

OUR COUNTRY IS THE WORLD:
RADICAL AMERICAN ABOLITIONISTS ABROAD

by

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Abstract

Antebellum abolitionists participated—through correspondence, print, and travel—in extensive transatlantic reform networks and often considered themselves citizens of the world. William Lloyd Garrison, the radical antislavery editor, was at the center of such networks and printed the same cosmopolitan slogan on every issue of his Boston newspaper, the *Liberator*: “Our Country is the World—Our Countrymen are All Mankind.” By focusing on the public and private writings of the Garrisonians—the antislavery radicals who took their name from Garrison—this dissertation shows how transnational reform networks functioned as communities of discourse in which the abolitionists developed radical ideas about slavery, democratic politics, nations, and patriotism.

The Garrisonians’ transatlantic friendships, many of which were forged at a “World’s Convention” on slavery held in London in 1840, brought abolitionists into contact with numerous European radicals, including Chartists, free traders, Irish Repealers, and revolutionaries like the Italian Giuseppe Mazzini and the Hungarian Lajos Kossuth. Interpreting their networks in light of a broadly Romantic worldview, the Garrisonians were convinced that they were uniquely cosmopolitan figures. But the Garrisonians’ affinity with certain British reformers also reveals that they were more similar to other antebellum reformers than previously thought. Though often seen as the anti-political pariahs of the antislavery movement, the Garrisonians’ endorsements of movements like Chartism and Irish Repeal suggest that they were more sensitive to

political strategy than scholars have allowed, and that they belong within a transatlantic context of democratic politics.

The Garrisonians' transatlantic networks were also crucial to their development of forward-looking ideas about nations and patriotism. Garrisonians were "civic nationalists" who viewed nations as political, rather than racial or ethnic, communities, and they also articulated a version of "cosmopolitan patriotism," which identified love for country with a willingness to criticize the vestiges of despotism in American institutions. But in contrast to exceptionalist narratives, which view the concept of "civic nationalism" as an inevitable outgrowth of the nation's founding creeds, I argue that the Garrisonians' ideas about nations were forged within transnational discursive communities, and were informed in part by encounters with European reformers.

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List of Abbreviations

AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
BAA	<i>British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding</i> , edited by Clare Taylor. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974.
BPL	Boston Public Library, Anti-Slavery Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division
Garrison & Garrison, <i>Garrison</i>	Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Francis Jackson Garrison. <i>William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life Told by His Children</i> . 4 vols. Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1885-1889.
HU	Harvard University, Houghton Library
JAH	<i>Journal of American History</i>
LWLG	<i>The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison</i> , edited by Walter M. Merrill and Louis Ruchames. 6 Vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971-81.
MWC	Maria Weston Chapman
NASS	<i>National Anti-Slavery Standard</i> (New York, N. Y.)
NYHS	New-York Historical Society
NYPL	New York Public Library
PASP	Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania
RDW	Richard D. Webb
RHAP	<i>The Rhodes House Anti-Slavery Papers: Material Relating to America from the Anti-Slavery Collection in Rhodes House, Oxford; mainly 1839-1868</i> , edited by Howard Temperley. East Ardsley, Wakefield, Yorkshire, England: Micro Methods Limited, 1963.
WLG	William Lloyd Garrison

- Wright's Journals (BPL) Henry Clarke Wright. Journals and commonplace books. 47 vols. 1834-1867. BPL, Ms.qAm.1859.
- Wright's Journals (HU) Henry Clarke Wright. Journals and commonplace books. 42 vols. HU, MS Am 514-515.

Introduction

Radical Abolitionism, Cosmopolitan Patriotism and Civic Nationalism

For thirty-five years, the Boston *Liberator*, a radical antislavery newspaper edited by William Lloyd Garrison, was the most important publication of the American abolitionist movement. Between the appearance of its first issue on January 1, 1831, and its last issue on December 29, 1865, much about the paper changed. The front page would be decorated by several different pictorial scenes, and a parade of slogans—“No Union with Slaveholders,” “Proclaim Liberty throughout the Land”—would march on and off the masthead. But for over 1,800 issues, one thing about the *Liberator* never changed—the motto that always appeared, in block letters, just below the masthead: “Our Country is the World—Our Countrymen are All Mankind.”¹

That slogan was not mere boilerplate. For Garrisonians, the radical abolitionists who rallied around Garrison, the *Liberator*'s motto was a badge of identity and a major premise in antislavery arguments. In 1836, one of Garrison's early allies, Charles Follen, connected the slogan directly to the fundamental principles of abolitionism. In a speech to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society (MASS), he noted that, “Our cause is the cause of man; therefore our watchword from the beginning has been, ‘Our country is the world,—our country men are all mankind.’” To be an abolitionist meant to love all human beings impartially, and to treat strangers and aliens as neighbors and countrymen:

¹ In a four-volume biography of their father, Garrison's sons would later identify this slogan as his “favorite motto.” Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, 1:xi. The motto is engraved on the side of Garrison's statue on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, and it was printed on memorial cards after his death. For an example of the cards, see McKim-Garrison Family Papers, NYPL, Box 3, MGF 31.

“As citizens of the world, as members of the human family, as Christians, we look upon every one as a fellow-citizen, as a neighbour, who defends the rights, and respects the feelings, of all men.” Abolitionists, according to Follen, saw “no difference between natives and foreigners.”²

Follen could have offered himself as proof. Born Karl Follen in Germany, he had only immigrated to America in 1824. In the early 1820s he fled his native country after being accused of conspiring with political radicals to assassinate a government official. “I will go out to look for a new fatherland,” Follen wrote in a poem before his departure for the United States, which he described as “the promised land.” In 1831, he moved to Cambridge to take up a professorship in German at Harvard College, where he became a Unitarian and helped introduce thinkers like Hegel and Fichte to local Transcendentalists like Theodore Parker and Margaret Fuller.³ In Cambridge, however, he began to question whether America was the paradise he had expected. In 1834, Follen wrote an “Address to the People of the United States,” blasting the hypocrisy of a country that claimed to be a land of liberty while enslaving millions. In 1835, he was horrified when an angry mob dragged Garrison by a noose through the streets of Boston, an event that made Follen even more vocal in his criticism of American slavery. In 1837, the year after his speech

² Charles Follen, “Speech before the Anti-Slavery Society,” in *The Works of Charles Follen, with a Memoir of His Life*, vol. 1, ed. Eliza Lee Follen (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, and Company, 1841), 629-30; or, *Fourth Annual Report of ... the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1836), 49-54.

³ See Edmund Spivack, *Charles Follen's Search for Nationality and Freedom: Germany and America, 1796-1840* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), Follen poem quoted on p. 119; Spivack, “Charles Follen’s View of Republicanism in Germany and the United States, 1815-1840,” in *Republicanism and Liberalism in America and the German States, 1750-1850*, ed. Jurgen Heideking and others (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 235-260; Theodore Parker, “The Life and Character of Dr. Follen,” *The Dial* 3 (January 1843): 343-362; S. S. Randall, “Charles Follen,” *Northern Light* 2 (1842): 113; Charles Capper, *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 84, 115; Lewis Perry, *Intellectual Life in America: A History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 212-13.

to the MASS, Follen's radicalism cost him his job at Harvard, forcing him into a second exile in New York City.

Follen grew accustomed to hearing anti-abolitionists, flush with patriotism, attack him for daring to criticize American institutions as a "foreigner." But Follen's reply to these "national bigots" was simple: abolitionists could "reverence patriotism as a virtue" only if love for country did not violate "philanthropy"—the love of all mankind. "So far as it is philanthropy applied to our own country," patriotism was commendable. But love for country was a "vice, so far as it would sacrifice the rights of man,—the moral to the selfish interests of our nation."⁴

That juxtaposition of "patriotism" with "philanthropy" was at the center of many debates between antebellum abolitionists and their critics. In the same year as Follen's speech, James K. Paulding, a popular Jacksonian writer, published a diatribe on Garrison and his allies, arguing that "universal philanthropy" was "opposed to all patriotism, and all the social relations of life. It has no fireside, no home, no centre." A fanatic like Garrison was "false to his native land, to the nearest and dearest ties and duties ... for he stands ready to sacrifice them all for the benefit of strangers, aliens, and enemies." Fifteen years later, another critic called abolitionists "philanthropic bags of pestiferous wind" and "philanthropic slough-hounds" who were "tracking patriotism to its death." Garrisonians "set up philanthropism as their supreme deity, and fall down before their rotten god, and worship!"⁵

⁴ Follen, "Speech before the Anti-Slavery Society," 629.

⁵ James K. Paulding, *Slavery in the United States* (New-York: Harper & Brothers, 1836), 306; "Parricides of the Republic," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, reprinted in *NASS*, 10 July 1851. See also "The People," *Brownson's Quarterly Review* (January 1847), 90-95; "The Conspiracy of Fanaticism," *The United States Magazine, and Democratic Review* (May 1850), 392.

Follen, like other Garrisonians, defended “philanthropism” from such screeds and insisted that to be a citizen of the world was more virtuous than to be a mere patriot. But Garrisonians saw the choice between patriotism and philanthropy as a false dilemma. In an 1839 essay in the *Liberator*, Follen argued that love for country and love for the world were not incompatible. Patriotism was only invidious if it was “exclusive.” The best example of such exclusive patriotism could be found in despotic countries, where mere “devotion to its ruler is accounted patriotism.” “In a country whose political organization rests on the principle of universal justice,” however, patriotism was not exclusive because it represented love for an idea of government, rather than for a particular government. In a true republic, “genuine patriotism is nothing else than philanthropy beginning at home and extending all over the world.” Insofar as abolitionists also believed in the principle of “universal justice,” they could call themselves “genuine” patriots *and* “citizens of the world.” Abolitionism was both “the noblest patriotism” and “the broadest philanthropy,” as Garrison put it in 1854.⁶

Four years after his speech before the MASS, Charles Follen was dead, killed in a tragic steamship accident and eulogized by his friends as “a philanthropist—not a mere patriot. He was a lover of men, not merely of Germans.”⁷ But Garrisonian discourses about patriotism and philanthropy did not die with Follen, nor did the Garrisonians cease to come into contact with European reformers like him. In fact, in the year that Follen

⁶ “C.F.”, “American Patriotism,” *Liberator*, 1 November 1839; William Lloyd Garrison, *No Compromise with Slavery: An Address Delivered in the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, February 14, 1854* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1854), 4. I am attributing the article to Follen on the basis of its internal similarities to Follen’s other works, and on the reasonable assumption that he was the most likely contributor to the *Liberator* with the initials “C.F.”

⁷ Samuel J. May, *Mr. May's Discourse on the Life and Character of the Rev. Charles Follen, L.L.D. Delivered Before the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, in the Marlborough Chapel, Boston, April 17, 1840* (Boston: Henry L. Devereux, 1840), 26.

died, a large delegation of Garrisonians traveled to London to attend a “World’s Convention” on slavery. There they inaugurated lifelong friendships with Irish, Scottish, and English abolitionists, and after the Convention, they came into contact with reformers in a variety of other social movements. Garrisonians would continue to travel to Europe periodically throughout the 1840s and 1850s, and even those who did not actually cross the ocean did so imaginatively, thanks to a voluminous correspondence with European reformers carried out both privately and in the pages of the antislavery press. Through literal and imagined Atlantic crossings, Garrisonians forged interpersonal ties and engaged in dialogue with political radicals in Britain and Europe, including, in the 1840s, Chartists, free traders, and Irish nationalists identified with Daniel O’Connell, and, in the late 1840s, European revolutionaries, including the Italian Giuseppe Mazzini and the Hungarian Lajos Kossuth.

The Garrisonians’ transatlantic networks were facilitated in part by revolutions in transportation and communications technologies that seemed to be annihilating time and space. In the 1840s, regular steam packets began carrying mail and passengers across the Atlantic at two-week intervals, a speed that astounded contemporaries. “The ocean is no longer a gulf of separation,” wrote Garrisonian Nathaniel P. Rogers in 1842, “as it used to be ... before steam had *laid down* her audacious rail-road track along the *hilly* Highway of Nations.” The pace of technological change affected Garrisonians directly, both by accelerating the exchange of print and letters with the friends they made in Europe and by making it easier for Garrisonians to cross the Atlantic. Garrison himself would make five transatlantic voyages in his lifetime, and the length of those trips in days trended steadily downward: 21, 25, 15, 10, 11. The first westward crossing that Garrison ever made, in

1833, took 42 days on a sailing packet. His last return from Europe, in 1877, took 10 days by steam. For early nineteenth-century reformers on both sides of the ocean, such transformations proved that a “new era [had] dawned upon the world,” a world in which parochial patriotism would have to be supplanted by philanthropy. At an international peace conference held in Paris in 1849, Henry Vincent—one of the English Chartists with whom Garrisonians corresponded—argued that steam “breaks down the barriers of distance and time—it runs nation into nation, annihilating and scattering national hatreds around it.”⁸

For many Garrisonians, Atlantic crossings were intimately connected to a sense of themselves as citizens of the world, a self-image that seemed to befit a world that was shrinking around them. That self-image, in turn, buttressed their sense of moral authority in conflicts over slavery. In 1848, for example, Maria Weston Chapman, one of Garrison’s closest allies in Boston, moved with her daughters to Paris, where she and other Garrisonians would attend the conference at which Vincent praised steam power. Chapman went to Paris because she wanted her daughters to have a European education, but in a letter to an English Garrisonian, she explained that her motives for travel were broader. “It is good to become cosmopolitan ... & to be able to say with an experimental feeling, ‘My Country is the World My Countrymen are all Mankind,’” she said, because “foolish pride & patriotism ... does more to sustain slavery than any thing else, except

⁸ N. P. Rogers, “British Abolitionism,” *Liberty Bell* (1842), 97-98; Arnold Buffum, “World’s Convention,” *NASS*, 20 January 1848 (“new era”); *Report of the Proceedings of the Second General Peace Congress, Held in Paris, on the 22nd, 23rd and 24th of August, 1849* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1849), 31. For other representative statements about the power of steam see “Letter from Richard Allen, of Dublin,” *Liberator*, 13 March 1846; WLJ to RDW, 1 March 1845, LWLG, 3:282-83; WLJ to Elizabeth Pease, 31 July 1849, LWLG, 3:646. For the lengths of Garrison’s trips, each number represents the number of days for a one-way crossing, rounded up to the nearest whole day, between Boston and Garrison’s English port, which was sometimes Liverpool and sometimes London. I have compiled the figures from Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, and LWLG.

the love of power & money.” “Our Country, Right or Wrong,” a popular antebellum slogan, was “apt to be the war-cry of those who have seen no country but their own.” But “Our Country is the World” indicated that Garrisonians were “excepted” from such naïve chauvinism. “To them the *cause* has acted as an inspiration on this ground as well as on many others.”⁹

*

This dissertation is a transnational and intellectual history of abolitionists’ networks in, experiences of, and thinking about the world outside the United States. Focusing on the writings and activities of Garrisonians, and spanning the antebellum period from 1830 through the 1850s, the dissertation develops three main themes. First, it shows that the Garrisonians participated in extensive friendship networks with reformers abroad, and that these networks facilitated transatlantic dialogue on a variety of subjects. Second, it argues that by listening in on these transatlantic conversations, we can revise caricatured portraits of the Garrisonians as the anti-political pariahs of the antislavery movement. Third, and most important, it explores the evolution of Garrisonian ideas about nations, patriotism, and cosmopolitanism, which were shaped, I will argue, by conversations with reformers abroad.

The first goal of the dissertation is to examine the kinds of transatlantic networks that brought Europeans like Follen to Boston, sent Americans like Chapman to Paris, and created communities of discourse between Garrisonians on both sides of the Atlantic. Historians have long known that networks between American and British abolitionists existed. But while building on the work of earlier historians, my dissertation departs

⁹ MWC to Elizabeth Pease, 25 December 1849, Ms.A.1.2.18.88, BPL.

from them by reassessing the nature and significance of the abolitionists' transatlantic networks.

According to earlier scholars, transatlantic cooperation between abolitionists began with high hopes but ended, as David Turley puts it, with "disenchantment," little "practical success," and a decidedly "mixed outcome." By the mid-1840s, "the value of Anglo-American co-operation and the true depth of a transatlantic reform culture were brought into question."¹⁰ If judged by the standard of "practical success," it is true that the results of Anglo-American antislavery cooperation were mixed. Abolitionists failed to establish any truly international antislavery societies, thanks in part to internal divisions in the movement, and the "World's Convention" of 1840 was followed by only one disappointing sequel in 1843. Neither convention realized the organizers' goals of placing international pressure on the governments of slaveholding countries. Yet there are other standards by which to measure the significance of Garrisonians' transatlantic

¹⁰ David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780-1860* (London: Routledge, 1991), 205, 206, 217. See Annie Heloise Abel and Frank J. Klingberg, *A Side-Light on Anglo-American Relations, 1839-1858: Furnished by the Correspondence of Lewis Tappan and Others with the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society* (Lancaster, PA: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc., 1927); Frank Thistlethwaite, *The Anglo-American Connection in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959); Betty Fladland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Antislavery Cooperation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972); Christine Bolt, *The Anti-Slavery Movement and Reconstruction: A Study in Anglo-American Co-Operation, 1833-77* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery, 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972); Clare Taylor, ed., *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974); R. J. M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983). A focus on the transatlantic dimensions of abolitionism informed and shaped the magisterial works of David Brion Davis, including *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975); and *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). Scholarship on abolitionism in a broad Atlantic context has also grown up with scholarship on slavery itself as a global system. See Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1988); Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London: Verso, 1997); David Brion Davis, "Looking at Slavery from Broader Perspectives," *AHR* 105 (April 2000): 452-466. Most recently, for a rousing narrative of the British abolitionist movement that pays attention to its broader Atlantic context, see Adam Hochschild, *Bury These Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

networks. Judged as formal structures, those networks were always weak. But judged as communities of friendship, they were vital and vibrant.

To borrow a term from intellectual historians, my dissertation treats Garrisonian networks as “communities of discourse.” Garrisonians were not intellectuals in the sense of being systematic thinkers who strive, above all, to develop coherent bodies of thought. But few historians now define “intellectuals” in such a restrictive way as to require that they be coherent. As David Hollinger writes, it is more useful to see intellectuals as articulate people who belong to a discursive community—that is, people who participate with a group of like-minded thinkers in the intellectual and social acts of exchanging ideas, asking shared questions, and probing the “points of contact between minds.” If intellectuals are defined less by the achievement of consensus than by this activity of conversation, then Garrisonians were intellectuals, and together with European reformers they created active intellectual communities. Much like James Kloppenberg’s study of fin-de-siècle thinkers in Europe and the United States, my work argues that Garrisonian ideas were “shaped within a transatlantic community of discourse rather than a parochial national frame of reference.”¹¹

¹¹ David Hollinger, “Historians and the Discourse of Intellectuals,” in *In the American Province: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ideas* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 130-151, quoted on p. 132; James Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 10. My interpretation of the Garrisonians’ networks also draws inspiration from recent scholarship on transnational reform movements in the Progressive era: see Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Ian Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods: Californian-Australian Environmental Reform, 1860-1930* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999); Ian Tyrrell, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire: The Women’s Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Deirdre M. Moloney, *American Catholic Lay Groups and Transatlantic Social Reform in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Alan Dawley, *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Leila J. Rupp, “Constructing Internationalism: The Case of Transnational Women’s Organizations, 1888-1945,” *AHR* 99, no. 5 (December 1994): 1571-1572; Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women’s Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). My work is also similar

As a group, Garrisonians can be distinguished from other abolitionists by several key ideas. First, unlike advocates of gradual emancipation or African colonization, they called for the immediate emancipation of slaves. Believing that God had made “of one blood” all nations, Garrisonians argued for the full social and civil equality of free blacks, even to the point of opposing anti-miscegenation laws. But even among “immediatists,” Garrisonians adopted a series of radical ideas that set them apart. Many defended the rights of women to speak publicly before mixed audiences and to serve in official roles in antislavery organizations. That view divided them from evangelical immediatists like Lewis Tappan, as did the religious heterodoxy of many Garrisonians. After 1837, Garrisonians further alienated themselves from men like Tappan when many became “non-resistants.” Non-resistance was a version of Christian pacifism and anarchism that defined human government as sinful. Recognizing only the government of God, Garrison and his fellow “non-resistants” declared themselves opposed to any use of political means—including voting and running for office—even in the pursuit of ends like the abolition of slavery.¹²

The heresy of non-resistance was the last straw for Garrison’s multiplying critics inside the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS), the organization of immediatists he had helped to found in 1833. In 1840, evangelical abolitionists seceded from the AASS, along with those who supported the formation of an abolitionist political party. In the early 1840s, many black abolitionists, who had once been Garrison’s leading allies, also

to recent studies of antebellum feminism that stress the movement’s transnational dimensions: Bonnie S. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women’s Movement, 1830-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Margaret H. McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998).

¹² For the most thorough discussion of non-resistance, see Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought* (1973; repr., Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995).

moved away from Garrisonians, both because they shared the reservations of political and evangelical abolitionists and, in some cases, because they disagreed with the non-resistants' rigid strictures against the use of violence, even in self-defense. Four years after its "schism," the AASS—whose remnant was still controlled by the Garrisonians—further radicalized itself by adopting a new doctrine: "No Union with Slaveholders." Condemning the Constitution as a "covenant with death" and an "agreement with hell," Garrison called for disunion between North and South and the withdrawal of abolitionists from participation in politics. Only by coming out of the Union could Northerners be cleared of guilt for slavery.

The "woman question," religious heterodoxy, non-resistance, no-governmentism, disunionism: in the minds of their critics, these ideas marked Garrisonians as heretics, fanatics, or both. One of the deepest cleavages between Garrison and other abolitionists proved to be his belief that the Constitution itself was a proslavery document, a view that cost him the support not only of abolitionists like James Birney and Joshua Leavitt in the Liberty Party, but also of Frederick Douglass, the one-time Garrisonian who concluded by 1851 that "there was no necessity for dissolving the 'union between the northern and southern states;' that to seek this dissolution was no part of my duty as an abolitionist; that to abstain from voting, was to refuse to exercise a legitimate and powerful means for abolishing slavery; and that the constitution of the United States not only contained no guarantees in favor of slavery, but, on the contrary, [was], in its letter and spirit, an anti-slavery instrument."¹³

¹³ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, ed. John David Smith (New York: Penguin, 2003), 292.

Historians have favored Douglass over Garrison on these same points. Indeed, prevailing opinions of the Garrisonians are still very similar to those of their antebellum critics. Although historians in the 1960s and 1970s often argued that the schism between Garrisonians, Tappanites, and political abolitionists had been overdrawn, many scholars still portray Garrisonians as impractical, puritanical, and anti-institutional cranks, whose views on the Union marginalized their role in the antislavery movement to the point of irrelevance.¹⁴ While praising the courageous willingness of political abolitionists to attack the “Slave Power” on the hustings and at the ballot box, many historians implicitly or explicitly criticize the “no-voting” Garrisonians, who refused to roll up their sleeves and do the dirty work of politics.¹⁵

The Garrisonians’ reputation as anti-political idealists was, no doubt, well earned. But in this dissertation, I will argue that the Garrisonians’ views on subjects like politics and disunion take on a different aspect when viewed from a transnational perspective. For example, the Garrisonians’ affinity with radical political movements in Europe shows that their ideas were more complex than caricatured portraits of them allow. At the same time that Garrisonians opposed voting in America, they endorsed the aims of the British

¹⁴ For earlier scholarship on the schism that emphasized the similarities that remained between the parties, see Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830* (1978; repr., New York: W. W. Norton, 1984); Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (1969; repr., Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1989); James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery*, rev. ed. (1976; New York: Hill and Wang, 1997); Stewart, “The Aims and Impact of Garrisonian Abolitionism, 1840-1860,” *Civil War History* 15, no. 3 (1969): 197-209; Walters, “The Boundaries of Abolitionism,” in *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, ed. Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 3-23.

¹⁵ See, most recently, Bruce Laurie, *Beyond Garrison: Antislavery and Social Reform* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-5; Frederick J. Blue, *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Don. E. Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government’s Relations to Slavery*, completed and edited by Ward M. McAfee (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 12-13; John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 19-20, 42, 153-156.

Chartists, working-class radicals who were agitating for universal suffrage and political democratization. Garrisonians also saw their calls for “disunion” as similar to the calls of Irish radicals for a “Repeal of the Union” between Ireland and England. Noticing such analogies in Garrisonian discourse, I will argue, helps reveal a side of their thinking that was sensitive to political strategy.

Moreover, although Garrisonians accused political abolitionists in the Free Soil movement and the Republican Party of caring more about defeating the “Slave Power” than rescuing the slave, their own discourses with European reformers reveal that they, like other abolitionists, viewed the “Slave Power” as a threat to democracy. Although they abstained from the ballot box, Garrisonians agreed with political abolitionists that slavery’s grip on the federal government was choking the life of the republic. But to pry that grip loose, they favored a kind of popular radicalism that more closely resembled the extraparlimentary agitation of Repealers and Chartists than the third-party organization of the Liberty Party and the Republicans.

By placing the Garrisonians’ ideas in a transnational frame of reference, then, it is easier to see points of agreement even between abolitionists as divided as Garrisonians and Free Soilers. Seeing those points of agreement, tentative though they were, can help historians understand how, by the 1860s, so many Garrisonians who were once non-resistants and disunionists had become such staunch supporters of the Union and the Republican Party. To become Republican partisans, as even Garrison did, required Garrisonians to reverse many of their opinions. But on a deeper level, Garrisonians became Republicans because they agreed that republican government was imperiled whenever power was concentrated in the hands of a single class, particularly a class of

slaveholders. And that belief, along with the faith in democracy that supported it, bubbled beneath the surface of Garrisonian discourse even in the 1840s, often rising to the surface in their discourses with European reformers on radical politics abroad.

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This dissertation also examines how Garrisonian ideas *about* nations were forged in the context of *transnational* networks. Over the course of the antebellum period, in conjunction with other thinkers and abolitionists, Garrisonians developed a concept of the nation that contemporary theorists would classify as *civic nationalism*. Civic nationalists differ from so-called *ethnic* or *ethnoracial* nationalists on the criteria for membership in a national community. For ethnoracial nationalists, membership in a national community is limited to individuals possessing certain ethnic or racial traits. Belonging to a nation is therefore involuntary, since it is ostensibly determined by membership in a prior, even primordial, social group, defined by descent, by phenotype, by shared cultural traditions, or by some combination of all these characteristics. This idea of the nation contrasts with a *civic* concept of nationality. Civic nationalists see the nation as a political community, whose citizens are united not by racial or cultural homogeneity, but by their juridical status and voluntary consent to a certain set of political principles. A nation, on this view, is a community united under a territorially bounded system of government and law, a community that can be joined either by virtue of nativity or through an open process of legal naturalization.¹⁶

¹⁶ Both historians and philosophers have made use of these broad designations, although historians have been more likely to point out that “actually existing” nationalism usually combines elements of the two. Different scholars also use different names to distinguish these two kinds of nationalism. By using the terms “civic” and “ethnoracial,” I am adopting the terminology of, among others, David Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 131-36. See also, from a large literature, Liah Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.:

Nineteenth-century ideas about nations seldom followed those tidy contemporary distinctions between civic and ethnoracial nationalism. As historian Dorothy Ross has recently demonstrated, ideas about nations were especially contested and unstable among antebellum American intellectuals, even as social and political changes in the early nineteenth century raised urgent questions about how wide to draw what David Hollinger calls “the circle of the we.” The growth of antislavery sentiment raised the question of whether slaves and free African Americans could belong to the nation, while the arrival of waves of Catholic immigrants from Europe challenged the myth of Protestant unity as a basis for national community. The fact that the United States was characterized by such cultural and racial heterogeneity was problematic for nineteenth-century theorists who were influenced by German theories of the nation, which imagined the nation as an organically unified “people” or *Volk*, extended through time and marked by identifiable ethnoracial traits.¹⁷

In the antebellum period, abolitionists offered the most radical defenses of what scholars now call civic nationalism.¹⁸ Since radical abolitionists advocated emancipation, without the expatriation of freed slaves, they were inclined against the prevalent idea that a nation had to be racially homogenous. To be sure, even abolitionists often believed that

Harvard University Press, 1992), 9-14; Maurizio Viroli, *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Chaim Gans, *The Limits of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 7-38.

¹⁷ See Dorothy Ross, “Are We a Nation?: The Conjunction of Nationhood and Race in the United States, 1850-1876,” *Modern Intellectual History* 2, no. 3 (2005), 327-360; David A. Hollinger, “Amalgamation and Hypodescent: The Question of Ethnoracial Mixture in the History of the United States,” *AHR* 108, no. 5 (2003), <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/108.5/hollinger.html>. On the “circle of the we,” see also Hollinger, “How Wide the Circle of the ‘We’? American Intellectuals and the Problem of the Ethnos since World War II,” in *Scientific Authority and Twentieth-Century America*, ed. Ronald G. Walters (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 13-31.

¹⁸ See Ross, “Are We a Nation?,” 355-60; Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 129-59; Roosevelt Montás, “Rethinking America: Abolitionism and the Antebellum Transformation of the Discourse of National Identity” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2004).

a nation was defined, at least in part, by shared traits like language, religion, culture, and a bank of common historical memories. By the end of the Civil War, however, they increasingly argued that the nation was a political community, whose membership was open to individuals of any ethnic or racial group. This concept of the nation animated the abolitionists' advocacy of Radical Reconstruction and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. In 1862, Wendell Phillips, a leading Garrisonian and disunionist in the antebellum period, envisioned a postwar United States as the "civic" nation par excellence, a nation with "no Yankee, no Buckeye, no Hoosier, no Sucker, no native, no foreigner, no black, no white, no German, no Saxon; ... only American citizens, with one law impartial over all."¹⁹

Phillips and other Garrisonians had begun to articulate that concept of the nation even before the War. In a remarkable speech delivered on the lyceum circuit in 1859, Phillips declared that his "idea of American nationality makes it the last best growth of the thoughtful mind of the century, treading under foot sex and race, caste and condition, and collecting ... under the shelter of noble, just, and equal laws, all races, all customs, all religions, all languages, all literature, and all ideas." To illustrate his commitment to this idea of nationality, Phillips recounted the story of a Milwaukee resident who had recently tried to cremate the body of his wife, who was born in Asia, "according to the custom of her forefathers." The man was forced by an angry mob, led by the local sheriff, to "submit to American funeral rites, which his soul abhorred." Such coerced homogeneity was "not my idea of American civilization," said Phillips, whose wartime

¹⁹ Phillips quoted in James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 221.

speeches only reinforced this prewar idea of the nation as a heterogeneous community, sheltered and united by “equal laws.”²⁰

The concept of the nation that Phillips described in 1859 is startling, not only for the clarity with which it anticipated later visions of a “transnational America” described by thinkers like Randolph Bourne and W. E. B. Du Bois, but also for its uniqueness in a period when most white Americans subscribed to racist or nativist forms of nationalism. Even many antislavery Northerners supported the colonization of free blacks to Africa, far beyond the circle of the “we.” The concept of a civic nation was still inchoate in the antebellum period, and even Phillips often rooted American national identity in a notion of descent from Anglo-Saxon traditions. Yet given the fact that so many antebellum Americans could only imagine a nation founded on what George M. Fredrickson calls the “ideal of racial homogeneity,” it is impossible not to wonder how a Boston Brahmin like Phillips, weaned on the same ideas about nations as his contemporaries, came to imagine a nation in which, as he put it in 1864, there was but “one idea—the harmonizing and equal mingling of all races.”²¹

In envisioning America as a civic nation, Garrisonians like Phillips claimed that they were defending the nation’s own founding ideals, as outlined in the Declaration of Independence. The rudiments of civic nationalism were available in American political

²⁰ Wendell Phillips, “Idols,” in *Speeches, Lectures, and Letters* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1872), 243-44. On Phillips’ wartime views of nationality, see Lawson, *Patriot Fires*, 132-40; James Brewer Stewart, *Wendell Phillips: Liberty’s Hero* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 209-95.

²¹ Phillips quoted in Lawson, *Patriot Fires*, 138. On “the ideal of racial homogeneity,” see George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (1971; repr., Hanover, N. H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987). On later theorists, see Jonathan M. Hansen, *The Lost Promise of Patriotism: Debating American Identity, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); David A. Hollinger, “Ethnic Diversity, Cosmopolitanism, and the Emergence of the American Liberal Intelligentsia,” in *In the American Province: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ideas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 56-73; Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

discourse from the very beginning of the nation, since many thinkers argued that the United States, lacking the ethnic, racial and cultural cohesion supposedly enjoyed by the nations of the Old World, was an exceptional nation, conceived in liberty instead of in bloodlines. The idea of the United States as a political community was central to the myth of American exceptionalism in the nineteenth century—“the idea,” as Dorothy Ross puts it, “that America occupies a place in history significantly different from that of any other country in the world.”²²

But the Garrisonians’ thinking about nationalism was by no means an inevitable byproduct of the fact that they lived in the United States. Instead, this dissertation shows that Garrisonian ideas about civic nationalism were produced in part by transnational exchanges.²³ The Garrisonians’ radical views on slavery, the Constitution and the Union led them to deny that the nation was significantly different from the countries of the Old

²² See Dorothy Ross, “American Exceptionalism,” in *A Companion to American Thought*, ed. Richard Wightman Fox and James T. Kloppenberg, (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995), 22-23. See also Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22-50; Yehoshua Arieli, *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964).

²³ By arguing that the Garrisonians’ views about nations were shaped by transnational processes, this dissertation joins recent theoretical works on “transnational history,” which challenge American exceptionalism by imbricating the history of the United States with the history of other nations. See David Thelen, “The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History,” *JAH* 86, no. 3 (1999), <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jah/86.3/thelen.html>; Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Daniel T. Rodgers, “Exceptionalism,” in *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past*, ed. Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 21-40; Ian Tyrrell, “American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History,” *AHR* 96, no. 4 (October 1991): 1031-1055; David Thelen, “Of Audiences, Borderlands, and Comparisons: Toward the Internationalization of American History,” *JAH* 79, no. 2 (1992): 432-62; Thelen, “Making History and Making the United States,” *Journal of American Studies* 32, no. 3 (1998): 373-397; Joyce Appleby, “Recovering America’s Historic Diversity: Beyond Exceptionalism,” *JAH* 79, no. 2 (1992): 419-31; Laurence Veysey, “The Autonomy of American History Reconsidered,” *American Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (Autumn 1979): 455-77. For stimulating critiques of transnational history, see Louis A. Pérez, Jr., “We are the World: Internationalizing the National, Nationalizing the International,” *JAH* 89, no. 2 (September 2002): 558-68; Michael McGerr, “The Price of the ‘New Transnational History,’” *AHR* 96, no. 4 (October 1991): 1056-67; Ron Robin, “The Exhaustion of Enclosures: A Critique of Internationalization,” in Bender, *Rethinking American History*, 367-80; David A. Hollinger, “The Historian’s Use of the United States and Vice Versa,” in Bender, *Rethinking American History*, 381-96.

World. While Americans boasted that their country was a model republic, Garrisonians often argued that slavery made the government of the country similar to the despotisms and aristocracies of Europe. While Garrisonians declared that they were the defenders of the Declaration's ideals, they also argued that the actually existing United States made the Declaration a sham, since it had been conceived, not in liberty, but in compromises that allowed slavery and liberty to coexist in the Constitutional framework of the nation. For Garrisonians, in short, it was by no means obvious that American nationalism was a "civic" nationalism. On the contrary, it was obvious to them that the nationalism of their contemporaries was based on racism and exclusion.

There were two ways, however, in which the transnational aspects of Garrisonian abolitionism aided the development of a civic nationalism untainted, as American nationalism was, by the ideal of racial homogeneity and the reality of slavery. First, the Garrisonians' transatlantic networks brought them into contact with thinkers and activists like Giuseppe Mazzini and Daniel O'Connell, who were also articulating a broadly civic conception of nationhood in Italy and Ireland. The ideas of such European thinkers, not just the ideas of American thinkers, helped Garrisonians articulate the idea of nationality that Phillips praised in 1859. The British reform movements with which the Garrisonians became involved, like Chartism and Corn Law Repeal, were also efforts to challenge a concept of British national identity founded on ethnic or cultural traits instead of political ones. Questions about what constituted a nation also came to a head in 1848, when a wave of nationalist revolutions swept Europe. As we will see, the Garrisonians' reflections on such foreign events helped shape their ideas about nations, undermining the exceptionalist thesis that the development of civic nationalism belongs uniquely to the

history of the United States. The Garrisonians' ideas were shaped in part by their participation in transnational communities of discourse, not just by their elucidation of latent American ideals.

The Garrisonians' transnational networks were also important because these networks modeled the kind of community that Garrisonians attributed to a civic nation. In the nineteenth century, as today, civic nationalists had to explain how a population of people, dispersed over a vast territory, could imagine themselves as part of a single community, especially in the absence of the ties that race and ethnicity presumably supplied. The Garrisonians' ability to imagine themselves as part of a transnational community of reformers provided some answers to that problem. Their sense of affiliation with a far-flung group of friends abroad helped them imagine a culturally heterogeneous, geographically extended *national* community. Antislavery associations reflected ideas about national association, and vice versa. In 1853, for instance, Phillips argued that antislavery organizations "gather[ed] all creeds and opinions in an united effort against Slavery." The same vision characterized his idea of the nation six years later. When Phillips said, regarding "the Anti-Slavery platform," that "the Hindoo, the Mohammedan, the Infidel, or the Atheist, who will help me lift the chain from the slave ... has as much right here as I have," *here* referred as much to the nation as the antislavery platform.²⁴

²⁴ *Proceedings of the American Anti-Slavery Society, at its Second Decade, held in the City of Philadelphia, Dec. 3d, 4th and 5th, 1853* (New York: American A[nti] S[lavery] Society, 1854), 105. Henry Clarke Wright also argued, in 1846, that "Anti-Slavery is a question of Humanity, not of sect, or nation. ... so I would not ask whether a man be a Jew, Mahometan, Heathen, or Christian, as a preliminary to co-operation in the abolition of Slavery. Such is the broad principle of Human Brotherhood on which the Anti-Slavery Movement in America is based." Such, too, was the principle of civic nationalism, which did not ask about a person's religious or cultural affiliations as "a preliminary" to inclusion in the nation. Wright, *First Day Sabbath Not of Divine Appointment ...* (Glasgow: William Symington Brown, 1846), 3.

Garrisonians, it should be noted, were not the only abolitionists to develop a concept of civic nationality. The idea of a nation united by ideals, rather than race or ethnicity or culture, was articulated also by Phillips' friend Charles Sumner, one of the architects of Radical Reconstruction, and by Frederick Douglass, who despite parting ways with Garrisonian disunionists always agreed with them in placing abolition and nationalism on "the broad platform of Philanthropy—whose country is the world, and whose countrymen are all mankind. On this platform," Douglass said in an 1847 speech, "we are neither Jews nor Greeks, strangers nor foreigners, but fellow citizens of the household of faith." During and after the Civil War, Douglass would join Phillips as two of the most prominent spokespersons for a "civic nation," or what Douglass called a "composite nationality."²⁵

The similarity between Douglass's and Phillips' concepts of the nation and their descriptions of the antislavery platform provides a good opportunity to note what this dissertation does not purport to do. It does not argue that Garrisonians were the only abolitionists engaged in active transatlantic discursive communities, or that Garrisonians alone were interested in British reform movements. Extensive scholarship exists, for instance, on the circulation of non-Garrisonian black abolitionists in what Paul Gilroy calls the "Black Atlantic," and on the innovative ideas about nationality that the "Black Atlantic" nurtured among African American activists.²⁶ I have focused on Garrisonians

²⁵ "West India Emancipation," in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, vol. 2, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: International Publishers, 1950-1955), 434. On Douglass's views on nationality, see Ross, "'Are We a Nation?'" 357-8; Lawson, *Patriot Fires*, 141-48; Waldo E. Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 197-224.

²⁶ See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall*; Mitch Kachun, "'Our Platform Is as Broad as Humanity': Transatlantic Freedom Movements and the Idea of Progress in Nineteenth-Century African American Thought and Activism," *Slavery and Abolition* 24, no. 3 (December 2003): 1-23; Lamin

in part because of my desire to understand a particular discursive community and its operations in depth, and in part because the transatlantic interests and activism of other abolitionists and reformers were often guided by ideological and strategic imperatives that were different from those of Garrisonians. For black abolitionists, to give one example, debates about nationality and transatlantic reform were often entangled with debates about emigrationism and black nationalism that did not concern Garrisonians as directly. Sometimes, those debates led black abolitionists like Martin Delany and Henry Highland Garnet—both of whom made Atlantic crossings of their own—to articulate concepts of nationality and nationalism quite different from those developed by white Garrisonians like Phillips.²⁷ But the Garrisonians' development of civic nationalism, while not unique to them, is especially illuminating of this dissertation's themes. With the exception of some black abolitionists, no group of abolitionists began their careers by rejecting the nation, its institutions, its leaders, and its founding documents so absolutely. And since Garrisonians distanced themselves so drastically from the myths of American exceptionalism, they throw into especially stark relief how transnational influences could help shape civic nationalism.

Closely related to their development of civic nationalism was their effort to articulate a complementary concept of patriotism. Prevailing ideas of patriotism in the antebellum period compared love for country to love for one's family. But that definition

Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Audrey A. Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England: Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Alan J. Rice & Martin Crawford, eds., *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass & Transatlantic Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999).

²⁷ See Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 209-36; Robert S. Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); C. Peter Ripley and others, eds., *Witness for Freedom: African American Voices on Race, Slavery, and Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), esp. pp. 126, 185-200.

of patriotism was almost always exclusionary: it excused the patriot's partiality for his country by likening it to a father's instinctive and natural love for his son or a husband's love for his wife. According to Orville Dewey, a Boston Unitarian and a critic of the Garrisonians, "all men feel" some "mysterious ties and sympathies" for their native soil, "that spot where my childhood grew, where my parents have lived, and my kindred shall live after me." Patriotism was ordained by "the God of Nations," Dewey suggested, and "we *are* not—and we *ought* not—to care for England and France, as we do for our own country."²⁸

Throughout the antebellum period, Garrisonians described the kind of patriotism that Dewey defended as narrow and selfish. In 1833, when Garrison made the first of his Atlantic crossings, he told an audience in London that he "sacrificed all my national, complexional and local prejudices upon the altar of Christian love, and breaking down the narrow boundaries of a selfish patriotism, inscribed upon my banner this motto:—*My country is the world, my countrymen are all mankind.*" Garrisonians claimed to possess an impartial sympathy that, as Garrisonian Henry Clarke Wright put it while traveling through Europe in 1844, was "antecedent to & independent of all ties of relationship such as husband & wife, parent & child, brother & sister, friend or benefactor." The ties of humanity were "above all *religious* ties that bind men together as Christians, as pagans, as Idolaters, as Mahometans or Jews," just as they were "above all *national* ties that bind men together as Austrians, Prussians, Russians, Chinese, or French."²⁹

²⁸ Orville Dewey, *On Patriotism: The Condition, Prospects, and Duties of the American People: A Sermon Delivered on Fast Day at Church Green, Boston* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1859), 4, 36.

²⁹ *Speeches Delivered at the Anti-Colonization Meeting in Exeter Hall, London, July 13, 1833* (Boston: Garrison & Knapp, 1833), 4; Wright's Journals (BPL), vol. 27, 7-8 (28 February 1844).

Such ideas were crucial to the Garrisonians' civic nationalism. But it was this kind of thinking, which seemed to set at naught "all social duties and sympathies, all feelings of patriotism," that disturbed critics like Dewey and Paulding. "The equal lover of 'the entire human race,'" said the latter, "such as Mr. Garrison and his associates, is in effect a traitor to his country, a bad citizen, a coldhearted friend, a worthless husband, and an unnatural father, if he acts up to his principles. ... His heart is never at home." The Garrisonians' philanthropy was rootless and opposed to the "ties and associations that form the cement of families, neighbourhoods, and communities, the solace of human life." Impartial love for humanity was indifference to homeland, and charity afar was spite at home.³⁰

Abolitionists, however, denied that the precedence of human brotherhood made them love their homes or countries any less. In 1860, Garrison conceded that because abolitionists were fighting an evil as "colossal" as slavery, it was natural that they would be "seemingly in antagonism" to "the whole social, political and religious structure" of society. Surely, such a reformer "cannot be a good citizen ... He cannot be sane. ... He cannot love his country." But even as Garrisonians claimed to resist the impulse of selfish patriotism, they also claimed to feel affection for their native countries and to be rooted in them, for better or for worse. Nathaniel Rogers, one of Garrison's closest associates, advised Richard D. Webb, an important Irish Garrisonian, not to emigrate, but to work for reform in his "*Homeland*." "God has claims on us in the lot where he casts our birth." Garrison expressed similar sentiments in 1846, on the eve of his third crossing of the Atlantic. "It is true that my country is the world and my countrymen are

³⁰ Paulding, *Slavery*, 281, 305-6.

all mankind,” he told a farewell meeting. “Yet I love this country as I love no other land; I love Massachusetts as I love no other State. I love Boston as I love no other city, and my home as I love no other spot of earth.” Borrowing contemporary phrenological terms, he insisted that his “organs of inhabitativeness and adhesiveness are ... of unusual strength.”³¹

Such professions of adhesiveness were, of course, partly attempts to answer the charges of critics like Paulding that the Garrisonians cared nothing for the ties of hearth and home. But they also suggest that Garrisonians were developing a version of what contemporary theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah calls “rooted cosmopolitanism” or “cosmopolitan patriotism.”³² As patriots, Garrisonians claimed to care deeply for the communities in which they lived, and there was nothing wrong, they argued, with loving one’s native soil. There was even nothing necessarily wrong with appreciating the cultural traditions of one’s homeland. In the same London speech in which Garrison forswore “national prejudices,” he noted that “there must be limits to civil governments and national domains. There must be names to distinguish the natural divisions of the earth, and the dwellers thereon. There must be varieties in the form, color, stature, and condition of mankind. All these may exist, not only without injury, but with the highest possible advantage.” But as *cosmopolitan* patriots, Garrisonians insisted that love for

³¹ William Lloyd Garrison, *The “Infidelity” of Abolitionism*, Anti-Slavery Tracts, New Series (1860; repr., Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 4; Nathaniel P. Rogers to RDW, 28 March 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.126; *Proceedings of a Crowded Meeting of the Colored Population of Boston, Assembled the 15th July, 1846, for the Purpose of Bidding Farewell to William Lloyd Garrison, on His Departure for England* (Dublin: Webb and Chapman, 1846), 6-7. After his return from a second trip to England in 1840, Garrison exclaimed in a letter to his brother-in-law, “Give me the land of my nativity above all other lands.” WLW to George W. Benson, 18 August 1840, LWLG, 2:676.

³² See Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Cosmopolitan Patriots,” in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 91-114; Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 213-72.

one's own country and customs, while not vicious in and of itself, could not become an excuse for hatred or oppression. Whenever national borders "are made the boundaries of human disinterestedness, friendship, sympathy, honor, patriotism and love," Garrison concluded in his London speech, "they are as execrable and destructive, as, otherwise, they are beautiful and preservative."³³

It followed that the hallmark of cosmopolitan patriotism, for Garrisonians, was the duty to criticize one's country whenever its practices became exclusive, "execrable and destructive." This patriotism diverged from what Tocqueville called the "irritable patriotism" of their fellow Americans, which "stoops to all the childishness of personal vanity." "The foreigner would be very willing to praise much in their country," noted Tocqueville of the Americans he met, "but would like to be allowed a few criticisms; that is exactly what he is refused." Garrisonians considered their patriotism to be "of a different stamp." It allowed, even demanded, criticism of the country and its institutions when they were in the wrong.³⁴

To insist that patriotism include the right to criticize their country was not a small thing for Garrisonians to do, in a period when even some Americans who were critical of slavery would brook no suggestion that the whole country was to blame. "I will listen to any high patriotic adjuration, to any solemn admonition," said Orville Dewey in his 1859 discourse on patriotism, "but I will not *listen* to any cold and blighting disparagement."³⁵

But patriotism, according to the Garrisonians, was defined by a willingness to criticize

³³ *Speeches Delivered ... in Exeter Hall*, 4.

³⁴ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Gerald Bevan (London: Penguin, 2003), 277. See also vol. 2, pt. 1, chap. 16. On the "different stamp" of Garrisonians' "patriotism," see William Lloyd Garrison, *An Address Delivered before the Old Colony Anti-Slavery Society, at South Scituate, Mass., July 4, 1839* (Boston: Dow & Jackson, 1839), 6.

³⁵ Dewey, *On Patriotism*, 37.

one's country when it shirked the duties owed to a supranational community of human beings. That idea went hand in hand with a concept of the nation as a community united, not by ties of kindred, race, or culture, but by institutions of government and a collective adherence to certain ideas. For if the Garrisonians' countrymen were all mankind—the key idea of cosmopolitan patriotism—then all mankind could become countrymen—the defining idea of civic nationalism.

PART I
BECOMING COSMOPOLITANS

Chapter 1

The Nation's Descent

To understand the origins of Garrisonian ideas about nations, patriotism, and world citizenship, it is necessary to begin in the eighteenth century, because Garrison's famous motto, "Our Country is the World," did not originate with him. Forty years before the first issue of the *Liberator* appeared, Thomas Paine had claimed, in *Rights of Man*, "My country is the world, and my religion is to do good." As a result, Paine said, he judged laws and systems of government by the standards of "humanity and impartial reflection." Inspired by Enlightenment ideals of progress and universal reason, Paine claimed to be a citizen of the world and did his best to act the part, becoming well known as a critic of established governments and religions on both sides of the Atlantic. In his legendary exchanges with Edmund Burke, Paine argued that hereditary principles of government were at war with the rights of man, and regardless of whether monarchical and aristocratic governments were found in Britain, America or France, they deserved to be replaced with republican governments, composed not by genealogical descent, but by the consent of the people.¹

Burke, along with other critics of Paine, saw such doctrines as untenable, for two related reasons. For him, good government gained its authority not just from principles, but from traditions, which were rooted in the histories of particular countries. Moreover, Burke argued that the best way to do good for the world was to begin by doing good in

¹ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 228. See also Thomas J. Schlereth, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in Enlightenment Thought: Its Form and Function in the Ideas of Franklin, Hume, and Voltaire, 1694-1790* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977).

one's own "subdivision" of the world: "to love the little platoon we belong to in society is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections." Burke did not discount love for the world, but local patriotism was "the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country and to mankind." A view like Paine's, by reversing the order of that series, would undermine public affections altogether. When speculative philosophers indulged in love for humanity, "nothing is left which engages the affections on the part of the commonwealth."²

Burke's critique of Paine's radical cosmopolitanism set the terms for transatlantic debates about patriotism in the 1790s.³ But these debates were entangled with already existing debates about slavery in the Atlantic World. Paine himself opposed slavery on the grounds that "all distinctions of nations, and privileges of one above others, are ceased." From the perspective of someone whose country was the world, it was wrong for Britons or Americans to claim the privilege of enslaving Africans. In the late 1700s, as antislavery sentiment grew and new attacks on slavery circulated in Britain and America, a nascent abolitionist movement emerged, gathering force not just from arguments like Paine's, but also from the mid-century testimonies of antislavery Quakers like Anthony Benezet and John Woolman. Men like Benezet and Woolman, together with antislavery Dissenters like Benjamin Rush and Granville Sharp, also appealed to a love for mankind and often accused slavery's apologists of being guided by narrow love for one's country, rather than by love for the entire human race. Two years before *Rights of Man* appeared, a poem printed in Philadelphia eulogized the late Benezet as a "citizen

² Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. J. C. D. Clark (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 240, 202.

³ See Evan Radcliffe, "Burke, Radical Cosmopolitanism, and the Debate on Patriotism in the 1790s," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 28 (1999): 311-339.

of the world,” who “regarded all Mankind as friends and countrymen,” instead of limiting his love to native country. “The World [was] thy country,” the poet said of Benezet, “and thy Friends MANKIND.”⁴

When eighteenth-century abolitionists claimed that the world was their country, those claims were informed not just by Paine’s radical cosmopolitanism, but also by the earlier writings of moral philosophers and Christian rationalists like Frances Hutcheson, who argued that “universal benevolence” was the God-given instinct of rational human beings. Hutcheson and his followers criticized the egoistic philosophies of thinkers like David Hume, who grounded their ethical systems on the principles of utility and “self-interest.” According to Hutchesonians, love for others was nobler than self-love and more in accordance with the dictates of a universe designed by a benevolent God. The Creator had endowed humans with a moral sense that enjoined them, in imitation of God, to extend their sympathy to all mankind.

On this view, love for one’s countrymen was more praiseworthy than self-love, but universal benevolence was better still, since it accorded with both reason and biblical revelation. The Christian idea of love for neighbors included even foreigners and enemies; the proverbial Good Samaritan had cared for a stranger from a hostile country. Judged by such standards of benevolence, it was both irreligious and irrational to love only the members of one’s native country. As the antislavery Dissenter Richard Price put it in a famous *Discourse on the Love of our Country*, true patriots did not limit affections to “the soil or the spot of earth on which [they] happen to be born,” nor was it benevolent

⁴ Thomas Paine, “African Slavery in America,” in *Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Philip S. Foner (2 vols., New York: The Citadel Press, 1945), 2:17; [Joseph Sansom], *A Poetical Epistle to the Enslaved Africans, in the Character of an Ancient Negro, Born a Slave in Pennsylvania ...* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1790).

to encourage a “spirit of rivalry and ambition” between nations. True patriotism was governed by “Universal Benevolence which is an unspeakably nobler principle than any partial affections.” Price admonished his listeners to “love [their country] ardently but not exclusively” and to see themselves “more as citizens of the world than as members of any particular community.”⁵

Eighteenth-century antislavery writers often invoked Hutchesonian ideas to attack European participation in the African slave trade.⁶ Enslaving Africans and stirring up war among African nations violated the dictates of universal benevolence and represented the nadir of selfish love for country, since Europeans would be horrified if their own kin or countrymen were similarly treated. In a passage that Benezet cited in his antislavery pamphlets, Hutcheson himself criticized the African slave trade because it broke the ties of universal benevolence that should have united all humanity. Benezet also published excerpts from a 1760 tract on the slave trade published in London by the pseudonymous author “J. Philmore,” which argued that “the kind and merciful Father of us all ... hath made of one Blood all Nations of Men.” That meant that “*European Whites and the African Blacks ... are Members of one and the same great Society spread over the Face of the whole Earth.*” But slavery broke the “Bond of Humanity ... the Foundation of all other particular Ties and Connections between Men, and gives Strength to them all:—A Patriot, or a Lover of his Country, is a brave Character; but a Lover of Mankind is a

⁵ “A Discourse on the Love of our Country,” in *Political Writings: Richard Price*, ed. D. O. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 178-79, 180-81, 193-94. On Hutchesonian moral philosophy and debates on patriotism, see Evan Radcliffe, “Revolutionary Writing, Moral Philosophy, and Universal Benevolence in the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54, no. 2 (April 1993): 221-240.

⁶ I trace the presence of Hutchesonian ideas about universal benevolence in early American abolitionism in much greater detail in “Philadelphia Abolitionists and Appeals to World Citizenship” (forthcoming).

braver Character.” Philmore continued that when he saw “an Englishman in distress, I pity him, if I can, more as being a man, than as being born in the same country, or as being a member of the same civil society with myself, more as a citizen in the world, than as a citizen of England.”⁷

By the end of the American Revolution, such antislavery arguments had gained enough adherents in America to inspire a wave of gradual abolition laws in the Northern portions of the new United States. The preamble to the first of these emancipation laws, passed in Pennsylvania in 1780, resonated with the arguments of writers like Benezet and Paine, both of whom have been credited with writing the bill. “It is not for us to enquire why, in the creation of mankind, the inhabitants of the several parts of the earth were distinguished by a difference in feature or complexion,” began the preamble. “It is sufficient to know that all are the work of an Almighty Hand.” There were differences among the peoples of the earth, but they were irrelevant from a moral point of view since all men were joined by ties of humanity. “Weaned ... from those narrow prejudices and partialities we had imbibed, we find our hearts enlarged with kindness and benevolence towards men of all conditions and nations.”⁸

The idea of a universal benevolence, unbounded by nations, inspired numerous antislavery appeals in the late eighteenth century. But it is important to note the limited

⁷ [J. Philmore,] *Two Dialogues on the Man-Trade* (London: Printed for J. Waugh, W. Fenner, G. Woodfall, W. Owen, and Mrs. Kingham, 1760), 9. On Hutchesonian antislavery arguments and Benezet’s use of them, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (1966; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 374-382, 487. On Philmore’s tract, see Davis, “New Sidelights on Early Antislavery Radicalism,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d. ser., 28, no. 4 (October 1971): 585-94.

⁸ *The Constitution of the Pennsylvania Society, for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery ... To which are added, the Acts of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania, for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery* (Philadelphia: Joseph James, 1787), 9. On Paine and Benezet as possible authors of the preamble to the Act of Gradual Abolition, see Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 77-80.

nature of these appeals. First, although eighteenth-century abolitionists enjoined benevolence towards suffering Africans, they did not always specify what benevolence entailed. Some writers only marshaled universal benevolence as a reason for opposing the slave *trade*, not slavery. Even when benevolence was thought to support the abolition of slavery, it was consistent with calls for gradual emancipation. Pennsylvania's state legislature justified its abolition law on the grounds of "kindness and benevolence," but as Gary Nash points out, "the 1780 law freed not a single slave; it held in slavery for life all children born up to the day the law took effect; and it consigned to twenty-eight years of bondage every child born of a slave after March 1, 1780. ... [T]otal abolition did not come in Pennsylvania until 1847."⁹

If antislavery appeals based on benevolence were seen as compatible with gradual emancipation, they also did not necessarily dictate the inclusion of people of color as full citizens in England or the United States. Indeed, far from urging the full inclusion of black Pennsylvanians in civil society as the equals of whites, the PAS excluded people of color from membership in its own society. To a certain degree, even the language of universal benevolence as a rationale for emancipation marked black people as aliens, foreigners, strangers—the objects of a selfless love that had to be very enlarged indeed in order to encompass them, not the objects of natural affection that one felt for countrymen. Upon the death of Benezet in 1784, Benjamin Rush wrote to Granville Sharp that "he seemed to possess a species of Quixotism in acts of piety and benevolence. He embraced all mankind in the circle of his love. Indians and Africans were as dear to him as the citizens of Pennsylvania." The implication, at least, was that "Africans" were not quite

⁹ See Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 60-65, quoted on p. 63.

the same as “citizens of Pennsylvania,” and that a circle of benevolence wide enough to include them was almost quixotic.¹⁰

It is also telling that the language of universal benevolence that coursed through eighteenth-century antislavery arguments was mobilized in the early nineteenth century by African “colonizationists.” Advocates of colonization, who organized the American Colonization Society in 1816, opposed slavery and urged its abolition, but simultaneously they supported the expatriation of black Americans to the African colony of Liberia. To oppose slavery on the grounds of benevolence, even on the grounds of world citizenship, was not necessarily to argue that the United States was a civic nation or that members of all races could be included as citizens in it. Antislavery sentiments could cohere with the ideal of a racially homogeneous nation.¹¹

Well into the antebellum period, advocates of colonization could oppose slavery yet also oppose the idea of a multiracial nation. Thomas Branagan, for instance, was a former sailor and plantation overseer who converted to Methodism—and abolitionism—after moving to Philadelphia in 1798. But far from being convinced of the equal status of blacks and whites, he remained obsessed with a fear of miscegenation and in 1805, he suggested that freed slaves could be relocated to a separate black nation in the Louisiana Purchase, where they could not prey on white women. Yet Branagan claimed in an autobiographical sketch, published in 1839, that he was “a citizen of the world,” and that

¹⁰ Benjamin Rush to Granville Sharp, 15 May 1784, in John A. Woods, “The Correspondence of Benjamin Rush and Granville Sharp, 1773-1809,” *Journal of American Studies* 1, no. 1 (1967): 23.

¹¹ On the American Colonization Society, see Douglas R. Egerton, “‘Its Origin is Not a Little Curious’: A New Look at the American Colonization Society,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 5, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 463-480; Fredrickson, *Black Image in the White Mind*, 6-27, 135. On the compatibility of gradual emancipation schemes with the ideal of a “white” nation, see Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and ‘Race’ in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), esp. 192-93.

he wished “all distinctions of parties might be done away. We are all the offspring of the same Universal Parent.” In defense of his antislavery, colonizationist views, Branagan said that “I love my country, I always have loved it; but for this cause, shall I cruelly treat one of another country?” Such professions of cosmopolitan love, while clearly arguments against slavery, were capable of becoming arguments for colonization: if a black person was “of another country,” then he or she belonged *in* another country.¹²

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The turn away from gradualism and colonizationism to calls for immediate emancipation constituted a major transformation in the antislavery movement. As Richard Newman has shown, that transformation paralleled a shift in the movement’s center of gravity from Pennsylvania to Massachusetts. Unlike the storied Pennsylvania Abolition Society, the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society (MASS), founded in 1832, was committed to forging a mass movement for the *immediate* emancipation of American slaves. Like the AASS, founded a year later, it also opposed colonizationism. William Lloyd Garrison and his new newspaper were at the center of this new movement, but Garrison himself had been a colonizationist as recently as 1829. His conversion to immediatism occurred as Garrison became more acquainted with black abolitionists in Boston, who emphatically rejected colonization.¹³

¹² Thomas Branagan, *The Guardian Genius of the Federal Union; or, Patriotic Admonitions on the Signs of the Times, in Relation to the Evil Spirit of Party, Arising from the Root of All Our Evils, Human Slavery; Being the First Part of the Beauties of Philanthropy* (New York: For the Author, 1839), 25-26. On Branagan, see Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 178-179; Beverly Tomek, “‘From Motives of Generosity, as well as Self-Preservation’: Thomas Branagan, Colonization, and the Gradual Emancipation Movement,” *American Nineteenth Century History* 6, no. 2 (June 2005): 121-147.

¹³ Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 5-64.

Black abolitionists like James Forten—one of Garrison’s earliest benefactors—had opposed the ACS from its earliest years, sensing that its program ultimately intended to create a nation free of black people. Perhaps because they also sensed how disavowals of patriotism, like those of Branagan, could easily turn into arguments for the expatriation of black Americans, abolitionists like Forten and his son-in-law Robert Purvis stressed their love for country. “Our expatriation has come to be a darling project with many of our fellow citizens,” Purvis noted in 1837, underlining that colonizationists were *fellow* citizens. But he declared “our abhorrence of a scheme which comes to us in the guise of Christian benevolence [a telling word], and asks us to suffer ourselves to be transplanted to a distant and barbarous land.” In answer to this guileful “benevolence,” Purvis said that free black citizens of the North “love our native country, much as it has wronged us; and in the peaceable exercise of our inalienable rights, we will cling to it. ... We are PENNSYLVANIANS,” he cried, asking his fellow citizens of the commonwealth, “Will you starve our patriotism?”¹⁴

To reject colonizationism meant to reject the idea that African Americans were somehow aliens and strangers in the United States. And that meant, in turn, to reject a concept of the United States as a racially homogeneous nation, into which black men and women could never be incorporated as full citizens and compatriots. When Garrison published a pamphlet-length attack on the American Colonization Society in 1832, he explicitly argued for the recognition of “the people of color as brethren and countrymen.”

¹⁴ Robert Purvis, “Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens, Threatened with Disfranchisement, to the People of Pennsylvania,” in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African-American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*, ed. Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Philip Lapsansky (New York: Routledge, 2001), 135. See also James Forten, “Series of Letters by a Man of Colour,” in *Pamphlets of Protest*, 66-73; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 233-45; Julie Winch, *A Gentleman of Color: The Life of James Forten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 195-206.

His critique of colonization rested on three major premises. The first had been embraced even by gradualists: the racially egalitarian idea that God had made all nations “of one blood.” But Garrison’s other two premises drew different implications out of that idea. As the equals of whites, African Americans were countrymen just by virtue of the fact that America was their “place of birth.” Furthermore, colonization was “utterly and irreconcilably opposed to the wishes and sentiments of the great body of the free people of color,” who wanted, as Purvis put it, to enjoy their civil rights peaceably without leaving their native land.¹⁵

These premises implicitly endorsed a civic idea of the nation. They suggested that the category of “countrymen” was not defined by descent, that nativity was enough to entitle persons to citizenship, regardless of their ethnic or racial identities, and that affiliation with a nation was freely chosen instead of involuntary. One measure of the distance between these Garrisonian ideas and the arguments of earlier abolitionists was the fact that black abolitionists were full members in the MASS and the AASS, as befitted organizations that called for the admission of black and white citizens as equal members in the national community.

Convincing other Americans to adopt that view of the nation, however, would prove exceedingly difficult. The mingling of black and white abolitionists in Garrisonian associations invited scorn from antebellum Northerners who feared “amalgamation” between the races, and in the 1830s, meetings of Garrisonian abolitionists were often the targets of ridicule and mob violence, especially when these assemblies were interracial. To Garrisonians, such attacks proved the spurious nature of the claims Americans made

¹⁵ Quotes taken from William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization: Or, an Impartial of the Doctrines, Principles and Purposes of the American Colonization Society ...* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832), iv, 16, 12.

about their uniqueness. The nation purported to be, unlike older nations, founded on civil equality and liberty, but the persecution of abolitionists proved that most Americans were very much committed to an ideal of racial homogeneity, exposing the myth of American exceptionalism as hollow. Indeed, the more committed Garrisonians became to the ideal of a civic nation, the more depressed they were by the distance between that ideal and the United States in reality.

The shift from gradualism to immediatism changed the tenor of abolitionist rhetoric about the United States, which became somber and scathing. Even while he was still a colonizationist, Garrison described the exuberant patriotism of his contemporaries as hypocritical. In his very first address as an abolitionist, delivered on the Fourth of July, 1829, he declared, "I am ashamed of my country." "We are a vain people, and our love of praise is inordinate," Garrison wrote later in a letter that elaborated on the speech. "We imagine, and are annually taught to believe, that the republic is immortal; that its flight, like a strong angel's, has been perpetually upward, till it has soared above the impurities of earth, and beyond the farthest star; and having attained perfection, is forever out of the reach of circumstance and change." Garrison's career began with his rejection of this exceptionalist myth. "I could not, for my right hand, stand up before a European assembly, and exult that I am an American citizen, and denounce the usurpations of a kingly government as wicked and unjust; or, should I make the attempt, the recollection of my country's barbarity and despotism would blister my lips, and cover my cheeks with burning blushes of shame."¹⁶

¹⁶ WLG to the Editor of the *Boston Courier*, 9 July 1829, LWLG, 1:85-86.

If Garrison was ashamed of the country before his conversion to immediatism, his blush only deepened thereafter, once he began to view slavery not just as a deplorable practice, but as an intolerable affront to God and man. “I blush for them as countrymen,” Garrison said of slaveholders in 1830. “I *know* that they are not *christians*; and the higher they raise their professions of patriotism or piety, the stronger is my detestation of their hypocrisy. Garrison’s fellow radicals in the MASS and the AASS joined him in rejecting the idea that the nation’s flight was like a “strong angel’s.” As one of his earliest allies, Samuel J. May, put it in an 1834 Fourth of July address, the country was more like a fallen angel: “Genius of America! Spirit of this republic! ... How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, Son of the morning! how art thou fallen from heaven!” The nation’s flight was downward, its countenance darkened, its fame blotted by slavery. By 1837, anxious over the prospect of Texas’s annexation, Garrison had descended into despair: “I do not see any hope for the slaves at the south—for the freemen of the North—or for our guilty, though still beloved country. I fear the time for repentance and reformation will have passed forever.”¹⁷

If Garrisonians’ “hope” for their own country was eroding daily, they were at least encouraged by the successes of the British abolitionist movement in the 1830s, which seemed to go from strength to strength. In 1833, after decades of popular agitation and petition campaigns spearheaded by reformers like Thomas Clarkson, Parliamentary abolitionists led by William Wilberforce finally succeeded in passing an emancipation bill for the British West Indies, which went into effect on August 1, 1834. The bill did not achieve everything that the most radical abolitionists had wanted. It called for slaves

¹⁷ *Liberator*, 12 July 1834 (the quote comes from Garrison’s paraphrased report of May’s speech); WLJ to John Farmer, 6 June 1837, LWLG, 2:84.

to be freed only after serving for six years as “apprentices” to their present masters, and it also provided public funds to compensate West Indian slaveholders for the loss of their human property. After 1833, however, a resurgent popular antislavery movement, led by radicals like George Thompson, turned the tide of public opinion against apprenticeship and called for immediate emancipation. Bowing to pressure, Parliament terminated the apprenticeship system two years early, and on August 1, 1838, the emancipation of slaves in the British West Indies was complete.¹⁸

If Garrisonians viewed the flight of their own country as downward, Great Britain was clearly on the rise in the 1830s. Indeed, if black abolitionists provided one impetus for the new immediatism of white Garrisonians, British abolitionists provided the other. In turning from colonizationism, Garrisonians also turned to the example of Britain, where the idea of immediate emancipation had been broached as early as 1823. A few months after his speech at Park Street Church in 1829, Garrison wrote in the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, the Baltimore paper he co-edited with Benjamin Lundy, that “the efforts of the friends of abolition in Great Britain, absolutely put to shame every thing that is doing in this country on the subject.” In the same year, black abolitionist David Walker published his incendiary *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* in Boston, signaling the rise of the new interracial movement taking shape there. Walker also praised the antislavery example of England: “there is no intelligent *black man* who

¹⁸ See Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 1-41; Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 419-72; Fladeland, *Men and Brothers*, 195-220; James Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 123-170; Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery: the British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992), part 2; Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

knows any thing, but esteems a real Englishman ... for they are the greatest benefactors we have upon earth.”¹⁹

As historian David Brion Davis has shown, the successes of abolitionists in England convinced antislavery reformers on both sides of the Atlantic that Britain had a “mission to lead the world,” including its former colonies in North America, “toward a new era of justice and Christian brotherhood.” Throughout the 1830s, Garrisonians remained star-struck by British abolitionists, lauding their example, praising the results of emancipation in the British West Indies, and celebrating the First of August as an annual holiday.²⁰ Garrisonian organizations in New England and Pennsylvania also opened channels of communication and cooperation with the veterans of the anti-apprenticeship campaign, who were beginning to form new emancipation societies dedicated to abolition throughout the world. Colonizationists, however, were also engaged in efforts to gain the endorsement and support of British abolitionists, some of whom, like Thomas Fowell Buxton, had supported similar colonization schemes in British Sierra Leone. Coveting the recognition of British abolitionists, Garrisonians considered it imperative to identify themselves, not colonizationists, as the representatives of the American movement and the true successors of the PAS, which had worked closely with British abolitionists in the late eighteenth century.

¹⁹ William Lloyd Garrison, “Great Britain,” *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, 16 October 1829; David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, ed. Peter P. Hinks (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 43.

²⁰ Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, 116-129, quoted on p. 127. See also James Brewer Stewart, “Boston, Abolition, and the Atlantic World, 1820-1861,” in *Courage and Conscience: Black & White Abolitionists in Boston*, ed. Donald M. Jacobs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 101-126; Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 116-142; Edward B. Rugemer, “The Problem of Emancipation: The United States and Britain’s Abolition of Slavery” (Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 2005); W. Caleb McDaniel, “The Fourth and the First: Abolitionist Holidays, Respectability, and Radical Interracial Reform,” *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (March 2005): 138-39.

In 1833, Garrison himself embarked on a transatlantic mission Britain as the representative of the newly formed New England Anti-Slavery Society (NEASS). This first Atlantic crossing was one of Garrison's first major actions as a professional activist, and it was also one of the most important. He arrived in May, ostensibly to raise funds for a manual labor school for black students, but he quickly reconceived the nature of his mission when he discovered that the long-hoped-for abolition bill was on the cusp of passage in Parliament. Garrison spent much of his time conversing with abolitionists on their progress, gathering antislavery materials, and reporting to friends back home on the imminent act of emancipation. While in England, however, he also learned that Elliot Cresson, an agent of the American Colonization Society had preceded him across the Atlantic to solicit the aid of British abolitionists. Soon, Garrison's time was absorbed in trying publicly to discredit Cresson, who was being pilloried by other immediatists even before Garrison arrived. These attacks on Cresson furthered the larger aim of Garrison's trip, which was, as he said in a letter home, to gain the British abolitionists' "efficient co-operation with us."²¹

In the months prior to his trip, Garrison expressed an admiration bordering on awe for well-known British abolitionists. To Henry Brougham, who helped to draft the 1833 emancipation bill, he wrote the year before his departure, "In the sincerity of my heart I say, that, of all men living, I esteem you the mightiest." For the young editor of the *Liberator*, the methods of abolitionists like Brougham served as a model and a source of shame. "The British abolitionists waste no ammunition," he told Samuel J. May at the

²¹ WLG to the Board of the Managers of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, 1 July 1833, WLGL, 1:243. Just as black abolitionists' opposition to colonization predated Garrison's, it was an African American abolitionist, Nathaniel Paul, who was already on Cresson's trail before Garrison arrived, together with British abolitionists Charles Stuart and James Cropper. See Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall*, chap. 2.

end of his paper's second year. "When I see what they are doing, and read what they write, I blush to think of my own past apathy, and mourn in view of my poverty of thought and language." Garrison had no doubt "what my reception will be in that country," and he lingered on the contrast between Britain and America. "There, I shall breathe freely," he said, "there, my sentiments and language on the subject of slavery, will receive the acclamations of the people." How different from the United States, where his sentiments were greeted with boos and hisses. Soon after setting foot in Liverpool, finally arrived in a "land of liberty and light," Garrison wrote back to his readers that "although in a strange land, and for the first time a foreigner, I cannot but feel myself at home among a people ... who never speak in the cause of suffering humanity but with authority."²²

When Garrison returned home to Boston later that year, armed with endorsements from many of the most famous abolitionists in Britain, he and his fellow immediatists continued to praise England as the land that America should have been. If Americans imagined, as Thomas Paine had, that their own Revolution would instruct the world and regenerate Britain, Garrisonians reversed the direction of influence: Britain had surpassed America's service to humanity, and the "land of liberty" was no longer the United States. In his 1834 *Address to the People of the United States*, Charles Follen asked Americans to recall "how your forefathers left their father-land, to seek liberty," much as Follen, the German exile, had done. But now, he pointed out, those who sought liberty had to look

²² WLG to Henry Brougham, 1 August 1832, LWLG, 1:160; WLG to Samuel J. May, 4 December 1832, LWLG, 1:193; WLG to Harriet Minot, 19 March 1833, LWLG, 1:215; WLG to the *Liberator*, 23 May, 1833, LWLG, 1:228.

outside of America. “England goes before us as a torch-bearer, leading the way to the liberation of mankind.”²³

Perhaps nothing could have been more radical in Jacksonian America than to suggest, as Garrisonians did, that slavery was a sin because blacks and whites were equal. But if there was a second most radical suggestion to be made in Jacksonian America, it may have been the idea that monarchical Britain, with its antiquated aristocracy and anti-republican habits, was actually freer than the democratic United States. England was to Jacksonian Americans what the Soviet Union was to Cold War McCarthyites—the evil empire against which Americans defined their own national identity.²⁴ Garrisonians were lauding England as a “land of liberty” at a time when the White House was occupied by the hero of the War of 1812, who rose to political preferment thanks partly to the rise of popular Anglophobia in the antebellum period. The Democratic Party forged by Andrew Jackson made a cottage industry out of vituperation for Old England and its monarchical backwardness, continuing a tradition of democratic assaults on Britain that stretched back to Paine. And foreign relations between the United States and Britain were also troubled throughout the 1830s, as constant rumors of war threatened over disputes about western territories and trade rights.

It is little wonder, then, that many Americans looked with deep suspicion on the abolitionists’ Anglophilia. To the charge that they were amalgamators could now be added the suggestion that they were thinly disguised British agents. James K. Paulding’s 1836 diatribe on Garrisonians, mentioned in the Introduction for its critique of “universal

²³ Charles Follen, “Address to the People of the United States on the Subject of Slavery,” in Follen, *Works of Charles Follen*, 5:226-227.

²⁴ I am indebted to James Brewer Stewart for suggesting this analogy.

philanthropy,” pointed out that “ever since the British government abolished slavery in its colonies, by a gross violation of the rights of property, . . . the press of that country has teemed with denunciations of the people of the United States.” According to Paulding, the real motive behind these calumnies was Britain’s knowledge that the United States were “the bugbears of despotism in Europe.” In order to rid the world of its model republic, Britain was using abolitionists “to light the fires of contention, insurrection, disunion, and massacre.” It was obvious that the immediatist impulse was “derived from abroad,” said Paulding, who falsely alleged that Garrison denounced colonizationism for the first time at a meeting in London, with Irish abolitionist Daniel O’Connell at his side. “We feel not hesitation in declaring our belief that they are not only stimulated by foreign influence, but by foreign money.”²⁵

The worst fears of anti-abolitionists seemed confirmed in 1834, when George Thompson, one of the leading lecturers of the anti-apprenticeship campaign, traveled to New England for an antislavery lecture tour. “The notorious Thompson,” as Paulding later called him, came at the invitation of Garrison, whom he had met the year before in England. His tour, together with another tour by British abolitionist Charles Stuart at around the same time, served as a flashpoint for debates about patriotism and the nation that had been building since the beginning of the Garrisonian movement. Garrisonians knew that “the narrow prejudice of clan, dignified by the name of national pride,” would cause many Americans to bristle at the barbs of British abolitionists. But in anticipation of the charge that they were foreign interlopers and subversive agents, the Garrisonians hailed Thompson and Stuart “as men who belong not to an island or a kingdom, but to the

²⁵ Paulding, *Slavery*, 134.

world.” Thompson himself invoked the same cosmopolitan ideals as his justification for coming to the United States. Shortly after arriving, he told one audience that he did not come “to expound the charter of human rights according to ... latitude, longitude, clime, or color. As a citizen of the world, he claimed brotherhood with all mankind,” and denounced the “misguided Patriotism” that had blinded American slaveholders to their nation’s sins.²⁶

In appealing to the ideal of world citizenship, Thompson and his apologists were drawing on ideas that, as we have seen, dated back to the eighteenth century and the Age of Revolution. Abolitionists in those early years had appealed to the ideas of “universal benevolence” and unbounded philanthropy as arguments against slavery, but immediatist abolitionists in the nineteenth century were now putting the same ideas to different use—not to attack slavery so much as to defend abolitionists. In June, an abolitionist in Maine, one of the stops on Thompson’s tour, anticipated in a letter to Garrison that “there will be many who will raise the cry of [a] foreigner interfering in our domestic concerns. But is philanthropy confined by the boundaries of countries, or must it exert itself only within the limited sphere of neighbourhood limits[?] As you truly say, ‘our country is the world and our countrymen all mankind.’” The Glasgow Ladies’ Emancipation Society, which had helped sponsor Thompson’s trip, described their emissary as a “Philanthropist of the

²⁶ *First Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society* (New York: Dorr & Butterfield, 1834), 52-53; *Letters and Addresses by George Thompson, during his Mission in the United States from Oct. 1st, 1834, to Nov. 27, 1835* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1837), 2-3. See C. Duncan Rice, “The Anti-Slavery Mission of George Thompson to the United States, 1834-1835,” *Journal of American Studies* 2, no. 1 (1968): 13-31.

World,” who, “feeling the impulse of an expanding benevolence,” had left Scotland to agitate “in another region of the Globe.”²⁷

But anti-abolitionists like Paulding saw Thompson, instead, as nothing more than a mischievous “missionary from a society of venerable spinsters.” Throughout his tour, Thompson was a lightning rod for charges of foreign interference; even Andrew Jackson made a thinly veiled reference to this foreign meddler in his 1835 message to Congress. In Boston, hostility towards Thompson changed from words to sticks and stones. It was his reputed arrival in the city to address a women’s anti-slavery meeting that sparked the infamous mob of 1835 that nearly tarred and feathered Garrison. The mob focused its ire on Garrison only after failing to find Thompson at the site of the speech, and then spared him (legend has it) only because Garrison was not a foreigner. Memories of this riot would galvanize Garrisonians in later years, helping to bring elite Bostonians like Wendell Phillips and Edmund Quincy into their ranks and providing a vivid example of what belligerent forms of patriotism could do when at their worst.²⁸

Dismayed by the degree of hostility that Thompson encountered on his tour, which he eventually abandoned for fear of his life, Garrisonians tried to argue that he was not only a citizen of the world but also a lover of the United States. They portrayed him equally as “a universal philanthropist ... the friend of all mankind,” and as a special friend of the United States, suggesting that love for humanity was compatible with a true love for country. As one Garrisonian put it, Thompson’s heart burned with “patriotic as well

²⁷ Louis O. Cowan to WLG, 21 June 1834, BAA, 32; Glasgow Ladies Society to Pennsylvania Female Anti-Slavery Society (PFASS), 3 September 1834, in PFASS Correspondence, PASP, Series 5, Reel 31, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁸ Paulding, *Slavery*, 135. On Thompson's tour, see Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 27-28. On Phillips’ conversion to abolitionism, see Stewart, *Wendell Phillips*, chap. 4. On Quincy, see Robert Vincent Sparks, “Abolition in Silver Slippers: A Biography of Edmund Quincy” (PhD diss., Boston College, 1978), chap. 2.

as christian love for our great but guilty republic.” Thompson sometimes flattered his American audiences by telling them their country was “peculiarly an anointed cherub. . . . No nation has ever been so peculiarly blessed.” But for that reason, no nation, he hastened to add, was guiltier of hypocrisy and sin. Thompson argued that the true patriot would expose the sins of a nation and raise it to righteousness; in rebuking America, he was not a hostile outsider, but a man whose concern for the country outstripped that of even “the most jealous patriot.”²⁹

Thompson himself suggested that such appeals to patriotic feeling were strategic. Perhaps what had not been “effected by an appeal to humanity [might] be obtained by the operations of wounded pride.”³⁰ But in the end, his professions of love for America were not effective in winning non-abolitionists to his side. It was too much for most of them, who imagined America as the world’s “model republic,” to accept the suggestion of British abolitionists like Thompson that the United States should “take up their example.” More important, the idea of the nation proposed by Thompson and the Garrisonians—one in which people of color would be viewed as equal citizens with white Americans—was too radical for most of Thompson’s hearers to accept. In a speech in New Hampshire, Thompson put his finger directly on the reason why immediatists were scorned: “It was that they pleaded for the *black man*. It was because he was *black*.”³¹ It had been one thing for colonizationists and gradualists to appeal to philanthropy and benevolence, but

²⁹ *Letters and Addresses by George Thompson*, ix (“universal philanthropist,” “friend of all mankind”), 36 (“patriotic as well as christian love”), 78 (“anointed cherub,” “peculiarly blessed”); George Thompson to Henry Clarke Wright, 5 November 1835, BAA, 49 (“jealous patriot”). See also *Letters and Addresses by George Thompson*, 11, 66, 119-120; *Reception of George Thompson in Great Britain, Compiled from Various British Publications* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1836), 122.

³⁰ Thompson to Wright, 5 November 1835, BAA, 50.

³¹ *Letters and Addresses by George Thompson*, 104.

Thompson and the Garrisonians were now using the same appeals to argue for a nation in which blacks and whites would be equal members, just as they were in new antislavery societies. To be told that such a position was *patriotic*—and to be told by a foreigner—was stretching the concept of patriotism and nationality farther than most Americans thought it could go.

For Garrisonians, on the other hand, the experience of Thompson’s tour, and the debates that surrounded it, helped open up the concept of patriotism in ways that pushed their ideas further towards a kind of “civic nationalism.” For example, Thompson refuted the charge of foreign interference by arguing, in a speech before the AASS, “I am not a foreigner, I am a man: and nothing which affects human nature is foreign to me,” adding, parenthetically, “(I speak the language of a slave.)” By defining *himself* as a man, instead of as a foreigner, Thompson was simultaneously stressing that slaves were *men*, not foreigners—a claim that was both crucial to Garrisonian attacks on colonizationism and a central premise of civic nationalism.³²

Arguments against foreign interference did double duty in other ways. Very often, for instance, Garrisonians found *themselves* accused of “foreign interference” for meddling in the domestic institutions of the *South*. They did not even have to go that far to be tarred as outsiders. Charles C. Burleigh, who toured Pennsylvania in 1837 as a paid agent of the AASS, dodged eggs and stones in some towns, and was charged with being a “foreign agent” because he was from the distant climes of Connecticut. At one level, the response to these charges was obvious: Garrisonians were Americans, not foreigners. But Garrisonians often used the same arguments they had marshaled to defend Thompson

³² *Letters and Addresses by George Thompson*, 67.

in order to defend themselves. That is, instead of rebutting the charge of interference by claiming to be Americans, they claimed to be citizens of the world, and grounded their right to interfere on that nobler identity. When a Garrisonian state society was formed in Pennsylvania in 1837, it issued a long address to the state's citizens, defending their right to interfere with the institution of slavery, both as citizens of the United States and as "members too of the great family of mankind. We are endowed with feelings and sympathies which were intended for our use, and which bind us to our fellow creatures by the common ties of human sympathy."³³

The implication was that what bound Americans to other *Americans* were the same ties that bound Americans with *foreigners*: the common ties of human sympathy. What tied the nation together was not geographical proximity or consanguinity, but only the ties of humanity—a view that reinforced the civic nationalism implicit in immediatist rhetoric. Thompson's visit and the arguments it unleashed about patriotism and "foreign interference" exemplify the way that Garrisonians' interactions with British reformers could spur their thinking on a variety of issues. In particular, their thinking about what constituted transnational bonds could inform their thinking about what constituted national communities, enabling them to articulate a view of the nation that differed from that of their contemporaries.

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³³ Ira V. Brown, "An Antislavery Agent: C. C. Burleigh in Pennsylvania, 1836-1837," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 105, no. 1 (1981): 77-79; *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Convention, Assembled to Organize a State Anti-Slavery Society, at Harrisburg ...* (Philadelphia: Merrihew & Gunn, 1837), 91. For another example of how Garrisonian defenses of the "foreign interference" of British abolitionists could also be used to defend themselves from the charge of interference in the South, see also WLJ to Peleg Sprague, 5 September 1835, LWLG, 1:510-513.

Yet it would be misleading to imply that Garrisonians already had, from the earliest years of their movement, an idea of the nation that was fully “civic.” By arguing for the inclusion of people of color into the nation, instead of for their expatriation, Garrisonians were challenging a central tenet of ethnic or ethnoracial nationalism—the idea that membership in a nation was defined by descent from a common primordial stock. The children of Africans and the children of Englishmen, they said, could both live together in the United States, which was the land of *their* birth even if their forefathers had been born elsewhere.

But Garrisonian rhetoric sometimes implied, nonetheless, that Americans shared cultural traditions and traits that were inherited from England. Indeed, one of the reasons why Garrisonians were so encouraged by British emancipation was because, they said, Americans were related to the English by ties of descent and by cultural commonalities like language and religious faith. To rouse popular opinion against slavery, British abolitionists themselves relied on a potent set of myths about the historic freedom of the English nation. Echoing the famous ruling in the Somerset case, British abolitionists argued that the “free soil” of England made a slave free the moment he or she stepped on it, and that the “free air” of England could not inhabit the lungs of a slave. American abolitionists relished these same myths about the historic freedom of English institutions. In an early Garrisonian speech on the First of August, David Lee Child argued that the “free spirit of England” could be traced back to medieval times and the emancipation of Saxon villeins from Norman conquerors. The abolition of villeinage was “the emancipation of our own ancestors,” he told an audience at South Reading. “There are probably few of us here, who are not descended from some of those ... [who] formed the

body of the English nation.” That presumption of Saxon ancestry connected American national identity to descent from “the body of the English nation,” but such a view of national identity could not include those “few of us” in Child’s audience (perhaps black abolitionists present?) who were *not* seen as descendants of some primordial Saxon nation.³⁴

Other Garrisonian responses to British emancipation took courage from the idea of American descent from the English nation. Wendell Phillips, who possessed a deep belief in the historical relationship between English institutions and American ones, saw in British emancipation an example of the “parent” rebuking the “child.” “In the name of three million slaves among us, let us thank God that that nation [Britain] was our mother country—the glass of our public opinion—the source of our literature and our religion.” In 1836, the annual report of the MASS praised England for establishing “the claim of the African to be considered in all respects a man,” but was especially encouraged by the fact that emancipation had been accomplished by “a people speaking the same language, and professing the same religion with ourselves.” It was “a circumstance favorable to our enterprise, that the sentiments and feelings of the British nation on this subject, as on every other, cannot fail to be diffused among us, their literature being intimately blended with our own.”³⁵

Garrisonians made the same kinds of references to the kinship between Britain and America when defending George Thompson in 1834 and 1835. As we have already

³⁴ David Lee Child, *Oration in Honor of Universal Emancipation in the British Empire, delivered at South Reading, August First, 1834* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1834), 3-5.

³⁵ Wendell Phillips, “The Benefits of West India Emancipation,” in John A. Collins, *The Anti-Slavery Picknick: A Collection of Speeches, Poems, Dialogues and Songs; Intended for Use in Schools and Anti-Slavery Meetings* (Boston: H.W. Williams, 1842), 23; *Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1836), 41. On Phillips views of Anglo-American history, see Stewart, *Wendell Phillips*, 19-35.

seen, Thompson often rejected the charge that he was a foreigner by arguing that he was a human being, and thus connected to the members of all nations by ties of humanity. But sometimes, and often in the very same breath, Thompson argued that, as a representative of England, he was peculiarly tied to Americans. In the same speech in which he said that “nothing which affects human nature is foreign to me,” Thompson argued, “I am not a foreigner. I am no foreigner to the language of this country. I am not a foreigner to the religion of this country. I am not a foreigner to the God of this country.” When Thompson returned to Britain, he told the Edinburgh Emancipation Society how rewarding it had been “to become acquainted with men in a distant country, having one common language and one common ancestry, working with us in the same common cause.” And he also carried with him an address from American female abolitionist societies to the “Ladies of Great Britain” that echoed such statements. “Dear friends,” the address said, “we boast a common ancestry and language; our hearts and our hopes too are one. You, as well as ourselves, claim kindred with ... the puritan mothers of New England.”³⁶

These kinds of comments defined “the British nation” with cultural traits—religion, language, literature—that were blended with the American nation by “ancestry” and kinship. In celebrating American descent from England, Garrisonians identified themselves with a long Whiggish tradition, stretching back to the political culture of New England Federalists that nurtured some future Garrisonians, of connecting American

³⁶ *Letters and Addresses by George Thompson*, 66; *Reception of George Thompson*, 67, 44-45. The address to the Ladies of Great Britain was signed by Maria Weston Chapman, among others.

institutions historically with British ones.³⁷ But the idea that America was descended from the British nation also foreshadowed ideas about race that became more widespread in the 1840s and 1850s, which described America and Britain as nations drawn from one Anglo-Saxon stock. Anglo-Saxonism was espoused even by some abolitionists in future years. Unitarian minister Theodore Parker argued in 1853 that “America and England are but parts of the same nation,—a younger and an older branch of the same great Anglo-Saxon stem. Our character will affect that of the mother-country, as her good and evil still influence us.”³⁸

Garrisonians were not saying *that* when they claimed, in the 1830s, that British emancipation was bound to influence the character of America. Still, the fact that some Garrisonians invoked a notion of national ties defined by ancestry and cultural traits, and then located these ties far in the distant past, caution against concluding that Wendell Phillips’ 1859 idea of nationality was a foregone conclusion in 1834. As Parker’s view of the Anglo-Saxon “nation” suggests, there were other concepts of the nation available to Garrisonians, which makes it pertinent to ask why most Garrisonians adopted Phillips’ view of the nation instead of Parker’s.

If the concept of a civic nation still had not fully arrived in the 1830s, however, the elements of that idea had clearly begun to float in antislavery discourse and often

³⁷ See Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 69-72; Howard Temperley, *Britain and America since Independence* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Eng.: Palgrave, 2002), 1-54; Paul Langford, “Manners and Character in Anglo-American Perceptions, 1750-1850,” in *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership*, ed. Fred M. Leventhal and Roland Quinault (Aldershot, Hants, Eng.: Ashgate, 2000), 76-90; Linda K. Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), 23-66; Marc M. Arkin, “The Federalist Trope: Power and Passion in Abolitionist Rhetoric,” *JAH* 88, no. 1 (2001): 75-98.

³⁸ Theodore Parker, *A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of Daniel Webster, Preached at the Melodeon on Sunday, October 31, 1852* (Boston: Benjamin B. Mussey, 1853), v. On antebellum “Anglo-Saxonism” among some abolitionists, see Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 97-102.

coalesced around eighteenth-century ideas about “universal benevolence,” patriotism, and philanthropy. In 1837, a speech on “foreign interference” by Andrew Somerville, one of Thompson’s fellow Scottish abolitionists, critiqued the “narrow and bigoted opinion, that our sympathies, and feelings ... are to be confined within the spots which rivers and mountains mark out as the limits of kingdoms.” Invoking the example of Jesus and the Good Samaritan, Somerville concluded that “the whole world, is the field in which our sympathies, our benevolence, and our love are to operate.”³⁹

Somerville was mobilizing the same ideas about the extensiveness of “universal benevolence” that another Scot, Frances Hutcheson, had articulated nearly a century before. But by connecting these terms to radical opinions about slavery and race, Somerville and other immediatists on both sides of the Atlantic were putting them to new use. And by arguing that cooperation between British and American abolitionists was justified by the principles of universal benevolence, abolitionists like the Garrisonians were also emphasizing that, as Somerville put, “the division of nations [was] a conventional arrangement.” National divisions placed limits on political sovereignty, but they could never act as boundaries on “those great principles and feelings which respect the whole human race.” Such arguments helped to germinate a civic nationalism that would view nations merely as territorially bounded systems of government and laws—laws that must “respect the whole human race” and recognize the equal rights of all the citizens within its borders, regardless of race or ethnicity.⁴⁰

³⁹ Somerville’s speech is printed as an appendix to George Thompson, *An Appeal to the Abolitionists of Great Britain, in Behalf of the Cause of Universal Emancipation* (Edinburg: William Oliphant and Son, 1837), quoted on pp. 31-32.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Chapter 2

The So-Called World's Convention

In 1840, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS) hosted a two-week “general conference” to be composed “of Anti Slavery Delegates from all parts of the world.” Topics for discussion were also drawn from all parts of the world: delegates heard reports on the status of slavery in Africa, Cuba, Brazil, the French Caribbean, and Islamic countries; on the progress of abolitionism in America and Europe; and on the results of British emancipation in 1838. It was a wide-ranging agenda, demonstrating that many British abolitionists were turning their attention from the empire to parts of the world where slavery remained. Veterans of the anti-apprenticeship campaigns, led by Joseph Sturge, had founded the BFASS in 1839 in order to signal that shifting focus, and began in the same year to plan for what became known as a “World’s Convention” on abolitionism.

The idea for such a Convention, however, came from the United States. Inspired by Sturge’s new society, Joshua Leavitt, the editor of the New York *Emancipator*, had first broached the idea of a “GENERAL ANTI-SLAVERY CONFERENCE” in London in a March 1839 editorial. Such a “general” meeting, he said, would aid American and British reformers in “concentrating our energies and harmonizing our movements.” Two months later, when the BFASS committee began to plan the meeting, it explicitly cited Leavitt’s suggestion.¹

¹ “Minutes from Committee Meeting ... Friday, May 31, 1839,” BFASS Minute Books, vol. 1, 34, RHAP (reel 1); “Magnificent Enterprise of Joseph Sturge,” *Emancipator*, 28 March 1839. See also Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 85; “The World’s Convention,” *Liberator*, 20 March 1840.

American abolitionists greeted plans for the Convention with enthusiasm, none more so than the circle of reformers who clustered around Garrison. For them especially, but for abolitionists more generally, a “World’s Convention” was the substance of things long hoped for. By 1840 Garrisonians had long been portraying themselves as citizens of the world in response to attacks from anti-abolitionists that they were agents of “foreign interference.” And as we will see in this chapter, after 1838 many Garrisonians also embraced “non-resistance,” the radical theory of Christian anarchism and pacifism that viewed human government as inherently sinful. Non-resistants added additional layers of meaning to the idea that their country was the world. In opposing all wars, even defensive ones, and all governments, non-resistants also explicitly declared their opposition to nations and patriotism. A “World’s Convention” seemed, therefore, to embody their hopes for a world without war or international conflict. In the fall of 1839, Angelina Grimké Weld wrote to English abolitionist Elizabeth Pease that “I often feel, like thyself, ready to despair of my Country.” But Weld “rejoice[d] in the prospect of the World’s Convention to be held in England next Spring—What a deeply interesting & important meeting it will be!” Philadelphia abolitionist Edward M. Davis told Pease that it would be the “greatest [sic] moral light of our times.” Davis crossed out his superlative suffix, but his enthusiasm was typical.²

Yet the Garrisonians’ great expectations were greatly disappointed when British organizers unilaterally decided to exclude women from the Convention. That decision angered Garrisonians from Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, who had delegated women abolitionists, including Davis’s mother-in-law Lucretia Mott, to London. To protest their

² Angelina G. Weld to Elizabeth Pease, 14 August 1839, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.8.49; Edward M. Davis to Elizabeth Pease, 30 March 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.23.

exclusion, Garrison refused to join the meeting as an official member, while Garrisonian delegates like Wendell Phillips registered their protests from the floor of the convention. Meanwhile, outside the Convention's walls, Mott met Elizabeth Cady Stanton for the first time, making possible conversations that seeded the women's rights movement in the United States. But in protesting the gender exclusivity of the conference, Garrisonians also had a more general complaint: that the Convention had not lived up to its name. They had come to London expecting a meeting that would embody Garrison's favorite motto, but the actual "World's Convention," they said, belied its exalted title. "What *is* a World's Convention?" Garrison asked after returning home. "It is that, at which all the world *may* be present." Yet the BFASS had "decided that one half of the world should be excluded!"³

As Garrison's comments suggest, the "World's Convention" became a locus for debates between abolitionists not only about the "woman question," but also about what a "World's Convention" was. After it ended, Garrisonians seldom spoke the meeting's name without lacing their comments with sarcasm. They referred to it as a "pseudo" or "so-called" "World's Convention." Phillips spoke for many Garrisonians when he said that "there [had] been no World's Convention, properly so called." But that claim raised the question of what a proper "World's Convention" *would* be like. Indirectly, it raised questions not just about criteria for membership in reform meetings but also about the

³ "Arrival of Wm. Lloyd Garrison and N. P. Rogers from England," *Liberator*, 28 August 1840. For previous treatments of the Convention, see Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Women Who Speak for an Entire Nation": American and British Women at the World Anti-Slavery Convention, London, 1840," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 301-33; Donald R. Kennon, "'An Apple of Discord': The Woman Question at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention," *Slavery and Abolition* 5 (1984): 244-66; Douglas H. Maynard, "The World's Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47 (1960): 452-71; Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 87-92; Fladeland, *Men and Brothers*, 259-73.

criteria for membership in larger groups, including nations. This chapter thus revisits the “World’s Convention” debacle by seeing it as a turning point in Garrisonian thinking, not just about gender, but also about nations.⁴

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Although the next century would be crowded with international conventions and World’s Fairs, such meetings were virtually unprecedented in 1840. Diplomatic summits like the Congress of Vienna had been held, and official correspondence had been carried on between reform and scientific societies in different countries. Pacifists influenced by American Peace Society founder William Ladd had also envisioned a future Congress of Nations that would arbitrate international conflicts without war. But in 1840 an actual international reform meeting was a new thing under the sun.⁵ It was so new planners could not settle on a name. Officially, the BFASS Committee used the title that Leavitt gave the meeting in his March editorial—the “General Anti-Slavery Conference.” But even the *Emancipator*’s reporters used multiple titles during 1839, such as the “Inter-National Convention,” the “London Anti-Slavery Conference,” and the “Conference of Nations.”⁶

⁴ For “pseudo,” see Oliver Johnson to MWC, 23 August 1840, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.14.8. For “so-called,” see the resolution of the Dorchester (Mass.) Anti-Slavery Society, 14 September 1840, reprinted in Appendix V of *Sixth Annual Report of the Glasgow Emancipation Society* (Glasgow: Aird & Russell, 1840), 29. For Phillips, see “Letter from Wendell Phillips, London, June 1840,” *Liberator*, 24 July 1840.

⁵ See F. S. L. Lyons, *Internationalism in Europe, 1815-1914* (Leyden: A.W. Sythoff, 1963), 11-18. On Ladd and the “Congress of Nations,” see Valarie H. Ziegler, *The Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 52-54. By the Civil War, similar conventions had been held for temperance, peace, and a few other reform movements.

⁶ “The Inter-National Convention,” *Emancipator*, 25 July 1839; “The London Anti-Slavery Conference,” *Emancipator*, 12 March 1840; “The London Conference,” *Emancipator*, 26 March 1840; “From our London Correspondent,” *Emancipator*, 5 March 1840.

Significantly, Garrisonians were the first to refer regularly to the meeting as a “World’s Convention,” a term that the BFASS Committee consistently avoided.⁷ In fact, calling the convention the “World’s” did not become widespread until January 1840, six months after plans had begun, when a poem by John Greenleaf Whittier, “The World’s Convention,” appeared in the *Liberator*. Whittier’s poem did more than give the Convention the name that most historians have used for the conference ever since. Its stanzas romanticized the “World’s Convention,” listing one by one the exotic realms that would be represented. Members would come, Whittier said, from the green vales of England, from the “holy sod which Jesus trod” in Palestine, from the “Inca-haunted halls” of Lima, from the “land of the dark and mystic Nile.” More important, the Convention would be dedicated to universal principles. Composed of the “pledged philanthropy of Earth,” it would be a “holy gathering,” founded on “the godlike plan” of the “brotherhood of man.”⁸

By 1840 Whittier was gravitating away from Garrisonians towards political abolitionism, for reasons discussed more fully below. But key Garrisonian ideas aligned in Whittier’s poem. In a crucial passage, Whittier underlined Garrisonian arguments about the intimate relationship between Britain and the United States by alluding to the “maternal claim” that England had on America. The “weal” of both countries were

⁷ Garrison used “World’s Convention” as early as the fall of 1839, when he printed the BFASS Committee’s circular: “British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society,” *Liberator*, 11 October 1839. See also “The World’s Convention,” *Liberator*, 20 March 1840, and “The World’s Convention,” *Liberator*, 3 April 1840. Even among Garrisonians, though, titles varied. George Bradburn, one of the American delegates to the Convention, called it “a Convention of the Abolitionists of the World” just a month before the meeting. See Bradburn to Francis Jackson, 3 May 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.37. Jackson titled it a “Convention of the Friends of Universal Freedom.” See Jackson to [Jonathan Phillips?], 3 April 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.25.

⁸ “The World’s Convention,” in *The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier*, Cambridge Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1894), 284-86. For original publication, see “The World’s Convention,” *Liberator*, 10 January 1840.

closely tied by kinship and mutual interest. Whittier also preempted the criticism that foreigners had no right to interfere with American slavery. This “world-assembled band,” he argued, would have America’s interest at heart, but it would combine “the patriot’s zeal” with the “Christian’s love for human kind, / To caste and climate unconfined.” In Whittier’s poem Garrisonians could hear the cadences of their own convictions. He too praised the mother country; he too blended the “patriot’s zeal” with the “Christian’s love.”⁹

The Committee of the BFASS was also pleased with Whittier’s work. In March, they ordered “that 1000 Copies of the Poem called the World’s convention ... be printed for circulation.” But this was one of the Committee’s few acknowledgements that their Convention was anything more than an ordinary meeting of British abolitionists on a larger, “general” scale. It is one of the only instances where BFASS members explicitly referred to a “World’s Convention.”¹⁰ By contrast, the Garrisonians were so captivated by the poem’s romantic portrait of the meeting that they seldom referred to it as anything else. At the annual meeting of the AASS in May 1840, a Garrisonian resolution argued that “the Anti Slavery enterprise is the cause of Universal Humanity, and as such, legitimately calls together the World’s Convention.” If the BFASS conceived of the meeting mainly as a powwow between British and American abolitionists, Garrisonians clearly foresaw something much grander. With the help of Whittier’s poetic license, they imagined a meeting that would prove the brotherhood of the “entire Human Family.” According to Garrisonians in Pennsylvania, the Convention would teach “that lesson

⁹ Whittier, “The World’s Convention,” 285-86.

¹⁰ BFASS members did, however, stress that the invitation for the Convention went out to “THE WORLD,” and they looked “to the world with the most lively anticipations of good.” See “The World’s Convention,” *Pennsylvania Freeman*, 16 January 1840.

whose rudiments are comprised in the noble sentiment, ‘our country is the world, our countrymen are all mankind.’” The *Pennsylvania Freeman* saw the meeting as a crucible where “national prejudices [would be] melted down, and national peculiarities forgotten, and national pride absorbed and swallowed up in the simple and grand idea of human brotherhood.” The week after the Convention opened, the *Freeman* rejoiced “to see the people of different countries finding other points of contact than those which are encased with their nationality.”¹¹

Garrison was most explicit in linking the Convention with the inauguration of a new world order, in which individuals would not be “encased” in nationality. He fused his expectations about the meeting with hopes for the coming of God’s kingdom on earth, which would erase national differences and end international animosity. In May 1840 he noted how “melancholy” it was to see that “oppression, violence and fraud” were rampant on earth, but he rejoiced that Christianity would triumph over evil. For “has not one God created us, and are we not all made of one blood? Are we not all brothers and sisters—members of the same family”? To Garrison, the “World’s Convention” gave clear answers to these questions, and it was thus a harbinger of God’s will done on earth as in heaven. “Whatever may be said or done at the World’s Convention,” he predicted, “the mere fact that the nations, by their representatives, are about to meet and embrace each other in love ... is indescribably joyous to my soul. As a precedent for many similar conventions yet to be held ... it is full of moral sublimity.” Such views, which even

¹¹ BFASS Minute Books, vol. 1, 186, RHAP, reel 1; “Resolutions of the American Anti-Slavery Society at its Seventh Meeting in New York from May 12-15, 1840,” BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.4; Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society Minute Book, 1838-1846, p. 40, in PASP, Series 5, Reel 31; “Twelfth of June,” *Pennsylvania Freeman*, 18 June 1840.

Garrison admitted were “Utopian,” show how expansive Garrisonian hopes about the “World’s Convention” could be.¹²

Even while crossing the ocean to attend the meeting, Garrison felt sure that it could not “prove a failure.” “Mankind are to be reconciled together,” he wrote in a shipboard letter to Edmund Quincy. “Their country shall no longer be hemmed in by geographical boundaries, or bounded by any number of square miles less than the whole globe.” Hate would vanish, slavery would end, wars would cease, and the dispersion of nations at Babel would be reversed. “That the first World’s Convention will do something toward hastening such an epoch, I think cannot reasonably be doubted. What does the first imply but a second, a third, and a final Convention, to prepare the whole earth to celebrate one universal jubilee?” Garrison longed for “a World’s Convention,” that would approve “Jesus, the Messiah, as the only King and Ruler on earth—the establishment of his kingdom to the subversion of all others—the prostration of all national barriers, castes, and boundaries.” The Convention foretold not the “mere abolition of slavery,” but “the reconciliation of the world to God.”¹³ These were great expectations indeed.

But the Convention did more to expose divisions between abolitionists than it did to reconcile the world. By 1840, abolitionism in the United States was splintering along multiple axes, and these well-known divisions between American abolitionists also roiled the “World’s Convention.” Two of the most important sources of disagreement among abolitionists were debates about the commitment of many Garrisonians to controversial

¹² WLJ to Richard P. Hunt, 1 May 1840, LWLG, 2:594-595.

¹³ WLJ to Oliver Johnson, 22 May 1840, LWLG, 2:626. See also WLJ to MWC, 3 June 1840, LWLG, 2:632-633.

doctrines on women's rights and non-resistance. After 1837, reformers like Lewis Tappan and James Birney, despite their agreement with Garrison on the importance of immediate abolition, were increasingly unsettled by his "ultra-ism" on these and other issues. Garrisonians, for example, favored the full participation of women in abolitionist organizations; Tappanites actively opposed it. And Tappanites feared, often with good cause, that the Garrisonians' indifference to conventions about "separate spheres" for women and men indicated a more general unconcern for church orthodoxy and social authority.¹⁴

By supporting non-resistance, many Garrisonians did explicitly challenge human authority, both ecclesiastical and secular. Non-resistance was a variety of Christian pacifism, but as mentioned above, it was more than simply a commitment to nonviolence. It was also a variety of Christian anarchism, a critique of the idea of human government. At the end of the 1830s, Garrisonians like Nathaniel P. Rogers, Henry Clarke Wright, and Edmund Quincy, and other members of the New England Non-Resistance Society, began to argue that many human institutions, including nation-states, were akin to slavery. As historian Lewis Perry has shown, non-resistants said "that the Biblical injunctions against violence meant that Christians had to renounce all manifestations of force, including human government," and submit instead to "the only true and effective government, the government of God." For men like Tappan and Birney, who believed in reforming

¹⁴ See Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal*, 3-18; Walters, "The Boundaries of Abolitionism," 3-23; Lawrence J. Friedman, *Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830-1870* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Stewart, *Holy Warriors*, 88-96; Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism*.

society from within existing churches and political institutions, such doctrines became insuperable obstacles to cooperation with Garrisonians.¹⁵

At the 1840 meeting of the AASS, held less than a month before the “World’s Convention” began, Tappan and his followers seceded to form the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (AFASS), taking with them Leavitt and the *Emancipator*. The Garrisonians were left in control of a much smaller but ultimately longer lasting society. In the same year as this famous “schism,” political abolitionists organized the Liberty Party and began nominating anti-slavery candidates for office, to the ridicule of non-resistants who believed that voting was inherently sinful. James Birney became the Party’s candidate for president that fall. It was in the midst of these fractures and mutual recriminations between American abolitionists that the “World’s Convention” took place in June. In fact, Garrison and Rogers sailed directly from the chaotic AASS meeting in New York for London, carrying with them the baggage of hurt feelings and substantive disagreements with the “new organization.”¹⁶

Birney and many of his supporters also crossed the Atlantic for the Convention, hoping that, having jettisoned the troublesome Garrisonians, men like Tappan and Birney could assume the role of partners with abolitionists like Sturge and other leaders of the BFASS. The name they chose for their new organization deliberately mirrored the name of the British society. In their backgrounds and beliefs, members of the BFASS did more closely resemble members of the AFASS than the radical Garrisonians. While there were some Garrisonian allies in the BFASS—men like the redoubtable Thompson—they were

¹⁵ Perry, *Radical Abolitionism*, 57. See also Ziegler, *Advocates of Peace*, 56-79; Peter Brock, *Radical Pacifists in Antebellum America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 77-169.

¹⁶ On the role that Leavitt and the *Emancipator* played in the schism, see Hugh Davis, *Joshua Leavitt: Evangelical Abolitionist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 134-163.

rare and stood outside the society's executive apparatus. Late in 1839 and early in 1840, when the Tappanites warned English friends like Sturge that Garrisonians were going to introduce the "woman's question" and "no-governmentism" into the proceedings of the Convention, executives in the BFASS were alarmed to hear that such radical doctrines might mar the conference.¹⁷

Their worst fears were confirmed early in 1840, when Garrisonian societies in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts nominated a number of women as delegates to the London Convention: from Massachusetts, Maria Weston Chapman, Lydia Maria Child, Abby Kelley, Emily A. Winslow, and several others; from Pennsylvania, Lucretia Mott, Mary Grew, Sarah Pugh, Elizabeth Neall and Abby Kimber. After learning of these appointments, the BFASS issued another circular on February 15, this time requesting discreetly that American societies should forward the names of the "gentlemen" who would be attending. But the Garrisonian women, perhaps missing the implication of the new circular, continued making their plans to travel to London later that year.¹⁸ It was not until May that a letter from Joseph Sturge appeared in the American antislavery press explicitly forbidding women delegates, to the "surprise and regret" of the *Liberator*. And it was not until May 15, a few weeks before the Convention, that the BFASS Committee

¹⁷ See Sklar, "'Women Who Speak for an Entire Nation,'" 305-06; Kennon, "'An Apple of Discord,'" 246-49; Lewis Tappan to John Scoble, 5 May 1840, in Abel and Klingberg, *Side Light on Anglo-American Relations*, 69-70; Joshua Leavitt to James Birney, 1 June 1840, in *Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831-1857*, ed. Dwight L. Dumond (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1938), 1:581; Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, 2:352-54. Garrisonians also warned their English friends to be on the lookout for "new organization" opponents like Amos A. Phelps and Nathaniel Colver. See MWC to Elizabeth Pease, 20 April 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.27; MWC to Pease, 21 April 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.28.

¹⁸ For names of all the American women who either attended the Convention or were delegated, see Sklar, "'Women Who Speak for an Entire Nation,'" 332-33. All of the Pennsylvania delegates eventually attended, but of the Massachusetts delegates, only Winslow went. Ann Phillips and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, however, accompanied their husbands, Wendell Phillips and Henry B. Stanton, and cooperated with the official women delegates. In Stanton's case, this was despite the fact that her husband parted ways with the Garrisonians in the schism of 1840.

reached a final resolution on the subject, “that the Delegates to the Convention do consist exclusively of Men, in accordance with the original design and circular of the Committee, and that *Women* can only be admitted as *Visitors*.” Garrisonians blamed Tappanites for tainting the BFASS, convinced that “the spirit of new organization has plotted to gratify its contempt of WOMAN even in the World’s Convention.” For their part, Tappanites lamented to each other that “Garrison is determined to introduce the woman question in England.” Meanwhile, Lucretia Mott and the Pennsylvanian women were somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic.¹⁹

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Most scholarly treatments of the Convention have focused on its exclusion of women, but it is important to remember that the “woman question” was not the only apple of discord in London. The non-resistance and “no-government” principles of some Garrisonians were just as scandalous as their views on women, and Tappanites were just as fearful that these topics would disturb the Convention. Early in the planning stages, Garrisonians had provocatively argued that the Convention would be established “on the principle of NON-RESISTANCE, or *moral suasion only*,” since the BFASS was limiting its agenda to nonviolent plans for abolition. But Tappanites saw such interpretations of the circular as attempts to identify it with the Garrisonians’ subversive ideas on human government. Leavitt’s *Emancipator*, soon the official paper of “new organization,” clarified in March that the BFASS constitution made “no denial of human authority, and no denunciation of the use of legislative and even forcible measures by those to whom it belongs, which are the distinctive peculiarities of ‘Non-Resistance,’ so called.” “We had

¹⁹ “London Convention – Letter from Mr. Sturge,” *Liberator*, 8 May 1840 (“surprise and regret” and “the spirit of new organization”); BFASS Minute Books, vol. 1, 206, RHAP (reel 1); Lewis Tappan to A. A. Phelps, 19 May 1840, BPL, Ms.A.21.11.47 (“Garrison is determined”).

hoped,” he added, “that our unhappy dissensions would not attach themselves to that Conference, but party spirit knows no bonds.”²⁰

But the role non-resistance played in the dissensions of the Convention was subtler than a simple case of “party spirit.” Non-resistance was important chiefly because it shaped the Garrisonians’ expectations about the character of the “World’s Convention.” Because they pledged loyalty to the “government of God” over “human governments,” and because they opposed war of every kind, non-resistants were also extremely critical of nations and patriotism. The New England Non-Resistance Society’s Declaration of Sentiments, drafted by Garrison in September 1838, argued that “we are bound by the laws of a kingdom which is not of this world,” a kingdom in which there were “no state lines, no national partitions, no geographical boundaries.” Garrison even applied his favorite motto to non-resistance: “Our country is the world, our countrymen are all mankind. We love the land of our nativity only as we love all other lands. ... Hence, we can allow no appeal to patriotism, to revenge any national insult or injury.” Non-resistance underwrote Garrison’s hopes for a “World’s Convention” that would eschew exclusive patriotism, ignore national and geographical borders, and recognize Jesus as the only ruler of the earth.²¹

In the months leading up to the “World’s Convention,” radical Garrisonians reiterated these non-resistance principles, particularly in the writings of Nathaniel P. Rogers, the New Hampshire radical who accompanied Garrison to London, and Henry Clarke Wright, whose non-resistance articles were a mainstay of the *Liberator*’s back

²⁰ “The World’s Convention,” *Liberator*, 20 March 1840; “The London Conference,” *Emancipator*, 26 March 1840.

²¹ Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, 2:230.

pages throughout 1839. Wright's columns were especially anti-nationalistic in tone. One of his tracts argued that "God makes MEN; men make NATIONS. ... Men are but little lower than angels. Nations are little better than demons." The nation's greatest crime, said Wright, was in assuming "to parcel out our love, sympathy, humanity and justice, by geographical lines and national boundaries," despite the fact that God had made "of one blood all nations." While God had created "one great family of brothers and sisters, one great society, one nation" that spanned the globe, nations portioned the universal family into arbitrary units, so that "the moral as well as the physical world is meted out by degrees of longitude and latitude." All such "lines of demarkation [sic] to moral duty" were blotted out by the gospel.²²

By literally demonizing nations and contrasting them with universal brotherhood, Wright exemplified the strong connections between non-resistance and Garrisonian critiques of patriotism. "Our Country is the World" had become more than just a reply to the charge of "foreign interference." It now served as a major premise in arguments for non-resistance. The disagreements that divided American abolitionists had also created essentially incompatible expectations about the Convention. Tappanites expected the primary purpose of the meeting to be the planning of practical cooperation between the BFASS and the AFASS, which they hoped would emerge as its main ally in the United States. They expected it to address the questions that concerned them: What should churches do about slavery? How might governments be influenced? How could foreign governments exert diplomatic influence on the United States? On the other hand,

²² "National Organizations," *Liberator*, 4 January 1839, 11 January 1839. Throughout 1839, Garrison published a regular column under the heading "Non-Resistance." The column was dominated by contributions from Wright, which sounded these themes again and again. For a wide-ranging biography on Wright, see Lewis Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform: Henry Clarke Wright, 1797-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

Garrisonian ideas about the meeting were bound up with their expectation of a millennial “World’s Convention” of the kind poetically evoked by Whittier. For them, the purpose of the Convention was to supersede governments, churches and nations, even to declare these organizations obsolete.

But even with ominous clouds swirling around the event, Garrisonians were still optimistic, as late as the opening day of the Convention, that Whittier’s “holy gathering” might materialize, life imitating art. The *Freeman* claimed that the Convention foreshadowed “that glorious consummation when no longer shall ... nations regard their peculiar interests as paramount to those of general humanity,” but instead would regard the world as “one vast community—a neighborhood of friends and kindred.” Another paper compared its potential influence to the “convocation of the disciples on the day of Pentecost,” since it was “the first Convention ever called, summoning delegates from all quarters of the world, to consult upon ... the principles of common humanity.” If these hopes were ultimately dashed on the rocks of the “pseudo” “World’s Convention,” it was because powerful waves of optimism sent Garrisonians hurtling towards them.²³

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In May 1840, as the Committee of the BFASS made its final decision on the exclusion of women delegates, it also commissioned a welcoming committee, made up of Sturge, Scoble, and William Bevan, to meet the American women on their arrival and explain why they were not wanted. In her valuable diary, Lucretia Mott recorded taut encounters with these men in the weeks before the meeting. On June 6, “Joseph Sturge breakfasted with us—begged submission of us to the London Committee. ... We

²³ See selections from newspapers in *Liberator*, 3 July 1840. See also “The London Convention,” *NASS*, 25 June 1840.

endeavored to shew him the inconsistency of excluding Women's Delegates—but soon found he had prejudged & made up his mind to act with our New Organization.” Two days before the Convention began, Sturge called again with Thomas Scales “to endeavor to reconcile us to our fate.” Instead, Mott began planning a protest meeting, along with Thompson, British-born Garrisonian William Adam, and Wendell Phillips, who had arrived with his wife Ann for the meeting. Sarah Pugh wrote a letter on behalf of the women delegates, presented by Thompson, Adams, and Phillips to the Committee, defending women abolitionists as “co-equals [with men] in the advocacy of Universal Liberty.” Unbowed, the BFASS voted to send “visitor's ticket[s]” to the “American Ladies who have recently arrived.”²⁴

As it became clear that neither side would back down, it became clear to Mott that this was not the “World's Convention” she had anticipated. As late as the evening before the sessions opened, she noted in her journal that “several [were] sent to us to persuade us not to offer ourselves to the Convention.” Nathaniel Colver, an anti-Garrisonian minister from the United States present at this last meeting, was “rather bold,” declaring “Women constitutionally unfit for public or business meetings.” Meanwhile, Scales tried to disabuse Mott of the idea that the General Anti-Slavery Conference was ever intended to be a cosmopolitan assembly. “It wasn't designed as a *World* Convention—that was a mere Poetical license,” Mott recorded him saying, with an allusion to Whittier's poem. It had also been clear, said Scales, “that all power would rest with the ‘London Committee of Arrangements.’” This idea that a “*World* Convention” was a figment of Garrisonian

²⁴ Frederick B. Tolles, ed., *Slavery and “The Woman Question”: Lucretia Mott's Diary of Her Visit to Great Britain to Attend the World's Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840* (Haverford, Penn.: Friends' Historical Association, 1952), 22, 27, 28; BFASS Minute Books, vol. 1, 226-28, RHAP (reel 1). See also James Mott, *Three Months in Great Britain* (Philadelphia: J. Miller McKim, 1841), 14-18.

imagination did not sit well. On the opening day of the meeting, Mott's diary dripped with sarcasm: "The World's Convention—*alias* the 'Conference of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society,' with such guests as they chose to invite, assembled." Here was the crux of the matter: Was this a "World's Convention," or was it something else, as the BFASS insisted?²⁵

Garrisonians raised that question as soon as possible on June 12, the first day of the Convention whose very name was now in dispute. The morning began with several rounds of self-congratulation. Daniel O'Connell, the great Irish abolitionist who later came to the defense of the Garrisonian women, boasted that the Convention was "more important than any which has yet assembled on the face of the globe." But the collegial mood was short-lived. Soon after O'Connell sat down, Thomas Scales, whose "flimsy arguments" had failed to impress Mott the day before, stood to read an explanation of the Convention's agenda, prepared at the Committee's request. Scales warned, in careful and circuitous prose, that "no topics of a foreign and irrelevant character may be introduced to divide our attention, or to divert us from the one great end we all have in common." The goal of the meeting was not to change "real or supposed inequalities of rank or order, of precedence or subordination, as they exist in different countries and communities, and have been introduced and established ... by the usages and customs or prejudices of mankind."²⁶

This oblique defense of the Committee's procedures failed to satisfy Garrisonians. Wendell Phillips promptly ignored the proscription of "foreign and irrelevant" topics by

²⁵ Tolles, *Mott's Diary*, 29.

²⁶ *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention, Called by the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and Held in London, from Friday, June 12th to Tuesday, June 23rd, 1840* (London: British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1841), 11, 16-18, 23-24.

calling for a roll to be taken of “all persons bearing credentials from any Anti-Slavery body.” Such a roll would by definition include the duly delegated women from New England and Pennsylvania, forcing the issue of their exclusion onto the floor. Debate over the proposed roll call consumed the rest of the day. Phillips and his allies argued that American societies had admitted women to their meetings for years, while British organizers replied that they never intended to include women. George Stacey, a member of the Committee, appealed to “the custom of this country,” where the exclusion of women from public meetings was a “well known and uniform” practice. John Burnet, a British Congregationalist, echoed Stacey’s argument, which reverberated throughout the rest of the day’s debate. “English ladies and English gentlemen,” he argued, “are accustomed to consider what takes place on this side of the water, just as American ladies and American gentlemen consider what takes place their side the water.” Garrisonians should have read the circular according to “English phraseology.” “As we are in England let us act as England does; and when English abolitionists come to America we shall expect the same ready conformity.”²⁷

Such arguments hardly convinced Garrisonians. Given their expectations about the “World’s Convention” as harbinger of a postnational world, they were shocked to hear British abolitionists saying that, when in England, they should do as the English did. George Bradburn, an MASS delegate, rose to express his disappointment that Phillips’ resolution did not pass unanimously, for “I had hoped ... that here, in a *World’s* Convention, there would be very little difference of opinion on the subject, how much soever Englishmen, as such, might differ from some of us respecting it.” As much as he

²⁷ *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention* (1840), 23-24, 25 (Stacey), 26-27 (Burnet).

respected English custom, it would not be right to make them binding on the delegates at the meeting. “Let it not be forgotten,” he reminded the meeting, “that this was designed to be a World’s Convention,” which was a serious “misnomer” as things now stood. But in the middle of Bradburn’s speech, a British delegate interjected, “I rise to know what is meant by a World’s Convention?” There was the rub. While Garrisonians argued that a “World’s Convention” should not be governed by national custom, British abolitionists insisted throughout the day that organizers had never envisioned a “World’s Convention” in the first place.²⁸

Other arguments, of course, were adduced on both sides. Garrisonians and their handful of allies, like John Bowring, the famous liberal and Member of Parliament from Exeter, and William H. Ashurst, a radical lawyer and feminist from London, argued that an appeal to English customs about women was hypocritical when a woman currently sat on the British throne. Opponents of inclusion, on the other hand, feared that admitting women courted public ridicule and the wrath of God. Inevitably, the debate also dragged the recent schism in the ranks of the AASS onto the floor, as Tappanites and Garrisonians took turns accusing each other of treachery in New York the month before. But debates on all of these subjects returned, ultimately, to whether the foreign delegates to the Convention should be forced to defer to the customs of one country. If so, Ashurst said, the Convention might as well close, because slavery was a national custom in America to which they would have to defer as well. At issue, Phillips agreed, was “a matter of conscience,” not of custom. It was a question of whether crossing borders changed moral duties. “We have not changed by crossing the water,” he answered. “Massachusetts

²⁸ *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention* (1840), 28-30. The British delegate was William Wilson of Nottingham.

cannot turn aside, or succumb to any prejudices or customs even in the land she looks upon with so much reverence as the land of WILBERFORCE, of CLARKSON, and of O'CONNELL.”²⁹

That comment suggested, revealingly, that the conduct of the “World’s Convention” was causing some Garrisonians to rethink their “reverence” for Britain. British abolitionists could sense that behind Garrisonian arguments about including women was a subtle implication that American customs were, on this point, more progressive than British ones. Captain Wauchope, a naval officer, rose to ask whether Americans were presuming to lecture *Englishmen* about matters of conscience: “I hold that England has something to say upon the efforts which have been made to annihilate slavery,” he harrumphed. Sensing that Garrisonians like Phillips were maligning the land of Wilberforce and Clarkson, Wauchope pointedly asked “whether our friends from America are prepared to cast off England altogether? Have we not given £20,000,000 of our money for the purpose of doing away with the abominations of slavery? Is not that proof that we are in earnest about it?” If the Convention had met in America, the woman question would be open for discussion, Wauchope concluded, but in Britain it was moot. “Our American friends are violating the feelings of the country in which they are now assembled.”³⁰

That objection, however, only suggested to Garrisonians that a “World’s Convention” should have been held in Boston, where the organizers’ feelings would not

²⁹ *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention* (1840), 26. For summaries of the debate, see Sklar, “‘Women Who Speak for an Entire Nation,’” 303-13; Kennon, “‘An Apple of Discord,’” 250-53; Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 89-90; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 330.

³⁰ *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention* (1840), 40.

have been violated by the admission of women. That idea surfaced explicitly on the last day of the meeting, during talks about a second “General Anti-Slavery Convention” (the name British abolitionists still insisted on using). When the BFASS Committee offered to plan a sequel, Garrisonians objected. Phillips hoped that the next Convention would be “free to decide of what it shall be composed,” and if it was “not possible in England to have a World’s Convention,” perhaps the next one should be “in France or my own country,” where a truly inclusive assembly “will not be opposed to the customs, the prejudices, or the religious convictions of the community.” This proposal, though, was voted down. In a last gasp, Garrisonians tried to put their discontent on the record by submitting to the Convention a signed protest of the women’s exclusion, but thanks to parliamentary maneuvers by Nathaniel Colver and John Scoble, the protest was tabled and left out of the proceedings.³¹

Phillips and a handful of supporters had succeeded, at least, in devoting the first day of the Convention to debates on its composition. A few days after the meeting started, when Garrison, Rogers, and black abolitionist Charles Remond arrived late to London, fresh from their New York battles with “new organization,” they made their dissatisfaction with the Convention clear by refusing to take their seats as delegates and watching the proceedings with the women in the visitors’ gallery. But few British abolitionists supported these protests. Even George Thompson begged his American friends not to interfere with the organization of the Convention. Although O’Connell

³¹ *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention* (1840), 557, 563. The tabled protest was printed in the Appendix to the *Ninth Annual Report of the ... Mass[achusetts] Anti-Slavery Society, Presented January 27, 1841* (1841; repr., Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970), xi-xii.

would later support of the women's claim to admission in the meeting, he was absent while the question was debated.³²

Garrisonians were left, in the aftermath of the "World's Convention," to complain that it had been a charade. Again and again, they emphasized the Convention's *name*. "A *World's* Convention we can no longer term it," wrote one Garrisonian to Elizabeth Pease. Garrisonians often repeated with indignation the explanation that the BFASS had given Mott: "they say ... that 'the World's Convention' was only a 'poetical flourish' of 'Whittier' & that the British & Foreign Committee never thought of such a thing!" After the Convention, in a speech in Glasgow, Garrison said he had been "sent over to this country to attend what was to be called the World's Convention. What a glorious day!" But he had not been "able to find the World's Convention. He found, indeed, an Anti-Slavery Society in London, and heard good speeches; but then it was not the meeting to which he was sent." Rogers told readers of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* that he was "impatient to reach" the "World's Convention." "But I did not find it. ... They laughed at the idea of a World's Convention." Mott assumed the name had been changed before she crossed the Atlantic.³³

³² Tolles, *Mott's Diary*, 31. Garrison's decision to sit in the gallery became a standard set piece in future hagiographies of his life; both he and Rogers were cheered on their return home. See Joseph May, *William Lloyd Garrison: A Commemorative Discourse* (Boston: Geo. H. Ellis, 1879), 10-11; *Proceedings of a Crowded Meeting of the Colored Population*, 11; *Sixth Annual Report of the Glasgow Emancipation Society*, 29-32; Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, 373-78; Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 288-91; James Caleb Jackson to WLG, 21 August 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.96. Remond's reception by black abolitionists was more mixed; some said that, as their representative, he should have taken his seat at the Convention. Richard Blackett argues that Remond was more inclined to avoid the conflict between Garrisonians and "new organizationists" and sought later to distance himself from the controversy created by the Convention. See Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall*, 42-44.

³³ William Bassett to Elizabeth Pease, 31 August 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.87; Nathaniel P. Rogers to Parker Pillsbury, 22 July 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.78; "Great Meeting of the Glasgow Emancipation Society: Reception of the American Delegates," *Liberator*, 28 August 1840; "To the Abolitionists of New Hampshire," *NASS*, 10 September 1840; Lucretia Mott to MWC, 29 July 1840, in *Selected Letters of*

But officially, the name never changed; Leavitt called it a “General” conference from the start. Garrisonians were the ones who expected a “World’s Convention,” and they were the ones disappointed by its failure to materialize. To Garrisonians the title was a token of the larger problem: the Convention had failed its supposed mandate by adhering too narrowly to the customs of one country.³⁴ Phillips told the *Liberator* that the BFASS “persisted in giving an exclusively *English* character to the meeting ... while we allowed this would be right had we come to an *English* meeting—but wholly refused to have a *World’s* Convention measured by an English yardstick.” Rogers cried that the spirit of “new organization” had “transmuted our glorious ‘World’s Convention’ into a local conference of guests in attendance on a London Committee.” By reverse alchemy, the Convention’s golden promise was turned into lead. Some even questioned the genuineness of its original promise. After all, the British were vastly over-represented at the Convention. How could “new organizationists” “call it a World’s Convention, when three-fourths of its members belonged to England, and only one-fourth of the number came from other parts of the world?”³⁵

Lucretia Coffin Mott, ed. Beverly Wilson Palmer (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 78-81. See also “News from England,” *Liberator*, 24 July 1840; “Arrival of Wm. Lloyd Garrison and N.P. Rogers from England,” *Liberator*, 28 August 1840; “The London Convention,” *NASS*, 23 July 1840; “The London Convention,” *NASS*, 1 October 1840; “John G. Whittier,” *NASS*, 10 December 1840; “John G. Whittier,” *NASS*, 17 December 1840; *Sixth Annual Report of the Glasgow Emancipation Society*, 29-32; WLJ to Anti-Slavery Friends and Coadjutors, [19 August 1840], LWLG, 2:677.; WLJ to his Editorial Chair, 6 October 1840, LWLG, 2:711; WLJ to J. H. Tredgold, 29 January 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.39; “To John G. Whitter,” *Pennsylvania Freeman*, 3 December 1840.

³⁴ Ironically, historians who use the title “World’s Convention” without comment are siding with the Garrisonians in a debate about nomenclature that Garrisonians did not win. Historians have not only tended to refer to the Convention by its poetic name; they have most frequently called it the “World Anti-Slavery Convention” or the “World Convention,” both names hardly used even by the Garrisonians, who preferred “World’s Convention.” I have placed quotes around the Garrisonians’ title throughout this chapter to emphasize its unofficial status.

³⁵ “Letter from Wendell Phillips, London, June 1840”; Rogers to Pillsbury, 22 July 1840; “Questions for New Organizationists,” *Liberator*, 14 August 1840.

The very grounds for the Garrisonians' hopes about the Convention were now the grounds for critique: the meeting had not been attended by the world at large, and it had been *too* English, certainly a problem they had not anticipated when embarking for the "holy land" of Wilberforce and Clarkson. The Garrisonians could only hope that some future conference would be "more deserving the name of World's Convention," as one of their few English allies put it. Rogers consoled himself that the meeting had not been entirely futile because "such a meeting had to be holden in Europe preliminary to the gathering of Humanity." But now that abolitionists knew how to tell a "meeting of Freedom" from false copies, he said, they were better prepared "to meet kindred spirits on the broad unshackled platform of Human Brotherhood without distinction of color, sect, or *sex* or clime."³⁶

It is significant that Garrisonians imagined this future Convention taking place in the United States. Throughout the 1830s they had said that England superseded America in the pursuit of universal freedom. Now they revised that order of rank, sometimes by turning it on its head. As we have seen, the revision began before the Convention even closed its doors, since Phillips suggested on the last day that its successor would have to be held in the United States or France. George Bradburn had gone even further in his speech on the question. Although abolitionists had focused on the "dark side" of the picture in America, he could now see that there was a "bright side" to America as well:

And let me add, that my country has never seemed so dear to me, as since I have been in England. I have a great, an intense veneration for England and the English. I venerate England as the mightiest nation of the world, and the English as a brave magnanimous people; and I thank them ... for their noble and beneficent exertions in the glorious cause of emancipation. *But I love America and the Americans more*; ... And should a Convention be called there, I hope it

³⁶ Anne Knight to MWC, 4 August 1840, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.13.49; Rogers to Pillsbury, 22 July 1840.

will be, in reality, a World's Convention, a Convention in which every friend of humanity, duly delegated, will be heartily welcomed to a seat, without respect of colour, of creed, or of sex.³⁷

It was Bradburn's travel to England that convinced him of his country's virtues, and he was not alone. Garrisonians became abruptly complimentary about the United States in the wake of the Convention, praising their native country in terms that had been rare in the 1830s. On his return home, Garrison told a welcoming party in Boston that "though I have been to England, there is no land as dear to me as my own. . . . I thank God that I was born in the United States,--that my field of labor lies in the United States." Unlike his visit in 1833, when he had been invigorated by England's free air and free soil, this trip impressed Garrison with the decaying institutions that had blighted English society. "In England, I have seen dukes, and marquises, and earls, and royalty itself, in all the hereditary splendor of an ancient monarchy, surrounded with luxury and pomp, and the people impoverished and oppressed to sustain it all: but here, in New-England, one looks for such inequality in vain." In the 1830s, Garrisonians had criticized such statements about the freedom of American institutions. It was crossing the Atlantic that made them reassess their shame for America, and it was their experience at the "so-called World's Convention" that made them now embrace, at least rhetorically, the idea of American exceptionalism.³⁸

Of course, Garrisonians had criticized Europe's anti-republican institutions long before 1840. As Chapter 1 suggested, they tried to mobilize shame in Americans by

³⁷ *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention* (1840), 558-59 (my emphasis). Bradburn was less critical of the Convention after he returned to Massachusetts, and within a few years he had moved out of the circle of Garrisonians towards political abolitionism. See George Bradburn to RDW, 1 January 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.4.

³⁸ "Arrival of Wm. Lloyd Garrison and N.P. Rogers from England," *Liberator*, 28 August 1840.

pointing out the contrasts between Britain's aristocratic customs and its abolitionism. Throughout the 1830s, Garrisonian discourse swung from an image of England as a progressive world-leader to a view of England as a tottering and undemocratic monarchy. But in the months after the Convention, the pendulum swung more decisively away from Anglophilia. Garrison concluded, after returning home, that "our country in nothing resembles England." Even its landscape, while picturesque, was full of monuments to its age: castles, towers, walls, and bridges. The youthful beauties of the United States, however, were formed not by "Romans, Saxons, Normans, or Danes," but by the hand of "Nature's God."³⁹

Upon returning to New Hampshire, Nathaniel P. Rogers similarly wrote that "I can breathe freely again in the atmosphere of Liberty ... [for] with all our pro-slavery it is an atmosphere of Liberty. Here is Freedom, compared to the restrictive and suffocating subjection, that broods upon the beautiful face of 'merry England.'" Rogers' vitriol mounted steadily over the next year. "England is a horrible country to my fancy," he wrote in the spring of 1841, "a cold blooded, cruel, tyrant country. Oh what a history she has – What a continuation of combat & executions!" England's "free soil"? Bloody soil was more like it: "Her green fields seem to me verdant with manuring blood. ... I felt sickened when I looked at them. She is a tyrant & the grand enemy of Christianity among the nations." Clearly much had changed since Garrison left for England in 1833, certain that he could breathe freely there. After sitting with Garrison in the gallery of

³⁹ WLJ to Phebe Jackson, 19 September 1840, LWLG, 2:705. James Mott, who was with his wife Lucretia in London, had similar feelings in 1841, when he congratulated Wendell Phillips on his "safe return to the land of liberty & equality (slavery & tyranny excepted). ... To every real lover of freedom, a visit to Europe, it appears to me, will have the effect to make him a truer democrat than he was before he witnessed the crushing effect of the aristocracy of that country." See James Mott to Wendell Phillips, 9 August 1841, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (916).

Freemasons' Hall, Rogers now felt he "could not breathe in London." "The World's Convention," he believed, "must be holden in a freer land than old England—it must be holden in *New England*."⁴⁰

If Garrisonians were more convinced of the freedoms they enjoyed in New England after their trips to London, they also began to argue that American abolitionists had displaced British abolitionists as the torchbearers for the antislavery movement. The British had contended against a distant evil in the colonies, while American abolitionists fought against an entrenched evil that was close at hand. Their persecutors, too, could be found in more dangerous proximity: when had British abolitionists faced mobs like the one that harassed Thompson and Garrison in 1835? Even the Garrisonians' British admirers praised their exceptional heroism. The English writer Harriet Martineau, who visited the United States from 1834 to 1836, returned home convinced that British abolitionists had it much easier than the Garrisonians. Her pamphlet, *The Martyr Age of the United States*, first published as an article in England in December 1838, portrayed Boston abolitionists like Chapman and Garrison as veritable saints. "It is a totally different thing to be an abolitionist on a soil actually trodden by slaves," said Martineau, "and in a far-off country, where opinion is already on the side of emancipation, or ready to be converted." British Garrisonians were even more convinced of this when they witnessed the bravery of the women delegates and their friends at the Convention. "In the coming of these women," Bowring told Garrison, "will form an era in the future history of philanthropic daring. ... The experiment ... honored America – it will instruct

⁴⁰ "To the Abolitionists of New Hampshire"; N.P. Rogers to RDW, 28 March 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.126; "Letter from N.P. Rogers," *NASS*, 27 August 1840.

England – If in some matters of high civilization you are *behind* – in this matter of courageous benevolence how far are you *before* us!”⁴¹

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Not long after the Convention adjourned on June 26, American abolitionists from both sides of the schism fanned out over the British Isles, forging alliances and friendships that both groups would continue once they returned home. Henry B. Stanton, Birney, and Scoble, the secretary of the BFASS, canvassed England for support. Garrison, Rogers, and Remond, meanwhile, sought allies for the “old organization.” Despite their anger about the Convention, Garrisonians strengthened ties with Thompson and forgave his fluctuation on the “woman question.” O’Connell, who said the right things in a letter to Mott, also impressed the Garrisonians. Elizabeth Pease, who continued to be a central operator in the Garrisonians’ network of transatlantic correspondence, won the unbridled admiration of all her visitors in Darlington. In addition to strengthening these old ties, Garrisonians made new friends, such as Bowring and Ashurst, the two men who backed Phillips’ resolution for a roll call.⁴²

Perhaps the most important of the Garrisonians’ new acquaintances was a group of Irish abolitionists who had come to London more as spectators than as delegates. First

⁴¹ Harriet Martineau, *The Martyr Age of the United States* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan & Co., 1839), 3-4; John Bowring to WLG, 9 November 1840, BAA, 122. See also Harriet Martineau, *Views of Slavery & Emancipation; from "Society in America"* (New-York: Piercy & Reed, 1837); John Bowring, “To the American Abolitionists,” *Liberty Bell* (1842), 18; Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 192-93; Fladeland, *Men and Brothers*, 229-30; James S. Gibbons to the Abolitionists of Great Britain, 25 September 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.10.1.

⁴² On Birney, Scoble, and Stanton, see Betty Fladeland, *James Gillespie Birney: Slaveholder to Abolitionist* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1955), 199-206. On O’Connell’s support for the women delegates, see Mott, *Three Months in Great Britain*, 19-22; Lucretia Mott to Daniel O’Connell, 17 June 1840, in Palmer, *Selected Letters*, 77-78. For evidence of the extent of Ashurst’s support, see William H. Ashurst to Wendell Phillips, 17 June 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.52; Ashurst to WLG, 26 July 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.81. On Thompson’s return to the fold, see WLG to Henry C. Wright, [23] August 1840, LWLG, 2:681. On his vacillation, see WLG to Helen E. Garrison, 29 June 1840, LWLG, 2:656.

among these was Richard D. Webb, an irascible Quaker printer from Dublin who was introduced to “Garrisonism” by Thompson. At the Convention he and his family became lifelong friends of the Garrisonians and devotees of “old organization” abolitionism, and they are central characters in the chapters that follow.⁴³ Garrisonians tended to find sympathizers like Webb in the provincial auxiliaries of the BFASS located in cities like Dublin and Glasgow. Meanwhile, as Garrisonians spent most of their time in Ireland and Scotland, Stanton and Birney tried to rally the English base of the BFASS, explaining the causes of their secession from the AASS and extolling the virtues of “new organization.” The more that members of the BFASS learned about Garrisonians, the more inclined they were to support the Tappanites. In July, Scoble informed Amos A. Phelps which side he was on: “From the part I have felt it to be my duty to take on the woman’s question &c I believe I am in very bad odour with not a few of our friends who have come hither from the United States – well I cannot help it.”⁴⁴

The support that Garrisonians received in Ireland and Scotland, combined with declining support in London, raised the possibility that Ireland and Scotland could take the place of England in their imagination. When Phillips reported to the *Liberator* on the

⁴³ Webb Ms., BAA, 97-98. For a partial list of those whom Garrison and his party met during three days in Dublin after the Convention, see RDW to WLG, 1 August 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.88. Also see Douglas C. Riach, “Richard Davis Webb and Antislavery in Ireland,” in Perry and Fellman, *Antislavery Reconsidered*, 149-67.

⁴⁴ John Scoble to Amos A. Phelps, 24 July 1840, BPL, Ms.A.21.11.89. See also James Birney to Lewis Tappan, 23 July 1840; Joseph Sturge to Birney, 6 November 1840; both in Dumond, *Letters*, 2:583-585, 2:613. Growing divisions between Garrisonians and Tappanites overlapped with fissures that were already emerging within the British movement before the Convention. Provincial antislavery societies in Ireland, Scotland, and outlying English counties were beginning to chafe under the frequently imperious leadership of the Committee, which often made unilateral decisions from its headquarters at 27 Broad Street in London. The patterns of British support for the two American factions reinforced perceptions among provincial abolitionists like Webb that their disagreements with the Society’s officers at Broad Street were profound and irreconcilable. See Riach, “Richard Davis Webb,” 156; C. Duncan Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists, 1833-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 59-66, 78-79. Cf. Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 209-210.

disappointing actions of British abolitionists, he qualified his critique by saying, “I except the Scottish and Irish Friends.” The heart of Ireland was freer than that of England, “and Scotland beats yet with all the zeal and true-heartedness, which we have all along given in our thoughts to the land of Clarkson and Wilberforce.” Likewise, in July, Pease told Garrison that she trusted he was “now enjoying the free & genial atmosphere of Scotland, after the murky mists of prejudice, by which you were surrounded here.” The air of England was no longer as free as the air of Ireland or Scotland; the love Garrisonians once felt reflexively for the land of Clarkson and Wilberforce now belonged to the lands of Thompson and Webb.⁴⁵

This shift was accelerated by the ill-fated journey to Great Britain of John A. Collins, an AASS agent, in the fall of 1840. Collins arrived in England in October on a mission to raise funds for the AASS, which was in severe financial straits following its division in May. The Society’s financial problems were caused in part by an economic malaise that began with the Panic of 1837; with many Americans in financial straits, it was difficult to find new benefactors. Now the split had deprived the Society of many of its wealthy sponsors like Tappan. As income dwindled, expenses mounted. To replace the *Emancipator*, the AASS established the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, with Rogers as its first editor. But with the *Standard* also teetering on ruin, Collins crossed the ocean hoping to keep the “old organization” afloat.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ “Letter from Wendell Phillips, London, June 1840”; Elizabeth Pease to WLG, 18 [July] 1840, BAA, 103.

⁴⁶ Collins’ trip is discussed in Rice, *Scots Abolitionists*, 101-14; Fladeland, *Men and Brothers*, 279-81; Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 211. See also *Tenth Annual Report ... of the Mass[achusetts] Anti-Slavery Society* (1842; repr., Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 42-63.

His timing was clearly inopportune, and some AASS leaders objected to Collins' mission, rightly fearing that wounds from the Convention were still too fresh.⁴⁷ It did not help Collins' chances that Rogers, as editor of the *Standard*, was doing his best to keep those wounds open by blasting England as a tyrannical country and London as "capital of the world's despotism." In the New Hampshire newspaper that he edited, the *Herald of Freedom*, Rogers had also declared after returning from the Convention that English "anti-slavery, in the great mass of it ... is more despotic as well as more servile than our republican pro-slavery. I had greatly misapprehended its character." British abolitionists worse than pro-slavery Americans? It was not a suggestion well calculated to put pounds into Collins' pockets.⁴⁸

It also did not help the Garrisonian cause that both Rogers and Collins had unorthodox religious beliefs, or that both had especially radical ideas about other reforms. In a few years, Rogers' radicalism became disconcerting even to his closest friends, while Collins soon became an Owenite socialist and a utopian anarchist.⁴⁹ But Rogers, Collins, and Garrison had committed more recent sins in the eyes of their enemies. In November, a group of "universal reformers," many of them Garrisonians, met at Chardon Street Chapel in Boston to discuss unorthodox doctrines on the Sabbath and the church. Collins

⁴⁷ See, for example, the note from C. C. Burleigh to James S. Gibbons, attached to Burleigh to the Abolitionists of Great Britain, 26 September 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.10.4: "I do not wish my name to be placed where it is liable to convey the impression to *any body* that I think well of this mission to England." See also WLJ to Elizabeth Pease, 1 March 1841, LWLG, 3:17.

⁴⁸ "To the Abolitionists of New Hampshire." On "new organization" reactions to Rogers, see John G. Whittier to C. C. Burleigh, 24 September 1840, in *The Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, vol. 1, ed. John B. Pickard (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 439-449, also printed in the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, 19 November 1840.

⁴⁹ See Friedman, *Gregarious Saints*, 59-61; Carl J. Gaurneri, *The Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 255; John L. Thomas, "Antislavery and Utopia," in *The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists*, ed. Martin Duberman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 254-59.

had been named to the planning committee before he went to England. In December, he received a letter from Garrison, reporting that the meeting had caused a “stir” and that “the champions in favor of the commonly received view of the Sabbath were nearly all new organized abolitionists.”⁵⁰ Later in the month, Nathaniel Colver, who had heard the Garrisonians’ heresies first-hand at Chardon Street, wrote to warn his British friends that Collins held to the worst kinds of “infidel fanaticism.” The next month, Charles Stuart warned the BFASS Committee that the “*American Anti Slavery Society*, of which Mr Collins is the agent, ought in my opinion to be called, *the Woman-intruding Anti-Slavery Society*.” By aiding Collins, Britain would be “identified ... with the rhapsodists of America.”⁵¹

With that reputation preceding him, Collins was doomed to a rhapsody in blue. Yet Garrisonians were still struggling to accept that relations with England had sunk so low. Some still held out hope that philanthropy could conquer the hardening lines of national division threatening the movement. In a letter introducing Collins to Pease, Garrison said he was aware of the difficulties he would face, “especially in consequence of the introduction of the new organization spirit among you in England.” But he hoped the British would even yet “forget all national distinctions and geographical boundaries, and remember that we are indeed members of one family, to whom there is nothing

⁵⁰ WLJ to John A. Collins, 1 December 1840, LWLG, 2:724. On the Chardon Street Chapel Convention, also see George Bourne to Amos A. Phelps, 20 October 1840, BPL, Ms.A.21.11.112; William Bassett to Elizabeth Pease, 31 January 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.45; MWC to Elizabeth Pease, 22 February 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.84.

⁵¹ Charles Stuart to J.H. Tredgold, 28 December 1840, Miscellaneous Correspondence, C84, RHAP (reel 2). Extracts of Colver’s letters, dated 30 November and 1 December, are also included in Miscellaneous Correspondence. See also Joseph Warren Alden to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1 February 1841, BPL, Ms.v.A.1.2.11.48. For Garrisonian rebuttals of Colver’s letters, see *Liberator*, 29 January 1841; “Rev. Nathaniel Colver and his Slandrous Letters,” *Liberator*, 12 February 1841; “Nathaniel Colver,” *Liberator*, 19 February 1841.

foreign, nothing remote.” Maria Weston Chapman said almost the same thing to Pease in her letter of introduction for Collins. She feared that those who had been most supportive of the AASS had been so “prejudiced” by Scoble and Birney “that they would be a hopeless case.” “Is not the cause of Righteousness & of God the same the world over? Is not the Christian’s country this world & his countrymen all mankind?” This was an open question more than a rhetorical one: Collins’ mission was becoming a litmus test for the *Liberator*’s motto.⁵²

Like the Convention, Collins’ trip put increased strain on Garrisonians’ reverence for England. On the one hand, in the circular Collins sent to donors, he tried to invoke the familiar encomiums to England. He appealed to the British “friends of freedom” because they had “fought so nobly and fiercely” against colonial slavery. With the cooperation of “philanthropists” on both sides of the Atlantic, “the moral and political influence of the two most enlightened and Christian nations of the globe” could banish slavery “from the face of whole earth.” But in between these well-known lines, there were hints of a holier-than-thou hauteur. Collins said, for instance, that “the spirit of sacrifice, zeal, energy, and devotion” of Garrisonian abolitionists was “unequaled by any body of men since the days of primitive Christianity.” Collins had the temerity to lecture British abolitionists on their recent Convention, which had committed them to the support of abolitionists in all parts of the world. Potential British donors may justifiably have wondered: Was this not the Convention that the AASS roundly denounced? And weren’t

⁵² WLG to Elizabeth Pease, 30 September 1840, LWLG, 2:708; MWC to Elizabeth Pease, 30 September 1840, BAA, 117.

Collins' friends the ones who had bedeviled upstanding men like Stanton and Birney with their libelous and infidel opinions?⁵³

Collins' flattery could not overcome the force of those questions. One by one, the doors of British abolitionists were closed in his face. He was refused an audience with Thomas Clarkson, who was tipped off by Scoble.⁵⁴ When he visited Thomas Fowell Buxton with Charles L. Remond, they were told that "America must now fight her own battles." John Edward Gray, a philanthropist recommended to Collins by one of his sympathizers, snapped that "this is a matter which only concerns the Americans," adding angrily that "I dislike bribery in morals as much as I do in Politicks and again there are evils enough about our doors to remove."⁵⁵ Collins and Remond heard variations on the same theme wherever they went. Even in Scotland, key leaders of the Glasgow Emancipation Society resigned their offices when Scottish Garrisonians, led by William Smeal, forced the Society to endorse Collins and Remond.⁵⁶ But the most stinging rebuke to Collins' solicitations came from Broad Street itself. In January, a heated correspondence began between Collins and the Committee of the BFASS. The Committee finally informed Collins, in no uncertain terms, that the "course recently pursued" by the AASS, reported to them by Colver and Stuart, had "alienated their

⁵³ John A. Collins, "An Appeal to the Abolitionists of Great Britain for the American Anti-Slavery Society," 12 November 1840, BPL, Ms.v.A.1.2.10.41.

⁵⁴ See Catherine Clarkson to John A. Collins, 13 December 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.10.92; John Scoble to Thomas Clarkson, 19 December 1840, Miscellaneous Correspondence, C84, RHAP (reel 2); Collins to Thomas Clarkson, 12 January 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.24; Thomas Felix Thomas to Collins, 15 January 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.28.

⁵⁵ Charles L. Remond to Elizabeth Pease, 27 November 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.10.59; John Edward Gray to John A. Collins, 4 December 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.10.72. See also Martha Hill to Collins, 7 December 1840, Ms.A.1.2.10.78.

⁵⁶ See GES Minute Books, vol. 3, 183-201, William Smeal Collection (microfilm); *Liberator*, 4 June 1841; *Seventh Annual Report of the Glasgow Emancipation Society* (Glasgow: Aird & Russell, 1841), 10-15.

confidence” in the society. The BFASS was finally abandoning the Garrisonians to their own devices.⁵⁷

Collins and his allies furiously lowered their lances at the Committee, but they might as well have attacked a windmill. Garrisonians accused the Committee of gossip for circulating Colver’s slanders behind closed doors; the Committee denied any official impropriety. The Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society, consisting of Webb, James Haughton, Richard Allen, and the Garrisonians’ Irish friends, demanded an explanation from the Committee for its repudiation of the AASS. They received a frosty reply. Later, with the help of Elizabeth Pease, Collins published his letters with the BFASS in an effort to expose the Committee. Yet aside from the support he received in Ireland and Scotland, he met with little success.⁵⁸

A dejected Collins was soon echoing the judgment of Rogers and others that their Anglophilia had been greatly exaggerated. “In our country,” he wrote to Garrison in December, “too much, vastly too much has been made of English anti-slavery feeling & sympathy. They can talk against slavery because they have never been corrupted by its presence upon their own soil.” Even the structure of English society encouraged a spirit of subjection that was antithetical to true abolitionism: “It is unphilosophical to think that the British people as a nation should be in favor of genuine freedom,” because their own government was “a vast and complicated system of slavery.” Collins found very few friends, he said, in Britain, aside from his allies in Scotland and Ireland; perhaps five

⁵⁷ Correspondence between Collins and the BFASS Committee can be found with Miscellaneous Correspondence, C84, RHAP (reel 2). The quote comes from the Committee’s letter to Collins dated 2 January 1841. The letters are also reprinted on the front page of the *Liberator*, 5 March 1841. See also John Scoble to James Birney, 2 January 1841, in Dumond, *Letters*, 2:621.

⁵⁸ See Correspondence Relating to American Slavery, 1836-1862, C4/45-50, C9/70-72, C84, RHAP (reel 2).

genuine abolitionists existed in the kingdom of England. “This country is all opposed to negro slavery,” he told Webb, “but it must be abolished by the square and compass”—from a distance. In a letter to Maria Weston Chapman, Collins echoed Rogers’ view that had shocked Colver in the first place: “Nine tenths of anti-slav[er]y in this country would be rank proslav[er]y with us.”⁵⁹

As Collins descended deeper into a winter of discontent, Garrisonian critiques of England intensified at home. England’s fiercest critic continued to be Rogers, who kept up a steady barrage as editor of the new *Standard*. He declared that British abolitionists, like all Britons, were “pretty much ‘subject;’ subject, whole subject, and nothing but subject” to the forces of monarchy, aristocracy, hierarchy, and “bayonet-archy.” West Indian emancipation was not sufficient proof of “their having common humanity, to any great extent.” Rogers went further than most of his colleagues when he argued that even Garrisonians like George Thompson were vulnerable to the spirit of subjection pervading Britain. “I don’t want to hear from England—Scotland and Ireland I do,” Rogers wrote to the *Liberator* shortly after Collins’ return in the summer of 1841. “Yet ... they have not many whole, free characters [even] there. [British] SUBJECTION is a chain. It is degrading.”⁶⁰

Rogers’ most scathing piece on England came in the form of a full-length article in *The Liberty Bell*, an annual gift book edited by Maria Weston Chapman and sold at the

⁵⁹ John A. Collins to WLG, 27 December 1840, BAA, 133; Collins to RDW, 28 January 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.38; Collins to MWC, 3 December 1840, BAA, 127. On his return to America, Collins was reported describing “the quality of English abolitionism in the mass” as “worse than new organization in this country.” “Reception at Chardon-Street Chapel,” *Liberator*, 6 August 1841.

⁶⁰ “British Abolitionism,” *NASS*, 19 November 1840; “Belligerant [sic] England,” *Liberator*, 6 August 1841. See also “Anti-Slavery Convention at Worcester,” *NASS*, 22 October 1840; “The Philanthropist,” *NASS*, 5 November 1840; “The Old World and the New,” *NASS*, 31 December 1840; “Mission to England,” *NASS*, 4 March 1841; “John A. Collins,” *NASS*, 11 March 1841.

Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Fair during the holiday season. In “British Abolitionism,” Rogers summarized why his subject had “been misunderstood among us ... and greatly overrated.” He first reviewed the causes of their former Anglophilia: Lord Mansfield’s decision in the Somerset case, Granville Sharpe’s powerful arguments before the court, William Cowper’s famous line that “slaves could not breathe” in England, and so on. “We verily believed,” Rogers said, “that [the] genius [of universal emancipation] lived and had her home ‘within the four seas of Britain.’” England was the home of men like Wilberforce, Clarkson, Fox and Pitt: “Oh, was not Britain the Land of Freedom, and London Liberty’s chief town!” But the “World’s Convention” pulled the wool back from their eyes. “One glance from the gallery of Freemason’s Hall ... awoke us to the realities of her abolitionism.” It reversed Cowper’s line: “not ‘slaves’ ... but *Anti-slavery* ‘cannot breathe in England!’ There is not elasticity enough in her atmosphere to give the breast of Liberty a single respiration. Liberty dies there ... and the whole land is strewed with her whitened bones.”⁶¹

With many similarly stern images, Rogers discounted the anti-slavery career of England, even stooping to revive old criticisms about the faults of the first Emancipation Act in 1833. “That boasted Emancipation Act, which gives Britannia the philanthropic mistress-ship of the world, as her navy claims it of the ocean,—what is it?” It was a proslavery compromise, a base plan for apprenticeship and compensation, foisted on a more radical populace. The “vaunted Emancipation Act” was no more humane than an act of Congress, Rogers said, concluding that “Britain can aid us but little in the overthrow of slavery.” Ireland would be of more help, but in the final analysis “the

⁶¹ N. P. Rogers, “British Abolitionism,” *The Liberty Bell* 3 (1842): 97-111, quotes on pp. 98-101.

waves of moral revolution must start from an agitation *here*,” in the United States. “They cannot move it there.”⁶²

However hyperbolic Rogers’ criticisms were, most Garrisonians defended his “severe strictures upon ... the London Committee.” The Committee suffered a “general condemnation among the abolitionists in this country,” Garrison told Elizabeth Pease. In the *Liberator*, he admitted that the *Standard* was often over the top in its “*phraseology*,” but he agreed with the gist of Rogers’ editorials. Ironically, the very things that Garrison had once praised about English abolitionism—that it was the *natural* fruit of England’s free soil—now became marks against it. According to the *Liberator*, “The abolitionism of England [was] ... nothing more than the natural humanity of the people, uncorrupted by the presence and unsubdued by the power of slavery. It has never been tried in a fiery furnace, (with some few exceptions,) nor compelled to encounter a single storm of persecution.” It was *too* easy to be an abolitionist in Great Britain. Being anti-slavery there was “no more a test of English character” than being pro-democracy was a test of American morals.⁶³

The Garrisonians’ new allies confirmed these views. Richard Webb told Collins that his trip proved “the perfect truth of Rogers’s estimate of much which, though showy & boastful, is at heart false and rotten in our English love of liberty.” “Rogers’s estimate of British Abolition,” he told Garrison, “*in the mass* is the right one.” Webb even agreed with Rogers that Scottish and Irish abolitionists were sometimes too apt to recoil from genuine abolitionism. “What can be expected amongst such people,” Webb asked Maria

⁶² Rogers, “British Abolitionism,” 107, 109, 104.

⁶³ WLJ to Elizabeth Pease, 1 December 1840, LWLG, 2:730; “The London Convention,” *Liberator*, 23 October 1840.

Weston Chapman. “I am sick of the praise the English receive from Abolitionists in America. They don’t deserve it – nor the Irish – nor the Scotch.” But Webb was not the only one sick of Anglophilia. To a great extent, their travails at the Convention and the subsequent treatment of Collins had muted the Garrisonians’ praise of England. Webb was closer to the truth when he saw that Garrisonians tended hastily to transfer their love to Ireland and Scotland.⁶⁴

Not every estimate of Great Britain was full of gloom and doom. Even Collins, towards the end of his trip, mustered some hope. “I leave the country with increased rather than diminished admiration for the good people of Great Britain,” he told Elizabeth Pease in July 1841, referring mainly to the hospitality he had received from friends like herself. But given the depth of his earlier despair, it does not say much that he left in a more hopeful mood. “The people of this country are liberal minded,” Collins conceded. “They should be instructed. They should have their liberty for they are slaves.” This was optimism, to be sure, but it was different from the idea that England was an antislavery holy land. The English were not beyond hope, Collins thought; they could be reformed. The same “optimism” informed a letter from Collins to Edmund Quincy in March. His mission had been successful, he told Quincy, because it was causing British abolitionists to learn more about genuine anti-slavery. “The leaven has got into the lump, which never before has been the case. The world’s convention! did not bring it about,” since most had sided with the partisans of Broad Street. Thanks to Collins’ efforts, however, the BFASS

⁶⁴ RDW to John A. Collins, 7 January 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.14; RDW to WLG, 30 March 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.1.35; Webb to MWC, 20 November 1841, BAA, 157; Harriet Gairdner to Collins, 10 December 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.10.85.

had been challenged: “Britain is taking sides,” and seeds of Garrisonian abolitionism were at least being sown.⁶⁵

Collins’ optimism is perhaps the best proof of how pessimistic Garrisonians had become about Great Britain. After 1833, Garrison and others had looked to England as the “land of liberty and light.” After the events of 1840, the most that could be said was that England was beginning to see the light. Before, Garrisonians imagined themselves at the feet of the British, but now the students had become the teachers. “At length we gave up in despair,” Mott wrote to Chapman after the “World’s Convention,” “& left London satisfied—that ‘when for the time they ought to be teachers, they have need that one teach them which be the first principles’ of Human Freedom.” England was subject; America was free. English abolitionism was a bed of roses; American abolitionism was a fiery furnace.⁶⁶ The paradoxical nature of these claims (if America was freer, then why were abolitionists there more persecuted?) did not particularly concern Garrisonians.⁶⁷ The point is that their once strident Anglophilia in the wake of British emancipation had turned into deep ambivalence about England in the wake of the “so-called World’s Convention.”

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For a brief period in 1841, Garrisonians discussed an abortive plan to hold an improved “World’s Convention” in the United States. The plan’s main booster was Henry Clarke Wright, whose animus towards the idea of “nations,” articulated throughout

⁶⁵ John A. Collins to Elizabeth Pease, 4 July 1841, BAA, 155; Collins to Edmund Quincy, 2 March 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.95. See also “Mission of J.A. Collins,” *Liberator*, 21 May 1841.

⁶⁶ Lucretia Mott to MWC, 29 July, 1840, in Palmer, *Selected Letters*, 79.

⁶⁷ Rogers came closest to noting this irony when he said that “here we have a *chance* to be free, and there is nothing to hunt us but the mob.” See “Belligerant [sic] England.”

1839 in his non-resistance speeches and writings, intensified at the end of 1840. In December, he confided in his diary, “There is no christianity in nations. No Justice, No Humanity.” In another entry, he exclaimed, “What havoc it will make among National organizations when they are brought to the test of Christianity!” By that test, nations were “evil & only evil,” since they provided states with the force needed to secure their tyranny. Wright, however, went on to develop this negative critique of human government into a positive defense of “human rights,” which fused theories of natural rights with Wright’s romantic humanism and radical non-resistance. Humanity was prior to nationality, he argued, as well as to any of the artificial labels by which people were categorized—race, gender, and religion included: “Man is noble, is honorable, and crowned with glory, because he is a MAN, and not because he belongs to this nation or that, and not because of any title which men may affix to him.”⁶⁸

In May 1841, while sifting through these ideas, Wright discovered a flash in the pan. Perhaps a “World’s Convention” on human rights could be held in Boston that would exalt humanity over nationality. From the start, Garrisonians understood Wright’s proposed Convention as a successor—and a far superior one—to the “so-called World’s Convention.” His first mention of such a meeting was prompted by a conversation with Garrison and Rogers in May 1841, a year after they had traveled to London. When Wright floated his idea of “*A World’s Convention to consider the subject of Human Rights*,” they immediately “fell in with the proposition.” The three men agreed to hold an organizational meeting later in the month, during “anniversary week” in Boston. On May

⁶⁸ Wright’s Journals (BPL), XLV, 93 (3 December 1840), 111 (23 December 1840); “National Organizations,” *Liberator*, 11 January 1839. See also Perry, *Childhood, Marriage and Reform*, 43.

26, a group of Garrisonians met to consider the idea, and a planning committee was nominated the next day.⁶⁹

Encouraged by these steps, Garrison wrote a few days later to Elizabeth Pease, promising “a genuine World’s Convention in Boston in 1843!!” Wright was ecstatic in his journal: “*A world’s convention! Human rights! Human Nature! May the Father of men direct us in this movement & furnish the means to carry it on.*” This Convention, unlike its false predecessor in London, would not be only an antislavery convention. It would bring the whole “Human family together to talk over their grievances.” All forms of oppression would be included on its agenda, and it would “look upon man as man, as one family,” rather than as a patchwork of nations. People from “all countries” would attend, and its proceedings would be published in different languages. All of this was familiar enough to Garrisonians; for the most part, Wright was describing what they had hoped the London Convention would be. But Wright’s boldest and most innovative suggestion was that this Convention would be permanent. It would “live, though its individual members may die.” A committee would meet as a permanent “place where oppressed & outraged Humanity can make known her complaints, & the oppressor be rebuked.”⁷⁰

In a letter to the *Liberator* explaining the need for this new World’s Convention, Wright sounded familiar non-resistant and abolitionist themes. “In our estimate of man’s relations, rights, duties & responsibilities, geographical lines & national boundaries must

⁶⁹ Wright’s Journals (BPL), XLV, 212 (6 May 1841), 224 (26 May 1841); “World’s Convention,” *Liberator*, 4 June 1841. See also Henry Clarke Wright to Wendell Phillips, 27 August 1841, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (1349/1).

⁷⁰ WLJ to Elizabeth Pease, 1 June 1841, LWLG, 3:25; Wright’s Journals (BPL), XLV, 225 (26 May 1841), 226 (27 May 1841); “World’s Convention,” *Liberator*, 27 August 1841.

be set aside,” he said. “Human love is not bounded by latitude & longitude. ... ‘Our country is the world – our countrymen all mankind!’” The obstacles to the communion of the human family—nations, for instance—were of human, not divine, invention and they could be removed by voluntary action. All who were “truly philanthropic” would support their removal.⁷¹

But not all Garrisonians were persuaded by Wright’s optimism. Was such a meeting practical? And if practical, was it desirable? Lydia Maria Child was not sure. Although she had been named in absentia to the planning committee, she told a friend to ask “Garrison (and *soon*) to take my name off the Call for the World’s Convention; on the ground that I feel no call whatever to the work, and probably should not attend such a Convention, if I were in Boston at the time.” Child was not the only one with doubts. Veterans of the Convention in London were even more skeptical. Webb’s experience made him wonder if such a meeting was possible. He told Wendell Phillips that he did not “like the term *World’s Convention* – it is ‘a poetical flourish of friend Whittier’s.’ There never has been a worlds convention, and we will never see one.” If British and American abolitionists could not get along, “can you imagine Esquimaux & New Hollanders, Caucasians and Negroes, Tartars and Sardinians all holding solemn council together – understanding the same words in the same sense, reasoning from the same premises in the same way & coming to a harmonious conclusion? I cannot.” Besides, the meeting would be the “world’s” in name only; Sardinians and Eskimos were unlikely to attend. “’Twould not be a World’s convention,” said Collins in a letter relaying

⁷¹ See Wright’s letter in the *Liberator*, 16 July 1841. The letter was also copied in Wright’s Journals (BPL), XLVI, 1 (18 June 1841).

Webb's doubts to Wright, "but a convention of a few Old Organized abolitionists from Gr[eat] Br[itai]n. & America."⁷²

Even those who supported Wright sympathized with Webb's skepticism. Their caution was born of the lingering disappointments of the previous summer. As Chapman put it, "The *words*, 'WORLD'S Convention' have been made ludicrous to the mind by the recent misuse of them on the part of the London Anti-Slavery Committee." It would take work, she said, to clear the name of its former connotations. Despite her doubts, Chapman favored Wright's idea. But Samuel J. May, who was also nominated to the planning committee, echoed Webb's more basic questions. He pointedly asked whether anyone in the world besides a handful of New England reformers had taken notice of the call for the meeting. "If not, 'tis plain to my mind, the time has not come for a World's Convention."⁷³

Perhaps because so many had stumbled over the title, not to mention the impracticability of the entire world assembling, Wright's journal began to refer to a "*Human Rights Convention for the World*," instead of a "World's" Convention. But the name, he soon discovered, was not the only problem his plans faced. In September, his

⁷² Lydia Maria Child to Ellis Gray Loring, 6 April 1842, Lydia Maria Child Papers (microfilm), NYPL; RDW to Wendell Phillips, 6 July 1840, Wendell Phillips Papers, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (1277/1); John A. Collins to Henry Clarke Wright, January 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.2. The nature of Child's objections is unclear, although it is probable that she wanted to avoid further wrangling with British abolitionists and interpreted Wright's Convention as intentionally provocative. In June 1841, Child succeeded Rogers as editor of the *NASS* and promptly attempted to smooth over relations with the BFASS and Sturge, who visited the United States that year. See "English Influence," *NASS*, 29 July 1841.

⁷³ For Chapman and May, along with other letters to Wright concerning the Convention, see "World's Convention," *Liberator*, 12 November 1841. With friends like these, the Convention did not need enemies. But it had those as well. The New York *Journal of Commerce* had a field day reporting on Wright's idea. Its Boston correspondent said he "poked in several times" to the planning session held in May "and always found a sufficiency of vacant seats." "Boston Anniversaries," *Liberator*, 11 June 1841. For a later satire of the idea of a "World's Convention," which lumped together Garrisonians, Fourierists, anarchists, and feminists as its targets, see Quirk Ogee, *Extracts from Humbugiana: Or, The World's Convention. A Satire. In Four Parts* (Gotham: Gas, Green & Ginger, 1847).

diary reported another meeting held to consider “a ~~World’s~~ Human Rights Convention for the World,” this time after the adjournment of a New England Non-Resistance Society meeting. May, one of the skeptics, spoke, as did Mott and other former delegates to London. According to Wright, all thought the meeting was a good idea. All agreed that non-resistants and abolitionists needed to take the initiative. But “money difficulties were suggested, & modes of procedure.” It was a “*great talk*,” one planner told Wright, but talk, in the end, was all it was.⁷⁴

References to Wright’s Convention soon disappeared from the *Liberator*. They lingered, however, in Wright’s diary and in Garrisonian imaginations. In April 1842, Wright reported chatting with some friends on a “World’s Convention to discuss *Human Rights*. Humanity needs such a Convention & will have it.” The next month, his diary reiterated his critique of nations: “Have long been trying to get a view of man without any regard to country or religion. Men *have* claims on each other as men, not as members of a sect or nation.” Wright lamented the stress placed on whether “one comes from this or that country, & is an Englishman, an American, an African, a Frenchman &c.,” instead of on “the fact that he comes from a Common Father, & inherits a Common Humanity.” In conversations with Rogers and Garrison, he continued to argue that “National Organizations as now regulated stand right in the way of Human Brotherhood.” Those ideas would circulate in Garrisonian discourse for years, but abolitionists let go of plans for a standing “World’s Convention” in Boston.⁷⁵

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⁷⁴ Wright’s Journals (BPL), XLVI, 62 (29 August 1841), 83 (21 September 1841).

⁷⁵ Wright’s Journals (HU), XLVIII, 64 (19 April 1842), 74 (1 May 1842), 87 (15 May 1842), 89 (17 May 1842). See also p. 94 (22 May 1842).

In his illuminating biography of Henry Clarke Wright, Lewis Perry notes parenthetically that Wright's plans to hold a "World's Convention" in Boston, of all places, was proof of the Garrisonians' "invincible parochialism." This chapter confirms that judgment while at the same time complicating it. As we have seen, Wright's proposal was not a simple sign of invincible parochialism; it was intended as an alternative to the parochialism of British reformers at the "so-called World's Convention" the year before. On the other hand, as we have seen, Garrisonians did conclude that only New England could host a true "World's Convention," given the tyrannical customs and weak-kneed abolitionism of Old England. "A World's Convention in Boston!" wrote Pease to the *Liberator* after learning of Wright's proposal. "That is the place for it—there cannot be one any where else."⁷⁶

But that parochialism was not invincible or inevitable. According to Perry, Garrisonians assumed that Boston was the place where "great historical movements always commenced," but that had not always been the case. For most of the 1830s, they argued that London was that place; it was actually going to London in the summer of 1840 that convinced them of Boston's virtues. And breaking up with England was hard to do. As Phillips lamented to Pease in May 1841, "How melancholy it is to lose all respect for such men as the London Com[mitt]^{ee}. Certainly to distrust is harder than to trust. How much two years ago I looked up, how reverentially, to such names as Scoble & Sturge – but then I had not seen them."⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Perry, *Childhood, Marriage and Reform*, 42; "Elizabeth Pease," *Liberator*, 30 July 1841.

⁷⁷ Perry, *Childhood, Marriage and Reform*, 42; Wendell Phillips to Elizabeth Pease, 15 May 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.1.18.

Their trips abroad gave Garrisonians reasons to argue that American institutions, the same institutions that they lambasted during the 1830s as inferior to those of the “mother country,” were not as far beyond hope as they had thought. In a speech in Glasgow following the Convention, Rogers even “claimed for America the character of a land of liberty,--a land which has free institutions, though in some respects clouded.” But the Garrisonians’ praise of America in the wake of the Convention was provisional and equivocal, rather than unqualified. After the Convention had ended, Garrison wrote to his wife from London that “slavery out of the question, our country is a century in advance of England on the score of reform, and of general intelligence and morality.” But of course, slavery was *not* out of the question for Garrison. In a similar letter that he wrote after returning to America, Garrison made his pride in America even more explicitly limited. “Putting our heaven-defying slave system, and our infernal prejudice against the colored man, out of the question,” Garrison said, “in all things else appertaining to the intelligence, equality and happiness of the people, Great Britain falls far in the rear of the United States, and her population have many and grievous burdens to bear, which are unknown to the white inhabitants of this highly favored country.” Garrison could now call America a “highly favored country,” but he could do so only by weaving through a long series of qualifications and asides. For, as he himself continued, “slavery and prejudice cannot be put aside, but must be taken into the general account.” America could “boast that [it had] ‘no castled lord,’” but it still had “something infinitely more frightful”—slavery. Garrison summed up his ambivalence best when he wrote, in a

letter to Wright, that it was now “difficult to determine, whether England or America demand the liveliest sympathy.”⁷⁸

If the so-called “World’s Convention” unsettled Garrisonians’ admiration for England as a land of liberty, it also began to mute the arguments that they had made in the 1830s about America’s descent from the British nation. But in a sense, that cleared space for the Garrisonians to underline that nations were political communities and that cultural customs were not sacrosanct. Nations should be judged, they argued, by the freedom and inclusiveness of their institutions. The “World’s Convention”—both the actual one held in London and the imagined one that Wright proposed in Boston—also served, implicitly, as a model for just how inclusive Garrisonians believed nations should be. In 1840, non-resistants like Garrison and Wright rejected the very idea of nationalism as limited and longed for a utopian world in which national boundaries would disappear. But when, by the end of the antebellum period, both Garrison and Wright softened their general critiques of nations and refined them into critiques of certain kinds of nations, the debates over the Convention of 1840 had already laid much of the groundwork for the concept of civic nationality that they would embrace. If a “World’s Convention” should include women as well as men, then so should a national community, and if a “World’s Convention” should welcome delegates from all nations and religions, as Wright argued, then so should a nation.

Garrisonians did not yet make that deduction explicit in their arguments about nations, and some Garrisonians still harbored doubts about whether a community could be created out of the members of disparate nations. Webb’s skepticism about a “World’s

⁷⁸ “The American Delegates in Glasgow,” *Pennsylvania Freeman*, 27 August 1840; WLJ to Helen E. Garrison, 29 June 1840, LWLG, 2:656; WLJ to Henry C. Wright, 23 August 1840, LWLG, 2:680; WLJ to Henry C. Wright, 1 April 1843, LWLG, 3:144.

Convention” of Esquimaux and Englishmen bespoke his deeper skepticism, discussed more fully in Chapter 6, of a pluralistic national community composed of different religious and linguistic communities. For Garrisonians, the debates over the “World’s Convention” did not settle finally whether a civic nation was possible or whether the United States was such a nation. But in forcing Garrisonians to articulate a cosmopolitan identity that transcended particular national customs, and then by encouraging them to argue that America was the country whose institutions were most conducive to the living out of that identity, the “World’s Convention” showed how the Garrisonians’ efforts to forge transnational relationships with reformers sparked reflection and contestation over the terms of national relationship as well.

Chapter 3

A New Web of Relations

“No man, of any nation, shall be able justly to accuse me, either in time or eternity, of refusing to acknowledge him as ‘a man and a brother,’ or advocating doctrines of a sectional or hostile character. ‘My country is the world—my countrymen are all mankind.’”

*William Lloyd Garrison (1843)*¹

“The individual is the world.”

*Ralph Waldo Emerson (1846)*²

Not all British reformers earned the Garrisonians’ scorn in 1840. Although the Garrisonians left the Convention with little esteem for members of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, they left with the highest regard for the “Philanthropists of Ireland,” as John A. Collins dubbed Richard D. Webb’s family and friends in Dublin. And they still had friends like George Thompson and Elizabeth Pease, whom Collins praised for her “giant’s heart” and her “soul so elastic as to feel for the whole universe.” These worthies had not been infected by the narrow-minded parochialism of the BFASS. They were the “benefactors of mankind,” the *Liberator* said of Webb’s circle. “None love Ireland better than they, but none can love the whole world more. ... They trample under foot all selfish national rivalries; their humanity is not bounded by geographical lines; their christianity breathes peace on earth.”³

In the decades after the “World’s Convention,” Garrisonians forged close ties of friendship with reformers like Webb and Pease. Through travel, print, and the exchange

¹ WLG to Joshua T. Everett, 4 March 1843, LWLG, 3:140.

² Quoted in Sacvan Bercovitch, “Emerson, Individualism, and Liberal Dissent,” in *The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 334.

³ John A. Collins to Wendell Phillips, 14 June 1841, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (429); “Mr. Collins,” *Liberator*, 25 June 1841.

of affectionate letters, American and British Garrisonians built interpersonal networks that redeemed some of the disappointment of the “World’s Convention.” On a practical level, these transatlantic networks served as conduits of information, tactical knowledge, and material or moral support, all aspects of Anglo-American abolitionism that previous historians have emphasized. But as this chapter will suggest, ties between Garrisonians and British reformers in the 1840s and beyond were not only ties of information, but also ties of imagination. Garrisonians imagined their travels and transatlantic friendships as the surest proofs of their cosmopolitanism. Abby Kimber, one of the delegates from Pennsylvania excluded from Freemasons’ Hall, wrote as much to Pease in the aftermath of the Convention. She had anticipated that she would form new “acquaintances and friendships” during her travels, “but that we should so cordially adopt Garrison’s motto – Our Country is the World &c – was more than I had thought.” She had so enjoyed the company of Pease and others “that I cannot recognise a ‘foreigner’ among you.” Other Garrisonians similarly believed that in forging friendships abroad, they were living out the cosmopolitan ideal.⁴

The fact that Garrisonians considered such friendships as evidence of their unbounded humanity had several ironic implications. First, it implied that a reformer could “trample” national divisions just by making the rounds from Pease’s home in Darlington to Webb’s office in Dublin and back to Boston again. Indeed, one did not even have to make these rounds. Despite constant urgings from her friends, Pease never traveled to America, but her “giant’s heart” remained unquestioned. The personalization of Garrison’s motto also meant that American reformers could claim to be “benefactors

⁴ Abby Kimber to Elizabeth Pease, 18 May [1841?], BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.43. The letter is dated in archival records as 1840, but internal evidence places it after Kimber’s trip to London.

of mankind,” whose hearts were “elastic” enough to encircle “the whole universe,” just by traveling to Europe. Garrisonians may have decried the Eurocentric character of the “World’s Convention” by contrasting it with their circle of friends, but in doing so they identified an even smaller group of people as representatives of the world. Garrisonians could only use their Atlantic crossings as proof of their world-embracing philanthropy by reproducing, to some extent, the Eurocentric conventions of nineteenth-century travelers, which imagined Europe as the world.

In 1843, David Lee Child, upset by growing hostilities between Garrisonians and “new organization” abolitionists, pointed out to Maria Weston Chapman that “our anti-slavery world is not *the* world; but renown therein is sometimes mistaken for world renown.” Child, who made his own sojourn to Europe in 1837 and 1838, was not criticizing Eurocentrism, but what he perceived as individual egotism among antislavery leaders. Yet his comment aptly notes that the Garrisonians’ self-image as exemplary world citizens required them to imagine the relatively small “anti-slavery world” in which they moved as “*the* world.” “We feel puffed up with our little retinue,” Child continued sardonically, “and like the tipsy one mount a wall and halloo, ‘Attention the Universe! By Kingdoms, to the right wheel, march!’” Child was not a neutral observer, but he spotted what now seems like an obvious gap between the world that Garrisonians imagined as their country and their actual experience in the world. Given the fact that their “little retinue” was confined mainly to Anglophone countries, and the fact that most of them had seen very few of the kingdoms of earth, how could Garrisonians believe that they were addressing “the Universe”?⁵

⁵ David Lee Child to MWC, 15 September 1843, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.19.37.

Such a posture struck Child as risible. But I will argue that this posture makes more sense when placed within the broad intellectual context of nineteenth-century Romanticism. Garrisonians, like the classic Romantic poets of the early nineteenth century, believed that their highly particular experiences in the world could be entry points into a spiritual unity with the entire universe. If Garrisonians mounted a wall to shout orders to the universe, this was not unlike the gesture of Romantic poets who climbed mountains to commune with all of nature and invoke the Spirit of the age. The Garrisonians' references to the elasticity of *hearts* and the ability of *spirits* to mingle across wide distances echo Romantic themes. For Romantics, too, one individual could unite his or her soul imaginatively with the world, and the mind's eye could see what the eye had not seen. This Romantic worldview, especially as articulated by New England Transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson, was similar to the Garrisonians' view of the world. By viewing their transatlantic ties through the larger cultural and intellectual lens of Romanticism, Garrisonians gave their friendship networks a significance that far exceeded their actual size and scope.

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Garrisonians traveled primarily across the Atlantic, but not exclusively. In the early months of 1841, Maria Weston Chapman traveled with her husband to Haiti, hoping the tropical weather would improve his health. The Chapmans lived in Haiti for half a year, during which time they managed to found an auxiliary chapter of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Port-au-Prince, arranged for Garrisonian papers to be sent to various subscribers on the island, and sent home reports about this "country entirely new and unknown to us." These reports found their way, in turn, to Garrisonian correspondents

across the Atlantic. In an 1841 speech in Glasgow, for instance, George Thompson cited the Chapmans' visit to Haiti as proof that abolitionism was not confined by national borders. He read a resolution passed by the new Haitian antislavery society (surely composed under Chapman's aegis), that "as philanthropists, 'our country is the world—our countrymen are all mankind.'"⁶

The Chapmans were not the first Garrisonian abolitionists to visit Haiti. In 1838, Philadelphia abolitionists C. C. Burleigh, Lewis Gunn, and Robert Douglas, Jr., traveled to the island and spoke to a recently formed Haitian Abolition Society in Port-au-Prince, which seems to have been organized by Anglophone immigrants and missionaries. Gunn and Burleigh, like Thompson, interpreted such contacts with Haitian abolitionists as signs of their philanthropy. In a speech to the Society printed back in Philadelphia, Burleigh noted the portraits of Garrison that he saw hanging on the walls of the Society's rooms, and praised his "noble sentiment" that "My country is the world; my countrymen are all mankind." Burleigh said, on the basis of this principle, "you ... who sit before me, are my countrymen." In his own speech, Gunn reminded the audience that "the mere fact of a man's being a Haytian was no proof that he was a friend to liberty," any more than the patriotism of most Americans was proof of their love for all mankind. "To love liberty *merely for ourselves*, is not to be abolitionists." The true abolitionist, like a citizen of the world would "hate slavery *wherever he might know it to exist*," even "in the most distant portions of the globe."⁷

⁶ MWC to WLG, 19 January 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.33; "Mr. Thompson's Lecture on American Slavery, and on the Present Position and Prospects of the Abolitionists of the United States," reprinted from the Glasgow *Argus* in the *Liberator*, 17 December 1841.

⁷ "Speech of Charles C. Burleigh, at a Meeting of the Haytien Abolition Society," *National Enquirer and Constitutional Advocate of Universal Liberty* (Philadelphia), 15 February 1838; "Speech of Lewis C. Gunn, Delivered before the Haytien Abolition Society," *National Enquirer and Constitutional*

But Europe was usually as distant a portion of the globe as Garrisonians saw. When Garrisonians did travel, it was most often by crossing the Atlantic, and their focus remained fixed on Britain in particular. Even while Chapman was in Haiti, she filled pages of correspondence with discussions about the ill-fated fundraising trip that Collins was then taking through Britain. From Cap Haitien, she wrote to Pease that “we have been greatly gratified since our arrival here, by much that we have observed.” Instead of elaborating on her observations of Haiti, however, Chapman moved quickly to conflicts between Garrisonians and “new organization” abroad. “Much as I should delight to dwell on the particulars of our sojourn here ... I am impelled by the accounts [of Collins’ treatment by the BFASS] I have just had from Boston, to turn to another subject.” The Chapmans’ trip to Haiti tantalizingly suggests the potentially broad range of travel and sympathy that could be motivated by the motto, “Our Country is the World.” But it also reinforced that “the world,” for most Garrisonians, still turned mainly on an Atlantic and Anglo-American axis.⁸

If “the world” that Garrisonians imagined in their motto was always larger than the world they had actually seen, this was partly because they accepted, implicitly, the idea of their contemporaries that to see Europe *was* to see the world. Europe, particularly Britain, was seen by many Americans as the place toward which all the corners of the earth converged. In retrospect, of course, it is easy to point out the many parts of the

Advocate of Universal Liberty, 22 February 1838. See also “Abolition in Hayti,” *Liberator*, 9 February 1838; Brown, “An Antislavery Agent,” 84.

⁸ MWC to Elizabeth Pease, 22 February 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.84. See also MWC to John A. Collins, 23 February 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.87. On the Chapmans in Haiti, see MWC, “Haiti,” *Liberty Bell* (1842), 164-204; “Letter from Inginac, of Haiti,” *Liberator*, 23 July 1841; John Telemachus Hilton to Chapmans, 30 April 1841, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.15.43; P. Tredwell to the Chapmans, 17 May 1841, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.15.45; Caroline Weston to Deborah Weston, 20 July 1841, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.3.104, and other related letters in the BPL, especially from William P. Griffin to Chapman.

earth that this vision of the world obscured, not to mention the imperial power relations that kept them in obscurity. A Eurocentric world was a woefully and often violently distorted one. Nonetheless, it was this prevailing Eurocentrism that allowed Garrisonians to omit most of the inhabited globe from their travel itineraries without feeling they had missed much. Mary Louise Pratt has argued that Europeans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries used their travels to the peripheries of European empires to cultivate and to claim a “planetary consciousness.” Similarly, Garrisonians often followed the travel writing of their day in representing journeys to England as if they were trips around the planet.⁹

Nineteenth-century travel writers often portrayed cities like London or Liverpool as microcosms for the world, focal points for all of the planet’s diversity. To a certain extent, Garrisonians echoed that convention in their own travelogues. In 1846, on finding himself in London for the third time in his life, Garrison wrote to his wife that “if, at first, [the city’s] vastness and splendor overwhelmed me, my astonishment is rather increased than diminished, the more I attempt to take its dimensions, and look into its wonders.” As he stood on a bridge over the Thames, he marveled at “the multitude of vessels from various parts of the globe ... carrying multitudes of people, who are enabled to travel a long distance for a mere trifle.” Nothing was more “animating or picturesque” than this scene. The London streets, he went on, “seem interminable,” and the city’s “modes of existence” were “complicated” and “mysterious.” As with other non-English travelers to London in this period, the dimensions and complexity of the city made Garrison reflect on the dimensions of the planet itself and the miniscule size of the traveler in it. “There

⁹ See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

are two positions in which I feel myself ‘less than nothing, and vanity’—a mere mote in the sun-beam,” he confided to his wife: “on the Atlantic ocean, and in London, the central point of human existence.”¹⁰

As Garrison implied, even the trip across the Atlantic could help the reflective traveler develop a “planetary consciousness.” Before he had ever reached London, his steamship itself served as a kind of floating microcosm. He wrote to his wife at sea in 1846, “we have on board 107 passengers, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Americans, &c.; yet brother men all.” On the same trip, he wrote to Edmund Quincy that “we are all ‘foreigners’ on board—that is, we hail from the various quarters of the globe.” Just as Garrison imagined that by looking out over the Thames, he had seen a picture of vessels from all over the earth, his imagination could turn a small sample of Europeans into a group of “foreigners” from “various quarters of the globe.” Through such sleights of the mind, Garrisonians imagined their exposure to one or two corners of the globe as exposure to the entire world.¹¹

The Garrisonians’ impressions of their “animating” and “picturesque” travels were mediated by a broader culture of travel writing in the mid-nineteenth century. To borrow the words of historian Lewis Perry, Garrisonians “combined reform with tourism.” Abolitionists who went to Europe were as delighted as any innocent abroad to

¹⁰ WLJ to Helen E. Garrison, 11 August 1846, LWLG, 3:363. Elsewhere, in a letter to Elizabeth Pease, Garrison referred again to the “immense city” of London as “this focal point of human existence.” See WLJ to Pease, 14 August 1846, LWLG, 3:375. Cf. Heinrich Heine’s first impression of London in 1828: “I have seen the most remarkable sight the world can show, I have seen it and am still amazed—in my memory there still rises up this stone forest of houses and between them the pressing stream of living faces with all their dreadful haste, with all their varied passions, of love, hunger, and hatred—I mean London.” Quoted in Rosemary Ashton, *Little Germany: Exile and Asylum in Victorian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 36.

¹¹ WLJ to Helen E. Garrison, 18 July 1846, LWLG, 3:346; WLJ to Edmund Quincy, 19 July 1846, LWLG, 3:350.

see the sights. “I am now in the capital city of world-famous Scotland,” Garrison wrote incredulously to his wife in 1840, after he had already seen the standard litany of famous sights in England: Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London, St. Paul’s Cathedral, “&c., &c.” His traveling companion, Rogers, compared their tour through scenic Scotland to “a continued panorama—or a long gallery of paintings.”¹² Mott’s journal from 1840 similarly records a whirlwind tour to the places that most American tourists flocked to see in Victorian Britain—the old wall of Chester, Stratford-on-Avon, Warwick Castle, Oxford, and, of course, London, where her party “passed thro’ places familiar to us by name ... Strand—Temple Bar—Fleet street—Ludgate Hill—St. Pauls.” In her diary, Mott could barely hide her excitement at meeting celebrities, touring Madam Toussaud’s wax museum, eating “a real English dinner,” or witnessing, from a safe distance, “a real ale-house fight.”¹³

The most generic feature of nineteenth-century American travel writing was its tendency to draw angular contrasts between the decaying institutions of Old Europe and the thriving republicanism of a young America. As Christopher Mulvey has argued, whether tourists celebrated their English heritage or contrasted England’s miseries with the felicities of New England, “as often as not England proved to be what [the American]

¹² Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform*, 271; WLJ to Helen E. Garrison, 23 July 1840, LWLG, 2:668; WLJ to Helen E. Garrison, 29 June 1840, LWLG, 2:655-656; “Ride into Edinburgh,” in *A Collection from the Miscellaneous Writings of Nathaniel Peabody Rogers* (Manchester, N. H.: William H. Fisk, 1849), 113. See also Stewart, *Wendell Phillips*, 76-80; WLJ to Anti-Slavery Friends and Coadjutors, 19 August 1840, LWLG, 2:677.

¹³ Tolles, *Mott’s Diary*, 15, 18-19, 21 (“places familiar to us”), 41-42 (“real English dinner” and “real ale-house fight”), 76. See Christopher Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Travel Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), esp. 3-106. Long after Mott’s trip, Henry Adams recalled that “millions of Americans have felt this succession of emotions”—crossing the Atlantic, navigating the Mersey River, taking tea at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool, and seeing the romantic town of Chester, England. Almost eighty years before, Mott had followed that exact itinerary, spending her first night in England at the Adelphi, and crossing the Mersey the next day on her way to Chester. Adams quoted by Mulvey on p. 42.

expected it to be.” Likewise, Daniel Rodgers has contended that as mid-nineteenth-century “tourists began to descend on Europe, their responses fell quickly into the waiting formulas. Pilgrims in search of proof of their own distinctiveness, Americans in mid-nineteenth-century Europe came back amply sated.” According to Mulvey and Rodgers, most antebellum American tourists saw what they wanted to see. And what they wanted to see was proof that the United States had retained the virtues of English culture while repudiating its vices. Guided by preexisting “formulas,” says Rodgers, American tourism became “a lesson in patriotism.”¹⁴

To a certain extent, this was true even for Garrisonian tourists. Like other Americans, their travelogues dutifully recorded their disdain for the poverty, inequality, and antiquity of European society. Mott punctuated her diary’s entry on Eaton Hall, “seat of the Marquis of Westminster & his son Lord Grosvenor,” by exclaiming, “The poor robbed to supply the luxuries!” Garrison likewise told Samuel May after returning home in 1840 that his “eyes were weary of sight-seeing,” and that “I could not enjoy the beautiful landscapes of England, because of the suffering and want staring me in the face, on the one hand, and the opulence and splendor dazzling my vision on the other.” In 1841, Wendell Phillips wrote to the *Liberator* from Naples about his own “melancholy tour” of the continent. He was appalled by the “painful contrasts” of European life—“wealth beyond that of fairy tales, and poverty all bare and starved at its side.” Although the “same contrast” existed in “our own country,” he said, it was not so “painfully prominent.” Garrison concluded that “we, in New-England, scarcely dream of the

¹⁴ Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes*, 9; Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 36-37.

privileges we enjoy, and the enviable condition in which we are placed, as contrasted with the state of things here.”¹⁵

Yet we should not conclude from such statements that Garrisonians simply parroted the patriotism and Eurocentrism of American tourists, or that they sorted their impressions mechanically into prefabricated pigeonholes. The Garrisonians’ writings about their travels followed some of what Rodgers calls the “waiting formulas” designed to prove America’s distinctiveness, but they also departed from them. After all, the Garrisonians’ expectations about Europe were demonstrably different from those of the typical patriotic tourist. Unlike most of their contemporaries, they were ashamed and critical of the United States as well as of England. Garrisonians also veered off the paths beaten out by the common mass of Americans who went abroad. They visited not only the usual spots like Chester or Naples, but also peculiar places—like Porte Plate, Haiti, or Darlington, England—which were certainly not on most tourist maps. If the itineraries of many American tourists proved that they were “pilgrims in search of proof of their own distinctiveness,” as Rodgers puts it, Garrisonian pilgrimages terminated in very different places, some of which symbolically challenged the presumed superiority of America and Europe. Edmund Quincy wrote to the Chapmans while they were in Haiti that “if [he] were a sentimental traveller [he] would far sooner make a pilgrimage to the tomb of Toussaint,” hero of the Haitian Revolution, “than to Mount Vernon,” because he thought Toussaint a greater man than the patriotic George Washington. A few years later, Henry C. Wright lived out that wish by taking his own pilgrimage to the French prison where Toussaint had died, “greater than Napoleon.” If Garrisonian travelers were pilgrims and

¹⁵ Tolles, *Mott’s Diary*, 16; WLG to Samuel J. May, 6 September 1840, LWLG, 2:697; “Letter from Wendell Phillips, Naples, April 12, 1841,” *Liberator*, 28 May 1841; WLG to Garrison, 29 June 1840.

sentimental tourists, their radicalism provided them with distinctive lists of sights to see and celebrities to meet.¹⁶

Garrisonians' observations about foreign countries were also interventions in ongoing debates with their political opponents. They put their sight-seeing into the service of their arguments. This was true, of course, of almost all American tourists—comparing Britain and America always had a polemical edge in the antebellum period, when international tensions between the two countries persistently ran high. Yet Garrisonian travelogues were shaped in unique ways by their rhetorical conflicts with critics. If the abolitionists praised England's enlightened society or its philanthropy, they were at once accused of indifference to the misery of English "wage slaves" and the tyranny of European states. On the other hand, if abolitionists tried to avoid this charge of hypocrisy by pointing out England's numerous faults, their opponents twisted these words into an admission that England was corrupt and avaricious, and that its act of abolition was selfish. "Whether we strike high or low," Garrison complained, "we cannot please the enemies of equal rights."¹⁷

Even the friends of equal rights were hard to please. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, the Garrisonians' severest strictures on Britain were often rebuked by "new organization" abolitionists as partisan invective. Garrison's critics knew that when Garrisonians like Rogers indicted British society in general, their ire was also directed at the BFASS in

¹⁶ Edmund Quincy to MWC, 25 February 1841, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.13.26-28; Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform*, 279.

¹⁷ "First of August," *Liberator*, 20 August 1841. Responding to a recent report in the press of a speech he had given on the First of August, Garrison pointed out that he had been "censured and ridiculed for having rebuked England for what she has left undone at home," but if he "had used only the language of panegyric," Garrison said, "then, doubtless, this amiable reviewer would have accused us of covering up the iniquities of England, and bestowing praise where little or none is due." See also "'England Opposed to Slavery,'" *Liberator*, 16 September 1842.

particular. Conversely, when Garrisonians enumerated the blessings of freedom enjoyed by Americans, they were often attempting to rally their supporters at home and to portray themselves—rather than “new organization” abolitionists—as the true representatives of American antislavery. So while the Garrisonians’ depictions of Britain often had the familiar ring of American exceptionalism, they were also designed to make Garrisonians seem exceptional. Instead of simply mimicking the patriotism of American tourists, Garrisonians manipulated patriotic language to fend off critics both in and outside of the antislavery movement.

This is not to say that the Garrisonians’ praise for America was merely rhetorical, but caution warns against seeing the Garrisonians’ impressions of Britain and Europe as simply formulaic. Garrisonian tourists did look at Europe with a “comparative gaze,” the term that historian Nancy L. Green uses to describe as the viewpoints of most American travelers in nineteenth-century France. But the Garrisonians’ comparisons did not always convey the same lessons as those of typical tourists. If their reform was combined with tourism, their tourism was also shaped by reform. On the one hand, they reproduced the Eurocentric presumptions that extrapolated a “planetary consciousness” from Atlantic crossings and tours of London. But they could also challenge those presumptions by traveling to Haiti, by setting Toussaint over Washington and Napoleon, and by criticizing social institutions both at home and abroad.¹⁸

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The Garrisonians’ impressions of Britain were guided not just by what they wanted to see, but also by what their friends wanted them to see. While overseas,

¹⁸ Nancy L. Green, “The Comparative Gaze: Travelers in France before the Era of Mass Tourism,” *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 11-28.

Garrisonians met a variety of British reformers whose *own* ideas about Britain helped them organize and interpret their perceptions of British society. This means that Garrisonian ideas about Britain were not produced by a mechanical process of shoehorning their experiences into prior expectations. Their ideas about Britain were shaped through a dialogical and transnational process, in which British and American Garrisonians both influenced each other's experiences and expectations.

Despite the organizational schisms that divided abolitionists in 1840, personal friendships between Garrisonians and British reformers multiplied and deepened after the "World's Convention." In the 1830s, most British abolitionists were faceless names for the vast majority of Garrisonians. Antislavery societies on both sides of the Atlantic regularly passed resolutions of cooperation in the 1830s, and a few lecturers made high-profile trips across the Atlantic. But Garrisonians knew the *names* of famous British abolitionists—Clarkson, Cropper, Wilberforce, O'Connell—far better than they knew the men themselves. With a few exceptions, personal friendships between Garrisonians and British radicals were rare.¹⁹

That changed after the "World's Convention," which allowed an unprecedented number of Garrisonians to become personally acquainted with British reformers. George Bradburn wrote that the conference had been worthwhile, "apart from all Anti-Slavery considerations," for "it was the occasion of my seeing Ireland, and making so many valuable acquaintances." One of those new friends, James Haughton, agreed in a letter to Garrison, which was printed in the *Liberator*: "The recollection of our short acquaintance often fills my mind with pleasure, and makes me feel glad that I went to the World's

¹⁹ Cf. Davis, *Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 213-254; Davis, "James Cropper and the British Anti-Slavery Movement, 1823-1833," *Journal of Negro History* 46, no. 3 (1961), 170-173.

Convention (!!!).” In a letter to Irish abolitionists, written just before her return home, Sarah Pugh summed up the Garrisonians’ view that although the Convention had not been “all we hoped for,” it had given them “much more than we dared to expect.” “Amongst our highest pleasures we place the opportunities enjoyed of mingling with those interested in *human beings*.”²⁰

It is hard to tell who was more excited by this mingling—Garrisonians or their newfound admirers. Though shunned at the Convention, Garrisonians were shuttled around like celebrities in the weeks afterward. For Mott, coming back to Philadelphia was like coming back down to earth: “Here we are at home again, and entering into our every-day avocations, just as if we had not been made such *somebodies* in our Fatherland—I mean *out* of the Convention.” No one was more responsible for making Garrisonian delegates feel like “somebodies” than Richard D. Webb, whose penchant for hero worship was a standing joke among his friends. He later recalled that in 1831, Lafayette, the French hero of the American Revolution, had been “*my idol*.” But by 1840, Lafayette was “deposed, and Garrison fairly seated in his place.” After learning about Garrison from Thompson, the hope of seeing Garrisonian abolitionists in person led him to London that summer like the “Star of Bethlehem.” After the Convention, Webb told Wendell Phillips that “it is no wonder that I should look on the past few weeks as some of the most fortunate of my life, in that it has brought me into the actual society

²⁰ George Bradburn to RDW, 1 January 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2, v.11, p.4; “Letter from James Haughton, of Dublin,” *Liberator*, 14 October 1842; Sarah Pugh to RDW, Richard Allen, and James Haughton, 24 August 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.98. See also Mott to Elizabeth Pease, 18 February 1841, in Palmer, *Selected Letters*, 86.

of so many men and women, any one of whom I would have been rejoiced to have got a glimpse of through a telescope.”²¹

This kind of “actual society” mattered, both to the Garrisonians and to their hosts. Both were able to see people whom they had previously glimpsed through telescopes, if they had known of each other at all. Now they could instantiate their archetypal images of British or American abolitionists with actual people. When Webb sent Garrison a “list of those who enjoyed your company [in Dublin] during the too short three days (the glorious three days!) during which you favored us with it,” those names now had faces. Even three “glorious” days of such company enthralled the Garrisonians. “Dear England, Ireland, Scotland, I dream of you,” mused Rogers, back in America. “Have I ever seen them[?] I often doubt it. I flashed over and back like a comet and just touched the famous Islands. I should not love certain ones there though, as I do, if I had not really seen them.”²²

The Garrisonians’ web of loved ones stretched throughout Britain’s “famous Islands,” but the network radiated outward from particularly important nodes.²³ In Dublin and Darlington, Webb and Pease worked throughout the 1840s as switchboard operators for communications between Garrisonians and British friends, their central importance reinforced by the assistance they gave Collins during his 1841 quarrels with

²¹ Lucretia Mott to RDW and Hannah Webb, 12 October 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.10.16; RDW to MWC, 22 February 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.30; RDW to Wendell Phillips, 6 July 1840, HU, bMS Am 1953 (1277/1). See also RDW to MWC, 26 February 1846, BAA, 254.

²² RDW to WLG, 1 August 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.88; N. P. Rogers to Henry Clarke Wright, 20 March 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.19. See also Sarah Pugh to Elizabeth Pease, 16 November 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.10.44.

²³ For general overviews of the Garrisonians’ transatlantic friendship networks, see Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller, “The Cab: A Trans-Atlantic Community, Aspects of Nineteenth Century Reform” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1977); Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 121-153; Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 208-220; Clare Taylor, “Introduction” to BAA, 1-16.

Broad Street. Reformers immediately around Webb and Pease, however, were tied almost as directly to the Garrisonians as they were themselves. In Ireland, Webb's circle of reformers, composed of unorthodox Quakers, Unitarians, and a few Dissenters, included Haughton and Richard Allen. Letters from all three men were often published in Garrisonian papers in the 1840s. Webb's circle also embraced his extended family—his brother James, his sister-in-law Maria Waring, his cousin Anne, who was married to Allen, his cousins Elizabeth and Sarah Poole—as well as the Unitarian minister Charles Corkran. These members of the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society, which also included women like Isabel Jennings and Susannah Fisher, formed one center of Garrisonian support in the British Isles.²⁴

Garrisonian ties with abolitionists in Scotland were the oldest, since reformers in Glasgow and Edinburgh had sponsored Thompson's trip to the United States in the 1830s. William Smeal, an orthodox Quaker, remained a stalwart ally in Glasgow, despite his reservations about Garrison's religious heterodoxy. The Edinburgh abolitionist John Wigham kept the main antislavery society there affiliated with the BFASS, but his wife Jane (Smeal's sister) and daughter Eliza Wigham made the women's auxiliary staunchly Garrisonian. Scotland was also one of the few places in Britain where Dissenters were as important to the Garrisonians as Quakers and Unitarians. For example, the evangelical John Murray, scion of a wealthy family who had spent time in St. Kitts, befriended

²⁴ See Riach, "Richard Davis Webb and Antislavery in Ireland," 151-161; Rice, *Scots Abolitionists*, 105-107; Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform*, 188-89; Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 210-214; RDW to MWC, 22 February 1842.

Garrisonians who came to Glasgow, as did Patrick Brewster of Paisley, a radical minister in the Church of Scotland.²⁵

In England, Garrisonians of course had friends in Thompson and Pease, both of whom were veterans of several middle-class reform causes. In 1840, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Garrisonians also became acquainted with the wealthy lawyer William Henry Ashurst and his London circle of radical Unitarians, who convened regularly at his home, Muswell Hill, to discuss Romanticism, various political reforms, and feminism. As we will see in future chapters, Muswell Hill served as a salon for some of the most famous reformers in mid-century London, and at Ashursts' home Garrisonians met people like the utopian socialist Robert Owen and the Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini. The "Muswell Hill Brigade," as Ashurst's family was known, also serves as a good example of how Garrisonian networks overlapped with networks simultaneously forming among transatlantic feminists. Ashursts' daughters were followers of the French feminist George Sand and corresponded with American feminists. Muswell Hill also became a point of intersection between political radicalism in England and the Garrisonians' religious radicalism, since many rationalists and Unitarians were also utilitarians and "philosophic radicals." Unitarianism, for example, introduced Garrisonians to the Bristol ophthalmologist J. B. Estlin and his daughter Mary. Because the orbits of Unitarians like the Estlins sometimes overlapped with those of Benthamite utilitarians, Garrisonians also knew Dr. John Bowring of Exeter, a one-time Member of Parliament and editor of the *Westminster Review*, the flagship journal of middle-class reform in Victorian England.

²⁵ This paragraph draws on Rice, *Scots Abolitionists*, 40-46, which also notes that Eliza and her sister, Mary Wigham, spent childhood summers in Dublin with the "anti-everythingarian" Webbs.

Bowring had joined Ashurst in supporting the Garrisonian delegates at the Convention in June 1840.²⁶

The Garrisonians' networks of friendship often included journalists and writers. Some Garrisonians were introduced through Ashurst to William and Mary Howitt, two of the most prolific reform writers in England during the mid-1840s. Harriet Martineau, one of England's most popular and influential writers, maintained long friendships with Garrisonians like Chapman. Many English reformers first read of the Garrisonians in Martineau's writings for the *Westminster Review*. As for Ashurst, he became a regular correspondent to the *Liberator* in the early 1840s, writing under the pseudonym "Edward Search," and his daughter Eliza became a regular correspondent with Elizabeth Neall, one of the Pennsylvania delegates excluded from the 1840 Convention. Neall later married Sydney Howard Gay, a close friend of New England literati like James Russell Lowell. When Gay later edited the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, he called upon many of these transatlantic networks of writers and friends. Lowell and Webb, for instance, were both columnists for Gay's *Standard*.²⁷

These far-flung and interlocking friendships suggest how diverse and intricate the Garrisonians' British networks could be, and also how disparate the views of their friends were. Writing for the *Standard* was one of the few things that a Boston Brahmin like

²⁶ Anna M. Stoddart, *Elizabeth Pease Nichol* (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1899); Chambers-Schiller, "The Cab," 157-159; Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists: Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement* (Houndmills: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 1-16, 39-45; Douglas Charles Stange, *British Unitarians against American Slavery, 1833-65* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1984). On the overlap of antislavery and feminist networks, see Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*, 127-128. For biographical note on John Bowring, see BAA, 96, n.6.

²⁷ See Amice Lee, *Laurels & Rosemary: The Life of William and Mary Howitt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 121-122. On the correspondence between Elizabeth Neall Gay and Eliza Ashurst, see Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, 202, n.33. On Eliza Ashurst's admiration of Sand's feminism, see Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*, 80.

Lowell shared in common with a Dublin Quaker printer like Webb, and the members of these friendship networks certainly did not always agree with one another. They were bound together by common acquaintances and interests, by meetings and letters of introduction, but they were not always bound together by common opinions. On the contrary, Martineau's sympathy for liberal Tories made her disagree sharply with many British Garrisonians on political issues, and Estlin disagreed vehemently with the Ashursts' unconventional feminism. He warned Samuel May not to "attach too much importance to Ashurst's letters," whose views were "very *ultra*," and the Ashursts and Howitts eventually had a falling out that ricocheted across the ocean into the pages of *Gay's Standard*.²⁸ Yet if British friends fell in and out of favor with Garrisonians, the same was true of their American friends. Despite their disagreements with transatlantic reformers, Garrisonians could boast that a wide-ranging assortment of British radicals moved within the circles of their friendship and acquaintance. These circles centered around Webb in Dublin, Smeal in Glasgow, Ashurst in London, and Pease in Darlington, but as we will see in future chapters, they also expanded to embrace a variety of British reformers, who represented movements as diverse as temperance, Irish Repeal, Chartism, free trade, feminism, and pacifism.

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When Sarah Pugh bid farewell to her Dublin friends in August 1840, she said it was a "great consolation" to know that "this intercourse need not cease though an Ocean

²⁸ J. B. Estlin to Samuel May, 2 October 1848, BPL, Ms.B.1.6.2.81. Estlin singled out Ashurst's daughters as representative of the family's eccentric views, pointing to their apparent imitation of George Sand in dressing like men and smoking in public: "I have heard that Mr. Ashurst's daughters, to show their superiority to the [?] conventionalities of society, have been seen in a cab, *smoking segars* [sic]!" For later controversies surrounding the Howitts, see Sydney Howard Gay to RDW, 24 August 1847; Gay to RDW, 13 December 1847, in Gay Papers, CU.

divide us.” Once Garrisonians like Pugh returned home, their conversations with friends did not cease, but instead continued, primarily through the exchange of letters and newspapers. These exchanges reached their peak at the end of each year, when British abolitionists collected European items and celebrity autographs to send for sale at the Garrisonians’ annual fundraising bazaars. Sometimes these boxes of goods included archives of reform newspapers or books that British abolitionists wished to recommend; the fairs became good opportunities for exchanging intellectual as well as material support. (“If you should ever be sending a box here,” Wendell Phillips asked Pease, “please drop in for me[,] say at the fair time, a copy of the *Anti corn Law almanac* & the [Chartist] *Complete Suffrage Almanac* for this or last year.”) Beyond simply providing information, however, these exchanges confirmed for Garrisonians that they and their correspondents were true philanthropists, united in heart and mind though an ocean stretched between them. After receiving a bundle of pamphlets and a box of items for the fair, Garrison wrote to Pease that “wide as the Atlantic is, the philanthropic mind holds a mastery over it, and by giving utterance to its thoughts and feelings, can exert a powerful influence on multitudes beyond the great deep.”²⁹

In addition to goods for sale, the Garrisonians’ literary friends often sent and solicited articles or poems for the *Liberty Bell*, an annual gift book edited by Chapman

²⁹ Pugh to RDW, Allen, and Haughton, 24 August 1840; Wendell Phillips to Elizabeth Pease, April 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.25; WLG to Pease, 14 December 1844, LWLG, 3:273. On the antislavery fairs, see Lee Chambers-Schiller, “‘A Good Work among the People’: The Political Culture of the Boston Antislavery Fair,” in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women’s Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 249-74; Deborah van Broekhoven, “‘Better than a Clay Club’: The Organization of Women’s Anti-Slavery Fairs, 1835-1860,” *Slavery and Abolition* 19 (April 1998): 24-51; Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 108-126. For examples of letters concerning fair contributions, see Elizabeth Pease to [Maria Weston Chapman], September 1840, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.14.13; Wendell Phillips to RDW, 31 December 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.1.141; RDW to MWC, 16 November 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.82.

and sold at the bazaars. From 1841 to 1849, Martineau appeared in all but one issue of the *Bell*, and Bowring appeared in all but three. Webb and Haughton wrote frequently for the *Bell*, along with other Irish contributors like Robert R. Moore, R. R. Madden, and Elizabeth Poole. From England, contributions came from Elizabeth Pease, both of the Howitts, Mary Carpenter of Bristol, and several others. By utilizing the movement's transatlantic networks, Chapman even secured pieces by the Duchess of Sutherland (a philanthropic peeress whom Garrisonians had met in 1840), Frederika Bremer (the radical Swedish feminist), and Lady Byron, the poet's widow.³⁰

The fairs and the *Liberty Bell* became two highly visible ways in which the Garrisonians' networks could be continued and expanded. Yet the exchanges of information that were concentrated around the fairs did not happen only once a year. Garrisonians sent periodicals and letters across the Atlantic throughout the year, thanks to regular steam packets and improving postal rates. New subscribers to Garrisonian newspapers dotted the British Isles after their 1840 visits, and Richard Webb scrawled subscription information in the corners of most of his missives to Boston.³¹ "We take the *Liberator*, the *N.A.S. Standard*, the *Non Resistant*, the *Herald of Freedom*, & the *Pennsylvania Freeman*," he told John A. Collins in 1841, "—and since the Convention I hardly read any thing else." Conversely, Webb and his friends kept Garrisonians well-supplied with Irish newspapers and clippings. George Bradburn told Webb he had

³⁰ See Issue 2-10 of the *Liberty Bell* (Boston) for articles by these authors, and Ralph Thompson, "The *Liberty Bell* and Other Anti-Slavery Gift-Books," *New England Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (March 1934): 159-162. On solicitations for the *Liberty Bell*, see MWC to Wendell Phillips, 20 April 1840, HU, bMS Am 1953 (394/1); Phillips to Edward M. Davis, 26 July 1841, HU, bMS, Am 1054 (148-156). On Madden, see Nini Rodgers, "Richard Robert Madden: an Irish Anti-Slavery Activist in the Americas," in *Ireland Abroad: Politics and Professions in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Oonagh Walsh (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 119-131.

³¹ For subscription correspondence, see, e.g., Charles L. Remond to Elizabeth Pease, 14 October 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.1.120; Wendell Phillips to RDW, December 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.113.

received “several papers from Ireland, since my return ... the contents of all of which were not so much read as devoured by me.” During the 1840s, it was taken for granted that friends on both sides of the water would send spare papers, pamphlets, and books. As Bradburn informed Webb in another letter, “If *I* abstain from sending papers to my Irish friends, it is only because I know there are so many others, who are constantly sending them such favors.”³²

Through these frequent written and printed communiqués, Garrisonians informed themselves about reform abroad. But they also imagined that these exchanges allowed them to conquer the Atlantic’s barriers of space and time. As Phillips told Pease in 1843, “I consider Darlington as little more than an afternoon’s ride now from Boston.” From the other side of what Webb called the “herring pond,” Haughton told Phillips, “It is a happy thing for us to be able to communicate in this way across the wide waste of waters which rolls between us, to feel that where our minds are occupied on similar subjects, that *they* are not separated, [for] thought laughs at all such barriers.” The ocean had seemed “immeasurable” to Haughton before meeting Garrisonians, and the United States “about as palpable” in his imagination “as the regions of the Moon.” But since the Convention, and thanks to the “almost magical” power of steam, “methinks at times, as if I could shake hands with you all.”³³

³² RDW to John A. Collins, 7 January 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.14; Bradburn to RDW, 1 January 1841; George Bradburn to RDW, 29 July 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.71. Regarding the Webbs’ “abundant access to our Anti-Slavery papers,” see Lucretia Mott to Webbs, 17 March 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.15. Also see Webb’s desire “to form an Anti Slavery Library” and his requests for specific titles in RDW to Sydney Howard Gay, 2 October 1846, Gay Papers, CU.

³³ Wendell Phillips to Elizabeth Pease, 24 August 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.48; James Haughton to Phillips, 13 August 1842, HU, bMS Am 1953 (710). For “herring pond,” see Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, 2:403.

It was common for nineteenth-century correspondents to claim that loved ones could be united in heart and spirit, even when they were physically separated. The Garrisonians used the same affectionate and imaginative language to describe their sense of nearness to friends. Letters and news from their friends were important aids to the imagination. “In imagination,” Garrison wrote to Pease, “I am with you all, continually; for I hail you as kindred spirits.” Opening packages from abroad made memories seem to materialize, transporting Garrisonians into the company of British friends. “Amidst all the warm greetings of Home,” wrote Pugh to the Webbs, “I long to hear of you and your doings;—the papers so kindly sent I share in—each one takes me back to your loved circle.” Abby Kimber, Pugh’s fellow Philadelphian, also imagined exchanges of news with her Irish friends as a form of virtual intimacy: “When I read the papers, which you are so kind as to send me—it is so pleasant to see, one of you talking of ‘our convention,’ *another* at a temperance meeting – that I look round almost expecting to see you at my elbow – ready to make remarks on what I have been reading.” Treasured scenes were brought back to life: “I could *see thee*, Richard.” “How near it makes you feel to us,” Mott also told the Webbs, “to read your comments on such recent transactions as are recorded in the *Liberator!*”³⁴

However saccharine these letters seem, they were important expressions of the Garrisonians’ faith that advocates of “universal freedom” were united “in bonds which

³⁴ WLG to Elizabeth Pease, 16 September 1841, LWLG, 3:29; Sarah Pugh to RDW, 18 November 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.10.49; Abby Kimber to RDW, 4 November 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.10.31; Lucretia Mott to RDW and Hannah Webb, 2 April 1841, in Palmer, *Selected Letters*, 93. See also WLG to Pease, 15 May 1842, LWLG, 3:76; Pugh to Pease, 16 November 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.10.44; Mott to the Webbs, 17 March 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.15; WLG to Pease, 1 December 1840, LWLG, 2:728-29. Virginia Lee Chambers-Schiller sensitively portrays the imaginative and affective bonding of Garrisonians in “The Cab,” 156-291. See also Friedman, *Gregarious Saints*, 43-67, on Garrisonian intimacy. On the trope of spiritual unity despite physical separation in nineteenth-century letters, see William Merrill Decker, *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 15, 37-94.

not even the wide rolling Atlantic can sever,” to use Pease’s words. Thanks to the transporting power of reading, Garrisonians could imagine themselves as part of a reform community that defied geography. “It is very hard for me to think,” Isabel Jennings of Cork wrote in 1843, “that ‘tis far short of two years since we first felt that Americans were our brethren—and not the inhabitants of a world with which we had no feelings in common.” That common world, constructed through reading and writing, was reinforced when abolitionists actually met in person. Jennings had read about the Garrisonians in the writings of Martineau, but she had not “*felt*” those writings until Charles L. Remond, an African American Garrisonian, had passed through Cork with Collins. Yet because meetings like these became the beginnings of long-lived reading and writing networks, Garrisonians could feel a sense of kinship with transatlantic reformers even after they separated, and even before they had met. “Though I never had the pleasure of seeing your face but for all that I feel well acquainted with you,” Collins wrote to Webb prior to visiting Dublin. “I have read your spirit & character in your speeches & through our beloved Garrison. And there is Richard Allen & Mr Smeal & John Murray, I know them all. I have seen their hearts,—I have communed with their spirits;—dales mountains nor oceans cannot separate the spirit.” Likewise, Pease wrote to an unidentified Garrisonian, probably Chapman, that because she had “conversed together so much” with Wendell Phillips “respecting thyself & other Boston friends, I seem unable to realise the fact that we are personally unknown.”³⁵

³⁵ John A. Collins to RDW, 28 January 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.38; Elizabeth Pease to [?], 17 July 1840, BPL, Ms.A.9.2, vol.13, no.104. When Edward M. Davis, son-in-law of Lucretia Mott, requested a letter of introduction to British abolitionists from Wendell Phillips before a business trip to Europe, he wrote, “To RD Webb I do not want one. I feel that it would be unnecessary, except as a certificate that I was really EMD, for I know him well, though I have never seen him.” Edward M. Davis to Wendell Phillips, 21 July 1842, HU, bMS Am 1953 (471/1).

The sense of belonging to an imagined transatlantic community of reformers was not limited, therefore, to those Garrisonians who had actually crossed the Atlantic. A New England abolitionist who never left home could still read about Irish abolitionists in their newspapers, or vice versa, and feel connected to a wider web of reform. On one occasion Richard D. Webb wrote to Marena Randall, an obscure Vermont reformer, after reading an article she had written on health reform that was reprinted in one of his Garrisonian papers. When Randall replied, she expressed surprise at learning that her “feeble production” had been seen in Ireland. But the mere fact that this distant stranger had seen her writing caused Randall “to realize more than ever before that *man* wherever found is the brother of every other man in the vast universe.” That brief exchange made it possible, fourteen months later, for Randall to write Webb requesting information about Ireland, opening her letter with the line: “My Country is the world, my country-men are all mankind.” Networks of print and correspondence meant that new introductions between American and British reformers could take place even if Garrisonians returned home or stayed at home.³⁶

The density of networks between Garrisonians and British reformers thus cannot be gauged simply by counting those who crossed the Atlantic in person. It also cannot be measured solely by the number of people who subscribed to antislavery periodicals or received transatlantic letters addressed to them. Excerpts of letters from Pease, Webb, and others were often pasted into the *Liberator* or passed around between friends. “I dont [sic] know which of your circle I wrote to last,” Webb told Chapman in 1844, “but it is no matter, as I understand you all reap the benefit of whatever I communicate in this

³⁶ Marena B. Randall to RDW, 25 November 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.76; Randall to RDW, 6 February 1845, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.15.14. Webb apparently learned of Randall’s writings on physiological reform from the *Herald of Freedom*, which copied them from the Vermont *Telegraph*.

way.” Quincy, who carried on a long correspondence with Webb without having met him in person, wrote that “my epistles must be regarded as Epistles general, directed to all the saints throughout the British Islands.” Evidence of these open epistolary practices abounds in Garrisonian correspondence. The practice of reading other people’s mail was so habitual that writers had to be explicit if they wanted to keep a matter closed. “Your letters to Boston, you must know, are considered too valuable to belong to any body in particular,” Gay advised Webb in 1847.³⁷

In sum, the main arteries of transatlantic Garrisonianism stretched from Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, to Darlington, Dublin, and Glasgow. But those networks also branched out into capillaries like Vermont and New Hampshire, Limerick and Bristol. Reformers imagined themselves as members of a community that stretched beyond national borders, even encompassing friends whom they had never actually met. William Bassett, a Quaker abolitionist in Lynn, Massachusetts, summed up the character of this imagined community in an 1840 letter to Pease. Thanks to the networks brought to life by the “World’s Convention,” he said, “we feel near than ever united to the kindred spirits on your side the water, and we shall anxiously look for tidings from you.” Bassett had not crossed the ocean himself, but he wrote as if the crossings of others were enough to unite him with “kindred spirits” abroad. “Though an ocean rolls between us, yet it interposes no barrier to a communion of spirit—we feel that our cause is *one*.”

³⁷ RDW to MWC, 2 September 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.51; Edmund Quincy to RDW, 27 November 1843, BPL, Mss. 960, No. 4; HU, bMS Am 1953 (710); Sydney Howard Gay to RDW, 24 August 1847, Gay Papers, CU. See also, from many examples, Wendell Phillips to RDW, 31 December 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.1.141; and letters by Mott in Palmer, *Selected Letters*, 92, 124, 105, 119.

“Farewell, my dear friend—though personally unknown, and ... separated in body, I feel nearly united to thee in Spirit.”³⁸

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Through the creation of transatlantic networks of communication and camaraderie, the Garrisonians were participating in broader, global transformations underway in the nineteenth century. As European nations expanded their empires through colonialism and trade, an “international civil society” was beginning to emerge in nascent form. As C. A. Bayly writes, the rise of the nation-state in the nineteenth century was accompanied by the rise of “a set of networks of information and political advocacy which, though less obvious than the rising national and imperial state, was no less important as a product of the age of Enlightenment and revolution.”³⁹

For eighteenth-century elites in Europe and the New World, good information had been a crucial tool for the political and economic integration of the Atlantic world. Yet good information also became increasingly important to late-eighteenth-century reformers who challenged the worst excesses of Atlantic integration, like imperial wars in Asia and the slave trade in Africa. Wealthy London merchants with investments in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas could think of themselves as citizens of the world, partly because their far-flung networks of trade and information encircled the Atlantic littoral. Yet their critics benefited from the same processes that stitched together the Atlantic economy. As transatlantic travel became cheaper and faster, colonists and abolitionists were better able to circulate information throughout the Atlantic world that turned the networks of empire and commerce against their builders. By the nineteenth

³⁸ William Bassett to Elizabeth Pease, 31 August 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.87.

³⁹ C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 118.

century, the Garrisonians could articulate a kind of world citizenship that was based more on an imagined community of reformers than on the increased integration of financial and commercial markets. Yet the Garrisonians' transatlantic networks would not have been possible without that prior integration, which had been furthered, ironically, by the Atlantic slave trade itself.⁴⁰

From the broadest perspective, then, the Garrisonians' personal friendship networks were emergent features of a new "age of global communication," which began to unfold in the eighteenth century and flowered in the nineteenth.⁴¹ Communication was a crucial tool for nineteenth-century reformers in a way that it had not been before, and it was especially crucial for abolitionists like the Garrisonians, who believed that social change depended on making persuasive arguments in the public spheres that were newly created by a transatlantic civil society. Since Garrisonians rejected political and violent strategies for reform, communication and the conversion of public sentiment were the most important tactics they had. During Garrison's first trip to England in 1833, he tried both to disseminate information and to collect it. He not only communicated the evils of colonizationism to British audiences, but also acquired "a large collection of anti-slavery documents, tracts, pamphlets and volumes, which will furnish us with an inexhaustible supply of ammunition." Similar tasks remained on the agenda of every subsequent Atlantic crossing made by Garrisonians. For his third trip to England in 1846, Garrison resolved first to "become personally acquainted with those who have control of the press

⁴⁰ See David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Alison Gilbert Olson, *Making the Empire Work: London and American Interest Groups, 1690-1790* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); John J. McCusker, "The Demise of Distance: The Business Press and the Origins of the Information Revolution in the Early Modern Atlantic World," *AHR* 110, no. 2 (April 2005): 295-321.

⁴¹ Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, 19-20.

in this country,” in the hope that “their testimony against American slavery” could “swell that tide of moral indignation, which, rising like a deluge, shall ultimately sweep the foul system of slavery from the earth.”⁴²

Because many historians now trace the rise of contemporary globalization back to the nineteenth century, many social movement theorists see abolitionists as harbingers of recent transnational activism. According to political scientists Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, the abolitionists’ attempts to diffuse information across national borders presaged the “information politics” of modern “transnational advocacy networks.” Abolitionists set precedents for what “human rights activists a century and a half later would call the human rights methodology: ‘promoting change by reporting facts.’” On this view, the abolitionists’ networks functioned first as channels for the circulation of information, which could then be used to mobilize public opinion in various countries behind humanitarian movements for reform.⁴³

Yet if the Garrisonians’ networks were functional mechanisms for “promoting change by reporting facts,” there was a deeper meaning in their transatlantic ties that was less methodological and more phenomenological. For, as I have already suggested, the transatlantic exchange of information between Garrisonians helped make them conscious of themselves as world citizens. As Webb said in a speech given in Dublin and reprinted

⁴² WLG to the Board of Managers of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, 1 July 1833, LWLG, 1:243; WLG to Edmund Quincy, 14 August 1846, LWLG, 3:370. His earliest meetings on arrival in 1846 were with three journalists: the editor of the *Daily News*, founded by Charles Dickens; Douglas Jerrold, the editor of *Punch* and a weekly reform gazette; and an agent of the *People’s Journal*, the Howitts’ paper.

⁴³ Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), 45. On “information politics,” see pp. 18-22. On the transnational exchange of ideas and information in contemporary movements, see Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, sec. ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 133, 176-195; Doug McAdam and Dieter Rucht, “The Cross-National Diffusion of Movement Ideas,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 528 (1993): 56-74.

in the *Liberator*, “By extending our views, and embracing all the means within our power of extending our information ... we are prepared to become useful members of society in our own country, more extended in our views as citizens of the world, more genuine patriots, and more zealous for the removal of all forms of misery over all the world.” Corresponding with British reformers was not merely a tactical tool that Garrisonians used to make the world in their own image. It also helped make their self-image what it was; exchanging information allowed them to think of themselves as “citizens of the world” and “genuine patriots.” In 1842, when Garrison praised “the contributions of our transatlantic coadjutors” to the annual fair, he did mention their tactical value (they “excited great curiosity and admiration on the part of the visitors”), but he also alluded to their symbolic significance. “It is by such co-operation,” he told Henry Wright, “that the great idea of human brotherhood becomes a living reality, and national animosities are doomed to an ignominious death.” Transatlantic ties were not merely for *reporting* facts that would promote human brotherhood. These ties made human brotherhood a *matter of fact*, a “living reality.”⁴⁴

To understand this kind of language, it helps to recall that Garrisonians lived not only at the dawn of a global “information age,” but also in the twilight of an age of imagination—the age of Romanticism. Positioned at the juncture of these two epochs, their writings about transnational reform often combined elements of both. On the one hand, Garrisonians sometimes imagined themselves as empirical fact-gatherers, a self-image that recalled eighteenth-century intellectual and political figures like Thomas

⁴⁴ Webb’s quote can be found in “British India,” *Liberator*, 28 January 1842; Garrison’s comment on the fair is in WLG to Henry C. Wright, 1 March 1843, LWLG, 3:135. Garrison may have been echoing Wright, who earlier in the year had said that the transatlantic cooperation behind the Fair was “the way to make treaties of peace between nations. ... Knit the hearts of individuals in love.” “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 13 January 1843.

Paine or Benjamin Franklin, or economic travelers like London merchants and the factors of joint-stock companies. All of these figures traveled through the Atlantic world to *collect* truths about distant societies and markets.⁴⁵ Yet Garrisonians blended this image of themselves as well-traveled informants with a Romantic self-image as itinerant visionaries. That image was modeled less on exemplars like Paine and Franklin and more on heroic artists like Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake, Lord Byron or Percy Shelley—poets who believed that their travels and writings *created* new truths about themselves and the world. By imagining themselves both as collectors of facts and as Romantic creators of fact—as “knowers” *and* as “artificers,” to use David Hollinger’s terms—Garrisonians could think of their travels not only as strategic enterprises, but also as spiritual and aesthetic ones.⁴⁶

Romanticism is an unfortunately blunt term for a many-sided movement, but three rough generalizations can be made about the kinds of Romantic thinkers whom some Garrisonians resembled. First, Romantic poets like Byron, Shelley, and Wordsworth aspired to realize the philosophical ideals of “unity” and “oneness.” Inspired by a revival of Neo-Platonism in the early nineteenth century, Romantic poets preached the doctrine of “oneness” from the mountaintops of Europe—oneness within themselves, oneness between humanity and nature, and oneness between human beings. If “oneness” needed

⁴⁵ Thomas Haskell has famously argued that the expansion of global markets in the eighteenth century sparked the rise of humanitarian sensibility by making market actors aware of the remote effects of their actions. See “Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2,” in *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 136-160. My account of the Garrisonians’ humanitarian feelings builds on Haskell’s insight that abolitionists believed distance to be attenuated in the nineteenth century, but it departs from Haskell in arguing that this sense of attenuation was due not just to the bare operation of markets, but also to cultural and intellectual sensibilities inspired by Romanticism.

⁴⁶ See David A. Hollinger, “The Knower and the Artificer, with Postscript 1993,” in *Modernist Impulses in the Human Sciences, 1870-1930*, ed. Dorothy Ross (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 26-53.

to be preached, though, this was because it was a paradise lost. A second postulate of Romantic thinkers was that the ideal of unity had not been realized by European society, which had most recently been torn asunder by the revolutions and wars of the late-eighteenth century. Oneness therefore had to be imagined and created through art, since it could not be observed in the present. Poetic acts of “redemptive imagination” were the means for restoring unity in the world.

Thirdly, these restorative acts of imagination were inspired by the spiritual oneness found in nature. Romantics worried that the Enlightenment idea of nature as a machine meant the alienation of human beings from the world and each other. So in contrast to Enlightened scientists, they sought to recreate a primeval unity between humanity and nature with poetic, metaphorical, and spiritual encounters with natural scenes. Romantics often literally shouted their message from mountaintops, for by looking out from those sublime vistas, Romantics could imagine and proclaim that their spirits were unified with the world. A solitary poet, high in the Swiss Alps, could be one with himself and the universe.⁴⁷

The faith of European Romantics in “oneness,” “imagination,” and “nature” had counterparts in nineteenth-century American thought, especially thanks to New England Transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson’s famous essay on *Nature*, published in 1836, argued that individuals could create their own spiritual truths through solitary acts of imagination and empathy with nature, thus bringing together all three of the Romantic themes outlined above. Emerson echoed the Romantics’ judgment that

⁴⁷ This cursory account draws primarily on M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971). See also Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 1-17; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 368-381.

“oneness” had eluded the heirs of the Enlightenment. He agreed that the “problem of restoring to the world original and eternal beauty, is solved by the redemption of the soul. ... The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is, because man is disunited with himself.”⁴⁸

But by the redemption of the soul, Emerson was not thinking of orthodox religion. Rather, the key to restoring the world’s original beauty and oneness was to practice self-reliant acts of radical individualism. This self-reliance was best cultivated, Emerson said, by lonely encounters with nature. Lacking mountains in Massachusetts, he found oneness with nature in the forest. Emerson could redeem his soul—and, ergo, unify the world—by taking solitary walks in the woods. Standing on the “bare ground,—[his] head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,” he felt all of his “mean egotism” vanish. He became, famously, “a transparent eye-ball,” through whom “the currents of the Universal Being circulate.” *Nature* contended that “spiritual facts” could be represented by “natural symbols,” and that “empirical science is apt to cloud the sight,” both characteristically Romantic ideas. Emerson, like the Romantic poets whom he admired, urged his readers to see the world anew, and to realize that “the world exists for you.” “Adam called his house, heaven and earth,” Emerson’s final pages concluded, “Caesar called his house, Rome; you perhaps call yours a cobbler’s [sic] trade; a hundred acres of ploughed land; or a scholar’s garret. Yet line for line and point for point, your dominion is as great as theirs. ... Build, therefore, your own world.” *Nature* implied that

⁴⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1836), 91.

a scholar could build a world and treat it as his “house,” without ever leaving his “garret” or the Massachusetts woods.⁴⁹

Emerson made that implication explicit in a lecture on “The Individual,” first delivered in 1837, which elaborated on key Romantic ideas introduced in *Nature*. “All history exists for the Individual,” he said, and “all men are of one essence.” But these Romantic premises proved the cliché that “to know that the sky is everywhere blue, you need not travel round the world.” An individual could find the history of the entire world “in a few persons; in one person.” “You may travel all around the world and visit the Chinese, the Malay, the Esquimaux [Eskimos], the Arab,” Emerson told his reader, but if he could study closely only one individual, “I travel faster than you. ... In my closet I see more and anticipate all your wonders.” Emerson even sketched a distinction between the Enlightened model of a traveler as an informant or “knower,” and the Romantic figure of a traveler as a visionary. “For the acquisition of facts to the end of practical skill—in other words—to be knowing—travel. The physician, engineer, naturalist, mechanic, merchant may gain vastly. But for the knowledge of principles, for character, for light stay at home.” The world traveler would return home with nothing but a jumble of facts, while Emerson’s reader “overpeered the whole world in your chimney corner. You have gone up in the spirit on to some mount of vision and have seen him painfully creeping by water and by land over all the inches of the wide champaign which you have commanded with a glance.” Without traveling at all, then, the individualist could build a world around himself. “The soul ... hath omnipresence,” Emerson said. “Space and Time disappear before its all-dissolving intuitions. ... The Individual learns that his place is as

⁴⁹ Emerson, *Nature*, 13, 37, 82, 92.

good as any place. . . . He stands on top of the world; and with him if he will is Divinity.” In *Nature* and “The Individual,” Emerson helped to insert Romantic ideals of oneness, unity with nature, and radical individualism into New England’s intellectual and literary lexicon.⁵⁰

It is important to note that his Romantic individualism did not make Emerson an advocate of total reclusion. He did recommend “self-reliance” and periodic withdrawal from society, but even in his famous essay on “Self Reliance,” Emerson hinted that the Romantic individual could enter into relationships with other human beings that were as deep and spiritual as his or her communion with Nature: “There is a class of persons to whom by all spiritual affinity I am bought and sold.” In an essay on “Friendship,” Emerson elaborated on the idea of spiritual affinity as the basis for a genuine friendship. “I chide society, I embrace solitude, and yet I am not so ungrateful as not to see the wise, the lovely, and the noble-minded, as from time to time they pass my gate.” Like-minded individuals could mingle their souls in friendship without sacrificing their nonconformity to the whims of society. Friends who withdrew from the inauthentic relationships of the world could “weave social threads of [their] own, a new web of relations; and, as many thoughts in succession substantiate themselves, we shall by and by stand in a new world of our own creation, and no longer [be] strangers and pilgrims in a traditionary globe.” Here, then, was another way for Romantics to create new worlds: not just by uniting their individual souls with Nature and the universe, but by uniting their minds with friends,

⁵⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Individual,” in *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Stephen E. Whicher, Robert E. Spiller, and Wallace E. Williams (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), vol. 2, 178-179, 184-185. See also Emerson, “Self-Reliance,” in *The American Intellectual Tradition*, vol. 1, ed. David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 310: “The soul raised over passion beholds identity and eternal causation, perceives the self-existence of Truth and Right, and calms itself with knowing that all things go well. Vast spaces of nature, the Atlantic Ocean, the South Sea,—long intervals of time, years, centuries,—are of no account.”

“cancel[ing] the thick walls of individual character, relation, age, sex, circumstance,” and “mak[ing] many one.” Even if Emerson were to be separated from such true friends, “my relation to them is so pure, that we hold by simple affinity,” and that affinity would “exert its energy ... wherever I may be.”⁵¹

The currency of those ideas in antebellum New England helps to illuminate the Garrisonians’ writings about their own “web of relations.” Their claim that they could be united spiritually with their transatlantic friends, despite great physical distances, was a classic Romantic expression of faith in spiritual imagination. When their letters affirmed that souls could mingle together, even across oceans, that idea resembled Emerson’s fanciful images of being “uplifted into infinite space,” or of standing on top of the world while sitting in his chimney corner. Garrisonians were not naïve about the brute facts of space and time, nor was Emerson. They knew as well as anyone the problems that distance posed for true communion across the Atlantic. But they addressed that problem with the philosophical and literary resources of their Romantic age. As Garrison told Wright while the latter was abroad in 1843, a “separation so wide” was a “severe trial,” but it was “not incompatible with the unity of the spirit.” Garrison asserted unity with Wright, despite the “billowy barriers” of the Atlantic, because both of them were “endeavoring to promulgate the great, vital, all-embracing truth, that all mankind belong to one brotherhood.” Since that message of human unity was “restricted by no geographical boundaries,” so too were the spirits of its messengers capable of being present to one another. Wright wrote to an English friend in a similar vein: “Oceans may

⁵¹ Emerson, “Self-Reliance,” 304; Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Friendship,” in *Essays: First Series* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1887), 157.

roll and continents may stretch between us, but human affections and sympathies may meet and mingle around the world.”⁵²

Lewis Perry, Wright’s biographer, is right to suggest that he “belongs to the history of romanticism.” Wright practiced “itinerant reform” as if it were a “Byronic pilgrimage.”⁵³ On a tour through Europe during the 1840s discussed in detail in Chapter 6, he described his travels much as Emerson described his walks in the woods. Both sojourns attempted to fix the brokenness and disunity of humanity through acts of seeing and imagination. In fact, like Emerson and the Romantic poets who inspired him, Wright often used natural imagery from the ocean or the mountains of Europe to convey the spiritual and Romantic truth that his country was the world.

Consider, for example, Wright’s account of crossing the Atlantic in 1843, in a letter to Garrison that was later printed on the front page of the *Liberator*. “I have a fearfully distinct impression of that ocean scene,” Wright began. “A black, unfathomed sea, upheaving and down-sinking in wild disorder ... our ship the centre of the whole world of sky and waters—the uprolling clouds, the lightning sporting in their bosom, the awful roll of thunder far away, the sinking sun, the shutting in of night, the moaning and howling of the blast through the shrouds, the solitude, the desolateness, the sense of loneliness, as I stood on the deck.” These descriptions of nature’s power, imaginatively combined with Wright’s descriptions of his “solitude” and “loneliness,” were distinctly Romantic in form and content. Also characteristically Romantic was Wright’s claim that this encounter with nature had a redemptive impact on his view of the world. “Then and

⁵² WLG to Henry C. Wright, 1 April 1843, LWLG, 3:143; Henry C. Wright, *Anthropology: Or, the Science of Man ...* (Cincinnati: E. Shepard, 1850), 93.

⁵³ Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform*, 258, 259.

there a change came over me,” he said. “There I felt it to be a practical truth, that *I was alone with God in the universe.*”⁵⁴

Wright was not exactly Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “ancient mariner” (“Alone, alone, all, all alone, / Alone on a wide wide sea!”), but his depiction of a solitary self, surrounded by the sublimity of nature, echoed the themes of Romantic poetry. Although his writing was not nearly as artful, Wright imagined himself acting out the kind of scene envisioned by writers like Emerson in *Nature*, or like Coleridge, who ended one of his poems with the narrator standing on a high cliff, looking over the sea: “... I stood and gazed, my temples bare, / And shot my being through earth, sea, and air, / Possessing all things with intensest love, / O Liberty! My spirit felt thee there.” As Wright stood on deck, his own temples bare before “the howling of the blast,” he felt, like Coleridge’s narrator, that his “mind [was] more entirely awake, active, restless and indomitable than I ever dreamed it could be.”⁵⁵ Wright also explicitly connected this Romantic view of nature with his views about worldwide philanthropy. Immediately before describing this ocean scene, he confessed that since his voyage, “I almost feel that my very nature has been changed—so completely have I lost sight of the contemptible distinctions of *sectarianism* and *nationalism*.” To put this in terms Emerson might have used, Wright’s voyage allowed him to imagine that he was now unified with the universe, enabling him

⁵⁴ “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 3 March 1843.

⁵⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” in *The Portable Romantic Poets*, ed. W. H. Auden and Norman Holmes Pearson (New York: Penguin, 1978), 138; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “France: An Ode,” quoted in Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 366; “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 3 March 1843. Also compare Wright’s ocean scene to Lord Byron, “The Ocean,” from *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, in Auden and Pearson, *Portable Romantic Poets*, 265-267 (“There is society, where none intrudes, / By the deep Sea, and music in its roar: / I love not Man the less, but Nature more, / From these our interviews, in which I steal / From all I may be, or have been before, / To mingle with the Universe ...”).

to piece together the world's broken heaps—its sects and nations—and restore the earth's original and pristine beauty.⁵⁶

That theme continued to appear in Wright's correspondence and journals while in Europe. In fact, like any good Romantic poet, he even ascended the mountains of Europe to get a better view of the world. In 1844, Wright spent eight months traveling through Central Europe, and in rapturous letters home on his passage through "stupendous mountains and snow-capped peaks," he spoke of being able to "see the Deity in the mighty Alps" and to feel "how insignificant is this magnificent world of matter, compared to the boundless, eternal, ever-present and ever-felt Empire of the Deity over the soul." Reaching for the classic Romantic metaphor of nature as a mirror for the soul of the individual, Wright continued that "my soul has mirrored forth to me this outward universe," showing him that "the human soul ... has indeed a power above and over all this visible world of oceans and continents, of mountains and valleys, of suns and stars." One of Wright's most memorable stops was in Geneva, where he had similar thoughts while taking in the stunning vistas of nearby Mont Blanc at sunset. Wright mentioned that these were the scenes where Byron had written several poems, so perhaps it is not surprising that, with Romantic poetry on his mind, Mont Blanc made him reflect on "that spirit empire in which we live. How insignificant seem those mighty glaciers, when I enter into the kingdom of my soul, and find God enthroned there! ... The soul rises above them all."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ "Letter from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 3 March 1843.

⁵⁷ "Letter from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 13 June 1845; "Letters from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 24 October 1845. See also Henry C. Wright, "Institutions for Men—Not Men for Institutions," *Liberator*, 20 September 1844 ("Man is an Empire, a Universe in himself. He is the likeness of the Deity. His soul is the mirror of Eternity."); and, for another published version of his encounter with Mont Blanc, Wright, *Anthropology*, 87.

Just as they had on the Atlantic, Wright's thoughts were immediately led from these reflections on the natural world to the hope that the soul would soon rise above human institutions just as it did above glaciers, melting down social barriers between people, "who should be knit together in love." "The time will come when ... human hearts [will] be allowed to meet around the world in kindly sympathy. *Nationalism* and *Sectarianism*, twin sisters of hell, shall no longer measure out human affection by latitude and longitude—and men shall meet and love as men, and not merely as Christians, or Heathens, or Frenchmen, or Americans." Striking these "Manfred-like poses," as Perry calls them, went hand in hand with Wright's critiques of nationalism and his convictions about the spiritual unity of humanity.⁵⁸

In fact, Wright's image of himself as a Childe Harold abroad turned his mind back to his idea for a "World's Convention" for humanity, which had fizzled just before his Atlantic crossing. In 1845, having returned from Europe to live in Scotland for several months, the highlands became his Alps, and on August 15, his diary recorded a hike in the Glen Fruin mountains with the daughter of the family of Scottish abolitionists who hosted him. Uplifted by the beauty of nature, he effused to his young companion that "I should like to congregate the world on these mountains around & stand here & speak to them of *Human* Brotherhood. ... Sectarianism & Nationalism cannot exist amidst the wilderness, & the Desolation & Solitude of this scenery." The solitude of the mountains, like the solitude on the deck of his steamship, gave Wright an opportunity to lose sight of nationalism.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ "Letters from Henry C. Wright"; Perry, *Childhood, Marriage and Reform*, 277.

⁵⁹ Wright's Journals (BPL), vol. 33, 62-67 (15 August 1845).

The page in Wright's journal that discussed this mountain walk was dog-eared, and he later published it in his 1849 book, *Human Life*. In the printed redaction of his journal entry, Wright added that "no man could be a sectarian here [in the mountains], nor a patriot, unless his church and his country were the world, and his brethren and countrymen all mankind. We could not be Americans, nor Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asiatics, here; we could only be human beings, and children of one Father." Here Wright explicitly connected the meaning of Garrison's favorite motto to the "wilderness" of nature. The Romantic could not be a nationalist when confronted by such scenery. Nor could anyone embrace a religion bounded by sect or geography. "One cannot well help loathing it," Wright said, "as he stands amid this Panorama." Inspired by such thoughts, he mused that this was the place for his ideal "World's Convention," with stone cairns for pulpits and "pews."⁶⁰

By depicting his "World's Convention" in the midst of a "Panorama," Wright was borrowing from a classically Romantic palette, and drawing together on one canvas the Romantic themes of oneness, nature, and imagination. If we want to understand the claims of some Garrisonians that they could transcend place and patriotism through their travels and transatlantic networks, it helps to realize that those statements were inflected by Romantic language. This is not to say that all Garrisonians should be classified as Transcendentalists or Romantics. Certainly Garrisonians were acquainted with both groups of thinkers. Wright's traveling companion in Europe was Joseph Poole, a relative of Irish abolitionists who was described by friends as a melancholic devotee of Shelley.

⁶⁰ Henry Clarke Wright, *Human Life: Illustrated in My Individual Experience as a Child, a Youth, and a Man* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1849), 117-18. The quotes in this paragraph all come from Wright's published letter to Garrison, which he dated (perhaps only ironically) June 12, 1847—the seven-year anniversary of the "so-called World's Convention." The published version does not correspond verbatim to the journal, but all of the sentences are based on sentences found in the original from 1845.

Garrison quoted from both Coleridge and Byron in his letters written from sea. In 1843, Rebecca Fisher reported from Ireland that she was reading a volume of Emerson's essays. But my aim here is not to show that Garrisonians were influenced directly by particular Romantics. My point is that the Garrisonians' self-image as philanthropists was not just an epiphenomenon of their interpersonal networks and transatlantic travels, an inevitable byproduct of their location at the birth of a global information age. Rather, their image of themselves was shaped by interpretation of their friendships and travels that were often articulated in a recognizably Romantic idiom.⁶¹

Shelley famously called the Romantic poets of his age the "unacknowledged legislators of the world." They were like the "tipsy" ones that David Lee Child imagined climbing a wall and calling the universe to attention. Yet as we have seen, Garrisonians sometimes claimed this Romantic role for themselves. As they communicated with friends abroad and traveled to Europe, they thought they were enacting, like Byronic visionaries, a new world, undivided by sects or nations. They did not think of their travels and ties merely as instrumental means for collecting and reporting facts, the way physicians and merchants might have. Garrisonians were also crossing the Atlantic for the sake of *making* facts. Wright prefaced his account of crossing the Atlantic by saying that "human brotherhood has become a practical truth, a *fact* with me." Much like Emerson had advised his readers of *Nature*, Garrisonians built their own world and called themselves its citizens.⁶²

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⁶¹ Rebecca Fisher to MWC, 27 March 1843, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.18.25.

⁶² "Letter from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 3 March 1843.

In an essay written in the 1840s, Emerson identified individualism as the characteristic idea of his age. “The modern mind believed that the nation existed for the individual,” Emerson said in “Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England.” “This idea, roughly written in revolutions and national movements, in the mind of the philosopher had far more precision; the individual is the world.” It was the age of “every man for himself,” an age that “tends to solitude.” “The social sentiments are weak; the sentiment of patriotism is weak. . . . People grow philosophical about native land and parents and relations. There is an universal resistance to ties and ligaments once supposed essential to civil society.” Emerson’s interpretation of individualism called for withdrawal from society and “self-reliance.” He celebrated the weakening of the “social sentiments,” which too often constrained the development of the individual. But Emerson also suggested that weakening traditional social sentiments could make possible new kinds of society. In “Self-Reliance,” he suggested that by removing himself from society as it was to commune with his soul and with nature, individuals could ultimately be “drawn into a closer brotherhood,” for “under the great and permanent influences of Nature” they could “overcome the first superficial barriers” that society put between individuals. “When I feel that we too meet in a just sentiment, that our two souls are tinged with the same hue,” he added in “The Individual,” “. . . why should I measure degrees of latitude?”⁶³

Radical individualism could thus point in the direction of a kind of sociability that transcended nationalism and sectarianism. Weakening old sentiments of “patriotism”

⁶³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England,” in *Lectures and Biographical Sketches* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1904), 326-327; Emerson, “Self-Reliance,” 305; Emerson, “The Individual,” 187. See also Bercovitch, “Emerson, Individualism, and Liberal Dissent,” 333-335.

made it possible to imagine *new* “ties and ligaments” between individuals in different countries. If “the individual is the world,” then individuals could claim the world as their country. Freed from the ties that were “supposed essential to civil society”—ties of kin and native land—Garrisonians could create new ties of solidarity and sentiment with worldwide individuals like themselves.

Of course, Garrisonians were constantly confronted by the fact that these new networks were not worldwide. Indeed, they barely covered the British Isles. By 1847, Chapman estimated that subscriptions to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in the British Isles were mostly sent for free, and she confided to Sydney Howard Gay that circulation of the paper in “the three kingdoms, gratuitous & all does not amount to a hundred copies.” Although Webb was often carried away by his adulation for Garrison, he was also blunt about the real extent of Garrison’s support in Ireland—or the lack thereof. “Garrison & Rogers carried away golden opinions of our Irish Anti Slavery,” he wrote in 1841, “but this was merely because they were thrown into the very circle of those who have the subject most at heart. The number is altogether not much above half a dozen.” This number was an exaggerated underestimate, but that does not weaken the force of Webb’s point.⁶⁴

Similarly, when some Garrisonians discussed holding a great conference of British Garrisonians in 1844, Webb responded with a wry letter to Chapman, dousing her imagination with a splash of reality. “You speak of the desirableness or necessity of having a ‘Centre of the Moral Universe’ in England,” he said. “That is an awful

⁶⁴ Maria Weston Chapman to Sydney Howard Gay, 23 September 1847 [mislabeled 1843 in the card catalog], Gay Papers, CU; Webb to Collins, 7 January 1841. On problems with subscriptions, see Richard D. Webb to Sydney Howard Gay, 4 September 1853; Gay to Webb, 31 July 1847, both in Gay Papers, CU.

proposition—at least it would be if it came from an Englishman—but you Americans dont [sic] always speak on the smallest scale—and I know what you mean.” Skeptical about the Reformation that “we poor two dozen in the Three Kingdoms are to set blazing in London,” Webb recommended calling a small meeting of Garrisonian friends, a core group that he estimated at thirty strong.⁶⁵

To the extent that Garrisonians shared in the worldview of Romantic visionaries, however, they could overlook these kinds of objections. Solitude, after all, was a virtue for Romantics, since it made possible genuine brotherhood unmediated by sect or nation. They could imagine uniting their souls with the world even without the world’s presence, as Wright had demonstrated in the Scottish highlands and as Emerson had shown in the Massachusetts woods. Historian Douglas C. Riach writes that Webb “often disconcerted his American allies by revealing just how financially weak, numerically few, and geographically dispersed their British support was,” yet it is not clear that Garrisonians *were* disconcerted by Webb’s revelations. They made a virtue of their unpopularity by treating it as proof of their purity. For example, Garrison told Quincy in 1841 that “our ranks are not yet purified,” referring to schisms from the previous year. Garrisonians were dwindling, he said, for the same reason that God had winnowed Gideon’s army into a select corps of fighters before sending them into battle—the better to prove that the righteous did not need numbers.⁶⁶

Views like these could mitigate Webb’s objections to the diffuseness and limited scale of Garrisonians networks. The ironic implication of those views, though, was that

⁶⁵ RDW to MWC, 26 February 1844, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.22.26.

⁶⁶ Riach, “Webb and Antislavery in Ireland,” 161; WLJ to Edmund Quincy, 12 January 1841, LWLG, 3:11. See also Quincy, “Liberty Party,” *Liberator*, 6 January 1843: “In a moral conflict ... one can chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.”

Garrisonians did not need to have global experience or worldwide webs of friends in order to claim that their country was the world. As Emerson argued, the individual could travel faster and farther in his mind than by steam. Maria Weston Chapman made a similar argument when Wright proposed his Boston “World’s Convention” in 1842. In a public letter voicing her support for the Convention, Chapman explicitly addressed the objection that “the number of those whose hearts are ready, will not make a crowd. The influence of numbers will not, for many years, be with them.” But this would not indict, she said, the character of the meeting. “At your first meeting, doubtless, you will be principally New-Englanders,” Chapman conceded. Yet if this was true “as to the individuals,” it would not be “true as to the position they will occupy. ... And will it be the worse for the oppressed East Indian, or the suffering Chartist, that no roused Hindoo, or awakened Englishman, shall be able to afford the money and the time to unite his heart with ours at our first meeting?”⁶⁷

The question Chapman addressed was this: Was the Garrisonians’ movement too small to represent the interests of the entire world? Did the Eurocentric character of their convention belie their claims to world citizenship? “Not if our country is the world, and our countrymen all mankind,” Chapman answered. What mattered was that Garrisonians, though few in number, would “enter into the true spirit of a World’s Convention” and “strive to convert men’s hearts by their lives”—their individual lives. If this purified group of visionaries convened on behalf of the world, why should they measure degrees of latitude? For if their spirits were of the right sort, “the interests of the Monarchist and the Mahomedan will not suffer, although at first republican christians may be their only

⁶⁷ “Letter from Maria W. Chapman, Sept. 19, 1841,” *Liberator*, 12 November 1841.

representatives.” Chapman acknowledged the geographical limitations but downplayed their relevance. East Indians and English workingmen would not be able to afford a trip to Boston, but they could be represented in absentia. “Better than a Congress of nations,” she concluded, “will be a Congress of humanity.” The latter, she implied, could be held with one nation present.⁶⁸

Viewed from one angle, Chapman’s argument can be seen as an incredible kind of hubris, since it imagined that a handful of American “republican christians” could speak for representatives of other nations. Viewed from another angle, however, Garrisonians were trying, through their discourses about their transatlantic networks, to deal with the problem of how to imagine a community across national borders and vast distances. The fact that they drew on Romantic ideals to deal with that problem is striking, especially since Romanticism is most often associated with nationalism in the nineteenth century. As the Garrisonians’ discourses suggest, however, Romantic idioms provided resources not just for imagining national communities, but also for creating new “webs of relations” that stretched across political and geographical borders. Instead of seeing the nineteenth century as an age of Romantic nationalism, perhaps it is more accurate to see it as an age in which different variations on Romantic themes—some of which were explicitly anti-nationalistic—coexisted and conflicted.

⁶⁸ “Letter from Maria W. Chapman, Sept. 19, 1841.” See also the way that Garrison framed his critique of the so-called “World’s Convention” in “Arrival of Wm. Lloyd Garrison and N.P. Rogers from England,” *Liberator*, 28 August 1840: “What *is* a World’s Convention? It is that, at which all the world *may* be present. ... Still, it is not expected that they all *will* be there. *I* complain, not that the whole world was not there, but that those who *were* there, were denied admission.”

PART II
ENCOUNTERS WITH BRITISH RADICALISM

In the 1840s, the networks Garrisonians had formed at the “World’s Convention” became conduits for ideas and information about a dizzying array of reform movements on both sides of the Atlantic. As Richard Allen noted in an 1842 letter to the *Liberator*, in the years after the Convention there were many “subjects of interest on which a word may be said”—the Opium War that Britain was waging in China from 1839 to 1842; the Irish Repeal movement of Daniel O’Connell, whose campaign for an end to the political union between Ireland and England peaked in the “Repeal Year” of 1843; Chartism, a working-class movement for universal suffrage and parliamentary reform; the “Anti-Corn Law” debate over the morality and expediency of freeing British trade by repealing or lowering agricultural tariffs, an issue that Allen called “the leading home philanthropic subject of the day”; the “great temperance cause”; and “last, though not least, the antislavery cause, and the action both at home and abroad upon it.” These topics together made up “a crowded and pressing group,” and the Garrisonians’ itineraries, libraries, and personal letters were frequently crowded with all of them at once.¹

Few schedules were as crowded as George Thompson’s. In the 1840s, Thompson lectured on abolition, worked as an agent for the British India Society (BIS) and the Anti-Corn Law League (ACLL), traveled to India twice to investigate the cause of land reform there, and in 1847, was elected to the House of Commons. In 1842, Thompson told the *Liberator* that “I have no time to write an essay. I never was more fully occupied than now.” That refrain was common among British Garrisonians in the years after 1840. In a biographical sketch for the *Liberty Bell*, Richard Webb wrote that Richard Allen “defies time,” for in addition to managing his affairs as a successful merchant, he had “more than

¹ “Highly Interesting and Important Letter from Richard Allen,” *Liberator*, 18 March 1842.

half the world to plead for.” There were the “poisoned, plundered Chinese, whom the English are warring against in the hope of making them swallow opium.” There were the “Hindoos” in India, who were growing that opium. There were “American slaves, and slaves every where,” not to mention “unhappy drunkard[s].” Yet Allen managed to find time, Webb reported, to advocate the claims of all of these groups. “In a few minutes he will pen a newspaper article on anything. In half an hour he will draw up a report for an Anti-slavery Society that will take you half an hour to read. He corresponds with ‘all sorts of people.’” Webb’s son, Alfred, later recalled that Allen “gave up so much time” to reform that at one point “his business was almost going to ruin.” Alfred, for his part, remembered a childhood filled with reform. “I remember in those times we children playing with our dolls, and saying, ‘Now thee’s going to a slavery meeting; now thee’s going to a temperance meeting.’”²

Exaggerated or not, such sketches manage to convey a sense of the frenetic pace of life for British Garrisonians in the 1840s—writing and reading letters, preparing and delivering speeches, attending meetings of many different reform societies, agitating, agitating, agitating. In Glasgow, William and Robert Smeal edited a newspaper devoted not just to “the Abolition of Slavery,” but also to “the Protection of the Aborigines, and the improvement of the condition of the Natives of India—on Moral Reform, Peace Societies, the cause of Temperance, the Repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws, &c.” In England, Elizabeth Pease and William Ashurst shared an active interest in Chartism and health reforms, not to mention their mutual interest in the antislavery movement. In

² “Another Word of Encouragement,” *Liberator*, 5 August 1842; “Sketch of ‘A Foreign Incendiary,’” *Liberty Bell* 3 (1842), 67-70. For the original manuscript, identifying Webb as the author of this article, see BPL, Ms.A.9.2.4.71. For Alfred Webb’s quote, see Hannah Maria Wigham, *A Christian Philanthropist: A Memoir of Richard Allen* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1886), 14.

Dublin, Webb and Haughton presided over weekly reform meetings that canvassed “Temperance, Peace, Anti-Slavery, and British India,” while Haughton also kept tabs on the Loyal National Repeal Association (LNRA) led by O’Connell. In 1842, Wendell Phillips wrote Pease to thank her for information about some recent Chartist and Anti-Corn Law meetings and to wonder in amazement at how, “amid such thrilling scenes ... you find time for us or hear the far off cry of the slave.” Phillips exaggerated for effect, just as Webb did in his sketch of Allen. But hyperbole notwithstanding, British Garrisonians clearly did not lack for things to do in the 1840s, which historians have seen as the culminating years of a decades-long “Age of Reform” in Britain that stretched from the 1780s to 1850.³

American Garrisonians were keenly interested in the reform ferment abroad and kept an eye on the movements that kept their British friends so busy. Friendship, at least, demanded it. Sarah Pugh told Pease that she was an avid reader of papers on the Corn Laws, for “independently of the principle involved are they not associated with those in whom I am so much interested ... with thyself and all in Britain for whom we care”? But for most Garrisonians, including Pugh, interest in the British “Age of Reform” went beyond personal interest and was never fully independent of the “principle involved.” The Garrisonians’ transatlantic correspondence included not just perfunctory expressions of curiosity about the activities of friends, but extended exchanges of news and opinions about causes like Chartism or Irish Repeal. Garrisonians from the United States sought

³ “The British Friend,” *Liberator*, 24 March 1843; “Letter from James Haughton, of Dublin,” *Liberator*, 14 October 1842; Wendell Phillips to Elizabeth Pease, 12 August 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.77. On the interest of Ashurst and Pease in physiological reforms, see Kathryn Gleadle, “‘The Age of Physiological Reforms’: Rethinking Gender and Domesticity in the Age of Reform,” in *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1750-1850*, ed. Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 200-219; Chambers-Schiller, “The Cab: A Trans-Atlantic Community,” 160-162.

out leading British reformers when they traveled abroad, and sometimes they identified themselves explicitly with foreign reform movements. This interest in British reform, I believe, was not incidental but integral to the Garrisonians' ideas about politics in their own country.⁴

The next two chapters focus on encounters and exchanges between Garrisonians, Chartists, and Irish Repealers. While Chartism and Irish Repeal were certainly not the only reform movements that attracted the Garrisonians' interest, these chapters will show why these causes struck the Garrisonians as particularly like their own. My ultimate aim is to suggest that an analysis of how Garrisonians thought about British reform in the 1840s illuminates the more general evolution of their thought in this crucial period. The first five years of the 1840s were pivotal ones for Garrisonian thinkers. It was in this half of a decade that abolitionists first systematically articulated the theory that a southern "Slave Power" had hijacked the nation's institutions, making the United States more like the aristocracies and despotisms of the Old World than a republic. Critiques of the Slave Power were made across the antislavery spectrum, by "new" and "old" organizationists alike, as well as by maverick members of the Whig and Democratic parties. But it was also in the wake of the "World's Convention" that Garrisonians began to make proposals for dealing with the Slave Power that were peculiar to them. Unlike most abolitionists, they attacked the Constitution as proslavery both in intent and function; they repudiated the second party system; they called for "disunion" between North and South—all in the first few years of the 1840s. Yet it was in these very same years, as they were developing a robust critique of the "Slave Power" and outlining their most provocative critiques of

⁴ See Sarah Pugh to Elizabeth Pease, 20 September 1842, BAA, 181-182.

the Union, that Garrisonians were engaged in intensive conversations with British friends about Chartism and Repeal.

The timing here is important: In the same years, on the same pages, at the same meetings, Garrisonians were talking about Irish Repeal and disunionism, Chartism and the Slave Power. Given the fact that these discussions sprawled across their letters and the *Liberator* simultaneously, it is not surprising that Garrisonians often saw analogies with British reforms that illuminated their own struggles at home, even as those struggles in turn shaped the way that Garrisonians interpreted Chartism and Irish Repeal. At the same time that Garrisonians were arguing that Congress was under the control of a self-interested and unrepresentative faction, they were engaged in dialogue with Chartists, who made similar arguments about the undemocratic structure of Parliament. At the very same moment that Garrisonians began calling for a repeal of the union between North and South, they were in dialogue with Repealers who were calling for disunion between Ireland and England. Garrisonians did more, however, than simply note the similarities between their causes and those of British reformers. Many of them went a step further by explicitly endorsing Repeal and Chartism.

Those endorsements are significant for several reasons. First, they enabled the Garrisonians to claim that, as citizens of the world, they were equally ready to criticize evils in countries other than their own. When anti-abolitionists accused Garrisonians who went abroad of ignoring the oppression of British workers or starving Irish families, Garrisonians could reply, truthfully, that some of their best friends were Chartists and Repealers. Likewise, Garrisonians pointed out that British abolitionists were not guilty of spite at home just because they expressed sympathy with the plight of American slaves.

In 1845, for example, Samuel May thanked the Bristol abolitionist Mary Carpenter for sending information on the “social improvement of the English working classes,” asking permission to publish her letters. “Everything of this sort is valuable here, in addition to its general interest, because it helps to neutralize the slanders of many of our presses against those English, Scotch & Irish friends who help the American Anti-Slavery efforts[.] These persons are sneeringly told to look after ... their suffering & wronged countrymen at home—as if they did not do this; as if they were not foremost in measures of benevolence at home.”⁵

The Garrisonians’ endorsement of Chartism and Repeal are also important, in retrospect, because they challenge the idea that Garrisonians in the 1840s were fanatically opposed, on principle, to any political movement. Many scholars suggest that by leaving the ballot box and calling for disunion, the Garrisonians were abandoning any attempts to find political solutions for the problem of slavery. But the Garrisonians sympathy for the Chartists and the Repealers, I will argue, suggests that they were not resolutely opposed to all political institutions, but only certain kinds of institutions, and that they were not opposed to all governments, but only certain kinds of governments. In fact, by endorsing Chartism and Repeal, Garrisonians marked themselves as radical democrats whose ideas about politics were similar to the ideas of antislavery Jacksonians and Whigs who would eventually seed the Free Soil movement and swell the ranks of the Republican Party. To be sure, Garrisonians opposed partisan politics and still refused to vote themselves, but that too placed them on a transatlantic spectrum of agitators who, like the Chartists and the Repealers, believed in using “extraparliamentary” measures—petitions, meetings, and

⁵ Samuel May to Mary Carpenter, 29 December 1845, BAA, 245. See also “Abolitionists Vindicated,” *Liberator*, 14 July 1843; “Who Are the European Abolitionists?,” *Liberator*, 3 October 1845.

publications—to exert pressure on political institutions from the outside in, rather than from the inside out.

Finally, the Garrisonians' conversations with Chartists and Repealers helped them further develop a concept of the nation as a civic or political community, rather than an ethnic or racial one. As historians like Linda Colley have shown, Chartists and Irish Repealers were attempting in Britain, much like abolitionists in America, to redefine the boundaries of the nation and the meaning of patriotism.⁶ Gradually, although by no means absolutely, political radicals in Britain articulated a notion of Britishness that did not depend on the traditional ethnic and cultural props of English national identity like faithfulness to the Anglican Church and hostility to non-English peoples like the French or Irish. Instead, argued the advocates of parliamentary reform and Irish reform, to be British was to hold a certain set of rights and to adhere to certain political principles—to belong, in other words, to a territorially bounded political community, defined by its commitment to liberty. According to this definition of the nation, patriotism required criticism of the government whenever it coercively denied citizenship rights demanded by the people.

In short, British radicals were imagining a nation in which liberties were protected and expanded, in which membership in the nation was voluntary and open to different linguistic, ethnic, and confessional groups, and in which government was democratic and sovereignty resided in the people. True patriotism in such a nation was defined not by the hawkish promotion of war with other nations, but instead by vigilant promotion of

⁶ See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 321-36; Hugh Cunningham, "The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914," *History Workshop* 12 (Autumn 1981): 8-33; Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*, 155-195; 3; Margot Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 13-59.

democracy within the nation. This radical project, however, was transatlantic in scope, and when Garrisonians condemned the “Slave Power” or called for disunion, they too were defending a concept of the nation to which people belonged not by virtue of race or ethnicity, but by virtue of living under a government composed of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Chapter 4

“The Chartists ... are The Abolitionists”

Encounters With British Political Radicals

In March 1843, Maria Weston Chapman wrote to Elizabeth Pease to ask about Chartism, one of the largest and most important working-class movements in British history. The year before, Chartists and unionists in Lancashire, where Pease lived, had walked out of their mills, resulting in several violent clashes and bringing England closer to a general strike than it had ever been. But Chapman had words of high praise for Chartists in her letter to Pease, who claimed to be a Chartist sympathizer herself. “I am deeply interested for the common people of England,” Chapman said, “no less so than for our own slaves—the corresponding class in this country.” That was not the only correspondence she saw: “If the Chartists were all in their enterprise pledged to peaceful measures only, they would be the corresponding class to the abolitionists.” The common people of England were to the slaves of America as the Chartists of England were to the radical abolitionists of the United States.⁷

Chapman was worried, from “what [she could] gather from the English papers,” that the Chartists were not all pledged to “peaceful measures.” “Pray let me know if this be so in reality,” she told Pease. Her wariness about the Chartists’ measures, however, should not obscure Chapman’s willingness to compare American slaves to the “common people of England” or to identify abolitionists with Chartists, or the fact that she went on to criticize Quaker abolitionists in Britain who were not willing to identify with the

⁷ MWC to Elizabeth Pease, 31 March 1843, BAA, 190.

Chartists. That reticence to sympathize with radical reformers in Britain, Chapman implied, explained why leaders of the BFASS had also shunned Garrisonians. She speculated that those abolitionists who opposed the Chartists “were impressed with the idea that nothing could be done in England but by & through the nobility, which is as much as if we should assume that here [in] the United States, we must depend for reform solely on the slave holders.”⁸

Chapman’s letter was one example of a larger effort by American Garrisonians to understand Chartism in the 1840s and to draw comparisons between themselves and the Chartists. To understand Chartism, American reformers like Chapman queried British correspondents like Pease, who were often close to the Chartist movement themselves. Yet Garrisonians’ expressions of their sympathy with and similarity to Chartists have often been minimized by historians.⁹ For reasons noted throughout this chapter, scholars have tended to assume that Garrisonian attitudes towards British labor radicals were characterized by indifference and outright hostility. By contrast, this chapter argues that the Garrisonians’ attitudes towards Chartism were characterized by genuine interest and approbation, which reveals a greater degree of political complexity than have previously attributed to them by historians.

To be sure, there were points of ideological and tactical disagreement between the Chartists and the Garrisonians that presented obstacles to sympathy between them. As Chapman’s letter indicates, Chartists’ “measures” sometimes failed to pass the muster of

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ A notable exception to this historiographical rule is the work of Betty Fladeland. See “‘Our Cause being One and the Same’: Abolitionists and Chartism,” in *Slavery and British Slavery, 1776-1846*, ed. James Walvin (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 69-99; and *Abolitionists and Working-Class Problems in the Age of Industrialization* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984). See also the introduction to Philip S. Foner and Herbert Shapiro, eds., *Northern Labor and Antislavery: A Documentary History* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994).

Garrisonian pacifists. Some kinds of Chartist rhetoric were equally anathema to Garrisonians, particularly the implication of many British popular radicals that factory workers in Britain were “slaves.” On the other hand, those obstacles did not prevent Chapman from stating frankly that slaves and the common people of England were “corresponding classes.” Garrisonians always insisted that working for wages was not the same as enslavement, but this did not mean they insisted that the situation of workers in Britain was in no way comparable to the situation of slaves in America. On the contrary, their situations were comparable in some respects, particularly in respect to their oppressors. The “nobility” of England were akin to the “slave holders” of the United States, as Chapman suggested, which helps explain why Garrisonians could imagine a qualified kinship both between English workers and American slaves, and between the activists—Chartists and abolitionists—who defended those classes from their respective tormentors.

There are still good reasons to view the Garrisonians’ expressions of solidarity with Chartists as paradoxical. Working-class radicals in the Chartist movement often attacked the system of labor created by industrial capitalism as an affront to the rights of freeborn Englishmen, and there is no doubt that Garrisonians believed fervently that wage labor was “free labor.” That apparent dilemma, however, dissolves somewhat once we look beyond the Chartists’ attacks on the “factory system” and see what the Chartists actually proposed as an alternative to the status quo. Although Chartists criticized factory owners and industrialists, their movement did not aim at the overthrow of capitalism per se, a point that is often obscured when Chartists are casually lumped together with other early nineteenth-century British working-class movements like Luddites or Owenite

socialists. The Chartists' quarrel was less with "free labor" than with undemocratic political institutions. As this chapter will emphasize, the Chartists' program called primarily for political demands like the democratization and reform of Parliament. The defining demand of the Chartist movement was a demand for ballots, which, even after the parliamentary Reform Act of 1832, were still denied to British workers by property qualifications for suffrage.¹⁰

Appreciating that Chartism was a campaign for radical democracy helps dissolve the apparent paradox in the Garrisonians' support for both "free labor" ideology and the Chartist movement. Despite the frequent implication of historians to the contrary, those attitudes were not incompatible. But in explaining our way out of one apparent paradox, we may find our way into another more revealing one. After all, Garrisonians by the 1840s were notorious within the antislavery movement for their opposition to voting, and for their opposition to the activities of antislavery politicians in the Liberty Party. Yet in the very same years they declared themselves supporters of the Chartists, whose main goal was the acquisition of political power. Their expressions of support for Chartists thus invite us to reexamine stereotyped views of the Garrisonians as resolutely opposed to any movement for political reform.

There were local reasons why Garrisonians could not express their support for political abolitionists in the United States—not least of which were the scars left by the schisms of 1840. Moreover, the radical democrats who came closest to being the Chartists' counterparts in the United States tended to identify with the Jacksonian

¹⁰ For two other historians who have briefly noted the Garrisonians' sympathy for Chartism and connected it to the political dimension of the Chartists' demands, see Douglas B. A. Ansdell, "William Lloyd Garrison's Ambivalent Approach to Labour Reform," *Journal of American Studies* 24, no. 3 (December 1990): 402-407; Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery*, 184-87.

Democratic Party, which Garrisonians viewed (not without reason) as the execrable tool of slaveholders and racists. Endorsing the British Chartists allowed Garrisonians to endorse radical democratic principles—like universal suffrage—that they could not endorse as easily in the United States, where leading proponents of those principles had various shortcomings in the eyes of Garrisonians. Their support for Chartists reveals a side of them that they did not show at home, which means that reexamining Garrisonian attitudes towards British political radicals can enable us to see sides of them that we would miss by focusing only on their attitudes towards political abolitionists and radical democrats in the United States.

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Shortly before returning to Boston from the “World’s Convention,” Garrison went on a whirlwind tour of Scotland, accompanied by Rogers, William Adams and Charles L. Remond. On July 27 he spoke at a meeting of the Glasgow Emancipation Society (GES) in the chapel of evangelical minister Dr. Ralph Wardlaw. Garrison was enthusiastic about this two-day visit to Glasgow, home to some of their earliest British supporters. Abolitionists there had sponsored George Thompson’s trip to New England in 1834, and Wardlaw’s chapel itself had hosted famous debates over West Indian emancipation. In his speech, Garrison said he had marveled at Melrose Abbey and St. Paul’s Cathedral, but “if there was any one building in Scotland, or in Great Britain, which his eyes had desired to see more than all others, it was [Wardlaw’s] chapel.”¹¹

¹¹ “Great Public Meeting of the Glasgow Emancipation Society; Reception of the American Delegates,” *Liberator*, 28 August 1840, reprinted from the *Glasgow Argus*. Also printed as *Report of the Speeches, and Reception of the American Delegates, at the Great Public Meeting of the Glasgow Emancipation Society, held in Dr. Wardlaw’s Chapel, on the Evening of Monday, the 27th July, 1840, Reprinted from the Glasgow Argus* (Glasgow: John Clark for George Gallie, 1840).

Not everyone in Wardlaw's chapel was so happy to see Garrison. That summer, the ranks of the GES were beginning to divide between those who favored loyalty to the Broad Street Committee in London and those who favored independence. The Garrisonians' conflicts with the BFASS at the June Convention only exacerbated these tensions, as did the reticence of evangelicals like Wardlaw to associate with Garrison's heretical religious views. A few months later, the arrival of John A. Collins in Glasgow on his ill-fated fundraising tour triggered a secession of BFASS loyalists from the society, leaving a smaller GES in the hands of Scottish Garrisonians like William Smeal and John Murray.¹²

Garrison and his fellow travelers also came to Glasgow at a divisive time for the city at large. In the summer of 1840, local Chartists were becoming notorious for disrupting middle-class reform meetings, gaining the floor, and demanding attention to the plight of workers in Britain. Antislavery meetings were frequently targets of this tactic, since radical workers in Glasgow argued that the success of West Indian emancipation now required the city's abolitionists to direct their charity to objects closer to home.¹³ In August, a group of Chartists disrupted the annual meeting of the GES, just a few weeks before Garrison came to the platform in Wardlaw's Chapel, to face an audience that was divided into three groups: his supporters, led by Smeal and Murray; moderates like Wardlaw who were wary of Garrison's heterodox radicalism; and a sizable contingent of disgruntled workers.

¹² Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists*, 59-114; GES Minute Books, William Smeal Collection (reel 1), 2:173-174; 3:183-201.

¹³ On the Chartists' strategy of disrupting meetings, see Fladeland, "'Our Cause being One and the Same,'" 85-86; Alexander Wilson, *The Chartist Movement in Scotland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970), 114-125. On Glasgow Chartists, see also Alex Wilson, "Chartism in Glasgow," in Asa Briggs, ed., *Chartist Studies* (London: Macmillan, 1959), 249-287.

“On going to the meeting,” Garrison later remembered, “accompanied by a few friends, I observed a person standing at the door of the Chapel, distributing copies of a small handbill or placard. I took one, perused it, put it into my pocket and resolved to read it to the meeting.” The person at the door was a Chartist, and his placard raised a question that Chartists often posed to abolitionists in the wake of British emancipation: “Have we no white slaves?”¹⁴ That question would have been familiar to American abolitionists as well. They were often asked the same thing by labor radicals in the United States, who described Northern factory workers as “wage slaves” or “white slaves,” as much in need of emancipation as “black slaves.” In 1836, striking textile workers in Lowell, Massachusetts, paraded through town singing, “Oh! I cannot be a slave, / I will not be a slave.” In the same year, a strike by cotton spinners in Glasgow had helped spark the growth of Chartism as a nationwide workers’ movement, whose spokespersons often drew parallels between slavery and factory work as freely as workers on the other side of the Atlantic.¹⁵

¹⁴ “The Chartists of Scotland,” *Liberator*, 18 December 1840. See also Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, 2:399-402; “Great Public Meeting of the Glasgow Emancipation Society”; Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism*, 244-246.

¹⁵ Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 87. On the Glasgow cotton spinners’ strike as an impetus for the Chartist movement, see Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 21-36; Wilson, *Chartist Movement in Scotland*, 35-41. The historiography on contemporary comparisons between “white slavery” or “wage slavery” and “black slavery” or “chattel slavery” is vast. But see Bender, *The Antislavery Debate*; Marcus Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery: The Anglo-American Context, 1830-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979); David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1999); Jonathan A. Glickstein, *American Exceptionalism, American Anxiety: Wages, Competition, and Degraded Labor in the Antebellum United States* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002); Foner, “Abolitionism and the Labor Movement in Antebellum America,” in *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, ed. Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (Folkestone, Eng.: W. Dawson, 1980), 254-71; Foner, “The Idea of Free Labor in Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), xvii; John Ashworth, *Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Edward B. Rugemer,

In the weeks surrounding Garrison's visit to Glasgow, the city's *Chartist Circular* printed several articles arguing that workers were being treated like slaves. In the June 7 issue, for instance, the author of a poem on "The Black and the White Slave" contrasted the open air and sunshine enjoyed by slaves in the Americas with the "rank and moted air" of the British factory.¹⁶ Seen in the context of such rhetoric, the placard handed to Garrison on his way into Wardlaw's chapel had a clear implication: "white slaves" in Britain were in more dire need of help than the "black slaves" of America. Yet when Garrison rose to address the audience, he rejected that idea. First, he read the placard to the crowd, "amid considerable cheering" from the Chartists. But Garrison proceeded to answer the placard's question—"Have we no white slaves?"—with an emphatic "No!" "In all Britain, and in all her dependencies, there was not such a being known as a white slave," for no Briton was legally reduced to the property of another person, a "beast of burden" in the eyes of the law.¹⁷

That reaction from Garrison was not surprising; he always rejected the idea that American slavery could be compared to wage labor. But what Garrison said next may be more surprising. Instead of washing his hands of Chartists who dared to speak of "white slaves," he posed a second question: "Were there not thousands [in Britain] who were famishing for bread, and who demanded the sympathies of all ... abolitionists?" To this question "he said yes; but there should be a distinction between oppression and slavery." Thus, while maintaining that slavery and wage labor were distinct, Garrison conceded

"The Southern Response to British Abolitionism: The Maturation of Proslavery Apologetics," *Journal of Southern History* 70, no. 2 (May 2004): 221-248.

¹⁶ "The Black and the White Slave," *Chartist Circular* (Glasgow), 7 June 1840. See also "The Land of Freedom," *Chartist Circular*, 27 June 1840; "The White Slave's Murmurs," *Chartist Circular*, 5 December 1840; "White and Black Slaves," *Chartist Circular*, 2 January 1841.

¹⁷ Quotes from this paragraph and the next three paragraphs are from "Great Public Meeting of the Glasgow Emancipation Society."

that Chartists deserved sympathy, and added that “abolitionists who were not the enemies of oppression, could never, in the nature of things, be the enemies of slavery.” Garrison promised that his own heart “bled” for Britain’s poor, and that they “would hear from him on the other side of the Atlantic.” “He was sorry” if abolitionists in Britain did not support the people, but “he could assure them American abolitionists did,” and if British abolitionists “wanted to prove themselves the friends of suffering humanity abroad, they must do so by showing themselves the best friends of suffering humanity at home.” According to newspaper accounts, these statements were cheered by the Chartists, to whom Garrison had conceded a great deal. He agreed with their claims that the charity of British abolitionists abroad could not excuse spite at home, and he chastised abolitionists who were not supportive of the Charter.

Apart from the fact that Garrison did not accept parallels between wage labor and slavery, almost everything he ever said about Chartists was positive. The same was true of most Garrisonians. In 1841, William Adams, who was present at Wardlaw’s Chapel in July 1840, published an article criticizing a book by William Ellery Channing, which had praised the Christianity of English abolitionists. Adams’ review, later reprinted in the *Chartist Circular*, argued that the “Christianity of the rich” was blind to the suffering of British workers. Just as slaveholders blamed the pain of slaves on their own incapacities, the “oppressors there [in England] will tell a false tale about the awful sufferings of the poor,—stating, as they did to some of the delegates to the London Convention, that it was greatly the fault of the mechanic.” Chartists, Adams said, were “insulted in the midst of their sufferings by being told by such men as Ralph Wardlaw of Glasgow ... that times were good.” When Garrison returned to Britain in 1846, his own support for Chartism

was unabated. In September, he told a cheering group of London Chartists that “I wish to be identified with you out and out,” even claiming, “I am a working-man.” Reporting on the speech later, Garrison said he had “identif[ied] ... with all the unpopular reformatory movements in the country.”¹⁸

To British abolitionists in the BFASS, Garrison’s flattery of Chartists was more proof, if more were needed, of his imprudence. In 1841, George W. Alexander, treasurer of the BFASS, feared that by “blend[ing] the advocacy of the rights of the slave with that of other objects,” Garrison and his friends were proving “seriously injurious to the cause of emancipation.” Even some of Garrison’s allies wished he would sup the Chartists with a longer spoon. John B. Estlin worried that Garrison made “a great mistake” by deeming it “necessary, for his credit in *America*, to meddle with all sorts of questions that divide the population of this country.” Disapproving specifically of his speech to London Chartists, Estlin warned Samuel May that Garrison was “*going out of his way* to make himself unpopular” by fraternizing with the Chartists, and thereby harming his work as “an *Abolition Advocate*.”¹⁹

Despite the fact that Garrison’s identification with Chartists was strong enough to worry other abolitionists, antislavery historians have generally assumed that Garrisonian support for radical workers in Britain was negligible. Perhaps historians have been so impressed by the Garrisonians’ consistent rejection of parallels between “wage slavery”

¹⁸ “Hypocrisy Unmasked,” *Chartist Circular*, 29 May 1841; William Lloyd Garrison, *American Slavery: Address on the Subject of American Slavery, and the Progress of the Cause of Freedom Throughout the World* (London: Richard Kinder, 1846), 4; WGL to Helen E. Garrison, 3 September 1846, LWLG, 3:393-394. See also WLG to Edmund Quincy, 14 August 1846, LWLG, 3:372-373. William Adams was a Rhode Island Garrisonian and native of Paisley, Scotland, who traveled with Garrison to the “World’s Convention.”

¹⁹ Abel and Klingberg, *Side-Light on Anglo-American Relations*, 68; J. B. Estlin to Samuel May, 1 October 1846, BAA, 290-292. See also Estlin to May, 2 November 1846, BAA, 296; May to Estlin, 1 December 1846, BAA, 302; May to Estlin, 4 December 1846, BAA, 302-303.

and “chattel slavery,” that they have assumed that Garrisonians rejected any likenesses between abolitionism and British working-class radicalism. Yet Garrisonians frequently tiptoed along the same line that Garrison walked in Wardlaw’s Chapel: they rejected the rhetorical equation of factory work with American slavery, but they endorsed the aims of Chartism in most other particulars, and did so in ways that shed light on their views about working political radicals. Indeed, Garrison published an editorial after returning to Boston that paid Chartists the highest compliment he could give them: he compared them to Garrisonians. “The Chartists, in their struggle for emancipation, are the abolitionists of the United States,” Garrison said, concluding that “what they seek, and all that they ask, is most reasonable.”²⁰

To be sure, Garrisonian support for Chartists was often qualified. For example, non-resistants deplored the Chartists’ tactic of disrupting, sometimes violently, other reform meetings in Britain. In 1843, while on a lecture tour in Great Britain, Henry Clarke Wright saw a group of Chartists invade an Anti-Corn Law meeting in Manchester. Later the same day he wrote in his journal that he “would have naught to do with such Chartism.” Chartists had “no excuse” for breaking up “meetings when their speakers are heard attentively as are others. They are *tyrants*, unworthy to be trusted.”²¹ In general, Garrisonians abroad disapproved of the tactics of militant Chartists, like the fiery Feargus O’Connor, and were drawn to “moral force” Chartists like William Lovett and Henry Vincent, who shared their opposition to violence. When Garrison made his 1846 trip to

²⁰ “The London Convention,” *Liberator*, 23 October 1840.

²¹ Wright Journals (BPL), XX, 108 (20 April 1843). See also “Disgraceful Conduct,” *Liberator*, 2 October 1840; “Anti-Slavery Meeting at Norwich, Interference of the Chartists,” *Liberator*, 22 January 1841.

Britain, Lovett and Vincent were “among those whom [he] was desirous to see,” and by the time he left they were “cherished friends.”²²

Yet the disjunction between “physical force” and “moral force” Chartists is easy to exaggerate, and so is the Garrisonians’ disapproval of the Chartists’ tactics. After seeing Chartists disrupt the annual meeting of the GES in 1840, Lucretia Mott still said in her diary that she was “not very sorry that they could be heard to plead the cause of their own poor.” Garrison, after the same meeting, argued that although the Chartists’ “conduct is not to be justified . . . it certainly admits of some palliation.” He would not condone their “rude behavior,” but he did “sympathize” with them, with “all [his] heart,” and wished them “speedy and complete victory!” Even Wright, before going abroad, said that Chartism was “a mighty work of reform,” and wished it “God speed.” In 1843, he declared in a letter to the *Liberator* that even “sword and gun, stone and club Chartists, cannot make their principles odious, nor retard their onward course, for God is in them. The principles of the Charter, when understood in their fullest extent, are of God, and must prevail.” In 1842, the *Liberator* declared Chartism “dear to the heart of every genuine republican and Christian.”²³

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The key to understanding how British Chartism, for all its faults, could be “dear to the heart” of Garrisonians lies in remembering that Chartism was primarily a movement

²² WLG to Quincy, 14 August 1846, LWLG, 3:372. See also WLG to Helen E. Garrison, 3 September 1846, LWLG, 3:394.

²³ Tolles, *Mott's Diary*, 70; “The London Convention”; “The Chartists of Scotland,” *Liberator*, 18 December 1840; Wright’s Journals (BPL), XVII, 89 (2 November 1840); “Letters from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 28 July 1843; “The English Chartists,” *Liberator*, 17 June 1842. See also “Letter from Thomas Davis,” *Liberator*, 24 June 1842. Davis, a Rhode Island abolitionist, was touring Scotland and reported to Garrison that even Feargus O’Connor was “more ‘sinned against than sinning.’”

for political democratization, a point historians in the last twenty years have stressed.²⁴ In the 1830s, the vast majority of British adults could not vote in parliamentary elections because voters still had to meet property qualifications. It was this exclusionary political system that was the chief target of the Chartist movement, which began in earnest in the late 1830s and had its peak years of activity between 1839 and 1842. The movement itself was composed predominantly of hundreds of thousands of factory workers, but Chartism, especially in its early phase, was not a movement designed to abolish private property, expropriate factory owners, or foment class warfare. Its primary goal was to secure access to Parliament, which Chartists believed was intimately connected to their hopes for economic empowerment.

Chartists took their name from the “People’s Charter,” a document first published in 1838 and presented as a petition to Parliament in 1839 and 1842. The Charter, far from being a rough draft for the Communist Manifesto published ten years later, was a petition for the radical restructuring of Parliament. It made six specific demands for political reform: universal male suffrage, annual parliaments, secret ballots, equalized electoral districts, salaries for Members of Parliament, and the abolition of all property qualifications for seats in the House of Commons. Chartists believed these measures would improve the plight of workers because they connected their economic distress to their political disempowerment. In that sense, Chartism was less continuous with later movements for socialist revolution, and more continuous with earlier traditions of British

²⁴ See Gareth Stedman Jones, “Rethinking Chartism,” in *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 90-178; Thompson, *The Chartists*; Dorothy Thompson, “The Early Chartists,” in *Outsiders: Class, Gender and Nation* (London: Verso, 1993), 45-76; and a useful historiographical essay by Miles Taylor, “Rethinking the Chartists: Searching for Synthesis in the Historiography of Chartism,” *Historical Journal* 39, no. 2 (June 1996): 479-95.

radicalism whose roots were in the Age of Democratic Revolutions. Like the artisans who read Thomas Paine in the 1790s, the Chartists' chief bugbear was an aristocrat, and suffrage was their lodestar.²⁵

Under the present electoral regime, Chartists argued, it was too easy for corrupt rulers to enact vicious "class legislation" that allowed the rich to enrich themselves, to govern badly, and to keep the poor in thrall. To ensure "government of the people," said the Chartists' 1842 petition, Parliament had to become a "body which emanates directly from, and is itself immediately subject to, the whole people." Chartism was a movement by workers, of workers, and for workers, but its goal was government by the people, of the people, and for the people.²⁶

That goal was forcibly described in a Chartist manifesto published in 1840 by William Lovett and John Collins (not to be confused with John A. Collins, the agent of the AASS). The enemy of workers, argued Lovett and Collins in *Chartism*, was "*the demon of misrule*," which "deprived the country of "ALL THE SOCIAL HAPPINESS that *can be made* to result from the powers and energies of representative democracy." The absence of representative democracy in Britain made it possible for "those who now hold the political power" to pass laws "*partial*" to their interests. These "corrupting and pernicious" policies filled public and private coffers while "engendering poverty, vice, and crime" among workers. The Charter, however, would secure *to all classes of society their just share of political power*" and procure for "our brethren *equality of political*

²⁵ On Paineite radicalism and its connections with later movements like the Chartists, see James A. Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

²⁶ "The People's Charter," Appendix B to William Lovett, *Life and Struggles of William Lovett, in his Pursuit of Bread, Knowledge & Freedom ...* (1876; London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1967), 315.

rights.” “Are we not justified,” Lovett and Collins asked, “in directing the public mind to the attainment of *political reformation*, as the most certain and direct means of all *moral* as of all *social* reformation”²⁷

Chartists had a deep distrust of concentrated power, since, as Lovett and Collins noted, history’s “black catalogue of recorded crimes” showed that “*irresponsible power*, vested in one man or in a class of men, is the fruitful source of every crime. For men so circumstanced, having no curb to the desires which power and dominion occasion, pursue an intoxicating and expensive career, regardless of the toiling beings who, under forms of law, are robbed to support their insatiable extravagance.” Only the Charter could end this scourge of “class legislation” and enable workers to secure laws that served, rather than trampled, the interests of labor. As the *Chartist Circular* put it in 1840, “the working men are determined, above all other things, to have a political power placed in their hands, through the medium of the Charter, which will ... enable them ... to prevent the infliction of future oppressive laws.”²⁸

Time and again, when labor radicals either in the United States or abroad tried to suggest that wages reduced workers to a state lower than slaves, the Garrisonians always insisted that “Poverty is not Slavery, and bears no resemblance to Slavery.”²⁹ But if poverty bore no resemblance to slavery, “irresponsible power” did. Just as Chartists like

²⁷ William Lovett and John Collins, *Chartism: A New Organization of the People* (1840; repr., Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), 20-21, v, 5. As historian Gareth Stedman Jones has argued, Chartist leaders—whether they leaned towards the “moral force” doctrines of Lovett or towards the “physical force” tactics of O’Connor—shared the conviction that the plight of workers was caused mainly by political impotence, for “in the absence of any legislative protection for labour, those who possessed political power could simply engross property by legislative fiat.” Stedman Jones, “Rethinking Chartism,” 109; Lovett and Collins, *Chartism*, 4. See also J. R. Dinwiddy, “Chartism,” in *Radicalism and Reform in Britain, 1780-1850* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1992), 415.

²⁸ Lovett and Collins, *Chartism*, 4; “A Few Plain Facts,” *Chartist Circular*, 31 October 1840.

²⁹ Jonathan A. Glickstein, “‘Poverty Is Not Slavery’: American Abolitionists and the Competitive Labor Market,” in Perry and Fellman, *Antislavery Reconsidered*, 215.

Lovett and Collins attacked British aristocrats for their overweening power, lack of self-control, and “insatiable” appetites, Garrisonians attributed the same sins to planters in the South. For Chartists, power was always bound to be used irresponsibly when it was vested exclusively in one man or class of men; abolitionists, too, said that the slave master could not “exercise self-control . . . while he wields irresponsible power.”³⁰ The Chartists believed that the House of Commons, because of its unrepresentative character, was like putty in the hands of self-interested legislators, who cared more for their wealth than for the rights of “toiling” millions. By the late 1830s, abolitionists also believed that Congress had been taken over by an aristocratic class, who had taken advantage of the Constitution’s provisions for counting slaves to determine federal representation. The “irresponsible power” of masters on their plantations, they argued, was writ large in the actions of the “Slave Power.” Garrisonians could maintain that *slaves* did not resemble *wageworkers* but agree that the *planter class*, with its aristocratic pretensions, resembled the powerful *landowners and wealthy capitalists* of Britain. The parallel that explains the Garrisonians’ sympathy with Chartists is not between two forms of slavery, but between two “demons of misrule.”

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Garrisonians were well informed about Chartism, thanks to the interpersonal networks they had formed with British Garrisonians in 1840. One of the Garrisonians’ chief informants was William Ashurst, the radical London barrister who opposed the exclusion of women to the “World’s Convention.” While not a worker himself, Ashurst was one of a small number of middle-class reformers in Britain who supported the

³⁰ “Anti-Slavery: Lecture VIII,” *Liberator*, 18 October 1839. See also Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal*, 70-72.

Chartists' appeals for universal suffrage and parliamentary reform. When the Garrisonians spent time at Ashurst's home, Muswell Hill, in the summer of 1840, conversations turned naturally to the condition of the working classes in England. The day before Garrison was confronted by a Chartist at the door of Wardlaw's Chapel, Ashurst had sent a letter asking Garrison to remind him of "the points of information you wanted, when you asked me what law book would give you information as to the oppressive laws by which the poor are bound down and made serfs in England."³¹

That letter suggests that Garrison emerged from his conversations with Ashurst believing, as Chartists did, that the poverty of workers was caused by "oppressive laws." After American Garrisonians returned home in 1840, Ashurst continued to serve as a major source of information on English radicalism, and in a series of pseudonymous articles, published under the name "Edward Search," he underlined the political aims of the Charter for readers of the *Liberator*. In July 1842, for example, a column by Ashurst called the Charter "a bill ... for securing equal rights and equal laws." Ashurst skirted the edge of allowable Garrisonian discourse by arguing that Chartists were fighting to abolish "white slavery, the slavery of caste," just as Garrisonians fought to abolish "the slavery of skin." But if it is surprising that Garrison printed such analogies in the *Liberator*, it helps to notice that for Ashurst, the "slavery" of workers consisted in political subjugation to "class legislation," not their status as wagers. In another column, echoing a familiar Chartist refrain, he wrote that "the monopoly of the power to make laws is the mater monopoly that secures to the possessors the means of controlling the liberties, and dealing with the lives and property of those over whom they extend." Because it aimed

³¹ Ashurst's letter quoted in Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, 2:401n1.

to overturn such political monopoly, Chartism was therefore a struggle for “emancipation in its largest sense,” which Ashurst defined as “the relief of all men, in every clime, from oppressive laws.”³²

Ashurst’s columns in the *Liberator* traced the rise of Chartism to disillusion with the Reform Act of 1832, an explanation favored by many historians as well. The Reform Act of 1832 was the first major overhaul of the British electoral system since the seventeenth century, even though calls for parliamentary reform had percolated in earlier British political discourse since the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Earlier popular radicals, who had been nurtured before the Wars on Paineite republicanism, had long argued that “Old Corruption” in Parliament was to blame for the recessions and high taxes after the Wars, which they said were borne disproportionately by British workers. Some of these popular radicals in the 1810s and 1820 even anticipated the Charter by arguing that only universal manhood suffrage could protect workers and purge Parliament of corruption.³³ Yet such radical appeals for parliamentary reform had fallen on deaf ears until the Whigs gained control of Parliament in 1830, displacing a Tory government that had ruled for three decades and had successfully blocked previous calls for Reform. To conservative Tories, extraparliamentary agitation led by radicals like Henry Hunt and William Cobbett was a dangerous example of demagoguery. And even “liberal Tories,” who saw

³² “Interesting Letter from England,” *Liberator*, 15 July 1842; “The Struggle for Equal Rights in England,” *Liberator*, 14 October 1842. See also “English and American Insanity of Legislation,” *Liberator*, 3 March 1843.

³³ See John Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform, 1640-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Introduction to Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes, eds., *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28-35; Philip Harling, “Parliament, the State, and ‘Old Corruption’: Conceptualizing Reform, c. 1790-1832,” in Burns and Innes, eds., *Rethinking the Age of Reform*, 98-113; Iorwerth Prothero, *Radical Artisans in England and France, 1830-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 22-45; Colley, *Britons*, 321-322; Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce: The Economic Policies of the Tory Governments 1815-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Edward Royle and James Walvin, *English Radicals and Reformers, 1760-1848* (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982), 108-123.

themselves as the public's servants and disapproved of many of the government's most coercive reactions to popular radicalism, believed that government was best left in the hands of "philosophic" aristocrats like themselves, who understood the laissez-faire precepts of liberal political economists. Liberals disliked "ultra Tories" but thought it unwise to open Parliament to workers, who would likely support a state with an all too visible hand in the economy.³⁴

For a variety of tactical and principled reasons, however, the Whigs who came to power in 1830 were more sympathetic to calls for parliamentary reform. Their sympathy did not extend, it should quickly be added, to the most radical proposals for universal suffrage. Indeed, the final passage of the Reform Act depended on the Whigs' skillful mediation between conservative Members of Parliament and "outdoors" popular radicals. On the one hand, Whigs courted support from extraparliamentary groups by seeming to indicate an openness to expanded suffrage, but at the same time, they told wary Members of Parliament that passing limited Reform would placate workers and stave off the fearsome possibility of a revolution in the countryside without giving radicals everything they asked.³⁵ Thus, while the Whigs' political savvy enabled the passage of the Reform Act in 1832, it was a Reform Act that failed to satisfy working-class radicals. The Act corrected the worst abuses of the old electoral system and lowered property qualifications

³⁴ For a subtle analysis of Tory government in the decades prior to Reform, see Philip Harling, *The Waning of 'Old Corruption': The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). See also William Thomas, "The Philosophic Radicals," *Pressure from Without in Early Victorian England*, ed. Patricia Hollis (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), 52-79.

³⁵ See Peter Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830-1852* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London: Hutchinson, 1973); Richard Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics: Whiggery, Religion, and Reform, 1830-1841* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). The recent European revolutions of 1830 were very much on the minds of Whig Reformers, who used those revolutions as proof that British rulers had to change or die. See Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 110-111.

for voting, widening the electorate to include the small property-holders, capitalists, and manufacturers who increasingly thought of themselves as the “middle classes.” But workers still remained disfranchised after the Act, which continued to base suffrage on property qualifications that workers could not meet. The Act thus fell far short of the most radical proposals for reform that had been publicized by mass meetings of workers in the countryside, even though those meetings had helped give Whigs political leverage in Parliament.³⁶

Despite the Reform Act’s shortcomings, some working-class radicals greeted it with cautious optimism. Its passage at least proved that agitation outside of Parliament could directly influence debates in Parliament, and if Whigs were not radical democrats, they were at least more willing than Tories to consider legislation favored by workers. Perhaps the first reformed Parliament would limit the workday to ten hours, reform poor relief, and abolish repressive strictures on trade union activity put in place during the long decades of war with Napoleon. Yet those hopes were also dashed. As historian Dorothy Thompson has shown, working-class “disillusion with the results of reform set in almost as soon as the Act was passed.” Far from passing laws tolerant of extra-parliamentary agitation, one of the first acts of the Whig-controlled House of Commons was to pass a series of new Coercive Acts in Ireland, designed to repress popular dissent there. “Any idea that the authorities in the post-Reform-Bill era would be more sympathetic” to trade unions was also “short-lived,” according to Thompson; strikes were ruthlessly broken, and union leaders often arrested on trumped up charges. Ten-hour legislation failed in 1833; Parliament passed new Poor Laws in 1834 that curtailed relief; new stamp duties

³⁶ See Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: the Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), part 3; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 807-828.

were placed on the press in 1836. This was not the docket of legislation that radicals had hoped for.³⁷

By the end of the 1830s, many workers believed that the Whigs' Reform Act, instead of solving the problem of "class legislation," had merely made it possible for the "middle classes," made up of their own employers, to conspire with aristocrats behind the closed doors of Westminster. In 1836, veterans of earlier movements for Reform began to revive radical calls for universal manhood suffrage, and in 1838, these demands coalesced in the Charter, which Chartists hoped would complete the unfinished job of reforming Parliament. One of the Chartists' early National Petitions argued that "it was the fond expectation of the people that a remedy for the greater part, if not for the whole, of their grievances, would be found in the Reform Act of 1832. ... They have been bitterly and basely deceived." The Whigs had ousted the Tories, but the Reform Act had only "effected a transfer of power from one domineering faction to another, and left the people as helpless as before."³⁸

This was the same interpretation of post-Reform politics that Ashurst supplied to readers of the *Liberator* in the early 1840s. "We (that is, the people who are called by the names of Radicals and Chartists) struggled hard ten years ago" for the Reform Bill, he told the *Liberator*, but it had "proved to be any thing but a remedy for the evils it was expected to remove." Small farmers and middle-class "shop-keepers" who had been given the vote in 1832 were still cowed by "the gentry," on whom their prosperity still depended. "The aristocracy here make the laws: the people have nothing to do with them

³⁷ Thompson, *The Chartists*, 11-36, quoted on p. 17.

³⁸ For the text of the Chartist petition quoted here, see Appendix C to Lovett, *Life and Struggles*, 332. On the rise of early Chartism, see Alexander Wilson, "The Suffrage Movement," and David Large, "William Lovett," in Hollis, *Pressure from Without*, 80-104, 105-130.

but to obey them.” Parliament was still undemocratic, and aristocrats still too powerful. In 1843, he wrote that the new “representative system gives one man in eight a vote, and is so arranged that five out of every eight who vote can be influenced to vote as the Squirearchy, or the persons of the established Church, or the Peers of the neighbourhood may desire.”³⁹

Other letters from British correspondents to the *Liberator* reinforced that view. In 1843, the front page featured a letter from a Chartist in Birmingham, calling herself “Sophia,” who painted a bleak picture of the “present condition of England.”⁴⁰ Sophia accused the Tories, who had regained control of Parliament in 1841, of having an “iron grasp” on “the throat of poor England.” But she saw no reason to trust Whigs either. Power had corrupted them after 1832, and they now cooperated with Tories in fleecing the poor with taxes and jailing Chartist leaders in a broad sweep of popular radicals that started in 1839. The Tories and Whigs were “equally injurious to, and abominated by the people[;] the one reminds you of a bold highwayman—the other, a sly, sneaking thief.” When either party wished to do something, the people had as much say in the matter as “the inhabitants of China.” Every kind of privileged person—nobles, high churchmen, landowners, “fox-hunting county squires,” bankers, former West Indian planters—was represented in Parliament, said Sophia, but “the *English people* are unrepresented—their wants are never heard in the House of Commons, except to be made the subject of sneer, or to be told, ‘that, to grant their prayer, would be the ruin of the aristocracy,’ &c.” The

³⁹ See “The Struggle for Equal Rights”; “State of Things in England,” *Liberator*, 10 March 1843.

⁴⁰ It is possible that “Sophia” was Joseph Sturge’s sister, Sophia Sturge. The byline from Birmingham supports that idea, but the way that the author’s name was printed suggests it was a pseudonym. It also seems unlikely that Sturge’s sister would have called for the adoption of the Charter and described herself as a Chartist; more likely she would have supported her brother’s calls for “complete suffrage.” For more on Sturge, see below.

only solution was to “correct the system of *representation*,” and the second half of Sophia’s letter detailed how the “*People’s Charter*” would do that. British institutions were “worn out, musty, and antiquated, totally unfit for the present age,” but the Charter promised change.⁴¹ The *Liberator* praised “Sophia” for her “comprehensive mind” and “superior intellect,” asking for more letters. She obliged with a sequel in 1844, arguing that unless the Charter was passed, there would soon “be but *two* classes in England—the very rich, and the very poor.”⁴²

Both Ashurst’s and Sophia’s contributions to the *Liberator* presented a coherent picture of Chartism as an attack on the exclusive political privileges still enjoyed by the upper classes in Britain. Citing Cobbett’s remark that it was impossible to “revolutionize a fellow with a full belly,” Ashurst argued that workers would never gain relief so long as well-fed legislators, with their “piggish tendency to grunt and lie down,” held a political monopoly in Parliament. The idea that Chartism was a struggle against political monopoly also coursed through the Garrisonians’ private correspondence with their friends in Britain. Many Garrisonians addressed questions about Chartism to Elizabeth Pease, who described her opinions on British politics as “*ultra radical*.” Pease came from a well-off family of mill owners, which might have been expected to incline her away from radical views. But although it was “*ungenteel*” and “*vulgar*” for a woman of her class to “sympathise with the poor oppressed Chartists,” she told Anne Warren Weston, “*I do most sincerely*.” Pease dismissed arguments against the Charter (“that the

⁴¹ “Present Condition of England—The Chartists,” *Liberator*, 3 March 1843. The reference to the inhabitants of China was intentional, since one of the things both Whig and Tory ministers had done in the early 1840s was support an Opium War with China, a war that many working-class radicals criticized as wasteful, unjust, and more proof that Parliament was most concerned with securing the interests of middle-class merchants, who wanted Chinese markets to remain open to British commerce.

⁴² “Present Condition of England”; “Chartism in England,” *Liberator*, 21 June 1844.

people are not *ready* for all this”) as “nothing but a slaveholder’s argument,” since opponents of emancipation had also argued that slaves were not prepared for liberty. In a letter to Wendell Phillips, she reiterated her support for Chartism by contending that the suffrage question seemed “to lie at the very foundation of the prosperity—almost of the existence—of this country.” Britain was cursed with a variety of social evils, but each was only one head of the “hydra-headed monster” of “class Legislation,” and until that system was “*destroyed* utterly—blood, bones & sinews ... *two* heads will spring up to fill the place of one.”⁴³

In the early 1840s, Pease exchanged a series of letters with Phillips that nicely illustrates how Garrisonians in the United States formed ideas about Chartism through transatlantic dialogue with British Garrisonians. Phillips wrote to Pease in August 1842 asking for facts and figures about Chartism. “How many people in England have a right to vote,” he asked, “*1 in 100?* or what proportion?” Phillips told Pease that he had copies of the Charter, and “your pamphlets & our newspapers throw much light on [the Chartists’] movements.” But he wanted specific information for a speech he was writing on Chartism, which he delivered multiple times between 1842 and 1844. Phillips asked Pease to write “telling the names of leading men, members of Parlia[ment]., & speakers among the Chartists ... any statistics about them.” “Perhaps a few lines of what is commonplace knowledge” there “would be novelty here.”⁴⁴ Pease wrote back that these requests “taught me how little I *really knew* on [Chartists] notwithstanding that I reckon

⁴³ “Struggle for Equal Rights”; Elizabeth Pease to Anne Warren Weston, 24 June 1841, BAA, 154; Pease to Wendell Phillips, 25 September 1842, BAA, 183.

⁴⁴ Wendell Phillips to Elizabeth Pease, 12 August 1842, BAA, 179. The question about the number of people in England who can vote is not reprinted in BAA, but it is in the original letter, which can be found in BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.77.

myself one of their body.” But she sent Phillips’ inquiries on to Ashurst in London, who in turn forwarded them to “three of the leading Chartists,” including Lovett. About a month later, she forwarded a “parcel of tracts which Mr Lovett forwarded to my care, which explain very fully the principles of the Chartists.” Phillips did not receive those tracts in time to incorporate them into the first iteration of his speech, delivered in late 1842, but the letters that he received in time “were amply sufficient for my purpose.” On December 30, he sent printed notices of his speech to Pease, asking her to forward copies to Ashurst, “whose letter was a great help to me.” He reported that the speech had “excited great attention & interest” and had been delivered “several times in different towns,” but if the speech had been a hit, it was only because Phillips had been “seated on the giant shoulders of [her] assistance.”⁴⁵

Phillips’ questions to Pease about suffrage reveal that he understood the Charter as a call for political democratization. He even sent Pease a copy of Massachusetts’ state constitution, which “may be worth a moment’s glance from a Chartist! like yourself.” “I was struck by the reflection,” he continued, “in reading the Suffrage Conv[ention] which you were so kind as to send me that little or no reference was made to our example on the questions.” Massachusetts had already “settled the matter of the [secret] ballot [and] the propriety of having *one* branch of the Legislature *annually* elective.” Phillips’ praise for America’s democratic institutions might seem like a predictable expression of pride in New England, but his comparison between American legislatures and Parliament was a hallmark of many Chartists’ writings as well. Lovett and Collins, for instance, had pointed in 1840 to America’s wealth as a result of the fact that “all are allowed freely to

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Pease to Wendell Phillips, 29 September 1842, BAA, 182-183; Pease to Phillips, 31 October 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.101; Phillips to Pease, 30 December 1842, BPL, Ms.Am.123 (32). See also Elizabeth Pease to Wendell Phillips, 31 January 1843, BAA, 185.

share in her institutions,” although they immediately added that slavery—“that remnant of kingly dominion”—was a “stain” on America. American slavery, though, was “more a feature of wealth and class domination, than of . . . her democratic institutions,” which Lovett and Collins praised. So Phillips’ allusion to his state’s democratic example should perhaps be seen less as a patronizing lecture, and more as proof of his familiarity with the rhetoric of Chartists themselves.⁴⁶

Phillips agreed with that rhetoric, primarily because he agreed with Pease that it was “expecting too much of poor human nature, to anticipate that those who have the power will legislate against their own interests.” In the notes that Phillips took for his speech on the Chartists, he argued that since political power in England had been vested in nobles, landowners, and soldiers, the lower classes had been left to suffer the burdens of war and taxes without representation. “Power[,] corrupting ... those who held it[,] has legislated for a class instead of for the people,” he scribbled in his manuscript. “The people without work, want bread[,] & finding the government of the rich not giving it[,] conclude to now ... govern themselves.” When Phillips called the Charter an indictment of the “bane” of aristocratic power, and a plea for “government ... of the people & for the people,” that was as concise a summary of the Chartists’ demands as one was likely to find on either side of the Atlantic.⁴⁷

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⁴⁶ Wendell Phillips to Elizabeth Pease, 29 June 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.62; Lovett and Collins, *Chartism*, 8.

⁴⁷ Pease to Phillips, 29 September 1842; Wendell Phillips, “Chartism” (A. Ms.), HU, bMS, Am 1953 (1585), 42. The quotes from Phillips’ notes are my best approximation at transcribing a heavily edited and barely legible page. On Phillips’ republicanism, ideas about power, and interest in English history, see Stewart, *Wendell Phillips*, 60-72.

In December 1840, William Adams forwarded to Garrison a handbill from Glasgow by Charles M'Ewan, a member of the central planning committee for Chartists in Scotland. M'Ewan had written an open letter to Garrison expressing dissatisfaction with his July speech in Wardlaw's Chapel. While he credited Garrison for reading the Chartist placard aloud, he believed that Garrison had "eluded its contents" and its question—"Have we no white slaves?"—with a "very fine distinction between slavery and oppression." He complained that Garrison had recommended "self-reform" as "the first and most essential duty," which gave the impression that "a great amount of our suffering arose from intemperance." The real causes of workers' sufferings were "a bloated Aristocracy ... and the minions of a lawless faction" in Parliament, which "gorged upon the life-springs of the indigent, until penury has filled the land with paupers, crime, and degradation: our political horizon is daily darkening."⁴⁸

Garrison printed M'Ewan's letter in the *Liberator* and responded to his charges with copious footnotes. Their brief exchange has been cited by more than one historian as evidence of "the philosophic chasm separating abolitionists from workers' spokesmen" and of the "important ideological differences between abolitionists and labor reformers," so it is worth looking closely at what Garrison said in reply.⁴⁹ Garrison's reply defended his appeal to British workers to take the teetotal pledge, which, at any rate, was a pledge that M'Ewan apparently supported. And Garrison did refuse to retract what M'Ewan called his "fine distinction" between "slavery and oppression," wryly noting that "a man who is not able to understand or perceive the difference ... by a statement in words, can

⁴⁸ "The Chartists of Scotland."

⁴⁹ Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism*, 245 (first quote); Glickstein, "'Poverty is Not Slavery,'" 215-16 (second quote). See also Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery*, 16-17; Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall*, 200.

probably be enlightened only by making an experiment in the two cases for himself. Slavery takes away all personal rights; oppression withholds political rights.” But as to whether Garrison had been deluded by Scottish abolitionists into a poor opinion of the Chartists, he reiterated what he had said in Glasgow: “slavery” and “oppression” were not identical, but abolitionists opposed both. When M’Ewan said that “if slavery should be abolished ... so ought oppression,” Garrison replied: “to this, every genuine abolitionist will heartily respond, ‘Amen!’”⁵⁰

Surely it would be wrong to conclude from this exchange that Garrisonians were simply dismissive of all radical Chartists, especially since there was a final chapter to the story of Garrison’s encounter with the Chartists of Glasgow. A few months later, when John A. Collins visited Glasgow, sparking the secession of conservatives like Wardlaw from the GES, that schism was accelerated by cooperation between Collins and local Chartists. In February, after Collins appeared in Glasgow to request the blessing of the GES on his mission, he was refused an audience for weeks by conservatives on the society’s committee. Frustrated, Collins and his allies called a public meeting on April 26, 1841, shrewdly inviting large numbers of local Chartists, who had reasons of their own for opposing the conservative leaders of the GES. The next day, at an adjourned meeting of the GES about which the conservatives were conveniently uninformed, an audience packed with Chartists elected new officers to the Society’s committee, purging it of anti-Garrisonians.⁵¹

At the first of these meetings, local Chartists presented Collins with an “Address of the Workingmen of Glasgow.” One of the Address’s three signatories was none other

⁵⁰ “The Chartists of Scotland.”

⁵¹ See Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists*, 110-113.

than Charles M'Ewan. The Address gratified Garrisonians by describing slavery as “the climax of human wretchedness” and identifying Glasgow workers with abolitionism, which they urged “our working brethren across the Atlantic” to support. The Address also gave a pellucid summary of the Chartist interpretation of Whig history since 1832. “But a few years ago,” it said, alluding to the Reform Bill, “the broad banner of universal freedom was boldly unfurled, inspired with the love of liberty.” Yet “the men who in days of yore led us on to glory, and to victory, and then betrayed us, are the very men who have now deserted you.” According to the Address, the betrayal of the working classes by Whigs and middle-class reformers offered the perfect “illustration” of the fate that was now befalling Collins.⁵²

In typical Chartist fashion, the Address also emphasized that the persistence of political inequality was to blame for the continued impoverishment of the people. It noted that poverty was partly attributable to the invisible hand of the labor market. “The equilibrium between wages, food, and labor, is so vastly disproportioned,” said M'Ewan and his co-signatories, “that in every case the working-man is seldom free from poverty.” But the Address identified politics as the primary root of these problems and aimed its axe there. If it were merely the market that impoverished workingmen, then Chartists could bear it, since “to submit to a providential dispensation is no doubt a christian duty.” But “to be robbed, starved, and insulted by a bloated aristocracy ... with a swarm of voluptuous placemen, and pensioners, who, vulture like, gorge on the life-springs of our common humanity” was unacceptable.⁵³

⁵² “Address to John A. Collins, Esq.,” *Liberator*, 28 May 1841, reprinted from the *Glasgow Post*.

⁵³ “Address to John A. Collins.” Compare this passage to M'Ewan's letter to Garrison—the language is almost identical, which suggests that he had a hand in drafting the Address as well as signing it.

Much like M'Ewan's letter to Garrison, then, the Address to Collins argued that without votes, British workers were powerless. "Tracing these contingencies to their legitimate origin, class legislation, we ask, are we, or are we not, justified in claiming a fair representation of our combined interests?"⁵⁴ That was a perfect summation of the Chartists' demands, and it is telling that Garrisonians in the GES were mostly willing to endorse it. The *Liberator*, which a few months earlier had criticized M'Ewan's letter to Garrison, approved of the April GES proceedings and declared that the Address was "admirable in its spirit and conception, and will be heartily responded to by all who stand on the old anti-slavery platform in this country." The day after the Address was read to Collins, the newly expurgated membership of the GES passed a resolution stating "that, in accordance with the sentiments contained in the Address to Mr. Collins ... it is the opinion of this meeting, that the people of this country are entitled to those rights of suffrage for which they have been contending these last three years." The meeting ended, said the Glasgow *Argus*, with a "series of the usual stereotyped Chartist cheers" for "the Charter, &c. &c. besides a plentiful shower of hisses for the benefit of the Whigs, the Ministry, &c."⁵⁵

The *Liberator's* praise of M'Ewan's Address was consistent with what Garrison and friends like Ashurst, Pease, and Phillips had always said: workers were not slaves, but they were oppressed, and so long as "emancipation" was understood in "its largest sense," Garrisonians could see Chartism as a struggle for emancipation. This is not to

⁵⁴ "Address to John A. Collins, Esq." In the original text, a comma appears between "class, legislation," but I have corrected what was an obvious typographical error.

⁵⁵ "Mr. Collins in Scotland," *Liberator*, 28 May 1841; "Anti-Slavery Meeting," *Liberator*, 4 June 1841, reprinted from the Glasgow *Argus*. The meeting was chaired by Patrick Brewster of Paisley, a Scottish Chartist who also earned the praise of Garrisonians for his firm opposition to slavery. See Fladeland, *Abolitionists and Working-Class Problems*, 111-120.

say that all Garrisonians on both sides of the Atlantic praised the Chartists without any qualification. Richard D. Webb, for instance, was pessimistic about the amount of good that the Chartists could do, both because not all of their leaders were honest and also because the Charter's enemies were so powerful. After receiving a copy of Phillips' lecture on Chartism in early 1843, Webb wrote to Maria Weston Chapman that "when we consider the power, the wealth, the station, the consideration and the influence which the aristocracy enjoy ... I don't know what to say of Chartism or to hope from the people from its influence." But even Webb's lack of faith that much good could be done by Chartists underscored that its objectives were political, and that the aristocracy had an oppressive grip on the country. "The present government may do as they please with Chartism," he said. "They are powerful—they have the confidence of the clergy and the aristocracy—and the middle classes crouch before the mighty confederation—however they may crow in the newspapers."⁵⁶

The strength of Garrisonian sympathy for Chartism can be gauged by two final observations. The first is that many Garrisonians believed strongly enough in the ideals of the Charter to praise the efforts of their onetime nemesis Joseph Sturge, who founded the Complete Suffrage Union (CSU) in the early 1840s. The CSU was an attempt to unite "moral force" Chartists like Lovett and Vincent with middle-class reformers in the Anti-Corn Law League, which is discussed in Chapter 6.⁵⁷ Although Sturge was one of the members of the BFASS who tried to distance the British society from Garrison in

⁵⁶ RDW to MWC, 2 February 1843, BAA, 186-187.

⁵⁷ On Sturge's attempted alliance between Chartists and middle-class reformers, see Alex Tyrrell, *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain* (London: Christopher Helm, 1987), 85-134; Fladeland, *Abolitionists and Working-Class Problems*, 49-73; Thompson, *The Chartists*, 261-68; Wilson, "The Suffrage Movement," 84-93; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 328-29.

1840, Garrisonians like Pease, Webb, and Richard Allen praised his efforts on behalf of “complete suffrage” in their letters to American friends, who in turn expressed interest in the CSU. That unexpected praise for Sturge is further proof of Garrisonians’ support for the aims of the Charter, especially as they tended to think, in the words of Irish American Garrisonian Thomas Davis, that the CSU “adopts the same principles” as the Charter, so that “the change is in name merely.”⁵⁸

The sympathy of Garrisonians for Chartism can also be gauged by their antipathy towards another contemporary species of labor radicalism: Robert Owen’s socialism.⁵⁹ Owen was a wealthy factory owner distressed by the cutthroat competitiveness of modern industrial society and the weakening of social ties between employers and employees. In the early 1800s, he converted his mills at New Lanark in Scotland into an experiment in philanthropic factory management. In 1825, he traveled to the United States to set up model communities there, including one at New Harmony, Indiana. Over the course of the 1820s, Owen’s critiques of industrial capitalism became increasingly radical and socialistic, and he eventually called into question the right to private property. Unlike the Chartists, Owen and his followers offered a critique of industrial capitalism that did not focus on the political power of aristocrats and middle-class industrialists in Parliament. To Owen, capitalism was cursed to its core by avarice and the competitive spirit, and he therefore tended to see parliamentary reform as a distraction from the real task of social reform on both sides of the Atlantic. In the memorable if somewhat schematic words of

⁵⁸ “Letter from Thomas Davis.” For examples of praise for Sturge and the CSU, see Pease to Phillips, 31 January 1842; Webb to Chapman, 2 February 1843; “Letter from Elizabeth Pease,” *Liberator*, 26 May 1843.

⁵⁹ On Owen and the Owenites, see Gregory Claeys, *Citizens and Saints: Politics and Anti-Politics in Early British Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); J. F. C. Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America: The Quest for the New Moral World* (London: Routledge, 1969); Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860*, rev. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 60-67.

E. P. Thompson, “Owen simply had a vacant place in his mind where most men have political responses.” What needed reform was not Parliament, said Owen, but society itself. But that meant that Chartism and Owenism were often at odds. As Gareth Stedman Jones and other historians have argued, the Chartists “remained nearer to Paine than to Owen.”⁶⁰

Not all Chartists opposed Owenism, of course. William Ashurst, for instance, while considering himself a political radical, was a booster of Owenite socialism, in large part because of Owen’s progressive views on gender equality, and also because Owen, an outspoken atheist, was highly critical of orthodox religion. In fact, it was largely through Ashurst’s introductions that several of the Garrisonians who traveled to England in 1840 were able to meet Owen at Muswell Hill and converse with him about his views. In general, however, they were not impressed by what they heard. After two conversations with the genius of New Lanark, Mott recorded in her diary that his “social system” was a “fallacy on its face.” Owen’s error, according to many Garrisonians, stemmed partly from his atheism, but mostly from his deterministic ideas. At the crux of the Owenites’ theories was the idea that character was determined entirely by circumstances. But for Garrisonians, whose belief in moral suasion depended on the idea that individuals could repent of sin, no matter what their envioning circumstances, that kind of materialist determinism was too much to accept.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, 783; Stedman Jones, “Rethinking Chartism,” 123. On relations between Owenites and Chartists, see also Claeys, *Citizens and Saints*, 208-260; Finn, *After Chartism*, 58; Thompson, *The Chartists*, 112-113; Derek Beales, “The Idea of Reform in British Politics, 1829-1850,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 100 (1999): 159-174.

⁶¹ Tolles, *Mott’s Diary*, 51-52. On Owen’s determinism, which he more often referred to as “necessitarianism,” see Claeys, *Citizens and Saints*, 115-119; Harrison, *Owen and the Owenites*, 78-87.

The only prominent Garrisonian who was impressed by Owenite socialism was John A. Collins, who gradually became a committed socialist during his 1841 tour of the British Isles. After he returned to America, Collins began to organize conventions that invoked Owen by challenging “the right of individual property.” He declared in the *Liberator* that “every labor-saving machine now introduced into society is an engine of oppression,” used by capitalists to “hold their hoarded wealth” and drive the masses “into the poor-house or prison.” Inspired by Owen’s example, Collins even founded his own utopian community in western New York.⁶² But Collins had not always traced the problems of working-class poverty in England to industrial machinery or competitive capitalism. At the beginning of his trip, Collins’ views were closer to those of Chartists, and as late as his trip to Glasgow, he had sympathized with the Charter. His early letters from abroad blamed poverty on the “system of legislation,” a classic Chartist claim. The “nobility & gentry” used the law to amass wealth, he wrote in December, leaving “the poorer & laboring classes in this country, in this respect, precisely in the same condition with the slaves of our country”—that is, disfranchised and dominated by irresponsible power and misrule.⁶³

Yet it is important that in late 1840 Collins did not attribute these problems to the competitive principles of capitalism. Instead, he told Garrison that the chief obstacle facing British workers was the concentration of “law making power” in the hands of a few. Owenites, on the other hand, believed that the capitalist’s ability to rob his workers did not depend on his “law making power,” but was instead made possible by the very

⁶² Collins quotes from “Property Convention,” *Liberator*, 28 April 1843. On Collins and his Skaneateles community, see Guarneri, *The Utopian Alternative*, 255; Thomas, “Antislavery and Utopia,” 254-59; Harrison, *Owen and the Owenites*, 174; Glickstein, “Poverty is Not Slavery,” 197.

⁶³ John A. Collins to WLG, 27 December 1840, BAA, 133.

principles of private property and capitalistic competition. By the time he left England, six months after his letter to Garrison, Collins had come to agree more with Owen than the Chartists. Before he boarded his ship home, he wrote to Elizabeth Pease that the British people were “slaves,” not because of the system of legislation, but because of “the system of exchange, by which one class of men can secure the fruits of the poor labourer without returning him an equivalent.” Although slavery, war, and intemperance were all evils, Collins now held that “the greatest of all the evils—in fact the father of these evils is the money catching system.”⁶⁴

That view directly contradicted Pease’s view that class legislation, not the “money catching system,” was the hydra-headed monster from which all other social evils sprung. And not surprisingly, Collins’ drift towards Owenism led to a parting of the ways with many of his Garrisonian friends on both sides of the Atlantic. His alienation was finally assured in the summer of 1843, when he attempted to disrupt an antislavery meeting in Syracuse by introducing anti-property ideas onto the platform.⁶⁵ Shortly thereafter, he was forced to resign as the general agent of the AASS, and by October 1844, Garrison wrote to Henry Clarke Wright that Collins was “afloat on the dark ocean” of atheism and Owenism. “Like Owen, he has much to say about the regeneration of the world, and claims to have found in his theory, coupled with his ‘no property’ doctrines, a panacea for all the ills of life. Alas! for his delusion.” “Robert Owen’s absurd and dangerous

⁶⁴ John A. Collins to Elizabeth Pease, 4 July 1841.

⁶⁵ See RDW to MWC, 22 February 1842, BAA, 168. When, in the spring of 1843, Collins announced his intentions to form an association on Owenite principles, he brazenly appended the names of many of his British friends to a call printed in the *Liberator*. One by one, Garrisonians in the United States and in Britain asked to have their names removed. See “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 28 April 1843; “Letter from Elizabeth Pease,” *Liberator*, 5 May 1843. On the controversy caused by Collins in Syracuse, see William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 104-108; Frederick Douglass to MWC, 10 September 1843, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.19.35.

dogma, that men are ‘the creatures of circumstances,’” was one of Collins’ chief heresies, according to Garrison.⁶⁶

It is important to see, however, that the reasons why Garrisonians rejected Collins were specific to Owenism. They did not entail a rejection of all British working-class movements. Collins’ drift away from abolitionism and into Owen’s camp is often cited as evidence of antagonism between Garrisonians and British labor radicals in general. Yet Collins’ trajectory was not from abolitionism into working-class radicalism, but from abolitionism into one particular form of British labor radicalism. If he had maintained his original position—that inequality in Britain was caused by its “system of legislation,” not by capitalism’s “system of exchange”—he would have remained close to the position of most Chartists, and there would have been no reason for the Garrisonians to shun him. Collins’ drift away from the antislavery movement only underlines the support of most Garrisonians for the Charter. In disagreeing with Owenism, they were agreeing with many Chartists.

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Garrisonians are usually presumed to have had, like Owen, a vacant place in their minds where most abolitionists had political responses. The non-resistance views of many of them entailed that governments, no matter how outwardly democratic, were always founded on force, and that the use of political means was always sinful. Wright, one of the most radical non-resistants, criticized the Chartists’ focus on suffrage for just that reason. England’s throne, he wrote in an 1843 letter to the *Liberator*, was “spattered

⁶⁶ WLG to Henry C. Wright, 1 October 1844, LWLG, 3:267; WLG to Henry C. Wright, 1 April 1843, LWLG, 3:145; WLG to Wright, 16 December 1843, LWLG, 3:240. See also Thomas Davis to Richard D. Webb, 12 June 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.33; “Christianity and Socialism,” *Liberator*, 23 June 1843; WLG to Maria Weston Chapman, 9 September 1843, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.19.33; Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal*, 66-67. Cf. Stewart, *Wendell Phillips*, 113-114.

over with the brains and heart's blood of slaughtered millions." Yet the Charter was "but an effort to put that usurped power of life and death into the hands of 5,000,000, that is now wielded by only 800,000." It aimed not to abolish the power of human governments, "but to increase the number who shall wield it." To Wright, "it matter[ed] little whether human life be at the disposal of one man, or of millions of men. Should it be at the disposal of *man* at all? That is the question." Even Garrisonians who were not as radical as Wright were critical of politics and voting, and especially critical of abolitionists in the Liberty Party.⁶⁷

It may seem paradoxical that Garrisonians abstained from the ballot box at home while supporting the Chartists' quest for the ballot in Britain. Yet as historian Aileen Kraditor has pointed out, there was "no contradiction" between the Garrisonians' own abstention from voting and their support for equal voting rights. For example, Garrison said in 1850 that "I want the women to have the right to vote, and I call upon them to demand it perseveringly until they possess it. When they have obtained it, it will be for them to say whether they will exercise it or not." "We want impartial liberty to prevail," he also wrote in 1850, again while advocating women's suffrage, "and then every one must 'give account of himself to God' for the manner in which he uses it." Kraditor rightly concludes that Garrison could consistently object to the denial of the right to vote without seeing voting "as a good in itself." Workers and women should have the liberty, as free agents, *not* to vote.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ "Letter from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 3 March 1843. But cf. "Letter from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 3 October 1845. On Wright's ambivalent statements on Chartism, see Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform*, 266-267.

⁶⁸ Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism*, 59. The first quote from Garrison can be found in John L. Thomas, *The Liberator: William Lloyd Garrison, A Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 372-373, which is also quoted by Kraditor. See also Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal*, 13-18.

Indeed, there was no reason why Garrisonians could not be just as or more radical than political abolitionists when it came to proposals for universal suffrage. Abolitionists who supported voting or “vote scattering” as a strategy did not have to support extending the vote to women or even to all men. James Birney, for example, the former slaveholder who became the Liberty Party’s abolitionist candidate for president in 1840 and 1844, nearly lost his candidacy because of some indiscreet remarks in 1843 that raised doubts about his commitment to universal suffrage. In a public letter to Gamaliel Bailey, he deplored the fact that “since the time of Mr. Jefferson, what is called *democracy* has been on the increase.” Birney did not think it coincidental that since the same time, “public virtue has been on the wane,” and he was sure that “no people ... can advance in moral refinement and true civilization under the univ[ersal] Suffrage.” Birney was even sorry that so many states had passed lenient naturalization laws that gave immigrants the franchise quickly, and he feared that the voice of the people, if given absolute sway in matters of state, would always be subject to manipulation by demagogues. If he had been present at the drafting of the Constitution, Birney said in another letter, he would have refused to give the suffrage to “such persons as the soberminded and law-abiding part of the community agree in pronouncing unworthy of being entrusted with so high an element of government.”⁶⁹

Birney’s undemocratic opinions about suffrage were not representative of most Libertyites. Yet they do reveal that support for antislavery politics in the United States was not a sure predictor of opinions on political democratization and universal suffrage. It is worth remembering that the Free Soil and early Republican movements of the 1850s,

⁶⁹ See Dumond, *Letters of James Gillespie Birney*, 2:733-34, 744-45; Fladeland, *James Gillespie Birney*, 215-226; Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism*, 149.

into which many Libertyites migrated, set up political tents big enough to cover nativists who favored restrictions on suffrage and old-school Whigs who feared the scourge of Jeffersonian and Jacksonian democracy.⁷⁰ Some “non-voting” Garrisonians were in favor of universal suffrage and some “voting” abolitionists were not, which suggests the peril of imagining an unbridgeable chasm between the views of “political” abolitionists and “non-political” Garrisonians.

Understanding how and why Garrisonians could express support for the Charter also helps us better understand how they viewed radical working-class activists at home, who were also agitating for political democratization in the 1830s and 1840s. Jacksonian activists like George Henry Evans and William Legget believed, much like Chartists, that political rights were essential for the protection of labor. Much as the Chartists saw the Whigs and Tories in Britain as factions of aristocrats and capitalists, Jacksonians saw the American Whigs as a party of bankers, manufacturers, and speculators. They attacked Whigs as Tory “aristocrats,” and both Chartists and Jacksonians scorned evangelicals in their respective countries who advised workers to reform their morals before agitating for political rights. Symmetries between Chartist and Jacksonian rhetoric are in many ways evidence of the deep impression left by Paineite radicalism on workers in both countries. Both Chartists and Jacksonian workers, despite their growing awareness that the social problems caused by the onset of industrial capitalism were new and distinctive, reached back to Paineite critiques of “aristocracy” and defenses of “democracy” to articulate their increasingly class-based grievances.

⁷⁰ See Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 226-30; Richard H. Sewell, *Ballots for Freedom: Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1837-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 265-71.

Working-class radical movements in the United States and Britain were not, of course, completely symmetrical in the 1830s, partly because labor radicalism in both countries was eclectic rather than monolithic. Just as Owenites in Britain downplayed the Chartists' Paineite rhetoric, there were Owenites and Fourierites in America who believed that social reform had to begin in utopian communities, not at the ballot box. There were also even more thoroughgoing critics of capitalism in the United States like Thomas Skidmore, who argued for the expropriation and redistribution of private property and saw both Owenites and Jacksonians as insufficiently radical. Labor radicals in America and Britain usually stitched together a pastiche of arguments from a variety of these sources.⁷¹

Despite outliers like Skidmore, however, most Jacksonian labor radicals shared a set of arguments and images that were also used to great effect by propagandists for the Democratic Party in the Age of Jackson. Like Chartists, Jacksonian Democrats feared the effects of concentrated power on democracy and individual liberties. The “corrupt bargain” that gave John Quincy Adams the presidency in 1824 animated later Jacksonian polemics in much the same way that fears of “Old Corruption” in Parliament animated the rhetoric of parliamentary reformers in Britain. Radicals on both sides of the ocean laced their propaganda with attacks on what Lovett and Collins would later call the “demon of misrule,” and both Jacksonians and British radicals trumpeted the rights of “the people” to representation in government. Importantly, too, radical workers in both countries often worried that their employers seemed to hold the reins of political as well as economic power.

⁷¹ See Edward Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians: The Radical Leaders of the Early Labor Movement* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1967).

Indeed, starting with the “Bank Wars” of Jackson’s presidency, the Democratic Party rallied radical workers into its ranks by contending that a “Money Power”—the Democrats’ epithet for the combined political power of “aristocratic” Whig merchants, bankers and capitalists—was controlling the federal government, overruling or ignoring the will of “the people” as expressed at the ballot box. Using corrupt and monopolistic means, the “Money Power” was robbing the poor with the help of the law, either by raising tariffs, printing paper money, or creating “monster banks” that gave political and economic power to the Few at the expense of the Many. Whether they looked at what was going on in urban factories or in Congress, radical Democrats like Leggett were convinced that “power and wealth [were] continually stealing from the many to the few” in the 1830s.⁷²

If these arguments about the dangers of aristocratic class legislation echoed the contemporaneous arguments of Chartists, this was not mere coincidence. Urban working communities in New England and New York were infused with growing numbers of British immigrants in the 1830s, many of whom brought with them pedigrees as political radicals and Chartists. During the 1840s, in crusades for land reform, ten-hour workdays, and manhood suffrage, New England radicals like Seth Luther stood shoulder to shoulder with former Chartists like Scottish-born John Cluer. In 1845, a correspondent of the *Liberator* reported approvingly on lectures that Cluer had given in Nantucket on the abolition of slavery and Chartism.⁷³

⁷² Leggett quoted in Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Noonday Press, 1990), 192. For the politics of the Jacksonian Era, see Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005).

⁷³ “John C. Cluer at Nantucket,” *Liberator*, 1 August 1845. Cluer also attended the 1848 MASS meeting in Boston. See *Sixteenth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society* (1848; repr., Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 88-9. See Mary H. Blewett, *Constant*

Another similarity between the Jacksonian Democratic Party and British Chartists was the fact that both groups contained large elements of anti-abolitionists. In Britain, as we have already seen, Chartist criticisms of abolitionists must be seen within the context of disillusionment with the Reform Whigs, who had abolished slavery with the support of working-class petitions, but who had then abandoned the interests of disfranchised workers. Yet there were clearly Chartists whose dislike for abolitionists stemmed from a Carlylean belief in white racial superiority, which made “white slavery” in Britain more offensive than the “black slavery” that remained outside the British Empire. Many Jacksonian Democrats, as numerous historians have shown, also envisioned a democracy for white men that would exclude African Americans. Many viewed the antislavery views of American Whigs as screens for their oppression of “white slaves” in the North. Jacksonian workers who attended minstrel shows and participated in antiabolitionist riots during the 1830s and 1840s were fearful that abolition would lead to racial amalgamation or black supremacy.⁷⁴

Yet if there were powerful strains of anti-abolitionism running through both the Chartist movement and the Jacksonian Democracy, both movements also had significant antislavery strains. The British Chartists who attracted the interest of Garrisonians, like Lovett and Patrick Brewster, wasted no opportunity to chastise America for the stain of

Turmoil: The Politics of Industrial Life in Nineteenth-Century New England (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 76-81, 198-99; Jamie Bronstein, *Land Reform and Working-Class Experience in Britain and the United States, 1800-1862* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999); Ray Boston, *British Chartists in America, 1839-1900* (Manchester, Eng.: Manchester University Press, 1971). See also Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). Although Wilentz argues that the legacies of “artisan republicanism” in the United States created “distinctively American forms of class conflict,” he also concedes in footnotes that the radical vocabularies he finds among Jacksonian workers in New York City were similar to the rhetoric of the Chartists. See pp. 16n, 243n, 343n.

⁷⁴ See Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*; Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (1990; London: Verso, 2003).

slavery. Likewise, historians Jonathan Earle and Sean Wilentz have recently argued that while the Democratic Party in the main was committed to the protection of slavery in the South and the suppression of abolitionist agitation, there were often overlooked aspects of Jacksonian rhetoric and ideology that pointed in an antislavery direction.⁷⁵ Leggett and Evans, like Lovett and Vincent on the other side of the ocean, were opponents of slavery. And although historians of political abolitionism often focus on Northern Whigs like Joshua Giddings and John Quincy Adams as the early harbingers of the Free Soil movement, it was often dissident Democrats in Congress who took the lead in attacks on proslavery policies like the “gag rule,” which banned antislavery petitions from the House of Representatives. In fact, antislavery Jacksonians, although a minority within the Democratic Party, were some of the first politicians to develop a robust critique of the “Slave Power.” Earle dates the first use of the term “Slave Power” to an 1836 speech by Senator Thomas Morris, an inveterate Jacksonian who later became a vice-presidential candidate for the Liberty Party.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Jonathan H. Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery and the Politics of Free Soil, 1824-1854* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Sean Wilentz, “Slavery, Antislavery, and Jacksonian Democracy,” in *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 202-223; Earle, “Marcus Morton and the Dilemma of Jacksonian Antislavery in Massachusetts, 1817-1849,” *Massachusetts Historical Review* 7 (2002), <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/mhr/4/earle.html>.

⁷⁶ Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery*, 43-47. Long before the 1830s, there had been critiques of the power granted to slaveholders by the Constitution. But it was not until the late 1830s that a robust attack on a “Slave Power” conspiracy emerged. See Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 119; Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); David Brion Davis, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 14. In 1804, John Quincy Adams, Jackson’s arch-nemesis in the 1820s, feared that Southerners in the federal government were conspiring “to establish an impregnable rampart of Slaveholding power, under the false batteries of democracy.” Quoted in David Brion Davis and Steven Mintz, eds., *The Boisterous Sea of Liberty: A Documentary History of America from Discovery through the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 299. But this quote, rather than undermining Earle’s thesis, indirectly supports it, for in 1804 Adams was a Jeffersonian, and his objection to the “Slaveholding power” stemmed from its opposition to “democracy.”

Antislavery Democrats like Morris viewed hostility to the “Slave Power” as continuous with the best traditions of the Jacksonian Democracy. For them, the anti-aristocratic arguments that Democrats had directed at Whigs during the Bank Wars of the mid-1830s could increasingly be applied to Southern slaveholders as well in the late 1830s and early 1840s. For Morris, the “slave power” was ominous and odious for the same reasons that the “monster bank” had been: it placed inordinate amounts of power in the hands of one “aristocratic” class. In a speech before the Senate in 1839, which argued against “gag rules” barring discussion of antislavery petitions in Congress, Morris argued that the “Slave Power” was “double in means and strength” to the “Money Power,” adding that “the slave power of the South, and the banking power of the North, are now uniting to rule this country.”⁷⁷

For the remainder of the antebellum period, numerous other abolitionists would put flesh on Morris’s skeletal outline of the “Slave Power.” Jacksonian rhetoric about aristocratic political monopolies became a ligament that connected dissident Democrats with Conscience Whigs in new political coalitions. In the 1840s, political abolitionists like Gamaliel Bailey and Samuel P. Chase, despite having cut their political teeth on Whig opposition to the Jacksonian Democracy, began to echo the arguments of those Jacksonians who pictured the “Slave Power” as an aristocratic cabal. By 1851, Bailey, formerly a Whig and now editor of the Free Soil organ the *National Era*, could write that no patriotic American would any longer tolerate “an Aristocracy enjoying exclusive privileges” in the United States. Aristocracy was antithetical to “pure Republicanism” and “the Democratic principle,” Bailey said, appropriating the very kinds of concepts that

⁷⁷ Morris quoted in Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery*, 47.

Jacksonians had used in the political battles of the 1830s. “The slaveholding class of the South,” Bailey concluded, was “an Aristocracy of the worst kind.” Former Democrat David Wilmot, of Proviso fame, similarly argued in 1850 that “slavery [was] the basis of an aristocracy” in the Southern United States. “No aristocracy ever struggled more desparately [sic] to strengthen and fortify their prerogatives than have the slaveholders of the South,” he concluded.⁷⁸

These attacks on the “Slave Power” were later crucial to the growth of the Free Soil movement and the eventual emergence of the Republican Party, because they were among the few rhetorical weapons that could be wielded by any antislavery politician, whether he was a former Democrat or a former Whig. As Leonard Richards notes, “hostility toward slave oligarchs ... provided common ground” to activists who entered the fold of antislavery politics from opposite sides of the fence. “Men and women could differ on scores of issues ... and still lambaste the ‘slaveocracy.’” Democratic critiques of an aristocratic “Slave Power,” with their origins in the ideas of dissident Jacksonians, became one constant in the various antislavery political coalitions that emerged in the decade and a half before the Civil War.⁷⁹

Garrisonians remained outside those coalitions throughout the 1840s and 1850s, and historians have had little difficulty showing how different Garrisonians were from the abolitionists who took up the banners of the Liberty, Free Soil, and Republican parties. According to most historians, the chief difference was the opposition of the former to

⁷⁸ “The United States and Europe—Foreign Relations,” *National Era*, 11 December 1851; “Slavery Question,” *National Era*, 16 May 1850. See also Gamaliel Bailey, “A Decade of the Slave Power,” *Facts for the People* (Washington, D.C.), 1 February 1856, 150-153, which refers to the “Slave Power Aristocracy.”

⁷⁹ Richards, *The Slave Power*, 3.

political action of any kind, due to their nonresistance principles and personal withdrawal from the ballot box. Yet while Garrisonians' opposition to voting did prevent them from casting ballots for antislavery candidates or approving of third-party organization, it did not prevent them from agreeing with the comparisons that antislavery Jacksonians and Whigs made between "aristocrats" and "slaveocrats." As the Garrisonians' endorsement of the Charter also makes clear, their principled renunciation of voting did not prevent them from denouncing partial suffrage laws, or from deploring the dangers of "misrule" and "class legislation" inherent in an electoral system that invested power exclusively in one class of men.

In 1850, for example, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, official organ of the AASS, printed a letter from Richard D. Webb, who noted "that there are many points of resemblance between a Slaveocracy and an Aristocracy, and the influence of both is, in many particulars, identical." Even if they believed that poverty bore no resemblance to slavery, many Garrisonians, no matter what their views on politics and nonresistance, could agree with Webb that there were "points of resemblance" between aristocrats and slaveholders. Henry C. Wright told his journal in 1846 that "*the Aristocracy of England* resemble the slaveholders of America exceedingly." And an 1849 report by the MASS argued that the American Revolution had spurned "the Aristocracy of English Acres" and the principle of "power resting on the ownership of land," only to create an "Aristocracy of American Flesh and Blood," an "abominable Oligarchy" whose power rested "on the ownership of Human Beings."⁸⁰

⁸⁰ "From our Dublin Correspondent," *NASS*, 22 August 1850; Wright's Journals (BPL), XXII, 146 (6 September 1843); *Seventeenth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society* (Boston: Andrew & Prentiss, 1849), 71-72. See also "The Chartist Movement—Temperance Cause," *Liberator*, 25 March 1842; Elizabeth Pease to Anne Warren Weston, 30 December 1841, BAA, 159.

Chartists themselves drew similar analogies. In the same editorial that endorsed the Chartists' goals as "reasonable," the *Liberator* reprinted a speech by John Collins, the co-author for *Chartism*, who argued that slavery in the United States was "*not the result of Democracy—it is[,] like the factory system in England, the result of kingly dominion and class legislation.*" Garrisonians could agree with Collins that the dominion of the "Slave Power" in Congress was just as undemocratic as "class legislation" in Parliament, and in doing so they were also agreeing with those antislavery Jacksonians and political abolitionists who attacked slavery on the grounds that it was a menace to, not a result of, "Democracy."⁸¹

Yet there is no denying that most Garrisonians were vehement critics of both the Democratic Party and the free-soiler parties that bent Jacksonian democratic rhetoric into the service of antislavery arguments. Their hostility to these parties, however, cannot be attributed to their "no-voting" principles or to some fundamental hostility to democratic principles. In light of their arguments about the Chartists and their comparisons between "slaveocrats" and "aristocrats," Garrisonians were hardly sympathetic to "aristocracy." Indeed, Garrison criticized the Chartists for not being radical enough in their opposition to aristocracy. In an 1843 letter to Pease, he confessed that he was bewildered to read in the papers of "roaring Chartists" who toasted the Queen as if she were their benefactor: "The watchword should be ... Down with the throne! Down with the aristocracy!" Those exclamations were worthy of any democratic radical or Jacksonian firebrand.⁸² Given their affinity for anti-aristocratic activists like Chartists, understanding the Garrisonians' aversion to antislavery politics and Jacksonian radicals thus needs an

⁸¹ Collins quoted in "The London Convention."

⁸² WLG to Elizabeth Pease, 28 February 1843, LWLG, 3:125.

explanation that is more subtle than a mere gesture towards their preference for moral suasion over political action.

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If we were to view their ideas about Jacksonian Democracy in isolation from their simultaneous expressions of sympathy with Chartists, it would be tempting to infer that the Garrisonians' critiques of political abolitionism masked a deeper fear of democracy, or that their ideas were closer to those of Whig capitalists than to those of working radicals. But the Garrisonians' expressions of support for Chartism showed that they could be as hostile to aristocracy as any political abolitionist or radical Jacksonian. Ultimately the Garrisonians' inability to declare their sympathy for Jacksonian democrats lay in the irremediable racism and anti-abolitionism of most Democratic Party officials and Northern workers. But since the Chartists they sympathized with in Britain, like Lovett and Vincent, combined resolute support for democratic reform with resolute opposition to slavery, the Garrisonians' support for Chartists allowed them to prove their bona fides as friends of democratic principles and the rights of "the people," without endorsing the racial exclusiveness that support for American democratic radicals would have entailed.

Consider the Garrisonians' reactions to the famous Dorr War, a particularly vivid American episode of conflict between the forces of "aristocracy" and "democracy." In 1842, the state of Rhode Island was convulsed by a political crisis that became known as the Dorr War. Unlike other states that had drafted new constitutions during and after the Revolution, expanding suffrage and political rights beyond the ranks of wealthy elites, Rhode Island's government remained a fossil from an earlier age. In 1841, it was still

organized under the same charter granted to it as a colony in 1663. That antiquated charter still restricted the vote and the right to hold seats in the legislature to landowners and their heirs. In the 1830s, these restrictions were increasingly intolerable to a growing number of Jacksonians and workers in the state's growing towns. Yet apologists for the charter, who tended to be Whigs, defended its prudence in placing government out of the reach of the hoi polloi.⁸³

In the late 1830s, critics of the charter, including working-class orators like Seth Luther, rallied under the leadership of Thomas W. Dorr, a former Whig who moved into the Democratic Party because of his staunch opposition to the state's ruling oligarchy and the colonial charter. A Rhode Island Suffrage Association, led by disfranchised workers, was formed in 1841, and in that same year, Dorrites gathered in an extralegal convention to draft and adopt a "People's Constitution," which declared a new government based on universal white manhood suffrage and derived from the sovereign power of "the people." Town meetings across the state ratified the Constitution, but in December, the legislature, run by self-described "law-and-order" Whigs, drafted its own Constitution, which made few concessions to the Dorrites and was defeated by town meetings. Conflict came to a head in the spring of 1842, when Dorr, who was elected governor under the "People's Constitution," tried to establish a new state government in Providence. In response, the charter government began to round up Dorrites on charges of treason. Later that year, working-class supporters of the Dorrite Constitution clashed in several gun battles with state troops, and Dorr himself marched on Providence with a small force of militiamen,

⁸³ On the Dorr War, see Wilentz, *Rise of American Democracy*, 539-45; George M. Dennison, *The Dorr War: Republicanism on Trial, 1831-1861* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976); Marvin E. Gettleman, *The Dorr Rebellion: A Study in American Radicalism, 1833-1849* (New York: Random House, 1973); Dan King, *The Life and Times of Thomas Wilson Dorr, with Outlines of the Political History of Rhode Island*, rept. (1859; Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries, 1969).

only to be repulsed and forced into exile. The charter government declared martial law in the state in order to track down and crush the large remaining pockets of Dorrites. It then drafted a new constitution that effectively removed property qualifications for suffrage for most adult males in the state, but which left the state's large population of immigrant workers disfranchised.⁸⁴

The Dorrite movement bore many striking similarities to the Chartist movement, which presented its second national petition to Parliament in the same year as the Dorr War. Both movements, backed mainly by workers with some support from middle-class reformers, agitated for the rights of “the people” against the political monopolies created by unequal suffrage laws. Just as Chartists had supported efforts in 1832 to reform a Parliament whose rules for apportioning representation dated to the seventeenth century, the Dorrites were seeking access to an antiquated state legislature governed by a charter drafted before the Glorious Revolution. As Sean Wilentz notes, workers in other states won “expanded political rights” in the 1830s thanks to the rising influence of Jacksonian Democracy. “By comparison, tiny Rhode Island was more like Chartist Britain ... with an obstinate gentry that ... fought to keep the industrial masses at bay before granting carefully calculated reform.”⁸⁵

But despite symmetries between Dorrite and Chartist rhetoric, the Dorrites do not appear to have drawn the parallel very often themselves. This may have been partly due to an unfortunate accident of nomenclature. The state government that Dorrites opposed was known as the “charter” government, so allusions to the “Charter” being advocated in Britain at the time would have been confusing. Chartists referred to their demands as the

⁸⁴ This narrative follows Wilentz, *Rise of American Democracy*, 540-42.

⁸⁵ Wilentz, *Rise of American Democracy*, 543.

“People’s Charter”; the Dorrites referred to theirs as the “People’s Constitution.”⁸⁶ Still, the similarities were noticeable to some contemporaries, especially Dorr’s opponents, who wished to discredit the “People’s Constitution” as a chimerical document. Dorr’s own brother, who cautioned him that confronting the state’s Whig oligarchy was a fool’s errand, said that suffragists “would be like the Chartists of England with a few leaders, and those not the right men to head such an enterprise—& no people—on which you can depend—to support you, at all risks.”⁸⁷

The parallels between Chartists and Dorrites were at least clear enough that the supporters of one group might be expected to have supported the other. Yet American Garrisonians, who endorsed the Chartists in their campaign for “complete suffrage,” did not endorse the “People’s Constitution.” But this was not because they disagreed with Dorrites’ arguments for equal suffrage. Rather, they denounced the Dorrites because they did not make suffrage equal *enough*. Their chief objection to the “People’s Constitution” was that it restricted suffrage to *white* males and left free men of color disfranchised. For this reason, the *Liberator* argued that Dorrites deserved the “severest condemnation,” for while crying “for equal rights,” they “haughtily and tyrannically exclude[d] the colored citizens of Rhode-Island from the use of the elective franchise.” In 1841, Garrisonians sent lecturers into the state to denounce the “color clause” in the “People’s Constitution”

⁸⁶ Dorrites also may have avoided comparison with the Chartists because they wanted to stress that Rhode Island’s charter government was an anomaly in republican America. See Dorr’s 1842 speech before Congress in King, *Life and Times*, 85: “The sovereignty of the country from which we derive our origins, and, I may add, many of our opinions upon political subjects inconsistent with our present condition, is in the king and Parliament; any attempt on the part of the people to change the government of that country would be deemed an insurrection. There all reforms must proceed from the government itself, which calls no conventions of the people, and recognizes no such remedy for political grievances. In this country, the case is totally reversed. . . . The idea that government is in any proper sense the source of power in this country, is of foreign origin, and at war with the letter and spirit of our institutions.”

⁸⁷ Henry Dorr, quoted in Dennison, *The Dorr War*, 56.

and the “pseudo friends of political reform,” who made “the rights of a man dependant on the hue of his skin!”⁸⁸

It is important to emphasize, however, that Garrisonians’ opposition to the Dorrite Constitution did not stem from an opposition to equal voting rights, nor did it stem from their personal abstention from the ballot box. They criticized the Dorrites not for being champions of suffrage, but for being “pseudo champions of free suffrage,” as another editorial in the *Liberator* put it. That same editorial went on to promise that “whenever a constitution shall be presented, based on the truth ‘that all men are created free and equal,’ the abolitionists of the State will not oppose, but hail it with delight.” Likewise, the Garrisonians’ critique of the “color clause” in the Dorrite Constitution does not entail that they supported or identified with the “law and order” Whig establishment. At the very least, the Garrisonians condemned *both* the Dorrites and the supporters of the charter as “equally ... diabolical.” On the one hand, the Suffrage Party’s proscription of black voters demonstrated that it was “perfectly unprincipled.” But on the other hand, said the *Liberator*, the charter government was based on “the spirit of ancient despotism” and was “hostile to the rights of man.”⁸⁹

Some abolitionists, to be sure, did support the “law and order” Whigs after the state legislature offered its proposed constitution early in 1842. In an attempt to win

⁸⁸ “Rhode-Island Affairs,” *Liberator*, 19 August 1842; “Rhode Island,” *Liberator*, 29 October 1841. See also “Thomas W. Dorr,” *Liberator*, 26 August 1842; WLJ to Edmund Quincy, 9 November 1841, LWLG, 3:38. On abolitionist reactions to Dorr, and their divisive effects on abolitionism in Rhode Island, see Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven, *The Devotion of these Women: Rhode Island in the Antislavery Network* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 38-46. On the exclusion of free black men from the terms of the “People’s Constitution,” see Wilentz, *Rise of American Democracy*, 542; Gettleman, *Dorr Rebellion*, 45-47, 129-130.

⁸⁹ “Free Suffrage,” *Liberator*, 10 December 1841; “Rhode-Island Affairs.” See also “Free Suffrage in Rhode-Island,” *Liberator*, 10 December 1841; “Rhode Island Suffrage Party,” *Liberator*, 10 December 1841; “The Suffrage Movement in Rhode-Island,” *Liberator*, 24 December 1841.

support away from the Dorrites, the Whigs *did* extend the vote to free black men who met the remaining property qualifications, and the annual report of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society praised this new Constitution for placing “all the inhabitants upon a political equality, without regard to the color of the skin.” But even after that important change, Garrisonians did not rush wholeheartedly into the arms of the Whigs; they still agreed to a large extent with the Dorrites’ portrayal of the state Whigs as aristocratic and anti-democratic oligarchs. In a revealing letter in July 1842, written after the government had declared martial law in the state, Garrison commented on “the horrible state of things [that] exists in Rhode-Island!” “With the Suffrage Party, I have very little sympathy,” Garrison said, for “while they protest against a land holding aristocracy,” they were only creating an aristocracy of the skin. Yet Garrison also added a “but.” “But I have still less sympathy with the Charter party.”⁹⁰

The Garrisonians joined Dorrites in seeing the state’s Whigs as political dinosaurs whose rule was tyrannical. In 1839, the Garrisonian *Pennsylvania Freeman* pointed out that it was a Rhode Island Whig who drew up a “gag rule” on antislavery petitions in the state’s legislature—“as much an aristocrat, perhaps, as is to be found in the whole state.” In the same year, Garrisonian papers, including the *Freeman*, endorsed the candidacy of none other than Thomas W. Dorr, who ran for the House of Representatives for the first time as a Democrat. Abolitionists praised Dorr’s nomination because of his opposition to the “gag rule,” the annexation of Texas, and the slave trade in the District of Columbia during his campaign for Congress as a Whig in 1837. After he defected to the Democrats in that same year, Dorr began to echo the arguments of other antislavery Democrats that

⁹⁰ *Eleventh Annual Report, presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society ...* (Boston: Oliver Johnson, 1843), 19-20; WLJ to George W. Benson, 8 July 1842, LWLG, 3:95.

slaveholders were as aristocratic as his state's Whig oligarchy. In 1838, after being invited to speak by the Young Men's Anti-Slavery Society in Worcester, Massachusetts, he sent a supportive letter to Edmund Quincy that was printed in the *Liberator*. When Democrats nominated Dorr for Congress the following year, the *Herald of Freedom* greeted his candidacy as an example of "genuine democracy," as proof that Rhode Island was the first state who "*dares hoist the Democratic Anti-Slavery Standard.*" "Cheers from all New-England for the anti-slavery Democracy of gallant little Rhode-Island!" wrote editor Nathaniel P. Rogers, while also prodding "*whig abolitionists*" in the state to support Dorr.⁹¹

The *Pennsylvania Freeman* also praised Dorr's nomination, describing him as a "*whole-hearted Democrat*" and criticizing Rhode Island Whigs even more explicitly than Rogers. The *Freeman*'s support for Dorr was unsurprising, since its editorial positions were still close to those of outgoing editor John G. Whittier, who within the year would break from Garrisonians and join the Liberty Party. But Garrison's *Liberator* reprinted the *Freeman* editorial and "fully endorse[d] all that [was] expressed" in it. The *Liberator* praised Dorr as "a rare man among those who have been elevated to office—independent, straight-forward, conscientious, and upright." "If the abolition voters of that state fail to send him to Congress ... they will bring great reproach on our cause," argued Garrison, urging Rhode Island voters to "turn the scale of election in favor of bleeding humanity" by choosing Dorr.⁹²

⁹¹ "Rhode-Island Democracy," *Herald of Freedom*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 23 August 1839. On Dorr's antislavery positions, see Dennison, *The Dorr War*, 21-23. His letter to Edmund Quincy is printed under "Young Men's State Convention," *Liberator*, 12 October 1838.

⁹² "Democracy and Abolition," *Pennsylvania Freeman*, reprinted, with editorial comment, in *Liberator*, 16 August 1839.

Three years later, Garrisonians disowned Dorr during the Rhode Island rebellion. After the People's Constitution was adopted by Dorrists with the "color clause" in place, the *Liberator* declared that it no longer had "any confidence whatever in his democratic professions."⁹³ Whatever their varied motives for doing so, the Dorrists sacrificed the ideal of racial equality for the ideal of universal white manhood suffrage. Garrisonians were critical of the Democratic Party in general on the very same grounds: while it made claims to be the heir of Jeffersonian democracy, as a party organization it was resolutely anti-abolitionist throughout the antebellum period, and its constituents, especially among the working classes, remained resolute white supremacists. Its leading figures in national politics were Texas annexationists, and antislavery dissidents like Thomas Morris were, as Jonathan Earle notes, usually treated as "heretics" and "banished" from the party. For these reasons, Garrison could only conclude in October 1844 that "the democratic party" was committed "to the slavocracy." But the Democratic Party and democratic principles were different altogether. Garrison's rejection of the Party as a tool of "slavocracy" belies a deeper agreement with anti-aristocratic critiques of the "Slave Power" being honed by antislavery Jacksonians.⁹⁴

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In many respects, British Chartists and radical democrats like the Dorrists had similar aims and vocabularies. But although there was a strain of Jacksonian Democracy that was conducive to antislavery arguments, the fact remained that endorsing democrats in the United States usually meant endorsing radical racists and anti-abolitionists. The Garrisonians' statements of support for Chartists allowed them to demonstrate their

⁹³ "Rhode-Island Affairs."

⁹⁴ WLJ to Henry C. Wright, 1 October 1844, LWLJ, 3:266; Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery*, 6.

approval of democratic politics while distancing themselves from what they viewed as the compromising positions of political abolitionists like Dorr and the hypocrisy of the slaveocratic Democratic Party.

Garrisonians had little love for Whigs, however, and at various times they ratified Jacksonian portraits of the American Whig Party as a bastion of aristocracy. In February 1844, for instance, the *Liberator* published a letter from a “respected correspondent” in Providence, where Phillips had recently given the lecture on Chartism that he had written with the help of Ashurst and Pease two years before. The lecture was “very slimly attended” by Rhode Islanders, said the *Liberator*’s informant, who went on to speculate about the reasons why. “The ‘Clay Whiggies’ had a great meeting” in Providence “at the same hour, to form a Clay Club, which took off quite a large number of the aristocracy. ... I suppose they did not wish to hear anything about the misery of the Chartists.” Those who did hear Phillips slacked their jaws and “stared, the ladies and gentlemen of property and standing, I mean.”⁹⁵ Such jibes at Providence “Whiggies” and aristocrats used Phillips’ speech as an opportunity to imply that the situation of Chartists was not unlike that of American workers, who did not have “property and standing.” They reaffirmed that Garrisonians had not been on the side of Rhode Island’s “law and order” charterites the previous year.

Still, as historian David Turley warns, “it is easy ... to exaggerate the significance of abolitionist links to Chartism,” and it would likewise be wrong to overstate the degree to which Garrisonian rhetoric overlapped with Jacksonian critiques of aristocracy in the early 1840s. In this chapter I have stressed the similarities that Garrisonians saw between

⁹⁵ “Wendell Phillips,” *Liberator*, 9 February 1844.

their movement and Chartism, but they also frequently stressed the differences between British working-class problems and the plight of American slaves, particularly if those differences were used “only for party watch-words,” as Wendell Phillips put it. In 1847, when a resolution was presented at a New England antislavery convention calling for the abolitionists to “unite the cause of the chattel slave with that of the wages slave” through a program of land reform, the resolution was “negatived by a nearly unanimous vote.” A few weeks later, when the *Harbinger*, a Fourierist magazine, implied that Phillips’ speech at the same convention showed his closeness to socialist ideas, Phillips rushed a denial into print in the *Liberator*. “From the remarks of the Harbinger, some may suppose that I placed the Laborer of the North and the Slave on the same level, and talked perhaps of ‘white slavery,’ of ‘wages slavery,’ &c.,” he said. “I did no such thing—I dissent entirely from those doctrines.”⁹⁶

In rebuffing the *Harbinger*’s attempts to link him to the Fourierists, Phillips also argued that if laborers were oppressed, they could seek other employment or exercise their right to vote, “*acknowledged* rights” that slaves did not possess. He recommended self-reform to workers as their first means of elevation, adding that the conflation of slavery with wage work came from “looking at American questions through European spectacles, and transplanting the eloquent complaints against capital and monopoly, which are well-grounded and well-applied there, to a state of society here,” where they were misapplied for partisan gain.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery*, 186; “New-England Anti-Slavery Convention,” *Liberator*, 4 June 1847; Wendell Phillips, “The Question of Labor,” *Liberator*, 9 July 1847 (“only for party watch-words” and “from the remarks of the Harbinger”). See also Stewart, *Wendell Phillips*, 114.

⁹⁷ Phillips, “The Question of Labor.”

At first, this kind of rhetoric seems to suggest a resolute antipathy on the part of Garrisonians to any linkage between their cause and that of working-class radicals. But closer inspection reveals some of the complexity that this chapter has tried to uncover. The vote against the labor resolution at the New England convention, for instance, was only “nearly” unanimous. Phillips’ reply to the *Harbinger* conceded that working-class complaints were “well-grounded and well-applied” abroad, even if he took the same position that Garrison had held in his exchange with M’Ewan a few years before: slavery and oppression were not identical, and socialist critiques of the capitalist system like those of Owen and Fourier were suspect. And although he cautioned against analogies between Europe and America, Phillips did argue that political misrule—the Chartists’ *bête noire*—was responsible for much suffering on both sides of the Atlantic. “In the old world, absurd and unjust institutions injure all classes, and, of course, oppress first and most cruelly that class, the weakest, whose only wealth is its labor. Here, from the same cause, the imperfections which still cling to our social and political arrangements bear hardest on the laborer.” Fixing those political imperfections—“a wiser use of the public lands, a better system of taxation, disuse of war and of costly military preparations”—would “help all classes much,” a view that Phillips shared with Chartists like Lovett and Vincent across the Atlantic.⁹⁸

In sum, Phillips, like other Garrisonians, believed that looking at America through “European spectacles” could be distorting, especially if one was looking for similarities between chattel slavery and “wages slavery.” But in this chapter, I have suggested that Garrisonians could wear European spectacles when they looked at the “Slave Power” and

⁹⁸ Phillips, “The Question of Labor.”

noticed its appalling likeness to the aristocratic governments of the Old World. Despite their sympathy for Chartists, most Garrisonians never accepted the doctrine that working for wages was akin to being bought and sold. But they did accept, and increasingly so as the 1840s and 1850s progressed, that representative democracy would benefit all classes, and that so long as the United States and Britain were governed not by the people but by aristocrats and slavocrats, irresponsible power would continue to exacerbate the political imperfections in both countries.

Chapter 5

Repealing Unions:

Garrisonian Disunionism and Irish Repeal

By 1842, abolitionists of various stripes were increasingly concerned by the rise of the “Slave Power” in national politics. When President William Henry Harrison died in office shortly after his 1841 inaugural address, they were not comforted to see his vice president, John Tyler, move into the White House. While nominally a Whig, Tyler, a Virginian and former Democrat, was sympathetic to Southern interests, and by late 1843, his administration had entered secret talks with Texas to explore the possibility of its annexation as a slave state. Other signs of the times were equally ominous. In January 1842, the House of Representatives attempted to censure the venerable John Quincy Adams, who had spent the past five years challenging the “gag rule” that prohibited the reading of antislavery petitions in Congress. While Adams eluded censure, fellow antislavery Congressman Joshua Giddings did not, and in February, while Congress was in an uproar over Giddings, the Supreme Court ruled, in *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, that Southern slaveholders had a constitutional right to capture fugitive slaves in the North without obstruction by states.¹

¹ On Tyler’s ascension to the presidency, see Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 120-126. On discontent with the “gag rule” and the attempted censure of Adams, see Lynn H. Parsons, “Censuring Old Man Eloquent: Foreign Policy and Disunion, 1842,” *Capitol Studies* 3 (1975): 89-106; James M. McPherson, “The Fight Against the Gag Rule: Joshua Leavitt and Antislavery Insurgency in the Whig Party, 1839-1842,” *Journal of Negro History* 48, no. 3 (July 1963): 177-195. On *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, see Paul Finkelman, “*Prigg v. Pennsylvania* and Northern State Courts: Anti-Slavery Use of a Pro-Slavery Decision,” *Civil War History* 25, no. 1 (1979): 5-35; Eric W. Plaag, “‘Let the Constitution Perish’: *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, Joseph Story, and the Flawed Doctrine of Historical Necessity,” *Slavery and Abolition* 25, no. 3 (2004), 76-101; Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 219-225.

These episodes provoked outrage in many parts of the North, but cross-sectional alliances in the major national parties continued, for the moment, to hold. Tyler's defection and the House's censure of Giddings indicated, however, that party solidarity was starting to fracture along sectional lines when slavery was at issue. Those sectional fractures only widened when Tyler's Democratic successor, James Polk, slaked the thirst of expansionists by going to war with Mexico in 1846. Between 1840 and 1848, as a result, antislavery elements in the Northern wings of the parties grew, while political abolitionists like Joshua Leavitt, James Birney, and Samuel P. Chase redoubled efforts to forge a third party.²

Radical Garrisonians, on the other hand, reacted to the crises of the early 1840s by calling for the dissolution of the Union. In the first four months of 1842, the *Liberator* denounced that the Union was little more than a shield and a sword for slaveholders; recent events in Congress and the Supreme Court had proven that. And according to a growing number of Garrisonians, only disunion could clear the North of guilt for sharing in the sin of slavery. In a letter to the *Liberator* in April 1842, Henry Clarke Wright summed up this new view: "We ought to have laid before the slaveholders, long ago, this alternative. *You must abolish slavery, or we shall dissolve the Union.*" In actuality, abolitionists had laid that alternative before the South before, but it was not until the spring of 1842 that the *Liberator* proposed disunionism as the "one standard" for dividing "genuine friends of liberty" from false abolitionists. The week before printing Wright's letter, Garrison proposed that disunion be the first order of business at the next meeting of the AASS. In May, he began putting a new slogan on his editorials: "A REPEAL OF

² See Stewart, *Holy Warriors*, 97-126; Sewell, *Ballots for Freedom*.

THE UNION BETWEEN NORTHERN LIBERTY AND SOUTHERN SLAVERY IS ESSENTIAL TO THE ABOLITION OF THE ONE, AND THE PRESERVATION OF THE OTHER.” Two years later, the AASS officially endorsed the more concise and insistent motto: “No Union with Slaveholders!”³

Garrisonians’ calls for “disunion” were insistent, but also imprecise. Sometimes they implied that dissolving the Union meant repealing the Constitution and making the Northern and Southern states independent polities. But at other times, they argued that their calls for disunion were not calls for the political secession of Northern states from the Union—at least not yet. Instead, they were enjoining Northerners to avoid *personal* union with slaveholders in their daily associations, and to renounce participation in the Union by not voting or holding offices that required oaths of loyalty to the Constitution. Most often, however, Garrisonians deliberately dodged the question of what exactly they meant by disunion. Specifics were always to be determined later, once enough people had been converted to the idea that liberty and slavery could not coexist in the same divided house.

But no matter how Garrisonians construed it, “disunionism” gained few converts. On the one hand, many political abolitionists shared the Garrisonians’ fear that union with the South was increasingly coming to mean Northern subjection to slaveholders. Many agreed that Northerners should withdraw from union with slaveholders in their churches and political parties. But they could not agree with Garrisonians who opposed voting, nor could they accept the view of many disunionists that the Constitution in its

³ “The Only Alternative—Dissolution of the Union, or the Abolition of Slavery,” *Liberator*, 29 April 1842; “The Annual Meeting at New-York,” *Liberator*, 22 April 1842. For the disunion slogan, see *Liberator*, 20 May 1842. For protests from other abolitionists about Garrison’s apparent call for a disunion litmus test, see James S. Gibbons, “The Dissolution of the Union,” *Liberator*, 13 May 1842.

present state could not be salvaged.⁴ Meanwhile, critics of the Garrisonians outside the antislavery movement argued that calls for disunion were treasonous. Garrison's screeds against the Union finally proved that abolitionists were puppets of foreign governments who wished to see the Union fail.

If disunionism had more enemies than friends in the 1840s, that has continued to be true among historians, who judge disunionism with the great benefit of hindsight—an advantage that is always in danger of becoming the enormous condescension of posterity. Aware that final abolition came about through political means and the amendment of the Constitution, some scholars are inclined to see the Garrisonians' disunionism as, at best, a passive withdrawal from politics and, at worst, a reckless, selfish and priggish maneuver, which weakened the cause of the slave for the sake of the Garrisonians' concern with their own personal purity. But since "disunion" provokes such polarizing opinions about the Garrisonians, historians still lack a full picture of what the idea meant to Garrisonians themselves. It has been easier to view disunionism through the distorting lenses ground by its critics.

In this chapter, however, I will argue that we can gain new insights about disunionism by considering it from a transnational point of view. In particular, I will suggest that disunionism becomes more intelligible if we notice how it emerged in the context of the Garrisonians' encounters with the Irish "Repealers." Between 1842 and 1844, at the same time that Garrisonians were raising the banner of disunion at home, Repealers were calling for an end to another union on the other side of the Atlantic. And Garrisonians were listening.

⁴ See Sewell, *Ballots for Freedom*, 80-88.

In the 1840s, a massive popular movement formed in Ireland for a repeal of the Act of Union of 1800. That Act had disbanded Ireland's independent Parliament in order to quell the Irish rebellions of 1798 and to secure the property and political privileges of Protestant landowners, the ruling minority on an island populated mainly by Catholics. The Union brought Ireland together with Scotland and England under the sovereignty of one Parliament in London. Discontent with its terms dated from the earliest years of the Union, but it was not until 1840 that Daniel O'Connell, the Catholic "Liberator" and a prominent abolitionist, began to mobilize a massive popular crusade for the Union's "repeal." In 1843, which O'Connell dubbed the "Repeal Year," the Repealers organized numerous "monster meetings" demanding the restoration of the Irish Parliament that had met before 1801. "Touching the Repeal of the Union," explained James Haughton in a letter written to Wendell Phillips during that year, "we do expect a 'separate Parliament,' we look to having the full management of our own affairs, merely united to England by the crown."⁵

The years in which Garrisonians began to make "No Union with Slaveholders" their calling card were the same years in which they were in close contact with Irish friends like Richard D. Webb, Richard Allen, and Haughton, who supported Repeal and knew O'Connell personally. Some Garrisonians had also met O'Connell himself at the "World's Convention" in 1840, the same year in which O'Connell founded the Loyal National Repeal Association (LNRA). Given these ties with Irish abolitionists, perhaps it should not surprise us that Garrisonians noticed and commented on the likeness between their calls for a repeal of the union of 1787 and O'Connell's nearly simultaneous calls for

⁵ James Haughton to Wendell Phillips, 10 September 1843, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (710). On the Union of 1800 and its aftermath, see the various essays collected in Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan, eds., *Acts of Union: The Causes, Contexts and Consequences of the Act of Union* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2001).

a repeal of the Union of 1800.⁶ In the *Liberator* between 1842 and 1843, editorials on disunion appeared on the same pages with letters from Irish writers about Repeal, and while regular readers of these dispatches could see that the two “repeals” and the two “unions” were actually very different, readers were also encouraged to notice parallels. One reader noted, in a letter to the editor, that it was odd for anti-abolitionists to condemn disunionism in America as treasonous “foreign interference,” while simultaneously many of them expressed their wholehearted support for “the *dissolution of the union between England and Ireland.*”⁷

Garrisonians often had specific, strategic reasons for suggesting that disunionists were American versions of Repealers. First, they knew that Irish Repeal was popular among Irish immigrants, who were coming to the United States in droves in the 1840s and who were beginning to compose a sizable voting bloc in the parts of the North where Garrisonians were active. They knew that Repeal was popular, as well, among anti-abolitionists, who were fearful of Britain’s antislavery influence and therefore greeted O’Connell’s philippics about English tyranny in Ireland as proof that British abolitionism was hypocritical. The Garrisonians’ expressions of interest in Irish Repeal were thus, in part, efforts to persuade American Repealers and Irish Americans that “the man who shouts for ‘Repeal,’ and yet is willing to shake hands with the southern slaveholders, is a loathsome hypocrite.”⁸

⁶ The simultaneity of Garrisonians’ calls for “disunion” and their interest in Irish Repeal has been noted before, but only in passing. See Clare Taylor, “Introduction” to BAA, 7; Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 17; Mayer, *All on Fire*, 314.

⁷ “Repeal of the Union,” *Liberator*, 27 May 1842.

⁸ WGL to Abel Brown, 18 March 1842.

But that accusation of hypocrisy only made sense to Garrisonians because they believed, at least to some extent, that calls for Irish Repeal and American disunionism were broadly similar. While disunion and Irish Repeal were not mirror images, and while a few of the Garrisonians' British friends even advised them against advocating Repeal, many leading Garrisonians insisted that there were substantive parallels between the two repeals. This chapter thus sets Garrisonian ideas about disunion alongside transatlantic discourses about Irish Repeal. Some scholars still trace the Garrisonians' disunionism exclusively to American roots: ideas about non-resistance, the "come-outerism" of perfectionist reformers like John Humphrey Noyes, and the rapid sequence of events in early 1842 from the censure of Giddings to the *Prigg* decision. But comparing the two repeals, Irish and American, can help us modify an overly simplistic view of disunionism as a rare flowering of ideas that grew only in the soils of American antebellum reform. Armed with a better understanding of disunionism's intellectual roots, we can also begin to see disunionism as a political strategy, which made sense within a broad context of nineteenth-century transatlantic radicalism.

*

Shortly after the *Liberator* raised the banner of disunion in April 1842, a New York newspaper, the *Herald*, speculated that the new doctrine was an import from abroad. An alarmist editorial, reprinted by Garrison under his weekly column called the "Refuge of Oppression," noticed that "for several years past, these [Garrisonian] fanatics have held their Annual Convention in this city in the month of May, but until the recent assemblage of the World's Convention in London, and the pilgrimage of several British abolitionists to this country, they have never dared to come out openly, and propose a

REPEAL OF THE UNION.” The *Herald*’s implication was clear: Garrisonians were a fifth column in the United States, conspiring against the nation at a time of heightened diplomatic tension between America and England.⁹

Paranoid, the *Herald* might have been. But as far as chronology was concerned, it had a point: Garrisonians did not begin to call for a “repeal of the union” until after 1840, the same year in which abolitionists had traveled to London and met, along with other British reformers, Daniel O’Connell. When Garrisonians did begin to call for disunion, moreover, they deliberately framed that proposal with terms and ideas that resonated with the rhetoric of Repealers they had met abroad. In fact, although historians usually use terms such as “dissolution,” “disunion,” or even “secession” to refer to the Garrisonians’ new position in 1842, the phrase that Garrisonians used most often in 1842 and 1843 was “Repeal.” In 1844, David Lee Child referred to Garrison’s demand for a dissolution of the Union as “the doctrine of ‘Repeal.’”¹⁰

In their correspondence, particularly with Irish reformers, Garrisonians made it clear that they knew “Repeal” had a double connotation in the early 1840s. Richard D. Webb told Wendell Phillips in June 1842 that “I am with Garrison for the Repeal of the Union.” In a mock-Irish accent, Webb continued that “I admired hugely his last two articles on the *American Repale* ... It is plain that you must come to *repale* at last.” Webb was the only Irish Garrisonian to vehemently oppose Irish Repeal, but he told Phillips that “your repeal” is “altogether another matter.” This idea that abolitionists had their *own* “repale” recurred in other letters. Writing to Elizabeth Pease, Phillips echoed

⁹ “Daring Abolition Movement—Repeal of the Union Proposed—Treason Organized at Last,” *Liberator*, 20 May 1842, reprinted from the New York *Herald*.

¹⁰ For Child’s reference to “Repeal,” see Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, 3:98

Webb by calling the disunion question “*our* Repeal.” Two years later, when the AASS endorsed “No Union with Slaveholders” as its motto, Edmund Quincy joked in a letter to Webb, “So you see that we have a repeal question as well as you, so you need not crow over us any more.”¹¹

Sometimes these double-edged uses of the word “Repeal” were little more than jocular asides in Garrisonian correspondence. But they were also part of a larger attempt by Garrisonians to connect their movement to Irish Repeal and associate themselves with Daniel O’Connell, who by 1842 was a political celebrity throughout the Atlantic World. O’Connell first rose to fame in the late 1820s when he led a movement for Catholic emancipation that succeeded in removing the political restraints barring Catholics from seats in Parliament. O’Connell’s successful mobilization of poor Irish Catholics in the Catholic Association, which members paid a pittance known as the “Catholic Rent” to join, caught the attention of democratic agitators—and conservative reactionaries—on both sides of the Atlantic, since it suggested the power of popular, extraparliamentary agitation to effect political change.¹² Propelled into the House of Commons by his popular base, O’Connell quickly forged alliances with Reform Whigs and abolitionists, earning a name in the 1830s as a champion of liberalism and slave emancipation.

¹¹ RDW to Wendell Phillips, 2 June? 1842, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (1277/1); Phillips to Elizabeth Pease, 29 June 1842, BPL, Ms. A.1.2.12.2.62; Edmund Quincy to RDW, 14 June 1844, BPL, Mss.960, no. 6. While Garrisonians did use the terms “disunion” and “dissolution” alongside “repeal,” Garrisonians rarely, if ever, described their doctrine of disunion as a “secessionist” position. Webb’s use of the term “repale” may also have had derogatory overtones. As we will see below, Webb was one of the few Irish Garrisonians to oppose O’Connell’s movement, and by calling it “repale” he may have intended to say that ending the Union would once again place Ireland beyond the “pale” of civilization.

¹² On O’Connell’s early career, see Oliver MacDonagh, *The Hereditary Bondsman: Daniel O’Connell, 1775-1829* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988); Wendy Hinde, *Catholic Emancipation: A Shake to Men’s Minds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). See also T. Desmond Williams, “O’Connell’s Impact on Europe,” in Kevin B. Nowlan and Maurice R. O’Connell, eds., *Daniel O’Connell: Portrait of a Radical* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985), 100-106; K. Theodore Hoppen, “Riding a Tiger: Daniel O’Connell, Reform, and Popular Politics in Ireland, 1800-1847,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 100 (1999): 121-143.

Thanks particularly to his alliance with parliamentary abolitionists, O'Connell had been a hero to Garrisonians well before 1840. He was one of the signatories to a letter rebuking American colonizationists that Garrison brought back from his first trip to England in 1833. During that same trip, O'Connell had declared in an anti-colonization meeting that he would never step on American shores as long as they were tainted with slavery. The abolitionists also admired O'Connell for his repudiation of violence in the campaign for Catholic emancipation, and as the 1840s began, they were glad to see his reputation as an abolitionist confirmed by his criticism of England's policy of diplomatic recognition for Texas.¹³

Both "old" and "new" organizationists praised the Irish Liberator and courted his favor. But several things endeared O'Connell to Garrisonians in particular. First, he had criticized the decision of the so-called "World's Convention" to exclude female delegates from the United States, publicizing his views in an exchange of letters with Lucretia Mott. In an 1840 letter of introduction for John A. Collins, English abolitionist John Bowring told O'Connell that "the part you have taken in the woman question appears to have created a strong feeling of regard and affections for you."¹⁴ If possible, O'Connell

¹³ See WLJ to Joseph Gales and William W. Seaton, 23 September 1831, LWLG, 1:133; WLJ to George W. Benson, 25 November 1833, LWLG, 1:272; John G. Whittier to WLJ, 12 November 1833, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.3.82; WLJ to Harrison Gray Otis, 5 September 1835, LWLG, 1:502; *First Annual Report ... of the New-England Anti-Slavery Society* (Boston: Garrison & Knapp, 1833), 56; "Daniel O'Connell's Opinion of the American Colonization Society," *Liberator*, 4 January 1839; "Daniel O'Connell," *Pennsylvania Freeman*, 25 April 1839; Edward M. Davis to Elizabeth Pease, 11 December 1839, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.8.89; Daniel O'Connell to Joseph Sturge, 24 November 1840, in *The Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell*, ed. Maurice R. O'Connell (8 vols.; Dublin: The Blackwater Press, 1972), 6:382-383; WLJ to Oliver Johnson, 3 July 1840, LWLG, 2:665. The original letter condemning colonizationism, signed by Cropper, Wilberforce, O'Connell and others, can be found in the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society Papers (1 box), NYHS, No. 349.

¹⁴ John Bowring to Daniel O'Connell, 22 October 1840, in O'Connell, *Correspondence*, 6:374. On O'Connell's support of the Garrisonian women, see Sklar, "'Women Who Speak for an Entire Nation,'" 311; O'Connell to Lucretia Mott, 20 June 1840, in O'Connell, *Correspondence*, 6:338-340; "Daniel O'Connell and the 'Woman Question,'" *Liberator*, 4 September 1840.

shined even more brightly in Garrisonian eyes after he also lent his support to the British India Society, whose founders were Elizabeth Pease and her father and whose leading lecturer was George Thompson. That support for India showed, in the words of one Garrisonian editorial, that O’Connell was “no less the champion of all nations than of Ireland,” a sensibility that “preeminently distinguished [him] above every other statesman in Europe or America.” In letters home in 1840, Garrison excitedly informed his wife of his meetings with the statesman (“I have shaken hands with O’Connell repeatedly”), but British Garrisonians were no less star-struck by O’Connell. Pease wrote to Maria Weston Chapman in 1840 that she had had the “good fortune to be in his company more than once last week,” and described him as “the most good natured, kind hearted person you can conceive.”¹⁵

In this chorus of Garrisonian praise for O’Connell, there were discordant notes. Over the course of the 1840s, Richard D. Webb ceaselessly reminded his friends that O’Connell was a politician, just like the Liberty Men or John Tyler. He could not be trusted farther than his favorite issue—the good of Ireland—would take him. Rogers was the American Garrisonian who took Webb’s warnings most to heart. O’Connell was like “a lion in a net by reason of his politics,” Rogers told Webb. He mused that it would be “glorious” if O’Connell would “*abdicate*” his seat in Parliament. But since he never did that, some Garrisonians always viewed him with suspicion.¹⁶

¹⁵ “O’Connell and British India,” *Liberator*, 3 April 1840; WLG to Helen E. Garrison, 29 June 1840, LWLG, 2:655; Elizabeth Pease to MWC, 1840 September [?], BPL, Ms.A.9.2.14.13. On O’Connell and the British India Society, see “Letter from Wendell Phillips,” *Liberator*, 23 August 1839; “British India,” *Liberator*, 25 September 1840; Joseph Pease to O’Connell, 10 March 1841, in O’Connell, *Correspondence*, 7:27-29; John Hyslop Bell, *British Folks and British India Fifty Years Ago: Joseph Pease and his Contemporaries* (London: John Heywood, 1891), 20-24.

¹⁶ N. P. Rogers to RDW, 28 March 1841, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.11.126. Webb’s opinions about Repeal are examined more fully in Chapter 6.

After O’Connell revived the Repeal movement in 1840, even Garrisonians who admired him worried that his interest in gaining support from America would mute his critiques of slavery. Irish Americans were some of the strongest supporters of Repeal, and also some of the most generous contributors to the “Repeal Rent,” a fund modeled on the “Catholic Rent.” But as the 1840s began, despite the premonitions of some that O’Connell was an idol with feet of clay, most Garrisonians still viewed him as a peerless ally. Writing from Dublin, where O’Connell was elected as mayor in 1842, Richard Allen assured his American friends that whatever the mayor’s views on other subjects, he had shown a “continual adherence” to abolitionism. He conceded that some Repealers were being tempted to backslide from O’Connell’s abolitionism, but in January 1842, he told George Bradburn that he was “not so much discouraged as others ... O’Connell is still sound I trust as ever.”¹⁷

More reassuring to abolitionists than Allen’s confidence, however, was their receipt of the famous Irish Address in early 1842. Like the anti-colonization address that Garrison solicited from British abolitionists in 1833, the Irish Address was a document signed by O’Connell that declared support for the abolition of slavery. In 1840 at the “World’s Convention,” O’Connell had pledged to send an address to the growing number of Irish immigrants in America, urging them to sympathize with abolitionists. But while the Irish Address was first conceived as an obiter dictum from the Irish “Liberator” to the “sons of Erin” abroad, it eventually became a massive petition, bearing the signatures not only of O’Connell and popular temperance reformer Father Theobald Mathew, but also

¹⁷ Richard Allen to Wendell Phillips, 3 February 1842, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (201); Allen to George Bradburn, 27 January 1842, BPL, Ms. A.1.2.12.2.17. See also Allen to Phillips, 18 November 1841, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (201); “Highly Interesting and Important Letter from Richard Allen,” *Liberator*, 18 March 1842.

of 60,000 Irish men and women. Thanks to the help of existing networks of supporters that O'Connell and Mathew used to campaign for Repeal and temperance, Richard Allen predicted to Wendell Phillips at one point in 1841 that the petition would collect up to 100,000 names.¹⁸

The final number of signatures proved to be smaller, but Garrisonians eagerly looked for the Address throughout 1841. Finally, in December, Charles L. Remond, an African American Garrisonian who stayed after the "World's Convention" to lecture throughout the British Isles, returned to Boston bearing the "Address from the People of Ireland, to their Countrymen and Countrywomen in America." It warned Irish emigrants about proslavery in the United States and admonished them "not [to] unite with it," calling on them instead, by "all your memories of Ireland," "TO UNITE WITH THE ABOLITIONISTS." Only by joining them could the Irish "in America do honor to the name of Ireland." At the bottom, the Address bore the name that was synonymous with Ireland's: Daniel O'Connell.¹⁹

Many Garrisonians believed that this Address, once widely published, would have immediate political effects in the United States, where they suspected that proslavery doughfaces in the Democratic Party were manipulating Irish votes. "The Irish population among us is nearly all 'democratic,'" Garrison noted in a letter to his brother-in-law in March 1842, and to secure their support, the "leading democratic journals" were raising "the cry in favor of Irish Repeal." Garrison argued that this support for Repeal proved

¹⁸ Richard Allen to Wendell Phillips, 2 December 1841, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (201).

¹⁹ Quotes from the Address are taken from a reprint in *Daniel O'Connell upon American Slavery: with Other Irish Testimonies* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1860), 38-40. For anticipations of the Address, see "The Irish Spirit," *Liberator*, 8 October 1841; "Richard Allen," *Liberator*, 17 December 1841; "The Disgrace of America," *Liberator*, 14 January 1842.

that “the democratic party is openly and avowedly the defender and upholder of the ‘peculiar institution’ of slavery.” By supporting Irish Repealers, they hoped “to stop O’Connell’s mouth on the subject of slavery, and to prevent any more ‘interference,’ on that point, from that side of the Atlantic!” But Garrison hoped that O’Connell would “put down” the South’s “pretended sympathy for Ireland, and be the means of advancing our movement still more rapidly.”²⁰

To that end, in early 1842 Garrisonians took several steps to publicize the Address in Boston and Philadelphia, the two cities other than New York where Irish American communities were the largest. In Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society distributed free copies at its public reading room. In Boston, meanwhile, Garrisonians held a public meeting in Faneuil Hall on January 28 to read the Address aloud. Several prominent speakers, including Phillips and Frederick Douglass, addressed an audience reported to be 5,000 strong, exhorting Irish Bostonians to heed their country’s call and gesturing for effect towards the roll of signatures displayed on the platform. Optimism ran high. Phillips claimed, during his speech at Faneuil Hall, that he had “never ... stood in the presence of an audience with higher hopes of the rapid progress and success of our cause than now.” Lucretia Mott reported from Philadelphia that “the seed sown seems to be taking root in Irish hearts.”²¹

If that was true, the roots were shallow. Not long after the Faneuil Hall meeting, Irish newspapers and associations began to denounce the Address, calling into question

²⁰ WLG to George W. Benson, 22 March 1842, LWLG, 3:62.

²¹ “Great Anti-Slavery Meeting in Faneuil Hall,” *Liberator*, 4 February 1842; Lucretia Mott to Richard D. Webb and Hannah Webb, 25 February 1842, in Palmer, *Selected Letters*, 111. Phillips’ speech is also reprinted as “Irish Sympathy with the Abolition Movement,” in Phillips, *Speeches, Lectures, and Letters: Second Series* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1891), 19-23.

its authenticity, challenging its authority, and condemning its arrogation of the right to intervene in American affairs. As these views became more widespread among Irish Americans, Garrisonians began to see that the Address was not the boon they expected. In February, a dejected Edward M. Davis told Elizabeth Pease that he had “handed a copy [of the Irish Address] to an Irish man” in the streets of Philadelphia, “but when he saw what it was he threw it away & would not pick it up.” By July, Garrison told Richard Allen that Irish Bostonians were avoiding antislavery meetings. James C. Fuller, a New York Garrisonian, wrote O’Connell to report that “the foes of liberty, with shame be it said that some of them are Irishmen, are ... endeavouring to destroy the good produced, indeed to destroy the credibility of the address itself,” and to discredit it as a case of foreign interference.²²

As previous historians have shown, the reasons for this hostility to the Address were numerous and complex. Some have argued that because Irish workers competed with free blacks for jobs and were often viewed as an inferior race of people themselves, they sought to prove their “whiteness” by rejecting abolitionists and persecuting free black Northerners.²³ Historians have also argued that Irish voters were drawn to the Democratic Party for its pro-immigration and Anglophobic platform, whereas they saw Whigs—often with good cause—as anti-Catholic and moralizing prudes. These political alignments, though, put Irish voters on the side of the party most likely to defend slavery and to demonize the abolitionists. Finally, Irish immigrants often wanted to prove their

²² Edward M. Davis to Elizabeth Pease, 15 February 1842, BAA, 167; WLG to Richard Allen, 2 July 1842, LWLG, 3:92; James Canning Fuller to Daniel O’Connell, 28 March 1842, in O’Connell, *Correspondence*, 7:144-146.

²³ Garrisonians also offered this explanation early in 1843. The annual report of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society expressed no surprise that Irishmen, “who had been trodden beneath the feet of all in their own country,” were “elated at finding themselves suddenly elevated to the peerage of the skin” in America. See *Eleventh Annual Report*, 26.

loyalty to American institutions and to avoid the appearance of foreign control, especially since nativists had long spread rumors that the Irish were automatons whose strings were pulled by a foreign papacy.²⁴

Garrisonians thought, however, that Irish Americans were under the sway of demagogues closer at hand. They accused Irish leaders—Democratic journalists, priests, and American Repealers—of manipulating Irish illiterates by spreading rumors that the Address was a forgery. And that diagnosis of the problem led to a common prognosis among Garrisonians: another address was needed from the pen of O’Connell himself, to affirm the first’s authenticity and to rebuke slavery even more strongly. John A. Collins wrote to Richard D. Webb that most Irish immigrants were “associated with the large democratic party,” and that partisan leaders were now trying to “deceive” the Irish about the Address. He estimated, much too optimistically, that “nine tenths of the Irish, [were] at heart, thorough going abolitionists,” but that “orators and editors” were leading them astray. Wendell Phillips agreed in a letter to Richard Allen. After he attended a Repeal meeting in Boston and was shouted down for speaking on slavery, Phillips concluded that

²⁴ For previous discussions of the reception of the Irish Address among most Irish Americans, and the ill-fated alliance between American abolitionists and Irish immigrants, see, most recently, Maurice J. Bric, “Daniel O’Connell and the Debate on Anti-Slavery, 1820-1850,” in Tom Dunne and Laurence M. Geary, eds., *History and the Public Sphere: Essays in Honour of John A. Murphy* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), 69-82; John F. Quinn, “The Rise and Fall of Repeal: Slavery and Irish Nationalism in Antebellum Philadelphia,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 130, no. 1 (January 2006): 45-78. See also Gilbert Osofsky, “Abolitionists, Irish Immigrants, and the Dilemmas of Romantic Nationalism,” *AHR* 80, no. 4 (October 1975): 897-900; Douglas C. Riach, “Daniel O’Connell and American Anti-Slavery,” *Irish Historical Studies* 20, no. 77 (March 1976): 10-12; Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 6-31; Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 133-37; Neil J. O’Connell, “Irish Emancipation—Black Abolition: A Broken Partnership,” in *The Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1750-1850: Proceedings 1978* (Athens, GA: Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1980), 58-76; John Wertheimer, “The Green and the Black: Irish Nationalism and the Dilemma of Abolitionism,” *New York Irish History* 5 (1990-91): 5-15; Stewart, *Wendell Phillips*, 109-112; Madeleine Hooke Rice, *American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 62-85; George Potter, *To the Golden Door: The Story of the Irish in Ireland and America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 371-99.

Repealers were entirely under the control of their leaders; the thing to do was to go over their heads by soliciting rebukes from the chief Repealer himself.²⁵

Yet American reactions to the Irish Address placed O'Connell himself in a bind. Repealers in the United States provided key financial and political support to the LNRA, and O'Connell was loath to lose their loyalty. After the Address, some American Repeal societies, including one in New Orleans and one in Albany, sent their own indignant addresses to Ireland, defending American institutions and, in some cases, asserting that the sufferings of slaves were light compared to the sufferings of Ireland. There is no evidence that these arguments persuaded O'Connell to rethink his opposition to slavery; he was a staunch and sincere abolitionist. But in the summer of 1842, he did affirm that the LNRA would continue to accept funds from American Repeal societies, so long as it was clear that he did not endorse proslavery arguments.²⁶

This conciliatory policy, though, was far from the ringing sequel to the Address that Garrisonians had been asking of O'Connell.²⁷ By June, Garrisonians were convinced that the funds of American Repealers had muted his protests of slavery. Phillips told Webb that Garrisonians were "all red hot" with O'Connell, and "with good reason." Where abolitionists had once revered him, Phillips said, they now despised "his little soul

²⁵ John A. Collins to RDW, 2 April 1842, BAA, 174; Wendell Phillips to Richard Allen, 30 March 1842, BAA, 171-172. See also Phillips to RDW, 29 June 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.61. In May 1842, Garrison reprinted O'Connell's antislavery speeches in the *Liberator* to prove his true colors. See "DAN'L O'CONNELL VERSUS AMERICAN SLAVERY!" and "The Voice of O'Connell," both in *Liberator*, 25 March 1842. For more assertions about the influence of Irish leaders on Irish Americans, see "The Irish Address," *Liberator*, 18 March 1842.

²⁶ For the hostile reaction of Repeal societies to the Address, particularly in the South, see David T. Gleeson, *The Irish in the South, 1815-1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 120-131.

²⁷ Compare the optimism of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in early 1842, shortly after the arrival of the Address, with its assessment of its reception one year later. See *Tenth Annual Report of the ... Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society* (Boston: Dow & Jackson's Press, 1842), 70; *Eleventh Annual Report*, 26, 94.

... for letting his noble life be clogged with gold so that he only stammers faintly, in half & half words.” When Elizabeth Pease learned of O’Connell’s mollifying response to a letter from New Orleans Repealers, she told Phillips that she “longed for the first time in [her] life to give him a scold.” Webb’s responses to such letters amounted to a long I-told-you-so, since he had warned from the very beginning that he had “no confidence” in O’Connell, who was a political temporizer, a wine drinker, a superstitious Catholic, and a bad landlord to boot.²⁸

But not all Garrisonians were so hard on O’Connell. While Garrison expressed concern in July 1842 about his “altered” tone, he confessed that “I cannot yet give him up.” James Haughton, the firmest supporter of Repeal among the Irish Garrisonians, responded to rumors of O’Connell’s vacillation by addressing a series of letters to the LNRA and O’Connell, urging the refusal of Repeal donations by American slaveholders. Webb, for his part, usually smirked at such efforts as credulous and naïve, but in the end, Haughton’s attempts to call O’Connell to repentance impressed Garrisonians more than Webb’s hard-boiled doubts.²⁹

²⁸ Wendell Phillips to RDW, 29 June 1842; Elizabeth Pease to Phillips, 16 August 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.79; Webb to Phillips, 1 September 1842, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (1277/1). For more of Webb’s harangues on O’Connell, which continued into 1843, see RDW to MWC, 2 February 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.7; WebRDWb to Phillips, 17 April? 1843, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (1277/1); RDW to MWC, n.d., BPL, Ms.A.9.2.16.28; Riach, “Richard Davis Webb in Ireland,” 62-167; Richard S. Harrison, *Richard Davis Webb: Dublin Quaker Printer* (Skeagh, Skibereen, Ireland: Red Barn Publishing, 1993), 46-48.

²⁹ WLG to Allen, 2 July 1842, LWLG, 3:93. See also Richard Allen to Wendell Phillips, 11 June 1842, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (201). For Haughton’s letters on the subject of Repeal contributions from America, see “Irish Repeal—American Slavery—O’Connell,” *Liberator*, 17 June 1842; James Haughton to Daniel O’Connell, 1 October 1842, in O’Connell, *Correspondence*, 7:176-77; “Letter from James Haughton, of Dublin,” *Liberator*, 14 October 1842; Haughton to O’Connell, 6 April 1843, in O’Connell, *Correspondence*, 7:199-200; “Slavery in the United States,” *Liberator*, 5 May 1843; “James Haughton to his Brother Repealers,” *Liberator*, 8 September 1843. See also Samuel Haughton, *Memoir of James Haughton, with Extracts from his Private and Published Letters, by his Son* (Dublin: E. Ponsonby, 1877), 46-7. For examples of Webb’s comments on Haughton’s naïveté, see Richard D. Webb to MWC, 1 October 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.59.

To be sure, their faith in O’Connell would continue to be tested throughout 1842 and 1843. In 1843, O’Connell implied in a speech that he had never met Garrison and distanced himself from the Garrisonians’ religious heterodoxy, outraging Garrisonians.³⁰ To Nathaniel P. Rogers, such actions proved that “what Richard Webb says is true of [O’Connell], that he has no moral integrity.” Rogers even stooped to publish a farcical article ridiculing O’Connell’s demeanor when he prayed at the dinner table, which Rogers had witnessed at a meal with British abolitionists in 1840. Yet it is telling that other Garrisonians—even Webb—lamented this editorial. Most criticized O’Connell but did not condemn him altogether.³¹

In part this was because O’Connell, while attempting to walk a fine line between embracing Garrisonians’ radicalism and inviting their scorn, never recanted his firm opposition to slavery. Even Webb had to concede to Edmund Quincy in 1843, “Thou knows that I am by no means an O’Connellite: nevertheless whatever he be, he is the man

³⁰ For O’Connell’s falling out with Garrison, see James Haughton to Daniel O’Connell, 5 August 1843, in O’Connell, *Correspondence*, 7:217-18; James Haughton to Edward M. Davis, 16 August 1843, HU, bMS, Am 1054 (89); RDW to Edmund Quincy, 16 August 1843, BPL, Mss. 960, vol. 2; “O’Connell and the American Pro-Slavery Repealers,” *Liberator*, 8 September 1843; WLG to MWC, 9 September 1843, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.19.33; Nathaniel P. Rogers to Francis Jackson, 13 September 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.55; “Mr. O’Connell and Mr. Garrison,” *Liberator*, 6 October 1843. Even political abolitionist Gerrit Smith, hardly a staunch Garrisonian himself, rebuked O’Connell for casting aspersions on Garrison’s faith, for the sake of what appeared to be only narrow political gain. See “Daniel O’Connell,” *Liberator*, 14 April 1843; “Letter to Daniel O’Connell,” *Liberator*, 28 April 1843; “Letter of Gerrit Smith to Daniel O’Connell,” *Liberator*, 28 April 1843; Gerrit Smith to Daniel O’Connell, 2 July 1842, in O’Connell, *Correspondence*, 7:166-67. In the spring of 1843, when O’Connell’s son and Repeal lieutenant, John O’Connell, announced plans to tour the United States, Garrisonians also criticized him for declaring that he would not comment on America’s institutions while abroad. See “O’Connell Faltering,” *Liberator*, 12 May 1843; “The O’Connellites and the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society,” *Liberator*, 16 June 1843. Garrisonians were also wary of the fact that the supporter of Repeal with the highest profile in the United States was Robert Tyler, the slaveholding son of President Tyler. When the LNRA passed a vote of thanks to Tyler in 1843, Garrisonians again raised a hue and cry about the Repealers’ apparent pliability. See “Vote of Thanks to Mr. Tyler ...,” *Liberator*, 28 April 1843.

³¹ Nathaniel P. Rogers to WLG, 14 September 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.56. For pained reactions to Rogers’ editorial, which helped precipitate a break between Rogers and his former Garrisonian friends early the next year, see Richard D. Webb to Edmund Quincy, 2 November 1843, BPL, Mss. 960, vol. 2, pp. 7-9; Quincy to Webb, 27 November 1843, BPL, Mss. 960, vol. 1, no. 4; Rogers to Webb, 14 January 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.4.

who above all eminent public men ... has done the most valiantly for the Slave.” Pease regretted O’Connell’s unkind words regarding Garrison, but she too affirmed that despite this “stain on his fame,” he was “nevertheless, a great man,” not just because of his unwavering abolitionism, but also because by advocating Repeal by peaceable means only, “he is carrying forward one of the grandest movements that ever was enacted in the theatre of the world.”³²

Several times in 1843 O’Connell reaffirmed his hatred of slavery, which helped redeem him in the eyes of Garrisonians. In June, the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (PASS) sent the LNRA a long rebuttal of proslavery arguments presented by American Repealers since the receipt of the Irish Address. After it was read at an LNRA meeting chaired by Haughton, O’Connell gave a rousing speech praising the PASS and American abolitionists as “a body of men whom [Repealers] most entirely respect.”³³ Then, in October, O’Connell sent a blistering rebuke to the Cincinnati Irish Repeal Association, which had sent the LNRA an address defending slavery. Garrisonians treated this reply to the Cincinnati Repealers as the second Irish Address they had waited for, printing numerous copies and organizing another publicity meeting at Faneuil Hall.³⁴ That

³² RDW to Quincy, 2 November 1843; Elizabeth Pease to Anne Warren Weston, 27 January 1844, BAA, 211.

³³ “Loyal National Repeal Association—Daniel O’Connell and American Slavery!”, *Liberator*, 9 June 1843; “Loyal National Repeal Association,” *Liberator*, 16 June 1843. See also “Repeal Movements,” *Liberator*, 14 July 1843; “Abolition and Repeal,” *Liberator*, 25 August 1843; “The Right Spirit,” *Liberator*, 8 September 1843.

³⁴ For O’Connell’s reply to the Cincinnati Repealers, see “Loyal National Repeal Association,” in *The Influence of the Slave Power, with Other Anti-Slavery Pamphlets* (1843; repr., Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970), no. 5; “Speeches of Daniel O’Connell and Thomas Steele on the subject of American slavery,” broadside (Philadelphia: [PASS], 1843), BPL, Res.4264.51, no. 32. For delighted reactions from abolitionists, see George W. Armstrong to Samuel May, Jr., 30 October 1843, BPL, Ms.B.1.6.1.37; “Irish Repeal and American Slavery,” *Liberator*, 17 November 1843; “Grand Meeting in Faneuil Hall,” *Liberator*, 24 November 1843; Quincy to RDW, 27 November 1843; WLJ to Daniel O’Connell, 8 December 1843, LWLG, 3:229.

meeting was no more successful than the first one had been in converting Irish Americans to abolitionism. But O'Connell's actions helped to vindicate him and suggested that perhaps Haughton had been right to trust him all along. Although O'Connell "descended from high principle" on occasion, Haughton thought he "made the amend honorable."³⁵

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Just as O'Connell never retracted his abolitionism in the contentious years after 1840, it is important to note that Garrisonians never recanted their support for O'Connell's Repeal movement, despite the hostility of American Repealers to the antislavery cause. At the February 1842 Faneuil Hall meeting to present the Irish Address, Garrison had declared, "I AM A REPEALER!" He never changed his mind. He was a Repealer, he continued, because England's posture towards Ireland epitomized the "true slaveholding style." Slaveholders argued that slaves could not take care of themselves, and England said the same thing about the Emerald Isle. "But Ireland has about made up her mind," Garrison continued in 1842, "that she will no longer be the vassal of England, to be subjected to famine, oppression and misrule." He claimed to support Ireland's every "effort to secure her emancipation," and over a year later, at the second Faneuil Hall meeting, he repeated that Ireland was "the victim of an absolute despotism," and thus "truly deserving" of all abolitionists' sympathy.³⁶

Throughout 1842 and 1843, Garrisonians echoed such statements of identification with the Repeal movement. When they appealed to O'Connell after his vacillation in

³⁵ James Haughton to Wendell Phillips, 13 August 1843, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (710). See also Haughton to Edward M. Davis, 16 August 1843, HU, bMS 1054 (89). On the disbanding of Charleston's Repeal society and other hostile reactions to O'Connell's abolitionism, see "A Repeal Association Dissolved" and "Irish Repeal—Mr. O'Connell," both in *Liberator*, 14 July 1843.

³⁶ "Great Anti-Slavery Meeting in Faneuil Hall," *Liberator*, 4 February 1842; "Grand Meeting in Faneuil Hall."

1842, they pointed to their consistent support for his cause; when O’Connell deprecated Garrison’s religious beliefs and pretended not to know him, Garrison protested that he was “a decided friend of Repeal.” Other Garrisonians likewise rejected the accusation of American Repealers that they were really meddling Anglophiles, who were manipulating O’Connell in order to keep Ireland in chains. “We have never done any thing whatsoever ... to injure or obstruct the cause of Repeal,” replied the PASS to one such charge, adding that it desired the “success of the Irish people in their efforts to effect a peaceable repeal” of its “political Union.”³⁷

Such statements of support for Repeal were, of course, partly strategic moves. Garrisonians wanted to persuade Irish Americans that it was impossible to be a Repealer without also being an abolitionist. Although the Garrisonians accused the Democratic Party of using Repeal in order to dragoon Irish votes, to some extent their own support for Repeal simply had the opposite end in view: to direct the Irish electorate away from the Democrats. Philadelphia abolitionist James Miller McKim explicitly admitted that he viewed demonstrations of support for Repeal partly as a way into Irish hearts. In a letter to Richard Webb, he asked for files of Repeal papers to help lure Irish readers to his antislavery reading room. Evidence of “sympathy & correspondence between us & the Dublin Repealers” would be “calculated [to] increase the hold which we are of late beginning to have on the confidence of the Irish population of this city.” This kind of pandering to Irish voters made Lydia Maria Child uneasy, not only because, she told Maria Weston Chapman, their “moral and intellectual state” was comparable to that of “dogs,” but also because “exciting the ignorant Irish by the use of O’Connell’s name,

³⁷ WLG to O’Connell, 8 December 1843, LWLG, 3:231; “Abolitionists Vindicated,” *Liberator*, 14 July 1843. For an example of the charge that Garrisonians were hostile to Repeal, see the reprint from the Boston *Pilot* in “O’Connell’s Abolitionism,” *Liberator*, 6 October 1843.

strikes me as work that peculiarly belongs to the Third Party,” since it would only “drive them to the polls.”³⁸

Despite the reservations of some, however, and despite the prejudices about Irish immigrants that some abolitionists still harbored, many Garrisonians saw Irish Repeal as a sister movement—one that was based on principles and tactics similar to their own. In an August 1843 editorial in the *Liberator*, Chapman praised the Repeal movement for its demonstration that “non-resistance” and moral suasion worked wonders for a nation. England’s “institutions [were] failing under her, as all arbitrary ones are doing the world over,” and she wished “God speed” to O’Connell’s “work of raising a noble people from wrongs and sufferings which yield in depth and intensity only to those of the American slaves.” While it is hard to know how many readers of the *Liberator* shared such views, one letter from a reader in Utica had agreed the month before that “Ireland must be delivered from the curse of this Union. Give her her home legislature, and it will do wonders for her.”³⁹

Not all Garrisonians, it should be noted, were so convinced. Rogers, O’Connell’s fiercest critic among the American Garrisonians, rejected the idea that Irish Repeal and abolition were equal, and Webb constantly told his American friends that Garrison was a greater man than O’Connell, chastening them for their florid endorsements of Repeal. In

³⁸ James Miller McKim to RDW, 23 October 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.66; Lydia Maria Child to MWC, 26 April 1842, in *Lydia Maria Child: Selected Letters, 1817-1880*, ed. Milton Meltzer and Patricia G. Holland (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 169. For Garrisonian arguments that true Repealers could not desire the liberty of Ireland without also desiring the liberty of slaves, see “Great Anti-Slavery Meeting in Faneuil Hall”; “To the Emigrants from Ireland, and their Descendants,” *Liberator*, 8 April 1842; “Letter from Richard Allen,” *Liberator*, 1 July 1842.

³⁹ “O’Connell,” *Liberator*, 18 August 1843; “Wesleyan Convention—Irish Repeal—Odd Fellowship,” *Liberator*, 23 June 1843. For other statements of support for Repeal, so long as it was carried out peacefully, see Thomas Davis to RDW, 12 June 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.33; Elizabeth Reid to Wendell Phillips, 26 September 1843, BAA, 196; Amasa Walker to RDW, 8 January 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.1.

August 1843, a few weeks before Quincy's editorial on Repeal was published, Webb wrote to Quincy to criticize "some very foolish high-go-mad remarks" that had appeared "in the *Liberator* about the cruelty and tyranny of England & c & c & c connected with the Repeal question." Both Rogers and Webb seemed to share Child's objection that the Garrisonian attraction to Irish Repeal reeked of politics, and, as Webb wrote, "politics and political efforts and politicians are full of unsoundness, and void of principle, and slaves of the Tyrant Expediency."⁴⁰

Those were the kinds of statements one might expect from Garrison, especially in 1843 at the dawning of disunionism. But it is telling that so many Garrisonians, even as they criticized third-party movements like the Liberty Party and urged abolitionists not to vote, were supportive of decidedly political movements on the other side of the Atlantic, like Chartism and Repeal. Rogers and Webb were exceptions to a rule of Garrisonian support for Repeal, on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, while Elizabeth Pease believed that the practicability of Repeal was open to question, "the right of the demand, I cannot see how any honest mind can deny." For most Garrisonians, the demands of the Repealers and the Chartists were both legitimate because both were popular movements struggling against a hostile aristocratic government. Even at the high tide of disunionism, they did not wash their hands of "politics" altogether: indeed, Webb, Rogers, and Child chastised Garrisonians who supported Repeal precisely because they viewed that support as political.

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⁴⁰ Pease to Weston, 27 January 1844, BAA, 211. See RDW to Edmund Quincy, 16 August 1843, BAA, 196; "O'Connell and Slavery," *Herald of Freedom*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 16 June 1843.

If the Garrisonians' support for Repeal suggests that their withdrawal from politics was not inflexible or facile, their exchanges with Repealers also help elucidate the meaning of their calls for "No Union with Slaveholders." Tense relations with Daniel O'Connell and American Repealers occupied significant column space in the *Liberator* in 1842 and 1843, but the other topic of debate that dominated Garrisonian discourse in these years was the disunion question. Those two issues were not as distinct as they might appear, for while discussing both issues side-by-side in the antislavery press, disunionists often took sideways glances at Repeal. Following their glances, I believe, can help us see disunionism differently.

Antislavery historians once saw Garrison's disunionism almost exclusively as a crusade for secession, inspired by perfectionism and a desire to maintain the moral purity of radical abolitionists. On this view, disunionism was simply an application of the logic of "come-outerism"—the idea that abolitionists should leave proslavery churches—to the nation as a whole. In an influential 1965 essay, John L. Thomas traced disunionism and the "come-outerism" of Garrisonians back to the "perfectionism" of John Humphrey Noyes—a utopian communalist whose views helped inspire Garrison's views on "non-resistance." He argued that it was the "perfectionist" wing of the abolition movement, "led by William Lloyd Garrison, [who] deserted politics for the principle of secession." In taking for their motto "No Union with Slaveholders," Thomas said, "the come-outer abolitionists ... sought an alternative to politics." Although that view of "disunion" as the apolitical outgrowth of "come-outerism" was criticized by historians in the 1970s and 1980s, it has recently been revived by John Stauffer, who follows Thomas explicitly in seeing Noyes as the immediate progenitor of Garrison's "disunionism." Both Thomas

and Stauffer also make little effort to conceal their belief that the disunionists' desertion of politics was an evasive maneuver, an abdication of responsible activism for the sake of preserving personal purity.⁴¹

There is no doubt that Garrisonians often described "disunion" as a moral duty whose object was to keep individual abolitionists pure. In one of his earliest editorials on disunion, Garrison told the "people of the North" to "demand the repeal of the Union, or the abolition of slavery—not as a THREAT, but as A MORAL OBLIGATION—as the performance of an imperative duty to clear your garments from pollution, and your souls from blood-guiltiness."⁴² Yet there are two problems facing the argument that disunion was only a product of moral perfectionism. First, there is the problem of timing. Garrison was exposed to Noyes's ideas in the mid-1830s, when they helped inspire him and some of his fellow abolitionists to form the New England Non-Resistance Society, yet it was another six years before he raised the banner of "the repeal of the Union" in the *Liberator*. The argument that disunionism was simply come-outerism writ large requires conflating Garrison's conversion to nonresistance with his conversion to disunionism, passing over the years that separated those turning points.⁴³

⁴¹ John L. Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865," *American Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (Winter 1965): 656-681, quoted on p. 661; Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men*, 19-20, 132-133. See also Thomas, *The Liberator*, 319-328. On John Humphrey Noyes and his influence on Garrison, see Perry, *Radical Abolitionism*, 63-69; Walters, *American Reformers*, 55-60; Robert David Thomas, *The Man Who Would Be Perfect: John Humphrey Noyes and the Utopian Impulse* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 146-66. Thomas says "the influence of Noyes upon Garrison's thinking has been vastly overrated by historians" (149n9). James Brewer Stewart draws the same conclusion in "Peaceful Hopes and Violent Experiences: The Evolution of Reforming and Radical Abolitionism, 1831-1837," *Civil War History* 17, no. 4 (1971): 293-309.

⁴² "Repeal of the Union," *Liberator*, 6 May 1842.

⁴³ E.g., Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men*, 115: "In the wake of the panic [of 1837], the perfectionist John Humphrey Noyes began to put into practice his sacred vision of community. *Simultaneously*, Garrison developed his doctrine of nonresistance and disunion" (emphasis added).

But the second and more serious problem with tracing Garrison's disunionism and nonresistance to the same source—perfectionism—is that it confuses those two positions as essentially the same. As Lewis Perry has argued, there were key differences between disunionism and nonresistance. Nonresistants held that *all* human governments were coercive and sinful; they thus urged individuals to “come out” from association with politics by disavowing voting. Yet Garrison's call for a repeal of *the* Union between the North and the South “made slavery a sectional issue,” as Perry notes, “and identified Northern governments with liberty.” Rather than attacking *all* governments, disunion indicted one government in particular—the Federal Union—and suggested that its dissolution would create a government unpolluted by slavery, a theoretical impossibility for thoroughgoing nonresistants. To that extent, “disunionism was political. ... [O]nly in the minds of political abolitionists and other critics of Garrisonism were disunionism and nonresistance thought of as synonymous.”⁴⁴

Garrison and his followers themselves seldom made that mistake. Indeed, some nonresistants believed that the new doctrine of disunionism betrayed their first principles. By 1843, Noyes himself began advising perfectionists to “come out” from among the Garrisonians, who had finally become caught up in politics through their advocacy of disunion. In January 1844, Rogers likewise confessed to Webb that he could not see how Garrison could be both a nonresistant and a disunionist. “I abhor everything political as instrumentalities in a moral enterprise like ours. Garrison is advocating the dissolution of our political Union. It is a thing our politicians alone can do. ... Garrison [is] holding, meantime, that voting at the polls, the incipient stage of [disunion], is unlawful.” Rogers

⁴⁴ Perry, *Radical Abolitionism*, 159-166. See also Lewis Perry, “Versions of Anarchism in the Antislavery Movement,” *American Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (Winter 1968): 773-74.

accepted Garrison's call for *personal* disunion from the "coercive influences" of politics. That was the "dictum of nonresistants." But it was incompatible with Garrison's calls for *political* disunion, Rogers said, which required an "act of suffrage at the polls. How W[illia]m Lloyd can advocate it, when he could not conscientiously take any part in it, I do not see."⁴⁵

Revealingly, Rogers even compared Garrison's calls for disunion to Irish Repeal, an openly political campaign that he opposed for the same reason: both were attempts to use political means to effect moral changes. In his letter to Webb he wrote that disunion was "as immaterial to our purpose, as Irish repeal is to your temperance movements." By the end of 1844, Rogers outdid Noyes in arguing that Garrisonian organizations were tainted with politics, a conclusion contributing to a painful break with his former friends. "Garrison holds politics a mortal sin," Rogers complained to Webb in the fall of 1844, "yet he fills his paper with the doings of politicians," and criticizes them "for not turning their *politics* to better account." If anyone followed "come-outer" logic to its ultimate conclusion, it was Rogers, who was actually propelled *away* from disunionism by his nonresistance, and finally felt forced by conscientious duty to "come out" of abolitionist "organizations" altogether.⁴⁶

In June 1842, Elizabeth Neall wrote to Elizabeth Pease that "the Dissolution Question is creating quite a stir among us. Garrison is accused of inconsistency in

⁴⁵ Nathaniel P. Rogers to RDW, 29 January 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.9. On Noyes's turn against Garrisonian organizations in 1843, see Perry, *Radical Abolitionism*, 69-70.

⁴⁶ Nathaniel P. Rogers to Richard D. Webb, 5 September 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.51; Perry, "Versions of Anarchism," 774-78. On the break between Rogers and the Garrisonians, see Friedman, *Gregarious Saints*, 59-61. See also RDW to MWC, 17 October 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.63; WLW to Henry C. Wright, 1 October 1844, LWLG, 3:266-67; WLW to RDW, 1 March 1845, LWLG, 3:285-88. Rogers's rejection of all "organizations" was denounced even by Noyes. See Thomas, *The Man Who Would Be Perfect*, 154-155.

upholding it because it is a Political Question.” Neall herself saw no inconsistency, but many historians have borne out the assessment that disunion was partly a “Political Question.” According to James Brewer Stewart, for example, Wendell Phillips did not believe that disunionism was exclusively a self-righteous way of fleeing from politics, but instead saw disunion as a “morally exacting political demand” that would also be an effective means of changing the law. Portents of disunion, as Stewart and others have also pointed out, also predated Garrison’s disunionism. Northern politicians were already arguing in the 1830s that the annexation of Texas would represent, or at least would risk, the dissolution of the Union.⁴⁷

Understanding disunionism as a “political demand” helps solve the problem of timing by placing its emergence squarely within the context of other events in 1842. On January 24, just four days before Garrisonians held the Faneuil Hall meeting to publicize the Irish Address, John Quincy Adams rose on the floor of the House of Representatives to read some antislavery petitions from his constituents, in violation of the so-called “gag rule” that Congress had passed to ban any petitions on the topic of slavery. Adams had protested the rule from its inception in 1836, so when Adams began to read a petition signed by forty-six residents of Haverhill, Massachusetts, there was nothing unusual about his act of civil disobedience. What was unusual about the Haverhill petition was that it entreated Congress to “immediately adopt measures peaceably to dissolve the Union of these States.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Stewart, *Wendell Phillips*, 117-145, quoted on p. 118. See also Stewart, *Holy Warriors*, 106, 113-114; Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal*, 129-145; Kraditor, *Means and Ends*, 196-217; Stewart, “Aims and Impact of Garrisonian Abolitionism,” 197-209.

⁴⁸ *Cong. Globe*, 27th Cong., 2nd Sess., 168 (1842). On the Haverhill petition as an “impetus” to Garrison’s calls for disunion, see Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal*, 130.

The Haverhill petition sent Southern Congressmen spinning into a two-week-long conniption. After Adams sat down, George Hopkins of Virginia rose to ask whether it would be in order to “burn the petition in the presence of the House.” Fellow Virginian Henry A. Wise made a motion that proved no less inflammatory, proposing the censure of Adams and any other Representative who “offered such a petition to this body.” For the next fortnight, business in House was brought to a standstill in the House by debates on whether to receive the Haverhill petition, on whether to censure Adams, and even on whether the “gag rule” was now causing more trouble than it was worth. Finally, on February 7, the debates on Adams’s censure were tabled and a motion simply to refuse the Haverhill petition was upheld.⁴⁹

The lessons of the intervening debates, however, were not lost on Southerners or on antislavery Northerners. In a climactic speech on January 25 and 26, Wise argued that the idea of dissolving the union was obviously a result of “foreign influence” from British abolitionists, who were using “English-American politicians” like Adams to provoke the downfall of the Union. A raving Wise intimated that Britain was training a black army in Jamaica or Canada to prepare for an invasion of the United States. He mentioned Joseph Sturge’s recent tour of the United States and the “World’s Anti-Slavery Convention” as proof that “there was [a] foreign conspiracy ... to effect a union between Abolitionists and dissolutionists in this country.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ See *Cong. Globe*, 27th Cong., 2nd Sess., 168-215 (1842), quotes on p. 168. See also William Lee Miller, *Arguing about Slavery: John Quincy Adams and the Great Battle in the United States Congress* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 429-444.

⁵⁰ *Cong. Globe*, 27th Cong., 2nd Sess., 170-174 (1842), quotes on pp. 170, 173. Wise’s theory that British and American abolitionists were conspiring to bring down the Union was offered in the context of the diplomatic imbroglio over Britain’s decision to free the slaves who had revolted on board the *Creole* in late 1841. See Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 108-111. Wise and likeminded alarmists also saw a connection between Adams’s presentation of the Haverhill petition and the issuing of Gerrit Smith’s

Wise was also evidently aware of news that an antislavery Address from Daniel O’Connell had recently arrived on American shores. “Let no American citizen ... fail to notice the coincidence of events,” he said. At the same time that “O’Connell was issuing his mandates to every Irishman in the United States ... to join the Abolition-English-American party,” a former president had submitted to Congress “a proposition to dissolve the Union.” On January 27, the day before the Faneuil Hall meeting where O’Connell’s “mandates” to Irish Americans were publicized, Joseph Underwood of Kentucky gave a speech echoing Wise’s view: the Haverhill petition augured an antislavery plot. As soon as the “bonds of this Union” were dissolved, “slavery was done in Kentucky, Maryland, and a large portion of Virginia,” since the Ohio River and the Mason and Dixon line would then beckon as foreign borders to which thousands of fugitive slaves could flee for freedom. “The dissolution of the Union,” Underwood concluded, “was the dissolution of slavery.”⁵¹

That line did not escape the notice of the *Liberator*, which printed reports on the House debates throughout February and March. On March 11, Garrison highlighted an excerpt from Underwood’s speech, with its “precious confessions” that dissolving the Union would end slavery. In February, at a meeting of the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society, he submitted resolutions calling for the “dissolution of the Union,” agreeing with Underwood that this meant the end of slavery. Ronald G. Walters has pointed out that these Essex resolutions were the first in which Garrison called explicitly for disunion, and in subsequent months, Garrison continued to trace his appeals for disunion back to the

Address to the Slaves in January. See “The Issue at Last—Disunion or Abolition,” *Washington Globe*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 25 February 1842; Stanley Harrold, *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 38-39.

⁵¹ *Cong. Globe*, 27th Cong., 2nd Sess., 171, 181 (1842).

uproar over the Haverhill petition. In April, after he had caused some uproar of his own with an editorial predicting that the AASS would be considering the disunion issue at its May meeting, Garrison cited Underwood again as proof that the end of the Union meant the end of slavery.⁵²

The howls of protest that greeted the Haverhill petition convinced Garrisonians that calls for disunion might be effective means of securing abolition, because they forced Southerners to a recognition that they had no choice: either the South would agree to the abolition of slavery within the Union, or disunion would effect the abolition of slavery anyway by removing its only support. “The only question is,” said Garrison, “is the Union that which guards, nourishes and perpetuates slavery and without which the infernal system would be overthrown? I affirm that it is—that the time has come for the enforcement of this startling truth upon the consciences of the people.” At the same time that Garrison defended disunion as a way to keep Northern consciences free of guilt, he and other Garrisonians were also arguing that it was an expedient yet uncompromising way to end slavery. As Walters puts it, the “disunionist abolitionists did not feel they were buying personal righteousness at the expense of political effectiveness.” Since the

⁵² “Dissolution of the Union,” *Liberator*, 11 March 1842. On the Essex County resolutions, see “Meeting of Essex County A.S. Society,” *Liberator*, 25 February 1842; Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal*, 180, n.2. For Garrison’s editorial predicting the discussion of disunion at the next AASS meeting, see “The Annual Meeting at New-York.” For his defenses of his editorial, which set off controversies among Garrisonians, see “Repeal of the Union,” *Liberator*, 6 May 1842 (which quotes Underwood again); WLG to Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society, 9 May 1842, LWLG, 3:71-72; “Repeal of the Union,” *Liberator*, 13 May 1842. Garrison reported on the “tremendous excitement in Congress” in WLG to Richard D. Webb, 27 February 1842, LWLG, 3:52. For reports in the *Liberator* on the efforts to censure Adams, see all four of the February issues and the first two March issues. For an extended Garrisonian argument connecting the Haverhill petition to disunionism, see *Eleventh Annual Report*, 4-10.

South's own leaders admitted that disunion meant abolition, there were "bits of political wisdom concealed in the lurid rhetoric of disunionism."⁵³

A picture of disunionism as a political, rather than just a perfectionist demand, becomes even sharper when we compare disunionism to Irish Repeal. The Garrisonians invited such comparisons, as I have already suggested, by describing their new slogan as a call for the "repeal of the Union." Throughout the spring and summer of 1842, while also trying to convince Irish Americans that it was impossible to be a Repealer without being an abolitionist, Garrisonians often referred to what Neall called the "Dissolution Question" as the "great question of a repeal of the Union"—to take an example from one of Garrison's letters to his brother-in-law. From the other side of the Atlantic, Richard Allen echoed that he had been enjoying Garrison's "heart-burning articles on the repeal of the American Union."⁵⁴

But by now it was necessary for Allen to specify *which* repeal he meant, since for an Irishman the phrase "repeal of the Union" already had a clear connotation. In fact, it was not until after Garrison's April 1842 editorial, which formally urged abolitionists to make "the REPEAL OF THE UNION between the North and the South, [their] grand rallying point," that the *Liberator* began using the term "*Irish* Repeal" in headlines for stories about O'Connell's campaign. Before 1842, "Repeal of the Union" referred to only one thing for most readers on both sides of the Atlantic: O'Connell's movement for

⁵³ "Repeal of the Union," *Liberator*, 13 May 1842; Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal*, 130-31. See also "Dissolution of the Union," *Liberator*, 26 December 1845.

⁵⁴ WLG to George W. Benson, 13 May 1842, LWLG, 3:74; "Letter from Richard Allen," *Liberator*, 1 July 1842. For other examples of disunionism being called "repeal," see previously cited editorials in the *Liberator* with that headline, and "The Union," *Tocsin of Liberty*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 20 May 1842; "The Union," *Vermont Telegraph*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 24 June 1842; "This Slaveholding Union," *Liberator*, 5 August 1842, "Repeal!," *Herald of Freedom*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 14 June 1844; and also Garrison's 1843 "Address to the Slaves," printed in Harrold, *Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism*, 178.

the restoration of Ireland's Parliament. After 1842, however, that movement was often denoted in the *Liberator's* headlines as "Irish Repeal," partly to distinguish it from news and views about disunion. Garrison surely knew readers would do a double take when they saw a headline in the *Liberator* about a "Repeal of the Union." (Was this a story referring to the Irish Address and O'Connell? Or was it referring to disunionism and the Haverhill petition?)⁵⁵

In March, the month after the reception of the Irish Address and the month before Garrison wrote his first editorials on disunion, he linked the two Repeals more explicitly, proving that he was aware of the double meaning in that word. In a personal letter, later published in the *Liberator*, he wrote that he was "for the repeal of the union between England and Ireland, because it is not founded in equity, because it is not a blessing, but a visible curse to the Emerald Isle." He added, suggestively, that "on the same ground, and for the same reason, I am for the repeal of the union between the North and the South." A few days later, in a letter signed "yours for the repeal of the union between freedom and despotism, the world over," Garrison wrote that, "I avow myself to be both an Irish Repealer and an American Repealer. I go for the repeal of the union between the North and the South."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Quote taken from "The Annual Meeting at New-York." A search for the term "Irish Repeal" in the *Liberator* prior to March 1842 turns up only one result, despite around 200 references to "O'Connell" or "Ireland" from January 1839 through February 1842. Part of this discrepancy can be explained by the fact that O'Connell's Repeal movement picked up steam in 1842 and 1843, and therefore appeared more often in the press. But the LNRA was founded in 1840, and O'Connell had already been vocally calling for Repeal in 1839. Between March 1842 and December 1848, there were 43 references to "Irish Repeal" in the *Liberator*, out of nearly 200 references to the "repeal" of a "Union." These estimates are drawn from searches conducted in the *Liberator* in the American Periodical Series Online, published by ProQuest.

⁵⁶ WLG to Abel Brown, 18 March 1842, LWLG, 3:56-7; WLG to George W. Benson, 22 March 1842, LWLG, 3:62. The letter to Brown was published under "The Irish Address on American Slavery," *Liberator*, 8 April 1842.

What did Garrisonians recognize in Irish Repeal that was similar to “American Repeal”? It is difficult to draw specific parallels between the two causes, because one of the first things they shared was a lack of specificity. Just as many American abolitionists were unsure exactly what Garrisonians meant by disunion, many observers on both sides of the ocean were uncertain about exactly what O’Connell meant by the “repeal” of the Act of Union of 1800. Lewis Tappan wrote to O’Connell in August 1843, expressing regret that he had been unable to come to Ireland during a recent trip across the Atlantic. Tappanites also admired O’Connell, but noted that many Americans were confused about “precisely what you are aiming to accomplish, that is, what specific acts you claim” from Great Britain. The always skeptical Webb suspected that most Repealers were just as confused, and doubted even O’Connell could “define the Constitution of Ireland if Repeal were attained tomorrow.” Even Richard Allen, who was much less hostile to Repeal than Webb, similarly confessed to Wendell Phillips in June 1842, “This Irish Repeal is with me a puzzling question.”⁵⁷

Puzzlement about the precise goals of the Irish Repeal movement persists even among historians. As K. Theodore Hoppen writes, in words that could just as readily be applied to Garrison’s calls for a repeal of the American Union, the “actual concept of repeal combined bouts of detailed precision ... with large tracts of vague ambiguity.” But one reason O’Connell remained vague was because his calls for Repeal were mainly strategic rallying cries, designed less to achieve the abolition of the Act of Union than to force England to reform its government of Ireland. O’Connell had been opposed to the

⁵⁷ Lewis Tappan to Daniel O’Connell, 15 August 1843, in O’Connell, *Correspondence*, 7:219; RDW to MWC, 1 August 1844, 224; Richard Allen to Wendell Phillips, 11 June 1842, HU, bMS Am 1953 (201). See also RDW to Edmund Quincy, 16 August 1843, BAA, 192: “Thou art desirous to know what we mean to do *when* we repeal the Union. I do not know—nor do I believe does anybody else.”

Union with England since 1801, but after 1829 he also proved willing to work within the constitutional union to achieve reform in Ireland without Repeal.⁵⁸

Willing, that is, until he became convinced that such reform could not be achieved without popular pressure. Much like the Chartists, O'Connellites were motivated in part by disillusionment with the progress made by the Whig Parliaments that followed the Reform Act of 1832. Immediately after that Act, Parliament had passed an Irish Reform Act whose property qualifications for suffrage and office holding were higher than those in England, which seemed merely to reinforce the power of Protestant landowners whom the Union had been designed to protect in the first place. Moreover, one of the first acts of the Reformed Parliament was a new set of Coercive Laws in Ireland intended to stifle popular agitation. In 1833, alarmed by such illiberal measures, O'Connell presented a Repeal bill to the House of Commons.⁵⁹

But that proposal was resoundingly defeated, helping to convince O'Connell that his best political option was to ally with Whigs in Parliament to address issues of concern to Irish Members—high land rents and unemployment in the Irish countryside, tithes paid to the Church of Ireland, and the civil disabilities that Catholics still suffered from. In 1834, in the so-called Litchfield Compact, O'Connell aligned his cadre of Irish Members in the House of Commons with the Whig Party. For the next six years, he muted talk of

⁵⁸ K. Theodore Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800: Conflict and Conformity*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1999), 30.

⁵⁹ For the following account of O'Connell's Repeal movement, I have relied on Kevin B. Nowlan, "The Meaning of Repeal in Irish History," in *Historical Studies IV: Papers Read before the Fifth Irish Conference of Historians*, ed. G. A. Hayes-McCoy (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1963), 1-17; Nowlan, *The Politics of Repeal: A Study in the Relations between Great Britain and Ireland, 1841-1850* (London: Routledge, 1965); Oliver MacDonagh, "O'Connell and Repeal, 1840-1845," in *High and Low Politics in Modern Britain: Ten Studies*, ed. Michael Bentley and John Stevenson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 4-27; Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal Year* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1966); Hoppen, "Riding a Tiger," 121-143; D. George Boyce, *Ireland 1828-1923: From Ascendancy to Democracy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 1-29; Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2-14.

Repeal. This alliance with Whigs was not just a marriage of convenience, for O’Connell was a genuine liberal and reformer who favored many of the policies promulgated by Whigs and independent liberals in Parliament. But when successive governments failed to deliver improvements in Irish rule, and instead passed controversial Irish Poor Laws and municipal reforms that O’Connell opposed, he revived old calls for Repeal. And he became even more insistent after 1841, when the Tories regained control of the House and the number of Irish Members whom O’Connell could count on for votes dwindled to no more than a dozen and a half.

Even when O’Connell formed the LNRA in 1840, however, his professed goal was to force concessions to Ireland by Parliament. He frequently framed his calls for Repeal as a kind of political ultimatum. “If we get the justice we require,” he said, “then our Repeal association is at an end, but,” he hastened to add, “I know we will not get that justice.” Such rhetoric suggests to historian Kevin Nowlan that O’Connell saw Repeal “not as an absolute necessity but as the most likely means of achieving justice and good government” for Ireland. His methods for pressing the demand for Repeal were similar to those he had used to force Catholic emancipation; indeed, the Repeal Association was in many respects a reincarnation of the earlier Catholic Association. By holding what he called “monster meetings” throughout 1843, O’Connell tried to use extraparliamentary pressure and popular mobilization to grease the gears of change within Parliament. That pragmatic aspect of O’Connell’s demands for Repeal is perhaps best revealed by the fact that towards the end of 1843, even at the height of the year-long sequence of “monster meetings” he called the “Repeal Year,” O’Connell was willing to consider a “federal”

compromise which would restore the Irish Parliament but maintain the sovereignty of the London Parliament.⁶⁰

In short, O’Connell’s appeal to England, even during the Repeal Year, was not always the simple demand for “Repeal.” Implicitly, he was making a conditional and calculated demand: Reform *or else* Repeal. That was the way Pease explained the Repeal movement in a letter Anne Warren Weston in January 1844, by which time O’Connell was in jail on charges of sedition: “if Ireland had been put, in all respects, on the same footing as England,” Pease wrote, then O’Connell might have agreed to something less than Repeal. But Pease explained that Reform and Catholic emancipation had not placed Ireland and England on equal footing, and only exacerbated Irish ills. “I remember hearing [O’Connell] say in 1838, that it was not repeal but Justice he wanted, but found he could not obtain the one without agitating for the other.”⁶¹

Many Garrisonians saw their own calls for a repeal of the American Union in the same way—as conditional demands rather than as absolute necessities. In May 1844, as the AASS adopted disunionism as its official watchword, Edward M. Davis wrote from Philadelphia to Wendell Phillips expressing his hope that the people of both the North and the South would “yet come to acknowledge our principles ... enough to influence the action of those who make & change our laws.” As a result, he added, he did “not see that the North & South must have separate governments.” On the one hand, if it were in his power to do so, he would break up the national compact the very next day. But at the same time, he did not think such actual disunion likely or even possible as a result of the

⁶⁰ Nowlan, “Meaning of Repeal,” 4-5, O’Connell quoted on p. 5. On the pragmatic dimensions of O’Connell’s movement, see also Kevin B. Nowlan, “O’Connell and Irish Nationalism,” in Nowlan and O’Connell, *Daniel O’Connell*, 13; Jackson, *Home Rule*, 14.

⁶¹ Elizabeth Pease to Anne Warren Weston, 27 January 1844, BAA, 211.

abolitionists' efforts. The main objective of calling for disunion, in Davis's mind, was therefore to render it unnecessary. "For altho' we cry out 'dissolution' because we are involved in the guilt of slave holding, yet I believe our arguments for dissolution will erradicate [sic] the evil of slavery," and then, "will not our government be a free one and our compact a just one?"⁶²

In 1846, even Garrison underlined the pragmatic, political dimension of his calls for disunion while in England. At one public breakfast, he answered a series of questions about his positions on voting and disunionism by explaining that these positions were intended mainly for the "consternation" of the South. Southerners "knew right well that the dissolution of the Union was the dissolution of slavery," Garrison said, again alluding to Underwood's 1842 declaration. By placing pressure on the South, abolitionists could therefore force them to the recognition that abolition was inevitable. "He did not think, however, that it would be necessary to dissolve the Union. The Southern States, when they found the abolitionists determined, and that they had no choice but emancipation or dissolution, would say the time had come for the abolition of slavery, and let their slaves go free." As in O'Connell's case, then, Garrison was calling for a particular reform or, *failing that*, a repeal of the Union. Disunionism, like Repeal, was intended as a means of popular pressure. What was necessary was not repeal, but persuasive determination on the part of the abolitionists.⁶³

⁶² Edward M. Davis to Wendell Phillips, 27 May 1844, HU, bMS Am 1953 (471/1). See also Davis to Phillips, 21 May 1844, in the same folder.

⁶³ "Breakfast to Garrison and Thompson," *Liberator*, 27 November 1846. As late as 1860, Garrison was still using Underwood's argument to show that Southerners knew disunion meant abolition. "Speeches at the Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society," *Liberator*, 1 June 1860.

Other Garrisonians agreed with that analysis of the purpose of arguments for a repeal of the Union. Henry Clarke Wright posed the alternatives starkly in his journal: “*Dissolution of the Union, or the Abolition of Slavery.*” In a letter to the *Liberator*, Wright praised the tactic of sending “thousands of petitions” to Congress that would, like the Haverhill letter, “make a right and effectual issue with the South, and [would] say— ‘*Release us from all support of slavery, or we dissolve the Union.*’” Garrison’s first editorial on disunion, published a week before that letter, proposed that “REPEAL OF THE UNION” should be the primary demand “until it be accomplished, or slavery cease to pollute our soil.”⁶⁴

The “either/or” shape of Garrisonian calls for disunion is often overlooked, but it is important to stress that even Wright and Garrison, both non-resistants, began by framing disunion as one horn of a practical dilemma, not as the only possibility for the resolution of America’s problem of slavery. The *Tocsin of Liberty*, an Albany paper still sympathetic to the Garrisonians in 1842, likewise said that “we are no advocate for an *unconditional* repeal of the Union, but if slavery is to be perpetuated in this free republic ... we should go for *repeal*. But our hope is yet, that slavery will be overcome without so great a sacrifice as such a repeal would be.” Such locutions, riddled with extenuating “buts,” were typical of Garrisonian calls for disunion and were mixed in with rhetoric that made disunion a moral duty. In May 1842, at a New England convention called to consider disunion resolutions, Garrison submitted resolutions he had drafted in February that cast disunion as a moral duty. But at the same meeting, Wright proposed wording to the effect that abolitionists should “persist in urging a dissolution of the Union,” at least

⁶⁴ Wright’s Journals (HU), XLVIII, 51 (28 March 1842); “The Only Alternative—Dissolution of the Union, or the Abolition of Slavery”; “The Annual Meeting at New-York.”

“so long as the South persists in slaveholding,” because that was “one of the most efficient means” to abolish slavery.⁶⁵

Both Garrison’s and Wright’s resolutions were eventually laid on the table by the Convention, a sign that disunionists were not always in perfect agreement about what disunion meant. What is clear, at least, is that some Garrisonians saw disunion as an “efficient means” for influencing Americans to abolish slavery, a view strengthened by the prognostications of slaveholders themselves. In January 1843, the MASS ultimately adopted a resolution, drafted by Garrison, calling the “compact which exists between the North and the South ... ‘a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell.’” But that wording was passed only after debate on another resolution presented by William A. White, who embarked later that year on a western lecture tour for the AASS. White’s wording argued, more circuitously, “that no abolitionist can consistently demand less than a repeal of so much of the Union between the North and South as supports the system of slavery, and, provided this repeal cannot be effected, should demand a repeal of the Union itself.”⁶⁶

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Garrison’s descriptions of the Union as a “covenant with death,” have tended to catch the eye of historians, as they did his contemporaries. But it is worth emphasizing that they existed alongside, and did not always displace, more pragmatic descriptions of “repeal.” As late as the spring of 1845, for instance, a “Disunion Pledge” printed in the

⁶⁵ “The Union,” *Tocsin of Liberty*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 20 May 1842; “New-England Anti-Slavery Convention,” *Liberator*, 3 June 1842. See also Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, 3:57-8; William Smeal to MWC, 21 March 1848, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.24.9; and a letter to the editor endorsing Garrison’s slogan as “ABOLITION or DISSOLUTION.” (“Dissolution of the Union,” *Liberator*, 20 May 1842).

⁶⁶ *Eleventh Annual Report*, 94.

Liberator made the usual claim that disunion was a way to “clear our skirts from innocent blood,” but in the same lines, the “Pledge” asserted that a “peaceable dissolution of the Union” was the “most consistent, feasible means of abolishing slavery.” While it is tempting to see disunionism merely as an expression of self-righteous perfectionism, Garrisonian discourses on disunion had room both for spectacular prophecies of guilt and judgment and for more pragmatic arguments, which depicted disunionism as a means of securing the abolition of slavery.⁶⁷

The pragmatic strain in disunionism stands in starker relief if we remember the Garrisonians’ strong support for Irish Repeal, a support they expressed at the same time, sometimes in the same breath, as demands for a “repeal of the Union” between North and South. By comparing “disunionism” to “Repeal,” Garrisonians could upbraid O’Connell when he seemed to falter *and* defend their unpopular strategy of disunionism by comparing it to O’Connell’s very popular strategy of demanding the Repeal of Union with England. In some respects, if not in every respect, disunionism was expressed in language that was similar to the language of Irish Repeal, a language that posed the repeal of union as an unwanted but unavoidable prospect—unavoidable, that is, *unless* and *until* English Whigs and Tories (or American Whigs and Democrats) acceded to the cries of popular opinion for liberty and justice.

Because of such similarities between Irish Repeal and disunion, Edmund Quincy argued in a September 1843 article in the *Liberator* that the abolitionists welcomed the founding of Repeal societies in the United States. When Repealers gave speeches, held monster meetings for Ireland, organized societies, and urged Parliament to give justice to

⁶⁷ “Disunion Pledge,” *Liberator*, 27 June 1845.

the Emerald Island, Quincy said, Garrisonians had no objection. “All this abolitionists like,” since “the removal of an existing wrong by the force of the public sentiment of the enslaved world” was “precisely their own line of policy.” The “measures” of Repealers were “excellent,” insofar “as their machinery of organization and agitation is concerned.” It was thus inconsistent for supporters of Irish Repeal in the United States to denounce abolitionists as traitors, Quincy said, since Repealers used “the same instrumentalities for the subversion of the domestic institutions of Great Britain, and the dissolution of her glorious Union with Ireland, which they denounce as fanatical and unreasonable when used by their own countrymen, or by Englishmen, for the destruction of slavery.” Indeed, abolitionism and Repeal were “precisely analogous in principle—distinguishable from each other only by the gulf which separates political disabilities from the conversion of a man into a beast of draught.” That last phrase indicated that the limits of Garrisonian analogies with Irish Repeal were the same as the limits on their analogies with Chartism: they continued to maintain that chattel slavery was a unique form of oppression. But they could admit parallels between abolitionism and movements against political oppression. Repeal and disunionism, for instance, were “precisely analogous” in that both tried to force political change by mobilizing popular appeals for the repeal of political unions.⁶⁸

Both movements also failed. In 1843, Robert Peel, leader of the Tories in London and O’Connell’s arch-foe in the 1820s, banned the “monster meetings” that O’Connellites had continued to organize on behalf of Repeal. In a rousing speech replying to rumors that these bans were being contemplated, O’Connell vowed that “unless they gag me, I WILL FIND THE MEANS OF SPEAKING TO IRELAND.” His

⁶⁸ “The Irish Repeal Movement,” *Liberator*, 8 September 1843.

allusion to a “gag” was not accidental; he went on to say that the contemporaneous gag rule in the United States House of Representatives was analogous to Tory suppression of Repeal: “I will tell Sir Robert Peel where he may find a suggestion for his bill. In the American Congress ... they have passed a law, that the house shall not receive any petitions from slaves, nor any petitions on behalf of slaves, even though the petitioners be freemen.” Sarcastically, O’Connell suggested that Peel take “that act ... for his model, when he is framing his bill for coercion for the Irish people.”⁶⁹ Some abolitionists similarly viewed the struggle for Irish Repeal as analogous to their own struggle, when the use of the “gag rule” to stifle the Haverhill petition was only one sign among many that their Union was also an instrument of coercion.

Of course, the Garrisonians’ analogies, like O’Connell’s, were rarely sustained or careful attempts to compare the two movements: they were rhetorical gambits, particularly useful in trying to prevent a political alignment between proslavery Democrats and Irish Americans. If Garrisonians or Repealers had tried to systematically compare “Irish” and “American” Repeal, they easily could have found as many contrasts as resemblances, if not many more. On the most general level, however, and from the vantage point of hindsight, it is possible to see that in 1842 and 1843, disunionists in the United States and Repealers in Ireland were struggling with similar questions, even if the movements were different.

For instance, both movements raised the question of what constituted political ties between people or states, and both answered that question by essentially saying that such political bonds had no existence outside of written constitutions and compacts. Repealers

⁶⁹ *Speech of O’Connell, In reference to a reported Declaration of the Ministry, that Coercive Measures would be used to suppress the Repeal Agitation* ([n.p.], 1843), Broadside, Boston Public Library Rare Books and Manuscripts, CAB 24.24.1, folder 9.

and disunionists both believed, therefore, that dissolving political associations did not require revolution; it was as simple as revoking a law. To O'Connell, repealing the union meant repealing the *Act of Union*, which would cause political relations between England and Ireland to revert to the status quo ante Union. For disunionists, dissolving the United States was as simple as repealing the Constitution. In an 1845 letter to peace activist Elihu Burritt, who opposed disunion, Garrison explained, "The American Union is but another name for the American Constitution. There was no such Union until the adoption of that Constitution; and the repeal or abrogation of the latter will be the dissolution of the former." While Garrison usually spoke of a "Repeal of the Union," he could just as easily have referred to the "Repeal of the Constitution," as he did in one headline printed over some 1846 disunion resolutions.⁷⁰

Viewed from an oblique angle, the Garrisonians' contempt for the Constitution as a "covenant with death" actually conveyed profound respect for paper constitutions, since it identified political arrangements with written charters. Both disunionists and Repealers saw legal charters—whether the federal Constitution or the Act of Union—as binding but voluntary, sovereign but not sacrosanct. Garrisonians often stressed that the Constitution was a "*voluntary compact*," which was why, as Henry Wright put it, "it is option[al] with us to belong to the Union or not." At other times, however, Garrisonians argued that the original Constitution had not been a truly voluntary compact, since it did not have the consent of the enslaved and since the Constitutional Convention itself was dominated by slaveholding interests. The document was thus a dead letter, susceptible to annulment. O'Connell sometimes made a similar argument about the Union of 1801. As Pease

⁷⁰ WLG to Elihu Burritt, 16 July 1845, LWLG, 3:301; "Repeal of the Constitution," *Liberator*, 6 February 1846.

explained to Anne Warren Weston, “O’Connell contends that [the Union] was not a *compact*, because it was obtained by force & bribery—therefore it is *not binding*, & that no union, save the mere act of parliament, has ever existed, else there w[oul]d have been an identification of the inhabitants of both, in political rights & privileges.” While the Garrisonians and O’Connell were adapting their arguments to their unique contexts, it is clear that they were circling similar questions in 1842 and 1843: How were political ties constituted by paper compacts? What made those compacts binding? And what justified repealing them? Both were developing an idea of the nation as a voluntary community based on a fragile consensus. Far from being inherent, membership in the national Union was, as Wright said, strictly optional.⁷¹

Garrisonians’ comparisons between disunionism and Repeal were products of a particular moment—a moment that was created by the particular convergence of events in 1842 and 1843: the Haverhill petition, the Irish Address and its aftermath, the Repeal Year and O’Connell’s arrest, and the heyday of Garrisonian correspondence with Irish abolitionists. In subsequent years, Garrisonians referred less and less to disunion with the word “repeal,” and referred more and more to disunion as a moral duty. Their critiques of the Constitution also became shriller as the apparent strength of the Slave Power seemed only to grow in the 1840 and 1850s. Garrisonians upped the ante by muting previously pragmatic aspects of their calls for “repeal,” and in 1854, famously, Garrison would do to a copy of the Constitution what George Hopkins had wanted to do to the Haverhill petition twelve years earlier: he burned it publicly. Earlier pleas for the

⁷¹ Wright’s Journals (HU), vol. 48, 51 (28 March 1842); Elizabeth Pease to Anne Warren Weston, 27 January 1844, BAA, 212. On the Union as a compact that was tainted from the beginning, and therefore void, see Stewart, *Wendell Phillips*, 124; Wendell Phillips, *The Constitution a Proslavery Compact: or, Extracts from the Madison Papers*, 3rd ed. (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1856).

abolition of slavery *or* the dissolution of the Union went up in smoke as well, as many of the Garrisonians increasingly stressed the moral imperative of withdrawing from a blood-soaked and slavery-cursed Union.

But while it is hard to look away from Garrison's pyrotechnics in 1854, focusing only on those later aspects of disunionism creates a distorted view of its actual origins, and encourages an intellectual genealogy of disunionism that is both chronologically and intellectually implausible. That genealogy identifies a single ancestor for disunionism—the rigid and puritanical creed of “come-outer” perfectionism. Yet this explanation of disunionism's origins always has a difficult time explaining the evolution of disunionism after the start of the Civil War, when many Garrisonians who once called for disunion themselves vilified Southern secessionists as traitors and justified Republican efforts to hold the Union together.

By October 1861, Garrison could be heard arguing that the disunionist slogan had always been intended primarily as a rhetorical tool to arrest the attention of the nation, not a statement of disloyalty. If we understand the origins of disunionism solely as a principled byproduct of perfectionism, it is hard to understand that turn towards unionism as anything but equivocation. John L. Thomas, surveying this supposed volte-face in his 1963 biography of Garrison, exclaims, skeptically, “From Christian anarchy Garrisonism had been miraculously converted into a respectable theory of constitutional reform!” Without minimizing the distance that Garrisonians had traveled between 1842 and 1861, or dismissing the irreducible inconsistency of much of their rhetoric, this chapter at least suggests that the development of disunionism into support for the Union does not have to be explained by an appeal to miracles. Perhaps instead we can see the congenital ties

between Irish Repeal and disunionism as a missing link in the evolution of Garrisonian thought about the Union.⁷²

Indeed, perhaps the key difference between 1842 and 1861 was not that Garrison and his fellow disunionists had changed their minds, but that Southerners had changed theirs. In the 1842 debates over the Haverhill petition, Southern politicians had averred that slavery depended on the Union, and that the dissolution of the latter would spell the demise of the former. That confession directly inspired the Garrisonians' confidence that they could use popular demands for a "repeal of the union" much like O'Connell was using similar demands in Ireland—in an attempt to force political change in Congress from outside its walls. The secession winter of 1860 and 1861, however, proved that the South no longer saw the Union as essential for the preservation of slavery, which made the strategy of antislavery disunionists suddenly moot. When asked about his change of mind about the Union in the 1860s, Garrison sometimes said that when he called the Constitution a covenant with death and an agreement with hell, he had "no idea that [he] would live to see death and hell secede." It is possible to view that reply as disingenuous, but it suggests a point worth considering: that the key difference between Garrisonian strategy in 1842 and 1861 was not a fundamental difference in the way that disunionists saw the Union, but in the way the South did. Once the union had been repealed, calls for its repeal obviously no longer had the rhetorical force they once had in 1842. It was time for a change of tactic.⁷³

⁷² Thomas, *The Liberator*, 412.

⁷³ Garrison quoted in Mayer, *All on Fire*, 531.

PART III
BECOMING PATRIOTS

Chapter 6

The Abolition of Nations

Garrisonians had been accused of lacking patriotism from the 1830s onward. But once they began to call in the 1840s for the dissolution of the national Union, that charge was leveled with more intensity than ever before. Even Northerners inclined to think that slavery was wrong could not accept Garrisonian disunionism, which not only threatened the United States in particular, but also implied that all nations could be dissolved on a whim. In 1845, Wright asked God to speed not only “the abolition of slavery” and the disunion of North and South, but also the abolition of “every National Organization on earth. . . . I long to see them all blotted from existence.” Anti-abolitionists viewed such statements with horror, especially since many believed, in direct contrast to Wright, that God was responsible for the existence of nations. In 1847, George Putnam, a minister in Roxbury, Massachusetts, argued in a sermon that nations were “of divine appointment.” “National compacts or societies are not arbitrary or artificial,” he said, and to call for the dissolution of the nation just because it had flaws was a form of “ultraism” bordering on blasphemy. Putnam advised radical abolitionists who could not love the Union to leave the country. Perhaps then they would see that all nations had flaws, and that “patriotism and religion are not antagonist sentiments.”¹

But ironically, at the same time that critics like Putnam were charging Garrisonian disunionists with a lack of patriotism, some abolitionists were arguing that the doctrine of

¹ Wright’s Journals (BPL), vol. 32, 74 (19 June 1845); George Putnam, *God and Our Country: A Discourse Delivered in the First Congregational Church in Roxbury, on Fast Day, April 8, 1847* (Boston: Crosby and Nichols, 1847), 8, 17-18, 29.

disunion was too nationalistic. James S. Gibbons, who doubted the wisdom of disunion, believed that Garrison's calls for separation with the South veiled a kind of special love for the North that Garrison would have otherwise disdained. "My friend Garrison," he wrote in an open letter to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in May 1842, "thou seemest to forget thy glorious motto—the largest on the anti-slavery list—'My country is the world, my countrymen are all mankind.' What, to thee, are map-lines and latitudes? They cannot dissolve a single moral obligation, nor make it easier to serve thy fellow-man; but they may throw friendly people into beligerent [sic] attitudes." For all of Garrison's opposition to national jealousies, Gibbons implied, disunionism gained its rhetorical leverage by stirring up such jealousies and elevating New England above the South as a superior country.²

Still other abolitionists criticized Garrison not for his disunionism, but for his apparent sympathy with nationalist movements like Irish Repeal. Rogers and Webb were critical of Garrison's paeans to O'Connell precisely because they believed that Repealers were narrow patriots, concerned merely for Ireland's freedom but not for the freedom of the world. Rogers described O'Connell's movement as an agitation for the "repeal of the political connexion between two islands in the ocean." Garrison's aim was nobler and more cosmopolitan, because his aim was to give "liberty to the slave, and his agitations are irrespective of channels of water, of nations, or of hemispheres. 'His country is the world—his countrymen are all mankind.'" Webb agreed in a letter to Chapman that Repeal "has no moral dignity to arrest the attention of the Philanthropist, the Patriot, or

² J. S. Gibbons, "Dissolution of the Union," *NASS*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 13 May 1842.

the Christian,” especially one who “would look on the world as his home & all men as brothers.”³

Garrisonians clearly agreed about the importance of “Our Country is the World,” which Gibbons called the “*largest [motto] on the antislavery list.*” As debates about disunion and Repeal showed, however, there was still confusion about precisely what that motto meant. Garrisonians knew that it set them at odds with people like Putnam. But did the reformer who looked on the world as his home have to advocate, as Wright did, the abolition of *all* “National Organizations,” or just the dissolution of nations founded on the institution of slavery? Clearly, as Gibbons suggested, the reformer whose country was the world would not intentionally stir up hostilities between nations. But did that mean Garrisonians could not even acknowledge “map-lines” and “latitudes” as borders of national sovereignty? Or did “Our Country is the World” simply mean, as Rogers and Webb implied, that Garrisonians only called for the dissolution of national unions to vindicate a universal principle?

If there were not clear answers to these questions in the early 1840s, that was because Garrisonian ideas about patriotism and world citizenship were still developing. But gradually, as I have suggested in the Introduction, Garrisonians were moving from a generic critique of nations and patriotism to more refined concepts like civic nationalism and cosmopolitan patriotism. While they often seemed to be describing patriotism as bad at all times and in all forms, in reality they were usually trying to specify *when* patriotism was vicious and *what* true patriotism was. Likewise, although some Garrisonians seemed

³ N. P. Rogers, “Daniel O’Connell,” *Herald of Freedom*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 22 September 1843; RDW to MWC, 3 July 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.35. See also “Gorgeous Sketch of O’Connell, and the Tara Meeting,” in *Collection from the Writings of Nathaniel Peabody Rogers*, 270-71.

to oppose all “National Organizations,” in reality they were trying to define what nations were and when allegiance to them was justified.

By looking closely at two Garrisonians—Richard Webb and Henry Wright—in the 1840s, this chapter follows some key Garrisonian ideas about nations and patriotism as they took shape. Webb and Wright were two of the Garrisonians most likely to denounce nations and patriotism. But as we will see, even in the 1840s they began to carve out intellectual space for a legitimate kind of nationalism and a corresponding kind of patriotism.

Webb, for instance, initially opposed the Irish Repeal movement precisely because it seemed too nationalistic, too driven by a narrow and irrational love for country and too neglectful of weightier matters like justice and religious liberty. In 1840, when Garrison and Rogers prepared for their trip to Dublin after the “World’s Convention,” Webb warned them that “every man [in Dublin] is a patriot, and enacts his patriotism” by “oppress[ing] his neighbour.”⁴ But when O’Connell was arrested in late 1843 by royal officials, precipitating a schism in the Repeal movement between loyalists to O’Connell and a more radical group of nationalists known as “Young Ireland,” Webb began to feel the stirrings of patriotism himself. As Webb reflected on why he felt sympathy for the imprisoned O’Connell while opposing the designs of “Young Ireland,” a nascent distinction emerged in his writings between good patriotism and bad patriotism. And that distinction, embryonic and ill defined though it was, corresponded to another distinction emerging in Webb’s mind, between nations founded on collective assent to shared liberal

⁴ RDW to WLG, 23 July 1840, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.9.79.

principles, and nations founded on ethnic identity, religious traditions, and collective historical memories.

Wright's thinking about nations and nationalism showed glimmers of the same distinction in the 1840s, when he spent five years in Europe lecturing on non-resistance, free trade, and abolitionism. Wright spent most of this time in Britain, but when his health deteriorated towards the end of 1843, he traveled to a water cure establishment in Austria to recuperate and spent eight months on the Continent. From Europe, Wright wrote scores of letters to Garrison for publication in the *Liberator*, and eventually, with the help of Webb, he released a book-length account of his European sojourn. After returning to Britain in 1844, Wright spent most of the next two years trying to turn public opinion against the Free Church of Scotland, which had raised the ire of abolitionists by accepting financial contributions from American slaveholders, and the Evangelical Alliance, a transatlantic organization of ministers that made the similar error of extending fellowship to slaveholding members.⁵ Eventually joined by Frederick Douglass and Garrison, who also came to Britain in 1845 and 1846, respectively, Wright spent his final years abroad urging the Free Church to "Send Back the Money" that had been contributed by proslavery Americans.

In this chapter I focus on Wright's early years abroad, from his arrival in Britain through his six-month stay in Europe. Thanks to his encounters with Europeans of

⁵ On the Free Church and Evangelical Alliance campaigns, see, from a large literature, Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists*, 115-50; Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall*, 79-117; Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform*, 45-47; Betty Fladeland, *Men and Brothers*, 296-301; J. F. Maclear, "The Evangelical Alliance and the Antislavery Crusade," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1979): 141-64; C. Duncan Rice, "Controversies over Slavery in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Scotland," in Perry and Fellman, *Antislavery Reconsidered*, 45-50; Alisdair Pettinger, "Send Back the Money: Douglass and the Free Church of Scotland," in *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform*, ed. Alan J. Rice and Martin Crawford (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 31-55.

various nations and his eclectic reform interests, Wright's travels gave him numerous chances to reflect privately and publicly on the meaning of nationalism and the merits of patriotism. On the surface, his ideas about love for country appeared almost uniformly negative. But as with Webb, Wright's vitriol about nationalism concealed an emergent distinction between two kinds of nationalism.

The middle section of this chapter also explores some of the reasons for Wright's affinity with the Anti-Corn Law League, a primarily middle-class organization that advocated free trade. In the months immediately after his arrival, Wright quickly fell in with free traders like R. R. Moore, John Bright, and Richard Cobden, the League's founder. Lewis Perry has argued that Wright's admiration for such men revealed that his views about political economy were increasingly in line with mainstream liberal thought. His burgeoning faith in free trade, according to Perry, bespoke a condescending blindness to the plight of wage workers in Britain and presaged Wright's eventual embrace of a "middle-class ideology" committed to economic individualism and entrepreneurial enterprise.⁶ But in this chapter, I will suggest that Wright's interest in free trade was also due to complex lines of affinity between his nonresistance principles and the rhetoric of Corn Law Repealers. Wright's ideas about the Corn Laws were related not just to his opinions about political economy or industrialism. They were also related to his ideas about nations and nationalism.

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Garrisonian debates about whether to support Repeal often hinged on the question of whether Repealers were narrow patriots, concerned only with the freedom of Ireland,

⁶ Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform*, 264-70.

or genuine friends of liberty, who wished to see oppression abolished everywhere in the world. When Irish Americans seemed to subordinate the abolition of slavery to their love for Ireland, Garrisonians on both sides of the Atlantic accused American Repealers of being “*over-national*,” as Haughton put it. In an editorial at the end of 1843, Garrison blasted a meeting on Repeal he had attended in Boston. “Nothing ... was advanced on the subject of slavery,” Garrison lamented, “the object of the lecturer being to extol Irish patriotism.” Such sentimental displays of “patriotism [were] but another name for moral cowardice and enlightened selfishness ... bounded by certain degrees of latitude and longitude.” According to Garrison, it did not matter “where a man was born, or by what name he is called—whether he is an American, a Briton, an Irishmen, or an African. ... Away with these national castes! Down with these geographical partition walls!” The Repeal speaker should have been inspiring brotherly love in his audience, not “inflating their vanity” as Irishmen.⁷

Both Garrison and Haughton were establishing a threshold for patriotism: as soon as it inhibited an Irishman’s sympathy for the oppressed in every nation, love for Ireland had become “*over-national*.” Both Garrison and Haughton always believed, moreover, that O’Connell passed that test. Insofar as he did not hesitate to support abolitionism, his patriotism was consistent and admirable. Proslavery Irishmen, however, only disgraced Ireland by “prat[ing] loudly of their love of father land.” Haughton said. Because “I love my country,” he continued, “I desire to maintain her true honor; I wish to see her people

⁷ “Letter from James Haughton, of Dublin,” *Liberator*, 14 October 1842; “The Irish in America,” *Liberator*, 15 December 1843.

in the first ranks, among all who are ... promoting man's freedom and happiness all over the world."⁸

Haughton and Garrison supported O'Connell's movement to repeal the Union so long as it did not interfere with the promotion of "freedom ... all over the world." But Richard Webb was more skeptical of Repeal. Haughton was "a repealer and believes in O'Connell," Webb told Chapman. "I am not and I don't." As Chapter 5 mentioned, Webb lost few opportunities to point out the faults in the Repeal movement, and he never tired of trying to convince his friends that their admiration for O'Connell was misplaced. "If he be a sun in your eyes," he told Chapman in another letter in 1844, "I am nearer to him than you are & can see the spots."⁹

In Webb's eyes, the "spots" on Irish Repeal were chiefly three.¹⁰ First, Repeal was a political movement and O'Connell was a politician. "If O'Connell was an American born he would be no better than Webster or Van Buren," Webb told Wendell Phillips. O'Connell was a demagogue, who was apt to promise the multitudes whatever they wanted to hear: "no wonder they like him." Webb reminded Garrisonians of their own arguments in the aftermath of the World's Convention—that since abolitionism was popular in Britain, it took little courage to espouse it. "In point of moral qualities there [was] no shadow of comparison" between the abolitionists of America and O'Connell.¹¹

⁸ "Anti-Slavery," *Liberator*, 15 July 1842.

⁹ RDW to MWC, 1 October 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.59; RDW to MWC, 31 March 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.21.

¹⁰ On Webb's ambivalence about Repeal, see also Harrison, *Richard Davis Webb*, 46-50; Riach, "Daniel O'Connell and American Anti-Slavery," 9.

¹¹ RDW to Wendell Phillips, 17 [April?] 1843, HU, bMS Am 1953 (1277/1); RDW to Edmund Quincy, 16 August 1843, BAA, 192-194. Even James Haughton, a supporter of Repeal, echoed Webb's reservations about the "political" character of the Repeal movement, and spoke of his struggles to maintain his independence from the actual political machinations of the Repeal Association so that he could keep

Webb's second recurrent gripe about O'Connell's movement appealed to his American friends' belief in "moral suasion," rather than violence, as the true instrument of social reform. Although O'Connell made sure to emphasize in his speeches that the Repealers were not trying to incite armed insurrection, Webb often questioned whether such disavowals of violence were sincere and consistent. He noted that many Repealers, especially O'Connell's militant critics among the Young Irelanders, were not so reluctant to rattle sabers at Parliament. According to Webb, moreover, O'Connell was aware of this and used the restiveness of the Irish population to impress the urgency of reform or Repeal on English politicians. O'Connell's "monster meetings" may have been peaceful in intent, Webb argued, but they were also intended to spook Parliament. "I am sure nothing can be less like moral suasion," he told Quincy, "than the bragging, hectoring, bullying style of nine tenths of the speeches made at nine tenths of O'Connell's 'monster meetings.'" The idea was to make "a good strong show of physical force" so that "the English will repeal the Union through fear."¹²

Finally, and most significantly, Webb doubted that repealing the Act of Union would actually repair the deep cleavages in Irish society, both between Catholics and Protestants and between wealthy landowners and poor laborers. Indeed, Webb feared such a repeal would exacerbate the country's social and economic divisions. Partly this fear was born of Webb's belief that Repeal was an incoherent demand, and that the

Repealers honest on the subject of slavery. See James Haughton to Edward M. Davis, 16 August 1843, HU, bMS, Am 1054 (89); Haughton to Samuel J. May, 28 May 1846, BAA, 264.

¹² RDW to Edmund Quincy, 16 October 1843, BAA, 201. See also RDW to Quincy, 16 August 1843, BAA, 193: "When 100,000 people meet, and threaten, & bluster of what they could do, and will do, unless—it is ridiculous to speak of moral power." And also see RDW to Phillips, 17 [April?] 1843: "The most ardent & intelligent of the repeal party are all strong physical force men and they fill the repeal papers with blood thirsty ... speeches. O'Connell himself frequently swaggers and talks big about the valour and the numbers of the Irish repealers and how nothing could withstand them."

movement's leaders had few concrete plans for organizing an Irish polity in the event of the Union's demise. He grasped that Repealers wanted legislative independence from England without repudiating allegiance to the British crown, but this demand left many specific questions unresolved.

But aside from the fact that Repeal was vague, Webb thought it was clear that "Repeal would not abolish royalty, or aristocracy, or the law of primogeniture." He was appalled, in fact, by O'Connell's obsequious professions of loyalty to the Queen. Repeal, in Webb's view, was not radical enough, for it would end the union between Ireland and England without significantly altering the unrepublican political institutions of either country. While some Repealers favored more extensive suffrage, for instance, Webb noted that O'Connell often held aloof from the Chartists and "complete suffrage" men like Joseph Sturge.¹³

If Webb thought that Repealers were not radical enough when it came to political institutions, he worried that many were too radical when it came to land reform. In a letter to Quincy, Webb noted that some radical Repealers promised to make one of the first acts of a restored Dublin Parliament a law for the "*fixity of tenure*," which would transfer the titles of Ireland's lands to its present tenants. Such a plan, argued some of the Repealers, would relieve Ireland of the problem of absentee landowners, who were often blamed for the impoverishment of Catholic laborers. But Webb was skeptical. To transfer titles in perpetuity to present occupants would, he thought, start an endless cycle

¹³ For quote, see RDW to Phillips, 17 [April?] 1843. See also RDW to Quincy, 16 August 1843, BAA, 192; RDW to Quincy, 2 February 1844, BAA, 214. On O'Connell's "professions of loyalty & love towards the queen—both on his own behalf and on that of the people," and his fraught relations with the Chartists, see RDW to Quincy, 16 October 1843, BAA, 202. Joseph Sturge urged him to include complete suffrage as part of his plans for a reconstituted Dublin Parliament, but with varying degrees of success. See Joseph Sturge to Daniel O'Connell, 30 August 1843, in O'Connell, *Correspondence*, 7:220-221; Tyrell, *Joseph Sturge*, 125, 147.

of “confiscation and subdivision” that would doom less radical plans for improving the Irish economy. It would also be likely to spur more agrarian unrest of the kind that had roiled Irish society since the eighteenth century, fracturing the nation along lines of class and land ownership.¹⁴

Unlike Webb, however, historians have been impressed by O’Connell’s ability to appeal to Irish constituents across socioeconomic lines, a wide appeal that some attribute to the movement’s use of Catholic and Gaelic markers of identity to rally supporters. Despite divides between Ireland’s Catholic poor and the Catholic gentry represented by men like O’Connell himself, Catholicism was a vehicle for Repeal’s broad-based support. In fact, over the course of the early 1840s, Catholic leaders in Ireland became the most reliable advocates of a full Repeal of the Union, and parish priests played a crucial role in mobilizing local support for O’Connell.¹⁵

But the salience of Catholicism in Repeal meetings and rhetoric only made the movement less palatable to Webb. As an unorthodox Quaker, Webb was disdainful of much mainstream Protestant theology, but he was even more dismissive of “Popery” as a superstitious and authoritarian faith. These were characterizations of Catholicism, moreover, that many of his Garrisonian correspondents in the United States, like Wendell Phillips and Edmund Quincy, found easy to accept. Webb thus constantly lamented that American Garrisonians did not know what they were doing when they praised Repeal. Did they not know, he warned, that the popularity of Repeal could be traced to the fact that the Irish people were “priest ridden,” and that at some Repeal meetings “*mass* was

¹⁴ See RDW to Quincy, 16 August 1843, BAA, 192. On land reform questions in Ireland, see McCaffrey, *Daniel O’Connell and the Repeal Year*, 16-17; Jennifer Ridden, “Irish Reform between 1798 and the Great Famine,” in Burns and Innes, *Rethinking the Age of Reform*, 276-77.

¹⁵ See Hoppen, “Riding a Tiger”; Ridden, “Irish Reform,” 277-79.

performed 5 times before the proceedings began”? Webb suspected that the real source of popularity for Repeal was the belief that it would result in “Catholic ascendancy” and the “expulsion of protestants.” It was no wonder Catholic priests were O’Connell’s most influential backers.¹⁶

Webb’s animus towards Irish priests and popish religion typified the general anti-Catholic sentiment of Protestant reformers like himself on both sides of the Atlantic. But in another sense, Webb was not entirely wrong in noting the rising influence of the Catholic church in the Repeal movement in 1843. Nor was he wrong to note that, at the peak of the Repeal agitation, it was unclear who controlled the movement: O’Connell or the Catholic clergy. On the one hand, O’Connell’s mind was formed by late eighteenth-century Enlightenment liberalism and religious toleration. As Chapter 5 noted, he viewed his campaigns for Catholic emancipation and Repeal primarily as tactics for reform, not for the creation of a new political “ascendancy” that would reproduce the exclusions of the Protestant establishment in a different form. Yet the politics of popular mobilization pushed O’Connell to emphasize the Catholicity of Ireland and to drape himself in Gaelic symbols from earlier ages. The saying of mass at monster meetings and the prominent display of pictures of harps were indispensable elements of Repeal’s movement culture and invaluable props for O’Connell’s personal legend.

But O’Connell’s deployment of such cultural tokens of Irishness worked only too well. By late 1843, when O’Connell began to voice an apparent willingness to reach an agreement for reform with English Whigs that would stop short of full Repeal, he was criticized from both flanks of his movement by Catholic leaders and by a vocal group of

¹⁶ RDW to Phillips, 17 [April?] 1843; RDW to Quincy, 16 August 1843, BAA, 195. On Phillips’ ambivalent views of the Irish, see Stewart, *Wendell Phillips*, 109-112.

radical nationalists known as “Young Ireland,” who challenged O’Connell’s leadership in the pages of their newspaper, *The Nation*. Webb, like other abolitionists, could often be vicious in his ridicule of Catholic masses and benighted priests. But it was not merely prejudice that made him worry that Repeal would elevate Catholics to power. He was trying to tell his American friends that, despite their admiration for O’Connell, the movement was already slipping from his hands by the fall of 1843. Control was passing to Repealers who construed the end of the Union less as an opportunity for liberal reform, and more as an opportunity for the creation of a culturally Gaelic or Catholic nationality.

Webb was especially concerned by the rising influence of *The Nation* and the Young Irelanders, who were to a large degree “independent of O’Connell” and were “by no means his greatest flatterers.” Unlike O’Connell, the Young Irelanders believed in Repeal because they saw the Irish as an ethnically and culturally distinctive nation, distinguished from the English by their own languages, cultural practices, and historical memories. To win independence, many of them were willing to take up arms against England. In 1844, in a note accompanying the latest issue of *The Nation*, Webb told Chapman that the paper’s editors were “all for individuality, independence, nationality,” adding sarcastically that Young Irelanders were “full of classic aspirations—longing for an Irish Marathon or Thermopylae.” He added that their obsession with independence made them quick to flatter slaveholding Americans when they thought it would gain them transatlantic support. Young Irelanders criticized O’Connell’s constant harping on American slavery, and were “bursting with admiration of Robert Tyler [the proslavery son of president John Tyler and a Repeal supporter] and the United States—ready to

annihilate any body who would tread on Brother Jonathan[']s ears by the slightest hint about his millions of slaves.”¹⁷

Given the diversity of views within the Repeal movement itself, Webb thought it unlikely that an independent Ireland would be any less restive than Ireland had been under the Union. Whatever O’Connell’s motives and aims, and Webb believed those to be mixed, “the peasant beau ideal of Irish liberty is—the ascendancy of the true Church—the restoration of the Churches to the Catholics,” “forfeited estates,” “the expulsion of the absentee,” and “perpetual tenure” for peasants on their present holdings. Meanwhile, the hopes of Young Ireland were staked less on specific reforms within Ireland, and certainly not on Catholic ascendancy, since many of *The Nation*’s muses were Protestant. Rather, they wanted the full independence of the nation, to be won if necessary by the sword.¹⁸ With so many discordant expectations about what Repeal would bring, said Webb, it could ultimately come to no good. With or without the Union, Ireland’s real problems would persist: rampant poverty, vast disparities in wealth and land, misrule at the hands of the monarchy and aristocratic rulers, and a church full of priests who took advantage of their ignorant parishioners.

In late 1843 and early 1844, however, Webb’s commentary on Repeal began to soften and shift, and outright hostility to O’Connell’s movement gave way to qualified sympathy. Even before that shift began, there were glimpses of sympathy in the midst of Webb’s long litanies on the faults of Repeal and O’Connell. In December 1842, Webb confessed to Phillips that “though I have no confidence in D. O’C[onnell]’s strength of

¹⁷ RDW to Quincy, 16 October 1843, 201; RDW to MWC, 3 March [1844?], BPL, Ms.A.9.2.16.22. The archival record for the second letter dates it incorrectly in 1842.

¹⁸ RDW to Quincy, 16 October 1843, 201.

principle, and I look on him as a mere expediency man I can't divest myself of a certain Irish feeling of attachment towards him." In the same letter Webb emphasized that Ireland's internal conflicts were largely a result of the fact that "England is too strong," which made "the repeal of the union at present mooted" more than anything. But "when the day of haughty England's downfall comes," Webb hinted, "there may be another story to tell." Midway through the "Repeal Year," Webb began to suggest that while he could not stand politicians and politics, he was "in theory & talk ... more of a repealer and a radical than anything else."¹⁹

By February 1844 these hints of a latent sympathy with Repeal were more pronounced, and Webb reported that he was "rapidly bubbling into a repealer, and an O'Connellite."²⁰ The reasons for Webb's shifting assessment of O'Connell and Repeal had to do with O'Connell's changing fortunes in late 1843. For much of the year, British Prime Minister Robert Peel had pursued a policy of studied indifference to O'Connell's monster meetings, fearing that a coercive response to the movement would fan the flame of Repeal, vindicate O'Connell's arguments about the oppressiveness of the Union, and, at worst, encourage insurrection. Peel believed he could siphon off O'Connell's support by developing a set of conciliatory policies designed to redress some Irish grievances. As Peel's policies caused O'Connell's followers to doubt the wisdom of his strategy, popular support would either melt away or be molded into more militant shapes by impatient "Young Ireland" radicals, who, in taking up arms, would justify Peel in using troops and coercion to quell agitation.

¹⁹ RDW to Phillips, 14 December 1842, HU, bMS Am 1953 (1277/1); RDW to MWC, 3 July 1843.

²⁰ RDW to MWC, 29 February 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.16.

Peel's machinations proved effective. By late 1843, it was becoming clear that there would not be a Parliament in Dublin by the end of the "Repeal Year," as O'Connell had predicted. Intimations of a longer lasting struggle began creeping into his speeches, frustrating the Young Ireland muses behind the *Nation*. With O'Connell's popularity and control of the movement seeming to ebb, Peel now began to look for an opportunity to crack down on O'Connell, prove his vulnerability, and dissolve the LNRA. He found his chance at the beginning of October, just before the last Repeal "monster meeting" of the year was scheduled to be held in Clontarf. When a circular published in the *Nation* called for a martial cavalcade to be held at the Clontarf meeting, Peel seized the opportunity to proclaim the Clontarf meeting seditious, canceling it the day before it was to be held. O'Connell disavowed any violent aspect to the meeting once he learned of the circular, but the die had been cast. British troops and naval ships were deployed in Dublin and at various other strategic points to ensure that the Clontarf proclamation would not issue in rebellion, and shortly thereafter, on October 14, O'Connell and a core group of associates were arrested on charges of sedition.²¹

British and American Garrisonians alike denounced these decisive actions against Repeal. When O'Connell was prosecuted and convicted in early 1844 by a jury stacked with Protestants, Garrisonians united in condemning these "palpable outrages on the right," as Pease put it to Phillips in January. "O'Connell in prison!!" exclaimed Richard Allen in disbelief. "The greatest asserter of universal freedom of this age before the whole world—the inmate of a jail!!!"²² Such sympathy for "poor O'Connell," as Abby

²¹ The previous two paragraphs rely on McCaffrey, *O'Connell and the Repeal Year*, 135-213.

²² Elizabeth Pease to Wendell Phillips, 30 January 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.10; Richard Allen to MWC, 2 June 1844, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.20.36B. See also John Lord to [RDW?], 7 February 1844, BPL,

Kimber called him, was deepened when he somehow found time to write an antislavery rebuke to Cincinnati Repealers in the week between the Clontarf Proclamation and his arrest, reviving the hopes of Garrisonians that O'Connell's voice might influence Irish Americans.²³ But Garrisonians were not critical of Peel's actions just because O'Connell had reestablished his reputation as an abolitionist in the reply to Cincinnati. To them, O'Connell's fate further underlined the repressive character of English political institutions, whose intolerance for democratic agitation now seemed to be on full display at Clontarf.

Even Webb leapt to O'Connell's defense after Peel's repressive maneuvers. He was still not a Repealer, but he certainly did not like "to see the country held down in this way. ... The green isle is this moment bristling with English bayonets. It is enough to stir the blood of even a nonresistant to be bullied in this manner."²⁴ In the months following O'Connell's arrest, Webb continued to criticize Repeal in his correspondence with American friends, but he increasingly took exception to Peel's iron-fisting handling of the Irish question. He saw the occupation of Ireland as entirely consistent with England's recent invasions of China and Afghanistan.

Webb even confessed that the government's treatment of O'Connell stirred his sense of identification with Irishmen, despite his innumerable statements of pessimism for his native country over the past year. In the very same October letter in which Webb had detailed some of his most stringent criticisms of the Repealers' goals and tactics, he

Ms.A.1.2.14.13; Sarah Pugh to Richard and Hannah Webb, 27 March 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.21; James Haughton to MWC, 18 July 1844, BAA, 222-23; C. S. Toll to MWC, 7 January 1844, BAA, 210; Pease to Anne Warren Weston, 27 January 1844, BAA, 211. John Lord was an American who traveled to Britain in 1843 to lecture on the Middle Ages; he was invited to stay with Richard D. Webb so he appears to have had some connection with reformers in the country. See Wright's Journals (BPL), vol. 24, 29.

²³ Abby Kimber to RDW, 18 June 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.38-39.

²⁴ RDW to Quincy, 16 October 1843, BAA, 199-201.

confessed that he could not “help feeling something towards O’Connell now as a true American feels towards Washington.” For while Webb was “neither Catholic, O’Connellite, Repealer, or even a voting politician,” he could not resist feeling “a little bitterness” towards “John Bull,” whose “repression of feeling” in Ireland would “not make us love him or like him.” O’Connell had faults, but “I hate English oppression worse than I do his vices whatever they may be.” Webb even went so far as to compare the situation in Ireland to the relationship between “the free and slave population of South Carolina,” suggesting that the Irish, “like the blacks,” would continue to struggle as long as the English held them down “by force of arms.”²⁵

The extent of Webb’s transformation into a sympathizer of O’Connell can be seen in a heated exchange he had with Harriet Martineau after O’Connell’s arrest. As Webb reported in a letter to Chapman, he had written Martineau to ask for a contribution for the *Liberty Bell* and had included a note about his “patriotic horror at the Government prosecutions” of O’Connell. But he was even more horrified by Martineau’s reply, which vindicated Peel’s conduct and vilified O’Connell. Martineau believed the Tories’ policies towards Ireland were charitable and just, and would obviate the need for Repeal. Startled by this defense of the Tories, Webb became uncharacteristically defensive of O’Connell and critical of England. He pointed out that Peel’s Tories had been guilty of terrible crimes in India and China, and “if they do good to Ireland, we have O’Connell to thank, & not them,” and he concluded that little could be expected from Tory rulers,

²⁵ RDW to Quincy, 16 October 1843, BAA, 200-201.

“who have always acted against [Ireland], at least against her Catholic population which includes five sixths of the people.”²⁶

Webb’s willingness to defend O’Connell only stretched so far, of course, and until the Liberator’s death, he continued to express his doubts about O’Connell’s fidelity to his American friends. But as we have seen, Peel’s repression of the Repeal movement began to aggravate Webb’s sense of justice, and he celebrated with other Garrisonians when O’Connell’s conviction was overturned in the late summer of 1844. Before that reversal, Webb even visited O’Connell in prison, although he expressed some justifiable concern that his record of opposition to Repeal might make him unwelcome there. He showed some of his affinity with Repealers, though, when he declared that the Queen would be unwelcome if she acted on a planned trip to Ireland. “I hope she won’t come,” Webb told Chapman. “The Irish owe nothing to the queen—and I abhor the prospect of the displays of degrading servility that w[oul]d probably take place if she came. ... It would in fact be a Tory Triumph.”²⁷

The idea of such a triumph aroused what Webb had called his “patriotic horror”—a phrase that indicated his embrace of a certain kind of love for his country. In his correspondence with American friends, Webb did not systematically outline a theory of patriotism or nationality. But in between the lines of his conflicted dispatches on Repeal, it is possible to discern an emerging definition of an acceptable form of patriotism, as

²⁶ RDW to MWC, 16 November 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.82. Webb also discussed his correspondence with Martineau in a letter to Edmund Quincy, 16 August 1843, BPL, Mss. 960, vol. 2, 7-9.

²⁷ For positive reactions to O’Connell’s release, see Elizabeth Pease to MWC, 13 September 1844, BPL, 1.79; RDW to MWC, 17 September 1844, BPL, 1.80; James Haughton to MWC, 14 October 1844, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.20.71. On Webb’s interview with O’Connell in prison, see RDW to Elizabeth Pease, 4 June 1844, BPL, 1.76; RDW to Edmund Quincy, 17 August 1844, BPL, 1.122; RDW to MWC, 2 September 1844, BPL, 1.78 (includes quote on the visit of the queen).

well as an idea of nationality defined in civic rather than in cultural, ethnic, or religious terms.

First, Webb clearly thought that patriotism was base if it precluded criticism of one's country. He certainly showed no compunction about castigating O'Connell and Repeal, even as he defended them in his correspondence with Harriet Martineau. Indeed, Webb trumpeted his willingness to criticize both England and his native country as proof that his patriotism was not narrow and parochial. Martineau's defense of the Tories, on the other hand, showed that she would "confine our ideas of men's moral obligations within geographical boundaries." Webb parted ways with Young Irelanders for the same reason: their love for country blinded them to their moral obligations towards American slaves. Because they were so "abundantly full of ... nationality," Young Ireland was always "anxious to purchase American support by silence on the subject of Slavery." For Webb, "patriotic" horror required being horrified by the sins of one's country as well as by the sins of other countries.²⁸

Webb also differed from Young Irelanders in his understanding of what a nation was. For the editors of the *Nation*, as for many romantic nationalists, a nationality was founded on the historic unity of a people, who were joined together by shared linguistic and cultural traits. It was clear that Webb thought this mythical homogeneity of the Irish people was ludicrous, when not even Repealers could agree and when the country was so divided along religious, economic, and political lines. Heterogeneity was a fact of Irish life; that was the clear inference that American Garrisonians could draw from their communications with Webb—a heterodox Quaker living in polyglot Dublin. Love for

²⁸ RDW to MWC, 16 November 1843.

country, then, could not be founded on some clear identification with a Gaelic or Catholic past, as various kinds of Repealers suggested. Patriotism, instead, could only be fueled by a collective “patriotic horror” at the oppressive institutions that blighted one’s country. Webb could not expect to identify with his compatriots as Catholics or Gaelic speakers, but he could join with them in revulsion at the militarism of English aristocrats and the persecution of O’Connell at their hands.

This kind of national identity, of course, was unstable because it required active agreement among a nation’s citizens, rather than passive possession of ethnic or cultural traits. In December 1846, Webb explained to Sydney Howard Gay that “nationality is nothing without a union of hearts and of objects amongst the people who constitute the nation—and the people of Ireland are as far from this union as possible.” That definition of “nationality” as a “union of hearts and of objects,” rather than as a unity predicated on heredity or cultural homogeneity, indicates that Webb was groping towards the concept that I have been calling civic nationalism, a concept distinguishable from the nationalism that Young Irelanders preached.²⁹

Webb was groping towards that concept, but he did not fully grasp it. There were still dimensions to his idea of nationality that were defined by what I have been calling “ethnoracial” traits. In the same letter to Gay, he added that the Irish people were far from the union required by “nationality,” because they “differ in race, in language, [and] in religion,” indicating that the “union of hearts and of objects” that Webb saw as the foundation of nationality was a union forged partly by shared ethnoracial traits. Webb’s fierce anti-Catholicism showed, on the one hand, his opposition to established religion

²⁹ RDW to Sydney Howard Gay, 1 December 1846, Gay Papers, CU.

and his belief that national membership should not be tied to church membership. But on the other hand, his anti-Catholicism betrayed a lack of tolerance for religious difference that inhibited Webb's commitment to a fully civic nationalism. In an earlier letter to Chapman about his increased sympathy for O'Connell since his arrest, Webb had also written that "all my feelings as an Irishman (for I am one of that race of white niggers) have been roused in his favor." His allusion to the epithet nativist Americans often leveled at Irish immigrants was probably intended to be ironic, but it suggests that Webb was not wholly free from the common idiom of his time, which identified belonging to a nation with belonging to a race.³⁰

Nor was Webb himself free of all noxious ideas about race and ethnicity. But I have suggested that his ambivalent feelings about Repeal were linked to ambivalent ideas about nationality. His definition of a kind of civic nationalism was fitful and incomplete, if indeed it can be described as a fully "civic" nationalism at all. Nonetheless, his letters about Repeal show how a qualified endorsement of patriotism could find its way into a Garrisonian rhetoric that was fiercely critical of "*over-national*" reformers. For Webb, patriotism was justified if and only if it was called forth by "horror" at oppression, just as nationality was only possible if it was based on a principled "union of hearts and of objects." In the decades ahead, Garrisonians would call on similar ideas to identify themselves as true American patriots, who were horrified by the aggrandizing power of Southern slaveholders and committed to a concept of nationality based on the idea of equal rights for all.

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³⁰ RDW to MWC, 16 November 1843.

When Webb went to visit O'Connell in prison in 1844, he was joined by Henry Wright, who had just returned from his eight-month stay on the continent and was midway through a five-year sojourn abroad.³¹ Garrison had first broached the idea of Wright's going to Europe, under the auspices of the New England Non-Resistance Society, in the spring of 1842, around the time that Wright's idea for a "World's Convention" on human rights was fizzling in the *Liberator*. According to his journals, Wright was at first reluctant to go, in part because in recent debates about the so-called "World's Convention," he and Garrison had argued that England was less fit for radical agitation than America. "I believe N. England is the place above all others to agitate the moral world," Wright wrote in his journal in March, evincing the pessimism of Garrisonians about Old England in the wake of their 1840 conflicts with the BFASS. "There is no portion of the Human Mind so adapted to moral culture, to receive truth & spread it." But at Garrison's insistence, Wright left it to the Non-Resistance Society to decide.³²

Throughout the summer of 1842, raising funds for Wright's contemplated tour of the British Isles proved difficult. Not all Garrisonians were as persuaded as Garrison was about the value of the trip, but gradually, objections were overcome. Even Wendell Phillips, who disagreed with Wright's radical views on "non-resistance," told Richard Webb and Elizabeth Pease in August that Wright was not "*all* wrong" and would "do good" in Britain, where "the conflicting heated masses of society" were being roiled by

³¹ For Wright's account of the visit to see O'Connell, see Wright's Journals (BPL), vol. 30, 76-86.

³² Wright's Journals (HU), XLVIII, 36 (3 March 1842).

issues ranging from Irish Repeal to British imperialism in India. Finally, in late September, Wright left for Liverpool.³³

The ostensible purpose of Wright's tour was to promote the causes of peace and non-resistance. Before leaving Boston, Wright had just published *A Kiss for a Blow*, a non-resistance treatise for children, and he carried numerous copies for distribution in Britain. Soon he was delivering speeches and writing tracts condemning defensive wars and demanding the abolition of the military. His friends on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean defended this diversion from the cause of abolition by arguing that in Britain, where slavery had been abolished, the chief evils to be fought were war and militarism. Pease reported to the *Liberator* that she agreed with Wright that "America is the ground on which to agitate slavery, and England the war system." In another letter, she echoed other Garrisonians in contending that England, which was in the midst of military expeditions in China, Afghanistan, and Ireland, was ripe for the preaching of non-resistance. "The question of non-resistance only needs to be fairly brought before the people of this country, to become a living principle among us; and no one can do the work like H.C.W."³⁴

³³ Wendell Phillips to RDW, 12 August 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.76; Phillips to Elizabeth Pease, 12 August 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.77. On fund-raising problems, see also WLG to George W. Benson, 13 May 1842, LWLG, 3:75; WLG to Henry Clarke Wright, 12 April 1842, LWLG, 3:69-70. For Wright's departure, see Wright's Journals (BPL), vol. 19, 46. On debates about the timing of the tour, see Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform*, 43; "Henry C. Wright," *Herald of Freedom*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 8 April 1842; "Letter from Thomas Davis," *Liberator*, 24 June 1842. Perry's biography also deals in great depth with some of the personal factors that compelled Wright to go abroad and stay abroad, which included a dysfunctional marriage and family relationship.

³⁴ "Letter from Elizabeth Pease," *Liberator*, 23 June 1843; "Letter from Elizabeth Pease," *Liberator*, 26 May 1843. Also see "Letters from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 28 July 1843 ("England is the place for the anti-war struggle"); Amasa Walker, "Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 12 January 1844 ("England is the best theatre on which to attack the war system"). See Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform*, 43-44.

In his lectures and writings abroad, however, Wright did not confine himself to defenses of non-resistance. Non-resistants believed that their principled opposition to violence and coercive human authority committed them to a larger set of related precepts. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 2, non-resistants like Wright identified nationalism and chauvinistic national identities as root causes of war. From the beginning of his trip, therefore, Wright and his friends construed his mission as a practical illustration that the true reformer's country was the world. They pointed to his criticisms of the United States as heroic refusals to use patriotism as a cloak for sinful systems like slavery and the army. Wright's lectures, letters, and conversations while abroad thus veered frequently into attacks on the "loathsome vice" and "mean selfishness" of "*patriotism*." In an 1843 issue of the *Liberator*, he reported, "I never lecture but I bring in American slavery and *nationalism*."³⁵

In the months leading up to his departure, Wright's hobbyhorse had been his plans for a true "World's Convention" that would dissolve national boundaries, and he filled his diaries with jabs at "National Organizations" as monstrous evils. In May he recorded a talk with Samuel J. May, Garrison, and Caroline Weston "on the Dissolution of the Union, on National Organizations, on *Human Brotherhood*, on going to England." Those subjects were related in Wright's mind. Going to England was not just a means to spread the gospel of non-resistance, but an end in itself, for it would prove the artificiality of national borders. "I came to this nation as a human being," Wright wrote a year after his arrival in Britain, "I care not for American or Englishman—I have no country ... to vindicate." Wright's friends, especially Garrison, encouraged this interpretation of his

³⁵ Wright's Journals (BPL), vol. 27, 80 (8 March 1844); "Letter from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 5 May 1843. Emphasis in the original.

mission. In an editorial praising Wright's *Kiss for a Blow*, Garrison predicted that the author's tour would not only spread non-resistance, but also "extinguish the flames of national animosities and rivalries—[and] prostrate those national barriers which divide the human race into hostile parties."³⁶

Wright's view of his mission as a lived critique of nationalism help explain why he also frequently veered into another topic during his travels: free trade. Wright reached England at a time when debates over British tariffs and protectionist trade policies known collectively as the Corn Laws were reaching a fever pitch, thanks to the growth of the Anti-Corn Law League (ACLL).³⁷ British Garrisonians had been praising the League's efforts long before Wright's arrival, sending glowing reports of the anti-Corn Law cause to their American correspondents. George Thompson, Garrison's most venerable ally in the British antislavery movement, was a paid lecturer for the ACLL beginning in 1841, and Garrisonians like Pease and Ashurst included positive views on free trade in their dispatches to the United States. "I abhor the Corn Laws," Richard Allen informed the *Liberator* from Dublin in March 1842, adding that he considered "the Anti-Corn Law question to be the leading home philanthropic subject of the day." The *Liberator*, for its

³⁶ "Letter from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 3 November 1843; "A Kiss for a Blow," *Liberator*, 9 September 1842. Garrison reinforced his view that Wright's mission was "restricted by no geographical boundaries" in WLG to Henry C. Wright, 1 April 1843, LWLG, 3:143-4.

³⁷ The classic account of the rise of the ACLL is Norman McCord, *The Anti-Corn Law League, 1838-1846* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958). But McCord's account of the high politics of the League's leaders now needs to be read alongside Paul A. Pickering and Alex Tyrrell, *The People's Bread: A History of the Anti-Corn Law League* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000). See also Nicholas C. Edsall, *Richard Cobden: Independent Radical* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986); Wendy Hinde, *Richard Cobden: A Victorian Outsider* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

part, echoed back the free trade sentiments transmitted from abroad. “Down with the Corn Laws!” exclaimed a guest editorial in 1841.³⁸

The reasons for this interest in free trade were complex. Most Garrisonians held broadly liberal views about political economy. As their refusal to equate wage labor with slave labor suggests, they did not view capitalism itself as inherently coercive. Most saw competitive markets as preservative, rather than destructive, of individual liberty, and non-resistants necessarily saw government intervention like tariffs as more coercive than market relationships. While in Europe, Wright would later muse that he loved to “see human beings in the market,” where they appeared “more natural, more like *human beings*” than elsewhere.³⁹

Aside from the ideological reasons they had for naturalizing the free market, the Garrisonians also had pragmatic reasons for supporting free trade. In the early 1840s, many of them were convinced that by promoting the growth of free-labor cotton in British India and the British Caribbean, abolitionists could hasten the downfall of slavery in the United States. In a free market, free-grown cotton and sugar could undercut demand for slave-grown produce and make slave labor unprofitable for planters. This was the guiding idea behind the British India Society, founded in 1840 by Elizabeth Pease’s father, Joseph Pease, with the help of George Thompson. Phillips in particular was convinced that India’s “cotton experiment” was “a great movement.” He hoped it would “strike off” the fetters binding Indian laborers and that “its *rebound* [would]

³⁸ “Highly Interesting and Important Letter from Richard Allen,” *Liberator*, 18 March 1842; “Horrible,” *Liberator*, 21 May 1841. On Thompson’s work for the ACLL, see Ronald M. Gifford II, “George Thompson and Trans-Atlantic Antislavery, 1831-1865” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1999), 228-236.

³⁹ “Letters from Henry C. Wright, No. V [3 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 18 October 1844.

knock ours away.” In a speech given in Boston after his return from Europe in 1841, Phillips rejoiced that the “sound of the cotton gin is now heard on the banks of the Ganges” and predicted that the “doom of slavery is to be written down in the prices current of the cotton market of Liverpool.”⁴⁰

Support for free trade, however, was not universal among Garrisonians. Many were critical of the British India experiment because it sanctioned imperialism in Asia and glossed over the fact that slave labor persisted in India. Others had more specific complaints about the ACLL, whose leaders were often uncomfortably silent about slavery and praised the anti-tariff arguments of proslavery ideologues like John Calhoun. Some British Garrisonians opposed proposals by free traders to abolish British duties on slave-grown sugar from South America, arguing that to lift those duties would be akin to approving of slavery. Garrisonians like Phillips responded that this kind of logic was uncontainable: if abolitionists were obliged to abstain from the purchase of products produced by oppression, how could they in good conscience purchase anything? Garrisonians never reached a consensus on such questions.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Wendell Phillips to Elizabeth Pease, 12 August 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.77; MASS Notes, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.1.19. See also Edward M. Davis to Elizabeth Pease, 28 December 1839, BAA, 88; Joseph Pease, *On Slavery, and its Remedy* (London?: W. H. Cox, 1841); Elizabeth Pease to Sydney Howard Gay, 29 January 1848, Gay Papers, CU; Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 101-2; Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*, 101-2, 127-129; Midgley, *Women against Slavery*, 122. The British-born William Adam, one of the Garrisonian delegates to the “World’s Convention” in 1840, lived in India in the 1820s and 1830s, where he was converted to Unitarianism by a Hindu reformer. He stayed in London after the Convention as an active member of the British India Society, serving as editor of its newspaper until 1841, when he returned to America to help found the Northampton Association. See Christopher Clark, *The Communitarian Moment: The Radical Challenge of the Northampton Association* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 26-29; Henrietta Sargent to David Lee Child, 24 March 1840, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.13.44. On other efforts to cultivate free-grown cotton in India, see Sven Beckert, “Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the Civil War,” *AHR* 109, no. 5 (December 2004): 1411.

⁴¹ For debates on the sugar duties question, see Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 137-168. For reservations about the British India experiment, see John A. Collins to Phillips, 14 June 1841, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (429); Richard Allen to Phillips, 1 July 1841; Allen to Phillips, 2 December 1841, both in HU, bMS, Am 1953 (201); William Bassett to Elizabeth Pease, 25 April 1842, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.12.2.46. For

Given these disagreements, Wright's affinity with the Anti-Corn Law Leaguers cannot be reduced merely to shared assumptions about political economy. For Wright, the rhetoric of the Corn Law repealers had a deeper resonance: it seemed to echo his own attacks on nations, vicious forms of patriotism, and militarism. A typical letter to the *Liberator* in April 1843, for example, reveals that free trade was associated in Wright's mind with more than Smithian economic theory. He began the letter by reporting that many of the people that he met called him "very *unpatriotic*" because he told them "in so many words, [that] there is not a more hypocritical, lying, deceiving, tyrannical nation on earth than the U. States." Wright revealed in the charge that he was not a patriot, "if to be an American makes patriotism. I despise the name, as I do the name Englishman, Irishman, &c. I would be a man, and a member of the human family ... and if the world might be my country, then I would be patriotic."⁴²

These were stock phrases from Wright's repertoire of non-resistance and no-government rhetoric, but they were revealingly followed by Wright's account of a recent "anti-corn-law meeting" he attended in Warrington, where he spoke for an hour to a large group "on the principle of *Free Trade* ... and its influence on the abolition of all armies and navies, and the folly of regulating the intercourse of human beings by nations." For Wright, the best reason for supporting free trade was that "nations have no soul, no conscience, no justice, no honesty," and yet "these wild beasts, called nations," tried to regulate "how men, brothers, shall hold intercourse one with another." Tariffs were immoral, aside from their economic effects, because they placed a "tax or penalty" on

reservations about the ACLL, see Phillips to RDW, 30 May 1845, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.15.34; RDW to MWC, 30 June 1845, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.15.4; George Thompson to MWC, 2 October 1845, BAA, 238-39.

⁴² "Letters from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 28 July 1843.

intercourse across national lines, “for all tariffs operate as a punishment, a fine on human love and brotherhood.”⁴³

Wright’s emphatic rejection of the name American, his critique of patriotism, and his romantic vision of a world without nations went hand in hand with his sympathy for the British free traders he encountered. After a conversation with John Bowring, R. R. Moore, and other repealers over dinner at the ACLL’s rooms in London, Wright was convinced that the League’s aim was “that men will cease all intercourse by *Nations*, & come to *inter-individual* intercourse. In fact, men will cease to be known as *Nations*, cease to wear national badges—to hang our National colours, & come to individual rights & responsibilities.” Writing from Liverpool a few days after his speech in Warrington, Wright similarly said that he felt “no interest” in free trade “as a mere question of repeal of the corn-laws.” His real interest in free trade was that it would, “in effect, annihilate the system of intercourse by nations, and leave individual human beings to go where they please on earth, and buy and sell. Abolish all international tariff, and you blot out nations in a most important sense.”⁴⁴

Viewing the ACLL through the lens of non-resistance, Wright saw the abolition of the Corn Laws as a step towards the abolition of armies and the blotting out of national borders. The “anti-monopoly cry [was] a far-reaching cry,” and some of “the Leaguers [were] seeing it.”⁴⁵ This interpretation of the ACLL’s aims was partly a case of Wright hearing what he wanted to hear, but to a certain extent, he was also echoing the rhetoric of ACLL spokesmen like John Bright and Richard Cobden, the founders of the League.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Wright’s Journals (BPL), vol. 21, 45 (16 June 1843); “Letters from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 28 July 1843.

⁴⁵ “Letters from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 28 July 1843.

A strong streak of anti-militarism ran through their speeches in favor of free trade, and Corn Law repealers had well-established connections with British peace reformers by the time of Wright's arrival. Moreover, despite poor organizational relations between free traders and Chartists in the 1840s, Cobden, Bright, and others joined political radicals who blamed the imperial ambition of aristocrats for sinking the nation into inescapable cycles of debt and war, and then raising the tax burden carried by ordinary people to fund the army and the navy.⁴⁶

In fact, Cobden's earliest publication, a pamphlet entitled *England, Ireland and America* (1835), argued that England's decades of continental wars and its maintenance of "an enormous army" many times larger than the aggregate armies of Europe or the United States were to blame for the accumulation of a massive national debt, which could only be alleviated by the repeal of the Corn Laws. Cobden criticized hawkish statesmen who seemed intent on provoking new hostilities with Russia and rebutted the argument that Britain's military prowess was necessary to protect its commercial interests. "It has, over and over again, been proved to the world, that violence and force can never prevail against the natural wants and wishes of mankind," Cobden wrote. That argument served Cobden's views about the wisdom of a laissez-faire political economy, but to Wright, such a national critique of violence would have sounded much like "non-resistance." So,

⁴⁶ An alliance between working-class suffragists and middle-class free traders never came to pass, despite Joseph Sturge's efforts to forge such an alliance in the Complete Suffrage Association. Many Corn Law repealers opposed universal manhood suffrage and other radical proposals made by Chartists, but both groups frequently criticized the imperial ambitions of aristocrats and military leaders as contrary to the will of the people and detrimental to the economic health of the nation, which helps explain why American and British Garrisonians saw no incompatibility between endorsing both the "moral-force" Chartists and the free traders. For a range of interpretations on relations between Chartists and Corn Law Repealers, see Lucy Brown, "The Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law League," in Briggs, *Chartist Studies*, 342-71; William Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals: Nine Studies in Theory and Practice, 1817-1841* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 421-34; McCord, *The Anti-Corn Law League*, 98-116; Hinde, *Richard Cobden*, 69, 98-99, 114-15; Edsall, *Richard Cobden*, 86, 104ff; Pickering and Tyrell, *The People's Bread*, ch. 7.

too, did Cobden's argument that England could best serve the world's progress not by "plunging into the strife of European wars," but by "calmly directing her undivided energies to the purifying of her own internal institutions" and "serving as it were for the beacon of other nations."⁴⁷

Wright's view of free trade as a branch of "non-resistance" was only partly a case of interpolation. His experience with Corn Law repealers gave him convincing evidence that there were real symmetries between the two causes. After Wright attended a meeting of the ACLL in Manchester, for instance, he also spoke at a meeting of the Manchester and Salford Peace Society, where he shared the platform with prominent ACLL lecturers R. R. Moore and Joseph Brotherton. Moore told the meeting that on one of his recent lecture tours, he had seen soldiers drilling and stopped to reflect that their precision could not have been achieved "had not the man been exterminated" and replaced with "a machine." "A soldier was a slave," Moore said, "and, though he was dressed in a special uniform, he was as purely a slave as the African in America was." That criticism of the dehumanizing effects of the military resonated loudly with Wright's non-resistant ideas, and it was echoed again in a letter from William Ashurst to the *Liberator* that described soldiers as "trained slaves," to be used like pawns by aristocratic warmongers who had no concern for the people. Wright concluded that the ACLL's "principal lecturers and delegates, John Bright, and R. R. Moore, are from principle thorough non-resistants. ...

⁴⁷ Richard Cobden, "England, Ireland, and America," in *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden*, vol. 1, ed. F. W. Chesson (London: T. F. Unwin, 1903), 54, 11, 35. On the relationship between ACLL arguments and anti-war arguments, see Richard Francis Spall, Jr., "Free Trade, Foreign Relations, and the Anti-Corn-Law League," *International History Review* 10, no. 3 (August 1988): 405-432; Alexander Tyrrell, "Making the Millennium: The Mid-Nineteenth Century Peace Movement," *Historical Journal* 21, no. 1 (March 1978): 75-95; Pickering and Tyrrell, *The People's Bread*, 107-108; Hinde, *Richard Cobden*, 16-19, 61; Edsall, *Richard Cobden*, 20-23; Martin Ceadel, *The Origins of War Prevention: The British Peace Movement and International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Richard Cobden, the champion of the League in Parliament—Joseph Brotherton, Dr. Bowring, T. Perronet Thompson—are strong anti-war men; and they are all accustomed to urge the anti-war tendency of the League principles as one of the strongest arguments in their power.”⁴⁸

In March 1843, while reporting to the *Liberator* on an invitation he had received to attend a large meeting of the ACLL in Manchester, Wright said that “the questions that come up in connexion with” the free trade issue were “numerous and startling. None come up more frequently than the army and navy.” The rising criticism of the Corn Laws, he reported in another letter, meant that “a powerful feeling is being kindled up against the military system. The people are beginning to see what it is that has brought their national debt upon them.” Elsewhere, Wright told the *Liberator* that “free trade is the all-absorbing interest” in Britain, “and in discussing this, war and the army and the navy come in of necessity, for they lick up four-fifths of the revenue of the nation.” Such reports from Wright to America help explain why in July 1843 the *Liberator* described free trade not just as an economic agenda, but as a “mingled sentiment of Democracy, Free Trade, and Non-Resistance.”⁴⁹

In addition to resonating with Wright’s critiques of war, free traders often seemed to echo his attacks on nations and patriotism. Cobden’s early writings attributed English ills to “the spirit of national hate” and a “spirit of overweening national importance.” He

⁴⁸ “Annual Meeting of the Manchester and Salford Peace Society,” *Liberator*, 9 June 1843; “State of Things in England,” *Liberator*, 10 March 1843; “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 7 April 1843. Richard Allen also reported on the “peace principles” of Brotherton, Bowring, and Cobden in “Letter from Richard Allen,” *Liberator*, 1 July 1842.

⁴⁹ “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 3 March 1843; “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 14 April 1843; “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 1 September 1843; “William Howitt,” *Liberator*, 28 July 1843. See also “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 5 May 1843, which praises the ACLL for preparing the public mind “to hear about the army and navy.”

often implied that a concern for the wealth and power of the nation served as an invidious motive for war and trade protectionism. In his second major pamphlet, which criticized English hawks who wanted to attack Russia, he noted that “patriotism or nationality is an instinctive virtue, that sometimes burns the brightest in the rudest and least reasoning minds; and its manifestation bears no proportion to the value of the possessions defended, or the object to be gained.”⁵⁰

These ideas about nationalism as potentially irrational and destructive continued to surface in the lectures of ACLL lecturers that Wright heard while abroad. In a speech at Covent Garden in 1843, John Bright argued that many Corn Law repealers were “Free Traders in the widest sense of the word,” who “wanted to have the question settled for the world, as well as for England.” These free traders, said Bright, were “tired of what were called the natural divisions of empires. They wanted not that the Channel should separate this country from France—they hoped and wished that Frenchmen and Englishmen should no longer consider each other as naturally hostile nations.” Bright criticized the “miserable and unnatural barriers” that tariffs raised between nations, which were “calculated to embitter their feelings and promote hostilities.” At the same meeting, Cobden explained that free trade meant “breaking down the barriers that separate nations; those barriers, behind which nestle the feelings of pride, revenge, hatred, and jealousy, which every now and then burst their bounds, and deluge whole countries with blood.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ Cobden, “England, Ireland, and America,” 5, 9; Richard Cobden, “Russia,” in F. W. Chesson, *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden*, vol. 1, 178n. See also J. A. Hobson, *Richard Cobden: The International Man* (1919; repr., New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968).

⁵¹ For the Bright quote, see Henry Ashworth, *Recollections of Richard Cobden, M. P. and the Anti-Corn Law League* (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1870), 245-255. For the Cobden quote, see John Bright and James E. Thorold Rogers, eds., *Speeches on Questions of Public Policy by Richard Cobden, M. P.*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1870), 79.

Despite his critiques of Britain's bloated military and imperial wars, in the early 1840s Cobden was not a non-resistant or even a thoroughgoing pacifist. His attempts to connect free trade to a broad internationalist idealism should also be taken with a grain of salt. This rhetoric was partly strategic, since Cobden wanted to attract Quakers and moral reformers associated with the British peace movement into the ACLL. Moreover, although Cobden spoke of the potential for free trade to break down national prejudices, British exceptionalism was key to his own view of the world. ACLL lecturers also frequently made appeals to the patriotism of their audiences. But Cobden's critiques of war and patriotism and his belief in internationalism were sincere. After the Corn Laws were repealed in 1846, he became a tireless advocate of international arbitration, and his second career as a peace reformer was clearly foreshadowed by his first as a free trader.

The important point is that American Garrisonians like Wright—and particularly non-resistants and peace reformers—interpreted the Corn Law repeal movement partly as a critique of strident nationalism and international conflict, an interpretation that British Garrisonians reinforced in their transatlantic correspondence. Since men like George Thompson were well known both to Corn Law repealers and Garrisonians, the latter took notice when Thompson identified the ACLL with the “cause of peace,” the “cause of universal brotherhood,” and the “cause of international amity.”⁵² Non-resistants who were also inclined to think that human government always violated the will of God could even infer support for that idea from ACLL rhetoric. Many free traders argued that since God designed different parts of the world to favor different kinds of crops, it would be a

⁵² George Thompson, *Corn Laws: Address of George Thompson, Esq. before the Conference of Ministers of All Denominations Assembled in Manchester, to Consider the Subject of the Corn Laws* (Manchester, Eng.: Haycraft, 1841), 7. For other examples of British Garrisonians stressing these aspects of the ACLL campaign, see Frances Armstrong to Samuel J. May, 16 February 1846, BAA, 252; “Letter from Richard Allen, of Dublin,” *Liberator*, 13 March 1846.

contravention of heaven's purpose to erect human barriers to the exchange of the world's produce.⁵³ From a variety of angles, Corn Law Repeal therefore looked to Wright like a kindred cause.

Clearly, though, this was partly because Wright was looking for such similarities. In appropriating the free trade question for his own purposes, he did not hesitate to put his own spin on the rhetoric of Cobden and his followers. For example, in June 1843, when Cobden gave a speech opposing sugar duties at the second so-called "World's Convention" on anti-slavery, Wright was in attendance as a spectator. But the speech that Cobden gave and the speech that Wright heard were subtly different in their tones and emphases. The printed proceedings of the Convention included a record of Cobden's speech in which he urged abolitionists "not [to] go to Government" to enforce antislavery principles, since "they will make tools of you if they can." Instead, he urged abolitionists to make "an appeal to public opinion." "Try by your persuasion to win people from slavery, to convince them of their error ... but do not go to Government to pass laws to put down slavery in other countries." To erect trade barriers like the sugar duties would only inhibit "the happiness which the freest inter-communication between nations will give to the family of man."⁵⁴

These passages functioned more or less like the peroration of Cobden's speech, but Wright gave them crucial emphasis in his journal and in a report to the *Liberator*, which gave notes on the "substance" of Cobden's speech. Where Cobden had simply

⁵³ See, for example, John Bright's Covent Garden speech in Ashworth, *Recollections of Richard Cobden*, 264-265. See also "English and American Insanity of Legislation," *Liberator*, 3 March 1843

⁵⁴ *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention, Called by the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and Held in London, from Tuesday, June 13th, to Tuesday, June 20th, 1843* (London: John Snow, 1843), 145-46.

urged his audience not to go to government, Wright interpolated a robust no-government argument of the kind non-resistants made. As part of a lengthy paraphrase of Cobden's speech, Wright attributed lines like these to the ACLL leader: "No government is fit to be held up as an example of morality or Christianity. ... Government is a soulless thing, and we should never appeal to men as *government*, but as men, as human beings having conscience and responsibility. As government men feel, think, and speak, and act, not as *men*, but as government." "Such was the tenor of Cobden's speech," Wright told the *Liberator*. But Wright's paraphrase makes it hard to see where Cobden's actual speech ended and Wright's own interpretation of it began. Attacking human government as "soulless" was something Wright was more likely to say than Cobden, but there was enough similarity between their critiques of governments to make them seamless in Wright's mind.⁵⁵

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Wright's relentless lecturing during his first year abroad took its toll on his health, and by the end of 1843, correspondence among Wright's friends often circled ominously around his persistent cough. In a December letter to Wright, Garrison expressed deep concern for his welfare and urged him to return home rather than risk more serious illness. But before that letter had crossed the Atlantic, Wright's British friends had persuaded him to cross the English Channel. Webb and Pease convinced Wright to seek a cure for his cough at the most famous water cure establishment on the Continent: the spa of Vincent Priessnitz at Graefenberg, a village nestled in the Austrian mountains near Silesia. An Austrian farmer without formal education, Priessnitz had opened the spa at

⁵⁵ "Letter from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 28 July 1843. See also Wright's Journals (BPL), vol. 21, 188.

Graefenberg in 1829, putting thousands of patients through a cure that prescribed water for virtually any ailment.⁵⁶

In the 1840s, thanks to promotional books by satisfied customers and acolytes, the “hydropathic” system that Priessnitz pioneered began to spread to America and England, where water cure patients endured demanding regimens of cold-water immersion baths, showers, and compresses, combined with simple diets, massages, and vigorous exercise. Despite its rigors, many abolitionists embraced the water cure, not only because it challenged the human authority of the nascent medical profession, but also because it replaced violent medical procedures with moral self-control and voluntary obedience to Priessnitz. It was, in short, an ideal cure for non-resistants like Wright. In the late 1840s and early 1850s, for example, Elizabeth Pease was an avid promoter of Ben Rhydding, a British water-cure spa where she often retired along with other British reformers like John Bright, Harriet Martineau, and George Thompson. After trying the cure herself for the first time in September 1843, Pease urged Wright to follow suit, and in December, he embarked from Hull, England, for Graefenberg, where he would take the water cure at its Austrian source.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ For Garrison’s letter, see WLG to Henry C. Wright, 16 December 1843, LWLG, 3:237-41. For Wright’s decision to go to Graefenberg, see “Letter from Elizabeth Pease of England,” *Liberator*, 2 February 1844; “Letter from Richard D. Webb—H. C. Wright—The Cold Water Cure—State of Ireland,” *Liberator*, 9 February 1844; Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform*, 48-49, 191. Spellings for Graefenberg were extremely inconsistent in Garrisonian letters and writings. Different spellings included Grafenberg, Graffenberg, and Gräefenberg.

⁵⁷ For an example of a promotional book on Graefenberg, printed the year before Wright decided to go, see R. T. Claridge, *Abstract of Hydropathy; or, the cold water cure, as practised by Vincent Priessnitz, at Graefenberg, Silesia, Austria* (London: James Madden and Co., 1842). For the spread of Priessnitz’s methods to England, especially among radicals like Pease, Joseph Sturge, and the Ashursts, see Gleadle, “The Age of Physiological Reformers,” 204-205. On the affinity between social reformers and the water cure, see Walters, *American Reformers*, 155-58; Clark, *The Communitarian Moment*, 196-203. On Pease and Ben Rhydding, see Chambers-Schiller, “The Cab,” 160-62; Stoddart, *Elizabeth Pease Nichol*, 155-56, 170-74.

Wright spent eight months in Europe, accompanied by Joseph Poole, the brother of Irish Garrisonians Sarah and Elizabeth Poole. On their way to Silesia from Hamburg, where they arrived on December 30, Wright and Poole passed through Berlin, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Dresden and Breslau, arriving in Graefenberg on January 10. After staying there for the first six months of 1844, Wright took all of July to travel through Austria, Germany, Prussia, Switzerland, and Belgium en route to London. Wright expressed reluctance, at first, to take such a long detour from his lectures on peace, slavery, and “nationalism” in Britain. But he and his friends soon began to describe this apparent detour as an inevitable extension of Wright’s mission to Europe. Touring Europe would allow him to elaborate his idea that nations were soulless and artificial, and that human beings were united in a brotherhood that spanned national borders. As Wright told the *Liberator* on leaving England, his task in Europe would not be, like the typical tourist, “to note down the many little peculiarities in thought, speech, dress, food, domestic and social intercourse, that constantly pass before me. . . . My object is and has been to study human beings.”⁵⁸

Wright’s biographer, Lewis Perry, has shown that Wright did not always hew closely to this objective. Very often he did note down “little peculiarities” about the people he met. But Wright’s letters and journals while abroad spent as much time reiterating his attacks on nations as sinful “human institutions” that defied the will of God. “Perish states, nations, republics, kingdoms, empires!” he exclaimed in a letter to Garrison, shortly after crossing the Channel and arriving in Hamburg. “The triumph of

⁵⁸ “Letters from Henry C. Wright, No. I [23 December 1843],” *Liberator*, 5 April 1844.

Christianity and humanity I associate with God, and not with any form of Church or State—of religious or national organizations.”⁵⁹

That credo became commonplace in Wright’s reports from Europe, which gave readers of the *Liberator* a steady stream of information and interpretation about Europe. Once Wright had returned from the Continent, apparently cured of his ailment, he mailed a “voluminous manuscript” to the *Liberator* for publication, which supplemented the letters he had already sent while at Graefenberg. These writings, culled from Wright’s correspondence and travel journals, became staples in the *Liberator* from April 1844 to February 1846. Over fifty of the 100 issues printed in that time contained dispatches from Wright, with over thirty of those dispatches recounting Wright’s trip to Austria and back. In 1845, Wright reshaped his letters and journal entries into a book and published it in Glasgow. *Six Months at Graefenberg* served both as another British advertisement for Priessnitz’s method and as a polemical reflection on Wright’s journey through the heart of Europe. Garrison probably exaggerated only slightly when he estimated, at the end of his run of Wright’s European reports in the *Liberator*, that the dispatches had been “read by thousands at home and abroad.”⁶⁰

This mass of published material, documenting what was supposed to be a side trip for Wright, became a self-conscious and deliberate effort to portray him as a citizen of

⁵⁹ “Letters from Henry C. Wright, No. II [25 December 1843],” *Liberator*, 12 April 1844. For Perry’s account of Wright’s trip through Europe, see Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform*, 271-80.

⁶⁰ WLG to Henry C. Wright, 1 October 1844, LWLG, 3:265 (“voluminous manuscript”); “Journal of Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 13 February 1846 (“read by thousands”). See also “Letters from Henry C. Wright, No. IV,” *Liberator*, 11 October 1844. Some excerpts from Wright’s journals were also published in two of his later books: *Human Life* and *Anthropology*. Wright compiled *Six Months at Graefenberg* in the fall of 1844 while staying at the home of Richard Webb, who reported to Maria Weston Chapman that Wright “has latterly taken to spend the greater part of the day writing in his room. I suppose he thinks he is shaking the world, but I can perceive very little of the motion so far.” See Richard D. Webb to MWC, 2 September 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.51. See also Webb to MWC, 3 November 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.68.

the world and an exemplary traveler. But this portrayal was not Wright's effort alone. His friends also construed his trip as a practical proof that he was not constrained by narrow loyalties to nations. On the eve of Wright's departure, Webb wrote to the *Liberator* that he would "have intercourse with natives of all parts of Europe," with the result that "his ideas, his sympathies, his knowledge of men and nations, will become more defined and more extended." And after Wright's return, Garrison declared in the *Liberator* that there was never "such a traveller in Europe as Henry C. Wright—so anti-national, so world-embracing, so brotherly, so deeply imbued with the spirit of universal philanthropy, so ready to communicate his 'ultra' thoughts and feelings to all with whom he came into contact." Privately, Garrison reinforced this interpretation in a letter to Wright himself: "I regard your sojourn in Graeffenberg [sic] as of vast importance. . . . Your social intercourse with so many persons from the various nations of the earth—the declaration to them of your peculiar views—the greatness of your spirit as exhibited to them in transcending all geographical boundaries, and pouring contempt on all national pride and glory—the inculcation of the great doctrine of human brotherhood . . . what may not follow from all this?" Such views framed Wright's trip as an exhibit—as a piece of evidence to support the Garrisonians' contention that they transcended geographical and national boundaries.⁶¹

Two recurrent themes emerged in discourses about Wright's trip to Europe, both of which cast it as an "anti-national" odyssey. The first theme emphasized what Garrison and Webb called Wright's social "intercourse" with representatives of many countries. About two months after his arrival in Graefenberg, "a *Hospital* for all nations," Wright

⁶¹ "Journal of Henry C. Wright"; "Letter from Richard D. Webb—H. C. Wright—The Cold Water Cure—State of Ireland"; WLG to Henry C. Wright, 1 October 1844, LWLG, 2:264-65.

told Garrison that “our saloon at meal times” was crowded with “some fifteen nations.” In future letters, Wright returned often to the fact that “fifteen different nations” were represented at the hospital, from “Russians, Poles, Hungarians, Prussians, Austrians, Frenchmen, and Italians,” to Danes, Tyrolese, and Englishmen. “Probably not on earth can you find such a combination as is found in this place, and in our saloon,” Wright said in a letter written near the end of his stay at Graefenberg. The “characteristics” of so many nations “in a measure are merged into a peculiar people,” forming a “Graefenberg dialect,” “a Graefenberg character,” a “Graefenberg state of society, that can no where else be found.” The mere act of this mingling, Wright implied in a letter written the day after his departure from the spa, was a way of transcending national borders. As the Graefenberg patients said their goodbyes, “some from Russia, Poland, Prussia, Austria, France, America, England, and Italy, were here in my snug little room. . . . We loved one another. Our nationalism was gone. We were only human beings.”⁶²

On his return trip across the Continent, Wright continued to comment often on the polyglot groups of travelers at boarding houses and restaurants or on trains and riverboats. On one occasion he met and conversed at length with a Hungarian Jew, and on another he happened to meet and converse with two of Prince Metternich’s children and their private tutor. At Neuchatel in the Swiss Alps, he praised a local hospital “for

⁶² “Letter from Henry C. Wright, No. V [13 March 1844],” *Liberator*, 31 May 1844; “Letter from Henry C. Wright [23 May 1844],” *Liberator*, 16 August 1844; “Letter from Henry C. Wright [28 June 1844],” *Liberator*, 31 August 1844; “Letter from Henry C. Wright, No. III [2 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 4 October 1844. In this last letter, Wright continued, “The feeling of Human Brotherhood is deep and strong within me. There is a sympathy that binds the whole family of man into one brotherhood, and perish all human devices that would break this bond!” Wright also met a Polish army officer who had fought in the Napoleonic Wars and served as an aide-de-camp for Tsar Alexander, and who was apparently impressed enough by Wright’s non-resistance arguments to invite him to Warsaw. See RDW to MWC, 31 March 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.24; Wright’s Journals (BPL), vol. 26, 88-9 (20 February 1844). Other accounts of Graefenberg confirm its diverse clientele, although they also confirm that patients came mainly from the Austrian empire and bordering countries like Prussia, Poland, and the German states. See Claridge, *Abstract of Hydropathy*, 20-27.

persons of all countries and religions, who need assistance in sickness. It does one good to meet such instances of the recognition of the brotherhood of man. It is a benevolence that knows no national or sectarian boundaries.”⁶³

Wright invested nearly as much hope in these social encounters with people of various nations as he had once placed in his idea for a true “World’s Convention.” Upon leaving Graefenberg he speculated that institutions like Priessnitz’s spa—or like the Neuchatel establishment that he visited later—might one day create forms of sociability untainted by nationalism, thereby fulfilling the same goal he once envisioned for the Convention. “One thing is certain—a few such institutions as this, scattered over the earth, would do more to secure the peace and prosperity of mankind, than all the guns and bayonets, the priests and politicians, the armies and governments and treaties of this world.” For Wright, who rarely had a positive word for “institutions” of any sort, that was high praise. “Individual hearts are here knit together,” he concluded, united by “a chord of individual love and sympathy reaching around the globe.” Institutions like Graefenberg could further “an extension of personal acquaintance and friendship all over the world,” creating “the union, in love ... of individual hearts.”⁶⁴ In Austria, Wright believed he had discovered the ideal that he saw at the crux of the Corn Law repeal movement—“*inter-individual*” intercourse instead of intercourse between nations.

⁶³ See “Letter from Henry C. Wright, No. VII [4? July 1844],” *Liberator*, 1 November 1844; “Letters from Henry C. Wright, No. XII [6 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 27 December 1844 (meets Metternich’s children on a boat on the Danube); “Letter from Henry C. Wright [11 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 4 April 1845 (“at the supper table [in Innsbruck] were English, Jews, Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, Poles, Austrians, Spaniards—a precious lot we were”); “Letters from Henry C. Wright [19 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 10 October 1845 (Wright watches the sun rise over Mont Blanc with “Austrians, Poles, Scots, Portuguese and Americans”); “Letters from Henry C. Wright” [23 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 24 October 1845 (“I became acquainted here [in Geneva] with an intelligent Hungarian Jew, who had just come from Pressburg on the Danube”); “Letters from Henry C. Wright [1 August 1844],” *Liberator*, 16 January 1846; Wright’s Journals (BPL), vol. 28 (3 April 1844 – 2 July 1844).

⁶⁴ “Letter from Henry C. Wright [28 June 1844].”

A second theme emerged in Wright's accounts of his European travels and was underlined by friends: his willingness "to communicate his 'ultra' thoughts and feelings to all with whom he came into contact." Wright often wrote that the Europeans he met were surprised by his readiness to speak ill of America. He did not hesitate to tell them that "no nation could be more heathenish, more savage and murderous" than the United States, as Wright put it to Swiss educator Philipp Emanuel von Fellenberg, who operated a school near Zurich. "They think I act an ungrateful and unpatriotic part," said Wright, when he spent time in the Graefenberg saloon "publishing the atrocities of my country." Wright's regular and almost gleeful reply was to disown his country. He told anyone who would listen "that I am not an American citizen, as they understand it; that I loathe the name *American*, and never wish to be recognized as one; that I have no country, and never wish to have, as they count country; that human beings, not human customs and institutions, not certain parallels of latitude and longitude, constitute my country and my countrymen. ... So they find no *nationalism* in me to appeal to."⁶⁵

Wright's disclaimers about his American citizenship both predated and postdated his trip to Graefenberg. Many of the British audiences who heard him speak on slavery or disunionism could expect for him to begin with the same stereotyped exclamations that he made in Austria about ridding his heart of "every vestige of patriotism" and claiming "the world [as] my country." In a speech before the Glasgow Emancipation Society in 1843, after calling American President John Tyler a "thief and a robber" who had sold his own enslaved children, Wright told his hearers they would "think I have no patriotism,

⁶⁵ "Letters from Henry C. Wright [17 July 1844]," *Liberator*, 25 July 1845; "Letter from Henry C. Wright [28 June 1844]."

but I have; I am full of it. It is not America, nor England, nor France that is my country, but the world.”⁶⁶

After his return from Graefenberg, as Wright threw himself into the Garrisonians’ “Send Back the Money” campaign against the Free Church, he had more occasions to make such disavowals of American patriotism, especially when he also published articles in the United Kingdom calling for the dissolution of the United States. “The division of the earth into states and nations is the work of man,” not God, Wright said in the preface to a series of essays on disunion he published in Glasgow in 1845, as his “justification for publishing these Letters in this kingdom.” “When our obligations as members of a particular nation conflict with our duties as members of the human family, the former cease ... and *patriotism* becomes a sin.” Because “humanity is above citizenship,” said Wright, his duties were not “regulated by the compass and the clock, but are extensive as human suffering and human need; and cannot be superseded, bounded, or modified by state and national arrangements.” If he violated “international law and etiquette” by calling for American disunion, Wright said in a letter to the *Liberator*, his “vindication” was that “nations violate inter-*human* law and etiquette. I cannot be faithful to man, and to nations.”⁶⁷

Wright pointed to his willingness to criticize his own country as proof that his sympathies were unbounded by nationalism, but he also cited his willingness to criticize

⁶⁶ “Letter from Henry C. Wright [23 May 1844]”; “Glasgow Emancipation Society—Annual Meeting,” *Liberator*, 15 September 1843. See also *Ninth Annual Report of the Glasgow Emancipation Society* (Glasgow: David Russell, 1843), 33.

⁶⁷ Henry Clarke Wright, *The Dissolution of the American Union, demanded by justice and humanity, as the incurable enemy of liberty.... Addressed to the abolitionists of Great Britain and Ireland* (Glasgow: David Russell, 1845), 3ff; “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 12 December 1845. See also “Speech of Henry Clarke Wright,” *Liberator*, 3 October 1845; “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 27 February 1846; Wright, *First Day Sabbath Not of Divine Appointment*, 3.

the evils he saw in other countries. If he had disowned America but refused to denounce sins elsewhere, that would have proved only that he wanted to exchange his citizenship in one particular country for loyalty to another. So Wright made clear that he was “just as ready ... to turn the tide of public opinion, as far as in me lies, against Russian despotism, or English robbery, or French cruelty.” One day in March 1844, as he entered the saloon at Graefenberg for supper, Wright dramatically “said to those around, ‘I never wish to be called an *American* again. I heartily loathe the name.’” According to Wright’s journal, “all stared,” until a patient named Gurney dared to ask whether Wright wanted instead to be called an Englishman. “*No*,” he replied, “I abhor that as heartily as I do America.” “Would you be called an Austrian?” asked an Austrian count who was listening in, to which Wright responded, “*No*—that is no better.” He wished to be only “a man, a human being.” Gurney ventured to ask, “Can’t you be a Human Being—& an American?” “Not well,” answered Wright.⁶⁸

True to his word, Wright lost few opportunities to show that he abhorred the name of Austrian or Englishman as much as he loathed the name American. Several times at Graefenberg he sparred with English patients who tried to defend patriotism by pointing to England as an exemplary nation. At the end of the above talk, an English army officer named Moore asked, “But for her Patriotism ... where had been the influence of England on the world?” Wright retorted that it would have been better “for the human family had England’s patriotism & England’s influence been a blank. Look to China—look to

⁶⁸ “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 12 December 1845; Wright’s Journals (BPL), vol. 27, 80-81 (8 March 1844). According to Wright, he had an almost identical exchange with the tutor of Prince Metternich’s children, in which Wright once again pledged that “I do not wish to be known as an American any where.” When asked, “To what nation do you belong?” Wright again rejected both England and Austria as alternative nationalities, claiming that “my country is the world; and I wish to be known only as a brother to all men.”

Hindoostan—look to New Zealand—look to West India—look to Africa—look over the globe—& see the nature of her influence. Tears & blood—widows & orphans—burning towns & cities. . . . So with the United States—so with all nations that call themselves Christian & civilized.”⁶⁹

This depiction of England, which even used its history in the West Indies as evidence of its malign influence rather than its moral example, was a far cry from the Anglophilia that coursed through Garrisonian rhetoric in the 1830s, but it was a critical portrait of England that Wright elaborated throughout his sojourn in Europe. The Corn Laws, the Opium War, the invasion of Afghanistan, the sufferings of Ireland, the tyranny of aristocrats, the plight of “the people”—all came under Wright’s general censure of England as a nation no better than others. In February 1844, when news of O’Connell’s conviction reached the Silesian Alps, Wright had a confrontation with another English officer named Captain Blair, whom he described as “*John Bull* personified.” When Blair and other English patients exulted in the verdict, Wright replied that they were mistaken if they thought “John Bull can put down Repeal or stop people from holding him up to scorn & execration for his robbing & murder,” and added that as a “friend of God [and] Man” he went for the “repeal of all domination that is based on the right of the strongest . . . all over the world.” Later that morning Wright pontificated further on England’s brutality in Ireland, arguing that Protestantism was no more Christian than Catholicism and calling the Church of England a gang of “*highway Robber[s]*” who fleeced the poor. There was “great excitement” caused by these remarks, he told his diary, adding, in what

⁶⁹ Wright’s Journals (BPL), vol. 27, 81-82 (8 March 1844).

was likely an understatement, that he “raised the steam a hundred fold” by “express[ing] my opinion most freely on all subjects.”⁷⁰

As we have seen, reports about Wright’s trip focused on two characteristics that supposedly made him a uniquely “anti-national” figure: first, his social intercourse with those he met on the continent, regardless of their nationality, and second, his willingness to “express [his] opinion most freely on all subjects,” even if those opinions reflected poorly on his nation or the nations he was traveling through. The one theme cast him as a figure with cosmopolitan sensibilities and experiences, and the other asserted his anti-nationalistic solidarity with a global family of human beings. “I rejoice at your boldness and fidelity,” Garrison told Wright in a private letter, “a stranger, as you are, in a strange land.” Readers of the *Liberator* were indebted to Wright for providing such a unique travelogue, he continued. “Be assured that you are affording much gratification, and conveying much instruction, to those who are in the habit of reading the *Liberator*; that you cannot write too often; that your health, welfare, location and movements, are matters of deep interest to thousands; and that you are sowing broadcast the seeds of a world-wide reformation.”⁷¹

But while the *Liberator*, for the purposes of “conveying much instruction,” gave readers a seamless representation of Wright as a world-embracing reformer and an “anti-national” exemplar, it is important to note that there was also a great deal of ambivalence about nations in Wright’s letters and journals while in Europe. Although Wright made histrionic claims that national organizations were wholly artificial and invidious, he also could not completely resist the “comparative gaze” of the typical European tourist. In

⁷⁰ Wright’s Journals (BPL), vol. 26, 113-125 (24 February 1844).

⁷¹ WLG to Henry C. Wright, 1 November 1845, 3:322-23.

many of the towns through which he passed, Wright used his sightseeing as a chance to compare the customs and institutions of European nations with those of America, which often fared better in the comparison than one might expect, given Wright's imprecations on the name American.⁷²

Indeed, in his *Liberator* dispatches Wright's attacks on nations and America were interspersed in a litany of formulaic observations about the towns and cities of Europe, which almost seemed to reproduce the superior attitude of ordinary American travelers towards the "Old World." As he passed from Hamburg and Berlin to Graefenberg, and then back through Vienna, Zurich, Geneva, and Ostend, his travelogue often conformed to a basic template. At almost every stop, he commented on the fact that European towns were surrounded by ruined fortifications, which proved the inability of military might to stand the test of time. Generally this observation was followed by a local history of the region, which, while probably cribbed from a typical guidebook, reflected Wright's particular interest in debunking militarism and religious sectarianism. In addition to a scornful comment on the blood-soaked forts surrounding virtually every stop he made, readers could expect Wright to note the empty cathedrals, the palatial trappings of nobles and monarchs and priests, the castles that served as scenes of "drunken orgies" in years past. Everywhere he looked, he saw evidence that the "lust after power over man" had "converted the earth into a charnel house."⁷³

⁷² For the term "comparative gaze," which I have also discussed in Chapter 3, see Green, "The Comparative Gaze," 423-440. On Wright's comparisons between Europe and America, also see Perry, *Childhood, Marriage, and Reform*, 264-71.

⁷³ "Letters from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 11 July 1845 ("drunken orgies"); "Letters from Henry C. Wright [23 July 1844]" ("charnel house"). For examples of dispatches that conform to this basic template, see "Letters from Henry C. Wright, No. III [12 January 1844]," *Liberator*, 19 April 1844 (Magdeburg, Prussia); "Letters from Henry C. Wright, No IV [5 January 1844]," *Liberator*, 26 April 1844 (Leipzig); "Letters from Henry C. Wright [8 July 1844]," *Liberator*, 28 February 1845 (Linz); "Letters

Almost without fail, readers could expect Wright to extrapolate from these sights to a general commentary on how institutions, which were supposed to be accessories or “appendages” to human welfare, had taken the place of man. “I have had an opportunity to learn much of the institutions, religion, and politics of Austria, Prussia, and Russia,” Wright told readers of the *Liberator*, “and one thing is certain, that it is the universal feeling in Europe, on the continent, and in England, THAT HUMAN BEINGS ARE MADE FOR INSTITUTIONS, AND NOT INSTITUTIONS FOR HUMAN BEINGS.” It was a theme that Wright had been sounding in his non-resistance writings even before crossing the ocean, but it was sharpened by his actual contact with the torture chambers, battlefields, and the “hoary institutions of despotisms of Europe.”⁷⁴ On his last day in Belgium, he summed up his impressions: in Europe there was “a cowering of soul before titles & station, an almost universal impression that men are made for political & religious institutions” instead of vice versa. A year later, Wright was still hammering the idea: “No one idea has been forced upon my mind, on this continent, so often as this—*that man is a mere appendage to institutions*. I cannot get it out of my mind; every thing forces it upon me.”⁷⁵

Wright’s bleak portrayals of European “institutions” sometimes led him to the tentative conclusion that American institutions, with the important exception of slavery,

from Henry C. Wright [10 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 14 March 1845 (Salzburg); “Letters from Henry C. Wright [11 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 28 March 1845 (Rattenburg); “Letters from Henry C. Wright [12 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 11 April 1845 (Innsbruck); “Letters from Henry C. Wright [30 July 1845],” *Liberator*, 2 January 1846 (Brussels); “Letters from Henry C. Wright [31 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 9 January 1846 (Waterloo). Other Garrisonians made similar observations about their travels in Europe. See, e.g., “Letter from Richard Allen,” *Liberator*, 11 October 1844.

⁷⁴ “Letter from Henry C. Wright [23 May 1844]”; Wright’s Journals (BPL), vol. 42, 55 (4 September 1847).

⁷⁵ Wright’s Journals (BPL), vol. 29, 40 (2 August 1844); “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” 5 December 1845. The journal excerpt was printed, slightly edited, in “Letters from Henry C. Wright [2 August 1844],” *Liberator*, 13 February 1846. See also “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 23 June 1843.

were at least not as bad as those of Old Europe. He often told readers of the *Liberator* that the cities of Europe were less dynamic than the cities of America. Berlin and Vienna lacked the vibrant “commercial” life of such cities, just as they also lacked the freedom of press enjoyed by Americans.⁷⁶ While at Graefenberg, Wright lamented that Europeans “know not the first elements of human freedom. I find it nearly impossible to make them understand how it is possible for people to live without some God-ordained powers that be, (as these terrific monsters, these despotisms, are called).” In October 1843, while in Wales, Wright drew an extended comparison between “Old England institutions” and “New-England institutions,” which argued for the “painful and striking” conclusion that “the servility of the great masses in England . . . is not less complete than is the servility of the southern slave.” In New England, Wright claimed, most men were freeholders, while Old England was blighted by a “farming tenantry” and a large class of landless, jobless workers. Taxes were light in America, as was the national debt, while “in Old England, every thing [was] taxed, directly or indirectly” because of the debts the nation incurred to fight incessant wars. In the case of Old England, “the all-pervading spirit of the nation [was] a desire to manage and govern others,” whereas in New England most institutions were intended “to train the people to take care of themselves, and each one to manage himself.”⁷⁷

It was in the very same letter that Wright claimed to “have no country” and to “care not for American or Englishman”—claims that might seem to be belied by his

⁷⁶ See “Letters from Henry C. Wright, No. III [12 January 1844],” on Berlin; “Letters from Hen[r]y C. Wright, No. XI [6 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 20 December 1844, on Vienna. On the lack of a free press in Austria, as compared to the United States, see “Letters from Henry C. Wright [12 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 11 April 1845.

⁷⁷ “Letter from Henry C. Wright [23 May 1844]”; “Letter from Henry C. Wright [1 October 1843],” *Liberator*, 3 November 1843.

compliments on his native country. But in other letters, he turned the tables in these comparisons between the United States and Europe, and argued that Europe, as bad as it was, had not sunk as low as America. European countries had not stooped to the level of selling human beings in its national capitols. Chastening his readers with that constant reminder, Wright tried to underline the tentativeness of his comparisons between New England and the Old World. At best, he sometimes implied, the institutions of Europe and America were equally in violation of the laws of God and man: the American Union was bad, for instance, but “the union between the cantons of Switzerland [was] but little better.”⁷⁸ And at worst, the superiority of American institutions was forever called into question by its history of enslavement.

Throughout his tour of Europe, therefore, Wright’s comments on America were always marked by ambivalence. In June 1844, when he tried to draw the same “contrast between the United States and the despotisms of Europe” that he had outlined earlier in his letter from Wales, he was stopped short by an Austrian count who asked whether he spoke as a white man or a black man. “I was dumb,” Wright confessed. “How could I speak? What could I say? ... How can I talk of the blessings of liberty in America, when I know that not one of these blessings is ever extended to the slave?” He promised that the “Austrian Count’s rebuke [would] ever ring” in his mind and even claimed that he would henceforth speak of America only by imagining himself standing in the place of a slave. “As an American slave,” Wright would “pour out my indignant rebukes upon that tyrant nation” and “trample in the dust the American banner that waves over my wife and children on an auction stand,” while at the same time he would “trample in scorn and

⁷⁸ “Letters from Henry C. Wright [26 July 1844],” *Liberator*, 7 November 1845.

execration the despotisms of Europe.” “American liberty,” “American religion,” and “American democracy,” Wright said, should be “despised and loathed by heathendom and Christendom.” In future comments about the relative freedom of America, he was more circumspect than he had been in 1843. His critiques of British customs were now coupled with the qualification that “bad as is this kingdom, she has not sounded the very bass note of infamy, as America has.”⁷⁹

Wright did not fully banish his lingering suspicion that American institutions were more pliable than the despotisms of Europe. As often as he conceded that America had “sounded the *bottomless* pit of infamy,” he also contended that there was at least “more hope for man in America than in Europe.” America lacked “old institutions” and was possessed by a “spirit of change, that sweeps institutions ... from the pathway of man’s onward progress.” It would be easier to begin a “peaceful, bloodless revolution” against all institutions there than in Europe. Retreating from a kind of patriotism that saw no room for progress in America, Wright took up the qualified if somewhat paradoxical position Garrisonians had already honed after the so-called “World’s Convention” in 1840: that if America was the country most in need of reform, it was also the best country best suited for reformers. As Garrison himself told Elizabeth Pease in the spring of 1843, “England and America both need[ed]” Wright’s aid, “but, bad as we are, there is more freedom of speech and better materials to carry on the work of reform here, than with you in ‘the old world.’”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ “Letter from Henry C. Wright [28 June 1844]”; “Letters from Henry C. Wright [26 July 1845],” *Liberator*, 22 August 1845.

⁸⁰ “Letters from Henry C. Wright [13 June 1845],” *Liberator*, 11 July 1845. See also WLW to Elizabeth Pease, 4 April 1843, LWLG, 3:148.

Yet even Wright's claims that there was more hope for America than Europe were not absolute: there was an irreducible ambivalence in his writings about which areas of the world were the worst for human beings, and which ones offered the most reasons for hope. Towards the end of his trip to Europe, he leavened his letters to the *Liberator* and to friends with hope that "a change is slowly coming over Europe" which "no power can arrest," and that "causes are at work that will certainly revolutionize Europe, and raise up the people, and sink the royalty and nobility." One instrument of this revolution, said Wright, echoing the Anti-Corn Law Leaguers whom he had associated with in Britain, would be the increase of "international intercourse," which would bring Europe "not only new kinds of merchandise, but new opinions, new principles, of human relations and duties."⁸¹ But the main instrument of Europe's progress would be "the saving power of the people" themselves. "*As a Nation*," Wright once told an English captain in Austria, England was "a monster of meanness, avarice, cruelty, injustice, fraud, treachery, robbery & murder," but he added, "among the people there is much sound principle." As with America, Wright could couple his blistering reproofs of European nations with notes of qualified optimism. "A power is rising in Britain," Wright effused in February 1846, "that will sweep away the Corn Laws—the State Church—restricted Suffrage—Primogeniture—the National Debt—Aristocracy and Royalty—all but the *name*; and that without bloodshed."⁸²

As a reformer, Wright ultimately placed his faith less in American uniqueness than in the power of popular opinion and popular reform to change institutions in every

⁸¹ Wright's Journals (BPL), vol. 32, 47 (9 June 1845); "Letters from Henry C. Wright [2 August 1844]."

⁸² "State of Things in England," *Liberator*, 27 June 1845; Wright's Journals (BPL), vol. 26, 76 (18 February 1844).

country. The “rising power of THE PEOPLE” was the primary vehicle for his hopes, whether in the United States or in Europe.⁸³ But that explains why he was so ambivalent about his native country. On the one hand, America seemed to offer more resources for popular reform than Europe: the press was more unfettered, the society more democratic, and the classes more fluid, than among the aristocracies and monarchies of Europe. At the same time, even if there seemed to be more hope for peaceful revolution in America, Wright thought that the persistence of slavery there was preventing the progress of “THE PEOPLE” elsewhere. While abroad, he lamented that the barbarities of slavery in the United States were reported in the newspapers of Austria, Germany, Russia, and Britain, where despots and aristocrats could point to America as proof that popular democracy was a sham.⁸⁴

This was a well-worn lament among American abolitionists, of course. In 1838, after David Lee Child had spent fifteen months in Europe, he also reported to readers of the *Liberator* that “enlightened and good men in Europe” now regarded Americans “as the most cruel and rapacious people, since the times of Cortez and Pizarro,” and that their enemies pointed to American slavery as proof of the failure of republicanism. But Child’s visit to Europe had not been made primarily as a reformer or an abolitionist, and his reports about the reputation of the United States among European liberals were thus cursory and incidental. By contrast, since Wright enjoyed direct and close contacts with British reformers like the Chartists and the free traders, he could provide readers in the

⁸³ “Letters from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 3 April 1846.

⁸⁴ See “Letter from Henry C. Wright [28 June 1844].”

United States with compelling evidence that America's conduct was disabling the cause of "the people" abroad.⁸⁵

In the spring of 1846, for example, Wright told the *Liberator* that "the friends of liberty here—the Chartists in Britain, who are pleading and laboring to advance the rights of the people—are chagrined, disappointed, disgusted to learn the hypocrisy and utter lying abandonment of American democrats." Despite Wright's ambivalence about the Charter, discussed in Chapter 4, he identified Chartists as friends of liberty, and he was dismayed that "the American republic is doing more to rivet the chains of despotism, and to retard the progress of liberty, in this hemisphere, than all the despots and aristocrats of Europe and Asia combined." Wright's assessment was characteristically hyperbolic, but it was not entirely groundless. British conservatives who opposed the Charter did often point to America as an example of democracy gone awry, and although Chartists could still persuade some fence-sitting liberals that America was a model for Britain to follow, in the 1840s even liberals and "philosophic radicals" in Parliament were beginning to see America as an example of democracy to shun. Slavery was one of many reasons why America was an unstable symbol in British politics during Wright's visit to Europe. Both liberals and conservatives could allude to it to make points in their favor at home, and as support for the Charter waned in the late-1840s, conservatives began to win more points than radical democrats.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ "American Republicanism in Europe," *Liberator*, 23 February 1838. See also Henry B. Stanton, *Remarks of Henry B. Stanton, in the Representatives' Hall, on the 23rd and 24th of February, before the Committee of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts ... on the Subject of Slavery* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1837), 51-2.

⁸⁶ "Letter from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 27 March 1846. On changing views of America among British radicals and conservatives, see D. P. Crook, *American Democracy in English Politics, 1815-1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

Wright's claims that "Freedom has no deadlier enemy on earth than the American republic" therefore had a ring of truth, especially when they were corroborated by British reformers themselves. In early 1846, for example, Wright forwarded a letter from Henry Vincent, a moral-force Chartist with whom he had become acquainted, to the *Liberator*. Vincent testified that while he was "in the society of our leading radical reformers, I soon found what a fatal influence America was exercising upon the cause of liberty throughout Europe." Whenever Chartists like himself tried to argue for popular government, "the rejoinder invariably was, 'Ah, but in America the people have power—your own system is in operation there, and why does it not crush these evils?'" When Wright claimed that American slavery was injuring the cause of the people, he was not just offering his own interpretation of events. He was echoing the judgment of British political radicals like Vincent.⁸⁷

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Both Webb and Wright emphatically claimed that they were not patriots, at least not as that term was understood by their contemporaries. Instead, they claimed that they could transcend national ties and judge all countries objectively. Yet despite their protestations to the contrary, both men eventually began to express a sense of affiliation with and love for their countries—in Webb's case, because he could not bear the military occupation of his country by another nation, and in Wright's case, because the customs and institutions of his homeland looked, from a distance, more pliable than those of the Old World. But if Webb and Wright were inching their way towards an embrace of

⁸⁷ "Dissolution of the American Union: Letter from Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 30 January 1846. See Samuel May, Jr., "Foreign Interference," BPL, Ms.B.1.6.13.39, which uses Vincent's letter as proof that European republicans have a vital interest in the slave question in the United States. "Their own liberties & their hopes for the liberties of their children & of mankind are deeply concerned in this matter."

patriotism, they also offered clear indications of how that patriotism would have to be qualified in order to be justified.

For both men, there was no acceptable form of patriotism that did not allow them, no matter where they traveled, to criticize their country's institutions with perfect freedom. Patriotism, when it was nothing more than dumb pride and unreflective vanity, was anathema to the reformer whose country was the world. Likewise, a patriotism that licensed international aggression and hatred was a narrow patriotism, and it too received the withering disdain of both Wright and Webb. In Switzerland, Wright reported being guided by a "Swiss *patriot*" to all the local battlefields. "His soul gloats over the bloody deeds of his countrymen," but Wright, for his part, abhorred such patriotism, and likewise criticized the English tourists he encountered in Europe who were "very national" and never saw anything to praise in other countries.⁸⁸

It was clear what Webb and Wright thought true patriotism was *not*. Less clearly articulated was their view of what true patriotism *was*, especially since they seldom endorsed patriotism explicitly for fear of having it confused with mere vanity or jingoistic chauvinism. Between the lines of their writings, however, a picture was emerging of a kind of nation they could identify with and love. First, it would be a nation judged by the open and democratic character of its institutions, not by the extensiveness of its empire or its victories on the battlefield. Second, it would be a nation joined not through coerced loyalty to a despotic ruler, but by voluntary citizenship and affiliation. Finally, it would be a nation that resembled what Wright called his "Graefenberg society," in which the members of the community loved one another irrespective of their countries of origin.

⁸⁸ "Letters from Henry C. Wright [24 July 1844]"; "Letters from Henry C. Wright [2 August 1844]."

Webb's movement towards this kind of civic nationalism was more hesitant than Wright's. His deep-seated suspicion of Catholic priests, his anxieties about the variety of social life in Ireland, and his intractable skepticism about the ability of Ireland to be an independent nation all combined to make him much less sanguine than other Garrisonians about the possibility of a civic nation whose institutions would be open to all. To the extent that Webb criticized the aristocratic and monarchic institutions of England, he shared Wright's view that a nation worthy of love would have to dispense with such institutions in favor of government by the people. Eventually, Garrisonians like Wright and Webb would come to believe that the United States represented the world's best hope for realizing this kind of a nation.

But in the 1840s, the United States, as a nation, still seemed to fail the tests to which both Webb and Wright put the nations they encountered. Its institutions were oppressive, its government despotic, its posture towards other nations hostile, all while "the people," who should have been the nation's regenerative force, were giddily toasting the nation's triumphs. And as long as slavery and racial prejudice persisted, it was equally clear that Americans would not be united by the kinds of sympathetic ties that Wright believed he had found abroad. Since the United States was not a "civic" nation yet, Garrisonians could not yet be American nationalists.

Chapter 7

The Overthrow of Despotisms

While in Europe in 1844, Henry Clarke Wright had predicted that the rising power of “the people” would soon transform the institutions of Europe. But he could not have known how quickly upheaval would come. Four years later, when a wave of popular revolutions swept across Europe, spreading from Italy and France to Austria, Hungary, and Germany, Wright felt “like one dreaming.” “It seems but *yesterday* that I was traversing the streets of Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Breslau, Olmutz, Vienna, Geneva, Strasburgh, Cologne, and Brussels,” he wrote in a May 1848 letter to James Haughton. Then, the people of the continent had been “quiet” and their rulers “secure,” but now, a “social earthquake” was “rocking Europe,” and old institutions were being “trampled on as things of no value.”¹

Later that month, in a dispatch to the *Liberator*, Richard Webb also concluded that “the world, the European part of it at least, [had] been turned ‘topsy turvy’” by recent events. In 1848, Italian revolutionaries forced monarchs in Piedmont and Tuscany, as well as Pope Pius IX in Rome, to adopt liberalized constitutions. Similar concessions were made to liberal reformers in Belgium and the Netherlands. Uprisings in Vienna and Paris caused the Austrian minister Klemens von Metternich and the French King Louis Philippe to flee into exile. In February, French revolutionaries proclaimed a republic and established a provisional government. Demonstrations roiled Prague, Cracow, Zagreb,

¹ Henry C. Wright to James Haughton, published as “The American Republic a Liar and a Hypocrite,” *Liberator*, 12 May 1848.

and Budapest, where an independent but vulnerable Hungarian government declared its independence from Austria. The year witnessed war between Austrians and northern Italians, street fighting in Paris, and planned uprisings by British Chartists and Irish nationalists, which were averted only thanks to displays of overweening force made by a government unnerved by events across the Channel. The next year, a Roman republic led by Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini began and expired; the radicalism of the French republic receded with the rise of conservative Louis Napoleon to the presidency; and Hungarians led by Lajos Kossuth unsuccessfully battled Russian armies for their national independence. “You doubtless look with much interest now to the arrival of every transatlantic mail,” Webb told Garrison in his letter. “There is no knowing what a day may bring forth.”²

As Webb suspected, Americans were transfixed by news arriving from Europe about the revolutions of 1848. Thanks to British mail steamers and the increasing integration of news networks in the United States, newspapers during the “springtime of nations” constantly featured two-week-old reports about the latest events in Europe. Antislavery papers like the *Liberator* were no exceptions.³ As recent scholars like Larry Reynolds and Paola Gemme have shown, news from Europe also sparked a profusion of highly politicized reactions to the events of 1848 and 1849. Some American observers

² “Affairs in Ireland,” *Liberator*, 26 May 1848. On the Revolutions of 1848, see Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851*, sec. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Charles Breunig, *The Age of Revolution and Reaction, 1789-1850*, sec. ed. (New York: Norton, 1977); Peter N. Stearns, *1848: The Revolutionary Tide in Europe* (New York: Norton, 1974); Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*; Priscilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

³ See, for example, “General Intelligence—Foreign,” *NASS*, 23 March 1848; “Important from Europe,” *Liberator*, 24 March 1848; “Fourteen Days Later from Europe—France a Republic—The Spirit of Freedom Spreading!,” *Liberator*, 31 March 1848; “Further Intelligence from France—All Europe in Commotion,” *Liberator*, 14 April 1848. On the importance of transatlantic steamers in facilitating spread of European news before telegraphy, see David Paull Nickles, “Telegraph Diplomats: The United States’ Relations with France in 1848 and 1870,” *Technology and Culture* 40, no. 1 (1999): 3-7.

celebrated the revolutions as the glorious offspring of their own revolutionary heritage, using national struggles in Europe to define and defend America's national identity as a model republic. Some even urged intervention against Austrian and Russian despotism on behalf of embattled republican forces in Italy and Hungary. Others, meanwhile, were fearful of the radical agendas being hatched in Paris and Vienna, staunchly opposing diplomatic assistance to revolutionaries seen as anarchists and socialists. Whether their reactions to the Revolutions were positive or negative, however, Americans across the political spectrum could not help but notice parallels between struggles in Europe and domestic debates in the United States about republicanism, gender, race, slavery, class, national identity, and much else.⁴

Garrisonians were participants in these broad discourses on European revolutions, but their perspective was shaped by their particular identities as radical reformers. As abolitionists who also advocated causes like feminism and political democratization,

⁴ See, from a rapidly growing literature, Larry Reynolds, *European Revolutions and the American Literary Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Paola Gemme, *Domesticating Foreign Struggles: The Italian Risorgimento and Antebellum American Identity* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005); David Brion Davis, *Revolutions: Reflections on American Equality and Foreign Liberations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990); Adam-Max Tuchinsky, "'The Bourgeoisie Will Fall and Fall Forever': The *New-York Tribune*, the 1848 French Revolution, and American Social Democratic Discourse," *JAH* 92, no. 2 (September 2005): 498-526; Michael A. Morrison, "American Reaction to European Revolutions, 1848-1852: Sectionalism, Memory, and the Revolutionary Heritage," *Civil War History* 49, no. 2 (2003): 111-132; Tim Roberts, "The United States and the European Revolutions of 1848," in *The European Revolutions of 1848 and the Americas*, ed. Guy Thomson, (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2002), 76-99; Brigitte Bailey, "Gender, Nation, and the Tourist Gaze in the European 'Year of Revolutions': Kirkland's *Holidays Abroad*," *American Literary History* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 60-82. For comparative studies of revolutionary Italy and antebellum America, see Don H. Doyle, *Nations Divided: America, Italy, and the Southern Question* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002); Enrico Dal Lago, *Agrarian Elites: American Slaveholders and Southern Italian Landowners, 1815-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Enrico Dal Lago and Rick Halpern, eds., *The American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno: Essays in Comparative History* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Eng.: Palgrave, 2002). For older studies of American reactions to the Revolutions, see Arthur James May, *Contemporary American Opinion of the Mid-Century Revolutions in Central Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1927); Merle Curti, "The Impact of the Revolutions of 1848 on American Thought," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 93, no. 3 (June 1949): 209-215; Eugene N. Curtis, "American Opinion of the French Nineteenth-Century Revolutions," *AHR* 29, no. 2 (January 1924): 249-70.

Garrisonians on both sides of the Atlantic saw the Revolutions as evidence that “a *world era*” of progress was dawning.⁵ Mid-century exchanges with European radicals injected hope and new forms of radicalism into numerous reform groups, Garrisonians included.⁶ And much like Theodore Parker, the Transcendentalist minister who began to appear more frequently at abolitionist meetings at the end of the 1840s, they saw the Revolutions as “signs of the times” that provided an “assurance of success.” At a Boston antislavery meeting in 1848, Parker linked the fall of European states with the rise of an “ideal State, the State of the Future,” to be built on the ruins of “the actual State, the State of the Present.”⁷

But by the end of 1849, the “State of the Future” itself was in doubt. All across Europe, the tide of revolution was already being reversed by internal forces of reaction or by the military might of Austria and Russia. The flight of monarchs the year before was soon followed by the flight of revolutionary leaders like Kossuth, Mazzini, and Giuseppe Garibaldi, who spent long decades in exile soliciting funds from sympathizers and hoping for another revolution, some other spring. The failure of the Revolutions forced many of their supporters to concede that the “State of the Present” was still well defended. Even in defeat, however, the Revolutions continued to cast a long shadow on political debates and reform movements on both sides of the Atlantic. As we will see in this chapter, the

⁵ For “*world era*” quote, see Mary Carpenter to MWC, 19 March 1848, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.24.50.

⁶ See, for example, Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*, 153-178; Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International: Marxism and the American Reform Tradition, 1848-1876* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Guarneri, *The Utopian Alternative*; A. E. Zucker, ed., *The Forty-Eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950); Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution: The German Forty-Eighters in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952).

⁷ “Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society” (“signs of the times” and “assurance of success” taken from a resolution proposed by Parker); “Sketch of the Speech of Mr. Parker,” *Liberator*, 14 April 1848 (“State of the Future” and “State of the Present”).

Revolutions gave reformers a potent repertoire of rhetorical tropes that compared the United States “Slave Power” to despotisms abroad, preparing abolitionists to frame their nation’s own impending crisis as a revolution. While debating the legacies of Revolution in Europe, Garrisonians also further developed the ideas about nationalism and patriotism sketched in the last chapter, in conversation with friends abroad. Though critical of the forms of nationalism spawned by some of the Revolutions, much as Richard Webb was critical of “Young Ireland,” by the mid-1850s Garrisonians were carving out intellectual space for an acceptable form of patriotism, which would be guided not by national vanity but by commitment to universal liberty.⁸

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Most Garrisonians learned about the Revolutions in a context of relative information scarcity. To get the latest news from Europe, readers of the *Liberator* or the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* had to wait, like all Americans, on the latest transatlantic steamer. But thanks to the contacts that Garrisonians had established with British reformers in the 1840s, Garrisonians also viewed the startling events of 1848 with the help of their own informants and interpreters. The latest steamer to Boston or New York brought not just the latest papers from London, but also letters from foreign friends like Richard Webb and William Ashurst, who were regular correspondents of the *Standard* and the *Liberator*, respectively, in these years. Sometimes, when the packets steamed back out of American harbors, they carried Garrisonians across the Atlantic to see post-revolutionary Europe firsthand. Just as Garrisonians discussions about Chartism and Irish Repeal took place within discursive communities that spanned the ocean,

⁸ For an eloquent summary of the rise and fall of radical hopes in 1848 and 1849, see Mayer, *All on Fire*, 378-79, 388.

Garrisonian ideas about Europe's mid-century Revolutions cannot be isolated from their real and imaginative Atlantic crossings after 1848.

Even before 1848, the Garrisonians' transatlantic networks had brought them into contact with radicals who would play prominent roles in the coming Revolutions. None was more prominent than Giuseppe Mazzini, the leading triumvir of the abortive Roman republic of 1849 and a lifelong theorist of Italian national unity, which had been fractured by the Congress of Vienna. After 1815, Italy was parceled into small kingdoms that were ruled by monarchs whose strings were pulled in Austria or elsewhere, but in the late 1820s, Mazzini and other Italian nationalists began to agitate for a revolution that would unify Italy and expel the foreign armies that kept most of nation's rulers in their thrones. Early efforts at revolution failed, however, and Mazzini spent most of his life in exile from the country where he longed to see a revolution. Seeing his exile as an opportunity to mobilize support for republicanism in Europe, which he believed would one day be united in a confederation of democratic states, Mazzini worked in various countries to establish counterparts to "Young Italy," the revolutionary organization he had founded with other Italian exiles in 1831. But Mazzini was hounded across the continent both by Austrian spies and, after 1833, by a looming sentence of death waiting for him back at home. Finally, in 1837, he settled in London, where he remained until just before the outbreak of revolution in Italy in 1848.

Those were the same years in which Garrisonians were forging friendships in Britain, and thanks to mutual friends, several of them met Mazzini. In London, Mazzini became acquainted with William Lovett, Douglas Jerrold and Harriet Martineau, all of whom Garrisonians also knew. He gravitated towards the same reform causes—free

trade, Chartism, the abolition of capital punishment, opposition to British imperialism in China and India—that occupied British Garrisonians. One of Mazzini’s oldest friends in the country was the prominent free trader and Member of Parliament John Bowring, who corresponded with Garrisonians after the 1840 “World’s Convention” in London. In June 1837 Bowring escorted Mazzini to Parliament, and a decade later, when Mazzini and his supporters organized a People’s International League to arouse British public opinion on behalf of national liberation in Europe, Bowring served as its president. Also on the League’s governing committee was William Ashurst, the staunch British Garrisonian who, writing under the nom de plume Edward Search, supplied the *Liberator* with regular dispatches in the 1840s. In the summer of 1847, one of Ashurst’s columns was accompanied by a copy of the International League’s charter proceedings. Two years later, after Mazzini’s effort to establish a republic in Rome had been defeated, Ashurst forwarded a circular on behalf of Mazzini and the Roman refugees to Sydney Howard Gay, the editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*.⁹

Ashurst, in fact, was the most direct and important tie between Garrisonians and Mazzini. According to Denis Mack Smith, Mazzini’s biographer, Ashurst and his family “became his closest friends in England” after 1845, exchanging “over fifteen hundred letters” with Mazzini and proving to be his most indefatigable supporters. Mazzini, along

⁹ See “Address of the Council of the Peoples’ International League,” *Liberator*, 11 June 1847; W. H. Ashurst to Sydney Howard Gay, 31 August 1849, CU, Gay Papers, Miscellaneous. On Mazzini’s exile and ties with British reformers, including those mentioned here, see Denis Mack Smith, *Mazzini* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 20-48; Maurizio Isabella, “Italian Exiles and British Politics before and after 1848,” in Sabine Freitag, ed., *Exiles from European Revolutions: Refugees in Mid-Victorian England* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 59-87; Gregory Claeys, “Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism, 1848-1854,” *Journal of British Studies* 28, no. 3 (July 1989), 225-244; Maura O’Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Political Imagination* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 57-92; Bernard Porter, *The Refugee Question in Mid-Victorian Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Harry William Rudman, *Italian Nationalism and English Letters: Figures of the Risorgimento and Victorian Men of Letters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 25-175; Margaret C. W. Wicks, *The Italian Exiles in London, 1816-1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1937), 182-98.

with other members of the exiled Italian community, was “soon spending most Sundays” at the Ashursts’ home, Muswell Hill, which was also a necessary stop for Garrisonians who came to London.¹⁰ Henry Wright spent one Sunday in 1847 with Mazzini, Jerrold, James Webb (Richard Webb’s brother), and Robert Owen at “dear Muswell Hill—the house of the world-loving and world-improving Ashursts,” recording the meeting for his diary and for the *Liberator*. While Wright, like most Garrisonians, came away from his encounter with Owen unconverted to his deterministic doctrines, he was impressed by Mazzini, who stayed later than Ashurst’s other guests to give Italian lessons in the parlor. Wright reported that Mazzini was “devoted to the political regeneration of Italy” and thought he “would make a stirring, active, and influential leader in such a revolution.” Garrison was also impressed in 1846, when he too met Mazzini at Muswell Hill during his third transatlantic trip.¹¹

These encounters between Mazzini, Wright, and Garrison were brief, but because of Ashurst’s friendship, they made it possible for the Garrisonians to attach themselves to Mazzini’s rising fame. In 1847, Mazzini contributed an antislavery piece to the *Liberty Bell*, which Richard Webb sent to Boston with instructions to introduce the author as “the

¹⁰ Smith, *Mazzini*, 45-6. See also Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, 39-45; Rudman, *Italian Nationalism*, 73-4; Wicks, *Italian Exiles in London*, 196-97. Mazzini’s correspondence with the Ashursts was published in three volumes in the 1920s: E. F. Richards, ed., *Mazzini’s Letters to an English Family* (3 vols.; London: John Lane, 1920-1922). Mazzini himself singled out the “dear, good, sacred family of Ashurst” when talking about his English friends in his autobiographical writings. See *Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini*, vol. 3 (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1866), 179-80. Mazzini’s friendship with some of Ashurst’s daughters may have been more than platonic, according to Roland Sarti, *Mazzini: A Life for the Religion of Politics* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997), 112-13.

¹¹ For Wright’s meeting with Mazzini, see “Letters from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 27 August 1847 (quotes); Wright, *Human Life*, 391-92. Elizabeth Pease also spent time with Mazzini, since her husband-to-be, Dr. John Nichol, was a fervent supporter and friend after the fall of Rome. See Smith, *Mazzini*, 126; Stoddart, *Elizabeth Pease Nichol*, 174-176.

illustrious Italian exile.”¹² The following year, when Mazzini rocketed to international fame as the leader of the doomed Roman republic, Ashurst’s reports to the *Liberator* on his movements referred to him in coded terms as the “Italian friend of mine, whom you met at my house when in England,” or as “an intimate friend, an Italian, to whom all his countrymen, though he has been a long time exiled from them, look up with respect and affection.”¹³

The next year, once Mazzini’s movements in Rome were well known, Ashurst informed the *Liberator* explicitly about the actions of “our friend Mazzini” or “your friend MAZZINI.” He also told Garrison’s readers about the aid that his family had given to the revolution in Italy. His youngest daughter, Emilie Ashurst, later married an Italian, helped publish many of Mazzini’s writings in English, and even acted as a secret courier to carry money and information between Mazzini and his associates in Italy. It was most likely Emilie whom Ashurst referred to in April 1849, when he informed the *Liberator* that “during the last winter, one of my daughters crossed the Alps, on foot part of the way, when other modes of communication could not be risked, and was successful in the object for which she went.”¹⁴

Around the same time that Emilie Ashurst was crossing the Alps, Maria Weston Chapman was crossing the Atlantic, along with her two sisters, to take up a seven-year

¹² Joseph Mazzini, “Prayer to God for the Planters, By an Exile,” *Liberty Bell* 8 (1847), 232-39; Richard D. Webb to [MWC?], 31 October 1846, BAA, 294.

¹³ “European Politics,” *Liberator*, 21 April 1848; “Letter from Edward Search,” *Liberator*, 20 October 1848.

¹⁴ “Letter from Edward Search,” *Liberator*, 27 April 1849; “Rome—Land Monopoly,” *Liberator*, 31 August 1849. On Emilie Ashurst’s clandestine work as a courier and her friendship with Mazzini, see Smith, *Mazzini*, 93, 187-88, 211. Also see [Emilie Ashurst Venturi], *Joseph Mazzini: A Memoir by E. A. V., with Two Essays by Mazzini ...* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1875). Emilie’s secret trip through the Alps to deliver money to insurgents in Italy is also recounted and corroborated in Richards, ed., *Mazzini’s Letters to an English Family*, 1:98-99. Richards says he was told about the trip two years earlier by a surviving friend of the Ashurst family, and he dates the trip in August or September 1848.

residence in Paris. Chapman's main objective was to give her children a European education, but one antislavery friend predicted that she would also be very interested in seeing "the struggle for right, the transition state of nations" in the new French republic.¹⁵ Not all Boston Garrisonians approved of Chapman's decision to move. Garrison himself regretted her departure, but mainly because he could have used her help in 1848 and 1849, when he was incapacitated by ill health, occupied by the birth of a child, and beset by grief over the deaths of two other children in the span of a year.¹⁶ Other Garrisonians, though, wondered about the wisdom of moving to Paris only months after blood had been running in the streets. "France, in its present state, seems an odd place to take children to for education!" exclaimed John B. Estlin, a relatively conservative British Garrisonian. When another group of abolitionists, which included wealthy Garrisonian Charles F. Hovey, left for a European tour in 1848, Edmund Quincy voiced similar surprise: "I have a notion that these stirring times which are such good reading, are not the pleasantest to be mixed up in."¹⁷

No American Garrisonian became as "mixed up" in the revolutionary events of 1848 as Emilie Ashurst. But as Chapman's relocation suggests, Garrisonian Atlantic

¹⁵ Amos Farnsworth to MWC, 19 April 1848, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.24.12.2. On Chapman in Paris, see Clare Taylor, *Women of the Anti-Slavery Movement: The Weston Sisters* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 68-78.

¹⁶ See WLG to Helen Garrison, 18 July 1848, LWLG 3:564; WLG to MWC, 19 July 1848, LWLG, 3:568. Garrison's personal crises in 1848 and 1849 also help explain why he did not comment as much as other Garrisonians did on events in Europe as they were happening. For most of the summer of 1848, following the death of his daughter, Elizabeth Pease Garrison, in April, Garrison was in Northampton at David Ruggles' water cure spa. The *Liberator* was left in the hands of temporary editors. When he returned to Boston, his son Francis Jackson Garrison was born in October. The next April, another son, Charles Follen Garrison, became ill and was then scalded to death in a homeopathic vapor bath that Garrison himself applied. His writings in these two years were sparse.

¹⁷ J. B. Estlin to Samuel J. May, 30 August 1848, BPL, Ms.B.1.6.2.78; Edmund Quincy to Richard D. Webb, 3 October 1848, BPL, Mss. 960, vol. 1, 17B. On the trip of Hovey's company, which included Eliza Jackson Eddy (Francis Jackson's daughter), see also WLG to Eliza Jackson Eddy, LWLG, 3:589-92.

crossings did not abate in the years after the Revolutions. In the early 1850s, Parker Pillsbury, Sarah Pugh, Daniel Neall, Edward M. Davis and James Miller McKim all traveled to Europe for various reasons, usually laden with letters of introduction to British Garrisonians.¹⁸ Chapman's home in France—which alternated between Paris and Versailles—became common stops for abolitionists on the continent, as Muswell Hill and Darlington were for those in England. Eliza Cabot Follen, the widow of Charles Follen, and her sister Susan Cabot spent time in Paris in 1849, while George Thompson spent a month with Chapman in 1851.¹⁹ At the start of a celebrated tour in Britain, African American abolitionist William Wells Brown stayed in Versailles to attend one of three European Peace Congresses held between 1848 and 1850, led by peace advocates like Elihu Burritt and Richard Cobden. The Webbs also traveled with Brown to Paris for the Congress, where Garrisonians met European liberals like Victor Hugo at a lavish soiree hosted by Alexis de Tocqueville.²⁰

¹⁸ On Pillsbury's trip, see Stacey M. Robertson, *Parker Pillsbury: Radical Abolitionist, Male Feminist* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 91-114. On Pugh and Neall, see Lucretia Mott to Richard D. Webb and Maria Webb, 5 April 1852, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.21.13; Sarah Pugh to Richard D. Webb, 9 April 1852, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.21.15; Pugh to Webb, 28 April 1852, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.21.18. On McKim's trip, see Maloney Collection of McKim-Garrison Family Papers, NYPL, Box 1; Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society Executive Committee, Minute Book (1846-1856), 181, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Series 5, Reel 31, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. On Davis's trip, see Edward M. Davis to Wendell Phillips, 21 July 1852, HU, bMS Am 1953 (471/1).

¹⁹ See WLJ to Elizabeth Pease, 31 July 1849, LWLG, 3:646; George Thompson to Richard D. Webb, 22 December 1851, BAA, 384. In his letter to Pease, Garrison wryly noted that "our anti-slavery circle is thinning continually, by a kind of colonization process. Who will go next, I will not attempt to surmise."

²⁰ See "Letter from Paris," *NASS*, 20 September 1849; "Letter from Maria W. Chapman," *Liberator*, 28 September 1849; Charles F. Hovey, "The Peace Congress," *Liberator*, 28 September 1849; "Letter from William Wells Brown," *Liberator*, 2 November 1849; Richard D. Webb, "The Peace Congress at Paris," *Liberator*, 7 December 1849; Sarah Pugh to Richard D. Webb and Maria Webb, 19 February 1850, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.19.10; William Wells Brown, *Three Years in Europe; or, Places I Have Seen and People I Have Met* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1852), 21-82; Brown, *The American Fugitive in Europe: Sketches of People and Places Abroad* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1855), 51-97.

Other European luminaries crossed paths with Chapman, who spoke French and whose home became a kind of salon for Parisian abolitionists and liberals. Her circle became acquainted with abolitionist Victor Schoelcher. Alphonse de Lamartine, leader of the Republic's Provisional Government, extended a still extant social invitation to Chapman, thanking her for sending an issue of the *Liberty Bell*. Chapman's grandson, the Progressive essayist John Jay Chapman, would later quip in a memoir that, "To be an exile for opinion's sake is the best introduction to the liberals of all foreign countries," doubtless with such contacts in mind. Remembering his grandmother's house as "full of souvenirs of Europe, and of presentation copies of the works of mid-century European writers," he concluded that the Garrisonians, "so far as social life went, found in France more than they had lost at home."²¹

Historian Clare Taylor is closer to the truth when she cautions that the Parisian circle around Chapman and her sisters was "fairly small." Their letters home made frequent apologies for being too occupied with the education of the children to make a full investigation of France. But Chapman's stay in Paris did allow her to infuse the yearly Boston anti-slavery bazaar with French items, and she prepared some antislavery and nonresistance tracts for publication in France. From Paris, Chapman also published

²¹ John Jay Chapman, *Memories and Milestones* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1915), 213. For Schoelcher, see Victor Schoelcher to MWC, 19 February 1852, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.26.9; Schoelcher to MWC, 29 April 1852, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.26.28; Schoelcher to MWC, 22 July 1852, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.26.47; Schoelcher to MWC, 6 January 1855?, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.6.36. For Lamartine, see Lamartine to MWC, March? 1849?, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.4.2. One of Chapman's daughters also married a liberal journalist from Strasbourg, who in the 1860s became a French correspondent for the first volume of *The Nation*. See MWC to Wendell Phillips, 14 March 1854, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (394/2); Edmund Quincy to Richard D. Webb, 5 August 1854, BPL, Mss. 960, vol. 1, 20; Taylor, *Women of the Anti-Slavery Movement*, 77-8; "The Week," *The Nation*, 24 August 1865, 225. Chapman also apparently hosted a ladies' antislavery society in her home. See "Letter from Mrs. M. W. Chapman," *NASS*, 10 July 1851.

several dispatches in the *Liberator*, one of which reported on the activities of French feminist Jeanne Deroin.²²

Chapman was also able to use the ties she had to secure *Liberty Bell* articles from European authors. Often printed in both French and English, essays appeared in the *Bell* by the French novelist Émile Souvestre and his wife in 1851; Victor Schoelcher, François Arago, Martin Paschoud, and Gustave du Beaumont in 1852; Ernest Legouvé, Charles de Rémusat, and Lafayette's grandson in 1853; Hippolyte Passy, evangelical pastor Adolphe Monod, and Hippolyte Carnot in 1856. With the permission of his widow, Chapman sent an excerpt from the writings of Baron Auguste de Staël-Holstein to the *Bell*. And she corresponded with Russian exile Nicholas Tourgueneff, a critic of serfdom and slavery living in Paris to whom Chapman sent copies of the *Liberator*, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In a preface to his reply, printed in French in the 1853 *Bell*, Chapman said that "a body of good men, of all countries, who should be at the same time great enough to create for themselves a sphere of moral action higher than that of national policy ... would soon be able to change the moral aspect of the world." In fact, it was in order "to make such men acquainted with each other for such a purpose, that the 'LIBERTY BELL' is published."²³

²² Taylor, *Women of the Anti-Slavery Movement*, 76. On Deroin and women's rights in France, see "Letter from Mrs. M. W. Chapman," *Liberator*, 18 May 1849; Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*, passim. On Chapman's publication efforts, see Richard D. Webb to MWC, 15 June 1849, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.24.78. On "our limited opportunities of observation" due to the children's education, see Caroline Weston to Samuel May, Jr., 2 December 1848, BPL, Ms.B.1.6.3.55 (quote); MWC to Elizabeth Pease, 29 November 1848, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.18.41. On collections for the Fair, see MWC to Elizabeth Pease, 25 December 1849, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.18.88.

²³ Taylor, *Women of the Anti-Slavery Movement*, 72-74; MWC, "The Baron de Staël-Holstein," *Liberty Bell* (1852), 252-57; "Russia and the Russians," *Liberty Bell* (1853), 210. For articles by the authors listed, as well as essays by other European writers, see issues of the *Liberty Bell* (Boston) for 1851, 1852, 1853, and 1856. Many of the French abolitionists who contributed to the *Bell* are identified in Lawrence C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802-1848* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). A sketch of Tourgueneff, along with an article by

Fleeting though they sometimes were, the Garrisonians' acquaintances with European reformers and revolutionaries like Mazzini and Lamartine reinforced their sense of identification with "good men, of all countries" who transcended mere "national policy." Transatlantic networks established by Garrisonians in the years after 1848, tenuous though they may have been, also made it possible for real exchanges between these reformers to take place. Schoelcher and Tourgueneff both passed copies of their works to Garrison with compliments, via McKim and Chapman. And in 1851, the Bristol Garrisonian George Armstrong forwarded antislavery literature to Hungarian leader Lajos Kossuth by sending it to William Ashurst. Ashurst passed it to his friend Mazzini, who knew Kossuth's Italian secretary. Later, Armstrong forwarded to the United States the reply he received from Mazzini, who told Armstrong that they were "moving on the same path," and who asked for the address of "Mrs. Chapman," whom he once "had the pleasure of meeting" in London.²⁴

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Early in her French sojourn, Chapman predicted to Elizabeth Pease that she would be of most service to the cause by helping to raise money. But an Atlantic pipeline of material support never materialized, and Chapman's family itself relied on the largesse of a British benefactor to stay in Paris.²⁵ As with the networks that formed after 1840, however, the most important thing about Garrisonians' Atlantic crossings was not the

him on the results of serf emancipation in Russia and slave emancipation in the United States, appears in "The Progress of Emancipation in Russia," *The Nation*, 24 August 1865, 235-37.

²⁴ James Miller McKim to WLG, 20 February 1852, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.21.5; N[icholas] Tourgueneff, "Letter," *Liberty Bell* (1856), 100-103; George Armstrong to Samuel May, 14 August 1855, BAA, 416; Joseph Mazzini to George Armstrong, [n.d.], BAA, 417. For a copy of the Mazzini letter to Armstrong, see BPL, Ms.B.1.6.1.11. On Mazzini's connections with Kossuth, see Joseph Rossi, *The Image of America in Mazzini's Writings* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1954), esp. 75-82.

²⁵ MWC to Pease, 29 November 1848.

organizational structures they created, which remained weak, but the discursive communities that they sustained, which remained vibrant. Just as their discussions of Chartism, Irish Repeal, and much else had crisscrossed the Atlantic in the 1840s, the Garrisonians' ideas about the Revolutions of 1848 would be shaped both by conflicts with critics in America and by conversations with friends abroad.

The Garrisonians were initially exultant over news about the Revolutions of 1848, especially once they learned that one of the first acts of the French Republic's Provisional Government was to abolish slavery in France's colonies. Garrisonians hailed France as the world's first example of a truly "republican form of government," and took courage from the abolition decree that a revolution in public opinion could overturn slavery in America. "What fidelity to the republican principle is here!" exclaimed the *Liberator*. "What a burning rebuke is this decree to our slaveholding republic of seventy years' standing!" According to a jubilant Ashurst, France's experiment in self-government meant that "republics will spread." "It is obvious that if one republic is sustained in Europe, the advance and further consolidation of the aristocratic spirit, and of monarchic despotism, is stopped," he told the *Liberator* in May, asking, rhetorically, "Can progress be arrested?"²⁶

Many Garrisonians did have reservations about the Revolutions of 1848. Non-resistants like Henry Clarke Wright tempered their enthusiasm for the French Republic's

²⁶ "The Revolution in France—Slavery Abolished in the French Colonies," *Liberator*, 31 March 1848; "France—England—Ireland," *Liberator*, 7 July 1848. See also "French Republic: Liberty—Equality—Fraternity," *NASS*, 6 April 1848; "Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society—French Revolution," *NASS*, 13 April 1848; "Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies," *Liberator*, 14 April 1848; "Remarks of Edmund Quincy," *Liberator*, 14 April 1848; "Sympathy for the French," *Liberator*, 21 April 1848; "Slavery in the French Colonies," *Liberator*, 28 April 1848; "Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society," *Liberator*, 19 May 1848; John B. Estlin to Samuel May, 26 May 1848, BPL, Ms.B.1.6.2.75; *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 3-4, 46-55.

abolition of slavery with regret that the Provisional Government had not also abolished the military. Garrisonians more generally deplored the escalation of violence in much of Europe over the summer.²⁷ A few Garrisonians, particularly the wealthy and somewhat conservative Estlin, lamented popular violence because they feared the threat it posed to civil order. From the beginning of the Republic, Estlin predicted that the idleness of the working population in Paris and the popularity of socialist leaders would inevitably result in bloodshed. Elizabeth Pease spoke for many Garrisonians when she said that while Europe was “awakening to Liberty,” the “*needless* shedding of blood” left her with “very mingled feelings.”²⁸

But the violence did not entirely dampen Garrisonian hopes that the Revolutions would succeed in toppling the despotic and aristocratic institutions of Europe. Some British Garrisonians confessed that the Revolutions stressed their non-resistance beliefs to the breaking point. Viewing from afar the risks that his friend Mazzini was facing in Rome in 1849, Ashurst told the *Liberator* that he could not join Wright in a complete disavowal of violence. Garrisonians who were non-resistants usually felt, like Lucretia Mott, that “even the non-resistant indulges the secret wish that, if they *will* fight [in Europe], the right may prevail, and larger liberty diffuse itself over the world.” Wright himself admitted that although the French republic merely placed the power of force in the hands of more people than before, he “had a little rather have it in the hands of the many” than in the hands of the few. When Russian armies combined with Austrians to

²⁷ See Henry C. Wright, “The American Republic a Liar and a Hypocrite,” *Liberator*, 12 May 1848; “Letter from James Haughton to Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 12 July 1848; “The Four Days of Blood,” *NASS*, 20 July 1848.

²⁸ See J. B. Estlin to Samuel May, 7 April 1848, BAA, 322; Estlin to May, 30 November 1848, BAA, 332; Elizabeth Pease to MWC, 15 May 1849, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.25.90. For other ambivalent letters from Estlin, whose hopes for the Revolutions were very lukewarm compared to most Garrisonians, see Estlin to May, 2 October 1848, BAA, 328-29; Estlin to May, 30 January 1849, BAA, 336.

defeat Kossuth's Hungarian rebels in August 1849, or when British troops overawed Chartists and Irish rebels in 1848, even non-resistants tended to justify the forces of revolution against those of reaction.²⁹

This view that popular violence in Europe was justified—if ever violence was—paralleled a broader reconsideration of the morality of slave insurrections taking place among abolitionists around the same time. In the 1840s, spurred on by black abolitionists like Henry Highland Garnet, white Garrisonians tentatively began to argue that, while they personally discouraged slave insurrection, slaves had more of a right than anyone to take up arms for their freedom. Their views of the European Revolutions were broadly similar. In 1849, after reading a speech by Frederick Douglass that praised Madison Washington, the leader of an 1841 slave ship uprising, Richard Webb could not but hope for more such rebellions. “No man, no matter how much he may abhor the clumsy medicament of war, can avoid sympathizing with the downtrodden when they turn upon their tyrants,” he told the *Standard*. “I can't help sympathizing with the Hungarians in their present struggle with the brutal tyranny of Austria, or with the illustrious Mazzini and his Romans in their defence of the Eternal City. . . . The whole Continent is heaving with the elements of a mighty struggle between Liberty and Despotism—and God speed the Right!”³⁰

²⁹ “Letter from Edward Search,” *Liberator*, 27 April 1849; Lucretia Mott to George Combe and Cecilia Combe, 10 September 1848, in Palmer, *Selected Letters*, 168; Wright, “The American Republic a Liar and a Hypocrite.” See also James Russell Lowell, “The Roman Republic,” in *The Anti-Slavery Papers of James Russell Lowell* (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1902), 2:107. Even Estlin's concern about violence on the continent seemed to be motivated in part by the fear that massacres in Paris and Vienna would make the people more apt to adopt coercive governments than liberal ones.

³⁰ “From our Dublin Correspondent,” *NASS*, 14 June 1849. On shifting views of insurrection among abolitionists in the 1840s, see Harrold, *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism*; Stanley Harrold, “Romanticizing Slave Revolt: Madison Washington, the *Creole* Mutiny, and Abolitionist Celebration of Violent Means,” in John R. McKivigan and Stanley Harrold, eds., *Antislavery Violence: Sectional, Racial,*

The Garrisonians' initial optimism about 1848 was ultimately diminished less by the violence of the Revolutions than by the fact that "Liberty" seemed to be losing its struggle with "Despotism" by the middle of 1849. In France, the radical edge of the early Republic was blunted by the election of the conservative Louis Napoleon as President at the end of 1848. Neither of Louis's names boded well. In 1849, Napoleon appointed conservative ministers, marginalizing republican elements, and in the spring, he sent French troops to Rome, to fight against Giuseppe Garibaldi's guerilla defenders of the republic and to restore the exiled Pope to power. That reactionary step was roundly condemned by Garrisonians, as was the military coup that Napoleon used to declare himself Emperor in 1851.³¹ France's rapid retrogression, combined with the triumphs of conservative forces elsewhere in Europe, challenged Ashurst's confidence that progress could not be arrested. "It makes me heart sick when I look on the politics of Europe just now," cried Webb in June 1849.³²

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To some degree Garrisonian ideas about the Revolutions developed according to an internal logic of their own. Together with their transatlantic friends, they rejoiced at the apparent defeat of despotisms and mourned the resurgence of reactionary forces in 1849 and after. But their discourses about European politics cannot be disentangled from

and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum America (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 89-107; Merton Dillon, *Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and their Allies, 1619-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 215-16, 224-26; Friedman, *Gregarious Saints*, 196-222.

³¹ See "France and Italy," *Liberator*, 1 June 1849; "Rome, Austria, France," *Liberator*, 29 June 1849; Richard D. Webb to [?], 8 July 1849, BAA, 337; "Rome—Land Monopoly"; Samuel May to J. B. Estlin, 7 September 1849, 340-42; "The Roman Republic Defended: Letter of Mazzini to the French Government," *Liberator*, 12 October 1849; Webb to Anne Warren Weston, 19 December 1851, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.25.139; Webb to MWC, 31 December 1851, BAA, 384-5 ("One feels as if the night of tyranny & darkness were settling down again upon the Continent").

³² Richard D. Webb to MWC, 15 June 1849, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.24.78.

their ongoing conflicts with defenders of slavery in the United States. Rhetorically, the Revolutions provided Garrisonians with a usable present with which to criticize their opponents at home. For antebellum Americans in general, like Garrisonians in particular, were watching the Revolutions closely and drawing a variety of lessons from them—lessons that offered the abolitionists rhetorical points of leverage in debates about slavery and American politics.

For example, numerous Americans greeted the Revolutions abroad as evidence of their own influence as model republicans and torchbearers for Europe. Garrisonians were quick to describe such reactions as hypocrisy of the worst kind. Far from proving that America was an exemplary republic, they said, the Revolutions proved that America was a “misnamed republic,” as Wright put it in an editorial titled “The American Republic a Liar and a Hypocrite.” While despotisms teetered in Europe, the United States was concluding a war with Mexico for the extension of slavery, the “Slave Power” was still tightening its control of the nation’s major parties, slave auctions were being held in the shadow of the Capitol, and those who attempted to assist fugitive slaves were treated as criminals and traitors. Abolitionists made much out of the news that in the spring of 1848, Southern Congressmen held a public meeting congratulating French republicans, just days before a large group of slaves were caught attempting to escape to freedom on board a Chesapeake ship called the *Pearl*. “It is a curious spectacle that the two sides of the Atlantic present at this time,” noted Edmund Quincy in the *Liberator* in July 1848. European countries were abolishing slavery and casting off tyrants, while Americans

were arresting fugitive slaves and doing obeisance before an “abominable Oligarchy” of slaveholders and doughfaces.³³

Garrisonians had charges of hypocrisy ready whenever Americans claimed to be models for Italians or Hungarians. But not all Americans sympathized with Europe’s revolutionaries, particularly once the early Revolutions began to give way to violence and Thermidorian reversals. Many observers interpreted the failure of Italians to defend the Roman republic, or of Hungarians to repulse Russian armies, as proof that European races were not yet prepared for self-government. Such doubts about the fitness of Italians and Hungarians for self-rule were often linked to doubt about the equality of swarthy peoples with Anglo-Saxons, and they were also based on a long-standing discourse in American political culture that judged whether a group was worthy of freedom by its capacity to fight successfully for freedom. One Democratic magazine article in 1852 exclaimed that “liberty will not come to man, he must go to it!” That article was a sympathetic portrait of Mazzini, but its sentiment was a premise in many arguments that questioned the worthiness of failed revolutionaries in Europe. If liberty came only to those who pursued it, reasoned some, then those who were unfree must have failed to “go to it!”³⁴

³³ Wright, “The American Republic a Liar”; “Revolutions and Republics,” *Liberator*, 28 July 1848. See also “To My Country,” *NASS*, 17 August 1848; “Popular Patriotism,” *Liberator*, 16 November 1849; “National Hypocrisy,” *Liberator*, 7 December 1849; “Speech of Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 31 May 1850. On the *Pearl* case, see “The Spirit of Liberty Contagious,” *Liberator*, 21 April 1848; Samuel May Jr., to J. B. Estlin, 2 May 1848, BPL, Ms.B.1.6.2.74; Wright, “The American Republic a Liar”; “Letter from Henry C. Wright,” *Liberator*, 23 June 1848; Stanley Harrold, *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, D.C., 1828-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 116-45.

³⁴ “Mazzini—Young Europe,” *The Democrat’s Review* 30, no. 1 (January 1852), 51. See Gemme, *Domesticating Foreign Struggles*, 107-130; François Furstenberg, “Beyond Freedom and Slavery: Autonomy, Virtue, and Resistance in Early American Political Discourse,” *JAH* 89, no. 4 (March 2003): 1295-1330.

Abolitionists rejected such arguments that liberty had to be earned, which took the same form as arguments that American slaves were unprepared for self-government. They had another explanation for the failure of Revolutions in France, Italy, and Austria: America's hypocritical embrace of slavery. Slavery was a drag on progress everywhere, because European aristocrats and despots could always point to the United States as proof that republican government was a sham. "It is not at home only, but the world over that the genius of Freedom is bound to the earth by the fetters of the American slave," argued the *Standard* in 1850.³⁵

Historian Paola Gemme has recently suggested that the abolitionists' jeremiads on the inconsistencies of American republicanism revealed an underlying agreement with their contemporaries that the United States was an exceptional nation. By arguing that America *should* have been the leading force for republicanism around the world, but was currently failing in its mission, abolitionists gave the myth of American exceptionalism a backhanded endorsement.³⁶ But it is also important to note that when Garrisonians argued that America was setting a bad example for the nations of the world, they were frequently citing the judgment of their friends in other nations. Likewise, American observers who believed that America was setting the example for Europe were not only extrapolating from exceptionalist myths; they were often echoing the arguments of European radicals themselves, who were prone to flattering the United States in an effort to win intervention in their revolutions.

³⁵ "What the French Think of Us," *NASS*, 14 November 1850. See also the untitled editorial in *NASS*, 26 December 1850; *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 89; "Speech of Henry C. Wright," *Liberator*, 31 May 1850; Elizabeth Pease to WLG, 18 January 1851, BAA, 359.

³⁶ Gemme, *Domesticating Foreign Struggles*, 124-129.

Debates between abolitionists and their contemporaries were not simply produced in an echo chamber, in which different Americans' ideas of exceptionalism reverberated. These debates took place in the context of transatlantic exchanges with Europeans, whose own views about America helped shaped Americans' views of themselves. Abolitionists and their interlocutors used dueling quotations from Europeans to prove their claims that the United States was either a beacon or a byword. Thanks to their transatlantic ties, Garrisonians could produce many foreign witnesses to testify that conservatives in their countries used American slavery as an argument against republican government. In the *Liberty Bell*, for instance, readers could find a French republican like Carnot arguing that American slavery presented a "fatal example . . . to Europe, to turn her from the pursuit of American independence."³⁷

Garrisonians, however, went beyond simply casting the American republic as a hypocrite or a hindrance to freedom movements abroad. In the years after 1848, they also drew creative and systematic comparisons between American politics and European politics, analogies that proved America was not just a bad republic—it was not a republic at all, but instead deserved to be categorized with despotic governments like Austria and Russia. Events like the prosecution of the *Pearl* fugitives proved that America's form of government was "a despotism," said Wright. "I care not what governments the nations of Europe create; they must be despotisms, if they enter into alliance with this nation as a *free Republic*."³⁸

³⁷ "Testimony against Slavery," *Liberty Bell* (1856), 34. See also Richard D. Webb, "From our Dublin Correspondent," *NASS*, 6 April 1848; "Letter from London," *NASS*, 25 October 1849; Joseph Barker to WLG, 24 October 1850, BAA, 350; Joseph Barker, "An English Chartist on American Slavery," *NASS*, 19 December 1850; "American Slavery," *NASS*, 2 January 1851.

³⁸ "Letter from Henry C. Wright."

By the 1840s, “despotism” was a capacious and loaded term. Beginning in the eighteenth century, European *philosophes* like Montesquieu had transformed the term from a generic synonym for tyranny and absolute power to a specific kind of government associated with “Oriental” countries. Unlike a Western “republic,” “despotism” referred to a country ruled capriciously by a single sovereign, who held sway over a populace too fearful or superstitious to challenge him. To Enlightenment thinkers in Western Europe, the clearest example of “despotism” as a form of political organization was provided by Turkish rulers, but after the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the term remained tied to Eastern Europe, and it was associated with the growing empires of Austria and Russia in the nineteenth century.³⁹

When Austria, Russia and Prussia formed the so-called Holy Alliance in 1815, fears of the expansion of despotic countries intensified in Europe and the United States. After successive partitions of Poland in the late eighteenth century and the quashing of a Polish rebellion by Russia in 1831, the use of the word “despotism” to describe the Holy Alliance increasingly referred not just to the autocratic rule inside of countries like Russia and Austria, but also to an apparently ominous desire by despotic rulers to expand their empires territorially. By 1850, such fears of despotic aggression seemed borne out by the

³⁹ See Asli Çirakman, “From Tyranny to Despotism: The Enlightenment’s Unenlightened Image of the Turks,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33 (2001): 49-68; Thomas Kaiser, “The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culture,” *Journal of Modern History* 72 (March 2000): 6-34; Melvin Richter, “Despotism,” in Philip P. Weiner, ed., *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973), 1-18; Franco Venturi, “Oriental Despotism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24, no. 1 (1963): 133-42; R. Koebner, “Despot and Despotism: Vicissitudes of a Political Term,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 14, nos. 3/4 (1951), 275-302.

collusion of Russian and Austrian armies in putting down revolutions in Hungary and the German states.⁴⁰

By the 1840s and 1850s, therefore, when Garrisonians suggested that the United States was a “despotism,” that term had specific connotations. It implied that American government, far from being republican, took the same form as that of Austria or Russia. The Slave Power was assuming the unjust prerogatives claimed by Hapsburg emperors or Russian tsars, and the people of the North were becoming as servile as the subjects of oriental despots. In the early, exuberant days of 1848, Webb argued in the *Standard* that “amidst all this toppling of despotisms,” Russia and the United States would soon be the only despotisms left in the world.⁴¹

When making their case that America was governed by despotism, Garrisonians like Webb pointed to several telltale similarities between the actions of European powers like Austria and Russia and the actions of proslavery politicians in the 1840s. The first similarity was suggested by laws that suppressed the speech of abolitionists, like the “gag rule” in Congress or the prosecution of abolitionists in the South who were caught with antislavery materials. In late 1843, for instance, as Wright prepared for his recuperative journey into Austria, Webb pointed out to the *Liberator* that the Southern states of America were not unlike the “well-linked despotism” of Austria. “Any thing that glances at politics is forbidden in Austria: just as impartial liberty is a forbidden theme in the

⁴⁰ See Cathal J. Nolan, “Detachment from Despotism: U.S. Responses to Tsarism, 1776-1865,” *Review of International Studies* 19 (1993), 349-68; Thomas A. Bailey, *America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to Our Day* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964), 45-59.

⁴¹ “From our Dublin Correspondent,” *NASS*, 4 May 1848.

slave States.”⁴² By the late 1840s, however, it was not just the internal suppression of freedom that made the Slave Power seem similar to European despotisms. Both powers seemed bent on expansion. Garrisonians denounced the Mexican-American War, which was ending just as the revolutionary tide of 1848 was rising, as a war for the extension of slavery. The rapacity of Texas annexationists and war hawks, they said, was no different from that of Old World emperors.⁴³

If anything, Garrisonians became more convinced of the similarity between the Slave Power and European despotisms as the 1840s turned into the 1850s. In the wake of the 1848 Revolutions and the Mexican War, expansionists in the United States had begun speaking openly about the possibility of annexing Cuba, arguing at the same time that the manifest destiny of the United States was to rule over a continent-wide empire. Edmund Quincy declared that this was “the same Manifest Destiny which compelled the Partition of Poland.” Any additional proof of despotism that Garrisonians needed was provided amply by the Compromise of 1850 and the passage of the notorious Fugitive Slave Law, which was doubly wicked in its disregard both for the rights of slaves and for the liberty of Northerners to assist them. By June 1850, Garrison concluded that “there is nothing in Italy, nothing in Austria, nothing in Russia, more ferocious or more terrible in its opposition to the spirit of liberty, than exists in the slaveholding States.” Worse, the Fugitive Slave Law made that opposition to liberty national in its scope. In a speech at the annual New England Anti-Slavery Convention, Garrison said straightforwardly what

⁴² “Letter from Richard D. Webb—H. C. Wright—The Cold Water Cure—State of Ireland,” *Liberator*, 31 December 1843.

⁴³ See, e.g., “Sixth Annual Report of the Western Anti-Slavery Society,” *NASS*, 7 September 1848.

his peers had been suggesting for several years: “we are living under a despotism, a most appalling despotism.”⁴⁴

Other Garrisonians drew liberally from a seemingly bottomless well of analogies between Russia, Austria, and America. In resolutions praising French emancipation in 1848, a meeting of Garrisonians in Boston declared America “a Despotism in the mask of a Republic.” Harriet Martineau suggested in the *Liberty Bell* that there were “more Warsaws than one,” and that the brutality of Russians who tore Polish families apart was no different from America’s barbarity towards slave families. An announcement for an antislavery meeting in England said that “the infamous Fugitive Slave Bill in America” was only one link in a “chain” of “oppression and misrule” that included “Cossack Despotism on the Continent of Europe.” Such analogies received their most extended treatment in 1854, with the timely republication of *Despotism of America* by Richard Hildreth, a book the *Liberator* called a “masterly work.” Hildreth argued that, far from being a democratic experiment, America was an “*experiment of Despotism*” coupled with democracy. Like other abolitionists, he observed bluntly that freedom of speech and of opinion did “not exist in the southern states of the American Union, any more than under any other despotism.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Edmund Quincy, “The Manifest Destiny,” *NASS*, 6 April 1848; “Speech of Wm. Lloyd Garrison,” *NASS*, 27 June 1850.

⁴⁵ “Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society—French Revolution”; Harriet Martineau, “More Warsaws than One,” *Liberty Bell* (1852), 71-84; “Fugitive Slave Bill and Manhood Suffrage,” in BAA, 357-58; Richard Hildreth, *Despotism in America: An Inquiry into the Nature, Results, and Legal Basis of the Slave-Holding System in the United States* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1854), 8, 93. For the *Liberator*’s endorsements of the book, see “New Publications,” *Liberator*, 12 May 1854; Richard Hildreth, “The Anti-Slavery Movement and the Dissolution of the Union,” *Liberator*, 19 May 1854, an extended excerpt from the book. See also, from a wealth of similar examples, R. Smith, “Letter from London,” *NASS*, 6 April 1848; “Despotism at Home,” *NASS*, 2 August 1849; “American Slavery and Turkish Freedom,” *NASS*, 30 August 1849; “Celebration at Abington, July 4, 1850,” *NASS*, 25 July 1850; “Letter from William P. Powell,” *NASS*, 8 May 1851; “Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, at Syracuse,” *NASS*, 22 May 1851; “The Rights of Freemen under Despotisms,” *NASS*, 31 July 1851; “Letter

Such allusions to European despotism in antislavery discourse were typical after 1848. Together they were woven into a stock trope that indicted America as a despotism whose crimes—against slaves, against the freedoms of citizens in the North, and against foreign countries like Mexico—paralleled the depredations of Austria and Russia. In 1849, Edmund Quincy even went so far as to say that it was “unfair” to the rulers of Austria and Russia “to put them into the same category with ourselves.” “This country presents a spectacle of Human Rights trodden into annihilation at one end of it, and of a perpetual armed intervention to put down the oppressed for the benefit of the oppressor, at the other, of which the struggle going on between Hungary and the Empire of Austria, and the armed interference of the Autocracy of Russia does not approach near enough to be a parallel.”⁴⁶

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Perhaps no abolitionist writer drew such analogies between European despotisms and the United States with more flair than poet James Russell Lowell. Despite being somewhat aloof from radical Garrisonians, Lowell was a corresponding editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in 1848, thanks to the fact that Sydney Howard Gay, the *Standard*'s highly respectable editor, was a fellow Boston Brahmin. Lowell, who wrote several long poems extolling the heroes of the Revolutions of 1848, spent most of that year and the next arguing in the *Standard* that “tyranny is of one complexion all the world over,” whether it was the coercion of Ireland by England, or of Hungary by Austria, or of Italy by the Papal States, or of the Northern states by the Slave Power. When Southern Congressmen managed to prevent Northern Congressmen from passing a

from Parker Pillsbury,” *Liberator*, 28 July 1854 (“we have the worst kind of despotism in the name of Democracy”).

⁴⁶ Edmund Quincy, “Russia and Hungary at Home,” *NASS*, 13 September 1849.

resolution of congratulations for the French revolution, and specifically for its act of emancipation, Lowell moaned that “our government is as absolutely a distinct thing from the people as that of Nicholas,” the tsar of Russia. “The truth is that we have never been more than nominal republicans.” In another editorial, Lowell lamented that American slavery was the key link in a “chain which binds down the oppressed of whatever race or complexion all over the world. As long as we have our own private shame to maintain, we are co-partners with all other speculators in sham wherever they may be. Nicholas and Calhoun are in precisely the same category.”⁴⁷

That categorization was not entirely unfair to Calhoun. Conservative politicians in the United States, both among the Whigs and among Southern Democrats, greeted the news of the revolutions in Europe coolly in public, while privately reacting in horror to the “red republicanism” spreading abroad. For Calhoun, the revolutionary overthrow of established order could only lead to anarchy. Rapid social change, like that witnessed in Paris, Vienna, and Rome, threatened private property, and eventually it led to tyrannical mob rule in which the established opinions of the few were crushed by the whims of the many. Both in the North and the South, theorists of conservatism like Orestes Brownson turned revolutionary arguments on their heads by arguing that mobs were more despotic than kings. “The spirit of radicalism is the spirit of despotism,” quipped Brownson’s *Quarterly Review* in July 1848.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See James Russell Lowell, “Sympathy with Ireland,” “Shall We Ever Be Republic?,” and “The Roman Republic,” all in *Anti-Slavery Papers*, 1:102, 1:56-7, 2:111. See also Lowell, “Irish and American Patriots,” “The Irish Rebellion,” in *Anti-Slavery Papers*, 1:202-208, 1:128-134. All of these columns were first published in *NASS*. For Lowell’s laudatory poems on Lamartine, the French Revolution of 1848, and Kossuth, the last two of which were also published in the *NASS*, see James Russell Lowell, *The Complete Poetical Works of James Russell Lowell* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1897), 91, 100-101

⁴⁸ “The French Revolution of 1848—its Causes, Actors, Events, and Influences,” *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* (July 1848), 380-410, quoted on p. 401. See Richard C. Rohrs, “American Critics of the

No group of Americans was more likely to agree than Southern slaveholders and their apologists, who viewed the radicalism of Northern abolitionists with the same deep suspicion that they harbored for European revolutionaries. If their only choice was between the despotism of Russia or the radicalism of Garrison, some Southerners gladly accepted Lowell's suggestion that they belonged on the side of the former. In February 1851, Beverly Tucker confessed to William Gilmore Simms that he was desperate about the apparent rise of antislavery sentiment and the "many-headed despotism of numbers" in the North. "If I were twenty years younger," he said, "I would go to Russia and claim the protection of the Emperor Nicholas as the very last man in his dominions who would ever think of changing the dominion of a single despot ... for the multitudinous tyrannies of a mob."⁴⁹ Just as Garrisonians increasingly saw no distance between despots and the "Slave Power," Southerners and Northern conservatives saw little difference between the abolitionists and revolutionaries.

That, too, was not an entirely mistaken assessment. The more sure Garrisonians became that America was a despotism, not a republic, the more they argued, in the words of Stephen S. Foster, that "revolution [was] the only remedy for slavery." Especially after the Compromise of 1850, when even Northern politicians like Daniel Webster had pledged themselves to Union at the expense of the slave, Garrisonians felt vindicated in

French Revolution of 1848," *Journal of the Early Republic* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1994), 359-77; Timothy M. Roberts, "'Revolutions Have Become the Bloody Toy of the Multitude': European Revolutions, the South, and the Crisis of 1850," *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 2 (2005), 259-83; Charles M. Wiltse, "A Critical Southerner: John C. Calhoun on the Revolutions of 1848," *Journal of Southern History* 15, no. 3 (August 1949), 299-310; William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 62-64, 261-64, 276-78; Joseph A. Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad: the South and U. S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 66-68; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 41-68.

⁴⁹ Tucker's letter excerpted in William P. Trent, *William Gilmore Simms* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1892), 183.

their claim that the North was complicit in the sin of slavery. “The north is to the slave what Russia is to Hungary,” said Foster, “the strong right arm of the power which mocks all his hopes.” There was nothing left for abolitionists but to “renounce the government, and raise the flag of revolution.”⁵⁰

Other Garrisonians also raised that flag in their writings. Just as Irish Repeal had initially provided a vocabulary for disunionism in 1843, the Revolutions of 1848 gave Garrisonians a set of tropes for talking about their situation in America. Disunionism could even be transposed into a vocabulary appropriate to 1848. In 1849, Garrisonian lecturers Oliver Johnson and Parker Pillsbury issued an “Address to the Young People of Ohio, on the Formation of a Northern Republic,” rhetorically raising the possibility of a “Young Ohio” of disunionists modeled on “Young Italy.” “The age, already white with ripening Revolutions,” demanded the creation of “a new Northern Republic.” Of course, when Garrisonians referred to disunionism as a revolutionary movement, they knew that the United States had its own revolutionary tradition. But when Garrisonians spoke of their movement as a revolution, they often implied that more recent revolutionary movements had superseded this tradition. As Pillsbury told the 1850 New England Anti-Slavery Convention, “We are here to add our mite to the greatest revolution which the

⁵⁰ [Stephen S. Foster,] *Revolution the Only Remedy for Slavery* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, [1855?]), 8, 11, reprinted in *Anti-Slavery Tracts*, Series 1 (Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970). See also Edmund Quincy, “The Fugitive Slave Bill,” *NASS*, 26 September 1850; “Speech of Wendell Phillips, at the Faneuil Meeting, Monday evening, March 25th,” *NASS*, 11 April 1850. Phillips compared Webster’s acquiescence in the Compromise of 1850 to the betrayal of Hungary into the hands of Russia. Quincy assailed Northern Congressmen for their willingness to “register the Edict of the Despot of the Country, be what it might.”

age has witnessed. The days of 1776 were indeed great days, but the glory of this latter revolution shall exceed the glory of the former.”⁵¹

Whereas the American Revolution had only created a despotism disguised as a republic, the new, bloodless revolution led by disunionists would create a true republic. Wendell Phillips even suggested, on the Fourth of July, 1853, that the Founding Fathers had only extended the promise of equality to all men because their position was “weak” in 1776. “Louis Napoleon was generous, when he was chosen President of France,” he said, with a suggestive allusion to France’s faux republican, “but when he found he was strong enough, he brought back the guillotine.” Just so, once America had “grown big enough,” it promptly set about “extend[ing] human slavery.”⁵² But their revolution, Garrisonians said, would topple the Slave Power, just as the French had deposed Louis Philippe or Mazzini had revived the Roman republic. In 1851 Quincy underlined that “the Abolition of Slavery presupposes a Revolution. ... For it will radically overthrow and reconstruct the institutions of the nation.”

Clearly, if anti-abolitionists believed the Garrisonians were allied with red republicans, the latter gladly accepted the charge, with the qualification that their revolution would be—like the early stages of the revolutions in Paris or Rome—non-violent. In turn, Garrisonians indicted their opponents as the friends of despotism. “Affinities will ever seek to blend together,” Garrison said in 1853. Those hostile to abolition, “if they were located in Russia ... would pay servile homage to the Czar; in

⁵¹ “Address to the Young People of Ohio, on the Formation of a Northern Republic,” *Liberator*, 12 October 1849; “Speech of Parker Pillsbury,” *NASS*, 11 July 1850. See also Pillsbury’s speech at “Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, at Syracuse, Concluded,” *NASS*, 29 May 1851.

⁵² “Anti-Slavery Celebration at Abington, July Fourth,” *Liberator*, 15 July 1853; Edmund Quincy, “The No-Voting Theory,” *NASS*, 21 August 1851.

Austria, they would take sides against Hungary; in Italy, they would anathematize Mazzini and his brave compatriots; in France, they would pay court to Louis Napoleon, and exult in the banishment of the leading ‘agitators.’” Only abolitionists, he concluded, were genuinely “worldwide in their sympathies and affinities.” “Ours is A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT; but we are revolutionists in a far higher and better sense than that of ’76.” By drawing analogies between American and European politics, Garrisonians could claim to be revolutionists in the sense of ’48.⁵³

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The Garrisonians’ description of their cause as a revolutionary movement, akin to the national revolutions that swept Europe in 1848 and 1849, went hand in hand with the description of themselves as true patriots, who loved their country with the same kind of love that Mazzini felt for Italy or Lamartine exhibited in France. The Mexican War, the Fugitive Slave Law, and, in 1854, the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, provoked expressions of outrage and patriotic feeling in much the same way that O’Connell’s trial and imprisonment, on a much smaller scale, had raised Richard Webb’s patriotic hackles. Overturning the despotism ruled by the Slave Power, they said, was true patriotism, and the abolitionist movement “the only hope of our country,” according to Garrison. While conservatives who accused the abolitionists of being anarchic disorganizers also accused them of recognizing “no country, no friends, no kindred,” the Garrisonians retorted that true patriots could not bear to see their country overrun by despotism. If it was patriotic to cheer the overthrow of despotisms abroad, it was patriotic to work for their overthrow

⁵³ “Anti-Slavery Celebration at Abington.” See also Edmund Quincy, “The Progress of the Revolution,” *NASS*, 17 October 1850; “Our Cause,” *NASS*, 31 July 1851. For other suggestions that American despots and European despots were leagued together, see *Proceedings of the American Anti-Slavery Society, at its Second Decade*, 104; “The Fellow-Feeling between Autocrats and Slavocrats,” *Liberator*, 26 December 1851.

at home. To those who told abolitionists to “leave the country,” Samuel May responded in 1851 that “other forms of wrong and tyranny might meet us, wheresoever we may go, that we should be equally bound to withstand. Besides we owe our country, which, with all her faults, we dearly love ... something more and better than desertion, in this hour of her utmost trial.”⁵⁴

In claiming that their hatred of American despotism was not incompatible with love for country, the Garrisonians were still careful to distinguish their patriotism from what most Americans understood by that term, just as Webb had distanced himself from Young Ireland’s definition of “nationality” even as he denounced England’s mistreatment of Ireland. For Garrisonians, since true patriotism was defined by hostility to despotism, it could not excuse oppression. They ridiculed Northern defenders of the Compromise of 1850 who claimed that their actions were dictated by patriotism. Such false patriots, said Philadelphia abolitionist Henry Grew, would “do for the ‘Government,’ the ‘Nationality’ of a people ... what the Almighty would not do to save the Government of the Universe!” The fact that compromises with slavery were cloaked in the language of patriotism only proved, said another correspondent to the *Standard*, that “the name of *patriot* has become corrupted, and is now applied to those vile wretches who, under pretence of ‘saving the Union,’ are doing acts of oppression and cruelty, that the proud Autocrat of Russia or tyrant Pope of Rome would be ashamed to do,” while those who were “working with all

⁵⁴ “Anti-Slavery Celebration at Abington”; “The Conspiracy of Fanaticism,” *The United States Magazine, and Democratic Review* 26 (May 1850), 385-400, quoted on p. 392; “Speech of Rev. Samuel J. May, at Syracuse,” *NASS*, 13 November 1851. See also “Speech of Wm. Lloyd Garrison.” For another anti-abolitionist article stressing their lack of patriotism, see also “The Present Aspect of Abolitionism,” *Southern and Western Literary Messenger and Review* 13 (July 1847), 434; “The Duty of Northern Patriots,” *Liberator*, 14 November 1851, published in Garrison’s department for Southern clippings, the “Refuge of Oppression.”

their might to make America what she should be” were denounced as traitors, fanatics, and unpatriotic disunionists.⁵⁵

In describing themselves as true patriots, Garrisonians were trying to stake out a definition of love for country that would be compatible with love for all mankind and opposition to despotism both at home and abroad. Rejecting what they viewed as the chauvinistic patriotism of many Americans—a patriotism defined, in the words of William Ashurst, as “that which Uncle Sam uses to register his billiousness [sic] when any thing is said implying that he is not mighty, grand, and able to whip the world”—the Garrisonians tried to rehabilitate the word “patriot” as a designation for reformers whose ultimate aim was an end to despotism in every country. In that attempted rehabilitation of “patriotism,” Garrisonians were joined by Ashurst’s friend Mazzini, who, as Maurizio Viroli has shown, championed “the ideal of a patriotism based on commitment to liberty beyond national barriers.”⁵⁶

As a lifelong advocate of Italian national unification and a lifelong exile from Italy, Mazzini’s ideas about nationality and nationalism were complex. On the one hand, he criticized what he called an individualistic “cosmopolitanism” that viewed human beings atomistically instead of as members of social associations. Such cosmopolitans, said Mazzini, regarded nationality as a “useless” or “dangerous” idea. For Mazzini, however, nationalism was only dangerous if it inspired aggression against other nations. In an 1836 article written in Switzerland, just before he fled to England, he wrote that “if

⁵⁵ “Letter from Rev. Henry Grew,” *NASS*, 20 February 1851; Walter Farrington, “Slavery—Patriotism—Law,” *NASS*, 9 October 1851. See also Edmund Quincy, “Slave-Catching Patriotism,” *NASS*, 6 February 1851; “Anti-Slavery Convention,” *NASS*, 8 January 1852.

⁵⁶ “Letter from Edward Search,” *Liberator*, 22 August 1851; Viroli, *For Love of Country*, 144-156, quoted on p. 144. See also Smith, *Mazzini*, 12-13.

by cosmopolitanism we understand the brotherhood of all men, love for all men, the destruction of those hostile barriers which separate and give rise to antagonistic interests among the peoples—then are we all of us cosmopolitans.” But simply declaring one’s love for all men did not solve “the practical question” of how “to triumph over the league of the governments founded upon privilege.” Having no “other weapons than the consciousness of his *rights*,” Mazzini argued, “the cosmopolitan has but two paths before him. He is compelled to choose between despotism and inertia.” To overturn despotism, represented in their case by the Austrians, Italians needed an “organisation” founded on national unity and collective identity, rather than just a notion of individual rights. But once established, an independent Italian nation would not be justified in aggression against other nations. For Mazzini, national liberation was simply the first, necessary step to the defeat of oppressive governments throughout Europe and, ultimately, around the world. While in exile in 1830s, Mazzini’s efforts to start an international organization of republicans under the name “Young Europe” indicated his faith in an ultimate pact of brotherhood between the free peoples of Europe. “For us the starting-point is Country,” but “the object or aim is Collective Humanity.”⁵⁷

While a champion of nationality and national unification, Mazzini’s views fall roughly into the category that Chapter 6 described as “civic nationalism,” a concept that based nationality on a society’s collective agreement, rather than on primordial racial or ethnic ties. “The nation is the universality of Italians,” Mazzini said, characteristically conjoining nationality and universality, “united by agreement and living under a common

⁵⁷ See *Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini*, vol. 3, 6-8. On Mazzini’s ideas about nationality and internationalism, see Bruce Haddock, “State and Nation in Mazzini’s Political Thought,” *History of Political Thought* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1999), 313-36; Iain McMenamin, “‘Self-Choosing’ and ‘Right-Acting’ in the Nationalism of Giuseppe Mazzini,” *History of European Ideas* 23, no. 5-6 (1997), 221-34.

law.” There was “no nation” without “unity of belief and a social consensus.”⁵⁸ To be sure, Mazzini’s ideas about nationality did not always adhere rigidly to those definitions, especially since his primary interest was in mobilizing Italians for revolution, rather than in outlining a systematic political theory of nationalism. At times, Mazzini was willing to compromise his republicanism by declaring that he favored a united Italy even if it were ruled by a monarch. And although his view of nationality was grounded on “unity of belief,” he also appeared to believe that each nation had a distinctive cultural contribution to make to collective humanity. Mazzini straddled the conceptual divide between “civic” and “ethnic” nationalism.

But whether or not Mazzini should or can be categorized as a “liberal” or “civic” nationalist, the important point is that Garrisonians could find in Mazzini’s ideas a notion of patriotism that, first, required patriots to denounce oppression in all countries, and second, held out human brotherhood across national borders as its ultimate goal. In 1847, when Ashurst helped to found the People’s International League in London, he wrote Garrison excitedly that “patriotism, elevated into love of the whole human race, has now made its distinct and organized advent.” In former times, Ashurst said, Englishmen had been taught that “patriotism was not necessarily inconsistent with ... hating foreigners” or engaging in “wholesale slaughter” on European battlefields. But the League heralded the coming recognition that “*we must raise the love of country into the love of man,*” undivided by the creeds and clans that bred national hostilities. Using words he knew Garrison’s readers would appreciate, Ashurst welcomed Mazzini’s International League

⁵⁸ Quoted by Haddock, “State and Nation in Mazzini’s Political Thought,” 321, 323.

as “a step towards realizing your motto, ‘*My country is the world, my countrymen all mankind.*’”⁵⁹

Given Ashurst’s sense that Mazzini’s ideas were similar to Garrison’s, it is not hard to imagine that the Italian and the abolitionist discussed nations and brotherhood when they met at Muswell Hill. Doubtless the subject came up again when Wright, fresh from his journey through Europe, spent a day with Mazzini and Ashurst in 1847. But whether consciously or not, Garrisonians after 1848 were articulating views about nations and patriotism that broadly resembled Mazzini’s. True, Mazzini was an advocate of national unification, while the Garrisonians advocated disunion in the United States. But Garrisonians claimed to defend disunionism on the same grounds that Mazzini used to defend unification: both argued that a unified nation required its people to be “united by agreement,” in Mazzini’s phrase.

“I am not a disunionist in an evil sense,” Garrison tried to clarify in an 1850 speech. “I advocate no disunion of freemen. I am for Union!” But the American Union was not based on social consensus among the people; it was “ruled by the Slave Power.” “The American Union, so called, is not a union in reality. It is a despotism, after all.” In denouncing the Union, according to Garrison, he was really calling for a nation founded a united belief in liberty, a concept of nationality similar to Mazzini’s idea that a nation required “unity of belief.” Wendell Phillips likewise explained in 1850 that disunionists had no special preference for “separate Confederacies” and no desire to stir up hostility between contiguous states, but they believed that “this Union” was “an insurmountable obstacle to the HARMONY of the nation.” If the Union were dissolved, Phillips said, a

⁵⁹ “Patriotism Enlarging into Human Brotherhood,” *Liberator*, 25 June 1847.

new union could be created capable of including, in one harmonious nation, members of different races and groups.⁶⁰

If Garrisonians could, like Mazzini, endorse a carefully qualified idea of union that based nationality on social consensus rather than ethnoracial homogeneity, they could also endorse love for country. In 1854, Garrison defended abolitionism on the grounds that it was “the noblest patriotism ... extant.” But that appeal to patriotism also had to be qualified, as it was for Mazzini. So long as patriotism sought only the liberty and interests of one’s own countrymen, it was a kind of patriotism whose ultimate aim was not “collective humanity” but mere nationality. Patriotism thus could not excuse the incitement of animosity and violence between countries. It had to keep as its objective the brotherhood of all mankind.⁶¹

That stringent definition of patriotism meant that Garrison had to be stingy in his praise for nationalist revolutionaries like Kossuth. In an 1849 editorial in the *Liberator*, Garrison admitted that Kossuth had many “real merits,” especially his hatred of tyranny. He was, “unquestionably, a sublime specimen of what the world calls ‘patriotism.’” But a “model ‘patriot,’” in the world’s eyes, was someone who was willing, like Washington or Kossuth, to call his country to arms. Kossuth’s patriotism made him “implacable, unmerciful, towards the enemies of his country, even to consuming them alive with fire!” The “scope of his vision,” like his country, was “bounded by a few degrees of latitude and longitude, and covers a surface of some thousands of square miles. He is strictly

⁶⁰ “Speech of Wm. Lloyd Garrison”; Wendell Phillips, *Review of Webster’s Speech on Slavery* (Boston: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1850), 3-4.

⁶¹ Garrison, *No Compromise with Slavery*, 4.

local, territorial, national.” To obtain Hungary’s independence, he lost sight of “the claims of humanity.”⁶²

Garrison’s editorial concluded by contrasting Kossuth’s patriotism with Jesus’s Christianity. “Jesus was neither local nor national in his feelings or designs,” although his native land was “in bondage” to Roman rulers. He abhorred Roman oppression and rebuked tyranny, “but without injury to the tyrant,” and without appealing to national “pride or revenge.” “His soul was expansive as the universe, his love for the human race impartial, his country the world.” For just that reason, however, Garrison could end by addressing Jesus as the “noblest of patriots!” Like Kossuth, Jesus denounced despotic power—a requirement for any patriot. But unlike Kossuth, he did not stir up hatred and violence against other nations—a standard that only the noblest, most expansive, and most impartial patriotism could meet.⁶³

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Garrisonians scrutinized Kossuth’s patriotism even more closely two years later, when he made a celebrated tour through the United States. After he was forced into Turkish exile in 1849 by Russian armies, Kossuth’s sympathizers had multiplied both in England and America. Especially friendly were the mostly Democratic writers and politicians loosely known as “Young America,” who favored American expansion into the southwest and the extension of American influence in Europe. Believing that it was America’s destiny not only to occupy its continent but also to intervene on behalf of republican movements abroad, Young Americans like Senator Lewis Cass of Michigan

⁶² “Patriotism and Christianity—Kossuth and Jesus,” *Liberator*, 31 August 1849. See also “Anti-Slavery in Canada,” *NASS*, 17 April 1851.

⁶³ “Patriotism and Christianity.”

and Senator Henry Foote of Mississippi pressured the administrations of Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore to defy Austria and extend aid to Kossuth. Finally, in early 1851, they successfully urged President Fillmore to send a naval vessel to escort Kossuth from a Turkish prison to the United States.⁶⁴

Kossuth arrived in New York City in December to a triumphal welcome. Whisked from one banquet to another, he spoke to packed halls of cheering admirers and was greeted by parades and welcoming committees at every turn. By December 12, one week after his arrival, New York diarist George Templeton Strong began his daily entry by noting that “Magyar-mania [was] epidemic.” In subsequent months, the mania became pandemic as Kossuth toured New England, the Midwest, and the South. Journalists in all three regions praised Kossuth’s eloquence, costume, and heroism, while hucksters sold exotic “Kossuth hats” to his devotees.⁶⁵

The official response to Kossuth’s tour, however, soon cooled, as it became clear that his intention was not to settle into quiet retirement on a Western estate, but instead to raise funds and secure promises of American military aid against Austria. Although sentimental portrayals of Kossuth often called him Hungary’s George Washington, his mission was doomed by the faith of most politicians in the foreign policy doctrine of non-

⁶⁴ On Kossuth’s tour, see Donald S. Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America: A Study of Sectionalism and Foreign Policy, 1848-1852* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1977); Reynolds, *European Revolutions*, ch. 8; Morrison, “American Reaction to European Revolutions”; Steven Béla Várdy, “Kossuth’s Effort to Enlist America into the Hungarian Cause,” *Hungarian Studies* 16, no. 2 (2002): 237-52; May, *Contemporary American Opinion*, 44-128; Ronald Zarychta, “Louis Kossuth and the United States, 1848-1852” (D.A. thesis, Carnegie-Mellon University, 1976). On diplomatic controversies surrounding the Hungarian revolution, see especially Merle Curti, “Austria and the United States 1848-1852: A Study in Diplomatic Relations,” *Smith College Studies in History* 9, no. 3 (April 1926), 141-206; Maurice G. Baxter, *One and Inseparable: Daniel Webster and the Union* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1984), 463-67.

⁶⁵ Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, eds., *The Diary of George Templeton Strong*, vol. 2 (New York: Octagon, 1974), 76. See also Alan Johnson, “Magyar-Mania in New York City: Louis Kossuth and American Politics,” *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (July 1964): 237-249.

interference that Washington had established in his Farewell Address. Kossuth argued that he was asking for a one-time intervention for the sake of “non-intervention,” since American aid would establish Hungary’s sovereignty and end Austria’s “intervention” in Hungarian affairs. But that counterintuitive message did not fill Kossuth’s pockets or win the converts he needed in high places. By the time he left for Europe in July 1852, it was with his famous hat in hand.

Kossuth’s mission also quickly became embroiled in debates over slavery. In a flurry of articles and meetings, the Garrisonians made sure of that. After all, they had been arguing since 1849 that Austrian despotism and American despotism were links in the same chain of oppression. Even before Kossuth arrived, they castigated politicians like Foote and Cass who waxed poetic in their speeches on Hungary while supporting despotism at home. The Garrisonians’ quarrel with Kossuth’s admirers only intensified after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, signed by the same Millard Fillmore who would offer Kossuth asylum the next year. Abolitionists heaped scorn on Daniel Webster, Fillmore’s Secretary of State, who had penned a defiant letter to Austria about America’s support for liberators like Kossuth while also supporting compromise with slavery. Before 1850, said Stephen Foster, the North “knew no difference between the fugitive from Carolina and the fugitive from Hungary.” But the Fugitive Slave Law, thundered other Garrisonians, meant the return of American “Kossuths back to Czars” in the South.⁶⁶ Just before Kossuth’s arrival in 1851, when a group of abolitionists that

⁶⁶ [Foster,] *Revolution the Only Remedy*, 6; “Speech of Wendell Phillips,” *NASS*, 25 July 1850. See also John Russell Lowell, “Turkish Tyranny and American,” in *Anti-Slavery Papers*, 2:158; Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, 3:341; Farrington, “Slavery—Patriotism—Law”; Wendell Phillips, “Review of Daniel Webster’s Speech,” *NASS*, 28 March 1850; K. Arvine, *Our Duty to the Fugitive Slave: A Discourse* (Boston: John P. Jewett & Co., 1850), 9-10; “Speech of Frederick Douglass, at the Tabernacle,” *NASS*, 23 May 1850; “Speech of C. C. Burleigh,” *NASS*, 6 June 1850; “Speech of Parker Pillsbury,” *Liberator*, 29

included Garrisonian Samuel J. May helped rescue a fugitive known as Jerry from federal marshals in New York, the *Standard* underlined that “the escape of Jerry from the United States Government at Syracuse is an event as much to be rejoiced at as the escape of Kossuth from Austrian despotism.”⁶⁷

While despising the hypocrisy of Kossuth’s proslavery sympathizers, however, the Garrisonians originally had high hopes for Kossuth himself. Perhaps the Hungarian fugitive would be bold enough to denounce slavery once he arrived in the United States. It was not an unreasonable hope. One of his first acts as Hungarian governor had been to emancipate the serfs, and Garrisonians knew, thanks to their allies abroad, that Kossuth had been given antislavery propaganda. On his way to New York, Kossuth’s steamer stopped in England. While he was there, George Armstrong passed a copy of Theodore Dwight Weld’s *American Slavery As It Is*, along with facts about the Fugitive Slave Law, to Kossuth, using Ashurst and Mazzini as intermediaries. Ashurst assured Richard Webb in November that “all you could wish has been done to possess Kossuth with right and just views on the subject of American Slavery.” Webb in turn reported to Anne Warren

August 1851; “The Fugitive Kossuth,” *Liberator*, 14 November 1851; “Bloodhounds Turning Spaniels,” *Liberator*, 19 December 1851; W. E. Channing, “The American Slave to Kossuth,” *Liberator*, 19 December 1851; “From Our Dublin Correspondent,” *NASS*, 11 December 1851. Even some conservative critics of the Revolutions and the abolitionists saw the force of the analogy between Kossuth and fugitive slaves, and consequently opposed inviting him to America. See “The Annual Message of the President ... to ... Congress,” *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* 6 (January 1852), 132-139: “If the European radical may conspire to overthrow the government of his country for what he calls liberty, why may not the Free-Soiler conspire to resist your Fugitive Slave Law, and to prevent a poor runaway negro from being sent back to slavery? Why shall the former here in this country be greeted with a national salute, and the latter with a halter?”

⁶⁷ “Preaching in Syracuse,” *NASS*, 23 October 1851. Kossuth’s visit also came on the heels of several other high-profile challenges to the Fugitive Slave Law by abolitionists in the North. See Stewart, *Holy Warriors*, 157-62; Garrison & Garrison, *Garrison*, 3:325-338; Mayer, *All on Fire*, 406-417; Albert J. Von Frank, *The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson’s Boston* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 21-30; James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North*, rev. ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1999), 106-124; Thomas P. Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: the Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 231-251.

Weston that if Kossuth was “silent about slavery [while in the United States] he will be so deliberately—for no pains were spared from many quarters to make the whole matter clear to him.”⁶⁸

As it turned out, however, Kossuth did elect to remain silent on slavery during his American sojourn. Wary of alienating either Northerners or Southerners, he announced within a week of his arrival in New York that he would “not meddle with any domestic concerns of the United States,” a circumlocution that Garrisonians interpreted as a clear refusal to address slavery. Instead, he spent much of his tour flattering the American republic as the greatest on earth. “The die is cast,” wrote Garrison soon after. “All speculation is now at an end, as to the position KOSSUTH means to maintain on the slavery question. ... He means to be deaf, dumb, and blind, in regard to it!” Quincy added that Kossuth’s “visit to this country was a fatal blunder.” He had “sold himself” to doughfaces, bowed before the national idol of slavery, and “stooped to kiss the feet of American women-whippers ... and slave-catchers,” compared to whom Hapsburgs and Russians were angels of light. Perhaps Kossuth had been too credulous of the “loud talk” of Young America about free institutions, but he would soon learn “that Slavery eats out the heart and spirit of a nation where it is tolerated, and that a Slaveholding Republic is but a Despotism in disguise.”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ William H. Ashurst to Richard D. Webb, 13 November 1851, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.20.153; Webb to Anne Warren Weston, 19 December 1851, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.25.139. See also Samuel May to J. B. Estlin, 4 November 1851, BAA, 383; Henry C. Wright, “Kossuth, Tell Him of American Slavery! Save Him! Save Him!”, *Liberator*, 7 November 1851; [William Ashurst,] “Kossuth—England—France,” *Liberator*, 7 November 1851; Eliza Wigham to [Anne Warren Weston,] 12 November 1851, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.25.137; “Kossuth and Hungary,” *Liberator*, 12 December 1851; Armstrong to May, 14 August 1855. Numerous other addresses and appeals were sent to Kossuth by Garrisonians in Britain during his brief layover. For a list of these, see Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, 3:343.

⁶⁹ “Kossuth Fallen!”, *Liberator*, 19 December 1851; Edmund Quincy, “The Mistakes of the Magyar,” *NASS*, 22 January 1852 (“fatal blunder”); Edmund Quincy, “Kossuth,” *NASS*, 11 December 1851

Surprised by the furor he had caused among abolitionists, and dismayed by a lack of support from other quarters, Kossuth defended his silence by arguing that his particular mission was to aid Hungary.⁷⁰ Some abolitionists were inclined to accept that apology as a fair excuse, particularly “new organization” abolitionists like Lewis Tappan, who sent an address to Kossuth that did not mention his neutrality on slavery.⁷¹ Henry Ingersoll Bowditch told his diary in January 1852 that “my anti-slavery friends shake their heads and ask how I can praise [Kossuth] so when he has failed to speak in behalf of the slave.” Bowditch’s response was that Kossuth was “here as a patriot and not as a philanthropist, on a specific mission for his fatherland.”⁷²

(“sold himself,” “stooped to kiss”); Edmund Quincy, “Kossuth and Slavery,” *NASS*, 18 December 1851 (“loud talk,” “Despotism in disguise”). See also Henry C. Wright, “Kossuth’s Apology for His Silence in Regard to American Slavery,” *Liberator*, 26 December 1851; Edmund Quincy, “Policy of M. Kossuth,” *NASS*, 1 January 1852; “Progress of Kossuth,” *NASS*, 1 January 1852; “Kossuth and His Mission,” *Liberator*, 9 January 1852; Anne Warren Weston, “The Eighteenth National Anti-Slavery Bazaar,” *Liberator*, 30 January 1852; Wright’s Journals (BPL), Ms.Am.1869; Richard D. Webb to MWC, 31 December 1851, BAA, 385; “New England Anti-Slavery Convention,” *NASS*, 3 June 1852.

⁷⁰ One of Kossuth’s lengthiest responses to the abolitionists’ charges was made in a speech in Faneuil Hall during his tour of New England, when he described “being charged from one side with being in the hands of abolitionists, and from the other side with being in the hands of the slaveholders.” Kossuth excused himself from running into the arms of either group: “And O, my God, have I not enough sorrows and cares to bear on these poor shoulders?” See *Kossuth in New England: A Full Account of the Hungarian Governor’s Visit to Massachusetts ...* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852), 92-93.

⁷¹ Garrisonians seized on the address as proof that the Tappanites were lukewarm, and a series of heated exchanges occurred in which Tappan defended the address. See “Kossuth at the Irving House,” *NASS*, 18 December 1851; “Movements of Kossuth,” *National Era*, 25 December 1851; Lewis Tappan, “Kossuth and the Anti-Slavery Committee,” *National Era*, 1 January 1852; “The Abolitionists and Kossuth,” *National Era*, 1 January 1852; “The American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and Kossuth,” *NASS*, 1 January 1852; E. Mitchell to Caroline Weston, 23 January 1852, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.26.6; Richard D. Webb, *The National Anti-Slavery Societies in England and the United States ...* (Dublin: Charles Hedgelong, 1852), 54.

⁷² Vincent Y. Bowditch, *Life and Correspondence of Henry Ingersoll Bowditch*, vol. 2 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1902), 251. For similar defenses of Kossuth, mostly sent by anonymous or pseudonymous authors, see William H. Furness to WLG, 30 December 1851, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.20.158; “A Plea for Kossuth,” *Liberator*, 2 January 1852; “Kossuth,” *Liberator*, 9 January 1852; “Kossuth and His Mission to this Country,” *Liberator*, 27 February 1852; “Defence of Kossuth,” *Liberator*, 12 March 1852; “Letter from Judge Jay,” *NASS*, 25 December 1851; “A General Survey,” *National Era*, 20 March 1851. Lucretia Mott was also apparently impressed by Kossuth. See Lucretia Mott to George Combe, 21 May 1852, in Palmer, *Selected Letters*, 216.

But as Bowditch noted, “Garrison, etc., say: ‘Nay.’ ... They will not listen to any of my arguments.” To Garrisonians, Kossuth’s demurrals and his defenders seemed to be making the very same arguments that George Thompson’s critics had made against his “foreign interference,” over fifteen years before. Thompson, who had risked lynching in 1834 to speak at abolitionist meetings, provided an alternative model to Garrisonians of how a foreign visitor to the United States should treat slavery. Thompson made a second Atlantic crossing just months before Kossuth arrived, and despite the fact that he was actually a Member of Parliament at the time, he pulled no punches about the domestic institutions of his hosts, claiming that slavery “was a human question before it was an American one.” In fact, just before his return to England, Thompson had told a public meeting in Rochester that it was hypocritical for America to extend asylum to Kossuth.⁷³ If Kossuth suffered in comparison to Thompson, Garrisonians could also compare him to their own emissaries. Henry Wright, for instance, had not hesitated to denounce the sins of Austria while at Grafenberg, nor did Maria Weston Chapman hesitate to criticize Louis Napoleon while in France.⁷⁴

⁷³ Bowditch, *Life and Correspondence*, 252; “Anti-Slavery Convention at Rochester, New York,” *NASS*, 3 April 1851. See also Thompson’s speech in “Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, at Syracuse, Continued,” *NASS*, 22 May 1851; George Thompson to the Westons, 24 February 1851, BAA, 365-66; “Convention at Auburn: Reception of George Thompson,” *NASS*, 27 March 1851; “Geo. Thompson in New York State,” *NASS*, 13 March 1851; “George Thompson in Massachusetts,” *NASS*, 12 December 1850; WLG to Elizabeth Pease, 23 June 1851, BAA, 378-9; “George Thompson and Louis Kossuth,” *Liberator*, 16 January 1852; “From Our Boston Correspondent,” *NASS*, 13 May 1852. The controversy caused by Thompson’s comments and his extended absence from his constituents may have cost him his seat in Parliament. See Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery, 1833-1870*; Gifford, “George Thompson and Trans-Atlantic Antislavery, 1831-1865,” 271-98.

⁷⁴ Garrisonians also had another negative standard of comparison with which to judge Kossuth. Father Theobald Mathew, the famous Irish temperance reformer who had signed the Irish Address with O’Connell in 1841, also visited the United States between 1849 and 1851. Like Kossuth, he avoided commenting on the subject of slavery, and many of the Garrisonians’ criticisms of Kossuth had already been hashed out on Mathew. See Quincy, “Policy of M. Kossuth”; John F. Quinn, *Father Mathew’s Crusade: Temperance in Nineteenth-Century Ireland and Irish America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 158-64.

After dismissing the arguments offered in Kossuth's defense, Garrisonians soon came to the conclusion that Garrison had anticipated in his 1849 comparison between Kossuth and Jesus. Kossuth refused to denounce slavery, they said, because his vision was confined narrowly to the interests of Hungary. Bowditch's apologia for Kossuth, that he was a "patriot," not a "philanthropist," struck Garrisonians as the problem. "He is here for Hungary – that is number one, and the whole number," said Garrison in a lengthy speech in January. "I grant that Kossuth has been true to Hungary; but it is one thing for a man to dare and suffer greatly, that *he and his countrymen* may enjoy freedom; and quite another thing to dare and suffer for *the freedom of the world.*" Later in the year, Garrison would publish, in a 112-page pamphlet, an open letter to Kossuth, which called attention to the fact that he too was a "fugitive," and which offered Kossuth the examples of Thompson and O'Connell. Kossuth was "selfish," the letter contended, "a Hungarian for Hungarians, and nothing for mankind." And in the final analysis, Garrison said, "local patriotism, courageous and self-sacrificing to the last extremity, is no anomaly in human history. To prove that it is neither selfish nor exclusive, a world-wide test must be applied to it."⁷⁵

Other Garrisonians drove home that Kossuth had failed the "world-wide test" of patriotism. Even before Garrison's speech, Phillips told an audience at the Boston anti-slavery bazaar that Kossuth was "a patriotic and devoted Hungarian—grant him that! He

⁷⁵ "Kossuth: Speech of William Lloyd Garrison, at the Melodeon, Thursday evening, Jan. 29, 1852," *Liberator*, 5 March 1852. Garrison's pamphlet-length polemic on Kossuth is reprinted in its entirety in LWLG, 4:97-199. Quotes are taken from this reprint, pp. 101-102, 152. It is a measure of Kossuth's importance to the Garrisonians that Garrison's sons, in their biography of their father, counted the *Letter to Louis Kossuth* as one of the two volumes that "may properly be called the 'Works of Garrison,'" with the other being Garrison's much more famous *Thoughts on Colonization*. They compared the pamphlet's importance to Theodore Dwight Weld's *American Slavery As It Is* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. See Garrison and Garrison, *Garrison*, 3:353-4.

loves Hungary so much that his charity stops at the banks of the Danube. He is a lover of his mother land,” but it was “a local patriotism.” To say Kossuth loved Hungary was no more noteworthy than to say, “Webster loves the whites.” Kossuth was “no coward,” Phillips admitted, but “he is selfish. Just as selfish as all patriotism is.” As might be expected, Henry Wright had little difficulty expounding on the same theme. In one article in the *Liberator*, he gibed that Kossuth was “daily addressing multitudes, not on human freedom, but on Nationalism—two things having no necessary connection.” In another article, Wright dusted off the catch phrases he had honed while in Europe. “How utterly worthless is Patriotism compared to Humanity!” Kossuth was “ready to sacrifice MAN to the *citizen*, HUMANITY to *Nationalism*. God regards and deals with man as man, not as *nations*.” “Poor Kossuth!” echoed Chapman from Paris. “The advocate of the rights of nations! But rights of nations are nothing but consecrated rights of men, & he cannot advocate these, it seems.”⁷⁶

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These denunciations of Kossuth’s “selfish” patriotism may have appeared, on the surface, to be condemnations of patriotism in general. They certainly appeared that way to the Garrisonians’ critics. But in reality, the debate over Kossuth gave Garrisonians the opportunity to refine their critiques of patriotism and to limit them to certain forms of

⁷⁶ “Kossuth: Speech of Wendell Phillips,” *Liberator*, 2 January 1852; Henry C. Wright, “Kossuth and the Great American Lie,” *Liberator*, 19 March 1852; Wright, “Kossuth and His Mission: Its Object Not Liberty, but Nationalism,” *Liberator*, 26 March 1852; MWC to Mary Estlin, 24 January 1852, BAA, 286. See also Henry C. Wright, “Recreancy of Kossuth,” *Liberator*, 2 January 1852. Phillips’ speech on Kossuth was enthusiastically endorsed by Garrisonians on both sides of the Atlantic. See Charles Hovey to [Anne Warren Weston?], 5 January 1852, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.26.1; Elizabeth Pease to [Anne Warren Weston?], 9 February 1852, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.26.9; Mary Estlin to Anne Warren Weston, 20 February 1852, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.26.11; “Kossuth—Phillips,” *Liberator*, 13 February 1852; A. J. Grover, “The Integrality of Reform—Kossuth,” *Liberator*, 13 February 1852; “Speech of Mr. Phillips,” *Liberator*, 13 February 1852. Phillips’ speech is also available as “Kossuth,” in Phillips, *Speeches, Lectures, and Letters: Second Series*, 40-68.

patriotism. It was not love for a country that was necessarily bad. But it was vicious the moment it became a form of national vanity, which prevented revolutionists from calling despotism by its name wherever they found it.

It is significant that both during and after Kossuth's trip, Garrisonians often said that Mazzini—theorist of nationality, Italian patriot, and friend of the Ashursts—was not guilty of selfish patriotism, as Kossuth was. They realized, of course, that Mazzini had never truly faced the “world-wide” test of patriotism because he never visited the United States. He certainly was as interested in American support and financial aid as Kossuth. But most Garrisonians speculated that Mazzini would not have failed the test.⁷⁷ And their speculations were reinforced by the subsequent careers of Kossuth and Mazzini in England. In 1854, British Garrisonians published a letter from Mazzini declaring his firm opposition to slavery. When the American consul in England, a Young American appointee of Democratic president Franklin Pierce, learned of the letter, he solicited a public letter from Kossuth declaring that Mazzini was not referring to American slavery in particular. That sealed Kossuth's fate in the minds of Garrisonians, while their respect for Mazzini only increased when he published another antislavery letter several years later.⁷⁸

Indeed, in 1872, nearing the end of his life, Garrison wrote a glowing introduction to an American anthology of Mazzini's writings. Recalling his meetings with Mazzini—

⁷⁷ See, for instance, Pease to Weston, 9 February 1852; S. Alfred Steinthal to MWC, 28 December 1853, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.27.87; “The Man of Expediency and the Man of Principle,” *Liberator*, 21 July 1854.

⁷⁸ See Rossi, *Image of America in Mazzini's Writings*, 123-29; “Letter from M. Mazzini,” *Liberator*, 21 July 1854; “Kossuth-Sanders,” *Liberator*, 21 July 1854; “Mazzini, Kossuth, and Mr. Sanders,” *Liberator*, 11 August 1854; “Celebration of W. I. Emancipation at Manchester England,” *Liberator*, 1 September 1854; F. Bishop to Mary Estlin, 1 August 1854, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.28.19; “Mazzini on American Slavery,” *Liberator*, 22 April 1859. Garrisonians republished both antislavery letters from Mazzini in *Letters on American Slavery from Victor Hugo, de Tocqueville, Emile de Girardin, Carnot, Passy, Mazzini, Humboldt, O. Lafayette--&c.* (Boston: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1860), 12-14.

the first in 1846 and another in 1868 when he was in Britain for a fourth time—Garrison placed him at the head of the nineteenth century’s notables. The century’s other heroes for popular freedom had “signalized themselves mainly for their patriotism; but that is a passion or sentiment which has narrow boundaries, and is too often limited to a given territory or people. Such, for example, was the patriotism of Kossuth, the most pretentious of them all.” After releasing another barrage on Kossuth’s recreant actions on his 1852 tour, Garrison quoted Mazzini’s two antislavery letters. “Mazzini’s love of native land was like a fire in his bones,” Garrison admitted, but her freedom “was with him but the prelude to the deliverance of all Europe.” His patriotism was not “simply the devotion of an Italian in behalf of his oppressed countrymen.” Instead, his patriotism had not “one spark of self-inflation, one atom of worldly ambition, one symptom of narrowness towards any people,” but was “spherical as the globe. . . . This great Italian was also cosmopolitan.”⁷⁹

While the distinction that Garrisonians made between good and bad patriotism was a slender one, it was significant, because their harangues on Kossuth contained the germs of their ideas about patriotism during and after the Civil War, when many would declare themselves reborn as lovers of country. On his 1867 trip to England, at a public breakfast held in his honor and attended by John Bright, John Stuart Mill, Thompson, Ashurst, William Cowper and others, Garrison recounted the “gratifying” memory of being invited, along with George Thompson, to witness the raising of the American flag

⁷⁹ William Lloyd Garrison, introduction to *Joseph Mazzini: His Life, Writings, and Political Principles* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1872). The frontispiece of the book contained a picture of Mazzini that he had presented to Garrison in 1868. See also “Patriotic Offering to Joseph Mazzini,” *Liberator*, 15 September 1865. In her own memoir of Mazzini, published a few years later, Emilie Ashurst began by quoting from Garrison’s eulogy, adding her agreement that Mazzini’s “patriotism was based upon something far higher than pride.” He believed that “no man can rightly fulfil his duties as a patriot; who fails in the higher duty he owes to humanity.” See [Venturi,] *Joseph Mazzini*, 1-2.

over Fort Sumter in April 1865. “The time was when I refused to have that banner wave over my head, because it was stained and gory with the blood of the slave. But now, as a symbol of universal emancipation, I am proud of it.” Indeed, now that America was no longer leagued with despotisms, Garrison was “unable to express the satisfaction I feel in believing that, henceforth, my country will be a mighty power for good in the world.” Freed from her “inconsistency,” America was now “free to advance the cause of liberty throughout the world!”⁸⁰

It would be difficult to take Garrison’s postwar patriotism as evidence that he had been an American patriot all along, given his earlier characterizations of the country as a slave-driving despotism. But it would also be wrong to assume that Garrison’s patriotism sprung up overnight, nourished by the fertile soil of Civil War nationalism. Instead, his postbellum ideas about love for country were taking shape even in the aftermath of the Revolutions of 1848, and they took the shape they did in large part because of exchanges with figures like Mazzini and Kossuth. If Garrison sounded, by 1868, like an American exceptionalist and triumphalist, his exceptionalism was forged on an anvil that spanned national borders. His idea that national pride was permissible only if it was a “symbol of universal emancipation,” that patriotism was only justified if it was also cosmopolitan, was an idea that had been hammered out by Garrisonians in debates about European despotism and a Hungarian exile.

⁸⁰ *Proceedings of the Public Breakfast Held in Honour of William Lloyd Garrison, Esq., of Boston, Massachusetts, in St. James’s Hall, London, on Saturday, June 20th, 1867* (London: William Tweedie, 1868), 41, 37.

Epilogue

Government of the People

Not all abolitionists were as critical of Kossuth as the Garrisonians were, and many political abolitionists and “new organizationists” defended the Hungarian’s patriotism. Militant black abolitionists also embraced Kossuth’s example as a model for insurrection and used the revolutions of 1848 to defend the right of American slaves to rise up against the despots on Southern plantations. Gerrit Smith, however, a radical New York abolitionist, a close friend of Frederick Douglass, and one of the Secret Six who later supported John Brown, echoed Garrison’s criticisms of Kossuth in four-page broadside pamphlet. Despite his disagreement with the Garrisonians’ disavowal of political strategies and their calls for disunion, Smith agreed that “it is the philanthropist, who is the highest style of man. His country is the world. His countrymen mankind.” Echoing Garrison’s editorial on Kossuth and Jesus, he continued that “reason forbids the repression of our sympathies out of respect to geographical and national lines. It is only for convenience sake, that such lines may be drawn across the human brotherhood. It is true, that they bound the flow of patriotism. But philanthropy is paramount to patriotism.”¹

Smith was a bit more lenient with Kossuth than Garrison: the fact that he was a patriot did not make him worthy of “unmitigated condemnation.” Nonetheless, he agreed with the arguments of Phillips and Garrison that mere patriotism was inferior to love for

¹ Smith’s pamphlet is reprinted in Ronald K. Huch, “Patriotism vs. Philanthropy,” *New York History* 49, no. 3 (1968): 327-335.

humanity, and he even conjectured, as they did, that Mazzini would have been a more philanthropic patriot if he had visited the United States. These points of agreement between Smith and the Garrisonians were only one example of broader patterns of convergence that were emerging in the American antislavery movement. Outraged by the Mexican War, the Compromise of 1850, and, in 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, antislavery Northerners were forging new cooperative ventures—like the Vigilance Committees designed to oppose the Fugitive Slave Law, for instance—which partly submerged the divisions of the past. In February 1849, several Garrisonians were invited to attend a meeting in Boston “to discuss the Advantages of organizing a Club or College, for the study and diffusion of the Ideas and Tendencies proper to the Nineteenth Century; and to concert measures, if deemed desirable, for promoting” those ideas. In addition to disunionists and non-resistants like Garrison, Quincy, and Wright, the invitation for the meeting included Elizur Wright, an “old organization” nemesis of the Garrisonians, and new antislavery allies like Emerson and Theodore Parker. A similarly diverse group of Garrisonians and non-Garrisonians had convened in Tremont Temple the year before to celebrate French emancipation.²

As new coalitions formed among antislavery Northerners, their rhetoric also coalesced around two themes with which Garrisonians had long been familiar. First, beginning with the Mexican War, diverse groups of Northerners became increasingly critical of “patriotism” and love for the Union as a cloak for the expansion of the Slave Power into western territories and Northern states. In a June 1846 issue of the *Liberator*, Garrison excerpted two editorials on “patriotism” from very different sources—one was

² The invitation can be found in Wendell Phillips’ papers, HU, bMS, Am 1953 (1019/7). For the French celebration, see “Sympathy for the French,” *Liberator*, 21 April 1848.

from an evangelical newspaper in New York, and the other was from a newspaper started by antislavery renegades in the Democratic Party. But both editorials joined in attacking the way that Northern hawks and their apologists “prate[d] of their patriotism” and shouted, “Our Country, Right or Wrong.” According to the New York *Evangelist*, the patriotism that supported a war with Mexico was “a lying patriotism, a traitorous patriotism, a patriotism that has, and ever will have, God’s curse.” According to the *Independent Democrat*, “it is the work of patriotism to see that the country is defended . . . against traitors within. . . . To us, therefore, it does not appear so very unpatriotic to tell doughfacedom, that it has betrayed the liberties and honor of the country.” Here was an emerging critique of proslavery patriotism that antislavery Democrats, evangelicals, Free Soilers, and Garrisonians could all wish well.³

Another sharpening point of convergence between disparate antislavery streams was the belief that the United States, as long as it was controlled by the Slave Power, was in fact a despotic rather than a republican nation. Antislavery Whigs like Horace Mann and Free Soilers like Gamaliel Bailey, editor of the *National Era*, joined Garrisonians in making frequent comparisons between Austria and Russia and the depredations of the Slave Power, arguing that democratic institutions were under attack from within the nation itself. This meant, as the *Independent Democrat* argued in 1853 in an editorial praising Mazzini’s abolitionism, that “the brave word spoken for Hungarian or Italian Liberty, is a word, too, for American Liberty and against American Slavery.”⁴ Of course,

³ “Our Country, Right or Wrong,” *New York Evangelist*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 5 June 1846; “Patriotism,” *Independent Democrat*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 5 June 1846. On the *Independent Democrat*, see Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery*, 91. Also see “True Patriotism,” *Liberator*, 7 May 1847;

⁴ “Mazzini on American Slavery,” *Independent Democrat*, reprinted in *Liberator*, 2 September 1853.

such echoes of Garrisonian discourse in the newspapers of Free Soilers did not by themselves make strong connections between political abolitionists and Garrisonians, who remained disunionists right up to the firing on Fort Sumter in 1861. Even when the Republican Party was formed, casting itself as the defender of democratic institutions, Garrisonians kept their distance and argued publicly that there were vast differences of principle between the Garrisonians attacks on racism in the North and slavery in the South, and the Republicans' limited attacks on the expansion of slavery into the West. Privately, though, Garrisonians could congratulate themselves that the growth of Free Soil sentiment was a "cheering sign of the times," even if they continued to hold it to a higher standard of principle.⁵

Whatever their remaining differences—and they were many—Garrisonians and other antislavery Northerners increasingly believed that a despotic Slave Power was threatening popular government, and that it was therefore the highest act of patriotism to follow the examples of Kossuth and Mazzini in throwing off the oligarchic rule of Southern tyrants. When war broke out and Southern armies invaded the North, the fate of popular government seemed more imperiled than ever. As Lincoln mournfully warned in the Gettysburg Address, it seemed possible that "government of the people, by the people, for the people" could "perish from the earth." The fact that Lincoln imagined popular government disappearing not just from America, but from the earth as a whole, hints at the fact that Republicans and Unionists viewed the struggle between democracy and despotism in a transnational frame. Perhaps that was why he also later spoke of

⁵ WLG to Samuel May, Jr., 2 December 1848, BAA, 332.

America as the “last, best hope” of mankind, since so many hoped-for democracies had been dashed in Europe in 1849 and after.

Scholars have long debated the etiology of Lincoln’s eye-catching phrase in the Gettysburg Address—“government of the people, by the people, for the people.” The phrase has been credited to Theodore Parker, but versions of it have also been traced to Mazzini and Kossuth. As historian Joseph Rossi notes, “the slogan was a familiar one among liberal thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic,” and it captured an ideal cherished by Chartists as much as Mazzini, by abolitionists as much as Kossuth—the ideal of a nation governed by its people.⁶

Garrisonians shared that ideal, and by the middle years of the Civil War, former disunionists like Wendell Phillips were speaking out on the importance of preserving the nation’s institutions, while the former no-voter Henry Wright was stumping for Lincoln. Once the Civil War ended, Garrisonians turned their attention to securing equal citizenship rights for African Americans. In 1867, as it became ever likelier that suffrage for black men would be secured, Wendell Phillips rejoiced that “we seem to be on the very eve of the accomplishment of all that the friends of freedom have ever asked of the nation; . . . that is, the absolute civil and political equality of the colored man under our institutions of government.”⁷

Critics of the Garrisonians might have reasonably balked at Phillips’ suggestion that all that had “ever asked of the nation” was the realization of civic nationalism—a nation defined by equality under a common law. Had they not also asked for disunion? Had they not asked for the abolition of all nations? As we have seen in this dissertation,

⁶ Rossi, *The Image of America in Mazzini’s Writings*, 136.

⁷ Phillips quoted in McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, 376.

however, even in asking for those things, Garrisonians *were* asking, all along, for a nation governed by the people. Their sense of affinity and their active collaboration with European reformers who were pursuing the same goals—Chartists, Repealers, Italian liberals—reveal the Garrisonians’ underlying ideal of a civic nation. But that ideal was shaped by transnational intellectual exchanges, and in fact, it was the Garrisonians’ claims that their country was the world that helped them eventually see their own country as the last, best hope for the world.

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