tenet that, as we saw in the epigraph, Wilson allows “no child in my house to know right from wrong,” for it can only be known by those who have already undergone conversion. The terrible irony is that Mrs. Wilson herself has yet to be born again, having undergone a false conversion experience and “deceived herself by her clamorous profession” (175), and that her misguided, doctrinally

⁴¹ In the King James Version of the Gospel of Luke, the line reads, “It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones” (17:2). Mark (9:42) and Matthew (18:6) also record this teaching in their own similar words.

supported belief in her own moral superiority prevents her from sympathizing with Jane when the youth is most in need of an affectionate parent figure.⁴²

Mary Hull, on the other hand, is a steady source of sympathy for Jane over the course of the story (18, 50, 123) and the two women share an intimate, affective kinship that sustains Jane during her sojourn in the crucible that is her aunt's hypocritical household. Before Jane's departure, but after offering her the "balm of tender sympathy" (18), Mary undertakes "the painful, but necessary, task of exposing to Jane, the evils before her, that she might fortify her against them.... She did not soften the trials of dependence upon a sordid and harsh nature. She told her what demands she would have on her integrity, her patience, and her humility" (18). The combination of tender affection and unflinching honesty in Mary's counsel, as well as the sense of parental duty from which it emanates, exemplifies the ideal of sympathetic yet judicious and rational Christian motherhood that the novel seeks to inculcate in its readers. It also enables us to gain a new perspective on the relationship between Mary Hull and Mrs. Wilson, which is marked by competition over the heroine's soul. The rhetoric of Mary's motherly preparation for the "trials" and "demands" Jane is about to be put to by her Calvinist twin, Mrs. Wilson, turns Jane's life with the Wilsons into a trial of faith in which Jane's Christianity, and by extension Mary's Christianity, will be tested by the orthodox tyrant, naturally the greatest threat to the practical, republican Jane. Later on the reader is more explicitly reminded of the spiritual subtext of Jane's time in the Wilson household when Mary tells Jane how "this foolish aunt of yours will try you like the fire, but I look to see you come out of it as gold from the furnace" (38).

The competition between Hull and Wilson is solidified when Mary helps Jane pack up the clothing left her by her father's creditors. Mary's ability to balance emotional inclination and good judgment – to offer and model judicious sympathy – is contrasted with Wilson's willingness to violate the law in order to serve her selfish desires even if it means involving Jane in her sinful actions. "In obedience to the strictest dictates of honesty, Mary forbore from permitting her zeal for Jane's interests to violate the letter of the law. She was so scrupulous, that she would not use a family trunk, but took a large cedar chest of her own to pack the clothes in" (19). No sooner has Mary modeled such conscientious behavior for Jane and the reader than a letter arrives from Wilson in which she tells Jane to grab "some small articles which would never

⁴² It should also be noted that while Bet does stand up for Jane and sympathize with her, she betrays very little motherly emotion toward Jane in this scene, and Jane is asleep for all of it so the two do not interact until a few chapters later.

be missed" (19) by her brother's creditors. Wilson justifies this by telling Jane that "there is no doubt my brother's creditors have cheated him a hundred fold" and that while "these things might help to pay the expense I must be at in keeping you, they will be a mere nothing divided among so many creditors – the dust on the balance" (19-20). Mary's response to the letter provides us with the logic and style of Christian resistance that the novel valorizes: "I am afraid she will load the balance with so much of this vile dust, that when she is weighed her scale will be 'found wanting.' No, Jane, let us keep clean hands, and then we shall have light hearts" (20). Once again drawing a connection between outward behavior and inner spirituality, Mary's directive to Jane to ignore her aunt's note is just one in a long line of such incidents and leads to the irate Mrs. Wilson's invective quoted in the epigraph to this chapter. In that same scene we are offered another instance of Mary's restrained but resolute resistance to Wilson's authority.

After Wilson reprimands Jane for disobeying her, Mary Hull, unemployed since Mrs. Elton's death, enters the room. Rather than directly confronting Mary about instructing Jane to disobey her, Wilson informs Mary that Mr. Lloyd has written to inquire if she would be interested in becoming his housekeeper and taking "charge of his family" (36). Wilson, in a typically callous manner that conveys her sense of Calvinist superiority, tells her, "here is a proposal of a place for you, from that Quaker that buried his wife last week. I suppose you call yourself your own mistress, and you can do as you like about it; but as you are yet a young woman, Mary Hull, and this man is a Quaker widower, and nobody knows who, I should think it a great risk for you to live with him; for, if nothing worse comes of it, you may be sure there is not a person in this town that won't think you are trying to get him for a husband" (37). Refusing to rise to the bait, Mary Hull's moderated reaction and response to Mrs. Wilson's provocative insinuations are a model for Jane Elton's later interactions with her aunt. Rather than directly engage with Wilson, Hull makes light of her assertions and uses her working-class status to her advantage. Mary is flattered and excited by Lloyd's offer, especially since it means returning to her old home, Lloyd having purchased the Elton's former house. Mary deftly parries Wilson's derisive warning, saying that "from all she had heard said of Mr. Lloyd, he was a gentleman far above her condition in life; and therefore she thought no person would be silly enough to suppose she took the place from so foolish a design as Mrs. Wilson suggested..." (37). This is an explicit acknowledgement of and appeal to a conception of class that implicitly structures the social and religious lives of the novel's characters. In a sense, Mary uses Wilson's commitment

to a hierarchical social order against her. Wilson's testy response, about "how some people strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel," is intended to insult Mary as one who pays heed to minor religious concerns but has no problem with much larger ones. Mary does not "condescend to notice this remark" and, in turning her cheek, again models for Jane the Christian path of resistance to irrational and unjust authority. Unlike Crazy Bet, who directly confronts Mrs. Wilson and counters the latter's unchristian attitudes with publicly voiced appraisals of her hypocrisy and lack of compassion, Mary Hull's resistance is more passive and less confrontational. As we'll see, Jane chooses to follow the example of Mary Hull rather than Crazy Bet, and it is one of the most important reasons for Jane's ultimate success in the novel.

That success takes the form of a marriage to Mr. Lloyd, but Jane's ability to receive and accept his offer is largely the product of her mirroring Mary Hull and recognizing the power of sympathy. Before her death we are informed by the narrator "that there was no sympathy between" Mrs. Elton and her husband, that "their hands were indissolubly joined, but their hearts were not related" (6). Rather than make the same mistake as her employer, we learn that Mary Hull turned down a marriage proposal because the local suitor was not religious and there would be no sympathy between them. Jane is confronted with a similar challenge when she realizes that no sympathy exists between her and Edward Erskine, her eligible but irreligious fiancé. Following Mary's lead so as to avoid her mother's marital fate, Jane breaks her engagement with Erskine, telling him that, "there can be no enduring love without sympathy; our feelings, our pursuits, our plans, our inclinations are all diverse" (144). This clears the way for Jane to marry the man with whom she does share sympathy, David Lloyd, an event which coincides with Mary's marriage to the same man she had refused several years before, but who has "come home a Methodist, having been made one by a missionary of that zealous sect in India" (170). How this young man was "made" a Methodist is left to the imagination of the reader, but, like Jane's decision to convert to her husband's Quakerism, we are encouraged to consider it a manmade or natural event rather than a supernatural one. Indeed, the only traditional "conversion" in the novel is Mrs. Wilson's, and we are told that it was a false one, and the source of all her problems, at about the same time that we are presented with Jane's decision to join the Quakers. This juxtaposition, therefore, leads the reader to infer that faith in supernatural conversions, especially those that are not followed by a corresponding reformation in behavior, is quite often misplaced. Finally, Mary Hull's marriage to James Mountain is presented as the lower-class parallel to the

union of Jane and Mr. Lloyd. In order to drive the point home, Mary suggests that Jane loves Lloyd like she loves James but then, fearing Jane will resent the comparison, Mary explains, “not that I mean to compare myself to you, or James to Mr. Lloyd, but it is the nature of the feeling – it is the same in the high and the low, the rich and the poor” (180). This is the idea, I would suggest, behind the pairing of these two women, to dramatize that love and sympathy are the same across the class spectrum, even while maintaining that this essential similarity does not erase the indelible difference between high and low, rich and poor. Sympathy may transcend station on the interpersonal level but such affective egalitarianism cannot change the socioeconomic positions from within which the individuals share such emotional kinship.

Before turning to the relationship between Jane and Crazy Bet, one more point must be made about Mary’s Methodism and its influence on her mothering of our heroine. It concerns the extent to which we can or should read Mary’s Methodism as a reflection of historical reality, i.e. how realistic of a Methodist is she? The question bears asking for what it leads us to recognize about Sedgwick’s use of the figure of Methodism and the differences between people and characters. I just mentioned how Jane never experiences the kind of supernatural conversion that her Calvinist cousins would have judged an authentic indicator of her Christian faith and membership among the elect. As an Arminian, Mary would not have believed that Jesus’s atonement was limited to a select few, but were her character crafted as a thoroughgoing Methodist, Mary would have been as anxious over Jane’s never having experienced conversion as her Calvinist counterparts, perhaps even more so. Instead, Mary seems to believe that Jane was not born mired in sin but is naturally good and may secure salvation by continuing to live her life according to the model set by Jesus in the Gospels. At one point we hear her proclaim, “Surely the kingdom is come in this dear child’s heart” (63), and at another we are told that she is convinced that Jane is “going on in the path to perfection, which, though no methodist, she was not...far from attaining” (123). In these statements we can observe how Sedgwick balances her regionalist commitment to verisimilitude with the liberal, Unitarian agenda of her story by making Mary a believable Methodist who simultaneously sanctions the romantic idea that children are born good and that salvation is obtainable without an experiential conversion experience which the individual could pinpoint in time and space. So while Mary is a typical Methodist in adhering to the doctrine of perfection, she is atypical in believing that a non-Methodist, and a woman yet to experience regeneration, could possibly attain it. The doctrine of

perfection is also the impetus for a rare narratorial rebuke of Mary Hull's Methodism.⁴³ When Mary displays "indubitable signs of a vexed spirit" upon learning that Jane has not been selected for a school honor, the narrator reads these "signs" as evidence that "the obnoxious doctrine of 'perfection'" (57) is equally erroneous. As anomalous as this statement may be given what we have seen to be the novel's attitude towards Mary, it fits perfectly with the novel's liberal agenda and antipathy toward divisive doctrines. Few tenets of Wesleyan Methodism drew more criticism than the doctrine of perfection, or sanctification, as it was also known. No matter the theological defenses, perfection naturally provoked non-Methodists by sounding both egotistical and heretical. Here Sedgwick references it to once again descry the gap between theological theory and lived reality, but from the perspective of this study this reference to perfectionism serves more as a reminder of how Mary's Christianity is an amalgam of Methodism and Unitarianism that had scant basis in historical reality. It also underscores the complete absence of enthusiasm from Mary's Methodism, and thus serves nicely as a segue to a discussion of Crazy Bet, the character who embodies the emotional and supernatural side of early American Methodism.

2

Having demonstrated Mary to be Jane's Methodist mother figure as well as her working-class twin, it is time to analyze Bet's Methodism and her relationship with Jane in order to determine her significance in Jane's moral maturation. I have already mentioned how Sedgwick employs Methodist details to make Bet seem more enthusiastic and antiestablishment, linking her to camp meetings (14), quarterly meetings (39), and the singing of Methodist hymns (90). Thanks to the decades old association of Methodism and insanity, these references complement the many minor ways that the text tells the reader to pity Bet, to perhaps cheer her on in her fearless opposition to Calvinist tyranny, but never to *be* Bet. Besides being known as "Crazy Bet," she is continually referred to with a mix of pity and condescension by the narrator and characters. Bet is a "maniac" (15, 88, 93), a "mad fool" (97), a "poor cracked body" (86), a "poor lunatic" (184),

⁴³ Less surprising is the fact that Wilson also targets Mary's perfectionism when engaging in their Calvinist-Methodist quarrel: "Mary's practical religion had, sometimes, conveyed a reproach (the only reproach a Christian may indulge in) to Mrs. Wilson, who revenged herself by remarking, that 'Mary was indulging in that soul-destroying doctrine of the Methodists – *perfection*;' and then she would add, (jogging her foot, a motion that, with her, always indicated a mental parallel, the result of which was, 'I am holier than thou,') 'there is no error so fatal, as resting in the duties of the second table'" (24).

and a “poor broken-hearted creature” (94). In spite of such language critics like Cathy Davidson, Sarah Brusky, and Victoria Clements have urged us to read Bet as Jane’s maternal guide and Jane as her sympathetic disciple. All three cite Bet and Jane’s midnight journey to the cabin of John Mountain in Chapter 9 as evidence of this relationship. The best means of disputing their claims would be to reread that journey through a more skeptical lens capable of accounting for the dangerous charge of Bet’s enthusiastic Methodism and Jane’s continued resistance to its attraction. What we find is that, at almost every stage of their journey, Jane refuses to do anything but disagree with, misunderstand, and pity Bet. While I agree that Bet does treat Jane as a daughter figure and potential kindred spirit during their journey, and that there are indeed moments when the two women experience a sense of kinship, by the end of their journey it seems clear that Jane has either failed to understand or refused to accept Bet as the kind of mother figure she has in Mary Hull. This resistance to Bet’s enthusiastic model of Christian sympathy testifies to Jane’s commitment to rational Christianity and refusal to indulge in a narcissistic sentimentality that would turn the orphan into the kind of outsider that can, like Bet, critique the absence of sympathy in society but not affect the kind of lasting change only possible from within that society.

When John Mountain asks Jane to visit his cottage that night, he believes that the identity of her guide will frighten Jane more than the thought of her midnight journey. And after he reveals it to be Crazy Bet, Jane asks him if there is really no one else she could get to accompany her (86). When Jane arrives at Lucy Willett’s grave, the designated meeting place, she is shocked by Bet’s appearance and immediately asks her to remove the crown of vines and wild flowers from her head. Bet refuses and chides her for her ignorance: “Child, you know not what you ask. Take off these greens, indeed! Every leaf of them has had a prayer said over it. There is a charm in every one of them” (92). Bet calls Jane a “foolish girl!” and demands that Jane sit down by Lucy’s grave so that they can wait for the suicide’s spirit to rise. But unlike Bet, Jane does not believe in ghosts. When Bet tries to explain that those who commit suicide are special instances, Jane, “impatiently rising,” begs Bet to getting going. After Bet refuses, Jane reluctantly agrees to sit and listen to Bet retell the familiar story of the death of Lucy Willett’s fiancé in Shay’s Rebellion, her insanity, and her suicide shortly thereafter. While Bet is successful in moving Jane with her rendition of Lucy’s story – “Poor Lucy! I never felt so much for her” (93) – it does not appear that Jane learns anything new about her death or that of her lover in Shay’s Rebellion.

They ascend the hill, enter a dense and dark forest and Jane has trouble keeping up with Bet. “They soon, however, emerged into an open space, completely surrounded and enclosed by lofty trees” (93). It becomes the site of the most significant moment of communion between Jane and Bet. Bet identifies it as a place of worship and then tells Jane to pray with her. “The maniac fell on her knees – Jane knelt beside her: she had caught a spark of her companion’s enthusiasm. The singularity of her situation, the beauty of the night, the novelty of the place, on which the moon now riding high in the heavens poured a flood of silver light, all conspired to give a high tone to her feelings” (94). Despite the fact that Jane has become momentarily caught up in her “companion’s enthusiasm,” Sedgwick uses the natural setting to offer a rational explanation for Jane’s reaction to Bet’s prayer: “It is not strange she should have thought she never heard any thing so sublime as the prayer of her crazed conductor – who raised her arms and poured out her soul in passages of scripture the most sublime and striking, woven together by her own glowing language” (94). The fact that Jane’s reaction to Bet’s prayer is a result of enthusiasm and the surroundings, as well as the prayer itself, signals to the reader that this moment of connection is fleeting and not the effect of a genuine communion between the two women. Bet’s momentary position as a figure of admiration, perhaps even emulation, rather than pity is immediately followed by a scene which once again places her in the role of pitiable eccentric. As they are leaving the clearing Bet draws Jane’s attention to “two young beech trees” (94), explaining that they stand on the spot where two other trees once stood. The earlier trees had grown their “lovingly,” side by side. One was chopped down and the other died soon after, presumably from sympathy. As she tells Jane the story, Bet grabs her head in both hands, “screamed wildly” (94), and began to cry. It quickly becomes clear that Bet saw the trees as a symbol of her own failed romance, cut short by the death of her fiancé. ““Poor broken-hearted creature!’ murmured Jane.” But once again, it appears that Jane has misunderstood. “ ‘No, child; when she weeps, then the band is loosened: for’ added she, drawing closer to Jane and whispering, ‘they put an iron band around her head, and when she is in darkness, it presses till she thinks she is in the place of the Tormentor; by the light of the moon it sits lightly. Ye cannot see it; but it is there – always there” (94). Jane does not respond to Bet’s third-person commentary on the mental anguish she has suffered from since the death of her lover, symbolized by an iron band encircling her head that can be read as an echo of the wedding band of a more precious a metal that would have encircled her ring finger had she married. The narrator tells us that Jane “began now to be alarmed at the

excitement of Bet's imagination," and that she "abruptly" turns from Bet and continues down the path.

This scene, and specifically Bet's wild reaction to her own story about the beech trees, has been used to support the idea that Jane and Bet are practicing transcendentalism in the clearing. "The scene," writes Cathy Davidson, "allows for a respectful, pantheistic celebration of nature in which the two women...enact Transcendentalism in a personalized, intimate, passionate, and sentimental register" ("Preface" x). But if there is any denominational "-ism" that the scene evokes, it is Methodism. First, the fact that they are praying in the open air, and in a clearing in the woods, is evocative of the camp and quarterly meetings we are told Bet attends. Second, the fact that they drop to their knees and that Bet raises her arms in prayers can be interpreted as another echo of Methodism, both actions being well-known components of Methodist worship.⁴⁴ Finally, despite Bet's naturalism and pantheism, the visionary Christian supernaturalism at the heart of her character makes it hard to read her as a symbolic predecessor of the romantic yet rational idealism of Emerson, Thoreau, and company. In any event, it seems clear that Jane never becomes the acolyte that Bet sometimes seems desirous of making her, and that this suggests that Bet's self-absorbed and delusional sense of sympathy with the divine is a poor substitute for the kind of connection she could have had with her fiancé before his death (and which the narrator implies she does have with him after her own death) or with Jane. But she cannot connect with Jane because she mentally and physically inhabits a world set apart from society, a result, like her insanity, of her strongest bond of sympathy being severed by the unexpected death of her fiancé.

⁴⁴ Of the many "distinctive actions" that accompanied public prayer, "The most prominent was kneeling. During this period, kneeling was *the* Methodist posture for prayer, without exception. Both the one praying and all those who acquiesced in the prayer knelt. The act and the posture were synonymous: Methodists praying meant Methodists kneeling" (Ruth 86-87). It was also common for Methodists to raise their hands while praying. Five years later, in the final chapter of *Northwood, A Tale of New England* (1827), Sarah Hale would use the Methodist proclivity for kneeling to illustrate another way a devote wife could literally bring low the Calvinist patriarchy in New England via the power of sympathy. Sidney, the hero, writes his wife how his father "illustrated" to him just "how highly" he "estimated the religious influence of woman in her family." "You know he was a Congregationalist," writes Sidney, "and that this denomination do not kneel in prayer. I had never, when I left home for the South, seen my father on his knees in family devotions. When I returned, after twelve years' absence, I found he used this posture altogether." He tells Sidney that this change was the result of his mother becoming "a member of the Methodist Church," after which "one change was apparent: she knelt at prayers; and soon the little children, following her example, knelt around her. I stood upright for some time – your mother never making a remark or breathing a word to induce me to change – but, at last, I can hardly tell how, from sympathy probably, I sunk down on my knees among them" (391).

After passing through a treacherous mountain pass the two women arrive at the top of the hill, and the climax of their journey. In another scene reminiscent of Methodism and its commitment to the power of the Holy Spirit, Bet tells Jane that she is “in the spirit, and... must mount to the summit” (96). As Bet has her enthusiastic moment of visionary communion with the divine, Jane looks on in a mixture of awe and annoyance. “In vain Jane called upon her. In vain she entreated her to descend” (96). When Bet does climb down from the summit, it is clear that Jane has missed the point of the behavior of her “crazed conductor” (94). “‘Now,’ said Jane, soothingly, ‘you are rested, let us go on’” (96). Bet’s contemptuous reply signals the failure of the two women to understand one another: “Rested! yes, my body is rested, but my spirit has been the way of the eagle in the air. You cannot bear the revelation now, child. Con, and do your earthly work” (96). What has been termed Bet’s “sermon on the mount” (Clements 46) appears to have fallen on deaf ears. When they walk on and Jane sees a light coming from the cabin of John Mountain, signaling the end of her journey with Bet, she can hardly contain her relief and shouts “God be praised” (97)! Jane’s refusal to see Bet as a mother figure, as anything other than the fit subject of her pity, signals her refusal of the enthusiastic evangelicalism that Bet represents. Throughout their journey Jane maintains her Christian composure; even though she momentarily shares Bet’s enthusiasm, Jane ultimately rejects Bet as a mother figure and her behavior as a model for her own. When Jane does resist and oppose the patriarchal Calvinism of her society, she does so in ways that are modeled on Mary Hull. Bet is undoubtedly the subversive, anti-Calvinist character that previous critics have deemed her to be, but she is not presented as an example to be emulated. While her tragic life has rendered her an adroit mouthpiece, her pathetic end, dying on the grave of her lover, signifies that her unique and powerful social position was achieved at the expense of the kind of domestic happiness that Jane and Mary are rewarded with for their faithfulness to the tenets of New Testament Christianity.

There is a decided lack of fellow feeling between Jane and Crazy Bet – especially when viewed, as Sedgwick intended, alongside the affectionate yet rational filial sympathy between Jane and Mary Hull – and it signals the heroine’s rejection of the dark side of Methodism, of the supernatural and the enthusiastic, of, as Susan Harris puts it in her Introduction to the Penguin edition, “the dangers both of experiential religion and excessive emotionality” (xviii). As we’ve seen, counting Bet and Jane’s midnight journey as evidence of a mother-daughter dynamic seems wrongheaded for many reasons. Such a reading also obscures the parallelism between Jane

getting through her journey largely untouched by Bet's enthusiasm, and Jane's sojourn at the home of her formalist, pharisaical aunt, who we recognize as Bet's alter ego. Jane's journey through the "caves of the mountain" (95), as the pass they take is called, is another kind of crucible in which her commitment to practical, rational Christianity is tested in the heat of Bet's enthusiastic imagination. While Jane momentarily catches "a spark of her companion's enthusiasm" she escapes the caves unchanged, testifying to the purity of her commitment to practical, rational evangelicalism, as well as the judiciousness of her sympathy. Bet personifies the alluring side as well as "the dangers of uncontrolled emotion and of a religious sensibility unconstrained by church doctrines" (Harris xviii). She is seemingly free and unfettered but that freedom comes at a terrible cost: exclusion from the experience of being a mother. Because she has no spouse or child in whom to invest her sympathy and share her affection, she loves and sympathizes with the natural world, especially animals. But, as Mary tells Mr. Lloyd, if one of them were to die she would "weep more than some mothers at the loss of a child" (184), suggesting that she expends her sympathy on beings either incapable of reciprocating that emotion or, in Jane's case, unwilling. This, the novel implies, is a result of her self-absorption, of her inability to sympathize with the world without foisting her own self-image on those she feels for, or projecting human traits and emotions on the natural world, resulting in misplaced sympathy that cannot affect change or fuel societal cohesion in place of consanguinity.

Like the novel itself, I will conclude with a comparison of Mary and Bet that focuses on how their contrasting characters naturally lead each to a very different domestic destiny. The two women are never in the same scene and never meet until the final chapter. There, in a development we can read as a final affirmation of Mary's success at balancing reason with emotion, Lloyd asks Mary, now married with a newborn, to take Bet into her home and try to restore Bet's "mind to its right balance" (184). Lloyd places "implicit confidence" in Mary's "judiciousness and zeal" (184), an understandable attitude given that Mary has been responsible for molding the character of Jane, now his wife. But beyond serving as final confirmation that Mary is the novel's ideal mother figure, Sedgwick's decision to have Mary bring Bet into her home is also evidence of undisciplined enthusiasm's inability to abide within a well-regulated domestic space. Mary, more clearly than anyone, recognizes that "the excitement of her mind was exhausting her life" (184), but she is ultimately unable to domesticate Bet, just as Bet is never able to bring Jane under her influence. Just before Bet flees Mary's home and makes her

way to the grave of her lover to die, she kneels momentarily next to “Mary’s infant, sleeping in the cradle” (185) and offers a parting prayer. Despite the love and affection she has to offer, Bet is incapable of being the kind of mother that Mary is, the kind of mother, the novel implies, that will raise children to become sympathetic yet self-regulating and self-disciplined citizens of a republic held together by bonds far stronger than those made by blood.

The scholarly fascination with Bet testifies to Sedgwick’s success in making her an attractive and charismatic personification of enthusiasm’s political potential. But in uncritically accepting her as a figure of resistance to tyrannical authority and female empowerment, scholars have misconstrued Bet’s larger narrative significance and the Methodist elements of her character. The allure of Bet’s life is a sympathetic trap that the heroine must recognize and avoid. The failure of fellow feeling to connect Jane and Bet is a demonstration of the former’s commitment to personal duty and Christian practice, to the values embodied by Mary Hull. By feeling for but not identifying with Bet, pitying but not sympathizing with her, Jane exhibits the judiciousness with which sympathy can and should be deployed. Mary’s inability to domesticate Bet is the novel’s final assertion that Bet’s brand of enthusiastic and self-centered sympathy, though enticing, must be rejected in favor of fellow feeling that can survive and function skillfully within society and engender its gradual progress toward an increasingly Christian and familial republican community. By recovering the central narrative significance of Mary Hull and her practical, dutiful, and sympathetic Methodism, one can appreciate the sophistication of this early work of sentimental fiction. It is also possible to see Mary and her scholarly reception as precursors to Uncle Tom and the body of modern criticism that finds his servility, humility, and dutiful obedience to the strictest dictates of Christian practice decidedly off-putting, especially in a character meant to be a sentimental hero. But unless we judge Mary and Tom by the “overtly religious” (Crane 105) standards of sentimental literature, and recognize how their creators tapped Methodism’s controversial character within the national imaginary, we will continue to misread the critical “cultural work” (Tompkins) they strive to perform.

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Chapter Three

Sympathy for the Story Teller; or, Methodism in our Portrait of Hawthorne as a Young Man

In *Province of Piety* (1984) - still, thirty years on, the best single study of Hawthorne's early work - Michael Colacurcio diligently notes the Methodist identity of several characters who appear in the tales and sketches the artist wrote during his "Salem period," after graduating from Bowdoin in 1825 and before finally managing to publish a collection of stories which garnered him critical attention, if not financial reward, in 1837. With one major exception - "Sir William Pepperell" - Colacurcio discusses each of the stories from this period in which Hawthorne turned to the figure of Methodism while struggling to write his way out of his mother's house and achieve some favorable recognition for his romantic fictions (324, 366, 497-502). In a note to his discussion of Methodism in "The Seven Vagabonds" he even states his belief that "Hawthorne's summer strolls around New England no doubt taught him all he needed to know about the indecorous tone of many a camp meeting" (n.44, 655). But the thesis of *Province of Piety* does not allow Colacurcio to make anything of Hawthorne's probable experiences with the New England Methodism of the 1820s and 30s. Nor, more importantly, does his focus on Puritanism allow him to discern how Hawthorne was using the regional memory of Methodism to craft a sympathetic self-portrait of his slightly younger self, one who is confronted with the specter of a new species of puritanism stalking his native land, but missing Puritanism's one redeeming feature: Literature, and more specifically Hawthorne's own intellectual and literary inheritance. This new kind of evangelicalism - emotional, illiterate, enthusiastic, and "popular" in both senses of the term - presented a more immediate and fundamental threat to his art and his audience than the increasingly literary and liberal Calvinism of New England. In the pages that follow I argue that Hawthorne used the controversial history of Methodism in New England, coupled with its recent regional successes, to simultaneously mock Methodism for its illiterate enthusiasm and generate readerly sympathy for a romanticized version of his slightly younger, storytelling self. By tapping into the anti-Methodist animus that remained active in New England

through the 1830s and his “Salem period,” Hawthorne depicts the plight of the literary artist who must compete with his anti-literary, evangelical other for sympathetic audiences.

In addition to ignoring “Sir William Pepperell,” the sketch in which Hawthorne makes his literary interest in Methodism most clear, Colacurcio fails to read the presence of Methodism in these pieces as anything other than Puritanism of more recent vintage. This is of course in keeping with the argument of *Province of Piety*, which is that early Hawthorne is best understood as a moral historian, one who closely resembles a nineteenth-century Perry Miller writing intellectual history as allegorical fiction in the “idiom of the gothic romancer” (1). By defining and affirming “the Hawthorne problem” (5) as answerable through analysis of his “life-long dialectic with the historical ‘thesis’ of American Puritanism” (1), Colacurcio all but ensures that Hawthorne’s fiction will be as unconcerned with the specifics of Methodism’s nineteenth-century character as was Miller’s historiography. Colacurcio intentionally blurs the distinctions between Puritanism, Methodism, and (popular) Evangelicalism, doing so most clearly when he refers to the Story Teller’s upbringing under Calvinist Thumpcushion as “evangelical-Puritan” (324) and describes Eliakim Abbot, the Story Teller’s rival, as an “Endicott-Thumpcushion-Methodist” (502). At one point, referring to the character of Abbott, Colacurcio rhetorically asks what could possibly be “the point, fictionally, of an extensive frame narrative centrally involving a minor and semi-comic itinerant Methodist *apart* from some relation to the great Whitefield?” (366, emphasis added). From Colacurcio’s perspective there would be no point, because “the [First] Awakening provided the missing historical link” between past and present just as he claims it provided Hawthorne with the “paradigm” (366) through which he intellectually processed the Second Great Awakening. In this chapter I both support and undermine that judgment. I invert this perspective by reading the “semi-comic itinerant Methodist” as an embodied commentary on the Second Great Awakening, but also discuss how Hawthorne uses the character of George Whitfield to connect the two periods of evangelical revival. I do not deny that Hawthorne did, in one sense, see the Methodists around him as the latest species in the genus of puritanical evangelicalism and represent them as such in his early fiction. But it is also true that Hawthorne was quite familiar with the tumultuous history of Methodists in New England: the violent reception they received and the antagonistic relationship they maintained with the Calvinist establishment, the ferocity and persistence of anti-Methodist sentiment and rhetoric, but also their enormous popular success in the region, the individual celebrity of some

of their preachers, and the assorted political, religious, and artistic explanations circulating for both. I argue here that Hawthorne employed Methodism because it was fundamentally different from Puritanism in its relationship to literature, learning, and emotion, and because Methodism's controversial popularity and influence on New England culture made it an ideal metaphorical vehicle for representing the literary ramifications of popular evangelicalism's increasing share of the regional audience.

There is evidence that Hawthorne's interest in anti-Methodism as a source for his art led him to research its eighteenth-century, transatlantic origins. In the same note in which he speculates about Hawthorne's familiarity with contemporary camp meeting culture, Colacurcio says that if Hawthorne did not possess firsthand knowledge of camp meeting indecorum, "he had a full sense of the background" because he checked out James Lackington's *Memoirs* (New York, 1796) from the Salem Athenaeum in February of 1831.⁴⁵ But the problem is that Lackington was a London-based, British bookseller whose autobiography is filled with eighteenth-century anti-Methodist mockery and caricature. While I question the extent to which reading that work would provide Hawthorne any sort of historical background relevant to understanding the American camp meeting, it certainly offered him a wonderful model for his own artistic appropriation of the tropes and rhetoric of anti-Methodism in the service of an autobiographical narrative in which the author's entertaining and sympathetic account of his development as an artist is set against the hypocritical corruption and pervasive popularity of a Methodism distinguished by anti-intellectualism, enthusiasm, and extravagant emotionalism. Rather than think of Lackington's *Memoirs* as giving Hawthorne historical background on American Methodism, I would argue that the book served as a model for his Story Teller project and its ironic juxtaposition of the literary artist with his evangelical other, Eliakim Abbott. Furthermore, Hawthorne's interest in and familiarity with eighteenth-century transatlantic anti-

⁴⁵ Unlike earlier London editions (1791, 1792, 1793, 1794), and probably to take advantage of the spike in Methodist popularity and controversy during the 1790s, the American edition Hawthorne checked out of the Athenaeum presents the autobiography as primarily concerned with Methodism, mentioning it repeatedly in its title and on its cover: *Memoirs of James Lackington, who from the humble station of a journeyman shoemaker, by great industry, amassed a large fortune, and now lives in a splendid stile, in London. Containing, among other curious and facetious anecdotes, a succinct account of the watch-nights, classes, bands, love-feasts, &c. of the Methodists; with specimens of Mr. Wesley's and Mr. Whitefield's mode of preaching, and the means made use of by them in propagating their tenets. Written by himself. Formerly one of the brethren of Mr. Wesley's church.*

Methodism underwrites my larger argument that his romantic appropriation of that discourse is best understood as extending the tradition begun by Brackenridge in *Modern Chivalry*.

The fact that Hawthorne checked out Lackington's anti-Methodist memoir at the height of the Revival of 1831, and that most of his stories featuring Methodist characters and tropes date to this period, suggests that we are right to search for his inspiration in the fervent religious atmosphere Hawthorne found himself within while working on the sketches and tales which would introduce his gothic romanticism to the American reading public and critical community. During the first half of the 1830s, at the same time that his stories began appearing anonymously in the *Salem Gazette*, *The New-England Magazine*, and Samuel Goodrich's annual gift-book *The Token*, the entire region was inundated with wave after wave of a "semi-Methodistic revivalism" (Carwardine 336) that was enthusiastic and theatrical. The Congregational clergy and laity had adamantly resisted the Methodization of New England since the first itinerants had begun traversing the region in the 1790s, but by 1830 they could no longer stem the tide. The Revival of 1831, considered the culmination of the Second Great Awakening, swept over the northeast and continued to drastically increase the membership of evangelical churches, both Methodist and Calvinist, until 1837 (Johnson 4).⁴⁶ As he wrote a cousin in Ohio in 1831, several acquaintances and members of Hawthorne's family were among the many who experienced conversion during the "considerable religious excitement throughout this part of the country, owing to the great number of four-day meetings which have been held by the Calvinists, Baptists, Methodists &c" (216).⁴⁷ The result was a more Methodistic public sphere, enthusiastic, reform-minded, and even less hospitable for the would-be romancer. It would also supply the religious raw materials from which he would fashion some of his most memorable early fictions.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Lyman Beecher called it "the greatest work of God, and the greatest revival of religion, that the world has ever seen" (qtd. in Johnson 4). While Beecher would have been loath to admit it, the Revival of 1831 was also a testament to, in Goodrich's words, how "orthodoxy was in a considerable degree methodized" (217) thanks to the Calvinists' increasing acceptance of so-called "New Measures" revivalism. As Richard Carwardine has written, "the New Measures that caused such controversy and tribulation in Presbyterian and Congregationalist ranks were in no sense new to Methodism" (332), and the basis of Finney's enormous success in New York and New England during this period lay in his adoption of Methodist revival techniques like the anxious bench and "the protracted meeting or 'four days meeting' as it was sometimes called" (334).

⁴⁷ In the letter, dated 9 September 1831, Hawthorne names several individuals who have experienced conversion or "been under serious impressions" (216). His attribution of the conversions to the four-day meetings is evidence that he was well aware that Methodism was behind the evangelical "excitement" all around him.

⁴⁸ To my knowledge Frank Shuffelton is the only scholar to recognize the interpretive importance of "the religious revivals of the late 1820's and early 1830's" (311) and the controversy over Finney bringing Methodistic

In addition to helping spearhead the temperance movement, Methodists were also the most vocal opponents of fiction, a distinction they would retain until the start of the twentieth century (Herbst 1-2). They were especially opposed to historical fiction, which was deemed a corruptive mixture of truth and falsehood (Drake), and saw the transatlantic popularity of Scott's novels to be a major problem on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴⁹ Methodists condemned him and his art as "morally pernicious" and posing a threat to Christian society "as dangerous as that of alcohol" (A Methodist). I read the anti-Methodism of "Sir William Pepperell" as an artistic reaction to these attitudes, as well as a vital aid in interpreting the vexed relationship between literature and religion that lies at the heart of Hawthorne's failed book project from this period, *The Story Teller*. As he had in "Mrs. Hutchinson" (1830) and "The Gentle Boy" (1832), in "Sir William Pepperell" Hawthorne uses the figure of historical enthusiasm to speak to contemporary developments in New England's evangelical evolution. But in Methodism he had found a denomination that was still supplying enthusiasts opposed to the religious establishment of Massachusetts, the only state that still maintained a tax-supported church into the 1830s, as well as vociferously condemning "the manufacturing of moral poison in the form of novels, sweetened with classical elegance" (*WCA* "Novel Reading"). For these reasons, I suggest, Hawthorne selected Methodism to characterize the emerging face of evangelicalism in the autobiographical collection of tales and sketches called *The Story Teller*. The Revival of 1831, I maintain, supplies the unacknowledged cultural context for the sinful career of the eponymous main character.

Hawthorne intended *The Story Teller* to comprise a two-volume collection of tales based around the rise and fall of an "itinerant novelist," an artistic orphan under the tyrannical care of an Orthodox parson who flees narrow-minded New England to take his story telling show on the road. Meant to be printed versions of the stories he originally told to audiences extemporaneously, the tales and sketches in *The Story Teller* were to conclude with the title character's repentant return to his native village, where he was to succumb to an early death

revivalism to New England. In his essay on "Young Goodman Brown," Shuffleton uses Trollope's account of a western camp meeting in *Domestic Manners* to demonstrate how Hawthorne's tale, believed to be part of *The Story Teller*, "reflects the conditions of a revival meeting" (318) and the horrified reaction of unsympathetic spectators like the Anglican Trollope or Unitarians.

⁴⁹ For more examples of Methodist anti-fiction arguments from this period see the following articles in the Methodist *Christian Advocate*: "Novel Reading" (23 May 1828), "Novel Reading Unchristian" (3 January 1834), and "Novel Publishing" (11 July 1834). For arguments specifically dealing with Scott see "Adam Clarke and Walter Scott" (22 February 1833) and "The Pernicious Effects of Sir Walter Scott's Novels" (4 March 1836).

caused by his prodigal lifestyle. Hawthorne hoped to get the work published as a book so that it might be reviewed and he could finally gain some measure of public success and, more importantly, a livelihood.⁵⁰ Unfortunately for him, and us, *The Story Teller* met the same fate as the previous two collections he had pitched to the publishing world. Towards the end of 1834 Goodrich informed Hawthorne that the collection was deemed an unpromising prospect for a book. The *New-England Magazine* agreed to publish the stories serially and Goodrich took some for future editions of his *Token*. Hawthorne reluctantly consented to it being broken up and the stories published separately. Over the next four years they would appear in various New England periodicals, but out of order and largely lacking the narrative frames describing their creation and delivery by the Story Teller, frames said to be “more valuable than the pictures themselves” (177). Hawthorne scholars have spent a good deal of time trying to determine which short stories and sketches originally belonged to *The Story Teller*, and what exactly the moral was which Hawthorne intended his readers to gain by the collection.⁵¹ It seems that, whatever it was, a comparison of the professions and callings of the popular storyteller and the popular evangelist was at its heart, specifically within the rapidly changing religious realities of New England in the 1830s. In this chapter I take Hawthorne's suggestion and read his early work as a series of interrelated, allegorical images chronicling the plight of the romantic young writer in an unsympathetic world. In the first part of this chapter I read “Sir William Pepperell” alongside the other two short stories by Hawthorne that Goodrich published in *The Token* for 1833: “The Seven Vagabonds” and “The Canterbury Pilgrims.” Together they comprise an allegorical triptych dealing with common themes and offering crucial insights into the genesis of Hawthorne’s Story Teller character. In the second part of this chapter I apply those insights to the pair of tales that chronicle the beginning and end of the Story Teller’s career, “Passages from a Relinquished Work” and “Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man,” demonstrating

⁵⁰ This was not without precedent of a sort. The success of Washington Irving’s *Sketch Book* (1820), *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), and *Tales of a Traveller* (1824) was well known to Hawthorne and he modeled some of his fiction, and fictional persona, on the publications of Geoffrey Crayon.

⁵¹ See Adkins (130-46), Gross, Baym (41-49), Colacurcio (496-522), Millington (10-11), Thompson (Chapter 5: The Oberonic Self), and Easton (Chapter 4: The Story Teller and Other Tales). Aside from the ones discussed below, some of the more familiar stories commonly associated with the collection include, in order of publication, “The Gray Champion,” “Young Goodman Brown,” “Wakefield,” “The Ambitious Guest,” “The Vision of the Fountain,” “The Devil in Manuscript,” “The Minister’s Black Veil,” “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” “The Great Carbuncle,” and “The Man of Adamant.”

Methodism's role in the literary martyrdom of his (slightly) younger, idealistic self to the twin powers of emergent evangelicalism and the New England book market.

1

We start as we turn from this picture of Christian love to the dark enthusiast close beside him, a preacher of the new sect; in every wrinkled line of whose visage we can read the stormy passions that have chosen religion for their outlet. Wo to the wretch that shall seek mercy there! At his back is slung an axe, wherewith he goes to hew down the carved altars and idolatrous images in the Popish churches; and over his head he rears a banner, which, as the wind unfolds it, displays the motto given by Whitefield, CHRISTO DUCE, in letters red as blood.

“Sir William Pepperell” (1832)

Despite the amount of critical energy directed at the religious elements of Hawthorne's career, this crusading Methodist iconoclast has gone almost unnoticed by scholars.⁵² Beyond being illustrative of how Hawthorne uses the regional memory of the First Great Awakening to comment on the Second, the “dark enthusiast” described above is an amalgam of historical fact and romantic fiction. Hawthorne based his sketch of the 1745 New England conquest of the French fortress at Louisbourg on Jeremy Belknap's *History of New Hampshire* (Grayson), published in three volumes between 1784 and 1792 (Kaplan). But as I will show, Hawthorne greatly enhances Methodism's prominence in his gothic revision of Belknap's narrative as a means of undermining Pepperell's image as a New England hero.

In his role as iconoclastic crusader this eighteenth-century, axe-wielding enthusiast is the personification of the denomination's nineteenth-century anti-fiction campaign. In a narrative

⁵² Robert Grayson and Margaret Moore are the only scholars to discuss “Sir William Pepperell” but neither offers a reading. Moore quotes the same passage (116) but does not analyze it. Of course to say that Hawthorne scholars have analyzed the role of religion in his life and work is quite the understatement. Since the contemporary reviews of Longfellow and Melville, critical commentators have rarely been able to avoid discussing the spiritual, theological, and denominational dimensions of his style and subject matter. Hawthorne's engagement with the Puritan heritage has, of course, garnered the most attention and continues to do so in the twenty-first century (Christophersen, Goldman, Magee, and Ronan). But there are also articles devoted to Shakerism (Gollin, Gross, Lauber), Quakerism via “The Gentle Boy” (Orians and Newberry), Spiritualism/Mesmerism (Coale and Stoehr), and one on the figure of William Miller in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (Hewitson). Then there are the book-length studies that treat his use of Catholic themes, imagery, and the discourse of Romanism (Franchot 260-9 and Fenton 69-79). Together they testify to the depth of Hawthorne's interest in both historical and contemporary developments in the religious evolution of New England, and the level of denominational literacy he could expect from his readers. Save for one article (Boudreau), Hawthorne's engagement with Methodism has been ignored despite the centrality to *The Story Teller* and the early development of his art.

move foreshadowing similar ones in works like *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne uses the “idolatrous images” of Catholicism, its “iconographic richness” (Franchot 260), as a symbol for art in general and his emblematical and allegorical art in particular.⁵³ It is a connection further suggested by his early tendency to write fiction in which, as in the epigraph, his narrator either describes paintings and pictures or consciously creates them in order to illustrate a moral, an artistic practice clearly analogous to that which produced the kind of religious imagery the “dark enthusiast” is so eager to destroy.⁵⁴ The iconoclastic Methodist is himself a work of religious allegory, a pregnant image of Protestant intolerance that contrasts sharply with the Congregationalist clergyman and “picture of Christian love” standing beside him. Hawthorne’s narrator simultaneously reads and creates the physiognomic message written in the wrinkled lines of the man’s face, encouraging us to interpret him as the personification of anti-Catholic bigotry and evangelical hatred for the blasphemous image. There are other details in the epigraph that suggest Hawthorne was describing the character of contemporary Methodism in his sketch. While Whitefield, for example, was the face of the First Great Awakening, he did not establish a “new sect” like the Wesleyans that came after him. In “Sir William Pepperell” Hawthorne is imagining a Methodism that never was in order to critique its nineteenth-century descendent, seen here lifting the text-only standard of popular evangelicalism’s hypocritical crusade against artifice and imagery.

There are clear similarities between the historical Methodism imagined in “Sir William Pepperell” and the contemporary Methodism depicted in *The Story Teller*. In the former, Methodists are “stern, unmitigable fanatics” (172) whose “excited imaginations” (167) make them prone to “extravagance” (166) – in this case, anti-Catholic iconoclasm. In “The Story Teller” (1834), the collection’s two-part title story, Methodist “extravagances” take the form of

⁵³ This may have been suggested to Hawthorne by the anti-novel rhetoric of the Methodists. In “Adam Clarke and Walter Scott,” for example, the author describes Scott’s novels as idols that “thousands are worshipping.” He predicts that soon the world will recognize Scott’s romances for the moral traps they truly are and then the *Waverly* novels will “be sold to the cheesemonger as waste paper” (104).

⁵⁴ Other examples from the Salem period can be found in “Dr. Bullivant” (“We are perhaps accustomed to employ too somber a pencil in picturing the earlier times among the Puritans...” [34]) and at the beginning of “David Swan,” in which the narrator states, “Could we know all the vicissitudes of our fortunes, life would be too full of hope and fear, exultation or disappointment, to afford us a single hour of true serenity. This idea may be illustrated by a page from the secret history of David Swan” (429). In “Fancy’s Show Box,” the narrator begins the story by saying, “Let us illustrate the subject by an imaginary example” (450). In “Endicott and the Red Cross” the narrator describes how “the whole surrounding scene had its image in the glittering steel” of Endicott’s polished breastplate, then notes that “the central object, in the mirrored picture, was an edifice of humble architecture, with neither steeple nor bell to proclaim it, what nevertheless it was, the house of prayer” (542). There are also, of course, the more obvious generic resemblances between painting and his early “sketches.”

Eliakim Abbott, a young and inexperienced itinerant preacher who claims to be divinely directed in his wanderings, sheepishly asserting to the Story Teller that he awaits to be directed “by an inward conviction” or “perhaps by an outward sign” (182). Despite being “on two such different errands” (187) the two itinerants pair up and travel together. The pair embodies Hawthorne’s early obsession with authorial alter egos and the ironic juxtaposition of secular and sacred in which such manichean perspectives are asserted only to then be undermined.⁵⁵ In the Story Teller’s description of their pairing the reader is encouraged to ponder the underlying similarities between individuals normally opposed: “We were a singular couple, strikingly contrasted, yet curiously assimilated, each of us remarkable enough by himself, and doubly so in the other’s company” (182). The ultimate point they were meant to embody can only be guessed at since the editors he approached with the volume would only publish the stories separately. As Charles Swann has written, “it is infuriating that Hawthorne was not allowed to develop the oppositions and relations between religion and art, between sermons and fiction – to say nothing of the question of the audiences for both genres” (22). And yet what remains of the frame narrative of *The Story Teller* does speak to these very issues even if we have been slow to study the emblems through which those statements are conveyed. The keys to deciphering the autobiographical allegory of the failed project are found in the tumultuous history of Methodism in New England, one with which Hawthorne was already well acquainted when he returned to his mother and sisters in Salem to begin his writing career and the period of struggling authorship upon which he would base his Story Teller character. By the fall of 1832, when *The Token* for 1833 went on sale in Boston, Hawthorne had demonstrated how he could harness his native land’s anti-Methodist and anti-Catholic animus in his art.

The sketch starts with the narrator’s confident assertion that, “The mighty man of Kittery has a double claim to remembrance.” Despite the alliterative assurance of the statement, Sir William Pepperrell (1696-1759), the leader of a volunteer army of untrained New Englanders that successfully laid siege to the mighty French fortress at Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, in 1745,

⁵⁵ In *Province of Piety* Colacurcio takes the reader through the many questions that this “literary odd couple” raises regarding Hawthorne’s views on preaching versus storytelling and how, perhaps, the two characters should “teach us to be more genuinely ‘dialectical’ about all of Hawthorne’s themes...” (508). Throughout his discussion of the *Story Teller* Colacurcio distinguishes but does not differentiate between Methodists and Calvinists, a crucial point, as I attempt to demonstrate.

has been largely forgotten.⁵⁶ But more importantly for our purposes, so has the short piece of historical fiction his life inspired the would-be author to write. Part of the blame must fall on Hawthorne himself. Like the other three biographical sketches of the same period - “Sir William Phips” (1830), “Mrs. Hutchinson (1830), and “Dr. Bullivant” (1831) - Hawthorne never chose to republish “Sir William Pepperell” in any of the short story collections for which he was principally known prior to 1850.⁵⁷ But the rest of the blame lies with us in the critical community, who have ignored this work of romantic revision in which Hawthorne uses colonial-era animosity between Methodists, Calvinists, and Catholics to depict the contemporary religious climate of New England. In “Sources of Hawthorne’s ‘Sir William Pepperell,’” the only work of scholarship devoted to the sketch, Robert Grayson demonstrates that Hawthorne’s “chief source is Jeremy Belknap’s *History of New Hampshire*,” a text that Hawthorne follows “very closely” (100) in many respects but departs from in others that are suggestive of his artistic intentions.⁵⁸ Grayson maintains that “the one important ingredient Hawthorne added to what his New England sources supplied” was what he terms an “anti-war stance” (104), but he does not tie the claim to a reading of the story. While I agree the sketch transforms a vaunted military victory judged by Belknap to be the work of a Protestant-supporting Providence into an ambiguous episode in what has been termed Hawthorne’s moral history of New England (Colacurcio 19-20), I am much more interested in the ways “Sir William Pepperell” departs from Belknap’s history in its artistic representation of the tumultuous religious context surrounding the expedition and informing its crusade-like character. Unlike its eighteenth-century antecedent, Hawthorne’s sketch sets the conquest of Louisbourg against the backdrop of the First Great Awakening, a narrative decision intended to make the story speak to nineteenth-century concerns regarding

⁵⁶ The Conquest of Louisbourg was part of King George’s War (1744-48), itself part of the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48). The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which ended the War, gave the fortress back to France. Colonial British troops conquered the fortress again in 1758 as part of the Seven Years’ War (1754-63).

⁵⁷ “Sir William Pepperell” did become a twice-told tale in 1842 when Duyckinck and Mathews republished it in the May issue of *Arcturus* (420-27), the magazine’s final issue.

⁵⁸ Grayson’s short article is true to its title and is devoted to delineating these differences but does not use them as evidence in support of an argument about “Sir William Pepperell,” the relationship between it and Hawthorne’s other work of the era, or the comparative literary merits of the two texts. Grayson’s principal point is biographical, that “the skills Hawthorne exhibits in the Pepperell sketch of adapting material to his purpose, gathering data from various sources, summarizing, and paraphrasing served him well as editor of *The Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*” (105-6) and that “Goodrich’s acquaintance with Hawthorne’s skill in the Pepperell sketch may be one reason he later offered Hawthorne the editorship” (100). I believe that another of Grayson’s articles - “Fiction in Hawthorne’s Four Early Biographical Sketches” - also deals with “Sir Pepperell” but have been unable to acquire it due to the obscurity of the journal in which it was published, *Publications of the Missouri Philological Association*. For more on the literary qualities of Belknap’s *History* and his other literary efforts see respectively, Kaplan and Kirsch.

revivalism, religious establishment, and the influence of a Methodist mentality on New England's reading public. Only by attending to these differences, unacknowledged by Grayson, and the religious context they were meant to comment on, can we make full sense of the sketch's "anti-war stance." I read them as evidence of how Hawthorne romanticized history and conceived of his art as analogous to that of the painter.⁵⁹

According to the narrator, Pepperrell's "double claim to remembrance" resides in his being "the most prominent military character in our ante-Revolutionary annals" and, more importantly, the "representative of a class of warriors peculiar to their age and country, - true citizen-soldiers, who diversified a life of commerce or agriculture by the episode of a city sacked, or a battle won" and then "went back to the routine of peaceful occupation" (166). Ironically, this personification of classical republicanism was also the "first of his countrymen" to be granted a hereditary title, having been "distinguished by the title of baronet" (173) in recognition of his success in conquering "this Dunkirk of America" (167). Hawthorne plays upon this irony in the story's concluding sentence, where he implies that Pepperrell's republican principles were among the casualties of the expedition: "He spent the remainder of his days in all the pomp of a colonial grandee, and laid down his aristocratic head among the humbler ashes of his fathers, just before the commencement of the earliest troubles between England and America" (173). If we are encouraged to ponder if Pepperrell really deserves to be remembered as the model of a citizen-soldier, the narrator explicitly questions whether "the victory was granted to our fathers as a blessing or as a judgment" (170). After lamenting how the undisciplined "provincial army made the siege one long day of frolic and disorder," the narrator states that "most of the young men who had left their paternal firesides, sound in constitution, and pure in morals, if they returned at all, returned with ruined health, and with minds so broken

⁵⁹ In "Sir William Phips," another biographical sketch from the same period, Hawthorne compares the difference between the romancer and the historian to that between a map and a painting: "The knowledge communicated by the historian and biographer is analogous to that which we acquire of a country by the map, -- minute, perhaps, and accurate, and available for all necessary purposes, but cold and naked, and wholly destitute of the mimic charm produced by landscape-painting" (12). As we will see in "The Seven Vagabonds," during this period of his career Hawthorne was obsessed with artistic analogues to his chosen profession that were viewed with similar contempt by New Englanders, whether in the form of fiddler, painter, conjuror, or even puppet master. Like the painter of landscapes, "a license must be assumed" by the romancer in order to make his characters "stand up in our imaginations like men" (12). In a statement predating his more famous formulation of the realm of romance as "a neutral territory," Hawthorne's narrator explains that in such imaginative biographical sketches, "fancy must throw her reviving light on the faded incidents that indicate character, whence a ray will be reflected, more or less vividly, on the person to be described" (12).

up by the interval of riot, that they never after could resume the habits of good citizenship” (170). This, in turn, meant that, “many thousand blooming damsels, capable and well inclined to serve the state as wives and mothers, were compelled to lead lives of barren celibacy by the consequences of the successful siege of Louisbourg” (171). It would seem that this sketch of Sir Pepperrell is meant more as a challenge to the uncritical remembrance of him, and the expedition he led, than the paean it initially appears to be. Such a reading is supported by Hawthorne’s representation of the capitulation of the French fortress, which employs the discourse of anti-Catholicism while still managing to elicit empathy for the inhabitants by graphically describing the “confused sobbing and half-stifled shrieks” that emanate from those cloistered “within the walls” when “the tumultuous advance of the conquering [Protestant] army becomes audible to those” (171) inside.

In passages that could be lifted from one of Radcliffe’s gothic novels, the narrator describes “the massive gloom” of “a rock-built citadel” containing “the temples of the ancient faith, with the sunlight glittering on their cross-crowned spires” (172). Peering through “the dark and lofty portal arch” with a mixture of attraction and repulsion, our Protestant gaze falls upon “the centre square of the city, in the midst of which rises a stone cross; and shaven monks, and women with their children, are kneeling at its foot” (171-72). These gothic details are wholly absent from the historical account upon which Hawthorne bases his sketch. In Belknap even the axe-wielding Methodist chaplain at the head of this section is a much less frightening figure, lacking both the wrinkled features beaming with iconoclastic enthusiasm and the banner with its blood-red lettering. The motto actually given by a reluctant Whitefield, and only after a good deal of pressure, was “Nil desperandum Christo duce.” By removing the “nothing to fear” from the flag and placing it in the hands of the Methodist chaplain, Hawthorne also removes any trace of doubt from the expedition and strengthens the already forceful contrast between the Methodist soldiers and the rest of the New England army. While the Methodists are described as bent on destruction and bloodshed, they are the exceptions and “the exulting feelings of the general host combine in an expression like that of a broad laugh on an honest countenance. They roll onward riotously, flourishing their muskets above their heads, shuffling their heavy heels into an instinctive dance, and roaring out some holy verse from the New England Psalmody” (172). And while Belknap does note that Pepperrell asked Whitefield his opinion before accepting the commission, a comparison reveals how much Hawthorne added to the anti-Methodist and anti-

Catholic components of the story.⁶⁰ Hawthorne declares Pepperrell to be “slightly tintured” with Methodism, a choice of words implying it to be a poisonous and corrupting contagion, not that different from the “contagion” described by the narrator of *Modern Chivalry* as a possible cause of Teague’s camp meeting conversion and tumbling routine. We are initially encouraged to interpret this piece of biographical information as evidence of the strength of Pepperrell’s character, for we are told that these “Methodistic principles,” “instead of impelling him to extravagance, assimilated themselves to his orderly habits of thought and action” (166). Pepperrell’s ability to harness and control the extravagant, evangelical zeal associated with Methodism is a sign of his fitness for command. But the meaning of Pepperrell’s Methodism would seem to change as the sketch unfolds and we are increasingly encouraged to see him as a tragic figure rather than a heroic one. The more disorderly and enthusiastic the expedition becomes, the more the reader is led to wonder just how well Pepperrell has managed to control his Methodism, and if his Methodist sympathies were not an indication that, like those of old, his crusade would end in an ambivalent victory that called into question the very same Christian principles it set out to uphold.

It was common for Calvinists opposed to the spread of Methodism and New Measures revivalism in New England to invoke the regional memory of Whitefield and the social upheaval of the First Great Awakening. Almost one hundred years later, Whitefield still stood for revivalism gone awry in large parts of the New England imagination: enthusiastic, socially disruptive, anti-establishment, and itinerant.⁶¹ The persistence of anti-Methodist sentiment well

⁶⁰ The section of Belknap’s description mentioning Methodism is fairly compact and thus deserves to be quoted in full: “Before Pepperrell accepted the command, he asked the opinion of the famous George Whitefield, who was then itinerating and preaching in New-England. Whitefield told him, that he did not think the scheme very promising; that the eyes of all would be on him; that if it should not succeed, the widows and orphans of the slain would reproach him; and if it should succeed, many would regard him with envy, and endeavor to eclipse his glory; that he ought therefore to go with ‘a single eye,’ and then he would find his strength proportioned to his necessity. Henry Sherburne, the Commissary of New-Hampshire, another of Whitefield’s friends, pressed him to favor the expedition and give a motto for the flag; to which, after some hesitation, he consented. The motto was, ‘Nil desperandum Christo duce.’ This gave the expedition the air of a crusade, and many of his followers enlisted. One of them, a Chaplain, carried on his shoulder a hatchet, with which he intended to destroy the images in the French churches” (272).

⁶¹ In 1835 Finney, for example, describes how the forces of anti-revivalism tried to use publications opposing the First Great Awakening to attack him and his so-called New Measures: “A letter was published in this city [New York] by a minister against Whitefield, which brought up the same objections against innovations that we hear now. In the time of the late opposition to revivals in the state of New York, a copy of the letter was taken to the editor of a religious periodical with a request that he would publish it. He refused, and gave for a reason, that if published, many would apply it to the controversy that is going on now. I mention it merely to show how identical is the opposition that is raised in different ages against all new measures designed to advance the cause of religion” (241-42). In his diary the Rev. William Bentley of Salem frequently compares the Methodist inroads in New

into the Jacksonian era may seem odd given the extent of Methodist successes throughout New England and the rest of the Northeast. “Given the triumph of evangelical voluntarism and the Methodists’ central role in revival and reforming efforts, it is perhaps surprising that fears of Methodists as bearers of disorder, crime, and scandal persisted into the 1820s and 1830s,” writes Eric Baldwin in his 2006 article “‘The Devil Begins to Roar’: Opposition to Early Methodists in New England.” “Nevertheless,” he explains, “Methodism still provoked derision and suspicion more than thirty years after its arrival in New England, despite the fact that the speed of Methodist growth meant that their churches were fast becoming nearly as numerous as Congregational churches” (109-10). While Hawthorne makes Pepperrell more of a pious Methodist than the historical record indicates, he renders Whitefield as a troublemaking itinerant, the “object of vast antipathy to many of the settled ministers” (167). This enhancement of evangelical controversy between Calvinist establishment and Methodist interlopers foreshadows the contrast between the kindly Calvinist pastor and the unmerciful enthusiast described at the head of this chapter. Playing on Whitefield’s reputation as an enthusiast claiming divine inspiration who defended his itinerancy by saying that he answered a higher call than the manmade ones issued by local congregations, Hawthorne labels him “the apostle of Methodism” (167). He also mocks Whitefield’s supposed prophetic abilities by suggesting that the response he gives Pepperrell is so cryptic as to be “dark as those of the Oracle of Delphos” (167). And by turning Whitefield’s “followers” into “disciples” with “excited imaginations” (167) Hawthorne does not only suggest that the Divine Dramatist is the head of a “new sect” of enthusiasts, thereby making the tumult of the First Great Awakening resemble the denominational competitions characterizing the Second. By referring to the imaginations of the Methodists Hawthorne also implies an ironic connection between the spiritual imagery of the Protestant enthusiast and the material imagery of the Catholic Church. The worshipful reverence with which we see the citizens of Louisbourg treating the symbol of their faith is the inversion of the righteous rage and violence it kindles in the breasts of Whitefield’s fanatical disciples, “each of whom clinches his teeth, and grasps his weapon with a fist of iron, at sight of the temples of the ancient faith, with the sunlight glittering on their cross-crowned spires” (172). Whether in their

England and the opposition to it to “the violent times of 1742” (22 October 1809), a period “when we suffered from the common infection” (12 November 1809). When he records the Methodists holding of “the first field meeting in the County of Essex, since Whitefield’s field preaching,” he notes that it “differed from the former as they were for transient preaching, but this for days & nights” (21 July 1805).

imaginations or in person, these “fanatics” fantasize about enacting iconoclasm to such an extent that their bodies react instinctively, clinching and grasping in a paroxysm of anti-Catholic animus that symbolizes Methodist hostility toward the art of the historical romancer and, more generally, mimetic images in general.⁶² Hawthorne captures all of this in another picture in which we are presented with a panorama frozen in time, thereby heightening the dissonance between narrative and story.

When read with an eye attuned to possible ways Hawthorne might have made the historical episode speak to contemporary concerns, “Sir William Pepperrell” reveals itself to be a depiction of religious controversy that provokes the reader into considering whether the Methodists or the Catholics are the real perverters of Christianity. In contrast to both, the “benevolent old” Calvinist clergyman, a historical personage mentioned by Belknap, embodies the faith’s central tenets of mercy and charity. After “much prayer and fasting” this “minister of an inland parish” journeys to Boston to apprise Pepperrell of “a method of avoiding danger from the explosion of mines, and of overcoming the city without bloodshed of friend or enemy” (169). Though provided him by history, Hawthorne makes the most out of this pastor by juxtaposing him to the “dark enthusiast” on a “crusade” of sorts. But while both Belknap and Hawthorne employ the term, I would argue that they do so with very different resonances. In *The History of New Hampshire* the resemblance to a crusade is evaluative and explanatory, a historical and structural correspondence that elucidates by analogy. By making the Methodist into such an over-the-top caricature of religiously motivated hatred and violence, Hawthorne is able to make the similarity of the expedition to the crusades serve as a symbol of the perversion of religious zeal, a figure evoking the terrible acts committed in the name of Christ, often under banners bearing his name. This, I would argue, is the key to understanding the significance of what Grayson characterizes as the sketch’s anti-war stance. The expedition turns upstanding, moral citizens into men unfit for Christian society, bloodthirsty adventurers more interested in martial glories than their faith. And this is why Sir Pepperrell himself serves as the perfect emblem of the ambivalent blessings said to be granted by a pro-Protestant divine Providence. Just before the end of the story the narrator rereads Sir Pepperrell’s face and finds there indication that the

⁶² It is worth noting that this was not an isolated sentiment. “Deacon John Gray, of Biddeford, writes to Pepperrell: “O that I could be with you and dear parson Moody in that church, to destroy the images there set up, and hear the true Gospel of our Lord and Saviour there preached” (qtd. in Parsons 52).

humble “man of plain good sense” has had his head turned by military experience and the promise of lasting remembrance. At the start of the sketch the narrator tells us that Pepperrell is “likely to gain no other posthumous memorial than the letters on his tombstone, because [he is] undistinguished from the many worshipful gentlemen who had lived prosperously and died peacefully before him” (166). But in the story’s final lines we learn that things have changed, and not necessarily for the better: “By the light which falls through the archway, we perceive that a few months have somewhat changed the general's mien, giving it the freedom of one acquainted with peril, and accustomed to command; nor, amid hopes of more solid reward, does he appear insensible to the thought that posterity will remember his name among those renowned in arms” (173). He has been led astray into extravagant ideas about his new place in history, revealing that egotism has gotten in the way of Pepperrell’s vaunted humility. Like the self-absorbed enthusiast unable to see the tragic irony in his imaginative iconoclasm, Pepperrell has morphed from model republican to zealous aristocrat. He begins the story “as the representative of a class of warriors peculiar to their age and country, - true citizen-soldiers” who embody American democratic ideals, but the expedition converts him into an image of self-interest and Old World values.

Whether or not antebellum readers could be expected to pick up on the sketch’s appropriation of religious controversy for the defense of the kind of imaginative, romantic art contained in *The Token*, publishing such a story inside it was a smart editorial move. Whether read simply as a questioning of New England mythology or not, Goodrich knew his audience and a sketch in which anti-Catholicism and anti-Methodism figure prominently, especially in contrast to a kind and learned Congregationalist pastor, was a safe bet. He did not need to worry about offending a Catholic readership and were a Methodist to receive his gilded gift-book it would quickly be hurled into the flames as a sinful work of morbid imagination. Yet no one knew better than Goodrich that the presence of Methodists in New England had forced the Standing Order to become a good degree Methodized over the course of the nineteenth century. He had watched his father, the Congregationalist pastor of Ridgefield, Connecticut, deal with the effects of Lorenzo Dow. While most chose open opposition, his father realized that the best means of beating them was to compete with them, and the only way to do that was to Methodize their churches through a series of formal, oratorical, and cosmetic changes. Goodrich’s father taught him a valuable lesson about audiences, religion, and the market when he “adopted evening meetings, first at the

church, and afterward at private houses,” and “put more fervor into his Sabbath discourses. Deacons and laymen, gifted in speech, were called upon to pray and exhort, and tell experiences in the private meetings, which were now called *conferences*” (216-17). There was an immediate response, “even among the orthodox,” that resulted in rewards both spiritual and material. With a keen eye for audience, Goodrich writes about how his father’s “religious meetings soon became animated, and were speedily crowded with interested worshipers or eager lookers-on. At the same time, the church was newly shingled and freshly painted; the singing choir was regenerated; the lagging salary of my father was paid up, and as winter approached, his full twenty cords of wood were furnished by his people according to contract (217). Twenty years later he was putting these lessons to use as founder and editor of the successful *Token* in which he published works by Sedgwick, Sigourney, and Child in addition to (and often alongside) Hawthorne. It could have been business savvy - an attempt to ride another wave of religious sentiment flooding the public sphere, as well as draw upon the death of the religious establishment that was all over the news - that led him to publish two stories by Hawthorne featuring Methodist ministers in *The Token* for 1833, as well as a third involving the Shaker village in Canterbury, New Hampshire. It certainly helped that both also contained Catholic characters and glittering crosses.

The two other sketches by Hawthorne that Goodrich selected for inclusion in *The Token* for 1833 were “The Seven Vagabonds” and “The Canterbury Pilgrims.” When studied together these three stories, with their painterly interests and common themes, form a literary triptych of sorts, an allegory tracing the rise and fall of irreverent Literature in an increasingly evangelical world. In “Vagabonds” we see the birth of The Story Teller and in “Pilgrims” we see the end of his career. I read the former as a conversion narrative in which a version of Hawthorne’s younger self realizes that his vocation is to become an “itinerant novelist” and join the ranks of the performers and peddlers he has just encountered, each representing a cultural analogue for the role of the romancer and all on their way to “the camp meeting at Stamford” (142). In the latter story we see another iteration of the poet figure, but there he is about to become a Shaker because the world refuses to supply an audience appreciative of his art and, “nearly forty,” he is penniless, “in a middle state between obscurity and infamy” (159). Placing the three sketches next to one another reveals an earlier version of the Story Teller’s rise and fall in which the allegorical elements are more pronounced. The triptych pits the rise of irreligious and

blasphemous art against the new face of New England's crusade against the imagination, illiterate and enthusiastic. In all three Hawthorne depicts imaginative art as under siege from an emergent evangelicalism lacking the one redeeming grace of puritanical culture: literature. In all three Hawthorne plays with tropes of religious travel – crusade, pilgrimage, itinerancy – to raise questions regarding the mixture of motives impelling individuals to follow a particular path in life. A brief look at “The Seven Vagabonds” and “The Canterbury Pilgrims” serves as an introduction to *The Story Teller's* thematic interest in the shared enthusiasm and artistry of the literary performer and the itinerant enthusiast.

Few of Hawthorne's short stories have been so resistant to satisfying interpretation as “The Seven Vagabonds” despite so strongly inviting an allegorical and autobiographical reading. In the story a well-read New England youth walking from Salem to Boston, evidently trying to determine his professional ‘path,’ comes to a crossroads where he encounters “a huge covered wagon” emitting a “delectable sound of music” (139). With storm clouds gathering, he enters to find it houses a travelling puppet show and the “circulating” library of a book peddler who has joined the showman for a tour around New England. Unlike the mass of his countrymen, the narrator has “none of that foolish wisdom which reproves every occupation that is not useful in this world of vanities” (141) and admires “the spectacle,” even imagining that he could be happy in such a life as that led by the “gray headed show man” (141). Significantly for his upcoming epiphany regarding his calling as a storyteller, he explains that, “If there be a faculty which I possess more perfectly than most men, it is that of throwing myself mentally into situations foreign to my own, and detecting, with a cheerful eye, the desirable circumstances of each” (141). He therefore easily pictures himself in the place of the showman, but is more tempted by the profession of his temporary partner. Possessing “something of a scholar-like and literary air,” the book peddler endears himself to the narrator by extolling the virtues of his small collection using “an amazing volubility of well-sounding words, and an ingenuity of praise that won him my heart, as being myself one of the most merciful of critics” (141). As with the showman, the narrator imagines himself in the role of book peddler and is tempted by the idea: “‘If ever I meddle with literature,’ thought I, fixing myself in adamant resolution, ‘it shall be as a travelling bookseller’” (143). His assertion is undercut, however, by the awe he displays at being handed a volume written by the peddler himself and realizing that he was speaking “face to face with the veritable author of a printed book” (142). The allure of authorship is more obviously

embodied in the story the reader has before him, in which four more “vagabonds” proceed to enter the wagon, each of whom serves as an occasion for imagining a different career which would tap his literary talents and fulfill his dream of living an itinerant lifestyle free from the day-to-day drudgery suffered by most, “lying down at night with no hope but to wear out to-morrow, and all the to-morrows which make up life, among the same dull scenes and in the same wretched toil that had darkened the sunshine of to-day” (151). All the entertainers we meet in the story are on their way to the Methodist camp meeting at Stamford, suggesting the collision of secular culture with the most zealous aspects of emergent evangelicalism.

The remaining four vagabonds who enter the wagon comprise a pair of European entertainers, a fortune-telling conjurer, and a Native American who makes his living by displays of prowess with his bow and arrow. They all, in some way, parallel the storyteller’s art and offer the narrator a chance to imagine himself in that profession. The attractive European couple, a “blessed pair,” fiddle and dance and offer people tours of Catholic countries like Spain, France and Italy via the medium of a show-box⁶³ accompanied by the far superior descriptions narrated by the beautiful young woman, who the author would gladly join were it not for the presence of her male companion. The Penobscot is also a Catholic and wears “a small crucifix [which] betokened that our Father the Pope had interposed between the Indian and the Great Spirit” (150). His connection to the Story Teller’s art is more opaque, but the sympathy the latter has for this “representative of those mighty vagrants” (151) who once travelled around New England suggests the Story Teller sees in him another out-of-place and unwanted native of New England forced to struggle to survive by arts which, elsewhere and in a different context, would be more highly valued. Like the Story Teller, he is “untamable to the routine of artificial life” and an outsider in his native land. The Catholicism of these three characters, so out of place in Calvinist New England, is in keeping with their associations with art and immorality and thus with Hawthorne’s maligned form of fiction. As in “Sir William Pepperell,” we see Methodism confront Catholicism at the end of the story when another itinerant preacher destroys their chances of making any money off of the crowds gathered for the camp meeting at Stamford. But before we get to the circuit rider, there remains one more member of the itinerant community: the mendicant conjuror who begs for charity and supplements the donations with fortunetelling

⁶³ In “Fancy’s Show Box: A Morality,” believed to have been intended for *The Story Teller*, Hawthorne again uses the show-box as an analogue and vehicle for literary artistry of an allegorical nature.

for a small fee. It is strongly suggested that this “prophetic beggar” is an incarnation of Satan himself. He is able “to relate, in all its minute particulars, what was then the most singular event of” the narrator’s life, and evidently a somewhat sinful one. “It was one which I had no purpose to disclose, till the general unfolding of all secrets; nor would it be a much stranger instance of inscrutable knowledge, or fortunate conjecture, if the beggar were to meet me in the street to-day, and repeat, word for word, the page which I have here written” (147-48). Such supernaturalism leads the narrator to imagine himself leading the life of a travelling trickster, and while he “could conceive of” that “sort of happiness” he “had little sympathy with it” (149). But he also significantly adds that, had he “been then inclined to admit it, I might have found that the roving life was more proper to him” than any of the other characters in the wagon, “for Satan, to whom I had compared the poor man, has delighted, ever since the time of Job, in ‘wandering up and down upon the earth’” (149). Though the soon-to-be Story Teller cannot imagine himself enjoying such a life, the conjuror evidently has other ideas, as we will see momentarily. Like all the other vagabonds who enter the wagon to avoid the shower, the diabolical fortuneteller is headed for the camp meeting at Stamford.

Hawthorne has each itinerant announce his or her intention to attend what the “merry damsel” has been told is “a great frolic and festival in these parts,” or “what you call the camp-meeting at Stamford” (146). Whoever so described a camp meeting was intentionally mocking the Methodists’ religious ritual in a particularly New England manner, and the merry damsel becomes an unwitting spokesperson for that perspective, albeit one that accords with that of her companions. The showman, for example, who is old friends with the satanic fortune teller, announces to all, “Come, fellow-laborers...we must be doing our duty by these poor souls at Stamford” (153). His adoption of the rhetoric of evangelical revival gently mocks the idea that these camp meetings actually affect people’s eternal salvation. “We’ll come among them in procession, with music and dancing,” cries the damsel, who the Story Teller addresses as “Mirth” from Milton’s *L’Allegro*, further suggesting that we are to read these vagabonds, who decide to travel to the camp meeting together, as personifications of the different forms of frivolity typically frowned upon by Methodists and Calvinists alike. But the idea that camp meetings are themselves irreverent burlesques on genuine religion that substitute theatricality for theology is what Hawthorne is playing with and expecting his readers to understand as a rebuttal of arguments against artists as corruptors of New England society. They would have been quite

familiar with such arguments, either from the Congregational pulpits, both Orthodox and Liberal, or from the numerous newspaper articles in which camp meetings were said to be woefully unsuited to New England even if they did do some good out West among “a rude and ignorant people, or a scattered population, who have no means of early instruction, and no regular opportunities of social worship.” “It will not do,” continues the article in the *Salem Gazette*, “to substitute earnestness for pathos, nor mere vociferation for persuasive rhetoric,” amongst a society where the vast majority possess at least as much learning as the Methodists’ “public speakers and exhorters.” More diplomatic than most, the article does not go into detail regarding what happens at camp meetings for fear of appearing to have “a design to burlesque their devotions” (Camp-Meeting). They do note that “the far famed Mr. Maffit” “appeared and *performed*,” the italics underscoring the element of entertainment and dramatic artifice to which non-Methodists attributed the excitement and exercises claimed to be the work of the Holy Spirit and signs of Christian conversion.

This is the controversial context through which we should interpret Hawthorne’s repeated invocation of the New England camp meeting in “The Seven Vagabonds.” We are meant to chuckle at the incongruousness of such a group heading to an evangelical event, and yet the irony of the itinerant entertainers attending a camp meeting is undercut by the implication that they would fit right in, that the Methodist ministers are themselves puppet masters and conjurers and performers who are making a living off of the people’s ignorance, credulity and desire for entertainment. The contrast is not simply between sacred and profane but between competing forms of popular entertainment. Camp meetings were well known as scenes where the irreligious and the religious freely mixed. Indeed, that was the point, for only by drawing the unchurched and skeptical within earshot of Methodist oratory could the MEC hope to continue adding members at such a prodigious rate. And there were many who attended in order to mock, gawk, or cause trouble but found themselves swept up by the contagious emotionalism and drawn into the tumult by the magnetic pull of the performance despite the absence of “pathos,” “persuasive rhetoric,” or the other literary and oratorical characteristics of preaching by the college-educated Calvinists. We must remember that articles like the one in the *Salem Gazette* quoted above indicate that many New Englanders *did* find Methodist preaching persuasive and *did not* believe they were merely being entertained by evangelical actors or participating in a burlesque of Christianity. The conversions that occurred on the campground often led to lasting change and

lifelong church membership, and by the 1840s the MEC in New England was only surpassed in size by the Congregational Church. Behind the vagabonds' intention to attend the Methodist camp meeting is Hawthorne's critical perception that his audience (and chances at making a respectable living as a writer) were being steadily diminished by the expansion of Methodism and its brand of illiterate, enthusiastic evangelicalism.

Once the six vagabonds agree to travel together, the old puppeteer asks the narrator where he is headed, and it is at this moment that the Story Teller is born (again). And yet it is almost a still birth because when he announces his intention to travel with them to the camp meeting, the group does not immediately welcome him. "But in what capacity?" asks the old showman, "All of us here can get our bread in some creditable way. Every honest man should have his livelihood. You, sir, as I take it, are a mere strolling gentleman" (152). Again we see a double irony here. A New Englander might say that none of them is engaged in an honest or "creditable" profession, making the showman's skepticism regarding the narrator's suitability for membership in their confederacy rather misplaced. But on another, allegorical level, the showman's question and accusation are the words of a society hounding the young idler to choose a path in life, a profession, to follow a calling. The profession he chooses is that of storyteller, and Hawthorne uses the social position occupied by the vagabonds to mock that which was to be maintained by the fiction writer. "I could not deny that my talent was less respectable, and might be less profitable, than the meanest of theirs," but his goal is "to become an itinerant novelist, reciting my own extemporaneous fictions to such audiences as I could collect" (152). The most important statement comes when he tells the group that storytelling is his "vocation, or I have been born in vain." But of course, being a storyteller in a land where fiction is deemed devilish and ranked below fortunetelling is to have the deck stacked decidedly against him. The question is not whether he can entertain but if he can make an honest living doing so. The response he receives is certainly not encouraging in this regard: "The fortuneteller, with a sly wink to the company, proposed to take me as an apprentice to one or other of his professions, either of which, undoubtedly, would have given full scope to whatever inventive talent I might possess" (152). The fiction-making faculty is equated with petty trickery, the conjuring undertaken by conmen, and generally classified as among Satan's many arts. It is telling that the one vagabond with whom the narrator says he has no sympathy is the only one to sympathize with him in his desire to join their ranks. It suggests that the Story Teller, and fiction

more generally, is being pushed into association with the satanic and secular even though there is no natural sympathy between them, at least as far as the artist is concerned. The Story Teller is trapped between the two worlds of entertainment and evangelicalism, but so, the story suggests, is Methodism.

The bookseller and author, on the other hand, opposes his plan, “influenced partly, I suspect, by the jealousy of authorship, and partly by an apprehension that the *viva voce* practice would become general among novelists, to the infinite detriment of the book-trade” (152). The joke here is fairly clear, the book-trade having nothing to fear from a storyteller unable to get a book published who was forced to remain a storyteller, publishing in other people’s collections, until one of his collections received the go-ahead. Ultimately the narrator must appeal to Mirth, the merry damsel, who manages to intercede in his behalf and get the group to admit him as an itinerant storyteller, whereupon celebratory dancing ensues and we are told that the jester above the puppet master’s mimic world and the old conjurer wink “particularly” at him, underscoring the perception of the storyteller’s art, in society’s eyes and his own, as a cross between clown and devilish trickster. Even though this story ends with him unable to fulfill his calling, we know the Story Teller has been born and will soon make good on his profession in the collection of the same name. The book industry’s rejection of *The Story Teller* is foreshadowed in the bookseller’s opposition to the narrator’s plan to circumvent the publishing industry all together.

The Story Teller, along with the rest of the vagabonds, is prevented from setting his plan into action by the appearance of another Methodist minister. While his physiognomy does not indicate that he is an unmerciful enthusiast, the “iron gravity” of his expression and the way he sticks “up in his saddle with a rigid perpendicularity, a tall, thin figure in rusty black” (154) quickly informs the seven vagabonds that this “missionary” is “what his aspect sufficiently indicated [him to be], a travelling preacher of great fame among the Methodists” (154). What does present an interpretive challenge is why he is riding toward them, and away from the camp meeting. As they surround him, he is evidently surprised at seeing “as singular a knot of people as could have been selected from all his heterogeneous auditors” (154) inquiring about the camp meeting. They are certainly an unusual grouping, all of whom “might be classified under the general head of vagabond” despite each character’s ability to earn his or her livelihood in “some creditable way,” with the possible exception of the “prophetic beggar.” The sight is so surprising that the narrator “even fancied, that a smile was endeavoring to disturb the iron gravity of the

preacher's mouth" (154). Certainly we are invited to laugh at the juxtaposition of the joyous, dancing, brightly colored band of pilgrims - "for it must be understood that our pilgrimage was to be performed on foot" - and the stiff and monotone seriousness of "this new votary of the wandering life" who simply responds to their inquiries by saying, "Good people...the camp meeting is broke up" (154). In its ungrammatical sparsity, the statement perfectly suits his character but also offers yet another contrast with the loquacious and literary company surrounding him. The reason for their temporary union having vanished, the vagabonds themselves break up and go their separate ways, and the story ends. The reader is left wondering if the Methodists had already broken camp or the circuit rider simply took the opportunity to prevent unwelcome competition.

In this middle panel of the triptych we again see art and literature opposed to evangelical Christianity as personified by a rather severe Methodist minister. As in "Sir Pepperell" there is an attempt by Hawthorne to question received wisdom. In "Sir Pepperell" that is the idea that the victory over Louisbourg was the result of divine intervention and that the war was an extension of the Protestant battles against popery. In "Vagabonds" we are asked to sympathize with those who have decided to live on the margins of society, to see their itinerant lifestyle as the brave bucking of the New England trend, the substitution of steady habits for adventure and excitement. Making calls upon our sympathy as well as our sense of humor, the strolling eighteen-year-old is already a misfit searching for his calling when he arrives at the intersection and enters the showman's wagon. As he informs us, his greatest talent involves a heightened sense of imaginative sympathy that allows him to throw himself "mentally into situations foreign to my own, and detecting, with a cheerful eye, the desirable circumstances of each" (141). Each of the six vagabonds offers him an opportunity to exercise this skill, thereby demonstrating his inventive faculty for the reader before we are made aware of his intention to become an itinerant novelist. When the narrator has his epiphany about having been born to tell extemporaneous fictions we have been prepared to read it a conversion experience. We must not forget that it is in order to avoid the rain that the narrator enters the wagon and that it is raining the entire time they are in the wagon. He passes through this baptism and emerges into a new world that has been transformed in his eyes: "Above our heads there was such a glory of sunshine and splendor of clouds, and such brightness of verdure below, that, as I modestly remarked at the time, Nature seemed to have washed her face, and put on the best of her jewelry and a fresh green gown, in

honor of our confederation” (154). Nature, not the Lord, is responsible in his eyes, just as “Nature” is behind his desire to become a wanderer and his storytelling talent. It is no wonder that some have read this as the victorious emergence of Unitarian infidelity.

In “The Triumph of Infidelity in Hawthorne’s *The Story Teller*,” James Duban offers an excellent explication of the “theological irony” involved in a group of irreligious entertainers banding together to attend a camp meeting “merely to profit financially from the numerous persons who will depart this mass prayer meeting” (50). I agree that “the initial installments of *The Story Teller*, as well as several of its later tales, feature a telling commentary on the evolution and theological tendencies of nineteenth-century Protestantism” (56), but do not interpret that commentary as describing “Hawthorne’s quarrel with Unitarianism” (55). I read the *Story Teller* character as embodying Hawthorne’s artistic interest in Methodism and, more generally, the new kind of evangelicalism increasingly prominent during the latter 1820s and early 1830s. I see the entertainers’ proposed attendance at the camp meeting to represent the competition for audiences (and profit) between secular entertainers and evangelical ones, like the itinerant Methodist preacher Eliakim Abbott who we meet in *The Story Teller*. Can the *Story Teller* and his fellow performers earn a living from a population given to attending Methodist camp meetings? How does the art of preaching compare with that of storytelling? Michael Colacurcio, who has done more than anyone to unpack all of the ambiguity contained in this deceptively straightforward tale, has suggested that, “perhaps we are invited to suspect that the seventh vagabond is really the Methodist Itinerant, and not our *Story Teller* at all; that in the end it is literature and not evangelical preaching which escapes reduction to mere showmanship. The structure, after all, calls for six clear cases of amusing vagrancy, plus one ambiguous seventh; perhaps Revivalism fills up that list better than Imagination” (499). While I do not believe this to be the most convincing reading, the fact that the preacher is also an itinerant and a relative outsider in New England is indeed key because of what it says about audience and competition between entertainers and evangelicals. There is ample support for the idea that the Methodist minister should be considered as much a vagabond as the performers even if he is not the titular vagabond. As previously mentioned, the Methodists received a hostile and at times violent reception to the region, and the association of Methodists with vagabondage goes back to the

days of Wesley.⁶⁴ Colacurcio goes on to suggest that, “as both the text and our own independent sources of sociological insight permit us to regard a camp meeting as a ‘great frolic and festival,’ perhaps we are expected to strike back at once, cutting off a Puritanic problem root and branch: people need diversion in this weary world, and sliding into home for Jesus has seemed to work for some” (499).⁶⁵ Despite invoking the historiography on camp meetings that presents them as boisterous bacchanals Colacurcio does not delve into that historiography or expand upon the Methodist elements within the story. But, as I will demonstrate, there is good evidence that Hawthorne intended Methodism to play a distinct, even oppositional role to the Standing Order, and that he is invoking the unkind image of them as mere entertainers that their Calvinist colleagues were chiefly responsible for spreading. By co-opting Calvinist hostility for the Methodists’ popular appeal, Hawthorne is able to make his art seem the more innocuous and even socially beneficial.

The tensions between popular writing and popular evangelicalism become much clearer when one reads “The Seven Vagabonds” alongside the third tale by Hawthorne that Goodrich included in *The Token and Atlantic Souvenir* for 1833, “The Canterbury Pilgrims.” In this third panel of the triptych, we again see the trope of religious travel and again it is ironically undercut by the fact that the pilgrims are motivated not by faith but by hunger, poverty, and desperation. After initially setting up the scene the narrator fades into obscurity and we are left listening to the odd gathering, again between “illiterate” evangelicals and those unsympathetic to their religious worldview and yet drawn to inhabit it for purposes of livelihood. The titular allusion to Chaucer’s tales signals that the characters one encounters in “The Canterbury Pilgrims” will bear

⁶⁴ The *OED* (3rd ed.) defines the adjective “vagabond” as “Inclined to stray or gad about without proper occupation; leading an unsettled, irregular, or disreputable life; good-for-nothing, rascally, worthless.” One of the quotations cited in demonstration of its usage is from the published journal of John Wesley: “A clergyman came into the...room, and ask’d aloud, with a tone unusually sharp, ‘Where those vagabond fellows were?’” The association of Methodist ministers with vagabonds in America goes back to the colonial period. In 1769 the following query was published in a New York City newspaper: “We have laws to punish vagabonds. ---Quere, If strolling Methodist Preachers, without education, without abilities, who impose themselves on the unwary as the oracles of learning and of truth, are not within the meaning of our laws against vagabonds and imposters?” *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury* June 12, 1769 Issue: 920 pg. 3.

⁶⁵ Colacurcio was not the first Hawthorne scholar to look to the history of camp meetings to try to interpret “Vagabonds.” In “The Triumph of Infidelity in Hawthorne’s ‘The Story Teller’” James Duban does the same but relies solely upon Charles A. Johnson’s *The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion’s Harvest Time* (Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1955) for his conclusions. Reprinted by SMU Press in 1985 and written from a Methodist perspective, Johnson’s work offers insights still useful today, but literary and cultural critics will find more recent treatments of the subject to speak much more directly to issues of contemporary interest, such as performance, subjectivity, and the relationship of camp meeting culture with its secular and sentimental counterparts.

a similarly ambivalent relationship to religion. Indeed, the men and women on their way to join the Shaker community in Canterbury, New Hampshire, are making the pilgrimage out of economic necessity rather than for reasons of religious devotion. Like the Story Teller, they are metaphorical and unwilling “pilgrims,” denominated as such for the purposes of irony. The group is comprised of a formerly successful merchant, a poet passed his prime, and a farming family fallen on hard times. In the middle of the night and bathed in moonlight, they stop at a spring a short distance from the village where they encounter two young Shakers stealing away to marry and begin a life among “the world’s people.” In another parallel with Chaucer’s work, the pilgrims share their stories so as to pass the time, and each one serves as a warning to the young couple. Despite being troubled by the stories of failure and disillusionment that they hear, the couple decides to carry out their plan and continue on their way as the seven pilgrims proceed on theirs.

Two aspects of this story especially deserve our attention for the ways they extend the triptych’s allegory of the fate of art and the imagination in an increasingly evangelical age. First, there is the juxtaposition and mixing of the religious and the secular that parallels what we saw in “Vagabonds” and corresponds with the distinction between the literal and the figurative. As in that story, the division between the two worlds collapses and the line separating them becomes the subject of the action rather than that which structures it. The figure of religious pilgrimage is deployed as a narrative device that captures the sense of desperation and longing for salvation embodied by the seven characters on their way to join the Shakers. The market-based, socioeconomic desperation they dramatize is a fictional representation of that which the author himself was experiencing during the Salem period (Wineapple 74-85). The clearest illustration of this is found in the character of the poet, the second aspect of the story that deserves our scrutiny. Not only does he symbolize the fate of art and embody the destiny of the Story Teller, but the poet is also the conduit for Hawthorne’s criticism of his future self manifested in a manner consistent with what we will find in the final chapter of *The Story Teller*, when the narration is taken up by the deceased Story Teller’s friend. Like the narrator of “Pilgrims,” he is simultaneously sympathetic and critical.

As in “Sir William Pepperell,” Hawthorne makes use of visual artistry to lend believability and verisimilitude to his fictional rendering of a supposedly real-life character. “Though a lithographic print of this gentleman is extant,” and the narrator describes him as

“nearly forty, a thin and stooping figure, in a black coat, out at elbows” who nevertheless displays “several tokens of a peculiar sort of foppery, unworthy of a mature man, particularly in the arrangement of his hair which was so disposed as to give all possible loftiness and breadth to his forehead. However, he had an intelligent eye, and, on the whole, a marked countenance” (158-9). He is an odd mixture of poverty and poetry who personifies what we will see to be the Story Teller’s fears that what was marginally acceptable in his teens “would be ridiculous in middle life; and that the world, so indulgent to the fantastic youth, would scorn the bearded man, still telling love-tales, loftily ambitious of a maiden’s tear, and squeezing out, as it were, with his brawny strength, the essence of roses” (“Fragments” 490-1). In the reaction of the Shaker to the poet’s self-description we see a comic example of evangelical culture’s inability to comprehend the importance of poetry: “‘A poet!’ repeated the young Shaker, a little puzzled how to understand such a designation, seldom heard in the utilitarian community where he had spent his life. ‘O, ay, Miriam, he means a varse-maker, thee must know’” (159). The narrator notes how this relabeling, this translation of poetry into mere verse, of the poet into the entertainer, stings the poet’s sensibility. It is a belittling of his profession that he has heard many times before from the mouths of those philistine New Englanders whose inability to tell the difference between a poet and an entertainer, to appreciate his work as art rather than entertainment, is the reason for his pilgrimage to the Shaker community.

“True, I am a verse-maker,” he resumed, “but my verse is no more than the material body into which I breathe the celestial soul of thought. Alas! how many a pang has it cost me, this same insensibility to the ethereal essence of poetry, with which you have here tortured me again, at the moment when I am to relinquish my profession forever! O Fate! why hast thou warred with Nature, turning all her higher and more perfect gifts to the ruin of me, their possessor? What is the voice of song, when the world lacks the ear of taste? How can I rejoice in my strength and delicacy of feeling, when they have but made great sorrows out of little ones? Have I dreaded scorn like death, and yearned for fame as others pant for vital air, only to find myself in a middle state between obscurity and infamy? (159)

Not only does the departing Shaker ventriloquize the hostile statements made by the world’s people, he also suggests that the Shakers might reject the poet for the same reasons as the rest of the world: the poet’s lack of practical “gifts.” At this the Shaker maiden chides her fiancé for his lack of generosity and suggests that the poet will be able to improve the crude hymns of the Shakers. And suddenly the poet becomes a hymn writer, his poetic calling transformed into a

religious one. The poet concludes by employing biblical rhetoric to denounce a society unable to appreciate his gifts: "I shake off the dust of my feet against my countrymen! But posterity, tracing my footsteps up this weary hill, will cry shame upon the unworthy age that drove one of the fathers of American song to end his days in a Shaker village!" (159). The narrator defends the poet from an overly offended audience by ensuring us that, "for all these bitter words, he was a kind, gentle, harmless, poor fellow," who deserves our sympathy. In so doing Hawthorne's narrator again foreshadows the attitude of the narrator of "Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man," who defends his friend's caustic recriminations by explaining that, "If there be any thing bitter in the following reflections, its source is in human sympathy, and its sole object is himself" (488).

In the narrator's description of the poet's character the reader sees reflected a caricature of Hawthorne's artistic sensibility that has been filtered through the world's illiterate perspective. By mocking his artistic, romantic self, Hawthorne simultaneously blunts the world's criticism and reveals it to be unnecessarily harsh on the artist. The poet "gave himself up to a sort of vague reverie, which he called thought," and which we can discern to be, like Hawthorne's, obsessed with light and synesthesia:

Sometimes he watched the moon, pouring a silvery liquid on the clouds, through which it slowly melted till they became all bright; then he saw the same sweet radiance dancing on the leafy trees which rustled as if to shake it off, or sleeping on the high tops of hills, or hovering down in distant valleys, like the material of unshaped dreams; lastly, he looked into the spring, and there the light was mingling with the water. In its crystal bosom, too, beholding all heaven reflected there, he found an emblem of a pure and tranquil breast. He listened to that most ethereal of all sounds, the song of crickets, coming in full choir upon the wind, and fancied that, if moonlight could be heard, it would sound just like that. (160)

It is crucial to note that the poet has no problem getting published and actually composes "a Farewell to his Harp" which, "with two or three other little pieces, subsequently written, he took the first opportunity to send, by one of the Shaker brethren, to Concord, where they were published in the *New Hampshire Patriot*" (161). But as with Hawthorne, and as evidenced by stories like "Vagabonds," "Pilgrims" and "Sir Pepperell," the publication of individual pieces in newspapers or collections edited by others did not translate into much money and certainly not a livelihood, even one comparable to that which could be earned by puppeteers or fortunetellers. The "death" of the poet's career symbolizes the death of Poetry, and his transformation into a

hymn writer strongly suggests that evangelicalism is to blame for its appropriation of all culture and its inability to recognize any utility or value in literary arts not devoted to Christianity.

In order to further demonstrate that Hawthorne's Methodist characters are imaginative responses to popular evangelicalism's hostility toward creative writing and the craft of fiction, I would like to conclude this section by comparing Hawthorne's comically critical representation of poetic enthusiasm in the block quotation above with an analogous account taken from a contemporaneous article in a Methodist newspaper. The psychological state of Hawthorne's suffering and distracted poet bears a striking resemblance to what Methodists termed the "Poetaster or Imaginative Mind," a subgroup of the condition referred to as "morbidity of mind." In his diagnosis of the poet's condition, Hawthorne's narrator describes him as one whom Nature "had sent into the world with too much of one sort of brain, and hardly any of another" (159-60). The similarities to the morbid mind, as described by a writer in *Zion's Herald*, Boston's Methodist newspaper, are striking:

The cultivation of the imagination, to the neglect of the severer powers, produces sentimentalism, and a sensibility that sometimes renders life a scene of painful melancholy, and even extends so far as to superinduce a *physical* excitability, which, while it prostrates the bodily energies, reacts also on the morbid susceptibility of the mind, until it ends the unfortunate sufferer's misery by premature death. The feelings of such persons are alternately joyous and depressed; when joyous they go to excess, and become frequently ecstatic – when depressed they become extremely so; the whole world looks to such a mind repulsive and gloomy as midnight, the most charming graces of nature are converted in associations of wretchedness, society loses its attractions and becomes insipid, all laborious efforts of mind or body are performed with reluctance, the least change in the wind or state of the atmosphere disturbs the sensitiveness of the sicklied nerves; fictions, poetry and music become the only tolerable mental employment of such an intellect. And yet with these diseased minds are almost always associated the most amiable and endearing qualities of the heart.... (G.H.I.)

While the poet in "The Canterbury Pilgrims" does not end his days in a premature death brought on by his morbid sensibility, we can certainly see his features in the above characterization. And I would suggest that though he does not physically perish, the poet does terminate the life of his poetic self by entering the utilitarian confines of the Shaker community. Hawthorne's poet, like his Story Teller, is a strange mixture of mockery and sympathy. He personifies the plight of the artist in a world ready to publish and read his poetry but not willing to place any value on it or the sensibility that produced it. Hawthorne, too, found it possible to get published in periodicals but, like the poet, could not turn his vocation into a paying profession. In the following section I

argue that the Story Teller is another incarnation of the doomed New England author, and that Hawthorne's ambitious but unsuccessful effort to get the publishing community to value and print a two-volume collection of stories is the ironic biographical analogue to his autobiographical character's inability to make a living as an independent storyteller.

2

Among other novelties, I had noticed that the tavern was now designated as a Temperance House, in letters extending across the whole front, with a smaller sign promising Hot Coffee at all hours, and Spruce Beer to lodgers gratis. There were few new buildings, except a Methodist chapel and a printing-office, with a bookstore in the lower story.

“Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man” (1837)

When the Story Teller returns to his native New England village, already enfeebled by the tuberculosis that will kill him, he finds that “Death and Vicissitude had done very little” (498) to alter its aspect. It is so similar that he can “hardly realize that years had past, or even months” (497) since he surreptitiously departed to begin his career as an itinerant novelist. But this makes the few changes he describes all the more significant, and in the excerpt above we are offered evidence that the town to which he returns has been inundated with evangelicalism in his absence. Parson Thumpcushion's parish has been invaded by a Methodist congregation and, in a related development, gone dry. It is unclear whether the Methodists are also responsible for the printing office and bookstore, but either way the business's presence, representing the ever-expanding reach of the print market in Jacksonian America, is inimical to Oberon's oral and largely extemporaneous profession.⁶⁶ There is no sign of Eliakim Abbott, but it appears that his brand of popular, evangelical Christianity has overtaken the town and had some effect on Oberon, who returns with the intention of warning the local youth against following his example just as Abbott “labored with tears to convince me of the guilt and madness” (187) of his chosen profession. By turning the narrative of his prodigal life into a cautionary tale directed at those who would also take up such a selfish and sinful course, Oberon putatively redeploys his

⁶⁶ Recent criticism on *The Story Teller* has dealt with the way its central tales engage with the major advances in publishing being experienced at the time but neither West nor Cohen note or discuss the appearance of the “printing-office, with a bookstore in the lower story” upon Oberon's return to his native village.

imaginative powers in the service of the socio-religious ideals against which he had so violently rebelled when he decided to become a travelling storyteller. But, as one would expect, Hawthorne does not capitulate to the evangelical worldview or consent to the damnation of his younger, more romantic self. In fact, I will argue that Hawthorne tries to get us to sympathize with the plight of the Story Teller and mourn his passing as the victory of evangelicalism and the book trade over the delicate genius of a literary enthusiast.

The two new buildings that greet the Story Teller on his home return represent the two institutions responsible for his inability to make a living: the Methodist Church and the publishing industry. The transformation of the tavern into its opposite further signals there is no place for Oberon in the New England of the Second Great Awakening. Temperance was one of the themes that would have united the assorted stories to be collected in *The Story Teller*, appearing in such stories as “A Rill from the Town-Pump,” “David Swan,” and “Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man,” quoted above. It is tempting to connect the temperance movement, often symbolized by the cold water they pushed in place of beer and liquor, to the many stories that employ water as a symbolic motif.⁶⁷ We are certainly invited to read its presence as an indication of supernatural intervention, a connection established through the tradition of baptism. When Oberon first sets out he departs his native village at sunrise while much of it is in fog, leading him to comment on how “such an unromantic scene should look so visionary” (177). As with the moonlight “which shines in so many a tale” written by Hawthorne, the fog suggests itself to be a romantic medium analogous to the “visionary” perspective of the romancer. But the extended description of the fog-filled town coupled with the many other water features appearing in the Story Teller’s tales and sketches implies that the element serves a narrative function integral to the collection’s allegorical interpretation and religious significance. We note, for example, that in describing how the fog is thickest around the meeting house the Story Teller suggests that we interpret it symbolically: “The white spire of the meeting-house ascended out of the densest heap of vapor, as if that shadowy base were its only support; or, to give a truer interpretation, the steeple was the emblem of religion, enveloped in mystery below, yet pointing to a cloudless atmosphere, and catching the brightness of the east on its gilded vane” (178). Readers of Hawthorne’s early fiction will remember that the steeple is an emblem that he

⁶⁷ Besides the stories focused on here, at least five others incorporate water as a central symbol: “The Vision of the Fountain,” “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment,” “Night Sketches: Beneath an Umbrella,” “Sketches from Memory” and “My Trip to Niagara.”

used frequently, as in “Sights from a Steeple,” the first story of his that Goodrich published in *The Token*. Here the fog signifies the earthly “mystery” enshrouding religion, and is suggestive of the moral ambiguity that would continue to characterize Hawthorne’s fiction through the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850).

The appearance of the village leads the well-read youth, “naturally enough,” to think “of Don Quixote” and how “the knight and Sancho had watched for auguries” before setting out themselves. He begins “to feel a similar anxiety” but it is quickly relieved by “a more poetical phenomenon than the braying of the dappled ass, or the neigh of Rosinante. The sun, then just above the horizon, shone faintly through the fog, and formed a species of rainbow in the west, bestriding my intended road like a gigantic portal.... It had no brilliancy, no perceptible hues; but was a mere unpainted frame-work, as white and ghost-like as the lunar rainbow, which is deemed ominous of evil” (178-9). Like the narrative frame of the Story Teller’s travels and the skeletons of tales he constructs before filling them up during his performances, the colorless rainbow presents the artist with a canvas upon which to paint his romantic tales of local color tinged with supernaturalism. But he misreads the emblem, perhaps intentionally ignoring the significance of the rainbow’s similarity to a lunar rainbow, which once again connects the fog to moonlight and romance. Viewing the sign “with a light heart, to which all omens were propitious,” he advances “beneath the misty archway of futurity” and enters upon his life as an itinerant storyteller. He will soon meet his evangelical alter ego in the form of Eliakim Abbott, yet another Methodist preacher who, like the Calvinist Parson Thumpscushion, considers his calling to emanate from the devil. In having his Story Teller surreptitiously abandon the personification of orthodoxy, Hawthorne suggests that the modern, New England artist must make a break with the Puritan past in order to have a chance of fulfilling his or her vocation. But by having the Story Teller immediately encounter an enthusiastic, illiterate, and ill-humored itinerant, Hawthorne also implies that the would-be writer must also come to terms with the Evangelical future and its disdain for human learning. In this section I reinterpret the moral of *The Story Teller* by recovering the meaning contained in the Methodist identity of Eliakim Abbott, the untutored itinerant preacher who accompanies the Storyteller at the beginning of his travels. As we saw earlier in the case of Crazy Bet, Abbott’s Methodism is not explicitly stated but can be easily inferred by the reader with the kind of denominational literacy Hawthorne could expect from his Jacksonian audience. But I argue that Abbott embodies that audience, that

the competition between him and the Story Teller dramatizes the struggle between irreverent literary entertainment and evangelical preaching which often condemned fiction as a vice as pernicious as alcohol. Reading Abbott as an embodiment of popular evangelicalism and a threat to the social control of the Standing Order is imperative for decoding the ambiguous moral of *The Story Teller* and the commentary it offers on religion and literature in the New England of the 1820 and 30s. Abbott, I argue, is the “mystic-evangelical other” (Anderson 3) of Hawthorne’s self-referential Story Teller character, and as such he represents the Methodization of religion and society in New England and the United States.

From the opening moments of their first meeting, it is clear that Eliakim Abbott is not a member of the Congregational clergy or, as the Story Teller initially surmises, preparing to become one. He is described as “a slender figure, dressed in black broadcloth, which was none of the finest, nor very fashionably cut. On hearing my footsteps, he started up, rather nervously, and, turning round, showed the face of a young man about my own age, with his finger in a volume which he had been reading, till my intrusion” (179-80). The book turns out to be a “pocket-Bible” and a symbol of Eliakim’s Biblicism and literal-mindedness. Though he prides himself on his “great penetration into people's characters and pursuits,” the itinerant novelist can “not decide whether this young man in black were an unfledged divine from Andover, a college student, or preparing for college at some academy. In either case,” he confides in the reader, he “would quite as willingly have found a merrier companion; such, for instance, as the comedian with whom Gil Blas shared his dinner beside a fountain in Spain” (180). This literary reference underscores his educational background and novelistic frame of reference. It is the complete lack of any signs of a literary education in this “fellow-traveller” that first betrays him as an itinerant evangelical rather than a member-in-training of the Congregational Church. The Story Teller’s initial assumption, mistaken though it is, signals his inability to escape the New England mindset that links ministerial identity with formal education and literary training. Indeed, the entire scene could be read as Hawthorne’s attempt to stage the inability of Literature and Evangelicalism to speak to each other despite their shared position on the margins of New England society.

The more we see the two characters interact the more we recognize their comical inability to understand each others’ conversation or vocation. After exchanging nods the Story Teller “made a goblet of oak-leaves, filled and emptied it two or three times, and then remarked, to hit the stranger's classical associations, that this beautiful fountain ought to flow from an urn instead

of an old barrel” (180). But the shy youth “did not show that he understood the allusion,” and the rest of their initial conversation confirms their inability to communicate despite employing the same language and both being pilgrims. Immediately after testing Abbott’s literary learning and finding it wanting, the Story Teller, rather provocatively considering his interlocutor, complains “that Nature should provide drink so abundantly, and lavish it everywhere by the roadside, but so seldom anything to eat. Why should not we find a loaf of bread on this tree as well as a barrel of good liquor at the foot of it?” (180). Hawthorne’s antebellum audience would have understood his comment as intended to invoke and undermine the battle between pro- and anti-temperance forces, but rather than upbraid the Story Teller for his sinful suggestion Eliakim responds with a generous but characteristically stern and unimaginative offer: “‘There is a loaf of bread on the tree,’ replied the stranger, without even smiling — at a coincidence which made me laugh. ‘I have something to eat in my bundle; and, if you can make a dinner with me, you shall be welcome’” (180). The fact that the young man does not laugh at the comical coincidence involving the loaf of bread is meant to suggest not just the absence of a sense of humor, but the presence of that dour and disciplined disposition for which Methodists were well known. It is also evidence of the kind of reception that awaits the Story Teller should he have the misfortune of performing in front of an audience of evangelicals.

The Story Teller accepts the man’s offer, saying, “A pilgrim such as I am must not refuse a providential meal.” Evidently still interested in surreptitiously assessing the man’s character by the kind of provocative wordplay which will characterize the stories he tells audiences, the Story Teller employs the rhetoric of religious pilgrimage in a piece of metaphorical self-description which re-presents his sinful, itinerant career as its pious opposite. The overly serious evangelist does not know whether the obviously irreligious stranger is teasing him or not but blushes all the same: “The young man had risen to take his bundle from the branch of the tree, but now turned round and regarded me with great earnestness, coloring deeply at the same time. However, he said nothing, and produced part of a loaf of bread and some cheese...” (180). In an “unexpected ceremony” that the Story Teller finds moving despite the fact that “his embarrassment made his voice tremble,” Abbott says grace before they eat and then again afterwards, when he offers up “thanks with the same tremulous fervor” (181). In keeping with his secular outlook, the Story Teller is not moved by the piety of his companion but deems the ceremony “an impressive one” because of its picturesque “woodland” setting, “with the fountain gushing beside us and the

bright sky glimmering through the boughs” (181). The beauty of Abbott’s evangelical piety only registers on an aesthetic level, not a religious one, further demonstrating the disconnect between the worldviews the two itinerants symbolize.

Yet despite being “on two such different errands” (187), the two end up travelling together when, in their final exchange, Eliakim accepts the Story Teller’s offer to join him for supper. Hawthorne also takes the opportunity to further establish that these men are both enthusiasts, pilgrims travelling the world in response to a call that neither can ignore and equally inexperienced at their vocations. When Abbott asks where the Story Teller plans to take his supper - “At your home?” (181) - the latter says yes even though he is speaking metaphorically. After Abbott suggests that they may not be travelling the same road, the Storyteller explains himself: “This morning I breakfasted at home; I shall sup at home to-night; and a moment ago I dined at home. To be sure, there was a certain place which I called home; but I have resolved not to see it again till I have been quite round the globe and enter the street on the east as I left it on the west. In the mean time, I have a home everywhere, or nowhere, just as you please to take it” (181). In typical Methodist fashion the evangelist refigures the trope of home so as to make the Story Teller’s homelessness speak to the Christian conception of our mortal lives as temporary sojourns: “‘Nowhere, then; for this transitory world is not our home,’ said the young man, with solemnity. ‘We are all pilgrims and wanderers; but it is strange that we two should meet’” (181). Strange indeed, but also representative of the parallel rise of romantic literature and evangelical Christianity and their competition for audiences among the population of the Northeast.

Skipping ahead to the Story Teller’s final days, we can observe how the worldview he confesses to embracing is the antithesis of Eliakim’s otherworldly Methodist perspective. “O, how fond I was of life,” he laments, “even while allotting, as my proper destiny, an early death! I loved the world,” he exclaims, “its cities, its villages, its grassy roadsides, its wild forests, its quiet scenes, its gay, warm, enlivening bustle” (491), all of which the reader was to have found represented in the tales and sketches that filled *The Story Teller’s* two volumes. He confesses to a love of earthly delights that marks him as among the unregenerate but also explains his chosen vocation: “The earth had been made so beautiful, that I longed for no brighter sphere, but only an ever-youthful eternity in this. I clung to earth as if my beginning and ending were to be there, unable to imagine any but an earthly happiness, and choosing such, with all its imperfections, rather than perfect bliss which might be alien from it” (491). Despite the power and cultivation

of his imagination, it appears that it is incapable of picturing forth the celestial sphere that most of his fellow New Englanders, whether Calvinist or Methodist, understood to be the actual realm of lasting happiness. The fact that he chooses the world even though he correctly foresees it will lead to an early death is a decision that flies in the face of evangelicalism's most fundamental beliefs and attitudes. But so is the decision to become an itinerant novelist and make one's living telling stories rather than saving souls.

In his untutored illiteracy and otherworldly enthusiasm, Eliakim Abbott embodies the evangelical audience who is unable and unwilling to enjoy the Story Teller's irreverent attitude and literary allusions. Like the Shaker couple in "The Canterbury Pilgrims" who are unaware even of the existence of poetry, Abbott's obtuseness in the face of the Story Teller's repartee evinces why the latter's life must end in ignominious solitude that itself serves as a cautionary tale for those would-be writers who would follow his example. Even in his final despondent days, however, Oberon displays a hesitancy to completely repudiate his prodigal lifestyle that harkens back to the sarcastic spirit with which he confronts the rebuke embodied in his enthusiastic alter ego. When Eliakim tells the Story Teller that he does not know where he is headed, "but God knows," Oberon feigns ignorance: "'That is strange!' exclaimed I; 'not that God should know it, but that you should not. And how is your road to be pointed out?'" "'Perhaps by an inward conviction,' he replied, looking sideways at me to discover whether I smiled; 'perhaps by an outward sign'" (182). We do not know whether he smiled or not, but the Story Teller does reply with a comical assertion that simultaneously mocks both of them, the evangelist as an anachronistic throwback and the Story Teller as an unthinking jackass:

"Then, believe me," said I, "the outward sign is already granted you, and the inward conviction ought to follow. We are told of pious men in old times who committed themselves to the care of Providence, and saw the manifestation of its will in the slightest circumstances, as in the shooting of a star, the flight of a bird, or the course taken by some brute animal. Sometimes even a stupid ass was their guide. May I not be as good a one?"

"I do not know," said the pilgrim, with perfect simplicity. (182)

Hawthorne's sarcasm is double-edged, undercutting evangelicalism's outdated faith in supernatural guidance while at the same time suggesting his youthful self is behaving like an ass by practicing on Eliakim's untutored naiveté. It is also representative of what I take to be the

central, dialectical dynamic of *The Story Teller*, alternating between anti-evangelical contempt and self-deprecating mockery of a writer unwilling to make his work speak to the Methodistic tenor of the times. But if Eliakim is any indication, to do so would be to fundamentally betray his own sense of calling, humor, and self. Hawthorne uses the Story Teller to imagine the difficulty of appealing to an audience as unsympathetic as Eliakim Abbott. Eliakim's complete lack of literariness – his evident ignorance of classical literature, his lack of a sense of humor or irony – symbolizes popular evangelicalism's opposition to literature and its commitment to inspiration, to preaching as the Spirit commands rather than relying on formal education and or a prepared sermon. It is because Eliakim personifies emergent evangelicalism - itinerant, enthusiastic, and untutored – and not the Andover establishment that he makes the perfect alter ego for the itinerant Story Teller, who is likewise anti-establishment and attempting to go it alone before the public. In Oberon's case it is the literary establishment that is being circumvented by his becoming “an itinerant novelist,” but at the time those two institutions were quite closely related, especially in New England. Both men are following a vocation in which they must appeal to, and compete for, audiences, which is why we see them both fail rather terribly, as well as speak at the same time. The difference between the two of them, however, is that the Story Teller works on his craft, understanding that he needs to entertain and instruct, while Eliakim apparently continues to rely upon the Spirit. Abbott's inability to move an audience is Hawthorne's indictment both of the belief in inspiration and Methodism's evident reluctance to think of its art *as* an art, as a performance requiring homiletic training and involving oratorical skill.

When the Story Teller bombs his first time out he realizes that he has underestimated his profession, having allowed New England's denigration of authorship to influence his expectations regarding the difficulty of the enterprise:

Hitherto, I had immensely underrated the difficulties of my idle trade; now I recognized, that it demanded nothing short of my whole powers, cultivated to the utmost, and exerted with the same prodigality as if I were speaking for a great party, or for the nation at large, on the floor of the capitol. No talent or attainment could come amiss; every thing, indeed, was requisite; wide observation, varied knowledge, deep thoughts, and sparkling ones; pathos and levity, and a mixture of both, like sunshine in a rain-drop; lofty imagination, veiling itself in the garb of common life; and the practiced art which alone could render these gifts, and more than these, available. (183)

As with the contrast between him and Eliakim, the comparison of storytelling to speaking before Congress is Hawthorne's attempt at redeeming the work in the eyes of those would argue that it

is not a real career or profession worthy of a grown man. Obviously guilt-ridden and internalizing at least some of his society's opinion of his calling, the Story Teller takes solace in the difficulty of the work and the methodical way he goes about honing his craft. After each performance he "investigated the causes of every defect, and strove, with patient stubbornness, to remove them in the next attempt. It is one of my few sources of pride, that, ridiculous as the object was, I followed it up with the firmness and energy of a man" (183). By contrast, and in keeping with the gender stereotypes that run throughout Hawthorne's early work, Eliakim is described as being more helpless than "even a woman" and "so easily discouraged by slight obstacles" that the Story Teller takes pity on him. After his first performance goes so poorly that he has the innkeeper return the small audience's money, the Story Teller says, "It is a fact, that I was more deeply grieved by an almost parallel misfortune, which happened to my companion on the same evening" (183). Yet Eliakim does not seem to have improved his craft by the time the odd couple arrives at the town in which the Story Teller first performs "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe." Once again they perform at the same time and compete for audience members, but this time the Story Teller takes a stroll before he goes on and happens upon Eliakim's prayer meeting. Having "collected about fifteen hearers, mostly females" in the schoolhouse, Oberon enters just "as he was beginning to pray, in accents so low and interrupted, that he seemed to doubt the reception of his efforts, both with God and man. There was room for distrust," he adds, "in regard to the latter" (185). Eliakim's lack of confidence bespeaks a lack of faith in himself as well as, perhaps, in the supposed source of his prayers. "At the conclusion of the prayer, several of the little audience went out, leaving him to begin his discourse under such discouraging circumstances, added to his natural and agonizing diffidence" (185).

The contrast with the Story Teller could hardly be greater. Not only has Oberon "manufactured a great variety of plots and skeletons of tales," he even has his greatest success when "leaving the filling up [of the stories] to the inspiration of the moment" and "cannot remember ever to have told a tale, which did not vary considerably from my pre-conceived idea" (183). While Eliakim struggles owing to his lack of literariness, the well-read Story Teller explains that his "success was generally in proportion to the difference between the conception and accomplishment" (183). It seems that Oberon has found his calling and possesses the skill and inspiration that Eliakim lacks. Are we to regard the Story Teller as a sort of secular enthusiast? It certainly seems so: "My spirits were good, with a certain glow of mind, which I

had already learned to depend upon as the sure prognostic of success” (185). Hawthorne could very well be playing off of enthusiasm’s original association with poetic inspiration, the word meaning either “prophetic or poetic frenzy” (*OED*) prior to becoming synonymous with false inspiration in the eighteenth-century.⁶⁸ He would be following the example of Romantics on the other side of the Atlantic who had been reclaiming the concept of enthusiasm for literary usage.⁶⁹ And certainly the pairing of the Story Teller and the itinerant evangelist suggests that they are, respectively, profane and sacred versions of the orator’s art. After initially agreeing to travel together, the Story Teller describes them both as being a bit off, although he deems Eliakim’s state of mind to be even more outlandish than his own. To his sarcastic surprise, they “were not overtaken...by the keepers of any lunatic asylum in pursuit of a stray patient. Perhaps the stranger felt as much doubt of my sanity as I did of his, though certainly with less justice; since I was fully aware of my own extravagances, while he acted as wildly, and deemed it heavenly wisdom” (182). With such a statement, Hawthorne’s autobiographical protagonist suggests that religious enthusiasm is identical to poetic enthusiasm with the only difference being the ascription of the source of power: God or the Imagination.

The most telling contrast between the two men as making competing appeals to the reading and listening public comes in the form of advertisements. Unauthorized by him, the local promoter has strategically (and symbolically) posted “play-bills announcing, at every corner, on the town-pump, and, awful sacrilege! on the very door of the meeting-house, an Unprecedented Attraction!! After setting forth the ordinary entertainments of a theatre, the public were informed, in the hugest type that the printing-office could supply, that the manager had been

⁶⁸ One of the quotations illustrating usage in the *OED* (2nd ed.) is from Dryden’s preface to his 1693 translation of Juvenal: “Poetry, by a kind of enthusiasm, or extraordinary emotion of soul, makes it seem to us that we behold, those things which the poet paints.”

⁶⁹ Coleridge is perhaps the best example of this among the English Romantics, using the term to mean both poetic and prophetic inspiration throughout *Biographia Literaria*. There he also speaks of the natural supernaturalism of the *Lyrical Ballads* in a way that could easily be applied to Hawthorne’s writing. He and Wordsworth decided that, “a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves” (Ch.14). In another example that could come from one of Hawthorne’s early stories Hazlitt writes in his *Lectures on the English Poets* that, “Poetry is the high-wrought enthusiasm of fancy and feeling. As in describing natural objects, it impregnates sensible impressions with the forms of fancy, so it describes the feelings of pleasure or pain, by blending them with the strongest movements of passion, and the most striking forms of nature” (8-9).

fortunate enough to accomplish an engagement with the celebrated Story Teller” (184). An advert for a show at the tavern posted on the town-pump, while not quite as sacrilegious as one on the meeting-house door, is nevertheless an emblem of the competition between evangelical reform and irreligious entertainment. By the 1830s the town-pump and the water it supplied were symbols of the burgeoning temperance movement, a connection Hawthorne plays with in “A Rill from the Town-pump” (1835), believed to have been part of *The Story Teller* and chosen by Hawthorne for publication in the first edition of *Twice-Told Tales* (1837). There he ventriloquizes Salem’s water pump, having it recount its long history and proudly claim, “From my spout, and such spouts as mine, must flow the stream that shall cleanse our earth of the vast portion of its crime and anguish, which has gushed from the fiery fountains of the still” (312). But Hawthorne also makes it mock the intemperate passion of those who seem to battle for abstinence with the same “fiery pugnacity” as people deep in their cups. “Is it decent, think you, to get tipsy with zeal for temperance, and take up the honorable cause of the Town Pump in the style of a toper, fighting for his brandy-bottle?” (313). He draws on a similar vein of hypocritical irony in linking Eliakim and the Story Teller, as well as in the juxtaposition of their respective announcements to the public. “In two or three places, underneath the flaming bills which announced the Story Teller, was pasted a small slip of paper, giving notice, in tremulous characters, of a religious meeting, to be held at the school-house, where, with Divine permission, Eliakim Abbott would address sinners on the welfare their immortal souls” (184-5). Like the difference between their oratorical personas, the advertisements illustrate the relative appeals of each toward the reading public. The “flaming” announcements of the Story Teller’s act, like the fiery liquor served during it, further suggest a link between his art and the flames of perdition. The fact that he is not in any way responsible for their appearance or content is analogous to the excessively laudatory reaction of the crowd to his performance, which is caused by the Story Teller’s fictitious reputation rather than the tale he tells. The evangelist’s handwritten notices, meanwhile, also convey the public’s reaction along with the “tremulous character(s)” of his religious discourse. It would appear that God had not granted Eliakim his “Divine permission.”

The best recent scholarship on *The Story Teller* has argued that the tale Oberon performs that night, “Mr. Higginbotham’s Catastrophe,” is an allegorical commentary on issues of itinerancy, audience, communication, the marketplace, and the ever-present Christian interpretive framework through which all narrative is filtered during creation, dissemination, and

reception.⁷⁰ Scholars have as yet avoided connecting “Higginbotham” and the other tales involving the beginning of the Story Teller’s career with its end and his demise as described in “Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man.” Based on it we can surmise that, despite his initial difficulties, Eliakim somehow manages to convince both the Story Teller and New England of the validity of his vocation, for as we saw in the epigraph to this section, it is his perspective that comes to dominate the Story Teller’s native village. It is tempting to imagine how Hawthorne might have depicted this change of fortune in the pair, but certainly we are not led to believe that the Story Teller’s career is at all successful at transforming his audiences into the kind of emblem-reading, allegorical-interpreting readers required to unpack the theological and literary meaning behind tales like “Mr. Higginbotham’s Catastrophe.” After his performance, during which his auditors laugh and applaud for all the wrong reasons, the Story Teller starts to see that he has little more to expect from spectators as yet unconverted to the evangelical worldview. But the conclusion to “The Story Teller No. 2” certainly suggests that his career is itself doomed to end in catastrophe. After Oberon relates having received a letter from old Parson Thumpcushion and burning it unopened, he ominously explains that, “The thought still haunts me, that then I made my irrevocable choice between good and evil fate” (187). Perhaps this is owing to Eliakim’s influence, for the last time we ever hear of the unlucky evangelical is in the Story Teller’s concluding statement: “As we walked onward, following the same road, on two such different errands, Eliakim groaned in spirit, and labored, with tears, to convince me of the guilt and madness of my life” (187).

Written between 1832 and 1834 when the region was still being rocked by waves of evangelical revivalism of a distinctly Methodist character, Hawthorne evidently intended his Story Teller’s “Home Return” to offer the reader some sense of what it was like to be a fiction writer in a world which was increasingly disposed to judge his art as irrelevant, irreverent, and downright dangerous, especially to the young. In a response directed at such critics, the Story

⁷⁰ Peter West focuses on newspaper culture in in *The Story Teller* and the way that “manufactured narrative becomes journalistic fact” (282). West demonstrates how Hawthorne critiques the increasing demand for stories of all kinds as a “dangerous social force,” and that stories such as “Higginbotham” “emerge out of the audience’s appetite for certain narrative conventions, and for a narrative style that subtly weaves these features together without revealing any sort of machinery” (282). More recently Michael Cohen has shown “Higginbotham” to be “a master text” on “antebellum anxieties about communication, circulation, anonymity, and authority” (370). In “Peddling Authorship in the Age of Jackson” he reads itinerancy as a figure for “the multiple forms of circulation and exchange – the movement of people products, and information – that organized cultural life in antebellum New England” (369) and masterfully unpacks the statement on authorship and celebrity made in this “richly reflexive” moment in which “the Story Teller confronts himself as an author in public” (382).

Teller plans to turn his exploits into a cautionary tale and his life into an emblem of the mortal danger of making the same choice between “good and evil fate.” Upon returning to his native village it occurs to him “that some youth..., now at the crisis of his fate, might have felt his bosom thrill at my example, and be emulous of my wild life and worthless fame. But I would save him” (499). Balancing a tacit acknowledgement of his enjoyable yet sinful itinerant lifestyle with his hard-won realizations about the true value of the fame associated with telling stories, the Story Teller will “save” such youths from making a similar mistake. The story of the Story Teller’s life and death will teach any such admirers “that the world is a sad one for him who shrinks from its sober duties” and “warn him to adopt some great and serious aim, such as manhood will cling to, that he may not feel himself, too late, a cumberer of this overladen earth, but a man among men” (499). Reminding us of the gendered contrast he drew between the helpless, effeminate Eliakim and his own masculine and capable self, the Story Teller’s professional self-perception at the end of his career no longer registers the industry and practice it takes as redemptive because his profession has removed him from the day-to-day cares with which the rest of humanity wrestles. For those youths interested in following the example of the solitary man, he will implore them to learn from his example and not “follow an eccentric path, nor, by stepping aside from the highway of human affairs, to relinquish his claim upon human sympathy” (499). But, I would argue that it is precisely this, the sympathy of the world as represented by the reader, that Hawthorne is attempting to elicit in the final chapter of the Story Teller’s life.

Hawthorne is able to achieve the double perspective mixing condemnation and compassion by introducing a narrator, a friend of the Story Teller, who is responsible for publishing the fragments from his solitary friend’s disconnected journal after his death. Like the narrator of “The Canterbury Pilgrims,” the narrator of “Fragments” criticizes the artist for his temperament while acknowledging his talent and defending his bitterness as self-directed. In language intended to mock the sentimentality of a culture which had no space for the Story Teller’s artistry, the narrator explains that Oberon’s “disease was pulmonary” and that “the tide of [his] being ebbed away, and the moon of his existence waned till, in the simple phraseology of Scripture, ‘he was not’” (487). The narrator then proceeds to provide us with a seemingly factual, un-romanticized biography of the Story Teller and his career based upon what he can “gather from” the “scarcely legible papers before” him. In his telling Oberon’s career as an itinerant

storyteller was little more than the petulant act of an ungrateful orphan who, “on a slight provocation” and the unjustified claim of “oppression,” “ran away from the home that sheltered him, expressing openly his determination to die sooner than return to the detested spot” (493). After four months he had made it to Niagara Falls but fell ill and realized his mistake, “determined upon a speedy self-atonement by returning to his native town. There he lived, solitary and sad, but forgiven and cherished by his friends till the day he died” (493). This “historical” and factual account that the Story Teller’s friend (and publisher) makes of his career as an itinerant novelist is more faithful to Hawthorne’s own life and the “northern tour” he took in September of 1832 upon which he based the Story Teller’s travels to the White Mountains, Fort Ticonderoga, the Erie Canal, and Niagara Falls. Once again Hawthorne wants us to observe the imaginative process whereby the romancer makes a moral tale out of the raw materials of everyday life. The narrator is the voice of objectivity, reason, and the sympathetic critic who recognizes the Story Teller’s talent while acknowledging that it flowed from the mind of a tortured artist. He calls Oberon “unequivocally the most original [person] I ever knew. His style of composition was very charming. No tales that have ever appeared in our popular journals have been so generally admired as his” (488). But such admiration is unable to provide him with a livelihood, and the Story Teller succumbs to a disease that is a punishment for his “selfish purpose to keep aloof from mortal disquietudes, and be a pleasant idler among care-stricken and laborious men” (489). “Though his disease was pulmonary” (487), it is strongly suggested that the real cause of death was a descent into madness brought on by his morbidity of mind.

The excerpts from the journal published by Oberon’s friend make him out to be a penitent prodigal who pays for his sinful career through mental anguish occasioned by his cultivation of the imaginative faculty. One excerpt from the journal that demonstrates “the morbid fancies to which Oberon frequently yielded himself” in the months leading up to his death describes a dream in which he was walking down Broadway in his shroud. Such deranged thoughts signal a mind wracked by guilt and lead the narrator, in conjunction with his friend’s many statements regarding how he will turn his life into a lesson that other youths may profit by, to conclude his narration with a simple yet highly significant question: “Has not so chastened a spirit found true communion with the pure in Heaven?” (499). Such a conclusion provides the last and most convincing clue that Hawthorne envisioned *The Story Teller* as a fictionalized rendering of his society’s views of authorship and the incompatibility between imagination and

salvation. The question demands the New England reader question whether he or she can sympathize and show mercy to someone who has rebelled against society's emerging evangelical consensus, symbolized by the Temperance House, Methodist chapel, and the book publisher.

That consensus and its implications for so-called idlers like the Story Teller is dramatized in a scene soaked with symbolism:

Moving slowly forward, I heard shouts and laughter, and perceived a considerable throng of people, who came from behind the meeting-house and made a stand in front of it. Thither all the idlers of the village were congregated to witness the exercises of the engine company, this being the afternoon of their monthly practice. They deluged the roof of the meeting-house, till the water fell from the eaves in a broad cascade; then the stream beat against the dusty windows like a thunder storm; and sometimes they flung it up beside the steeple, sparkling in an ascending shower about the weathercock. For variety's sake, the engineer made it undulate horizontally, like a great serpent flying over the earth. As his last effort, being roguishly inclined, he seemed to take aim at the sky, falling rather short of which, down came the fluid, transformed to drops of silver, on the thickest crowd of the spectators. (497)

Like the fog-filled scene that marked his departure from the same town, he returns to one that elicits an allegorical reading. Here the water is manmade, an intentional spectacle, and yet it is still focused around the meetinghouse. Perhaps the most obvious reading is as a forced communal baptism in which the town looks on with a mixture of enjoyment and surprise. The water successively imitates a waterfall, a thunderstorm, an upside down shower, a giant snake, and finally is turned into "drops of silver" by the light passing through it. Is it meant to suggest the manmade spectacles of conversion that were becoming increasingly common as New Measures revivalism and Methodist evangelicals came to dominate New England's religious landscape? Does the water's transformation into a giant serpent imply that the new evangelicalism can easily become an evil influence on the town? Or is this a narrative emblem of the town's embrace of temperance, a communal celebration of the union of religion and abstinence from alcohol? Or, perhaps, it is an imaginative depiction of the community's insistence that all the idlers join the church and the evangelical movement apparently afoot. The biggest clue comes when the Story Teller describes what happens when those drops of silver land on the idlers of the village: "Then ensued a prodigious rout and mirthful uproar, with no little wrath of the surly ones, whom this is an infallible method of distinguishing" (497). When interpreted as a means of identifying and separating the community, the spectacle comes to register as yet another means by which religious sympathies are the indicator of societal

inclusion. But there is also certainly something to a reading that finds in this spectacle a wry commentary on just how destitute of entertainment and amusement is the New England of the 1830s.

I would like to conclude by suggesting that the Story Teller is actually a fictional antecedent to Hester Prynne. Both characters are solitary, living secluded lives separated from their societies by sin and use their transgressions as the source of their art. Hester's "imagination was somewhat affected...by the strange and solitary anguish of her life. Walking to and fro, with those lonely footsteps, in the little world with which she was outwardly connected..." (60), Hester reminds us of the solitary Story Teller's artistic isolation. She had "felt or fancied, then, that the scarlet letter had endowed her with a new sense" (60) allowing her to peer into the souls of those around her. Hester's public sin and solitude "gave her a sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in other hearts" (60). In his final days and closing thoughts, the Story Teller writes of a similar sense granted him by his parallel position: "Soon to be all spirit, I have already a spiritual sense of human nature, and see deeply into the hearts of mankind, discovering what is hidden from the wisest. The loves of young men and virgins are known to me, before the first kiss, before the whispered word, with the birth of the first sigh. My glance comprehends the crowd, and penetrates the breast of the solitary man" (500).

The ultimate irony is that the literary establishment *did* kill the Story Teller, both the book and the character, even though Goodrich and Benjamin sold his stories in their edited journals and gift-books. Goodrich failed to get a publisher for *The Story Teller* as a book but was eager to include a bunch of its tales in *The Token* over the next few years. While he did manage to get the *New-England Magazine* to agree to publish the stories serially, that only lasted for a few months. When Park Benjamin assumed the editorship in the spring of 1835 he decided to remove the stories from their frame and publish them out of order. After that, Hawthorne understandably lost interest in his character. He had told Franklin Pierce that publishing *The Story Teller* would garner him "an (undoubtedly) immense literary reputation" (28 June 1832), which he hoped would put him in the position to earn a living from his writing. He could not live independently on what he earned for his individual stories, at least not at the rate Goodrich and his colleagues were paying. To become a successful editor he needed that "literary reputation," and for a good reputation he needed good reviews, and the only way to get reviews of any kind was to have your own book published. But, by the end of 1834, he now had no fewer than three

failed book projects to his credit, four if one includes *Fanshawe* among them. Yes, people loved his stories. But he published them anonymously, perhaps because, as he has his Story Teller self explain just before performing for the first time, “a slight tremor seized me, whenever I thought of relinquishing the immunities of a private character, and giving every man, and for money, too, the right, which no man yet possessed, of treating me with open scorn” (182).

It would be twenty years before he republished parts one and two of “The Story Teller” as “Passages from a Relinquished Work,” appearing in the second edition of *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1854). By then he had achieved the immense literary reputation he joked about acquiring via *The Story Teller*, having published several short story collections and all of his novels save for *The Marble Faun* (1860). The year before, Pierce, now President, had appointed him American Consul at Liverpool and Hawthorne was the family man that Oberon had lamented not becoming. But he was also a well respected literary artist whose work came to be known for its romantic interrogation of the relationship between public piety, personal morality, and the claims of history – all of which he had explored in the most elaborate and autobiographical of his early works.

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Chapter Four

Those Shouting, Singing, Moaning Methodists: Romantic Racialism and Religious Characterization in Stowe's Antislavery Novels

Among the many scenes involving race, religion, and societal mores to be found in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, none so succinctly illustrates the significance of the three themes' convergence as that in which the St. Clare family discusses Augustine's most unorthodox and unseemly religious proclivities. When Augustine informs his puritanical cousin Ophelia, freshly arrived from New England, that he never joins his wife and daughter at church on Sundays, Marie bemoans the image cast by her husband's scandalous refusal to enact the spectacle of public piety, a performance she herself has mastered:

“I do wish St. Clare ever would go to church,” said Marie; “but he hasn't a particle of religion about him. It really isn't respectable.”

“I know it,” said St. Clare. “You ladies go to church to learn how to get along in the world, I suppose, and your piety sheds respectability on us. If I did go at all, I would go where Mammy goes; there's something to keep a fellow awake there, at least.”

“What! those shouting Methodists? Horrible!” said Marie.

“Anything but the dead sea of your respectable churches, Marie.” (157)

In declaring his preference for Mammy's Methodist Church, St. Clare violates the denominational order of things and thereby makes it visible. He also undermines the very point of religion, as far as Marie is concerned. Methodism is for her slaves. To her the performance of Christian worship is meant to distinguish the rich from the poor not bring them together. Like the pro-slavery sermon to which she soon eagerly listens while decked out in lavish jewelry, the spectacle itself is intended to convey a visual justification of the relationship of master and slave. The irony, hypocrisy, and inauthenticity of such Christian displays, whether they be oratorical or ceremonial, is underscored by Marie's mockery of the affective and informal nature of African-American Methodism, both of which are captured in the shout, a spontaneous irruption of feeling

expressed through sound rather than tears which was interpreted as a sign of the presence of God. “Those shouting Methodists” are the authentic Christians even though they are loud, disorderly, and melodramatic, indeed because they are so.

But Marie’s words do not merely convey an upper-class reproach grounded in a warped sense of respectability. They also signify Stowe’s familiarity with Wesleyan Methodism and her plan to use it to construct a believable yet allegorically suitable form of evangelical Christianity for her black characters. Shouting was actually a common component of Methodist worship in the antebellum era and the “shout tradition” extended back to the late-eighteenth-century revivals in the upper South in which European and African styles of religious performance intermingled and a new, distinctly American form of Methodism emerged as a result. In “Shouting Methodists,” the third chapter of *Fits Trances and Visions*, her superb study of early U.S. religious culture, Ann Taves writes “that a new style of public worship had already emerged among Methodists by the first decades of the nineteenth century” (77) which was the result of an interracial and “multicultural context” (80) in which the “two very different performance styles” of Europe and Africa coalesced to form “the interracial shout tradition” (110). For Taves, the most important element of this tradition is its interactive and embodied nature, a characteristic traceable to traditional African religion’s emphasis upon music, dance, and “a dynamic interaction between leader and people” (80). Recovering the resonances that Mammy’s shouting Methodism would have had for Stowe’s antebellum audience, its associations with an interracial and interactive evangelicalism, allows us to discern how her abolitionist fiction relies upon its reader’s denominational literacy to reinforce and extend the story’s rebuttal of religious arguments supporting slavery. St. Clare also couches the difference between Marie’s formalistic, establishment Christianity and Mammy’s enthusiastic, emotional Methodism in terms suggesting that salvation can only be hoped for by those imbibing the latter mode of Protestantism. In comparison to the “dead sea” of his wife’s “respectable churches,” the Methodist services will “keep a fellow awake,” a turn of phrase that in this context invites a theological reading in which wakefulness signifies the possibility of religious awakening.

Black Methodism eventually does prove to be the means of St. Clare’s salvation, and his provocative statement of preference foreshadows the solace and guidance he will receive from Uncle Tom’s Methodist ministry after the death of his daughter Eva (Ch. 27 & 28). In his own deathbed scene, St. Clare once again chooses Methodism over respectable Christianity when he

refuses calling a clergyman but pleads with Tom to pray for his soul and perform the role of minister (275). It is Uncle Tom's fervent and pronounced Methodism – its hymns and exhortations, its illiteracy and enthusiasm, its faith in the face of learned criticism – that is responsible for St. Clare's salvation. And in *Dred; or, A Tale of the Dismal Swamp* (1854), Stowe's second abolitionist novel, it is Aunt Milly's Methodism that saves the white characters from a bloody death at the hands of Dred. Her ability to out exhort Dred, with the help of several hymns and the rhetoric of the New Testament, is the reason there is no rebellion. There are a great many more similarities between the Methodism of Uncle Tom and Aunt Milly. Both “got” religion at camp meetings and undergo conversion experiences in which they have a vision of the Lord bleeding on the cross that soothes their suffering and enables them to cope with the physical, psychological, and spiritual cross of slavery. Both are suffering servant figures who seem to care more for securing the salvation of their white owners than their own freedom. And both Tom and Milly embody a brand of loving and illiterate evangelicalism, enthusiastic but nonviolent, that would be seen sympathetically by a white readership well aware that Christianity had been a key ingredient in all of the slave insurrections the United States had seen by the beginning of the 1850s.⁷¹ Indeed, Stowe uses that historical connection and the natural alliance between the republican rhetoric of revolution, which had come to be enshrined in the national consciousness in the decades after independence, and the biblical rhetoric of salvation in the formation of the character of Dred. Personifying that alliance in his speech and his plans for a righteous insurrection, Dred is the embodiment of the black revolutionary tradition, son of Denmark Vesey and heir to Nat Turner.

The scene in the St. Clare household quoted above is just one of the many in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* in which Stowe relies upon the controversial and distinctive character of Methodism to imagine a black religiosity at once realistic and idealized, one which reflected well-known religious realities but was also underwritten by Romantic Racialism⁷² and Stowe's desire to differentiate the religious temperaments of the Anglo-Saxon and the African. In *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853) she writes that “The negro race is confessedly more simple, docile,

⁷¹ While the role of religion in Gabriel Prosser's 1800 Richmond rebellion has been reassessed as very minor (Egerton 179-81), evangelicalism in general and Methodism in particular played a major part in the two insurrections that Stowe explicitly references, the first led by Denmark Vesey (1822) and the other by Nat Turner (1831).

⁷² In his introduction to *Dred* Robert Levine explains that “the historian George M. Frederickson has coined the term “Romantic Racialism” to describe Harriet Beecher Stowe's and other liberal whites' paternalistic views of blacks' supposed racial differences from whites” (xviii).

childlike, and affectionate, than other races; and hence the divine graces of love and faith, when in-breathed by the Holy Spirit, find in their natural temperament a more congenial atmosphere” (41). To Stowe their religious temperament “indicates a peculiarity which goes far to show how very different they are from the white race. They are possessed of a nervous organization peculiarly susceptible and impressible. Their sensations and impressions are very vivid, and their fancy and imagination lively” (45). Blacks are thus naturally suited and attracted to Methodism. Denominating black characters like Uncle Tom and Aunt Milly Methodists allows Stowe to fabricate for them a form of evangelical religiosity corresponding to the racial and religious logic of her fiction, as well as contrasting with the cold and literary Calvinism supposedly suited to her own Anglo-Saxon temperament. Stowe saw much she could admire in Methodism but it was always a foreign faith to her and she wrote about Methodists from the perspective of a disgruntled Presbyterian intimately familiar with the differences that often involved the two evangelical denominations in controversy.⁷³ What Stowe likes about the Methodists is their willingness to take emotion seriously and value the genuine and extemporaneous. This is the key connection between the mind of Methodism and that of sentimentalism. Methodism offers to respect feelings and not sneer at them in the way that many did, especially within the Calvinist establishment. Methodists were therefore natural allies of sentimentalism even though they severely and consistently condemned fiction as sinful and were hostile to “literature” as defined

⁷³ In 1801 Presbyterians and Congregationalists, the two largest and most influential denominations of American Calvinists, officially joined forces in order to combat the threat to their influence and religious leadership being posed by the “upstart,” popular evangelicals primarily comprised of Methodists and Baptists. Stowe was a member of first family of Congregationalism, the direct descendent of colonial-era Puritanism. Her father, Lyman Beecher, was the principal defender of the New England state-church establishment and Calvinist orthodoxy in its liberalized, “New Divinity” form. Within the Reformed (i.e. Calvinist) Churches he battled liberal Unitarians and more enthusiastic Presbyterians like Charles Finney. Beecher’s brand of orthodoxy, however, was not the most conservative form of Calvinism, and he was brought up on heresy charges by Princeton-based, “Old School” Presbyterians who were firmly committed to retaining strict adherence to Calvin’s Five Points. To them, the differences between Beecher and Finney seemed indistinguishable, both men representing a more enthusiastic and less doctrinally conservative form of Calvinist evangelicalism. In 1837 these tensions resulted in the division of the Presbyterian Church into more orthodox and conservative “Old Lights” and more liberal and revivalistic “New Lights.” Though they still disagreed and debated the relative merits of Calvinism and Arminianism, their mutual commitment to evangelical revivalism meant that New Light Presbyterians and Methodists sometimes found themselves on the same side of the Protestant debates and disagreements over the direction American Christianity should take. Lyman Beecher’s children were largely more liberal and less orthodox than their father. In the 1860s, and just before her father’s death, Stowe converted to Anglicanism, a very controversial move but one in keeping with the independence of religious thinking she had displayed since adulthood.

at the time by an association with formal education.⁷⁴ Like the sentimental novel, the Methodist mode of worship attempts to connect the material and religious worlds via the emotion-filled and image-laden language of the Bible paired with persuasive rhetoric taken, unlike the jeremiad, from quotidian experience and colloquial speech. In this chapter I discuss the Methodism of Uncle Tom and Aunt Milly, demonstrating the many ways that Stowe used the unique and controversial character of antebellum Methodism to imagine a version of Black evangelicalism which fit the political agenda and performed the requisite cultural work, namely a form of Methodism that would elicit sympathy and fellow-feeling from white readers. Methodism gave voice to a great many African Americans in the early and antebellum U.S. But in the voices it gives to Tom and Milly, in the many hymns they sing, exhortations they deliver, and prayers they earnestly utter, we find Stowe striving to imagine a black Christianity that makes the white reader feel a sense of Christian kinship similar to that so frequently expressed by her narrators.

In our discussion of the evangelicalism that undergirds Stowe's sentimental fiction and motivates her characters, somehow we have missed the fact that all of Stowe's white characters are Presbyterians and all her black characters Methodists.⁷⁵ Perhaps we have taken the religion of Stowe's black characters for granted because, in a way, she does so herself. It seems as if black Christianity and Wesleyan Methodism are one and the same. But that is the first clue in decoding Stowe's deployment of Methodist character, and to realizing why we must not take it for granted, for in the natural fit between the race and the religion we can discern the underlying logic. Stowe, steeped in the discourses of anti-Methodism and romantic racialism, brought the two together in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*. For Stowe, blacks were racially predisposed to Methodism, psychologically and physiologically inclined to its enthusiastic, imagistic, and emotional style of worship. Their exclusion from formal education also meant that the

⁷⁴ In *The Life of the Mind in America* Perry Miller notes this paradoxical relationship, the way that Methodists employed many of the same tactics as the artists who they then routinely condemned, and suggests that it demonstrates how both Methodists and Romantics were both children of the zeitgeist (60-1).

⁷⁵ Thomas Gossett notes a couple clues that Tom may be a Methodist. "Since the religion of Uncle Tom has caused such widespread skepticism and rejection in modern times, it is instructive to compare him with a character" from an earlier antislavery novel who is named Tom and "so similar" to Uncle Tom "that there has been a good deal of conjecture" that Stowe based her character on this earlier fictional Thomas. "Both Thomas and Uncle Tom are devout Christians. Thomas was converted by 'certain Methodists' and Uncle Tom, though his denomination is not specified" (154), is strongly suggested to be of the same church. Gossett does not mention Tom's Methodist hymnbook or his singing of hymns. There are exceptions to Stowe's correlation of Calvinism/Methodism to her white/black characters, *Dred* being the most significant.

nonliterary and anti-intellectual character of Methodism was a more suitable means of religious expression.

In the Reverend Richard Allen's autobiography Stowe would have found her theories regarding the natural suitability of Methodism to African Americans partially verified by Allen's statement that he "was confident that there was no religious sect or denomination [that] would suit the capacity of the colored people as well as the Methodist" (16). Unlike Stowe, however, Allen did not feel this way because he thought the African race biologically predisposed to enthusiastic, emotional, and imaginative religion. In *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen* (1833), he argues "the reason that the Methodist is so successful in the awakening and conversion of the colored people" (16) has most to do with their "plain doctrine" (16) and distinctive style of preaching, "for the plain and simple gospel suits best for any people, for the unlearned can understand, and the learned are sure to understand" (16). He goes on to offer a more detailed rationale for choosing to stay within the Methodist fold despite being "so violently persecuted" (16) by some of the white church leaders:

The Methodists were the first people that brought glad tidings to the colored people. I feel thankful that ever I heard a Methodist preach. We are beholden to the Methodists, under God, for the light of the Gospel we enjoy; for all other denominations preached so high-flown that we were not able to comprehend their doctrine. Sure am I that reading sermons will never prove so beneficial to the colored people as spiritual or extempore preaching. I am well convinced that the Methodist has proved beneficial to thousands and ten times thousands. (17)

His concluding sentence applies equally well to the Church he started, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). But his statements about why Methodist preaching was in fact "so successful" among the black population of the early republic are what concern us here. In Allen's appraisal of the black audience and the reasons behind its enthusiastic response to Methodist oratory, we have an unromanticized and nonracialized (yet literary) explanation for the popularity of Methodism among a group of Americans systematically denied education yet surrounded by Christian rhetoric promising salvation (not to mention political rhetoric promising freedom and equality). The fact that Methodism historically saw its mission as among the masses shaped its rhetoric and character such that the lack of formal education among the African American population was not the barrier it proved to those few Anglicans and Presbyterians who tried to evangelize African Americans. By the middle of the nineteenth century there were more African Americans in Methodist Churches than any other denomination (Finke and Stark 100-

101). In Allen's *Life* and the church he founded Stowe would have seen Methodism as the means of black advancement and empowerment but also would have been reminded of how the denomination's early and adamant anti-slavery stance had begun to weaken at the start of the nineteenth century. By the time of Allen's death in 1831 and the posthumous publication of his autobiography two years later, the major Methodist bodies had become almost indistinguishable from their Protestant peers when it came to the issue of slavery, especially in the South. While there were efforts to restore American Methodism to its Wesleyan antislavery roots, these were unsuccessful and in 1844 the Methodist Episcopal Church, South seceded from the main MEC body over the issue.

Prior to 1851 and the serialization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the *National Era*, Harriet Beecher Stowe had published the bulk of her fiction in the *New-York Evangelist*, a pro-revival, anti-slavery, Presbyterian weekly founded in 1830. Her first short stories ran alongside partisan accounts of the latest developments in the Calvinist-Methodist controversy, critiques of Arminian theology, arguments about the "aristocratic character" of Wesleyan Methodism,⁷⁶ as well as the occasional piece largely devoted to delineating just how much "the two great divisions of evangelical people, Methodists and Calvinists," actually agreed ("Substantial Agreement of Evangelical Men").⁷⁷ Stowe's early fiction was well suited to this literary context, with its blend of Presbyterian partisanship and cautious evangelical ecumenicalism, and found a ready audience in the "orthodox religious folk" (Hedrick 334) who subscribed to the *Evangelist*. From the start of her authorial career in the 1830s, Stowe's work was read within the context of evangelical controversy, and, by the time she began writing novels in the 1850s, she had become adept at using religious differences in the service of her artistic and political goals, coming to count on a readership with a denominational literacy comparable with her own.

Stowe knew that she could also count on some religious readers to firmly reject her fictions out of hand because they were still seen as posing the same kind of moral threat "as dancing and card-playing" (vi). Stowe's older sister Catharine preemptively raises this argument in her preface to Harriet's collection of previously published stories, *The Mayflower* (1843),

⁷⁶ See, for example, "Conference Between a Calvinist and a Methodist on the Possibility of Falling from Grace" (1830), "A Methodist Afflicted with the Doctrines of Election and Reprobation" (1830), "Wesleyan Methodism" (1830), "Praying Calvinistically" (1830), "Embarrassments of Arminian Theology" (1837), "Methodist Conference System" (1838), "And They Marveled at His Doctrine" (1839), and "The Doctrine of Election" (1845).

⁷⁷ This is the first of installment of a two-part article. For further examples see the two articles entitled, "How We Agree," published on 10 July and 31 July, 1830. Even these pieces, however, could be said to be rather partisan in their depictions of Methodism and antagonistic engagement with the Methodist press.

maintaining that “works of imagination *might be* made the most powerful of all human agencies in promoting virtue” even while fully acknowledging that “they are often the channel for conveying the most widespread and pernicious poisons” (xii). Catharine assured wary readers that they had nothing to fear from the pen of her talented and pious younger sister. She concludes her preface by affirming that one day evangelical authors such as Harriet could rank among “the greatest of public benefactors” (xvi). In so doing she presciently forecasts the enormous moral and political impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, a work that grew out of these earlier tales and sketches as well as the literary environment within which they appeared.

It is not as if Stowe’s methods of characterization have been ignored or the question of how she tapped her deep familiarity with sectarian contests and theological debates to create fictional men and women gone unmasked. But the Calvinist ‘influence argument’ has certainly obscured Stowe’s sophisticated appropriation and adaptation of Methodism. Mason Lowance, for example, has written about how the debate over the accuracy of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* revolved around the issue of character: “the *veracity* of the book was regularly questioned and defended, and both sides used *character formation* and *character representation* to support their views. Particular and specific understanding of Stowe’s method of writing character is therefore essential to an appropriate interpretation of the text. And her method was essentially biblical, an appropriation of style from the Mathers and from Jonathan Edwards” (160). In this chapter I demonstrate that Stowe appropriated the style and substance of Methodist evangelicalism in her creation of black characters. I do not hope to disprove Lowance, Farrell and the many other critics since Parrington who have demonstrated the extent to which Stowe’s abolitionist fiction was shaped by her Calvinist heritage, but rather to prove that part of that inheritance consisted of an image and understanding of Methodism that made it the ideal type of evangelicalism for her black characters.

In his essay on *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the American Renaissance Michael T. Gilmore identifies Harriet Beecher Stowe’s “sacramental aesthetic,” arguing that Stowe used the logic of the Protestant rite of the Lord’s Supper, in which Jesus is present in spirit, “as the model for the abolitionist narrative she went on to write” (63) in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. While at a celebration of the Eucharist, Gilmore explains, “the ‘real but spiritual presence’ (the formula that descends from Calvin) of the suffering Christ in the bread and wine kindled in her mind the image of a bleeding slave, and when she reached home after services, she jotted down her vision” (63). The

symbolism of the ceremony showed her “she could simulate – no, she could tap into and capture – the spiritual reality that infused the ordinance” and write “a text of ‘real presence’ that would, as an *imitatio Dei*, bring to life the letters on the page” (64) and the characters in the hearts and minds of the reader.⁷⁸ Among the best pieces of *Cabin* criticism to deal with the relationship between its form and the religious ideology infusing it, Gilmore’s argument is also yet another which, we might say, “descends from Calvin” in that it writes about the novel from a Puritan or Calvinist perspective.⁷⁹ Gilmore deserves extra credit for not arguing that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is a Protestant sermon, a move that Dawn Coleman has recently shown to have a long history in twentieth-century criticism from pre-war critics like Parrington to both Ann Douglas and Jane Tompkins at the end of the century (265-66). Still, it is a move Coleman nonetheless makes herself, arguing that the novel is narrated by a sermonic voice which challenges and interrogates the genre of the sermon and the practice of preaching as much as it strives to uncritically be an abolitionist sermon. But in the work of all the critics so far named, as well as quite a few more,⁸⁰ Stowe’s fiction is read through a decidedly Calvinist lens. In this chapter, however, I will be writing about the Methodist aesthetic of Stowe’s abolitionist fiction, about how the daughter, sister, and wife of famous Calvinist divines used her knowledge of Methodism and its popular associations to fashion an African-American religiosity attractive to middle-class Christians like herself for its blending of emotional, imaginative evangelicalism with child-like and Christ-like qualities.

⁷⁸ Gilmore’s larger point is that the sentimental Stowe shares with the male writers of the romantic Renaissance an interest in writerly authority, and the ability of fiction to make the kind of difference oratory could and had, most importantly in the founding of the republic.

⁷⁹ By “Puritan” I mean the seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century British Congregationalists who colonized New England and the religio-literary tradition they established. They were, of course, “Calvinist,” but I reserve this term to refer to nineteenth-century Presbyterians and Congregationalists, especially in the context of the Methodist-Calvinist divide that, I argue, was as much a defining feature of early national and antebellum literature as it was nineteenth-century Protestantism.

⁸⁰ See Farrell, Foster, Lewis, Lowance, and Westry in Works Cited.

Various exhortations, or relations of experience, followed, and intermingled with the singing. (25)

“Yes,” said the old woman, who had been groaning and praying, in her Methodist fashion, during all the encounter, “it's an awful case for the poor crittur's soul.” (174)

Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852)

Given the amount of critical attention paid to the subject of Uncle Tom's character, his religion, and the novel in which he appears, it seems appropriate to begin by firmly establishing the need and benefit of reexamining the issue with an eye towards delineating the debt of all three to Stowe's opinion and understanding of Methodism as a Calvinist New Englander who harbored major reservations regarding orthodoxy's central tenants and their psychological effects. These would lead her to convert to Episcopalianism in the 1860s and, as Ann Douglas has noted, in her postbellum fiction “Stowe conducted the most brilliant exploration of New England Calvinism as a theology and a lifestyle ever conceived by an American. No one understood better Calvinism's repressive aspects,” writes Douglas, “especially in relation to women...” (245). But Stowe had already begun that critical exploration in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and she deployed Methodism's antagonist relationship with Calvinism to critique those repressive aspects. In this section I want to recover Uncle Tom's Methodist identity in order to illustrate the extent to which Stowe relied on Methodist forms and beliefs to fashion her most famous character and, in doing so, demonstrate how Tom embodies a sentimental rebuttal of the Calvinist arguments, made by men such as her father, attacking popular evangelicalism's illiterate, enthusiastic, and emotional character. In her novel, Tom is redeemed by Methodist Christianity, but his character could also be said to redeem Methodism in the eyes of white, middle-class members of the established and “respectable” churches, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Episcopalian. In Stowe's sentimental perspective, Methodism is quite attractive by virtue of its willingness to equate the untutored with the uncorrupted and feeling with authentic religious experience. This is a side of Tom's character that prior critics focusing on the subject, like Ammons, Yarborough, and Lowance, have ignored. In so doing they have missed the way Tom's character is an eloquent yet illiterate Methodist critique of erudite evangelicalism more interested in literary artistry and intellectual sophistication than affecting fundamental personal and societal change.

In arguably the most influential chapter of *Sensational Designs* (1985) Jane Tompkins offered a critical reappraisal of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that judged it on its own aesthetic and political terms and recovered the cultural work it performed via its "sentimental power" and popular appeal. I would suggest that the reasons for prior critics condemning or ignoring the novel are analogous to those relegating Methodism to obscurity within American literary history: its popularity and sentimentality. Intent on demonstrating just how badly her critical predecessors had slighted the sentimental novel and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in particular, Tompkins argues that despite being "the most obvious and compelling instance of the jeremiad since the Great Awakening," Sacvan Bercovitch "completely ignores Stowe's novel" in his "influential work of modern scholarship" (140), *The American Jeremiad* (1978). Thanks to Tompkins' work many of us have set aside our "modernist prejudices" (127) and come to see the sentimental novel "as a political enterprise, halfway between sermon and social theory" (126), and less closely linked with "the realistic novel" than the "typological narrative" (135). But in that chapter Tompkins herself makes a number of critical moves that have underwritten the continued critical avoidance of Methodism's role in the construction of black character, religiosity, and evangelical arguments for abolition.

One of the pillars of Tompkins' revisionary approach involves considering how Stowe's original readers would have interpreted her work with a very different set of expectations and knowledge. "The power of the sentimental novel to move its audience," she writes, "depends upon the audience's being in possession of the conceptual categories that constitute character and event. That storehouse of assumptions includes," according to Tompkins, "attitudes toward the family and toward social institutions; a definition of power and its relation to individual human feeling; notions of political and social equality; and above all, a set of religious beliefs that organizes and sustains the rest" (126-7). I agree, but would say that Tompkins leaves denominational literacy off this list of attitudes, notions, and definitions even though, as I demonstrate here, Stowe relies upon it heavily in both of her antislavery novels. Stowe's 1850s readers would have found their familiarity with the character of Methodism and the contours of the Methodist-Calvinist divide to be among the most important "conceptual categories that constitute character" in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, especially as regards the title character. Stowe's familiarity with Methodism was heavily and complexly mediated by the New England heritage of anti-methodism, embodied by her father, and by her own sentimental and anti-Calvinist

attitudes. In creating Uncle Tom she drew upon Methodism's unique character in the popular imagination. Her own prose relies upon some of Methodism's distinguishing genres such as the exhortation, the hymn, and, as we saw in the introduction to this chapter, the shout. We will also soon see how she followed Wesley's theory of Christian perfection in her depiction of Tom's moment of spiritual transcendence immediately preceding his death at the hands of Legree. But it is also a scene that Stowe modeled on a similar experience she herself had in 1843, at a time of great psychological and physical suffering.

In spite of all it has helped us to see about sentimental power and its appropriation of evangelicalism in the service of its own political ends, *Sensational Designs* discourages the recovery of these sorts of denominational details and the narrative elements to which they are attached. "Once in possession of the system of beliefs that undergirds the patterns of sentimental fiction, it is possible for modern readers to see how its tearful episodes and frequent violations of probability were invested with a structure of meanings that fixed these works, for nineteenth-century readers, not in the realm of fairy tale or escapist fantasy, but in the very bedrock of reality" (127). Whether described as a "set" or a "system" of beliefs, Tompkins implies that evangelicalism should be thought of as supradenominational master text, a "ruling paradigm" (136) that can be used to decode the "iterative nature" (137) of the novel's allegorical narrative linking the material and spiritual realms via a series of correspondences in which "every character in the novel, every scene, and every incident, comes to be apprehended in terms of every *other* character, scene, and incident" (136). Such an approach, however, actively obscures Stowe's use of denominational distinctions and the differences between black and white religiosity that she used to express them. This, in turn, elides the ways in which Tom's Methodist character embodies a sentimental critique of establishment Christianity and northern Calvinists more concerned with theological disputes than passionate, popular preaching capable of reaching the American masses.

The strengths and the weaknesses of this approach can be discerned in Tompkins' sample close reading of a scene from the twenty-second chapter of the novel, in which Eva and Uncle Tom sit by the shore of Lake Pontchartrain at sunset, on a Sunday, reading the Bible. While convincing, her argument relies upon eliding the denominational markers Stowe places in the scene, and thus does not account for the way the Methodist-Calvinist divide structures its religious and racial allegory. Noting them does not disprove Tompkins' argument so much as

complicate it in ways that lead to a greater appreciation of how Stowe used such sectarian details and distinctions to ground her “sermon,” to use Tompkins’ words, “in the very bedrock of reality.” It also demonstrates that, like Finney, she was freely willing to adopt both Methodist forms and ideas if it meant being able to convince larger numbers of people to, as she famously writes at the end of her most famous novel, “*feel right*” and, much less frequently mentioned, “*pray!*” (385). Prayer, it’s worth noting, is the genre of religious speech within which Uncle Tom “especially excelled” (26). Tompkins uses the scene to prove that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is a jeremiad but I say the scene demonstrates just how integral Methodist genres are to the work’s dramatization of how “plan and simple” evangelicalism can overcome interracial animus. If the book is a revivalist Calvinist sermon in novel form then certainly it is one that draws as heavily from Methodist sources, consciously and unconsciously, as the actual sermons preached by Calvinist ministers who were losing their parishioners and pay to preachers capable of moving their listeners, like the Methodists. “Look at the Methodists,” Finney urged his fellow Calvinists in the 1830s, and imitate them, or risk losing control of “the public mind.” Invoking the illiterate yet eloquent character of the American Methodist that I have been tracking in this dissertation, Finney pleads with his Presbyterians to follow the example of their less learned counterparts:

Many of their ministers are unlearned, in the common sense of the term, many of them taken right from the shop or the farm, and yet they have gathered congregations . . . and won souls everywhere. Wherever the Methodists have gone, their plain, pointed and simple, but warm and animated mode of preaching has always gathered congregations. Few Presbyterian ministers have gathered so large assemblies or won so many souls. Now are we to be told that we must pursue the same old, formal mode of doing things, amidst all these changes . . . ? It is impossible that the public mind should be held by such preaching. We must have exciting, powerful preaching, or the devil will have the people, except what the Methodists can save (252-53)

Whether or not the Presbyterian clergy could be said to have listened to Finney is less important than the fact that Harriet Beecher Stowe certainly did, and we see it quite clearly in her revival sermon turned abolitionist fiction, indeed in the very scene that Tompkins offers up as emblematic of the Puritan jeremiad genre.

In the excerpt of Chapter 22 quoted by Tompkins, Eva reads from Revelations – “And I saw a sea of glass, mingled with fire” – and Tom sings two stanzas from two different Methodist hymns, “The Wings of the Morning” and “A World of Spirits Bright” (226-27), the latter being based on Revelations 7:9 and evidently familiar to Eva. Tompkins says that “Eva asks Tom to

sing again” (137) but that is not quite accurate. She tells him, directs him to sing: “Tom, sing about ‘spirits bright.’” Eva is leading this little prayer meeting, and Tom is her audience. But as in the Methodist shout tradition, he does not stay silent but sings and interacts with Eva, crossing the racial and gender divide but most importantly the line separating authorized speaker from attentive audience, as Eva does herself as a woman teacher/preacher. The call-and-response dynamic we see between Tom and Eva is punctuated by the two hymns that Tom sings, the first sung on his own initiative, because he thought it a suitable response to Eva’s pointing out that the Bible’s words apply to the physical world around us and tell us of things to come. The second, “a well-known Methodist hymn,” Eva tells him to sing because she has been dreaming about the spirits: “I see a band of spirits bright, / That taste the glories there; / They all are robed in spotless white, / And conquering palms they bear” (227). When Tom sings the hymns, here and elsewhere in the novel, his voice changes from the ungrammatical and heavily accented one Stowe normally assigns him to one conveying perfectly pronounced stanzas of sacred music. Tom’s ministry is extempore while Eva’s accords with a preconceived plan. Eva, here the representative of the literate evangelicalism of the educated elites, plays the minister while Tom is the enthusiastic audience displaying his heartfelt faith with characteristically Methodist hymn singing and a willingness to interpret Eva’s words as having supernatural and literal truth. Eva tells Tom that she has seen the spirits but before she has a chance to explain that this occurred during a dream the narrator interjects to tell us that, “Tom had no doubt of it at all; it did not surprise him in the least. If Eva had told him she had been to heaven, he would have thought it entirely probable” (227). At first glance this would seem to be merely another example of Stowe’s use of the Methodist character in creating Tom’s Christianity. But the narrator’s description of Tom’s reaction is also a representation of the Methodist mentality as seen through the rationality of Calvinism, of the supernaturalism of African-American evangelicalism as seen from the perspective of white, educated, middle-class evangelicalism and its commitments to Common Sense Realism. We would expect Eva, being a child, to also believe in the possibility of such supernatural visions but she quickly tells Tom that she did not actually see the spirits bright but saw them in a dream. As the well-educated evangelical in miniature, Eva is able to employ the metaphor of sight while Tom, it is suggested, owing to the literalism and simplicity that mark him out as a Methodist, is unable to make such subtle literary distinctions. Tompkins’ schematization of the “iterative nature of this scene” establishes the way it is “a node within a

network of allusion” that corresponds with the logic of the jeremiad. But it does so only by ignoring the many Methodist features found throughout the network. While offering us an excellent bird’s-eye view of the whole it necessarily elides details in favor of structural parallels and larger generic correspondences. I would like to use this scene to initiate a new reading of Uncle Tom’s character that compliments Tompkins’ argument by uncovering the Methodist elements of Stowe’s abolitionist sermon, thereby recovering its artistic engagement in evangelical controversy for the purposes of antislavery.

One might begin by noting, in keeping with Tompkins’ methodology, that this scene beside Lake Pontchartrain is another iteration of a much earlier one. When we first meet Uncle Tom it is in his cabin on a Sunday evening. He is hosting a Methodist class meeting comprised of enslaved blacks as well as the thirteen-year-old Master George Shelby, who stays to read from the Bible and, “by request, read the last chapters of Revelations, often interrupted by such exclamations” (26) as are often heard in the interactive, call-and-response style of Methodist worship. The singing of Methodist hymns and spirituals surrounds Master George’s readings and the narrator explains that many were sung “which made incessant mention of ‘Jordan's banks,’ and ‘Canaan's fields,’ and the ‘New Jerusalem;’ for the negro mind, impassioned and imaginative, always attaches itself to hymns and expressions of a vivid and pictorial nature” (25). The Methodist hymns that fill Uncle Tom’s cabin that evening, like the ones Tom sings for Eva while they sit beside Lake Pontchartrain, are thus poetic windows into “the negro mind” and its predisposition for affective, imagistic, and popular forms of Christianity. In both scenes the white child of the slaveowner performs the formal reading of the Bible and thus embodies the role of the minister. Before he commences reading Master George is busy teaching Tom how to write and he is asked to act as lector by Aunt Chloe because he “is such a beautiful reader” (24) and “well trained in religious things by his mother” (26). Sensing his own skill and his audience’s admiration, George begins to add his own commentary, “with a commendable seriousness and gravity” (26) which leads his black listeners, young and old, to affirm that “a minister couldn’t lay it off better than” young Master George. With that the white child’s transformation into a religious leader of black adults is complete and, as happens later alongside Lake Pontchartrain, Uncle Tom is naturally able to take over because he too is a well-trained, childlike Christian who is also a kind of lay leader. The “touching simplicity, [and] the child-like earnestness” (26) of the prayers that Tom recites after George has finished reading indicate that

Tom's Christianity, though focused on freedom and judgment day, is as harmless to the country as that of a child. Even though he is himself viewed as "a sort of patriarch in religious matters" by his fellow slaves and "looked up to as a sort of minister among them" (26), Uncle Tom is never presented as a potential leader of his people or the means of their salvation from earthly bondage, except through the kind of righteous, selfless death he enacts at the end of the novel. Tom dies never having violated Shelby's opening description of him as a trustworthy, honest, and pious Christian who truly "got religion at a camp-meeting, four years" (2) prior to the start of the action of the novel.

Even though Tom is represented as a religious leader among his fellow slaves and manages to convert Sambo and Quimbo through his martyrdom, the primary target of his missionary work is the white population, both as characters and readers. Methodism is particularly apt as a form of sentimental religious discourse because it so clearly privileges feeling and in doing so recreates feeling as a kind of religious insight, providing him with the means of channeling his religious talents while it provides Stowe with the means of representing a fervent yet docile form of evangelical Christianity among African Americans.⁸⁴ We see the same association of Methodism with childlike simplicity in the scene between Eva and Tom that Tompkins reads as representative of the novel's iterative and allegorical structure, one in which, I argue, Methodism represents a kind of sympathetic and sentimental evangelicalism that is worthy of white sympathy and qualified admiration but not fear. Unlike the institution of slavery, white readers have nothing to dread, personally, from black Methodists because their faith, like their hymns, emanate from a racialized subjectivity characterized by imagination, affect, and a naïve but sincere belief in the supernatural. As her father explains, Uncle Tom "is a hero to Eva; his stories are wonders in her eyes, his songs and Methodist hymns are better than an opera, and the traps and little bits of trash in his pocket a mine of jewels..." (154). Eva's view of Tom is remarkable because it differs so widely from the standard one found North and South. But it also supports the interaction we see between her and Tom beside Lake Pontchartrain, when Tom, at Eva's request, sings her one of her favorite Methodist hymns.

⁸⁴ Stowe does the same in *Dred* when a slave trader tries to convince a potential customer, a Presbyterian minister, that the black woman in question is worth the price he is asking for her. "A sound, strong, hearty woman; a prudent, careful housekeeper; a real pious Methodist, a member of a class-meeting! Why, eight hundred dollars an't anything! I ought to get a thousand for her; but I don't hear preaching for nothing, - always think right to make a discount to ministers!" (257).

The “Methodist hymns” and hymnbooks that are scattered throughout *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* are closely associated with Tom’s character and his “infernally old Methodism” (297), as Legree puts it, but they also suggest a general pervasiveness to the Methodism among the enslaved population. A “Methodist hymn-book” (181) is among the many odd items that cousin Ophelia finds in Dinah’s disorganized drawers. And when, at the end of the novel, George Shelby gathers his slaves to tell them he is granting them their freedom, “an aged, patriarchal Negro” naturally “struck up a Methodist hymn” (380), one which the narrator does not even bother citing in detail, simply saying that “the burden was: The year of Jubilee is come, / Return, ye ransomed sinners, home” (380). There have, to be fair, already been a good many Methodist hymns in the story, most of them sung solo by Tom (226-7, 297, 340, 341-2) or by a chorus including him, as at the meeting he holds in his cabin at the beginning of the book (24-5).⁸⁵ The consistent linking of black religiosity with hymn singing reinforces the racist logic of the novel but must also be interpreted as a principle means by which it leads readers to sympathize with the plight of the Christian slave. When reading the hymns Tom sings, many in Stowe’s audience would have recognized words and images that they had themselves sung as an expression of their own religious affections. Hymns were popular among white and black evangelicals alike as a means of psychological unburdening and spiritual community building. Stowe was herself a lover of hymn singing. But what, if anything, distinguished Methodist hymns from their competitors?

In the introduction to his *Plymouth Collection of Hymns and Tunes* (1855), Henry Ward Beecher very proudly declares that the “more than thirteen hundred hymns” (iii) that fill the volume come from a wide range of Christian denominations.⁸⁶ He makes rhetorical use of the synonymous relationship between “Methodist hymns” and hymns focusing on human emotions in the popular mind when he writes, “To say that we have sought for hymns expressing the deepest religious feeling, and particularly the sentiments of love, and trust, and divine courage, and hopefulness, is only to say that we have drawn largely from the best Methodist hymns” (v). Beecher goes on to describe in more detail the enormous debt owed to the Wesleys, and

⁸⁵ Two hymns are quoted in *Cabin* that are not sung by Tom. The first is sung by Emmeline and her mother while in the slave warehouse (287), the second by Emmeline alone while she is in Legree’s upstairs rooms (324).

⁸⁶ Bearing in mind the ferocity of anti-Catholic sentiment at the time, it was quite daring of Beecher to proudly declare that many of the hymns came from Roman Catholic sources. “Some of the most touching and truly evangelical hymns in this collection,” he provocatively affirms, are of Catholic origin and he writes of the joy he felt at finding “how much food for true piety is afforded through Catholic devotional books to the masses of darkened minds with that Church of Error” (iv-v).

especially Charles,⁸⁷ for these hymns that exemplify how the genre is supposed to work. Beecher defines a hymn as “a lyrical discourse to the feelings” that “should excite or express feeling. The recitation of historical facts, descriptions of scenery, narration of events, meditations, all may tend to inspire feeling” (iii). The centrality of feeling to the genre’s existence explains why Stowe employed it in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and would come to rely on it in *Dred*, where the narrative is interrupted more than fifty times by the quotation of at least one stanza of a hymn, often more. It is a long novel but this number still suggests the extent to which Stowe conceived of hymns as helping her achieve her sentimental and abolitionist literary objectives.

Tom’s hymn singing is also the means through which he mounts resistance to the institution of slavery. When Legree calls for the coffle to “strike up a song” and punctuates the command with “a smart crack of the whip” (297), Tom starts to sing a Methodist hymn about the freedom and happiness to be had by the slave in the new Jerusalem. Cutting him off, Legree roars that he doesn’t want any of Tom’s “infernal old Methodism” (297) and the enslaved men begin to sing a rhyming, nonsensical song. Stowe uses it to illustrate a lesson about emotion and expression, for she says that the chorus, despite its unmeaning language, contains a concealed prayer which only the faithful and sympathetic can hear: “As if the poor, dumb heart, threatened—prisoned—took refuge in that inarticulate sanctuary of music, and found there a language in which to breathe its prayer to God!” (297). But he does hear Tom singing again later in the novel, and again it is an instance of solitary resistance that brings swift retribution from Legree. When Legree discovers “Tom’s Methodist hymn-book” (292) and learns he belongs to “the church,” Legree tells Tom that he’ll, “soon have *that* out of you. I have none o’ yer bawling, praying, singing niggers on my place,” he shouts, “*I’m* your church now!” (292-93). Tom mentally resists “and, as if repeated by an invisible voice, came the words of an old prophetic scroll, as Eva had often read them to him, —“Fear not! for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by name. Thou art MINE!” (293). Legree, of course, does not hear the voice because, as the narrator explains, “that voice is one he never shall hear” (293).

⁸⁷ “The contributions of the Wesleys to Hymnology have been so rich as to leave the Christian world under an obligation which can not be paid so long as there is a struggling Christian brotherhood to sing and be comforted amid the trials of this world. Charles Wesley was peculiarly happy in making the Scripture illustrate Christian experience, and personal experience throw light upon the deep places of the Bible. Some of his effusions have never been surpassed. Neither are there any hymns that could more nobly express the whole ecstasy of the apostolic writings in view of death and heaven” (v).

Tom's Methodist talent is not manifested in rhetorical nuance or oratorical polish but, typical of his Methodism, in "the simple, hearty, sincere style of his exhortations," a quality which, we are told, "might have edified even better educated persons" (26). This narratorial assertion establishes the transmission of feeling as the measure of sermonic skill, but also acknowledges Tom's homiletic abilities to be unusual for one lacking an education. It is a qualified rebuttal of her father's claim that "illiterate men, however pious, cannot command the attention of that class of the community whose education and mental culture is above their own" ("Address" 6). Throughout the novel the reader witnesses Tom's ability to appeal to his white social superiors by virtue of his sincerity and the heartfelt nature of his language. Tom's attempts at bringing St. Clare back to his faith are characterized by their childlike simplicity and, after her death, are a continuation of Eva's efforts. When St. Clare says to Tom that, "It seems to be given to children, and poor, honest fellows, like you, to see what we can't," he vocalizes one of the novel's foundational truths. Tom responds by quoting scripture: "'Thou has hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes,'" murmured Tom; 'even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight'" (262). But in her defense of Tom's sermonic skill we also hear Stowe's advocacy of the novel as a means of reforming even the educated elite. If the provoking of prayer and sympathy ought to be the ultimate goal of preaching it is also presented as the ultimate goal of writing novels such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Even the kind of sermonic address ascribed to Tom – "exhortations, or relations of experience" (25) – is novelistic in its form in that it involves narrating personal experience as a means of inspiring religious feeling. The black Methodists of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, like the novel itself, use the narration of experience to convince white characters and readers that they are deserving of the sympathy warranted by fellow Christians suffering under inhuman conditions and praying for physical and spiritual salvation. Stowe was also well versed in the Scottish Common Sense tradition and its emphasis on the importance of moral emotion to animating decent human behavior.

With a little imaginative alteration Stowe could use some of her own religious experiences as raw materials for Uncle Tom's evangelical character. In what is now the authoritative biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Joan Hedrick perceptively connects Stowe's second, conversion-like experience of sanctification in 1843 to the thirty-eighth chapter of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, "The Victory," in which Uncle Tom also undergoes a spiritual rebirth closely resembling that described by believers in Christian perfection (155). As with Tom, Stowe's

“victory” comes after a period of physical suffering, mental anguish, and spiritual lassitude. “Caught up in the widespread fever of religious expectation,” Hedrick writes of how “Harriet was discontented with her former level of piety” and longed “for a fiery renewal of faith” (149). In an 1842 letter to her husband, Stowe “carefully distanced herself from the heretical doctrine of perfection while eagerly embracing its emotional counterpart: ‘I do not believe in perfection in this life – but I do believe, & my thoughts have turned much to it this week, in a baptism of the spirit, - a second conversion that is to the Christian as real an advance, as his first generation.’” (qtd. in Hedrick 149). To avoid the controversy, she divides the experience from the doctrine, affirming the validity of the former while not getting entangled in the politics of the latter. And yet the phrase she uses, “baptism of the spirit,” has decidedly Wesleyan associations, and the experience she describes believing in was another of those doctrines and forms that Finney imported to Calvinism from Methodism. Most important for us, however, is the way she describes her own “second conversion” and how that is transformed into Uncle Tom’s conversion-like experience at the end of the novel. While Hedrick points out the correspondence between Stowe’s religious development and that of her most famous character, she does not attend to the language of the text, even though she quotes Stowe’s account of her sanctification experience: “My *all* changed – Whereas once my heart ran with strong current to the world, it now runs with a current the other way. What once it cost an effort to remember, it now costs an effort to forget – The will of Christ seems to me the steady pulse of my being and I go because I can not help it” (qtd. in Hedrick 155).⁸⁸ What stands out about this description is the complete lack of imagery. But that is intentional, for as the italicized “*all*” immediately announces, even a wordsmith of Stowe’s caliber is stymied by the task of portraying in words an experience that is ultimately ineffable, that strains the picturing power of language. The words “all” and “what” and “way” point at discrete things but do not name or represent them, therein conveying the speaker’s struggle to achieve mimesis while simultaneously managing to convey an idea of the experience. Since at least the days of Edwards, having that struggle was half the battle, for the authentically spiritual (i.e. supernatural) strained human powers of representation, and accounts

⁸⁸ HBS to Thomas Beecher, 16 March 1844.

of a genuine religious experience are often understood as those that exhibit the kind of abstract impressionism we observe in Stowe's statement.⁸⁹

When we turn to Uncle Tom's sanctification, however, imagery abounds and we find a species of supernaturalism very different from that informing Stowe's representation of her own second, conversion-like experience:

Tom sat, like one stunned, at the fire. Suddenly everything around him seemed to fade, and a vision rose before him of one crowned with thorns, buffeted and bleeding. Tom gazed, in awe and wonder, at the majestic patience of the face; the deep, pathetic eyes thrilled him to his inmost heart; his soul woke, as, with floods of emotion, he stretched out his hands and fell upon his knees, —when, gradually, the vision changed: the sharp thorns became rays of glory; and, in splendor inconceivable, he saw that same face bending compassionately towards him, and a voice said, "He that overcometh shall sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcome, and am set down with my Father on his throne. (339-40)

Tom's "victory" involves a vision and a voice that the narrator describes unquestioningly, not even bothering to employ the standard rhetorical qualifications whereby the reader is made to understand that "vision" and "voice" are mental rather than physical phenomena, metaphors intended to figuratively capture the experience and not to be taken literally. Like the well-trained Calvinist she was, Stowe narrates her own "baptism" in abstract terms that skillfully avoid the charge of enthusiasm that would accompany any use of concrete imagery or suggestion of sensory and therefore supernatural experience. Stowe writes about her heart, memory, and will rather than her eyes or ears, but with Tom it is quite different, even though his heart and soul are mentioned. And that difference, I would suggest, is in keeping with the Methodist-Calvinist divide between enthusiastic and rational evangelicalism. Tom's supernatural experience initiates a new era in his life. "From this time," the narrator goes on to explain, "an inviolable sphere of peace encompassed" Tom's heart and "an ever-present Saviour hallowed it as a temple. Past now the bleeding of earthly regrets; past its fluctuations of hope, and fear, and desire; the human will, bent and bleeding, and struggling long, was now entirely merged in the Divine" (341). The entire plantation community recognizes Tom's transformation but not everyone knows what to make of

⁸⁹ Edwards' description of his own conversion experience, from his "Personal Narrative," is a model for the use of the rhetoric of ineffability: "There came into my mind, a sweet sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, that I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction: majesty and meekness joined together: it was a sweet and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great, and holy gentleness" (793).

it. In an ironic inversion of the divine infusion described by the narrator, Legree asks Sambo, “What the devil’s got into Tom?” (341). We know Cassy perceives something of the truth because she starts calling him “Father Tom” (343, 345, 346) and is consoled by “the hymns and passages of Holy Writ, which this lowly missionary breathed into her ear in intervals, as they were going to and returning from work” (343). Unable to make any headway with Legree, Tom’s ministry has finally come to encompass his fellow blacks and his martyrdom also marks the moment of conversion for Sambo and Quimbo, as indicated by the tears they shed (359). As with Jesus, Tom’s faith in the face of suffering proves the impetus to their salvation, their sympathy for Tom’s situation being that which alone can touch their hearts.

Readers would have found it hard to believe in Uncle Tom’s vision of the loving Jesus transformed via his sacrifice from an image of betrayal and suffering to one of Christian glory. Like Stowe, they would have judged such experiences to be instances of enthusiasm, the result of an overheated imagination rather than divine intervention.⁹⁰ And we know that Stowe was aware that most of her readers, even the evangelicals, would be skeptical about Tom’s vision despite their faith and despite the fact that the genre certainly provided latitude for such supernatural scenes to take place. We know this because, shortly after describing Tom’s vision, the narrator openly acknowledges her reader’s doubts by directly addressing them. After Tom wakes up and recognizes that, like Stowe, his will has changed, he naturally sings a hymn, “Amazing Grace,” after which the narrator returns to the subject of his vision. She begins her defense by first affirming that Tom’s vision is grounded in reality, noting that such experiences are frequently described in “the religious histories of the slave population” and that she has “heard some from their own lips” of a similar nature and “of a very touching and affecting character” (340). She does not, however, maintain that this is evidence of genuine supernatural activity. Instead the narrator immediately moves to modern science and a materialist explanation, writing how the contemporary “psychologist tells us of a state, in which the affections and images of the mind become so dominant and overpowering, that they press into their service the outward senses, and

⁹⁰ In *The Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1854) Stowe describes her incredulity at being told by a young black woman that Jesus spoke to her. Stowe asks her what she means and if she was dreaming. “With an air of wounded feeling, and much earnestness, she answered, “O no, Mrs. Stowe; that never was a dream; you’ll never make me believe that” (48). Upon hearing this defense, Stowe writes, “The thought at once arose in the writer’s mind, If the Lord Jesus is indeed everywhere present, and if he is as tender-hearted and compassionate as he was on earth—and we know he is— must he not sometimes long to speak to the poor desolate slave, when he knows that no voice but His can carry comfort and healing to his soul?” (48).

make them give tangible shape to the inward imagining” (340). Once again the narrator does not present this information as evidence that Uncle Tom’s vision is the product of natural forces, just that such a vision accords with reality and she is therefore justified in including it in the novel. Indeed, the narrator never explicitly states that Tom’s vision is authentic. Instead she follows these points with three rhetorical questions that place the burden of proof on the skeptical reader: “Who shall measure what an all-pervading Spirit may do with these capabilities of our mortality, or the ways in which He may encourage the desponding souls of the desolate? If the poor forgotten slave believes that Jesus has appeared and spoken to him, who shall contradict him? Did He not say that that his mission, in all ages, was to bind up the broken-hearted, and set at liberty them that are bruised?” (340). These leading questions certainly do not amount to a full-throated defense of such supernatural experiences, but that is the point. In a moment of persuasive brilliance, Stowe forces her imaginary interlocutor into the rhetorical position of having to limit divine omnipotence in order to eliminate the possibility that such a thing could happen. Having established that Tom’s conversion experience is true to life, her narrator leaves it up to the reader to judge whether such experiences are also spiritually genuine. Whether Tom’s vision is the product of purely natural processes or the result of supernatural interference with his senses and psyche, the point is to render such considerations irrelevant, as well as to imply that harboring such skepticism is to take the side of the atheistical Legree and his henchmen. The Wesleyan doctrine of perfection, stripped of its label and denominational affiliation, provided Stowe with the theological basis and means of obtaining a second conversion experience for herself, but it also provided her with the means to visualize for her readers the Christological parallels which, until that time, were forced to remain implicit. The novel’s narrator skillfully navigates Calvinist expectations and never openly attacks orthodoxy, but in her defense of Tom’s enthusiastic, emotional, and imaginative Christianity we can descry how Stowe uses the figure of Methodism to embody a brand of evangelicalism in sympathy with her sentimental project and many of her own personal religious convictions.

Stowe was not done defending Tom’s vision from skeptical readers after the final installment of the novel appeared in the *National Era* and the novel was published in book form to such well-known success. We recall Lowance’s statements about how “the *veracity* of the book was regularly questioned and defended, and both sides used *character formation* and *character representation* to support their views” (160). Stowe’s biggest defense of her work and

its main character of course came in the form of *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1854). In that book she explains the thinking behind his sanctification scene and supports its factual basis by turning to romantic racialism and the biological and temperamental differences between members of the African and Anglo-Saxon races. Continuing to write about the event as if she had not herself written it, Stowe suggests that “the vision attributed to Uncle Tom introduces quite a curious chapter of psychology with regard to the negro race, and indicates a peculiarity which goes far to show how very different they are from the white race” (45). Narrating her own experience as a reader and researcher, Stowe proceeds to describe how one will find, “almost constantly, in the narrations of their religious histories, accounts of visions, of heavenly voices, of mysterious sympathies and transmissions of knowledge from heart to heart without the intervention of the senses” (46). She presents these as the natural result of race, of the African’s “sensitive and exceedingly vivacious temperament.” In a portrait that borrows many features from those painted by critics of early American Methodism, Stowe explains that blacks “incline much to outward expressions, violent gesticulations, and agitating movements of the body. Sometimes in their religious meetings they will spring from the floor many times in succession, with a violence and rapidity which is perfectly astonishing. They will laugh, weep, and embrace each other convulsively, and sometimes become entirely paralysed and cataleptic” (46). African Americans are natural born Methodists and Uncle Tom’s vision, grounded in such thinking, allows Stowe to mount a defense of the possibility of such supernatural experiences while never unequivocally affirming that they exist outside of the black religious imagination. Some have argued that in her next antislavery novel Stowe radically revised this position, severing the connection between black skin and enthusiastic, emotional religion. We will see, however, that in many ways Stowe doubles down on romantic racialism, and that the connection between race and religious character is in some ways actually strengthened in *Dred*.

“Woman, thy prayers have prevailed for this time!” he said.

“The hour has not yet come!” (462)

Dred (1856)

Aunt Milly has not fared very well among the relatively few critics who have written about “Stowe’s other antislavery novel” (Sanchez-Eppler 27). William P. Mullaney reads her character as personifying “an important shift in Stowe’s gender politics,” writing that Milly’s “humble fate functions as Stowe’s concession that the power of motherly love as a social corrective possesses limited political agency” (162). “Certainly,” Richard Boyd confidently affirms, “the progress of the narrative bears out her ineffectiveness as a model, for although she seeks to induce in others a forgiving love and a spirit of reconciliation,” (28) Milly does not ultimately succeed. Even though she is the only character who “might be said to have transcended” the cycle of violence and sin that is slavery, by the end of the novel Boyd reads Aunt Milly as having been “banished wholly to the periphery,” “ending her life alone, in New York City, where she has established an orphanage” (28). How New York City could be considered the periphery, or living with your grandson and dozens of adopted children deemed being “alone,” are the more obvious questions that Boyd’s argument raises. Jeanine DeLombard is among the few who have noted that Milly actually does have some “success in countering Dred’s Old Testament vengefulness and wrath with her New Testament patience and faith,” but she then heavily qualifies that assessment by saying that “it is only Clayton’s intervention that averts the violent climax to which the novel has been building” (102).⁹¹ Here I contend that Milly plays a much more central and successful part in *Dred* than has been acknowledged, maintaining that Stowe intended her character to vie with Dred for the reader’s sympathy and support.

The critical reluctance to give Milly her due is partially the result of a modern desire to read *Dred* as an improvement over the romantic racialism and Christian pacifism of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. As many critics have noted, Milly is the Uncle Tom figure of *Dred*, personifying a very similar kind of New Testament Christianity committed to peace and patience (Stratman 391;

⁹¹ DeLombard also offers an excellent overview of the “differing opinions about the failure of the slave rebellion” plot expressed by Newman, Hedrick, and Levine. In describing why *Dred* is “neither an incendiary tract nor a good novel,” Hedrick notes how Dred’s “Old Testament militancy is stilled by the words of Milly, a female slave imbued with New Testament pacifism” (259-60). Levine and Norman both focus on similarities between Milly and Sojourner Truth, focusing on resemblances between the confrontation of Dred and Milly and the one between Truth and Douglass over the question of violence in the service of freedom.

Levine xix; Mullaney 162). Focusing on the character of Dred allows us to read the novel as a radical departure from its predecessor. In his introduction to the Penguin edition (2000), Robert Levine writes that “because of the centrality of the whites’ point of view in the opening third or so of the novel, the racial politics of *Dred* can seem similar to the racial politics of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which depend on racist notions of essential differences between ‘white’ and ‘black’ blood as a way of explaining character and action” (xviii). But as we become fully acquainted with the title character by the middle of the novel it becomes apparent to Levine that in *Dred* Stowe “suggests the limits of racialism as a way of understanding character and action” and departs “from the racial orthodoxies that had informed her first novel” (xix). Dred is certainly the antithesis of Uncle Tom. While Tom uses his evangelicalism to prevent bloodshed Dred employs his to justify violent rebellion. Tom is a type of the loving, suffering Jesus of the New Testament while Dred is an Old Testament prophet, reincarnated as a temporarily enslaved black man and charged with leading his people out of bondage. In the character of Dred, said to be the son of Denmark Vesey and a Mandingo woman (208), Stowe is finally able to imagine a full-blooded African American who is also a capable leader and persuasive interlocutor. But Dred is also an anomaly, an enthusiast who, like Crazy Bet, is “under the inspiring belief that he was the subject of visions and supernatural communications” (274). His intellectual prowess is described as “uncommon” and astonishing and he does not learn to read so much as because he evidently possesses the “power of reading” as an “instinctive faculty” (208). While his ability to read seemingly from birth is represented as unique, Dred’s tendency towards trance and mesmerism is accounted a racially inherited trait. In words that could easily come from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the narrator of *Dred* explains how “The African race are said by mesmerists to possess, in the fullest degree, that peculiar temperament which fits them for the evolution of mesmeric phenomena; and hence the existence among them, to this day, of men and women who are supposed to have peculiar magical powers. The grandfather of Dred, on his mother’s side, had been one of these reputed African sorcerers; and he had early discovered in the boy this peculiar species of temperament” (274).

Levine reads *Dred* as Stowe’s “most dramatic revision of the politics of color that had informed *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*” because in his character we see Stowe reject “the equation of black skin (and blood) to domestic passivity” (xx). This is true, and yet it must also be immediately pointed out that Stowe also employs a female version of Uncle Tom – Aunt Milly –

to contain the threat of black-on-white violence posed by Dred. Dred may be descended from black revolutionaries but he is personally preternatural, exists largely outside the realm of possibility for white readers (just as he lives in the swamp), and occupies an enthusiastic mental space described by the narrator as “a twilight-ground between the boundaries of the sane and insane” (273). Dred is indeed a character who personifies and rhetorically legitimates, through a blend of biblical and revolutionary discourse, the argument for armed revolt as biblically and politically justifiable vengeance, but the novel that bears his name ultimately espouses the perspective embodied by Aunt Milly, a willingness to continue to turn the other cheek and leave justice and vengeance to the Lord. In the rest of this chapter I examine the dynamic between Aunt Milly and Dred so as to reevaluate the relationship between *Dred* and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in terms of their religious and racial politics. I argue that Aunt Milly is a revision of Uncle Tom who takes his visionary Methodism from the plantation cabin to the tenements of New York City.

While not as prominent as in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, racist thinking does appear fairly regularly in *Dred* and occupies an important position in the novel’s religious conflicts. Jacob Stratman has noted how *Dred*, like its predecessor, “is plagued with romantic racialism and [it] threatens to undermine the heroic preaching of the black figures” (394). Though Stratman discusses the character of Clayton as a prime example of its presence in the text, he does not discuss Clayton’s racist statements about religion. There we see the working out of religious toleration via racial prejudice. Clayton, a lawyer, lectures Nina, her aunt, and his sister Anne about the need to be tolerant of religion in all its forms, even if personally distasteful. But his arguments rely upon a racist understanding of religious identity. Speaking of the religious exercises at a camp meeting they all attended the day before, he explains how “barbarous and half-civilized people always find the necessity for outward and bodily demonstration in worship; I suppose because the nervous excitement wakes up and animates their spiritual natures, and gets them into a receptive state” (245). Rather than condemn what is foreign to their own racial-religious temperament, Clayton preaches tolerance: “let the African scream, dance, and shout, and fall in trances. It suits his tropical lineage and blood, as much as our thoughtful inward ways do us.” (245). In the horror and disgust expressed by Anne and Aunt Maria at hearing Clayton defend the vehement and public emotionalism on display at the camp meeting we hear strong echoes of Marie’s denunciation of those horrible “shouting Methodists” in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

for whom St. Clare declared his somewhat sarcastic preference. Critics have already noted the parallels between these two unorthodox and unchurched defenders of the faith (Stratman 393).

But it is also true that racialism is frequently outweighed by classism in much of this discussion. The conversation they are engaged in both before and after the camp meeting is more about the propriety of publically exhibiting such extravagant religious feeling and the way in which one's position on the subject depended on one's class position and religious affiliation. In debating Clayton Aunt Maria scornfully refers to the camp meeting folk as "that rabble of such very common people!" (281) and his sister Anne describes with a shudder how "there are in a crowd coarse, rude, disagreeable people, with whom it isn't pleasant to come in contact" (282). But when his sister, in the name of decency, says that, "These things ought not to be allowed!" (245), Clayton proceeds to lecture her on the sin of intolerance. "We must have charity for every religious manifestation," he tells her, then proceeds to preach about "intolerance" being "a rooted vice in our nature" (245). But later, after the camp meeting, he maintains that this species of religious prejudice is unique to Protestantism. "We are too often ashamed of our better moments – I believe Protestant Christians are the only people on earth who are ashamed of the outward recognition of their religion. The Mahometan will prostrate himself in the street.... The Roman Catholic sailor, or soldier, kneels down at the sound of the vesper bell" (282). Protestants, on the other hand, seem to "take pride" in maintaining physical and emotional reserve. Rhetorically including himself among the Protestant fold but excluding all those at the camp meeting, Clayton sneers at how "we take our religion moderately and coolly" and "are not going to put ourselves much out about it" (282). Presumably he means middle-class Protestantism and not the Methodists and Presbyterians who joined together to host the camp meeting. But the more significant point is that he turns the hegemonic perspective of the ruling class on its head by making it the outlier rather than the exemplar.

It is natural to be repulsed by a faith that is foreign to us or a mode of worship that does not suit our own "lineage and blood," but we must not turn that distaste into intolerance by seeking to restrict the free exercise of religion. Religious liberty is rooted in recognizing and then severing the connection between personal and political response, between institutional, communal or individual repugnance rooted in difference and the extent to which individuals are "allowed" to exercise their right to freedom of conscience. In a bizarre but representative blending of religious racialism and religious tolerance that reminds us of the more common point

about Stowe's blending of racism and abolitionism, Clayton bemoans how "our first impulse is to forbid everything that would not be proper for us" (245). Clayton's perspective is not identical to the narrator's; he soon realizes that slavery can never be the Christian and paternal institution he believed it had the potential to become and resigns from the practice of law in South Carolina. Nevertheless, Clayton's views are validated in a number of ways in the novel. He is, for example, among the successful characters at the novel's end who have fled the South for Canada or the Northeast.

Clayton's picture of African American religion is also partially fulfilled in the character of Aunt Milly, who, like Uncle Tom, gets religion at a camp meeting and has a vision during a trance state in which she sees the crucified Christ. For Milly and Tom it is a conversion moment in which they overcome their rage and reconcile themselves to God's will. Milly's trance, vision, and conversion enables her to forgive her mistress for hiring out her son to a drunkard who shot him when he defied his order. This experience gives her the moral power and authority to go toe to toe with Dred and counter his Old Testament call for hellfire with her words of love and forgiveness, words that she exhorts, prays, and most importantly sings. In more parallels with Uncle Tom, Aunt Milly's character is closely associated with the singing of hymns and she is especially skilled in the art of prayer. She uses both when, at the critical moment, she intervenes between God and Dred and prevents the heavenly sign being given for the start of the righteous insurrection. Milly's role, defined in large part by her Methodism, is therefore central not only to the plot of the novel but to any appraisal of its religious and racial politics.

Robert Levine persuasively argues that the title character "remains to the end the genuine hero of the novel" and that Dred wins the "'debate' on black violence" that he has with Aunt Milly. Writing of the critical scene at the end of the novel when Dred prays for a sign from God to unleash righteous violence and Milly suddenly appears to intervene, Levine states that Milly "certainly fails to persuade Dred to renounce his plans for slave insurrection" (xxv). But Milly gets into Dred's head more successfully than it first appears. He is still thinking about Milly's exhortation several days later. Having been "deeply affected" by what she said about "the eternal principle of intercession and atonement," the narrator describes how Milly's message of love and patience "was blindly struggling with the habitual and overpowering sense of oppression and wrong" (497) that drives Dred and his storyline throughout the novel. It is true that Milly's message and the New Testament Christianity she embodies ultimately fail to persuade Dred to

abandon hope that the sign would one day be given by the vengeful Old Testament God to whom he implored for justice. But that is not to say that we are not meant to be persuaded, that the reader is meant to finish the novel sympathizing with Dred's armed and violent plan rather than Milly's calls for loving one's enemies and escaping to the North. The end of the novel finds Milly in New York City working as a pastry chef and running a sort of orphanage for a notably biracial group of indigent children, "among whom were blacks, whites, and foreigners" (546). The narrator explains that Milly "had rescued [them] from utter destitution in the streets, and was giving to them all the attention and affection of a mother" (546). Dred dies a martyr but also a deluded enthusiast whose claims to inspiration never result in his becoming "a leader and deliverer" (496) of his people. He also dies having been bested by Milly, overpowered by her hymns, preaching, and prayers.

Milly's role in preventing insurrection is intercessional. She intercedes between God and Dred, or more accurately, she prays for Jesus to continue to bear the yoke of the South's iniquity. Having come out of his enthusiastic "trance" without receiving a message, Dred addresses the gathering of "brethren" "in his ordinary tone" rather than his prophetic one, and tells them that "the vision is sealed up, and the token is not yet come! The Lamb still beareth the yoke of their iniquities; there be prayers in the golden censers which go up like a cloud! And there is silence in heaven for half an hour! But hold yourselves in waiting, for the day cometh!" (460). A cryptic announcement to be sure. Why this silence? What of these prayers? The answers lie in the sudden appearance of Milly, whose presence is announced by the sound of a disembodied voice, "in a wild and mournful tone," emanating "from among the trees" (461) and singing the words of a hymn. The first stanza asks, along the lines of "Amazing Grace," how the "Saviour [could] bleed" and "die/ For such a wretch as I?" But the second stanza, the chorus, sung just as the voice becomes a person in the form of Milly entering the circle, is the key for decoding Dred's pronouncement about the Lamb and the prayers ascending to heaven.

"O, the Lamb, the loving Lamb,
 The Lamb of Calvary!
 The Lamb that was slain, but liveth again,
 To intercede for me!" (461)

Milly is the reason the sign was not given, both in terms of her prayers and the version of Christianity she embodies. Milly's appearance in the circle signals that Dred has already lost,

something he acknowledges in his body language and his exclamation. “When Dred saw her, he gave a kind of groan, and said, putting his hand out before his face: ‘Woman, thy prayers withstand me!’” (461). Milly, through Jesus, has interceded on behalf of peace. Milly’s prayers have scrambled the signal. Like Tom, whose skill in prayer is said to be his greatest feature, Milly is able to intercede on behalf of the white population without their knowledge. In her hymns she sings about Jesus’s sacrifice and his intercession between sin and judgment, humanity and God the Father.

“Agonizing in the garden,
 On the ground your Maker lies;
 On the bloody tree behold Him,
 Hear Him cry, before He dies,
 It is finished! Sinners, will not this suffice?” (461)

Milly immediately follows the singing of this line with, “O, won’t it suffice, brethren!” (461) turning the rhetoric of the hymn into a direct address. In another echo of Uncle Tom’s ministry, Milly proceeds to exhort the gathering by relating her experience. Like Dred, Milly addresses her audience as “brethren,” further suggesting that a gathering that first resembled a court session with jury and witnesses has now morphed into a competition between two black preachers. It is one that Milly wins.

I am not alone in recognizing the crucial importance of Milly to Stowe’s accomplishment in *Dred*.⁹³ Jacob Stratman maintains that Milly provides the Christian counterbalance to Dred’s Old Testament jeremiad, but also claims that she employs the genre herself, arguing that “this notion of peacekeeping is latent in the jeremiad, as it proposes conversion within the individual soul, and therefore, is transmitted to the community” (392). But the better way to look at the issue is by recognizing Milly’s Methodism, and that Dred and Milly encounter each other from across the Methodist-Calvinist divide. Dred’s rhetoric is Calvinistic in form, as Stratman argues, but also in its invocation of the doctrine of election. One could argue that the Calvinist-Methodist divide has become gendered in *Dred*, that Dred’s unmerciful and enthusiastic evangelicalism is coded as Calvinist so as to enhance his associations with patriarchal power. Similarly, Milly’s

⁹³ Robert Levine does admit that Milly’s character does participate in *Dred*’s revisionist project: “In a revisionary undercutting of the racist assumptions of white supremacist culture, Milly’s black-centered rhetoric affirms the equality of the races by insisting (against the grain of the demonic portrait of Tom Gordon) that whites can one day be as good as blacks” (xxix).

merciful and loving Methodism seems inextricably linked with her status as a suffering mother figure. As opposed to Dred, Milly's oratory is much better characterized as exhortation and she is constantly singing Methodist hymns. Like Uncle Tom, she undergoes conversion at a Methodist camp meeting, during which she enters a trance state and, also like Tom, has a vision of the crucified Christ. Aunt Milly is as much the heroine of *Dred* as Uncle Tom is the heroine of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as per Ammons's argument.

It is Aunt Milly's prayers that prevent bloodshed, that intercede at the critical moment and forestall God giving Dred the sign to lead a violent revolution. She actually wins what Levine terms their "'debate' on black violence" (xxiv), and in a more direct and significant way than Levine is willing to recognize given his commitment to making *Dred* Stowe's successful attempt at fixing those problematic racial and political elements of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.⁹⁴ I argue that Stowe drew inspiration from Sojourner Truth's *Narrative* for the pivotal scene when Milly, alone and with no other weapon than her voice, confronts Dred, Harry, and the group of black men intent on committing violent insurrection in the name of righteous justice. Truth bravely confronts an armed mob of over a hundred men intent on making trouble at a camp meeting. Through the singing of hymns and the skillful deployment of Christian rhetoric, coupled with an impressive understanding of crowd psychology, Truth is able to defuse the situation and ensure that the camp meeting, where she is the only black person, is left in peace (78-82). Truth's Christian heroism in saving the all-white meeting from the threat of physical violence using only her singing and preaching voice could very well have been the inspiration for Milly's major but largely forgotten victory.

I would like to conclude by discussing how the figure of black Methodism was not limited to abolitionist fiction. Pro-slavery authors used the same distinctive denominational features in their anti-Tom novels, employing romantic racialism to explain the natural connection between Methodism and the members of the African-American race. Arguably the most popular of the many anti-Tom novels published in the years following the appearance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *The Planter's Northern Bride* (1854) was also written by another woman of New England and an acquaintance of Stowe, Caroline Lee Hentz. Upon meeting a Methodist itinerant seeking permission to minister to the local population of enslaved blacks, the plantation-owning hero,

⁹⁴ Though they were pointed out by her contemporaries, these issues would be most famously critiqued a century later by James Baldwin in his 1959 essay "Everybody's Protest Novel."

Moreland, tells him that the Methodists are “the predominant sect” among them and that he believes it to be the result of a natural affinity. As Moreland explains to the Methodist missionary, “your peculiar style of preaching is better adapted than any other for their warm and simple hearts. The demonstrations of enthusiasm, which a colder formula represses, constitute the joy of their religion. They all expect to go to heaven with shouts of glory and songs of victory, or never reach there at all. There is no silent path for them” (409). The similarities to Stowe’s shouting Methodists are striking, but in Hentz’s proslavery fiction Methodism carries with it the seeds of insurrection. The fact that Brainard is so skilled at reaching “their warm and simple hearts” becomes the means of furthering his true missionary goal, starting an armed rebellion. Brainard uses the Methodists’ “peculiar style of preaching”⁹⁵ to convince a large portion of the enslaved population to rise up against its white oppressors, portrayed sympathetically and paternalistically by Hentz.

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⁹⁵ “When compared with most of the leading denominations, the style of the Methodist preacher is peculiar, both as to matter and manner,” explains the Reverend C.C. Goss in his 1866 history of Methodism in America. “Although it is not quite as marked as in days gone by, yet it is sufficiently discernible at the present.” He goes on to cite how they preach extemporaneously and appeal to the heart in “plain, simple language,” and that they come “directly from the people” and not the college (qtd. in Finke and Stark 113-4). Finke and Stark note that “by the time Goss wrote these insightful lines, however, they no longer applied” (114) in many ways. By the 1850s and certainly after the Civil War, the peculiarity of Methodist oratory diminished as seminaries sprang up and the Methodist clergy increasingly resembled their colleagues in the old colonial mainline denominations.

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Conclusion

By 1860 the figure of Methodism could still signify religious enthusiasm, illiterate eloquence, and extravagant emotion, but these popular associations were increasingly undermined by the concerted effort of the Methodist ministry and laity to achieve the same social position and prestige enjoyed by their establishment counterparts. In the four or five decades following the Revolutionary War, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Anglican clergymen imitated Methodist style and technique so as to compete with their enormous popular appeal. The result was a more Methodistic and popular Protestantism across the nation. By mid-century, however, Methodism was coming to look more and more like its Calvinist rivals. The first Methodist seminaries opened in the 1840s and, despite a great deal of internal resistance, by the 1850s the distinctive and controversial character of early American Methodism was being quickly erased. Instead of itinerating, Methodist ministers settled into parishes. Rather than honing their oratorical skills on the circuit they received formal training in homiletics. Instead of continuing to embrace enthusiasm and promote public displays of emotional excess, Methodists cultivated the rational side of their evangelical heritage and toned down their worship in order to attract a more affluent and better educated audience. By the start of the Civil War, Methodists and Calvinists still disagreed over doctrine and emphasized different elements of Christian evangelicalism, but they had come to resemble each other in ways and to an extent unimaginable at the start of the century. As a result, the figure of Methodism lost much of its potency as a means of critiquing Calvinism's shortcomings and representing the anti-intellectual, enthusiastic, and emotional character of popular evangelicalism.

As the preceding four chapters have shown, the figure of Methodism appealed to early national and antebellum authors for a variety of different, even contradictory reasons. Both Brackenridge and Hawthorne, for example, mock Methodism in order to argue for the necessity of literature. Teague O'Regan and Eliakim Abbott each embody the need for literary education, but the rationales are quite different. For Brackenridge, Methodism symbolizes the religious manifestation of a pervasive political problem. The electorate's tendency to associate the absence

of education with honesty and integrity leads them to elect leaders who are dangerously unqualified. While not missing opportunities to travesty the pretension and bigotry of the Calvinist establishment, *Modern Chivalry* nevertheless uses the figure of Methodism to represent the threat of an anti-intellectualism supported by Christian arguments. Teague's camp meeting tumbling routine is a burlesque of religious exercises that registers the ease with which such behavior, supposedly supernatural in origin, can be imitated by the irreligious for personal gain. His successful performance dramatizes the need for the citizenry to distinguish between emotion and intellect, between judging based on affective response versus intellectual assent. By suggesting that sympathy plays a central role in camp meetings and evangelicalism more generally, *Modern Chivalry* means to make its readers recognize how easily their minds and emotions can be manipulated. If the enterprising yet illiterate Teague can mask his self-interest and sexual desire as genuine Christian conviction, readers can discern how easy it would be for a demagogue to dupe an electorate as hungry for honesty and selflessness as the Methodist masses are for signs of supernatural intervention. By making the body and the senses the measure of truth and discounting learning and an educated intellect, evangelicals are inviting deception. Most importantly for *Modern Chivalry*, they are also offering tacit support for electing political representatives based on emotional appeal and sympathetic identification instead of an objective judgment concerning the candidate's intelligence, education, and experience.

Hawthorne also mocks Methodism's hostility towards literature, but does so in order to ensure the continued existence of the artist rather than the republic. Eliakim's untutored, evangelical simplicity is in extreme contrast with the Story Teller's erudite, irreverent, and ironic public persona. While the Story Teller recognizes the need to practice his art, Eliakim's deluded belief in heavenly inspiration and commitment to Methodist anti-intellectualism leads to his failure as an orator. Without natural aptitude, education, and industry, a Methodist vocation cannot be the basis for a preaching profession. Without literature and the kind of skills, tactics, and artifice cultivated by both the Story Teller and the Calvinist clergy, the religious enthusiast can never become the successful preacher. Methodist opposition to fiction, drama, and literature more generally is thus hypocritical. Eliakim's attempts at convincing the Story Teller of the sinful insanity of his chosen profession are meant to evoke sympathy on behalf of Hawthorne's semi-autobiographical hero. Anti-Methodism offered Hawthorne the rhetorical resources to fashion an evangelical character capable of eliciting regional animosity despite New England's

Puritan past. Ultimately Eliakim's brand of enthusiastic evangelicalism wins out and the Story Teller dies a martyr to romanticism. But his death, like his life, is designed to inspire sympathy for the artist in evangelical America, for the gothic romancer rejected by a world awash in revivalistic fervor and unwilling to admit that religion involves as much artistry and imagination as storytelling.

From the perspectives of Brackenridge's neoclassical picaresque and Hawthorne's gothic romances, Methodism appears as an existential threat to, respectively, the political and artistic life of the nation. Both men saw literature and literary education as integral to the success of the American experiment. And both fiction writers found in Methodism a metaphorical vehicle with which to deliver a critical yet entertaining representation of the emergent form of Protestant evangelicalism. The simplicity, credulity, and enthusiasm that distinguish their Methodist characters are intended to reflect the dangers of an uncritical and uneducated national audience. Methodism's popular appeal in both narratives signals that audience's eagerness to adopt an ideology that turns ignorance and illiteracy into assets. But it is precisely for these very same reasons that Methodism is so attractive to authors of sentimental fiction. Avowedly Christian and emphasizing the role that emotion could and should play in the public sphere, sentimentalism shared a number of core beliefs with Methodism. Both movements were openly hostile toward the Calvinist establishment and considered its formal, intellectual, and unmerciful brand of evangelicalism to be a corruption of New Testament Christianity's commitment to love, humility, and the practical piety modeled and preached by Jesus. The female authors of sentimental fiction were also attracted to Methodism's historical identity as a religious movement primarily comprised of women that offered them the chance to take a more active role in the public life of the church. Methodism's willingness to interpret emotional states as signifying spiritual truths aligned with sentimentalism's defining faith in the power of sympathy and fellow feeling to reform society along Christian lines and combat religious hypocrisy at the level of the individual, region, and nation. Finally, the fact that Methodism traditionally saw its mission and greatest successes among the most marginalized and least educated members of society aligned with the sentimental novel's valorization of pious characters from similar social positions, especially the orphan, the servant, and the slave. In *Mary Hull*, *Crazy Bet*, *Uncle Tom*, and *Aunt Milly* we can therefore discern sentimentalism's sympathy with Methodism's character in the popular mind.

Sedgwick and Stowe are both sentimental writers who deploy the figure of Methodism as a means of advocating for a more sympathetic society and critiquing the unfeeling and unchristian elements of the Calvinist establishment in which they were raised. But these similarities should not obscure the very different methods by which each author appropriates anti-Methodist discourse, differences that correlate with the respective political goals motivating their fictions. In *A New-England Tale* Sedgwick brilliantly divides the dual character of Methodism into its rational and enthusiastic halves. A sentimental work of regional domestic fiction, Sedgwick's first novel began its life as a tract expounding the pedagogical virtues of Unitarianism, the most liberal strain of Reformed Protestantism. Unitarians were also, we sometimes forget, Arminian, and thus shared some beliefs with Methodists even though the two were at opposite ends of the political spectrum. Their Arminianism meant both denominations believed that Jesus died for all people, not an elect few, and that salvation could be lost if one did not maintain a Christian life. This was a corollary to the most important belief shared by Methodists and Unitarians in the eyes of *A New-England Tale*, namely that people's actions or "works" had an effect on their salvational status: saint or sinner, saved or damned. Sedgwick observed this mutual emphasis on practical Christianity, on the way day-to-day choices and actions reflect core New Testament values, and made it the basis of her first novel's most important relationship, that between the orphaned heroine and her surrogate Methodist mother. It is the practical character of Mary's Methodism, its emphasis on duty and love, that makes her such a remarkable mother, role model, and teacher to the Congregationalist Jane Elton, the descendent of generations of "worthy [Calvinist] divines." Sedgwick also saw that Unitarians and Methodists shared a mutual enemy in the orthodox, Trinitarian Calvinism that descended from the Puritans and now, in certain forms at least, was threatening to make monsters out of future citizens. Mary is a suffering servant figure who plays the motherly foil to the tyrannical and orthodox Aunt Wilson, a woman whose hypocritical and unchristian character is personified in her three children, all of whom lead horrible lives thanks to their mother's warped understanding of the relationship between lived experience and the measure of personal piety. Jane must resist the corruptive influence of living in her aunt's hypocritical household and stay true to the New Testament Christianity that Mary has been teaching her since birth. But Aunt Wilson is not Mary's only motherly competition for Jane's affection and moral development. Jane must also resist the temptations and model proffered by Crazy Bet, a character in whom

Sedgwick places all those elements of Methodism not in keeping with her domestic and political agenda. In her enthusiasm, her itinerant lifestyle, her hymns and exhortations, not to mention her purported insanity and the way she proudly resists the influence of the Calvinist establishment, Bet is a discernibly Methodist character. In Chapter Two we saw how Sedgwick used these characteristics to make Bet an enticing model of the wrong kind of sympathy: undisciplined, narcissistic, and ultimately ineffectual as a force for Christian reform. By offering the reader two forms of sympathy and distinguishing them by their relative ability to function within society and, in so doing, change it, Sedgwick's novel speaks to recent critical debate over the politics of sentimental literature.

No work has been more central to that debate than *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. And as we saw in the last chapter, no character better illustrates how sentimental fiction redeems the character of Methodism than Uncle Tom. Intimately familiar with anti-Methodist discourse, Stowe uses its features to imagine an enslaved evangelicalism rendered more powerful as a proselytizing force by virtue of the very traits cited by Calvinists like her father as evidence of Methodist inferiority. Tom's untutored illiteracy increases the efficacy of his prayers and the persuasiveness of his appeals by giving them a sincerity and simplicity missing from the learned sermons and hypocritical behavior of the American clergy, North and South. Stowe saw the popular success of Methodist tactics and doctrines, and her most popular character continually engages in typically Methodist behavior and adamantly espouses Methodism's belief in unlimited atonement, the possibility of Christian perfection, and the role played by works in determining one's salvational status. But Stowe's knowledge of African-American Methodism also made it the ideal kind of Christianity for her black characters because of its distinctive forms of religious speech. The exhortation, the shout, and the Methodist hymn became the formal vehicles by which she cloaked and conveyed sentimental arguments in favor of abolition. Uncle Tom's Methodism is indeed enthusiastic, but rather than condemn it as delusion Stowe's narrator reverses the charge. The real religious problem lies not with the credulous slave but the unsympathetic reader whose skepticism bespeaks an imaginative and spiritual shortcoming with major political and religious implications. Her awareness of the differences between Methodism and Calvinism enabled Stowe to imagine an evangelicalism recognizably distinct from the more formal, rational, middle-class variety she and her white readers practiced. That knowledge also allowed her to create a character and a narrator that could persuasively preempt arguments about

mimetic accuracy and theological doctrine. The mixture of Methodist genres and beliefs that combine to form the character of Uncle Tom were so successful that Stowe amplified their presence in her second sentimental novel advocating the abolition of slavery. The Methodist hymns found throughout the pages of *Dred* should sound familiar and remind us of those sung by Uncle Tom. Aunt Milly also personifies a sentimental critique of establishment Protestantism and her emotional exhortations, coupled with her unrepentant enthusiasm, reflect Stowe's authorial conviction that the forms and beliefs of an idealized Methodism were instrumental in the success of her first novel and could make her second one even more popular and persuasive.

In the opening volume of *Modern Chivalry* Part II (1804), Brackenridge wrote that, "the American has in fact, yet, no character; neither the clown, nor the gentleman" (284). Thus he could not base his "clown" on a stock American type and chose an Irishman, Teague O'Regan, for the role. Fifty years later, the Methodist had become a familiar character in the national imaginary, one that represented a distinctly American religious, political, and literary identity. In part this occurred because Methodism had experienced such startling and controversial success in the decades separating the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. But it was also the result of the creative adaptation of Methodist and anti-Methodist discourse by American authors. As Methodists proliferated so too did their fictional counterparts. As Methodism became representative of American Christianity, it also became an ideal fictional representative for the country's emergent religious attitudes and their literary implications. The characters examined in this dissertation are a strategic sampling of the many Methodists who populate the pages of nineteenth-century American fiction. While each personifies a different argument, they all bear the distinguishing marks of Methodism. By recovering the lost literary and political significance of those characters, we are able to decipher the complex and sometimes contradictory statements these Methodist men and women embody concerning the parallel rise of popular literature, politics, and religion in the newly formed United States.