

Deviant Society: The Self-Reliant "Other" in Transcendental America

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This dissertation utilizes theories of deviance in conjunction with literary methods of reading and analyzing to study a range of deviant or transgressive characters in American literature of the 1840s and 50s. I justify this methodology on the basis of the intersecting and related histories of Emersonian self-reliance and deviance in American thought. I contend that each of the texts of self-reliance discussed by the dissertation – *The National Police Gazette* (1845-present), Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), Margaret Fuller’s *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), Henry David Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience” (1849) and *Walden* (1854), and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) – actually sanctions deviance. Since deviance is endorsed by these texts in some shape or form, it is a critical component of American culture; consequently American culture is one that promotes deviance.

My work on Douglass and Thoreau employs the sociological theories of Robert K. Merton (1949) to investigate the tensions between the culturally lauded goal of self-reliance and the legitimate means for securing this. I explore the importance of Transcendentalist self-reliance to the American Dream ethos and the ways in which it is valorized by each protagonist.

The work on the *National Police Gazette* puts popular and elite forms of literary discourse into conversation with one another. My primary concern here is with explaining why and how specific self-reliant behaviours are deemed “deviant” in the literary context, but “criminal” by popular works.

The chapters on female deviance elucidate the confines of women's writing and writing about women as well as the acceptable female modes of conduct during the nineteenth century. They also focus on the ways female characters engaged in deviance from within these rigid frameworks. A functionalist interrogation of female deviance underscores the ways society is united against those women who are classed as unwomanly or unfeminine.

My conclusion seeks to reinvigorate the conversation regarding the intersection between literature and the social sciences and suggests that literature in many ways often anticipates sociological theory. Ultimately, I conclude by broadening the category of the self-reliant individual to include, for instance, females and African-American slaves who were otherwise not imagined to possess such tendencies. Thus, this dissertation revises notions of Emerson's concept of self-reliance by positioning it instead as a call to arms for *all* Americans to engage in deviant or socially transgressive behaviour.

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The University of Toronto will forever hold a special place in my heart as the place where the rudimentary framework for this dissertation was formulated. I thank the University of Waterloo, Department of English for being the place where those early ideas were able to grow and expand freely in order to produce this somewhat unconventional dissertation.

A special thank you to the staff at the New York Public Library who were incredibly helpful in granting me access to original copies of *The National Police Gazette* on such short notice.

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Dedication

To my parents, Mohan and Primla

Thank you for your unwavering love and support over the years. You have taught me that the impossible is always possible. Your impact on the pages of this dissertation runs deeper than you know. If I am at all successful in my academic career, it is because of the lessons you have taught me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Deviance is a slippery term. Sociologist J.L. Simmons' 1965 survey of 180 American adults responded that "deviance" includes actions and activities such as homosexuality (49%), substance abuse (47%), alcoholism (46%), prostitution (27%), murder (22%), political extremism (10%), and atheism (10%). According to John Curra's *The Relativity of Deviance*, today's list would instead highlight an entirely different set of behaviours such as terrorism, self-mutilation, erotic asphyxiation, and other "eccentric" (a label which Curra himself problematizes) personalities such as vampire Danielle Willis¹ or "Monsieur Mangetout" ("Mister Eat Everything").²

While a specific definition of deviance continues to elude us, one thing we can safely argue is that deviance, despite its slipperiness, seems to be a term that is still bandied about in twenty-first century America. Marshall Barron Clinard and Robert Meier suggest that "part of the reason for deviance may be that 21st century American life is very informal...often that informality crosses over into incivility" (506)³. This supposition would suggest that a more formal period, like the 1840s and 50s should be less prone to deviant behaviours. This

¹ Willis "sleeps by day and works by night (she's a fiction writer), drinks human blood, partly for nourishment and partly because it excites her. She paid her dentist to install a pair of permanent porcelain fangs over her incisors" (Curra 54).

² Michel Lotito (1950-2007) is Monsieur Mangetout who is a Frenchman with the amazing ability to eat anything. The list includes TV sets, aluminum skis, supermarket carts, bicycles, razor blades, coins, bullets, and most notably a two-seater Cessna airplane (Curra 55).

³ Their text works in conversation with Marco della Cava's "What Happened to Civility?" which makes references to such pop-culture incivilities as South Carolina's Republican Representative Joe Wilson who infamously interrupted President Obama, Serena Williams' "expletive-laced" tirade against Kim Clijsters, and Kanye West rushing onto the stage as Taylor Swift was accepting her award for Best Music Video.

dissertation demonstrates that this is untrue. The nineteenth century was equally susceptible to a host of deviant behaviours.

While today deviance is a problem debated in the social science fields, in the nineteenth century it was literature that played a significant role in debates about what we today refer to as deviance. Based on my study of literature, I surmise, then, that it is not a lack of formality (or too much informality for that matter) that engenders deviance but instead the American culture of self-reliance, one of America's key principles, that promotes deviance.

Moving forward, I will need to provide a more coherent notion of deviance, but for now I offer a working definition. Although the circumstances described predate the inception of the term deviance,⁴ I will use it to describe those self-reliant behaviours that involve a refusal to conform to socially accepted norms/mores. In this dissertation, deviance is the point at which self-reliance becomes anti-social. The term deviance then encapsulates a range of terms: anti-social, non-conformity, and social transgression. I will, of course, qualify the term deviance later and discuss the difficulties inherent in using it. I also offer here a definition of self-reliance. In my dissertation, this term encompasses those behaviours that Emerson lauds in his 1841 essay "Self-Reliance": non-conformity to social and political norms, self-trust, and self-truth.

⁴ According to Stearns, the term deviance came into use in 1944 (201).

The American Impetus to be Self-Reliant

Today, self-reliance, in its original Emersonian conception, remains of interest to American political commentators. American President Barack Obama's *Change We Can Believe In* (2008) speaks of Americans believing in "personal responsibility, hard work, and self reliance" (3).⁵ Even his earlier book *Dreams From My Father* (2006) depicts Obama as a man who had to rely on the tenets of self-reliance to overcome the difficulties prompted by his father's disappearance when he was 2 years old. Other political figures like Robert Ringer also outline the current importance of self-reliance to the American people. In *Restoring the American Dream* he suggests that "to restore the [original goals] of the American Dream, we have to recapture the spirit that exemplified it – the spirit of individualism, self-reliance, and risk taking" (207). We might also consider Conservatives Edwin Feulner and Doug Wilson's recent comments in *Getting America Right: The True Conservative Values Our Nation Needs Today*:

⁵ Curiously, during Obama's 2012 presidential campaign, he instead employed the term "self-reliance," not in its original sense, but in a more literal (and negative) sense. During a million-dollar fundraiser in San Francisco in October 2011, Obama warned that if he loses the election, it will usher in what many reporters have paraphrased as "a painful era of self-reliance in America." Obama claimed, "we're going to have a government that tells the American people, 'you are on your own...If you get sick, you're on your own. If you can't afford college, you're on your own. If you don't like that some corporation is polluting your air or the air that your child breathes, then you're on your own'" (Dwyer 1).

Self-reliance, Tocqueville observed in *Democracy in America*, was the organizing principle of American life, culture, and politics in the nineteenth century. Today, our nation seems to have reversed Tocqueville's admiring formulation and become a nanny state in which more and more individuals depend on government to do not only what they can't do for themselves, but far too much else. (55)

Though their comments suggest an America in which self-reliance does not flourish, Feulner and Wilson still apply the original Emersonian sense of self-reliance to their critiques of American culture.

In its original instantiation, among the privileged class, self-reliance represents a method of intellect, an exhortation to rely solely on oneself instead of seeking support externally. The idea of self-reliance is found abundantly in Ralph Waldo Emerson's writings, not exclusively in his famous essay "Self-Reliance" (1841).⁶ Emerson's "Spiritual Laws" (1841), published the same year as "Self-Reliance," also evokes allied ideas of self-trust and self-truth:

A man's genius, the quality that differences [sic] him from every other, the susceptibility to one class of influences, the selection of what is fit for him, the rejection of what is unfit, determines for him the character of the universe. (154)

Also, in *Representative Men*, Emerson chastises those individuals who adopt what George Kateb has termed the "herd-spirit" (18). Emerson announces: "enormous populations, if they be beggars, are digging like moving cheese, like hills of ants, or of fleas" ("Uses of Great Men," *Representative Men*, pg. 7).

Finally, George Kateb's *Emerson and Self-Reliance* concludes that in "Fate,"

⁶ Joel Myerson's *A Historical Guide to Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2000) notes that modern-day interpretations of this famous essay tend to be associated with "commercial impulses" (64). The most well-known example of this would be a Nike commercial from the 1990s that features a group of self-absorbed youth with voice-overs of lines from "Self-Reliance." The ad culminates with their infamous slogan, "Just Do It."

the first essay in *The Conduct of Life* (1860), we actually find one of Emerson's "most compressed statements of his self-reliant method":

By obeying each thought frankly, by harping, or, if you will, pounding on each string, we learn at last its power. By the same obedience to other thoughts, we learn theirs, and then comes some reasonable hope of harmonizing them. We are sure, that, though we know not how, necessity does comport with liberty, the individual with the world, my polarity with the spirit of the times. The riddle of the age has for each a private solution. If one would study his own time, it must be by this method of taking up in turn each of the leading topics which belong to our scheme of human life, and, by firmly stating all that is agreeable to experience on one, and doing the same justice to the opposing facts in the others, the true limitations will appear. (qtd. in Kateb, p.6)⁷

These words for Kateb are the hallmark of Emersonian self-reliance.

Still, Emersonian scholars offer differing interpretations of the signal term. Joel Myerson labels it as "a stirring call to personal freedom of thought and expression" (*Historical Guide*, 64); Kateb proclaims it "a principle for the conduct of a whole life" (17); and Stanley Cavell deems it "a study of (philosophical) writing (hence of reading and thinking) which is established by '[calling] attention to the externals of writing and to the internals of the one writing, backing it, fronting it, hence to assert that both writing and writer are to be read'" (55). Where these scholars do agree, though, is that the self-reliant principle is proposed as an over-arching framework for the life of the mind.

Kateb even goes as far as announcing that instances of self-reliance run the risk

⁷ This passage seemingly confirms a charge that many critics have levied against Emerson: his inability to produce a single cohesive philosophy. Yet, what is more important here is the way in which Emerson consciously deploys contradiction as a rhetorical strategy. As a number of critics have pointed out in passages such as this one, Emerson is more concerned with experimenting with a multiplicity of perspectives. This is precisely what I believe to be Emerson's beauty – his ability to synthesize seemingly disparate insights.

of being only “marginal and eruptive” if they are treated as anything other than the work of the inner life (25). Kateb’s work outlines some of the “attitudes opposed to self-reliance” (18), or more aptly, those attitudes that threaten the self-reliant impulse. First and foremost of these attitudes is materialism: “Self Reliance” does not promote any form of “economic self-centeredness” (18). According to Kateb, Emerson himself challenges the notion that the self-reliant impulse is “acquisitive or possessive or consumerist” by suggesting that materialism is not self-reliance, but a “misdiagnosed dying” (18). Thus, the ideal self-reliant person is unfettered by both material possessions and material worries. A second attitude is self-centeredness. Emersonian doctrine argues that self-reliance should not entail one believing and acting as if they are alone in the world, but moreover a belief that the world reflects what the individual thinks or says about it. Maurice Wohlgeleinter openly cautions us against confusing self-reliance and self-centeredness: “[self-reliance] is not self-centeredness, despite [its] apparent turning inward” (lxiii).

Any discussion of Emerson’s “Self-Reliance” should bear the caveat that Emerson himself is not the inventor of the concept of self-reliance but an important theorist of it. The novelistic form provides insight into how the impetus toward self-reliance began even before Emerson’s 1841 oration. Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel* argues that individualism was an important forerunner to self-reliance. He suggests that the import of individualism for the rise of the novel was twofold: first, society had to regard individuals highly enough that they were deemed an acceptable subject for serious literature; and

second, there had to be a variety of beliefs and actions amongst ordinary people so that an account of them would be of interest to others (60). Reflecting on the American context in particular, Craig Haney surmises that by the nineteenth century, the notion of individualism had been elevated almost to the status of religion (194). At this point in American literature, the innocence of the Adamic persona in New World Eden was gradually being replaced by what was deemed a more authentic American narrative. In *The American Adam* (1959), R.W.B. Lewis outlines the self-reliant individual in all its glory:

the individual going forth toward experience, the inventor of his own character and creator of his personal history; the self-moving individual who is made to confront that 'other'—the world or society, the element which provides experience. (111)

Emerson and Self-Reliance announces at the outset that “the very phrase self-reliance has become a common synonym for individualism” (1), but Andrew Epstein is more cautious. He instead indicates only a *correlation* between the terms “individualism” and “self-reliance”:

Individualism has sometimes seemed to suggest that self-interest is the highest priority, and that personal freedom depends upon the discovery or creation of one’s inalienable, essential, unique identity and the refusal to be reined in by suffocating to any normative community. (65)

According to Epstein, it is the refusal to be suffocated that constitutes the official, mythic version of American self-reliance. This is the version of self-reliance I will use – the idea of a correlation, not causation. I agree with Epstein’s correlation and will argue throughout the dissertation that the two concepts are related, but not interchangeable. While Epstein – and others like

Charles Hayes, Joel Myerson, and Neal Dolan – agree that these terms are related, they are all careful to refer to “individualism” and “self-reliance” as distinct entities. The self-reliant person’s transcendentalist beliefs (about which I will say more later) help him or her to develop and cultivate an innate recognition of their unique position within the cosmos, whereas individuals are instead those who distance themselves from all social convention and society. What I take from the interrelationship between self-reliance and individualism is that one conjoins self-reliance and Transcendentalism to get an individual who truly understands their position in the cosmos - unlike regular individuals. As Epstein surmises, the individualist is more akin to the beloved Huckleberry Finn character who “sheds social encumbrances and lights out for the Territory” (65).

Here is the point at which more needs to be said about the Transcendentalists⁸ since they ultimately set the stage for the advocacy of the doctrine of self-reliance (*Reader*, xxix). Emerson stands for Transcendentalism when he writes: “What is popularly called Transcendentalism among us, is Idealism; Idealism as it appears in 1842”⁹ (“The Transcendentalist” 93). The speech presents a strategic opposition between the materialist, who insists “on facts, on history, on the force of circumstances, and the animal wants of man”

⁸ Myerson (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2000) indicates that the name “Transcendentalists” was not “self-imposed, but appropriated by outsiders in an attempt to easily classify and categorize another group of people” (xxv).

⁹ *Emerson’s Prose and Poetry* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001) stipulates that while the speech was actually delivered at the Masonic Temple in Boston on December 23, 1841, the first printing of this speech dated the lecture “January 1841”, with an erratum on the table of contents page reading “January 1842 (93 n1).”

and the Transcendental idealist who instead focuses “on the power of Thought and of Will, on inspiration, on miracle, [and ultimately] on individual culture” (“The Transcendentalist” 93). Myerson’s *Transcendentalism: A Reader* explains how Emerson’s signal essay fits into the broader Transcendentalist rubric:

The Transcendentalists were essentially syncretic, borrowing from various philosophies, literatures, and religions whatever they felt was appropriate to their developing beliefs, and forging these borrowings into a new system. While this type of belief formation may be practical, its essential nonlinearity, and inherent potential for internal contradictions among different aspects of disparate intellectual and moral structures, brings to mind Emerson’s admonition in “Self-Reliance” that a “foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,” and is a warning to take Transcendentalism on its own terms and not pin it down by trying too hard to separately define its constituent parts. (xxv)

Despite the Transcendentalists’ desire to elevate themselves above mere individualism, there remains within even the most highly regarded self-reliant people an element of the anti-convention or anti-social. It has not gone unnoticed amongst scholars that there are negative consequences to self-reliance, but what I highlight next for the reader is the ways in which self-reliance resembles deviance today.

Self-Reliance and Deviance

The relationship between self-reliance and deviance is thorny; the texts examined in the following chapters are simultaneously exercises in Transcendentalist self-reliance on the one hand, and deviance on the other. The

term *deviance* only came into use in 1944 (Stearns 201), yet I retrodict back to the nineteenth century to discuss this concept. By using present theories to explore past events, we can read time backwards (retrodiction). Thus, as a cultural historian, I project from effect to cause; contemporary instances of deviance in American life can be traced back to the nineteenth century culture of self-reliance. I am particularly interested in pinpointing the moment at which self-reliance becomes deviance, and with the ways in which deviance itself is a part of American culture. To explore these questions, I use an interdisciplinary approach that bridges the sociological and cultural.

The association between deviance and self-reliance is traced primarily by critics of politics and society. For example, Kateb's political interpretation of self-reliance claims the theory involves "the wish to be oneself, to live as one thinks best, to take chances deviantly, to pursue one's specific vocation, to define oneself as different from others" (32). This makes clear Kateb's opinion that self-reliance borders on deviance when one actively distances themselves from normative society. More recently, social-psychologist Stevan E. Hobfoll's *Stress, Culture, and Community: The Psychology and Philosophy of Stress* outlines two very different forms of anti-social coping strategies¹⁰, one which "includes coping activities that either are directly meant to harm others or that display general disregard for likely harm they will cause" (145) and the other, which describes activities that "are more inadvertently anti-social" (145), of which he claims Emersonian self-reliance is a contributing factor. Hobfoll

¹⁰ Also related to "isolationist coping" where individuals face their demons alone (Hobfoll 124).

equates these types of anti-social coping strategies with a “shoot from the hip” response (of honesty and forthrightness) (145), which is associated with having little regard for social protocol and “Self-Reliance” since Emerson encourages us to engage in a form of deviance that essentially has no regard for social niceties and proprieties.

Deviance: A Historical Overview

The earliest known occurrences of what we now refer to as deviance date back to the seventeenth century. Stephen Pfohl’s *Images of Deviance and Social Control: A Sociological History* (1985) traces the history of deviance and gives a thorough account of the major Western formal perspectives on deviance. According to Pfohl, “each [perspective] offers a distinctive theoretical image of what deviance is, how it can be best studied, and how it should be controlled” (11).

Pfohl’s work suggests that the oldest conceptions of deviance relate to what he acknowledges as the “demonic perspective” which effectively links deviance with the supernatural and more particularly, the notion of sin (20). This perspective suggested that when people sinned, they succumbed to the influence of evil forces – either temptation or possession (20), and were thus drawn to deviance. Deviance invoked an association with “cosmic consequences” – meaning that acts harmed more than just one particular victim; all acts of sin/deviance were transgressions against not only God, but “against

the whole order of nature itself, against the entire cosmos” (21). To illustrate this, we can look at events that took place in the town of Salem in the winter of 1692. 11 year old Abigail Williams and her cousin Betty Parris were overcome by a mysterious illness. According to witnesses, their "arms and backs twisted in unnatural ways"(4) as if they had been assaulted by “invisible agents” (4). It was declared by the town Doctor that these girls were bewitched. Soon after, two other girls showed similar signs of bewitchment. The four girls began to accuse other Salem residents of being witches.¹¹ As accusations spread, so too did panic. Pfohl notes that at this point, the entire community of Salem was “caught up in a mania of witches. The devil and his [deviant] disciples were everywhere” (24). This sociological notion of the demonic perspective was, obviously, fraught with problems, the foremost being that it provided little distinction between types of deviance – all deviants (regardless of their behaviours or motivations) were considered to be demonically inspired and therefore subject to religious rituals of public punishment (25). Punishment was meted out in a concerted effort to eradicate the devil and restore the entire community’s relationship with God. The demonic perspective remained the dominant conception of deviance until the 18th century Enlightenment, at which point the classic perspective gained prominence.¹² This Utilitarian line of

¹¹ Michael Burgan’s *The Salem Witch Trials* outlines how witches were conceived of during the 17th century: "witches were men and women who were said to make deals with Satan...people promised to worship Satan and work for him. In return, Satan gave them specific powers, such as the ability to fly or cast harmful spells on their enemies"(4).

¹² Pfohl (New York: McGraw Hill, 1985) is careful to point out that though “the demonic perspective may seem far removed from our modern, secular, and scientific world... for many people demonic explanations remain the only true explanations.”

thinking suggested deviance involves a process of rationally calculated choice to achieve maximum pleasure at the cost of minimal pain. It was popularized by the classical writings of thinkers like Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham. According to Pfohl, Beccaria argued that deviance was always calculatingly chosen over conformity – so long as it ensured the greatest amount of pleasure at a minimal cost. Pfohl summarizes Beccaria’s findings by claiming that “deviance was essentially no different than any other form of human conduct. One deviated for the same reasons that one made other reasonable investments – to reap the profits of maximum pleasure” (57). From my readings, I conclude that criminologists generally argue that the difficulty of classical theory is that this perspective assumes all deviants are no different from others since every human operates in an attempt to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. Beccaria’s view is to blame as Pfohl writes that the system of lawful control is

not rational enough to deter people from choosing pleasure beyond the prescribed boundaries of the social contract. Nothing more. Nothing less. The problem of deviance is thus not a problem of bad or inadequate people, but of bad or inadequate laws. (58)

According to Pfohl, David Rotham’s history of the origins of the prison system is the most succinct explanation of the American classical context. Like Foucault, Rotham argues that the popularity of the classical control philosophy resulted in a pervasive American reliance on incarceration (Pfohl 64). One element of this reliance had to do with reform; American reformers were so immersed in the “immediate and widespread appeal” of Beccaria’s classical

According to him, Evangelical preachers still tell us that “deviance is a sin and that its only control is conversion, prayer, and perhaps the donation of money to a particularly holy cause” (33)

tenets that they neglected to fully appreciate the consequences of relying upon prison as the sole form of punishment (Pfohl 24). As a result, such reformers paid little attention to “what prison really was or what incarceration really meant” (Pfohl 24). Convinced of the superiority of their ideas to the demonic perspective, they proceeded with a rationally calculated schema: “prisons matched the punishment to crime precisely: the more heinous the offense, the longer the sentence” (Pfohl 64).

The classical era is followed by theorizing in which deviance is portrayed as a sickness or pathology, not a sin or rational choice (Pfohl 85). Deviance is firmly believed to be the cause of an infected mind and/or body and requires a medical intervention instead of punishment. This type of thinking originated with Cesare Lombroso’s *The Criminal Man* [1876] (2006), which hypothesized that individuals were often “born criminal.” Others trace the true origins of the pathological perspective to the writings of American physician-reformer Benjamin Rush, who wrote the first American text on psychiatry in 1812. He argued that severe mental disorders were caused by “an arterial disease of the brain” and cited the “behaviour diseases” of “lying, crime, drunkenness, and revolutiona – a sickness characteristic of opponents of the American Revolution” (qtd. in Pfohl 86).

As with the other theoretical perspectives, this pathological view draws criticism because it represents deviant offenders as helpless, essentially having little to no control over their own thoughts, feelings, or actions (84). Critics of the pathological view argue that it is scientifically unsound and only fulfills

what Pfohl believes is the society's need for simple (in this case medical) explanations/solutions for complex problems (84).

When describing each theoretical perspective, Pfohl does not conflate the deviant with the criminal. In Pfohl's work, within the demonic perspective, deviants are classified either as sinners, or "demonically inspired", in the classical arena they are rational hedonists, and finally, from a pathological perspective, they become sick individuals. Siegel and McCormick's work in *Criminology in Canada: Theories, Patterns, Typologies* underscores the difficulty encountered when deviance and criminality are confused. They argue that not all crimes are deviant or unusual acts, but perhaps more importantly not all deviant acts are illegal or criminal (6). Yet, when critics discuss deviance in the classical era in particular, there appears to be a general tendency to lapse into more "criminal" language. This is in part due to the rhetoric of control that surrounds discussions of the rational hedonist. As already indicated, punishment in the classical schema was meted out by a "rational system of measured punishment, each calculated to exceed the pleasure expected from a specific act of deviance" (Pfohl 57). Also likely to further the association between deviance and crime, is the fact that the proper identification of deviance was the sole domain of the legislature. Judges were in charge of determining if any act of deviance actually constituted an illegal act (Pfohl 56).

The voices within the literature that I am concerned with enact a similar pattern; non-conformist behavior is a prelude to later self-reliance. In each case, it is in an initial instance of deviance that separates or distances the individual

from society. This seminal instance then propels an individual toward further self-reliant behaviours. For example, in *Narrative*, this signal moment is Douglass' physical rebellion against slave owner, Edward Covey, who symbolizes the tyranny of slavery. It is the confidence gained by this act that inspires his forthcoming self-reliance. I discuss these activities in detail in Chapter Two, but Douglass' efforts to teach himself to read and write would be a salient example. Another example from the works studied in this dissertation would be Ruth Hall's refusal to remarry after her husband's death. Her subsequent decision to become a writer launches her into a career of self-reliance. In the case of Douglass and Hall, as with the other literary figures in *Walden*, "Civil Disobedience," and *The Scarlet Letter*, despite these initial instances of non-conformity, the figures in question are re-absorbed into the community by the end of the work.¹³ I argue then that deviance follows the trajectory outlined by Emerson in "Self-Reliance": he suggests that non-conformists ("deviants") should anticipate society's reaction since it is always the same:

For non-conformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a sour face. The bystanders look askance on him in the public street or in the friend's parlor. (124)

Emerson argues, though, that ultimately this reaction is only fleeting:

If this aversation had its origin in contempt and resistance like his own, he might well go home with a sad countenance; but the sour faces of the multitude, like their sweet faces, have no deep cause,

¹³ Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* and the figures in the *National Police Gazette* would be the obvious exceptions here. In *The Blithedale Romance*, Zenobia dies at the end of the novel. And in the *Police Gazette*, individuals are typically jailed or sentenced to death.

but are put on and off as the wind blows, and a newspaper directs.
(124)

This model of first non-conformity, then self-reliance, and then eventual re-absorption is the one that I will trace throughout this dissertation.

Why Sociological Theory?

While American Transcendentalists established a model of self-reliance that resonates to this day, what is considered deviance in America has changed significantly with the rise of sociological theory and the shift from religious to secular modes of defining and addressing anti-social or deviant behavior. I have selected macro-sociological¹⁴ theories in particular because they provide unique insights into the 1840s and 50s since this pre-war period was rife with social changes with causes ranging from the Economic Panic of 1837¹⁵, to the Industrial Revolution, to the Mexican War in 1848, and to abolitionist John Brown's raid of Harper's Ferry in 1859. Formulated to trace "transformations in cultural norms and institutions and the subsequent effect they have on individual and group behaviour" (Siegel & McCormick 174), macro-sociological theories account for the social turmoil taking place in America during this era and the impact this had on ideas of deviance. Furthermore, sociology is particularly suited to my project as, by definition, it encompasses

¹⁴ Larry Siegel and Chris McCormick's *Criminology in Canada* (Scarborough: Nelson, 2003) defines the macro perspective as "a large scale view of a situation or event [that] takes into account contextual, social, and economic reasons, for example to explain the phenomenon" (402).

¹⁵ This financial crisis began as a major recession in the United States which lasted until the mid 1840s.

(but is not limited to) “gender; social inequality; crime and delinquency; family; demography; social problems; race and ethnicity; religion; education; the polity; government; sport; urban sociology; and, of course, deviance” (Franzese 28).

More specifically, I will use the field of criminology, a subset of the larger sociological field, because it provides the best tool for explaining deviance and non-conformity. Non-conformity is (as established) a feature of deviance so it is obvious how non-conformist strategies are understood by criminological theory.

Sociological Theories of Deviance

To add even more precision to the study of the deviant individual, it is important to understand the different *types* of deviance theories used by contemporary criminologists. The most unique is Robert J. Franzese’s *The Sociology of Deviance: Differences, Tradition, and Stigma*, which presents an original perspective that, as he himself acknowledges, “differs from what is offered by other sociologists” (6). Franzese defines deviance purely in terms of difference: “deviance is the differences in behaviours, values, attitudes, lifestyles, and life choices among individuals and groups” (6). The sociologist himself acknowledges the criticism that such a loose definition might incur, and so he announces immediately that his definition demonstrates a “lack of value judgment” that typically emanates from the word itself since deviance usually wants us to answer the question, “according to who?” (6). To avoid

problems/questions of this sort though, I argue that a more concrete definition of deviance is needed in order to be able to say more about the precision of these different types of deviance. One of the reasons criminological theory is so well suited for this project is because it offers precisely this sort of precision: of the five major types of deviance theories outlined by criminologists, each is more rigorous than the broad definition offered by Franzese. Criminological theories of deviance include Control Theory, Social Reaction Theory, Conflict Theory, Feminist Theory, and Anomie and Structural Theory as the major contemporary theoretical approaches to understanding deviance. For comparison purposes, a brief definition of each type of theory is provided here.

Of the modern theories that will be discussed here, Control Theory is the one that best conforms to the ideological constructs of nineteenth century classical theory. Control theory links deviance with improper socialization at an early age. Theorists like Albert Reiss (1951), David Matza (1957), and Jackson Toby (1957) argue that we all need to be controlled because of our innate selfish orientation toward self-preservation and therefore control mechanisms are absolutely necessary (Franzese 30). Control theories examine the repercussions of and explanations for the failure of these control mechanisms. The most well-known of these types of theories are the Rational Choice Theory and the Routine Activities Theory. Rational Choice theorists like Derek Cornish and Ronald Clarke argue that individuals all act in their own self-interest and that all offenders exhibit a lower self-control. A key idea here is the control theorist's belief that the greater the individual's self-control, the less likely that person is

to engage in delinquent behaviour (Britt 168). The Routine Activities Theory, on the other hand, links deviance with increased opportunity. This work argues that it is primarily the absence of adequate supervision that leads to specific types of deviance (Britt 49). Thus, both theories presuppose a rational subject, an idea originally developed in classical texts. Deviants are able to rationally exert self-control over their emotions and decisions (Rational Choice Theory), or they have made a rational calculation about the probability of success based on the presence of supervisory figures (Routine Activities Theory). In both instances, Control Theory suggests that the subject will logically determine whether any potential penalty is worth the eventual pleasure or not.

Social Reaction Theory is perhaps the most popular of the five schools of thought, even though it is controversial and scientifically questionable (Franzese 30). Social Reaction Theories such as Labeling Theory places emphasis on “definitional issues involved in the construction of deviance designations, and the interactions that occur among deviants, and the meanings actors attach to behaviours and events” (Franzese 30). Ultimately, this work is concerned with looking at the impact of labels on deviance and how deviant behaviour is learned. Most research in this field refers to the Labeling Theory, which stipulates that labeling people as “deviants”/criminals can “have unanticipated and ironic consequences of deepening the very behaviours it is meant to halt” (Ball 139). Social Labeling Theory marks a decided departure from classically-inspired thought. In fact, Labeling Theory offers a critique of the demonic perspective. The Salem Witch Trials reveal a type of behaviour

that today would most certainly be considered under the category of Labeling Theory. The link between the Salem Witch Trials and ideas espoused by Social Labeling is implicit in Kai Erikson's *Wayward Puritans* (1966). In this text, he outlines the very role deviance plays in a community, but more importantly, the social labels (although Erikson does not actually use this wording himself) attributed to specific forms of unwanted conduct. He focuses on the social perception of witches and how those labeled as "witch" are affected. The Salem Witch Trials enable an examination of how the "labelers" use labels to invoke and re-assert their power over those they are labeling.

Conflict Theory is likely the most diverse of all the theories mentioned since Franzese notes "there is no one type of conflict theory" (30). Richard Quinney's famous "social reality of crime" theory is the most well-known Conflict Theory. It postulates that criminal (and deviant) definitions "represent the interests of those who hold power in society" (Siegel & McCormick 236). This theory is generally rooted in Marxism and are mostly concerned with the nature of the relationship between people and the economy - more precisely, how economic structures shape the human condition (Franzese 30).

Feminist theories are difficult to link with either demonic, classical, or pathological theorizing. They explain deviance from the perspective of women. The feminists argue that "gender is the central organizing principle in societies" (Franzese 31). Their main interest lies in the ways in which gender is implicated in deviant behaviour. Part of the difficulty in summarizing the feminist approach to deviance is that these theorists do not typically use the

same data or statistical analysis that is commonly found in academic journals (Franzese 31). Like Conflict Theories, Franzese points out that “there is no one feminist theory of deviance or crime, instead there are feminist theories” (31).

Finally, the greatest shift away from classical thinking is found in Anomie and Structural Theories because they have nothing to do with the offender’s rational choice, but instead focus on circumstances beyond the individual’s control. These theories argue that deviance is the result of social breakdown/change or “*strains*” in the social fabric of groups.¹⁶ Such theorists believe that “deviant behaviour is likely to occur when the social cohesion or solidarity in society is threatened or diminished, and when individuals are blocked from achieving societal goals through legitimate means” (Franzese 29). In *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1949), American sociologist Robert Merton outlines the circumstances under which “deviant”/aberrant behaviour flourishes:

It is, indeed, my central hypothesis that aberrant behaviour may be regarded sociologically as a symptom of dissociation between culturally prescribed aspirations and socially structured avenues for realizing these aspirations...No society lacks norms governing conduct. But societies do differ in the degree to which the folkways, mores and institutional controls are effectively integrated with the goals which stand high in the hierarchy of cultural values. The culture may be such as to lend individuals to center their emotional convictions upon the complex of culturally acclaimed

¹⁶ Contemporary instantiations of *strain* are usually examined with respect to the American Dream. In *The Epic of America*, Adams posits the ability of each individual to succeed/make their own choices regardless of age, class, religion, race, or ethnicity. Now the American Dream has been deflected into a purely economic realm. In particular, see Messner and Rosenfeld’s *Crime and the American Dream* [1994] (2007) which analyzes the “strong pressures to succeed monetarily and [the] weak restraints on the selection of means” (x).

ends, with far less emotional support for prescribed methods of reaching out for these ends. (188-9)

This dissociation or discord that Merton writes about between culturally lauded goals and the legitimized means for securing them, results in what he terms *strain* – something I would argue is clearly experienced by each of the literary figures under examination.

Modern sociological theory functions as a reiteration of questions and ideas that mobilized early theories, particularly those theories dealing with the nature of the individual and his or her relationship to the broader society. The examination of literary deviance then places contemporary deviance theories within a larger historical context whilst supplementing the current state of knowledge regarding literary and sociological studies. I will next map out the ways in which literary texts engaged these debates about the relative roles of control theory, rational choice theory, feminist theory, and *strain* theory in the production of both deviance and self-reliance.

Transcendentalism: Origins and Oppositions

As noted above, this dissertation uses appropriate theories of deviance in conjunction with literary methods of reading and analysis, to study a range of transgressive characters in American literature of the 1840s and 50s. I justify this methodology on the basis of the intersecting and related histories of self-reliance and deviance in American thought. Indeed, in its early stages, Transcendentalism, an important framework for understanding Emersonian self-

reliance, was associated with rebellion and radicalism since it began as a revolt against the class-bound rationalism of Unitarian culture (Rose 1). The Transcendentalist belief in intuition and the superiority of the current generation to Biblical times firmly positioned this group as anti-institutional outsiders. Whether this be in the form of active resistance against the institution of slavery, the American government, or institutionalized gender norms, rebellion against social norms is a recurrent theme in the literature of the 1840s and 50s.

Further underscoring the differences of the Transcendentalists from mainstream society was their sincere conviction that all humans possessed a divine inner being which needed to be developed and cultivated – something not feasible within the limits of a conformist society (Rice 20). Opposition to Transcendental radicalism was widespread, but most interesting is Theodore Parker's 1840 parodic tract entitled "Transcendentalism."¹⁷ A Transcendentalist practitioner himself, Parker's literary endeavour chronicles the misplaced social fears of Transcendentalism that were based upon outmoded medieval stereotypes. A particularly salient portion of the article laments the obviously exaggerated fate of mankind if the Transcendentalists were to come into power:

...[A]las for the churches in New England. We be all dead men, for the Transcendentalists have come! They say there is no Christ; no God; no soul; only 'an absolute nothing', and Hegel is the Holy

¹⁷ Edgar Allan Poe's *Never Bet the Devil Your Head* (New York: Quill Pen Classics, 2004) also offers a parodic indictment of Transcendentalists though Poe has openly denied having any specific target in mind. In the short story, Transcendentalism is the disease affecting Toby Dammit. Dammit is subsequently killed in a freak accident where his head is severed off as he tries to leap through a turnstile while crossing a bridge.

Ghost. Our churches will be pulled down; there will be no Sabbath; our wives will wear the breeches, and the Transcendentalists will ride over us rough shod. How shall we be delivered, from these desperate fellows; this 'mixed multitude of devils? (67)

The Utopian vision outlined in this portion of “Transcendentalism” is arguably the same fate that conventional American society of the 1840s and 50s believed awaited them if free-thinkers were to have free reign.

Literature and Sociology: The Space In Between

For a project of this sort, sociological theory alone is not enough; it cannot account for the specific properties of imaginative texts and the role they play. As Vincenzo Ruggiero does in his book *Crime in Literature: Sociology of Deviance and Fiction*, I too will use classic fiction as a vehicle for the “communication of sociological meaning and the elaboration of criminological analysis” (1). This type of project, as Ruggiero notes, has become increasingly popular in recent decades – something Ruggiero attributes to what he terms the “traffic from sociology to literary studies” (3). To explain this phenomenon, Ruggiero gives the examples of Antonio Candido (1995), who after teaching sociology for 15 years transferred to the comparative literature department; of Kieran Dolin who quit legal studies for literary studies to research the explanatory bridges “between the mentalities of law and fiction” (3); and finally of legendary sociologist Howard Becker who shifted his research focus to the social and ideological aspects of literature (3).

Great literature universalizes feelings and makes them relatable for others even if they are far removed from one's own experiences. Unlike sociological writings, literature suggests that each individual's experience is unique. As George Orwell's interpretation of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* suggests, "Literature is an attempt made by men to understand their social experience; it is thus more of a witness to that *particular* [emphasis added in original] experience than illuminating a fully balanced account of the complete social scene" (Hall 36). Perhaps more important than simply offering access to an individual's social experience is that each author is permitted by the freedom of the fictional enterprise to air their specific social grievances – regardless of how egregious the offense against them is. Ruggiero (4) quotes Edgar Allan Poe who offers an excellent explanation for literature's appeal: "[A] wrong – an injustice – done a poet who is really a poet, excites him to a degree which, to ordinary apprehension, appears disproportionate with the wrong." Here, Poe is really saying that literature enables us to personalize social events and occurrences thereby making them more real and relatable.

This dissertation can be located in a broader trajectory of scholarship that refigures the relationship between the literary and the social. Reacting against the predominance of didacticism in criticism, Wilde famously argued that "Art never expresses anything but itself" (xx). While Wilde usefully shifted the terms of much critical debate, subsequent Marxist and historicist critics recuperated the social in literary study. More recently, Antonio Candido,

whose work influences this study, traces the dominant trajectory of current socio-literary commentary/criticism, noting the general tendency toward an “art and society” approach, one that posits “congruences between specific works of art, specific aspects of those works, and specific aspects of the society in which the works are made” (x). This connection typically comes about through a complex process of “reflection” whereby the literary text functions as a mirror “whose surface picks up and sends back whatever is placed before it” (x).¹⁸ My own approach in this dissertation has been influenced by Harry Levin, who argues that “literature is not only affected by social causes, it causes social effects...thus, [it is] culture-forming” (qtd, in Clerc 523). Clerc provides a list of American texts which have in some way produced significant social changes. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* influenced the abolition movement and the American Civil War, generating (or producing) a cultural movement that was empathetic toward enslaved characters. He also cites Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* which eventually produced a society concerned with the activities that went on in the American meatpacking industry. And finally, he invites us to consider Sinclair Lewis’ *Babbitt* which ultimately helped produce much of the negative sentiments aimed at the middle class American businessman that continued for decades. I argue that the texts discussed in this dissertation actively influence society – essentially are culture-forming or culture-producing. These works promote anti-social self-reliance (deviance), thereby creating and

¹⁸ Another branch of the “art and society” approach treats the works as a form of reportage which reflects society as a journalist’s account does (Candido xi).

producing a culture of American deviance. Each of these authors, in some way, use their writing to transfer acts of deviance into models for social change.

In Chapter Two, I turn my attention to the works of Henry David Thoreau and Frederick Douglass using the sociological theory of Robert King Merton (1949) to examine the tensions between the culturally lauded goal of self-reliance and the legitimate means for securing this. I explore the importance of Transcendentalist self-reliance to the American Dream ethos and the ways in which it is valorized by each protagonist. I will also explore how these authors negotiate the slippage between deviance and self-reliance. Finally, I will argue that, contrary to dominant theories of deviance of the 1850s, these texts figure deviance as what Merton has since called “*strain*.” The chapter elucidates how *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom* and “Civil Disobedience” and *Walden* all treat the *strain* produced by thwarted cultural aspirations of self-reliance and the subsequent adaptations (conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion) engaged in by each protagonist. I contend that these adaptations sanction deviance and in return, aid in producing an American culture of deviance. Douglass and Thoreau in *My Bondage* and “Civil Disobedience” engage in rebellion where “allegiance [is] not only withdrawn from the prevailing social structure but must be transferred to new groups possessed of a new myth” (Merton 210), while Douglass’ protagonist in *Narrative* is an innovator (that is, he assimilates the cultural emphasis upon the goal, but does not equally internalize the way the goal is to be achieved) and finally *Walden’s*

narrator displays “retreatist” tendencies as his protagonist attempts to “escape from the requirements of society” (Merton 207).

Chapter Three reconstructs the context in which privileged forms of deviance existed in American literature. The chapter is ultimately preoccupied with explaining why and how specific self-reliant behaviours are deemed “deviant” in the literary context, but “criminal” by popular works. My work here focuses on how most literary deviants are reabsorbed into the community, but those in the *Police Gazette* are rarely re-integrated and instead become “outsiders” (as defined by sociologist Howard Saul Becker). This entire discussion is set amidst the historical backdrop of the penny press and the flash papers.

Chapter Four looks at the ways female deviance (or female self-reliance) is depicted within both the popular (Sarah Hale’s *Godey’s Lady Book* and *Police Gazette*) and literary (Margaret Fuller’s *Women in the Nineteenth Century* and Fanny Fern’s *Ruth Hall*) discursive settings. I demonstrate how the texts in question engender a culture of female self-reliance which operates within the very confines of women’s writing. I explain that female forms of deviant behaviour are not entirely shunned by the popular magazine or the literary text – in *Godey’s* we have a simultaneous encouragement and dismissal of unconventional “self-reliant” behaviour and in *Ruth Hall*, we have a deployment of both conventional (non-deviant) and deviant literary tropes. The chapter provides insight into the “sentimental self-reliance” employed by Fanny

Fern and Sarah Hale. I observe how this technique of sentimental self-reliance renders female deviance more palatable for the reader.

The final chapter explores the sociological functions enacted by the deviance of Hester and Zenobia in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Blithedale Romance* respectively. This functionalist interrogation reveals an inherent contradiction within American society: notions of Emersonian self-reliance are incongruous with notions of femininity. Hawthorne highlights the inconsistencies between self-reliance and true womanhood (which necessitates maternity) through his depiction of the ultimate fate of each woman. The maternal Hester thrives and flourishes while the non-maternal Zenobia is eradicated from the landscape. Texts such as these highlight how American society produces deviance because of its limited options for women; they must either conform with the Cult of Domesticity, or risk becoming unfeminine deviants. The chapter also explores the specific nuances of maternal and non-maternal behaviour, as well as the dual functions maternity serves in American literature. I argue that maternity permits an acknowledgment of a woman's sexual nature, while simultaneously limiting this sexuality within a reproductive framework.

Chapter 2: From Conformity to Rebellion: Douglass, Thoreau, and the Re-Thinking of Mertonian *Strain*

In *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1949)¹⁹ American sociologist Robert King Merton outlines the very specific circumstances under which he believes deviant/aberrant behaviour flourishes:

It is, indeed, my central hypothesis that aberrant behaviour may be regarded sociologically as a symptom of dissociation between culturally prescribed aspirations and socially structured avenues for realizing these aspirations...No society lacks norms governing conduct. But societies do differ in the degree to which the folkways, mores and institutional controls are effectively integrated with the goals which stand high in the hierarchy of cultural values. The culture may be such as to lend individuals to center their emotional convictions upon the complex of culturally acclaimed ends, with far less emotional support for prescribed methods of reaching out for these ends. (188-9)

This dissociation between culturally acclaimed ends (for our purposes again, self-reliance) and the legitimate means for securing them, results in what Merton terms *strain*. I argue that this *strain* is something experienced by Douglass and Thoreau in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855)²⁰ and Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" ("Resistance to Civil Government") (1849) and *Walden* (1854). Douglass and Thoreau both fall into the socially sanctioned category of author, which in a sense gives them the opportunity (or perhaps the license) to write exactly what they mean. This makes literature one of the most interesting places for the examination of *strain*; more specifically, for the examination of

¹⁹ First published in 1949, but revised editions from 1957 and 1968 are often cited.

²⁰ *My Bondage* is often considered as an expansion of *Narrative* as Douglass herein provides greater detail of his journey from bondage to liberty.

the American inability to achieve self-reliance without occupying a deviant position. I contend that each of these classic texts of self-reliance actually sanctions deviance as Merton later theorizes it. Since deviance is endorsed by these texts in some shape or form, deviance is a critical component of American culture; namely American culture is one that promotes deviance.

Merton's examination of social and cultural *strain* focuses on the ability of Americans to achieve monetary success mainly because he is acutely aware of how wealth in America had become consecrated as a value in and of itself, and the ways in which the American Dream had come to embody purely economic implications during the 1930s and 40s. Yet, despite the focus in Merton's sociological scholarship on economic wealth as a culturally sanctioned goal, I would suggest that his framework is, in fact, more flexible than it initially appears. Merton never provides his readers with a single concrete definition of the American Dream, rendering it plausible for us to apply his theories to any alternative goal that might fall within its broad rubric (e.g. self-reliance). Perhaps the key in the argument for the flexibility of Mertonian *strain* theory comes from the sociologist's own simple disclaimer that the consideration of multiple and varied social goals would render his project academically unmanageable and, therefore, he has elected to stay within the confines of economic goals (194). David Downes' *Understanding Deviance* (2007) makes the similar argument that Merton's theories can and should be applied by/in multiple disciplines, provided they stay within the American context (98).

Douglass and Thoreau: An Emersonian Connection

The amalgamation of a criminological and literary analysis of Douglass and Thoreau is unique; the two authors are typically studied through a mutual Transcendental “connection” with Emersonian thought. Douglass’ relationship with Emerson is less conventional than Thoreau’s given that he did not share the same personal connection with the thinker that Thoreau did. Though Douglass was keenly aware of Emersonian doctrine, the only noted interaction between the two men is during an August 1844 Abolitionist convention organized by the Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society. Douglass appeared on stage while Emerson delivered a speech entitled “Emancipation of Negroes in the British West Indies” where he “attacked slavery not only for its gross immorality but also for its denial of economic justice to the slaves” (Myerson 145). At this convention, Transcendentalist heavy hitters like Margaret Fuller, Thoreau, and Ellery Channing were in attendance. Despite the lack of a more personal connection, Douglass clearly invokes and revises Emersonian discourses (particularly the notion of self-reliance) throughout his autobiographies. Darlene Clark Hine’s *A Question of Manhood* traces the implicit connection between Douglass and Emerson:

The very self-reliance and independence Douglass stressed in his autobiographies represented conformity to the American type of self-made man. Thus, Douglass was, to use Emerson’s phrase, a representative²¹ man. Much of the present-day biographical and

²¹ Hine does admit that on the other hand there are ways in which Douglass “was not representative.” This is primarily because “Douglass seemed, at times, to be less attuned to the cultural sentiments of black Americans and to their political struggles than were some other black men among his contemporaries” (443).

literary treatment of Douglass makes him appear to be exceptional. For his own part, Douglass at times stresses the Emersonian dictum that the great man is often great because he is representative, not because he is exceptional. Self-reliance, for Douglass, as for Emerson, often existed in the paradox of blending one's ego into larger "transcendental" forces, of believing that what is true of one's self is true of others. Douglass' concept of Self-Reliance, like Emerson's, was grounded in the principle of universality rather than difference. (443)

Myerson echoes this last statement of Hine's in his supposition that *Narrative* exemplifies the particular brand of "Transcendental politics" advocated by Emerson (146). Douglass here equals Emerson's intense belief in "the unity of mankind - [a unity] that also demanded freedom, dignity, and equal economic opportunity for all people" (Myerson 146).

In "The Poet" (1844), Emerson describes what he terms the "centrifugal tendency" of man to seek to "escape the custody of that body in which he is pent up, and of that jail-yard of individual relations in which he is enclosed" (Emerson 192). This quote enables us to see how Emerson metaphorizes the lack of autonomy because of the prison-house of conformity that is society. As Katherine Henry surmises in *Liberalism and the Culture of Security: The Nineteenth Century Rhetoric of Reform*, "like Emerson, Douglass [too] figures his progress as a series of escapes from bodily bondage" (64).²² Robert Gooding-Williams cements the link between Douglass and Emerson further in his positioning of *Narrative* as a veritable "revision" (177) of Emersonian doctrine:

²² As Henry admits though, in Douglass' case, this is a rather complex endeavour since his is not just "a search for sanctuary, because his account also subverts the very concept of protection: what from the outside promises refuge for an aggrieved liberty, turns out to be yet, another form of confinement" (64).

In “Self-Reliance” Emerson proclaims that ‘the moment [a man] acts from himself, tossing the laws, the books, idolatries and customs out of the window, we pity them no more but thank and revere him.’ Commenting on his fight with Covey, Douglass echoes but revises Emerson when he writes that ‘a man, without force, is without the essential dignity of humanity. Human nature is so constituted that it cannot honor a helpless man, although it can pity him; and even this it cannot do long, if the signs of power do not arise.’ Our tendency to revere a man displaces our tendency to pity him just when he ‘acts from himself.’ Self-reliance, then, is antithetical to dependence on laws, books, customs and the like.’ (177)

Similarly, in James M’Cune Smith’s²³ “Introduction” to *My Bondage*, the Emersonian connection is clear from the very first line:

When a man raises himself from the lowest condition in society to the highest, mankind pay [sic] him the tribute of their admiration; when he accomplishes this elevation by native energy, guided by prudence and wisdom, their admiration is increased; but when his course, onward and upward, excellent in itself, furthermore proves a possible, what had hitherto been regarded as impossible, reform, then he becomes a burning and a shining light, on which the aged may look with gladness. (xvii)

M’Cune’s “Introduction” is further evocative of self-reliance in its claim that “It has been said in this Introduction that Mr. Douglass had raised himself by his own efforts to the highest position in society” (xxv) and again in the reference to Douglass’ “self-relying and independent character” (xxii).

The most convincing connection between *My Bondage* and Emersonian self-reliance, though, comes from Robert Nowatzki’s *Representing African Americans in Transcendental Abolitionism and Blackface Minstrelsy*. The critic writes, “Douglass and many other authors of slave narratives, such as William Wells Brown, patterned their narratives after the most famous American

²³ James M’Cune Smith was an African American Abolitionist educated in the African Free School in New York City, but prohibited from entering any American College.

autobiography, written by another Founding Father and the forefather of Emersonian Self-Reliance, Benjamin Franklin” (136). Nowatzki argues that there is a similarity between Franklin’s work and Douglass’ in that like Franklin, African American slaves could overcome their unfortunate position through hard work, perseverance and determination which some consider elements of self-reliance. As Nowatzki makes clear to us, both individuals begin in low positions and have to work hard to overcome them. He compares Douglass’ 1838 arrival in New York with Franklin’s 1723 arrival in Philadelphia. Franklin had detailed his inability upon his arrival to afford more than “three great puffy rolls” (21) as well as the fact that he had no money for lodging. Douglass echoes this in the admission that “I had very little money – enough to buy me a few loaves of bread, but not enough to pay board” (338).

Unlike Douglass, Thoreau was often referred to as Emerson’s “greatest pupil” (Myerson 165) and it was actually at Emerson’s behest that the young scholar began keeping a journal of his activities at Walden Pond (412). After Thoreau’s two-year sojourn in the woods, he returned to live on Emerson’s property and even followed the speaker on his lecture tour of England (Myerson 177). As editor of *The Dial*, a self-proclaimed magazine for “Literature, Philosophy, and Religion,” and the chief publication of the Transcendentalists, Emerson had a hand in publishing Thoreau’s first work, titled “The Natural History of Massachusetts” (1842) (Myerson 412). While some scholars, such as Joel Porte, argue that Emerson and Thoreau’s relationship was one fraught with difficulties, others like Robert Richardson Jr. vehemently deny such allegations.

Richardson's *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* claims that from the outset, the relationship between the two embodied loyalty, companionship, and presumptive equality.

This notion of Thoreau as a theorist of self-reliance is invoked in Philip Cafaro's *Thoreau's Living Ethics*:

Self-Reliance includes the ability to trust yourself and your judgments of the world's affairs. 'These are the voices which we hear in solitude.' Emerson writes, 'but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter into the world'...at Walden Pond, Thoreau attempted to find his own voice and to live up to it... [solitude] allowed him to explore the practical aspects of Emerson's ideal: building his own house, raising and cooking his own food. (109-110)

Steven P. Olsen also recognizes the importance of this type of self-sufficiency, claiming that "the two years Thoreau lived at the Walden Pond were a grand experiment in self-reliance in nature. Thoreau grew his own crops, cooked his own bread on an outdoor fire, and continued to build his own home. He lived by the labor of his hands" (59-60).

Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" also invokes Emerson's theories. Here, he employs the principles of self-reliance with a "literalness and moral intensity that went beyond what even his mentor would then accept" (Buell, *American* 257). Perhaps this is why, as Kateb points out, Emerson initially disapproved of Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" in 1846. Emerson did however, eventually concur (after 1850), with the refusal to obey the Fugitive Slave Law and spoke

warmly of “principled disobedience” (35).²⁴ The *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* suggests a kinship between “Self-Reliance” and “Civil Disobedience” claiming: “As Ralph Waldo Emerson had done in “Self-Reliance” (1841), Thoreau made a call to action as [sic] citizens of the country and the world. Thoreau was confident in criticizing his nation’s government because of his Transcendentalist ideals of self-reliance” (50). Wayne contends that the central argument of Thoreau’s essay, like Emerson’s, is advocacy for a “moral engagement with the problems of society, for looking inward to find solutions to the problems that plagued their times” (50). Even a recent online version of “Civil Disobedience” (2008) underscores the link to “Self-Reliance,” claiming that

the driving force behind the essay was that of self-reliance, and how one is in morally good standing as long as one can ‘get off another man’s back’; so one doesn’t have to physically fight the government, but one must not support it or have it support one. (vii)

Instead of a unification of Douglass and Thoreau based on their

Transcendental impulses, I propose to examine the particular instances of *strain*

²⁴ Further research reveals a curious discrepancy regarding Emerson’s personal reaction to Thoreau’s essay. On the one hand, critics like Lawrence Buell and David Robinson characterize Emerson as frequently impelled toward “civil disobedience.” Buell cites Emerson’s 1844 “Politics” in which he avers “good men must not obey laws too well” (Buell “American,” 216), while Robinson points to Emerson’s statements in an 1851 talk “Address to the Citizens of Concord on the Fugitive Slave Law” where he announces, “[i]f our response to this law is not right, there is no right” (362). Conversely, others like Kateb and Myerson present his response to the concept of civil disobedience as unfavourable. With particular respect to Thoreau’s essay, both critics argue Emerson’s vehement disapproval of it and more importantly deny the very act of “resistance” Thoreau engages in. Myerson’s *A Historical Guide to Ralph Waldo Emerson* reiterates, albeit with some caution, a conversation that ensued between the two men when Emerson visited Thoreau in jail – “Henry! *Henry!* What are you doing in jail?” To which Thoreau is said to have retorted, “Waldo! What are you doing *out of jail?*” (66).

experienced by the respective protagonists in terms of the “individual adaptation” or response to *strain*²⁵ that they conform with (Merton 193). This chapter will utilize the comprehensive framework for contemporary studies of deviant behaviour outlined by Merton to explore the nuances of each protagonist’s actions. By focusing on this *strain*, I highlight the ways in which American society consistently thwarts cultural aspirations of self-reliance and leaves individuals with seemingly no recourse than to assume a deviant position. Thus, deviance and self-reliance are not one and the same, but their relationship is far more complicated. If you are being self-reliant, you will essentially be deviant. Deviant acts are what make self-reliance possible for Americans. While we might argue that many contemporary societies also encourage deviance, I believe that no other society promotes the idea of self-reliance as forcefully and openly as America does. Perhaps then this is what makes America’s failure to provide a suitable avenue for achieving this goal so egregious.

Mertonian *Strain* in Douglass and Thoreau

Before examining the individual adaptations deployed by the respective protagonists, I outline here the basic ways in which the concept of *strain* is treated by each author. In *Narrative*, we encounter a protagonist systemically prevented from achieving self-reliance and in what I would term a state of

²⁵ Each category of adaptation refers solely to *behaviour* and not *personality*. Each adaptation should be conceived of as enduring responses and not types of personality organization.

strain.²⁶ Levine and Malachuk's *A Political Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson* explores the relationship between self-reliance and slavery. They suggest, in the first place, an affinity between Emersonian self-reliance and "conditions of a democratic society" (153), problematizing the fact that Emerson clearly "assumes a society of free, equal, and mobile individuals" (153). At the time at which Emerson writes, democracy in the United States depended largely on one's skin colour – "for an enslaved man or woman, the America of Emerson's time was a tyranny, not a democracy" (153). Emerson did realize later on that the institution of slavery radically negates the idea of self-reliance, but in the original version (1841) he "took free and equal individuals as its point of departure and did not consider the way in which American slavery challenged that vision (154). In later years (around the time Douglass was writing), Emerson did seek to reconcile his increasing commitment to the anti-slavery cause with his theory of self-reliance. He applied self-reliance to a number of anti-slavery issues:

the 1850 *Fugitive Slave Law*; the spread of slavery to new federal territories; the post-abolition prospects of the black race, and the darkening shadow; the spread of slavery to new federal territories; the post-abolition prospects of the black race, and the darkening shadow of violence, disunion and civil war. (155)

In addition to systemic opposition, Douglass's quest for freedom was riddled with other difficulties. As the earlier sections of this dissertation demonstrate, Thoreau was entitled to certain basic liberties in his metaphysical

²⁶ Dr. Shaun L. Gabbidon cites Rocque who confirms that strain theory can effectively be applied to African American slaves: "the strains during the slave era...all fit Merton's notion of strain" (254).

quest for self-reliance. Douglass the slave, though, is not as fortunate. Indeed *Narrative* recounts the difficulty slaves face in constructing a cohesive notion of self, a requisite step in any eventual self-reliant endeavor, as they are typically uncertain of their heritage. The *strain* Douglass describes is produced when slaves are deprived of socially legitimate means of having a self as the dominant culture defines it. Almost all slaves are unaware of their true ages and suspect (but do not have confirmation) that their white slave holder occupies the dual position of master and father. We can add to this the forced estrangement between the young slave and their mother, which is designed to blunt the maternal impulse and more importantly, prevent the slaves from ever inquiring about their true identities.²⁷

Further, Douglass laments the slaves' utter lack of self-sufficiency despite their tireless efforts to serve their masters over the years. More importantly, the text demonstrates a decided lack of legitimate opportunities (and therefore *strain*) for the slaves to ever improve their financial lot. *Narrative* outlines the particular plight of Douglass' beloved grandmother, who had been a major source of wealth for her master, having peopled his plantation with slaves, nursed him as an infant and looked after him as a child, and even cared for him upon his deathbed. Yet, she remains penniless and lonely, without the prospect of ever attaining even a most basic form of self-reliance in her old age. Such was the fate of most slaves, who were not regularly

²⁷ In *Narrative* Douglass reveals: “[m]y father was a white man. He was admitted to be such by all I ever heard speak of my parentage. The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father; but of the correctness of this opinion I know nothing; the means of knowing was withheld from me” (12).

allowanced, but instead given meager portions of coarse corn meal; their food often served in troughs, these slaves were treated no better than animals who are, of course, not capable of Emersonian self-reliance.

Finally, we might argue that *Narrative* devotes considerable attention in the text to the *strain* caused by the slaves' lack of educational opportunities. Though the idea that education leads directly to freedom is ultimately proven fallacious, Douglass nevertheless records his initial faith in this spurious correlation in *Narrative's* early stages. When he moves to Baltimore, the hope of becoming educated (and thus free in his mind) is initially dangled before him, but almost immediately removed:

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A,B,C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her among other things that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said 'If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master – to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now,' said he, 'if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave.'
(29)

Notice here though that it is Captain Auld himself who makes the connection between self-reliance/freedom and education, not Douglass. Douglass' conviction that educating himself will lead to his eventual freedom is more complex than Auld suggests; Douglass reveals that he envisions the act of reading as a silent mechanism for counteracting the "white man's power to enslave the black man" (29). As such, learning to read and write becomes a

clandestine (not legitimate) approach to eventually resisting the power of the slave owner and the enterprise of slavery more generally.

In *My Bondage*, Douglass makes this notion of *strain* apparent for the reader almost from the outset. He announces the ways in which the system, and even society, are against the black slave:

Aliens are we in our native land. The fundamental principles of the republic, to which the humblest white man, whether born here or elsewhere, may appeal with confidence, in the hope of awakening a favourable response, are held to be inapplicable to us...We are little scourged beyond the beneficent range of both authorities, human and divine... American humanity hates us, scorns us, disowns and denies in a thousand ways, our very personality. (xx)

This inability of the slave to cultivate any sense of self (or self-reliance) is further underscored in one of Douglass' first epiphanies:

I was A SLAVE – born a slave – and though the fact was incomprehensible to me, it conveyed to my mind a sense of my entire dependence on the will of somebody I had never seen; and, from some cause or other, I had been made this somebody above all else on earth. (45)

This statement is compounded by his admission that he was “born for another’s benefit” (45) and that his sole purpose in life is to serve his master and not himself as the Transcendentalists, or Emerson, would advocate.

In Thoreau, we have something structurally similar to what occurs in Douglass' work. In both texts, any attempt at self-reliance (future or present) is trumped by the jail-yard of conformity that Emerson writes of. For example, “Civil Disobedience” criticizes an American government that systemically prevents its citizens from legitimately approximating any form of Emersonian

self-reliance. The work focuses on undermining the integrity of a government that is in no way conducive to self-reliance or individualism – a government that in and of itself is responsible for the creation and perpetuation of *strain*. While self-reliance and individualism were culturally sanctioned goals in America during the 1840s and 50s, as other chapters will demonstrate, “Civil Disobedience” showcases the ways in which socially acceptable means for achieving such goals were essentially unavailable. Thoreau’s government is chosen by the people (thus a seemingly legitimate mode) for “[executing] their will” (227), yet this particular government is susceptible to abuse and a perversion of sorts. He boldly asserts that instead of fostering the requisite components for the self-reliant spirit, this American government “does not keep the country free...does not settle the West...does not educate” (227). Thoreau describes the American citizens as mere bodies (just as slaves are mere bodies), forced to serve the state as machines would -- their minds wholly inactive. It is this intellectual inactivity that spurs Thoreau’s rebellion forward as he advocates resistance, not submission, to civil government.

Thoreau also experiences a *strain* in *Walden*. Kateb’s interpretation of “Self-Reliance” supposes that the essay is an attack on the belief that economic self-centeredness is true individualism²⁸: an “exclusively materialistic life isn’t life, but a misdiagnosed dying” (18). This materialistic focus is exactly what plagues the men Thoreau criticizes because they do not appreciate the “finer

²⁸ Emerson would support this economic-based form of self-reliance as it reflects Thoreau’s obsession with the idea that he can financially support himself through his own labour.

fruits” (7) of life -- arguably those things that transcend the material. *Walden* re-visits the metaphor introduced in “Civil Disobedience” of men working as machines, laboriously toiling without devoting any time to contemplating one’s self or self-truth. Thoreau pursues his lofty self-reliant endeavours at Walden cabin, far removed from city life. His motivation for retreating to Walden Pond is simply to “transact some private business with the fewest obstacles” (17) - here, the word “private” signifies the personal or mental business of the mind.

I now turn back to Merton and examine the individual adaptations produced by each protagonist as a response to the *strain* I have outlined. *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1949) indicates five plausible adaptations which still provide a framework for contemporary studies of deviant behaviour: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion. As John Andrew Hostetler (1993) clarifies, “no individual fits any one mode of adaptation perfectly... a person might be a conformist in some ways and an innovator in others” (300-1).

Merton’s typology of deviant behaviour is best summarized by the chart which follows below.²⁹ Merton believed that the modal response was conformity, but that for those individuals for whom *strain* proves intolerable, one (or more) of the following deviant adaptations results. Since most

²⁹ This chart was taken from Merton and Sztopka’s *On Social Structure and Science* (1996). Similar charts can be found in Taylor, Walton, and Young’s *The New Criminology: For A Social Theory of Deviance* (New York: Routledge, 1973), Beirne and Messerschmid’s *Criminology* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995), Dillon’s *Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts, and Their Application to the Twenty-First Century* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) and most recently, Burfeind and Bartusch’s *Juvenile Delinquency: An Integrated Approach* (Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett Publishers, 2011).

individuals perceive their main problem to be the discord between means and goal, the most typical response was a withdrawal of allegiance to institutionalized means to achieve the goal. Within the typology, (+) signifies an acceptance of the goal/means, (-) a rejection of the goal/means, and (+/-) a rejection of previous goals and a substitution with new goals/means.

Merton's Typology of Individual Adaptation

Adaptation Means	Cultural Goal	Institutionalized
I. Conformity	+	+
II. Innovation	+	-
III. Ritualism	-	+
IV. Retreatism	-	-
V. Rebellion	+/-	+/-

To better understand each of these adaptations, I cite examples from *Cultures of Unemployment* by Dutch sociologists Engbersen, Schuyt, Timmer and Waarden.³⁰ The text reveals the findings of a 1980s study of the daily life of the long-term unemployed population in the Netherlands. The work argues that “in Western societies, work and consumption can be viewed as central cultural goals [and] receiving training and looking for a job the institutional means to attain these goals” (154). The sociologists have carefully paired the

³⁰ In this case, we do not need an American example since this example works equally well. I specifically selected this text to maintain cohesion throughout the dissertation since Engbersen, Schuyt, Timmer, and Waarden discuss each adaptation except rebellion. When it comes to rebellion, the authors themselves stipulate that rebellion does not have much to do with their case study (154).

behaviours of the individuals interviewed with a different adaptation to better explain Merton's themes.

While Merton has outlined these 5 adaptations, I stipulate that only 4 of them are relevant to the work of this dissertation. I will, however, go through each adaptation for the sake of completeness and so that the reader is able to distinguish between each of them.

The Conformity Adaptation (I)

Each of the individual adaptations stipulated by Merton in some way remind us of certain features of "Self-Reliance." Emerson writes:

Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of everyone of its members. Society is a joint-stock company in which the members agree for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. (122)

The above quotation brings to mind the conformity adaptation which represents conformity to both cultural goals and the institutional means. Conformity is considered the most common and widespread type of adaptation by Americans (Merton; 1996, 139). Without this conformist adaptation, Merton argues that society's stability and continuity would not be maintained (Merton; 195). Merton himself refrains from delving too deeply into the conformist adaptation: "since our primary interest centers on the sources of *deviant* behaviour... little more need be said regarding this type of adaptation at this point" (Merton; 1949, 139).

In “Self-Reliance,” Emerson dissuades his reader from conformity, thus essentially encouraging them to take on a deviant position:

Whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist...A man is to carry himself in the presence of all opposition as if everything were titular and ephemeral but he. I am ashamed to think how easily we capitulate to badges and names, to large societies and dead institutions. (122-23)

In *Cultures of Unemployment*, individuals engaging with a conformity adaptation were those unemployed people who continued to strive for the “goals of paid employment and a higher consumption level in the generally accepted ways” (154). This included applying for jobs at the Employment Office and attending courses to hone their skills. The vast majority of conformists were not active in the informal economy³¹ and did not abuse the social security system.

The Innovation Adaptation (II)

In the innovation adaptation, the individual assimilates the cultural emphasis upon the goal, but does not equally internalize the norms governing the ways in which said goal is achievable. This type of adaptation is oriented toward chance and risk-taking and often spurred on by one’s frustrated aspirations and inability to achieve commonly lauded goals. Thus:

Incentives for success are provided by the established values of the culture; and second the avenues available for moving toward this goal are largely limited by the class structure to those of deviant behaviour. It is the combination of the cultural emphasis and the

³¹ The informal economy refers to any part of the economy that is not taxed, monitored by any form of government or included in any Gross National Product.

social structure that produces intense pressure for deviation. Recourse to legitimate channels...is limited by a class structure that is not fully open at each level to men of good capacity (Merton; 1996, 141-2)

With the innovation adaptation, Merton stipulates that the victims are not always aware of the “structural sources of their thwarted aspirations” (Merton; 1996, 143). They are aware of a discrepancy between their individual worth and the social rewards they reap, but not the necessity of how this discrepancy comes about. Often times, “innovators” eventually become rebels and take on the “rebellion” adaptation later in life. Emersonian support for this type of adaptation comes from his “Self-Reliance” edict that we must “never imitate” (134), but instead continuously embrace spontaneity and creativity – ideas also found, and perhaps even more developed, in his earlier “The American Scholar” (1837) speech.

According to *Cultures of Unemployment*, the goals of these individuals, termed by the text as “enterprising”, were still to secure a job and achieve higher consumption levels, but unlike the conformists, they attempt to secure these goals by working in the informal economy. Their main purpose of work, whether informal or formal was to attain a higher income level (155).

The Ritualist Adaptation (III)

The “ritualist” category of deviant adaptation involves the scaling down of lofty cultural goals to a point that is more easily achievable. In the case of the ritualist, he or she typically rejects the society’s cultural aspirations (such as

self-reliance), but still abides by institutional norms. Since this type of adaptation represents an internal decision and the overt behaviour is actually institutionally sanctioned, many question whether or not ritualism represents actual deviance. Merton's opinion is that it nevertheless "represents a departure from the cultural model in which Americans are obliged to strive actively, through institutionalized procedure, to move onward and upwards" (Merton; 1996, 146). The mindset of the ritualist is often that "high ambitions invite frustrations and danger", while "lower aspirations produce satisfaction and security" (146-7). Essentially then, this adaptation represents the individual's decision to cease engaging in any form of competitive struggle (Merton, 1949, 203-4). Again, "Self-Reliance" supports endeavours toward simplicity while shunning competitive behaviour; Emerson instead emphasizes the individual's own desires, motives, and abilities.

In the case of the unemployed in the Netherlands, the ritualists had given up hope of a job and higher consumption level, but still adhered to society's prescribed rules. They regularly went to the Employment Office and applied for jobs despite little hope. They rarely participated in the informal economy and did not abuse the social security system (155).

The Retreatist Adaptation (IV)

The retreatist represents those individuals who exhibit a fervent desire to escape from society and all requisite social requirements. It is the least common

adaptation: “people who ‘adapt’ in this fashion are, strictly speaking, in the society but not of it. Sociologically, these constitute true aliens. Not sharing the common frame of values, they can be included as members of the society (in distinction from the population) only in a fictional sense” (Merton; 1996, 148). These are those individuals who have relinquished culturally prescribed goals and their behaviour does not accord with institutional norms” (Merton, 1996, 148). This type of deviant is often thought of by others as a “non-productive liability” (149) and often condemned by conventional representatives of the society. Retreatism is considered a private or “privatized,” not collective, model of adaptation: “their adaptations are largely private and isolated rather than unified under the aegis of a new cultural code” (149). This is reminiscent of Emerson’s “Self-Reliance” where he claims, “[w]hat I must do, is all that concerns me, not what people think” (123).

In *Cultures of Unemployment*, the retreatists no longer aspire to a job or higher consumption level. These people did not make appropriate use of channels for attaining a job and were essentially resigned to their situation. Like conformists and ritualists though, they did not do anything illegal/informal to make extra money (155).

The Rebellion Adaptation (V)

The rebellion adaptation describes the individual seeking to bring about a new or greatly modernized social structure, presupposing alienation from

current goals and standards (Merton; 1949, 209). These individuals typically denounce an institutional system that is itself to blame for their inability to satisfy quests for legitimate social goals.³² In today's society, organized movements of rebellion are those that introduce a social structure where the cultural standards of success "would be sharply modified and provisions would be made for a closer correspondence between merit, effort, and reward" (Merton; 1949, 149). Essentially, whenever the institutional system is regarded as the barrier to the satisfaction of legitimized goals, rebellion is a possible adaptation. Perhaps nothing is more evocative of the rebellion adaptation than Emerson's prophesy of the over-arching impacts of true self-reliant behaviour:

It is easy to see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men; in their religion, in their education; in their pursuits; their modes of living; their association; in their property; in their speculative views. (132)

The situations outlined in *Cultures of Unemployment* admittedly do not have much to do with rebellion (154) and therefore another example is needed. Between August 2006 and October 2007, Ananya Mukherjea interviewed 34 home care social workers in the New York City metropolitan area. The goal of her work, *Understanding Emerging Epidemics: Social and Political Approaches* (2010), was to explore the social workers' decision making process regarding Alzheimer patients (170). The rebels in this study actively modified or replaced organizational requirements with their personal and professional care standards "when they believed the organizational goals frustrated

³² This adaptation differs slightly from the other four as it represents a transitional response – a desire to change the existing cultural/social structure so that ultimately it will be more accommodating.

fulfillment of patient need” (171). Mukherjea provides a typical response of the rebellious figure:

I became a social worker to help people. I never expect the system to be fair. If it was fair, there'd be no need for social workers. I go to work every day ready to fight for my client. I constantly meet and call nurses and therapists. I push them for social work referrals. Once I get them I do what is needed. I don't care if they ordered only two visits. If I feel four or five or more are necessary, then I do it and explain after. (173)

Slave Strategies of “Innovation”

As mentioned, Merton's theory argues that *strain* comes about as the result of “a social structure that holds out the same goals to all its members without giving them equal means to achieve the goals” (Johnson 15). As Johnson argues, “the United States has been portrayed as the land of opportunity and supposedly anyone who puts forth an honest effort will be able to achieve the American Dream...Realistically, however, it exposes the structural barriers that limit or totally eliminate opportunities for disadvantaged groups such as racial minorities” (15). My purpose in utilizing *strain* theory to explain Douglass's narrative is not merely to, as Johnson puts it, “[acknowledge] that society unfairly distributes the legitimate means to achieving success” (16), but mainly to prove that the American society is in fact a “criminogenic” (Tunnell 96) one - or that it is a society “organized for crime... [and therefore] deviant and criminal adaptations” (97).

Under the Mertonian rubric, the innovator accepts the cultural goals, but shuns the social structure's means for achieving them. Douglass' particular case adds a further complexity to Merton's schema; Douglass struggles against his own slave consciousness, which is locked into institutional opportunity structures. I argue though that in this struggle Douglass is an innovator; he can, at times, be construed as being capable of thinking of innovative strategies to counteract systemic oppression. He is innovative in two very significant ways – first, because of his capability for innovative strategies of resistance and second, in terms of the very structure of *Narrative*.

Initially, when speaking about Master Thomas Douglass admits, “I had lived with him nine months, during which time he had given me a number of severe whippings, all to no good purpose” (42). And then he tells us of his time with Mr. Covey – “during the first six months, of that year, scarce a week passed without his whipping me. I was seldom free from a sore back” (43). Until this point, Douglass does not really appear to rebel against these beatings in any sense.³³ The main innovation comes when Douglass takes his freedom into his own hands by spontaneously fighting back against Covey's attack (50). The paragraph following this seminal fight scene is crucial to understanding Douglass' mindset:

³³ There is an incident where Covey demands Douglass take off his clothes (presumably so Covey can fix him on a tree and beat him) and Douglass refuses. Not much attention is devoted to this incident though: “I made him no answer, but stood with my clothes on. He repeated his order. I still made him no answer, nor did I move to strip myself” (43).

This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free... I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and now I resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. (50)

We see here a Douglass who has gradually become autonomous and who is now one struggling (and succeeding) to overcome the slave consciousness. He is now thought of as one who is capable of innovative thought, of thinking of himself as outside of the slave consciousness: "From this time I was never again might be called fairly whipped, though I remained a slave four years afterwards" (51).

Douglass is further innovative in his personal dedication to reading and writing. While he announces literacy as the "pathway from slavery to freedom" (29), he simultaneously recognizes the need to educate himself, since white patriarchal society will not allow him to be schooled/taught in any way. Douglass' tactics for teaching himself to read are innovative in and of themselves. If the white adults will not teach him, Douglass finds ways around this, believing that he too is capable of intellectual endeavours.³⁴ He writes of how while he was running errands for his master, he would befriend other white boys his age and "[convert] them into teachers" (32). He would also offer bread to the poor white children in the neighbourhood in exchange for lessons. Thus,

³⁴ Douglass notes that the slave masters would "much rather see us engaged in those degrading sports, than to see us behaving like intellectual, moral, and accountable beings" (55).

he would use the dominant society – the very people that oppressed him – to further his deviant goals of self-reliance. What is just as interesting is that he manages to inculcate this spirit of innovation into a small group of slaves who also find themselves subject to the sudden intense desire to learn. Since open learning amongst slaves is not accepted, Douglass again takes an innovative approach and forms a secretive Sabbath school where he would teach his fellow-slaves to read.

As mentioned, Douglass' very structure in *Narrative* is innovative. He takes a different approach to the slave narrative than what has gone before in the tradition. In many of the classic slave narratives that precede Douglass' we find an explicit statement of the veracity and specificity of the forthcoming tale in a preface typically written by a white abolitionist member. For instance, in *The Life of Gustavus Vassa*³⁵ (1814) by Olaudah Equiano, the preface definitively states that "facts were the foundation of [Vassa's] assertions; and no statement was made by him for which he had not some voucher or authority" (20). Similarly, the preface of Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince* (1831) suggests that all facts in the text were confirmed by a prominent white resident of the colony during the same period (251). The prefaces to the *Narrative* do the same thing; both Garrison and Phillips vouch for the truth of Douglass' story, but the difference between these three narratives becomes obvious in Garrison's explicit claim that Douglass' story is a representative one – applicable to the treatment of all slaves in Maryland (330), not just a specific

³⁵ Olaudah Equiano was Gustavus Vassa's original slave name.

case. In addition, it would seem that at least the beginning of Douglass' *Narrative* reads much like it should – he is essentially imitative in form of those slave narratives that come before his. Yet, William Andrews outlines Douglass' concerted effort to create an original (innovative) ending instead of deploying what he labels as a “stock-in-trade climax” which derives its origins from “capture-flight-and-pursuit plots of favourite romances by James Fenimore Cooper, William Gilmore Simms, and Robert Montgomery Bird” (163). Douglass's choice to end his narrative with an explanation of his assumption of a new identity ultimately makes this *Narrative's* climatic moment. Russ Castronovo also underscores the innovative strategy in *Narrative*:

Douglass cast off his hesitation to connect the slave's history to sacrosanct narratives of American history. This change charts Douglass's increasing literary self-reliance and creative independence, but it also forms a part of a significant tendency in antebellum African American discourse to encode lives, memories, and political struggles with dominant narratives of American history. Blurring distinctions between slave murderers and revolutionary patriots, Douglass amalgamated illicit black rebellion to nationally authorized history; in effect he disguised potentially alarming aspects of black discourse with the plots, characters, and signifiers of American narrative. (198)

This choice of the end as climax has a dual impact: it reasserts Douglass as deviant innovator whilst re-inscribing the notion of America as promoting a culture of deviance.

My Bondage: Douglass the Rebel

In *My Bondage My Freedom*, Douglass recasts himself as a rebel rather than an innovator. We see his refusal to simply just sit back and accept institutional oppression at the age of 13 years when he taught himself to read,³⁶ furthering his unusual desire for “every increase of knowledge” (156). This instilled within him the realization of the “delusion” (159) (or slave consciousness) many slaves (including himself) had operated under – “the delusion that God required [slaves] to submit to slavery, and to wear their charges with meekness and humility” (159).

As Douglass does in his earlier work, *My Bondage* also employs the standard tropes of the slave narrative: first, he includes an authorizing preface which explains that “the reader is, therefore, assured with all due promptitude, that his attention is not invited to a work of art, but a work of facts” (v) and that “every transaction therein described actually transpired” (v). This is followed by the revelation that his master “allowed no questions to be put to him, by which a slave might learn his age” (35) and (as in *Narrative*) that he knew nothing of his father. Douglass even includes a lengthy description of the forced separation between him and his mother, something commonly included in most slave narratives.

³⁶ He even learned to write later on.

As he grows older though, his rebellious³⁷ tendencies come to the fore.

As we read on, Douglass' irreverence for the institution of slavery and desire for social change becomes more obvious: "it was the institution of *slavery* – not its mere *incidents* – that I hated" (161) and then again when he announces, "I hated slaves, slavery, slaveholders, and all pertaining to them; and I did not fail to inspire others with the same feeling wherever and whenever the opportunity was presented" (251). We see him rebelling against the slave consciousness when he reveals that whenever he met a slave who he felt might be receptive, he "would impart to him so much of the mystery as I had been able to penetrate" (165) and again when he begins his "public speaking" (275) on the issue of slavery by speaking to servants and other slaves. Douglass actively tries to educate slaves to the lies their masters perpetuate in order to maintain slave consciousness.

Seeking Change: Thoreau's "Rebellious" Desires in "Civil Disobedience"

Thoreau's attitude in "Civil Disobedience" reflects Merton's "rebellion" adaptation. However, as a white privileged male, his disposition toward, and ways of enacting, rebellion are dramatically different from those of Douglass.

³⁷ Literary critics support the reading of Douglass as a rebel. William L. Andrews refers to young Frederick's "rebellion" (285) against Mr. Covey. Jeannine Marie DeLombard also discusses his "rebellion" (125) and finally even Eric J. Sundquist provides an in-depth description of Frederick Douglass' "plotted rebellion" (705). Most convincing though is Douglass' own admission that the five young men he joins forces with all "resembled, on a small scale, the meetings of revolutionary conspirators, in their primary condition" (280).

Whereas non-conformity is not a real choice for slaves, Thoreau criticizes his privileged audience for enslaving themselves through conformity. I now move back to the discussion of conformity as an active choice since Thoreau was part of dominant white society. In “Civil Disobedience”, Thoreau makes his distaste for conformity (thereby aligning himself with a more “deviant” approach in the Mertonian sense) undeniably clear:

The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia, jailers, constables, posse comitatus, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens. Others--as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office-holders--serve the state chiefly with their heads; and, as they rarely make any moral distinctions, they are as likely to serve the devil, without intending it, as God. A very few--as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and men--serve the state with their consciences also, and so necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are commonly treated as enemies by it. A wise man will only be useful as a man, and will not submit to be "clay," and "stop a hole to keep the wind away," but leave that office to his dust at least: 'I am too high born to be propertied, To be a second at control, Or useful serving-man and instrument To any sovereign state throughout the world.' (229)

Here, Thoreau actively denounces an “institutional system that is itself to blame for [his] inability to satisfy his quest for [self-reliance]” (Merton; 1949, 149). In the very first paragraph of “Civil Disobedience” he writes: “The [American] government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it” (227) and then follows in the second paragraph claiming the

American government to be nothing more than a “tradition” and one that “does not keep the country free...does not settle the West...does not educate” (227).

The type of government Thoreau does seek, then, is one predicated on “conscience”: “can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong?” (228). Conscience was important to the Transcendentalists since they had “long held that conscience, was, in principle, a higher authority than public opinion or the imperfect laws of the state” (Buell 357). Though Patterson points out that the term “conscience” is actually “conspicuously absent” from “Self-Reliance” (189), Levine and Malachuk cite Len Gougeon, who believes that self-reliance is based on “the divinity of the individual and the moral efficacy of a democracy that relied upon the collective conscience of individual citizens” (28). Gougeon argues:

Emerson believes the collective conscience to be articulated by representative individuals relying upon the interests of Reason rather than self-interested understanding...Emerson acted on the belief that individuals of conscience must constantly enter the public sphere to teach their fellow citizens the equal worth of all individuals. This is what self-reliance requires. (qtd. in Levine and Malacuk 28).

Merton is clear about the course of actions to be undertaken in the “rebellion” phase of social adaptation: “[t]o pass into organized political action, allegiance must not only be withdrawn from the prevailing social structure but must be transferred to new groups possessed of a new myth” (Merton; 1949, 210). For Thoreau, Transcendentalism offered precisely this – a mode of living that had arguably mythic underpinnings. The movement argued for its practitioners to “transcend” the mundane and foray into the arena of mystical knowledge that every human possessed if he or she would listen to it (Ayers

323). The Transcendentalists' foremost conviction was that certain beliefs and values had the ability to transcend the lesser mode of mere sensory experience and this firmly positioned them as American embodiments of European Romanticism (Ayers 323). In particular, their conviction that the natural world provided "divine lessons from which we [could] benefit if we [learned] to sympathize with the natural world" (Myerson; 2010, xxv) reflected an especially Romantic notion of inspiration derived from nature. More importantly, though, this idea of man's physical and spiritual communion with nature finds its American origins in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Leatherstocking Tales* (1823-41), which position nature unequivocally as the "pre-eminent American setting" (Ladd 28). The set of five historical novels describes an adventurous trip into the lush and unpredictable wilderness of 18th Century America. As Ladd suggests, Cooper's protagonist, Natty Bumppo, cements the American hero's alliance with nature in three significant ways: Bumppo lays the foundations for the heroic myth of the American westerner living close to nature, he perpetuates the notion of the Native American as a "child of nature", and perhaps most importantly, he establishes the Western landscape as a place where the uniqueness of the American character flourishes (28). Ladd's schema is confirmed by textual evidence in the very first book of the series, *The Pioneers* (1823). Bumppo's character, though white, lives amongst the Indians and is portrayed as a distinct amalgamation between folk hero Daniel Boone and the romantic era myth of the primitive, natural man (Ladd 28). Cooper's Bumppo demonstrates a natural simplicity which is

interspersed by moments of spontaneity that stand in stark opposition to insincerity and greed exemplified by civilized society. Finally, the *Leatherstocking Tales* ultimately reveal an unusual American character – one that rests midway between civilization and the wilderness (Ladd 29).

While the mythic underpinnings of Transcendentalism align Thoreau with the rebellious desire for a new social structure, his desires for change do the same despite his critics. Much of the Thoreauvian scholarship interestingly characterizes him as simultaneously subversive and ineffectual in “Civil Disobedience”; he is at once portrayed by Drinnon and Gross as a radical “anarchist” (546, and 577) and then again by the very same critics as lacking true rebellious motivations. Drinnon qualifies Thoreau’s rhetorical strategy in the essay: “Civil Disobedience” begins with a highly critical tone – “that government is best which governs least...This American government – what is it but a tradition” (Thoreau 227), yet this is immediately followed by “sweet reasonableness” (Drinnon 546) where he stipulates: “But, to speak practically and as a citizen, unlike those who call themselves no-government men, I ask for, not at once no government, but *at once* a better government” (Thoreau 228). Drinnon further argues that it is Thoreau himself who augers criticism in his choice of inconsistent language: while he announces his readiness for war with the State, he simultaneously reveals his intentions to use and take advantage of this very same State. Gross is more severe than Drinnon in his indictment of Thoreau, labeling his act of “civil disobedience” as “utterly irrelevant” (573). Thoreau’s arrest and stint in jail was met with little fan fare since his local

newspaper, *The Concord Freeman*, made absolutely no mention of it and neither did anyone associated with the Boston Press (Gross 573). Though his form of resistance began as opposition to the Mexican War³⁸ -- particularly the annexation of Texas by the United States in 1844 -- when Thoreau finally did explain his disobedience in January of 1848,³⁹ he was relatively quiet on the actual subject of the Mexican war. At this point, the war had essentially come to an end and the prospect of peace loomed closely; the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was already a year old at this point (Gross 573). This is where Douglass and Thoreau differ; Douglass certainly risks a lot in challenging Covey, while Thoreau does not actually risk very much by going to prison.

From Merton's point of view, however, the rebellion adaptation does not have to be revolutionary. Indeed, literature can function as a vehicle for rebellion as a social adaptation. Thoreau's pervasive rhetoric of change thus further cements his status as a rebel and his conscious effort to use the medium of literature for his "deviant" purpose. Recall Merton's stipulation that rebellion requires a desire for change -- specifically for a change in social structure. Thoreau's rhetoric of "change"⁴⁰ becomes apparent early on in the text when he says "I ask for, not at once no government, but a *once* a better government" (228). In the crucial moment when Thoreau emerges from the

³⁸ Thoreau was equally concerned with slavery and devoted to its abolishment. "Civil Disobedience" is as much a direct response to the slavery crisis that incited tension in New England during the 1840s and 50s. In his essay, Thoreau condemns the US Constitution that essentially enshrines slavery.

³⁹ An explanation was given at the Concord Lyceum where he delivered a lecture on "The Rights and Duties of the Individual in Relation to Government."

⁴⁰ Thoreau uses the word "change" or some variation of it 6 times in his essay.

prison after his short sojourn there, he immediately remarks: “When I came out of prison – for someone had interfered, and paid that tax – I did not perceive that great changes had taken place on the common” (241) which demonstrates, for him, the very importance of change.⁴¹

Also important to note is Thoreau’s reference to Orpheus, who could “change the nature of the rocks and trees and beasts” (243). While Thoreau admits he cannot “expect” (243) to have the same powers of change as Orpheus, he still does share Orpheus’ inclinations/desires for change. Even the last lines of “Civil Disobedience” re-inscribe his fervent desire for a change in the institutional system:

Is a democracy, such as we know it, the last improvement possible in government? Is it not possible to take a step further towards recognizing and organizing the rights of man? There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow men. A State which bore this kind of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which I have also imagined, but not yet anywhere seen.

⁴¹ He does in the next line admit “yet a change had come to my eyes come over the scene – the town, and state, and country, greater than any that mere time could affect” (241). This however is a personal not institutional change because it has more to do with a greater understanding of the people, his “neighbours” (241) and their kinship to one another than any actual institutional change.

Interestingly, Thoreau's rhetoric has become so standard that even mainstream politicians use it. United States president Barack Obama at a June 2008 Independence Day festival in Missouri echoed Thoreau's ideals of change: "when our laws, our leaders, and our government are out of alignment with our ideals then the dissent of ordinary Americans may prove to be one of the truest expressions of patriotism" (Kennedy 191). In an article in *Rolling Stone* magazine (2008), Obama claims, "I want people to feel connected to their government again...and I want that government to respond to the voices of the people, and not just insiders and special interests. That's real change" (Wenner). This statement is entirely reminiscent of an earlier remark by Thoreau: "a government in which the majority rule in all cases cannot be based on justice, even as far as men understand it. Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong?" (228).

Thoreau as Retreatist in Walden

I end with a discussion of retreatism since this is the typical way we think of Thoreau and self-reliance. Published five years after "Civil Disobedience," *Walden* depicts Thoreau at an entirely different juncture in his deviant career. Buell, Lunenfeld, and Maynard all refer to Thoreau's stay at Walden Pond as a "retreat" in their work. Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* makes clear that unlike the political change (more in keeping with the rebellion adaptation), *Walden* is only "loosely" political (135). The politics

of *Walden* are a “politics of nature” or “politics of environmentalism” (Buell 135) or “green politics” (Buell 544). Thoreau’s main concern in *Walden* is to provoke social reflection, rather than inspire interest in political or institutional change (Buell 135). As Buell further notes, the goal of *Walden* is not for political change necessarily, but to force readers to “[immerse] themselves so completely in the life according to nature that they will refuse to reenter civilized life again on the same terms as before” (135).

Thoreau’s distaste for conformity is not as clear cut in *Walden* as it is in “Civil Disobedience”; Thoreau vacillates between conformity and non-conformity, though I argue that he ultimately sides with non-conformity. His account of his activities at Walden Pond are an example of the retreatist, non-conformist deviant exhibition of the dangers of allegiance to social institutions. Indeed, self-reliance is enabled by retreatism. Thoreau’s example has become so mainstream that we now use *Walden* as an example of how to think outside the box.

At the very beginning of *Walden*, we realize that Thoreau has already left his retreat at the Pond and resumed his place amongst conformist society: “At present I am a sojourner in civilized life again” (5). He even re-iterates a long list of conformist forms of employment that he has engaged in previously. He worked in typical, menial jobs as a “reporter to a journal” (15), a “self-appointed inspector of snow storms and rainstorms” (15), “surveyor of forest paths and all across-lot routes to make sure they are passable” (15), looking after the wild stock of the town. He even uses the guise of business (a very

conformist endeavour) to justify his decision to move to Walden Pond: “I have thought that Walden Pond would be a good place for business, not solely on account of the railroad and the ice trade; it offers advantages which it may not be good policy to divulge; it is a good port and a good foundation” (17-18). Yet, shortly before this he tells us that his goal in moving to Walden was to “transact some private business with the fewest obstacles” (17), which as I previously mentioned, I believe to signify private mental business. We soon realize that interspersed amongst the text’s first pages are indeed indicators of non-conformist attitudes. He chastises the conformist desires of men: “most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them” (7). He even comments on the “great scholars” who “make shift to live merely by conformity, practically as their fathers did, and are in no sense the progenitors of a nobler race of men” (13). Linda Corrente and Michael Spring point out that when Thoreau ventured to live at Walden Pond in 1845, he was almost 28 years old and “in those days, most 28 year-old men were well into their careers” (1). What made Thoreau non-conformist was that “not only did [he] not have a career, he did not want one” (Corrente 1). They cite textual evidence revealing that Thoreau had resigned from his first job as teacher for Concord School system because he refused to beat the students as was expected of him. As mentioned, Thoreau moved from job to job, never once settling on any career

and making obvious that “in spite of all these jobs, he simply does not have the same ambitions as other men” (Corrente 1).

At the most basic level, Merton’s explanation of the retreatist category suggests that ultimately the figure in question is led to “escape from the requirements of the society” (Merton; 1949, 207). Notions of escape and escapism pervade *Walden*; aside from the fact that Thoreau journeys to Walden Pond in an attempt to escape society and its conventions, the word “escape” or some variation of it, also appears repeatedly in different chapters of the story (“escape” 46, 113, 116, 139 and “escaped” 116, 125). Even the very name “Walden” is believed to have come from an Indian woman bearing the same name who escaped from an Indian pow-wow being held on the land (125). Walter Harding’s Foreword to *Walden* (1995) claims that “*Walden*, like *Robinson Crusoe*, is escape literature. Thoreau, like Crusoe, was able to get away from it all, to shed the cares and tribulations of modern civilization...[it is an] escape but in terms of reform and particularly of reform of himself” (ix).

Yet, when we think of *Walden* we must acknowledge that there are moments when Thoreau is never really alone, or has never truly escaped. He is forever in the “company” of nature,⁴² which is made particularly clear in his chapters “Solitude” (where the forces of Nature seem to be sympathizing with man) and “The Ponds” (where the pristine water allows you to see your own

⁴² In Thoreau’s mind, the society of nature is far superior to that of the city of Concord: “the most sweet and tender, the most innocent and encouraging society may be found in any natural object, even for the poor misanthrope and the most melancholy man” (91).

reflection). In addition to this, we are told he actually has more visitors at Walden cabin than when he was living in Concord – “when I return to my house I find that visitors have been there and left their cards, either a bunch of flowers, or a wreath of evergreen, or a name in pencil on a yellow walnut leaf or a chip” (90). Thus, essentially what we find in Thoreau’s behaviour is an altered form of the retreatist adaptation; Thoreau shuns society not entirely, but only selectively.

Literature’s Transformative Powers

Strain theory draws our attention to Douglass and Thoreau’s deviance in the conventional sociological sense. Without literature, Douglass would just be another unruly black man and Thoreau a mere delinquent taxpayer. It is, then, the act of writing that gives their deviance a voice. Literature has transformative powers; Douglass and Thoreau are not just mere rebels, but become pinnacles of self-reliance for their audience – an audience that might not otherwise realize that self-reliance depends on deviance. As I demonstrate, the access to legitimate means is perhaps not as curtailed as we might initially assume. Curiously though, despite the openness of literature, *strain* continues to permeate and even overshadow each of the texts discussed. This sheds light on a larger problem; each author’s literary endeavours draws more attention to *strain* and its implications than any lasting form of self-reliant behaviour or activity. What becomes evident is that self-reliant activity associated with

deviance in any way often becomes just that – deviant behaviour whether it be in the form of innovation, rebellion, retreatism, or otherwise.

Chapter 3: "The Traffic from Social to Literary Studies": The *National Police Gazette* and "Self-Reliance"

In *On Literature and Society* Antonio Candido summarizes the dominant trajectory of sociological-literary commentary as one that “relates a period, or a genre, to social conditions or [focuses] on the relationship between the work and the public, or finally [investigates] the position and social function of a writer” (3). While this type of sociological-literary criticism treats literature as a *reflection* of society, my dissertation examines literature as a form of production. I explore the ways in which literature shapes and forms cultural definitions of deviance. Further, this chapter illustrates the role which Emersonian discourses of self-reliance play in socially sanctioning or legitimizing particular behaviours in the literature that are criminalized in the discursive setting of the *National Police Gazette*, a popular 1845 American tabloid-like magazine that was devoted to matters of interest to the police. I also further the work Candido sets out to accomplish in *On Literature and Society*; I demonstrate the ways in which the “boundaries between academic disciplines can be made permeable and fuzzy” (Ruggiero 3). Candido himself abandoned sociology to take on instead a position as professor of comparative literature (Ruggiero 3), essentially acting as a forerunner in the “traffic from sociology to literary studies” (Ruggiero 3). While this chapter does not seek to advocate a departure from any particular academic discipline, it does instead promote the notion of a simultaneous reading of canonized American literature in conjunction with criminal discourses.

As Horst Zander's *Fact - Fiction - "Faction"* has shown, criminological and literary narratives have an overlapping history. The boundaries between journalism and fictional discourse are actually rather permeable (201). Zander relies heavily on Davis' supposition that journalistic writing and novels were originally covered by the same term: "novel." Lennard J. Davis addresses the original overlap in meaning between the terms "novel" and "news." In the sixteenth century, "novels" referred to news ballads and tales. The main function of these ballads was to inform the lower classes of new public events like earthquakes, wars, murders, supernatural happenings, etc. The news ballad was set with moveable type and therefore something new or "novel" (45). He also explains that new tales of criminals, brief accounts of jokes and jests were also known as "novels" (46). Initially, both forms were subject to the same Licensing Act and even derived from the same "news/novels discourse" (Zander 200). Jürgen Enkemann's work also emphasizes what Zander calls the "convergence and mutual interlocking rather than the differences of the modes" (200).⁴³ Davis admits that in the 17th and 18th centuries there was a sort of gradual subdivision of the two genres, but Zander believes that despite this division many publications continued to show "intimate relations between journalistic and fictional discourses instead of exemplifying its disjunction" (201). Anderson's *Imagined Communities* still provides the best account of the relationship between the novel and the newspaper. Anderson also addresses the

⁴³ In Zander's book, he reiterates Enkemann's research which points to *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* and also writers like Addison and Defoe who merge the modes instead of differentiate them. In particular, Defoe accomplishes this because his novels usually did not use presentational techniques which were associated with fictional discourse, but did proclaim that these works were factual pieces.

overlap between the two mediums, situating both as “cultural products” (35). He unites the two primarily on the basis of the “imagined community” – both of these forms “provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the kind of imagined community that is the nation” (25). *Imagined Communities* includes an in-depth discussion of how an imagined community is formed in the novel and the newspaper. In the case of the novel, for illustrative purposes Anderson includes the example of a simple-novel plot, in which a man (A) has a wife (B) and a mistress (C), who in turn has a lover (D). He includes the following time-chart:

<i>Time:</i>	I	II	III
<i>Events:</i>	A quarrels with B	A telephones C	D gets drunk in a bar
	C and D make love	B shops	A dines at home with B
		D plays pool	C has an ominous dream

Anderson’s analysis of the time-chart is as follows:

During the sequence A and D never meet, indeed may not even be aware of each other’s existence if C has played her cards right. What then actually links A to D? Two complementary conceptions: First, that they are embedded in ‘societies’ (Wessex, Lubeck, Los Angeles). These societies are sociological entities of such firm and stable reality that their members (A and D) can even be described as passing each other on the street, without ever becoming acquainted, and still be connected. Second, that A and D are embedded in the minds of the omniscient readers. Only they, like God, watch A telephoning C, B shopping, and D playing pool all *at once*. That all these acts are performed at the same clocked, calendrical time, but by actors who may be largely unaware of one another, shows the

novelty of this imagined world conjured up by the author in his readers' mind. (26)

Concerning the newspaper, Anderson turns to the *New York Times* as an example. He suggests that in a single issue, we might find “stories about Soviet dissidents, famine in Mali, a gruesome murder, a coup in Iraq, the discussion of a rare fossil in Zibabwe, and a speech by Mitterand” (33). Each of these events has happened independently and without the players involved being aware of one another; therefore, the linkage between them is simply “imagined.” This imagined community is formed on two bases: 1) calendrical coincidence: the date of occurrence provides an “essential connection” between them; 2) relationship between the newspaper, as a form of book, and the market: the newspaper is merely an “extreme form” of the book, a book sold on a colossal scale, but of ephemeral popularity.

During the 1840s and 50s in the United States, ideas about deviance circulated across literary and popular genres; hence, this dissertation uses the *Police Gazette*⁴⁴ to place literature and popular representations of deviance into conversation with each other and to delineate the exact types of deviant acts (and their many variations) which society prohibited during the 1840s and 50s. As Kaikkonen argues, “elite literature” is “literature appreciated and praised by the elite and upheld by the establishment through the literary cannon, whatever time or place it is applied to” (44). In comparison, “popular literature” or

⁴⁴ I have elected to refer to the publication as the *Police Gazette* since this is the title the original paper and current website uses. It is also the title deployed in critical scholarship.

“popular fiction” is “disdained by the establishment but consumed by large groups of so-called ordinary people” (44). She too suggests an overlap between the two modes, particularly with respect to the labeling of popular literature as “entertainment literature” which is done primarily in order to signal that 1) this literature is not consumed only by the “so-called ordinary people but even by those who belong to an elite” 2) to demonstrate that the “speaker is conscious of the elite-popular dichotomy and makes an effort to view the two groups objectively and to refrain from automatically situating him/herself in the elite” and 3) “to admit that entertainment, as one of the conceivable functions of literature and as one of the needs of its readers is legitimate, and that the need is not inherently of low social status” (44).

Critical scholarship abounds regarding the American people’s tumultuous relationship with the press, whose pre-eminence has been underscored since the very inception of America. In its original instantiation, the First Amendment to the Bill of Rights (1789) proclaims that “Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press” (“The Charters of Freedom”, National Archives),⁴⁵ firmly entrenching the sanctity of the press within American culture. Sociologist Roy Edward Lotz traces the historical progression of the American press in *Crime and the American Press* (1991), suggesting that as the nation of America grew and expanded, so too did the prowess of the media. He argues:

⁴⁵ Quoted from an official transcription of the original first amendment to the United States Constitution. The amendment was ratified on December 15, 1791 and became what we call today the “Bill of Rights.”

It seems that the media, rather than our leaders, tell us what is important, what we should be concerned about, and even for how long. Therefore, the primary struggle for our social agenda is between elected officials and the media – not between citizens and our elected leaders. At the very least, the press has become what I refer to as “the unelected loyal opposition.” In days of old, congressional members of the “out” party served as the primary objectors and questioners of the current administration. Today, the press enjoys an aggressive, advocacy role in challenging and questioning those in power. The press claims that it acts on the public’s right to know. (xiii)

Most significant in the above quotation is Lotz’s reference to an intrinsic public “right to know,” a notion explicitly taken up by *Police Gazette* under George Wilkes’ guidance. The publication’s 1845 “Prospectus” boasts its efforts to satisfy this public entitlement to knowledge:

The object of our *Police Gazette* will therefore be to supply the deficient arm of our criminal police by an organ which will communicate familiarly with the public upon all the statistics of the department, whether secret or otherwise, and which will make them conversant with the modes and means in continual operation against the safety of their property. (“Prospectus” 56)

Despite the thought that the *Police Gazette* was going to supply “the deficient arm of [the] criminal police”, it was nevertheless targeted by censors, who believed it encouraged others to imitate criminal behaviour. Perhaps the most oft cited negative opinion is that of anti-vice crusader Anthony Comstock (1844-1915) who vehemently argues that the *Police Gazette* was responsible for “polluting American life” (Gorn 20) and therefore is entirely unworthy of serious attention. Comstock believed that “evil was a contagion and that unregulated freedom of the press allowed the disease to spread” (LaMay 11). As LaMay and Dennis suggest, Comstock believed that “by glamorizing the fast

life, illustrated weeklies made the Victorian virtues of piety, morality and steady habits seem dull” (11).⁴⁶

Yet, Elliott Gorn in “The Wicked World: The National Police Gazette and Gilded-Age America” astutely observes that “historians ignore the *Police Gazette* at their peril” (21). He argues that the sensibilities and behaviours reflected in this publication are, in fact, “a significant part of American life” (Gorn 21).⁴⁷ Indeed, other forms of contemporary popular accounts such as *Fox News*, TMZ.com, or the *National Enquirer* are today’s equivalent of the *Police Gazette*. Gorn further provides an interesting hypothesis regarding the *Police Gazette*’s allure:

The world of the *Police Gazette* [is] not far from our own age, so fascinated with the manipulation of images, with spectacles. Rapes, scams, murders, extramarital affairs, drinking, carousing; even as the *Police Gazette* condemned these, it made them the focus of its attention, made its readers question who were the real sinners and who the saints. (20)

Although the ostensible goal of the *Police Gazette* was to expose and therefore curtail the instances of crime (a deterrent function), its critics feared that it would have the reverse effect and actually serve as a model for would-be criminals (a stimulant function). Such causal relationships have been explored

⁴⁶ More recently, Edward Van Every (1930), Elliot Gorn (1995), and Guy Reel (2006) have each devoted considerable scholarly attention to the negative implications of the *Police Gazette*.

⁴⁷ The *Police Gazette*’s July 2013 website (www.policegazette.us) claims it to be the inspiration for “much of what we take for granted in today’s popular culture. Everything from *Sports Illustrated* to *Playboy* magazine, from the *Guinness Book of World Records* to *National Inquirer*, and from Howard Stern to the Colbert Report can trace a heritage back to the *National Police Gazette* (“Homepage,” *National Police Gazette*).

by Criminologists Ronald Akers and Robert Burgess (who also take up the notion of morality) in their Social Learning Theory, which explains deviance by examining variables that encouraged delinquency and those that discouraged delinquency. This theory posits that imitation occurs when

an individual engages in a behaviour that is modeled on or follows his or her observation of another individual's behaviour. An individual can observe the behaviour of potential models either directly or indirectly (e.g. through the media). (Miller 327)

Baldwin and Baldwin's 1981 revision of Akers provides a more concise summary of the actual imitation process:

Observers tend to imitate modeled behaviour if they like or respect the model, see the model receive reinforcement, see the model give off signs of pleasure, or are in an environment where imitating the model's performance is reinforced... Inverse imitation is common when an observer does not like the model, sees the model get punished, or is in an environment where conformity [to the model] is being punished. (Miller 327)

The question of whether readers of the Gazette were stimulated to commit crime, or to avoid it through inverse imitation, was at the heart of debates about its social role in the 1840s and 50s.

Early Beginnings of the Police Gazette, the "Penny" Press, and the "Flash" Papers

The climate in which the *Police Gazette* existed is best understood by exploring the perceptions of crime in New York City during the years leading

up to the publication's initial printing. The *Police Gazette* began publication in 1845 in the guise of a chronicler of the "crimes of the day" (Gorn 11).⁴⁸ Even in the years prior to the *Police Gazette's* publication, the city of New York was associated with the criminal enterprise. Thomas Jefferson, staying in Monticello,⁴⁹ wrote candidly about New York City to a friend: "A city life offers you...painful objects of vice and wretchedness. New York...seems to be a cloacina [anus] of all the depravities of human nature. Here on the contrary, crime is scarcely heard of..." (qtd. in Stevens 11). John D. Stevens adds to this negative portrait, depicting New York City as "vital, vibrant, and violent – a gangly adolescent that had grown too fast for its own good" (10). New York City was considered a major center of commerce; from 1841 onwards, it was responsible for nearly half of the nation's imports and exports. This began in 1825 when the Erie Canal started bringing in streams of products, not to mention people (Stevens 10). Stevens surmises that by 1832, more than \$100 million in commerce had passed through New York City's port (11). During this era, the city was prone to "dizzying" change – factories, stores, and hotels were erected only to be replaced quickly by new ones (11). Almost everyone frequented, if not lived in, the area below Washington and Union Squares. According to Stevens, "such density made for an inviting market for those who had a product to peddle – like a cheap newspaper" (11). This major influx of money attracted lots of criminal activity.

⁴⁸ PERIODICITY: weekly: 1845-1934; semi-monthly 1934-35; monthly 1935-current

⁴⁹ Monticello is a National Historic Landmark located just outside Charlottesville, Virginia. It was Jefferson's estate and at his direction, the site of his burial.

Although statistics for the first half of the 19th century are poor, it is well documented that from 1814 to 1834, the New York City police court docket grew six times as fast as the population did, suggesting a gradual increase in criminal and deviant activities (12). Though the nation supported 65 daily newspapers (“dailies”), most of these only devoted minimal space to crime news – “an inch or two to murders, suicides and the like” (Stevens 16). The details of crime and deviant behaviour were instead left to the weekly magazines (“weeklies”), penny pamphlets, and broadsides⁵⁰ (16). According to Merle Curti in *The Growth of American Thought*, in the 1830s, publishers of newspapers were actively seeking to attract the attention of “the common man and his wife” (347). In this era, there were two notable efforts to establish low-cost “dailies” in America. *The Boston Daily Evening Transcript* succeeded, but the *Philadelphia Cent* did not. The cheap, or “penny papers,” did not actually appear in New York City until January of 1833 (Stevens 18).

In 1844, George Wilkes began an American newspaper entitled *Subterranean* which focused specifically on the realm of politics – particularly its corrupt entities (Mott 325). Wilkes was arrested numerous times, but managed to escape serious punishment until his sixth arrest, which ultimately led to the demise of *Subterranean*. While in jail, he ironically met Enoch E. Camp, a lawyer who proposed they begin a *Police Gazette* together – one inspired by distinct models of the *Penny Sunday*, *Times and People’s Police Gazette*, *Bell’s Penny Dispatch*, *Sporting and Police Gazette* and *Clark’s*

⁵⁰ Also known as a “broadsheet,” which is a large sheet of printed paper on one side only, often used as a poster to announce an event or other important matters.

Dispatch (Mott 325). The idea was that Camp would secure and provide the funds, while Wilkes would serve as editor. The result was the birth of the *Police Gazette* on September 13th, 1845.⁵¹ At the time of its inception, the eight large quarto pages sold for ten cents, later five cents, then four cents (Mott 325-6). By the fall of 1847, the size of each page had been enlarged; in 1848, it was a four-page blanket sheet, each page having eight wide columns (Mott 327). Early editions of the *Police Gazette* appealed to the notion that their publication would “help police by identifying career criminals, their haunts, and their patterns of malfeasance” (Cohen 43). As early as October 11th, 1845, the magazine claimed to “have a larger circulation than any of the regular weeklies” (“Article 8” 58). On June 20th 1846, they touted a circulation rate of 23, 000 (“Comic 2” 345).

During the fall of 1841 up until the spring of 1843, the sexual underworld of New York City garnered considerable public attention as a result of increasingly popular weekly newspapers with bold titles known as the scandalizing papers or “flash papers” (Cohen 1).⁵² Wilkes was adamant that the paper was by no means to become a “flash-derivative” (Cohen 43). These papers exhibited a heretofore unseen “trenchant, mocking humour, and a titillating brew of gossip about prostitutes, theatrical denizens, and sports contests. The papers offered guidance to men young and old intent on

⁵¹ Gorn argues that though “National” might imply a pan-optic gaze cast over the entire US nation, the publication was actually almost entirely focused on New York City – it was “a product of the fashions, the rhythms, the life of the town” (18).

⁵² Among other popular “flash” titles were publications like *The Scrutinizer*, *New York Flagellator*, *Polyanthos*, *The Flash* and *The Libertine*

navigating the new world of unrestricted pleasure and commercialized leisure in the city” (Cohen 1). The term “flash” was derived in part from the fact that these papers were rather short-lived, but particularly because the term had an “in-the-moment slangy connotation” about it (Cohen 2). In terms of their reputation, Cohen notes that “as bold, noisy, and provocative as these [flash] papers were in their time, for many years they were completely forgotten. Historians of journalism and even sensational journalism had no knowledge of them” (3). The flash papers only gained scholarly attention in 1985 when a significant collection of nearly a hundred issues was bought in a single purchase made by the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts, from a private party living in New Hampshire (3). *The Flash Press* asserts that Patricia Cline Cohen is the first historian to see the 1985 set during 1987-88 (3).

Other reasons for the appropriate flash title include the fact that the genre-setting first paper of this sort was titled *Sunday Flash*. In eighteenth century London, flash was an extensive form of slang vocabulary deployed by thieves to prevent outsiders from understanding them” (Cohen 2). The “flash” papers stood in opposition to the popular penny press, which combined “hard news, human-interest features, and more than a dollop of crime and sensationalism, along with a highly personalized editorial voice, all contrived to augment newspaper readership with the more plebian and street-smart crowd” (Cohen 1-2). Cohen argues that the *Police Gazette*, in its original form, was admirably “restrained about sensationalizing sex crimes” (43) and “was not

remotely a flash paper” (44). Yet, the authors acknowledge the *Police Gazette* certainly possessed flash-esque elements.

Flash papers differed from others in that they delved deeper than the “penny press,” daring even to “trumpet the attractions of prostitutes and provide tours of brothels” (Cohen 2). Typical flash characteristics included a focus on racy details and colourful characters (Cohen 2). Indeed, the *Police Gazette* offered just this; the publication was commonly described as “racy, satirical, spicy” (Cohen 2). In *Licentious Gotham: Erotic Publishing and its Production in 19th Century New York*, Donna Dennis also characterizes the *Police Gazette* in similar language:

This long-running illustrated weekly served up a spicy stew that included trial reports of seductions, criminal conversations, incest, and bigamy, shocking biographies of famous criminals of both sexes and an assortment of true crime stories about violent acts like murder, sexual assault, and highway robbery. (89)

Cause to further link the *Police Gazette* with the “flash” papers comes from the fact that the publication tended to include lively reporting and romanticized stories such as those appearing in their regular “Lives of the Felons” column. Cohen et. al argue this particular column bore considerable similarities to the original “flash” stories found in the “Gallery of Rascalities and Notorities” of *The Flash* (Cohen 44). This was a Gallery known for exposing exceptionally scandalous events and characters (Horsley 139).

Despite these notable similarities to the “flash papers” of the time, Wilkes struggled to undermine any association between the *Police Gazette* and

obscenity. Unlike other obscene publications, his work printed details like names and addresses and often even included a list of inventory found upon arrest (Dennis 89) – all in the name of making these stories appear more credible. Wilkes’ original intention was to emphasize factual detail over sensation.

The Contemporary Police Gazette: Richard Kyle Fox and William A. Mays

During the Civil War, the *Police Gazette* began to decline and ultimately Wilkes was forced to sell it to Chief Matsell, who sensationalized the paper, changing much of its focus from crime to more titillating topics like sex (Mott 328). However, when the sensationalization of crime began, the *Police Gazette* was still teetering on the brink of extinction. Soon after Matsell took over, the *Police Gazette* was acquired by Richard Kyle Fox⁵³, a journalist from Belfast who came into possession of it in lieu of debts owed to him by the owners (Gorn 12). Fox kept the focus on crime but made significant

⁵³ Frank Luther Mott’s *A History of American Magazines 1850-65* does provide a detailed historical account of the early years of the *Police Gazette*, but ultimately devotes far more space to the years after Wilkes reign. Perhaps most curious though, is the *Police Gazette’s* 2013 website which omits Wilkes’ name entirely. Instead, the site attributes all of its successes to Richard Kyle Fox: “A century before Howard Stern hit the airwaves, there was a man who not only recognized the appeal of quasi-lesbian imagery, but – like Stern – knew how to make it an acceptable part of popular culture. Five generations before Stephen Colbert and Sacha Baron Cohen blurred the distinction between the real and fictional news correspondent, there was a man who populated this real-news publication with fictional editors and their semi-real exploits. Before there was the celebrity gossip column, he invented it. Before there was a sports page, he created it. Before the advent of the girlie magazine, he provided it. (“About the National Police Gazette,” <http://policegazette.us/>, National Police Gazette).

changes to the overall publication. He opted to cut the size of the actual pages but increase their overall number to 16. This would provide him with the space to include more illustrations, which became increasingly graphic. As Gorn observes, “virtually as soon as Fox took over as editor, nakedness increased, stories of infidelity proliferated and images of libidinous abandon multiplied.” Fox also developed an ingenious and aggressive marketing strategy which provided discount rates for hotels, saloons and barber shops (Gorn 12).⁵⁴ Within the year, the *Police Gazette* was considered part of the elite, top-two dozen American magazines published after the Civil War (Gorn 12).⁵⁵ Even the special editions of the *Police Gazette*, focusing on major sporting events, often sold close to half a million copies (Gorn 12). During the 1870s and 80s, the more “bizarre and blood-soaked the better” (Gorn

⁵⁴ In the early 1880s, a full page of advertisements cost 75¢; years later it was \$1.

⁵⁵ Currently, the majority of scholarly attention has been devoted to studying the *Police Gazette* under Fox’s control, once it had become known for publishing salacious and scandalous stories. Notable scholarly endeavours include Howard Chudacoff’s *The Age of the Bachelor*, which focuses on the period from Fox’s editorship until the early twentieth century. Guy Reel, considered one of the foremost experts on the *Police Gazette*, also focuses more on the *Police Gazette* under Fox’s reign. David B. Sachsman’s *Seeking a Voice: Images of Race and Gender in the 19th Century Press* begins by tracing the trajectory of the magazine after 1881. Donna Dennis’ *Licentious Gotham* is perhaps one of the few works that focuses more on the early years of the *Police Gazette*’s publication, much as this dissertation intends to do. These are the issues which most closely adhere to the *Police Gazette*’s original mandate of aiding in the fight against crime and deviance. From the 1860s onward, the *Police Gazette* began gradually moving away from its initial role as public repository of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and more toward the sensationalization of news purely for entertainment purposes. My focus is hence on the pre-sensational phase of *The Police Gazette*.

13) seemed to be the *Police Gazette*'s motto. In fact, by the late 1870s, the *Police Gazette* far outstripped any other publication in terms of their coverage of blood and sex. A sampling of their regular column titles from this period illustrates this well: "Murder and Suicide: A Gush of Gore and Shattering Brains All Around the Horizon," "This Wicked World: A Few Samples of Man's Duplicity and Woman's Worse Than Weakness," "Crooked Capers: Scrapes and Scandals of All Sorts and From All Quarters" (Gorn 13).

Today, the *Police Gazette* remains an online publication under the direction of editor and proprietor, William A. Mays. Their website still boasts the same authentic "Americanness" found in the original publications: "as American as baseball, gunfire, apple pie, drugs, George Washington, Jesse James, and secret sex" ("Homepage", <http://policegazette.us/>, *National Police Gazette*). Mays' company, *National Police Gazette Enterprises LLC*, is wholeheartedly dedicated to the "preservation, promotion, and continuation" ("Homepage", *National Police Gazette*) of the publication. Current news is given the *Police Gazette* treatment; featured articles include headlines like "Rev. Jerry Falwell, D.D, Goes to Meet His Money Maker" (2007), "*National Police Gazette* Goes to War With O, *The Oprah Magazine*" (2010), "The Convictions of Barry Bonds: How the Home Run King Sold His Soul For Greatness, But Remained An Intolerable Embarrassment" (2011), and "Sometimes Lynch Mobs Got It Right" (2012). Original columns like "The Lives of the Felons" have been similarly modernized. Current "Lives of the

Felons” entries include stories of famous criminals and cult “heroes” from recent decades such as John Wilkes Booth, Al Capone, Bonnie and Clyde, The Boston Strangler, Jeffrey Dahmer, Osama bin Laden, and Andrea Yates.⁵⁶ The April 2013 “Lives of the Felons” section features Jason Derek Brown, known for “snowboarding, skiing, dirt biking, and murder.” Other columns in the *Police Gazette* of today include “Eccentric Tantrums,” “Sports Page,” “The Morgue,”⁵⁷ and “Contests/Trivia.” The one signal difference in this modernized *Police Gazette* is its participatory nature – Mays openly asks for artists (amateurs and professionals alike) to submit illustrations of current “sensational and criminal events or other subjects of an interesting character” for publication in the *Police Gazette*.

Deviant or Criminal Outsiders?

The examination of sociological definitions of transgressive behaviour in the *Police Gazette* first requires us to distinguish between the concepts of crime and deviance. Criminologists Siegel & McCormick observe the scholarly tendency to conflate the

⁵⁶ A Houston, Texas resident convicted of killing her five young children in the bathtub on June 20, 2001 as the result of post-partum depression. In 2002, she was convicted of capital murder and sentenced to life, but this was subsequently overturned in 2006 when she was deemed not guilty by reason of insanity.

⁵⁷ This section provides a link to illustrations from both past and present *Police Gazette* issues.

concepts of deviance and crime, despite the fact that there are what he terms “significant distinctions” (6) to be made between the two terms. Siegel & McCormick provides the simplest distinction between deviance and crime, claiming “not all crimes are deviant or unusual acts, and not all deviant acts are illegal or criminal” (6). An important caveat to this distinction between crime and deviance is that “some deviant acts, but not all, are considered crimes” (Siegel & McCormick 6).⁵⁸

The legal definition of crime applies to many different societies. It is defined as “a violation of societal rules of behavior as interpreted and expressed by a criminal legal code created by people holding social and political power. Individuals who violate these rules are subject to sanctions by state authority, social stigma and loss of status” (Siegel 15). Chris Greer’s *Crime and Media Reader* clarifies the difference between crime and deviance. He writes “deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an offender” (Greer 243). A similar sentiment is evoked by Eugene McLaughlin who concedes that unlike criminal offences which are conceived of as actual facts (because of their legal implications), deviance “can never be an absolutely known fact because it is

⁵⁸ A further irony here is that we cannot argue the opposite. Siegel & McCormick announce the falseness of the claim that “all crimes are behaviours that depart from the norms of society” (6).

constructed through a series of transactions between rule makers and rule violators” (228). Even the most recent scholarship on deviance by John Curra asserts the same: “deviance is not a property inherent in certain forms of behaviour; it is a property conferred upon these forms by the audiences which directly /indirectly witness them” (5).

In the *Police Gazette*, double standards emerge to mark off as criminal motivations and behaviors that otherwise resemble self-reliance, which I have argued elsewhere is deviance legitimized. Whereas self-reliant transgressors in the literary fiction explored in this dissertation are re-absorbed into the community by the end of the work, their criminal counterparts are not. For example, in Douglass’ *Narrative* the protagonist eventually secures his own job and plans the date on which he will escape to the North. Ultimately, he escapes and becomes a prominent member of the Abolitionist community. *My Bondage, My Freedom* traces Douglass’ transition from bondage to liberty and details his specific exploits as Abolitionist, public speaker, author, and eventually publisher. The final chapters of Thoreau’s *Walden* indicate that the protagonist departs Walden and returns to city life on September 6th, 1847 – a return which is signaled from the very beginning of the text: “at present I am a sojourner in civilized life again” (5). In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester returns to Boston years later to take up residence in

her old cottage and continue her charitable work. Hawthorne reveals that the community comes to look upon her as village sage and that she provides advice for many of its women. Even Ruth Hall ultimately becomes both independent and wealthy by selling a book-length selection of her columns. Yet, there are some obvious exceptions here – Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance* being one of them. Zenobia, the epitome of female self-reliance, dies toward the end of the novel signaling the inability of American society to handle not only the self-reliant individual, but particularly the self-reliant female. This of course was an idea taken up earlier in Fuller’s *Woman*: for a true union to occur, each person (male or female) needs to be a self-dependent unit. In particular, men need to remove their dominant influence over women. A final exception is “Civil Disobedience” where, despite the fact that Thoreau is released from jail and back into society because “someone interfered and paid the tax” (241), he reveals that instead of saluting him as is customary in his village, “[his] neighbours did not thus salute me, but first looked at me, and then at one another, as if I had returned from a long journey” (241).

Unlike these privileged transgressors, deviants in the *Police Gazette* rarely reintegrate back into the community; the majority of articles conclude with sentencing outcomes instead of stories chronicling an offender’s release. In his seminal text, *Outsiders*:

Studies in the Sociology of Deviance, Becker provides a critical explanation of what he labels as the outsider figure:

[S]ocial rules define situations and the kinds of behaviour appropriate to them, specifying some actions as 'right' and forbidding others as 'wrong.' When a rule is enforced, the person who is supposed to have broken it may be seen as a special kind of person, one who cannot be trusted to live by the rules agreed on by the group. He is regarded as an *outsider*. (1)

Becker also specifies a second class of outsiders: people the deviants themselves deem "outsiders." Often, these outsiders are the very people who created or sought to enforce the rules in the first place (15). Though this second idea is certainly an appealing perspective, this section of the chapter will concern itself primarily with the first category of deviants outlined by Becker – those who "stand outside the circle of normal members of the group" (15). Ultimately, Becker teaches us to examine the treatment of outsiders during a particular historical or social juncture in order to understand not only *who* constructs the rules, but also *what* constitutes deviance or abnormal behaviour at that specific moment. This reminds us of the contextuality of deviance, for as Curra argues, deviance can never be separated from its social context; conceptions of deviant behaviour fluctuate considerably depending on both place and time (ix).

Works like Becker's reflect the radical scholarly "re-orientation" (Caffrey 211) the study of deviance has undergone in recent decades. While previous conceptions of deviance/deviants were considered "canonical" – authoritative, standard, acceptable, given, and unquestionable – the "skeptical revolution" now asks, "deviant according to whom" or "deviant from what"?

(Caffrey 221). The revolution aims to unearth the specific social constructions that render one an outsider.

In the *Police Gazette*, and in the literary texts, the deviants studied are all outsiders in some way or another. In the *Police Gazette*, the very presence of one's name in conjunction with the criminal label renders that individual an outsider in the Becker sense: their mention in the publication signifies an actual or perceived rule-breaking of some sort. They are immediately depicted as outside of normal, law-abiding society. The figures presented by the *Police Gazette* are also outsiders in quite literal ways. Many, like the African-American slaves, "colored" criminals, or corrupt Indian Chiefs found in early issues, were racial outsiders, while others in later publications are outsiders on the basis of their failure to engage in any sort of meaningful employment. A prime example would be the vagrant who the *Police Gazette* defines as having "nothing to do" ("St. Louis" 3). Other literal outsiders include those individuals housed in asylums. The October 16th 1845 "Prospectus" further specifies the ways in which the "miscreants"⁵⁹ of the *Police Gazette* are depicted as outsiders. First, the magazine defines these offenders as part of a class of their own which lies outside of conventional American society. They are the lowest dregs of the social order, not the average citizen, but "thieves, burglars, pickpockets and swindlers" (56). Second, the *Police Gazette* makes clear its mandate to render the criminal distinct from (or outside of) the masses: "the

⁵⁹ One of the ways in which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "miscreants" is in the sense of different from conventional society – "a villain, scoundrel, rebel, criminal or felon." This is also the sense in which the classical theorist Jeremy Bentham used it in [1789] (2007) in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.

felon, branded with his shame, will be pointed out on all sides, and be stripped of the social impunity which mainly emboldened him to offence” (56).

In the literary context, we discover each protagonist in this study is an outsider by Becker’s definition, but in a more literal sense. Take, for example, Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*, who finds herself relegated to the forest on the outskirts of town alongside the scapegoat Mistress Hibbins. Or, we might even consider *Walden’s* protagonist, who claims that the real attractions of the cabin where he sojourned were its location *outside* and away from the city limits: “its complete retirement, being about two miles from the village, half a mile from the nearest neighbour, and separate from the highway by a broad field” (59-60). In Fuller’s *Woman*, women are systemically prevented from engaging on equal footing with men on the basis of their gender. And of course, in Douglass’ case, “normative” behaviour for blacks is defined differently; the enslaved African American is racially deemed unfit by the dominant whites to do things like learn to read and write. I would add that in each of the texts studied herein, the protagonists are literal outsiders because of their alliance (in whatever fashion) with the Transcendentalists, who Anne Rose positions as “anti-institutional outsiders” (1). In other chapters, I trace the specific Transcendentalist leanings of each author. I will discuss how these canonical texts legitimize certain acts of deviance; in this chapter I want to focus on how the *Police Gazette* condemns behaviours that, as I argue elsewhere, are applauded in the literary context.

Olds' *The Lonely American* explicitly unites the self-reliant figure and the outsider, making an even stronger case for my juxtaposition of these two terms. Olds' text unearths the "darker version of the ideal of self-reliance" (35) which is the "ideal of the outsider who stands apart yet shapes out country's destiny" (35). The author posits that the self-reliant person as outsider practices a newer form of self-reliance, one that is focused on apartness and self-sufficiency. The outsider figure is crucial to any examination of American culture; outsiders are the "bedrock of the American heroic landscape" (36). The culture is "flooded" with outsider heroes, both males⁶⁰ and females.⁶¹

Functionalist Underpinnings of the Police Gazette

Criminological theory, especially functionalist theory, can be used to explain the function or role of crime narratives. While Comstock worried that crime narratives had the potential of glorifying criminal and deviant acts, the early publications of the *Police Gazette* situated itself as a deterrent force – its goal being to notify the would-be criminal, or deviant, of the potential punishment that awaits him or her.

⁶⁰ She cites actors like Clint Eastwood and John Wayne, known for playing tough characters in Western movies. The Western genre is one peopled with "lonesome heroes" particularly because it usually has to do with the frontier.

⁶¹ She suggests that when it comes to female self-reliance, there is a shift from the self-reliant individual to the self-reliant family.

Diana Kendall's *Sociology in Our Times* defines functionalism as focusing on "societal stability and the ways in which various parts of society contribute to the whole" (182). Functionalists argue that what might seemingly appear as deviant or dysfunctional behaviour may, in some manner, actually be functional for the society (Andersen & Taylor 176). A scientific analogy is perhaps helpful to better understand the theory of functionalism. Many critics compare the theory of functionalism to the human body – both have "interacting parts all working toward a common goal of keeping the organism functioning properly" (Padhy 251). For instance, the bones, ligaments, muscles, blood, and nerves each function uniquely to maintain the entire body, but they cannot be separated from the other body parts they affect or the ones that have an effect upon them (Ferrante 30). This type of rhetoric is reminiscent of Biblical passages from *Corinthians* (Padhy 251):

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. (Corinthians 12:12)

If the foot should say, 'because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. (Corinthians 12:15).

But in fact God has arranged all the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. (Corinthians 12:18).

I also turn our attention to the modern day example of prostitution to better understand the functionalist mentality. Most people would argue that prostitution is deviant behaviour since it demeans the women engaging in it, puts them at physical risk, and subjects them to sexual exploitation (Shepard 176). Yet, functionalist theorists would urge us to see things differently –

prostitution is actually “functional” because it reinscribes and maintains the social system that “links women’s gender roles with sexuality, associates sex with commercial activity, and defines women as passive sexual objects and men as sexual aggressors” (Shepard 176). Thio and Taylor’s *Social Problems* is even more specific in this regard, explaining that prostitution exists because it serves two functions. Firstly, it offers customers what they want by providing quick and unemotional sexual gratification and various sexual partners (194). This would be the intended or obvious function. Secondly, prostitution also serves a more unintended or unknown function; it “[keeps] the wives and daughters of respectable citizenry pure” (194). Prostitution encourages men to seek out prostitutes to engage in premarital sex or extramarital sex so that ‘respectable’ women do not need to do so” (194).

Though functionalism does provides the foundations for this chapter (and the final one on Hawthorne), I must acknowledge upfront, as Prafullah Padhy does, that functionalist theory does not necessarily have a popular place in modern sociology.⁶² David Lee and Howard Newby concur, claiming that “functionalism today is very unfashionable” (265). Despite this, though, I have elected to rely on functionalism because I am fascinated by their uniqueness; unlike other theories, functionalism regards deviance as “positive.”⁶³

⁶² In Padhy’s own words, functionalism does not have a very “popular voice” (249) in modern sociology. In other disciplines though, functionalism is still popular. *Teaching Today* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2010.) suggests it as the dominant perspective for evaluating the education system and Jon Lang and Walter Moleski suggest its popularity in the Architecture discipline.

⁶³ This functionalist concept of deviance as positive needs to be clarified by the caveat that deviance must be “proportionate” (Kendall 184). Society can become

Perhaps the most important reason for studying the *Police Gazette*, then, comes by way of the “functionalist” theory developed in the works of French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917).⁶⁴ Durkheim sees deviance, in particular, as functional because norms are meaningless unless there is deviation from them; thus, deviance is necessary to clarify what society’s norms are. In this sense, deviance creates solidarity amongst social members. This notion calls to mind the more recent work of American sociologist Kai Erikson in *Wayward Puritans* (1966), a study of deviance in 17th century Massachusetts. Erikson’s work immediately makes obvious his reliance on Durkheim’s research: *Wayward Puritans* begins with an invocation of Durkheim’s findings on the normality of deviance and its “integral part in all healthy societies” (Fenton 186). Steve Fenton surmises that Erikson’s endeavour in *Wayward Puritans* is to address the very question Durkheim originally asks: “does it make any sense to assert that deviant forms of behaviour are a natural and even beneficial part of social life” (186)?⁶⁵

dysfunctional if too many people begin violating norms because then our “everyday existence may become unpredictable, chaotic, and even violent” (Kendall 184). For instance, even if a few people commit inexcusable acts so violent or heinous that they pose a threat to society, deviant acts are moved into the realm of criminality.

⁶⁴ There are a number of key sociological points to be gleaned from Durkheim’s work – particularly his analysis of suicide in *Suicide* (French *Le Suicide*) which 1) criticized the typical psychological interpretations of suicide and instead deployed sociological rationales 2) emphasized the role of social sciences in the production of deviance 3) emphasized the importance of people’s attachments to society in understanding deviance (Andersen & Taylor 155).

⁶⁵ Fenton does acknowledge the ways Durkheim differs from Erikson: 1) Durkheim argues that definitions of crime are socially relative; he fails to see constants in crimes like homicide. 2) Durkheim does not see the problem of attaching deviant labels to individual offenders. 3) Durkheim ignores ambiguities about morality within a given society.

I will now go through some more watered-down versions of functionalist theory. These interesting theories will help to ground our eventual understanding of Durkheim's functionalism – the main focus of this chapter. General Deterrence Theory⁶⁶ stipulates that “crime rates will be influenced and controlled by the threat of criminal punishment” (Siegel 128). Specifically, an inverse relationship exists between crime rates and the certainty and severity of legal sanctions. This means that if the probability of arrest and or conviction (certainty) increases, crime rates will decrease. Similarly, if the threat of severe punishment increases, crime rates will be lower. Efforts by the *Police Gazette* to underscore the certainty and severity of legal sanctions are explicit. “Article 8” from November 29th, 1845 provides a detailed list of persons tried in the court of Oyer and Terminer and General Jail Delivery that year: 10 were convicted of murder, 29 of murder in the second degree, 38 manslaughter, 256 of burglary, 20 of arson, and 23 of highway robbery (116). A similar column entitled “Criminal Statistics” from January 25th 1851 reveals that in the previous year, 158 people were charged with larceny, 19 with assault with intent to kill and 14 charged with breach of the peace (1). These statistics assured the reader that the criminal system was indeed functioning as it should.

Another regular feature in the *Police Gazette* entitled simply “Under Sentence of Death!” attempts to enact a similar deterrent purpose. Those sentenced to death by execution (the severest form of penalty available) are

⁶⁶ A subcategory of the classical rational choice theory which makes this an apt framework since I have already argued that the *Police Gazette* and other canonical literature from the 1840s and 50s fall within this “classical” domain.

listed briefly, without giving any details of the offenders' histories or any potentially extenuating circumstances indicating the certainty of such punishment regardless of motivations. For example, a sample entry in this column from 1846 reads: "New Hampshire – Andrew Howard, for the murder of Phebe Hanson, September 19th 1843, time of execution, July 8th 1846" (157). Another says: "Maryland – Wm. Wheeler, a slave for engaging in an insurrection, time of death unknown" (157). And yet another 1847 edition of the same column reports: "Vermont – Eugene Clifford, for the murder of his wife and child, time of execution any day" ("Under Sentence of Death!" 162). The very reporting of these punishments supports the legal system by reminding the reader about the certain consequences of crime.

Publishing the specific exploits of deviants and criminals in the *Police Gazette*, the magazine assumes it will be difficult for these same acts to be carried out again with such ease. Strategies need to be abandoned or perhaps modified to avoid suspicion and therefore a deterrent effect is present. The now infamous Joseph Pulitzer once claimed "there is not a crime...there is not a trick, there is not a swindle, there is not a vice which does not live by secrecy. Get things out in the open, describe them, attack them, ridicule them in the press, and...public opinion will sweep them away" (Swanberg 462).

In keeping with this idea of publicizing criminal exploits, Wilkes' *Police*

Gazette abides by a similar motto⁶⁷ of publicly exposing wrongdoings:

Following [the first page of the Lives of the Felons column] will be given, sketches of other notorious members of the same genus, whose numerous depredations have for the past twenty or thirty years marked the chronology of the criminal departments of this country – That the public may have a faint idea of the numbers and characteristics of this class, we will name a few that come first to hand. (“Prospectus” 153)

On the one hand, then, in the *Police Gazette* we have biographical sketches of models we should *not* follow (recall inverse imitation), whereas the self-reliant figures in the literature in question are models that we should emulate. The difference between self-reliance and deviance is a matter of valuation; one is desirable (literary) and the other is not (popular). Yet, both types of individuals are considered social outsiders.

Despite evidence suggesting that there is a deterrent factor in the *Police Gazette*, Lotz argues that the deterrent effect of crime narratives is only superficial and that it is actually implausible to argue that crime news has any deterrent component whatsoever. He argues that crime narratives cannot function as deterrents unless we can be assured, first, of the reader’s interest in the news, and second, and more importantly, of their ability to read and fully comprehend it and have the money to spend on it regularly (5). Lotz argues that though such requirements may seem rather simplistic, they often ultimately prove to be too demanding. He surmises that “most offenders do not have a prestigious job or a large disposable income; many do not have an impressive

⁶⁷ Most critics, Lotz especially, argue that Pulitzer clearly had less noble intentions than this public espousal. Most claim he printed stories mainly to attract readers of the working class (Lotz 4).

intelligence either” (5). Lotz quotes former prison director, George Beto, who claims that the majority of inmates in prison “are not the intelligent, the cunning, and the glamorous offenders portrayed on television and pictured in the cinema. Rather, they are the poor, the stupid, the inept” (5). While such a generalization appears rather harsh, sociological data confirms that only a modest percentage of inmates have an IQ above 100 (Department of Justice 48). When it comes to papers like the *Police Gazette* and the Penny Press more generally, Stevens claims that “the majority of [readers] were ‘urban workingmen.’ In today’s usage this term conjures up a factory worker or a ditch digger, but in the mid-nineteenth century included labourers, small merchants, retail tradesmen, and clerks” (Stevens 20). Osgerby’s *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth and Leisure – Style in Modern America* confirms this, stating that the readership of the *Police Gazette* was “largely working class, although a significant minority of middle-class male readers were also drawn to their universe of pugnaciousness and prurience” (22). Anthony Comstock (1844-1915), founder and secretary of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice (1873), also questioned the deterrent function of the *Police Gazette* vehemently, arguing that such publications were destroying America’s youth: “They make a pure mind almost impossible. They open the way for the grossest evils. Foul thoughts are the precursors of foul actions” (Gorn 9). According to Comstock, sensational news stories actually “glamorized the lives of libertines, harlots and criminals” (Gorn 10) and therefore often ended up promoting, instead of discouraging, vice.

The magazine clearly positions itself as a deterrent, yet we can also approach the importance of the publication from another avenue – the control perspective. Lotz argues that people read crime narratives primarily because they want to have control over what happens to them. The notion here is that crime narratives enable readers to not only envision themselves as victims of particular criminals, but also sufficiently familiarize themselves with the nature of such crimes so that they are able to avoid victimization in the future. Chris Greer’s *Crime and Media: A Reader* suggests that for this very reason – for readers to “see the event as potentially within his or her own experience” (235) – do crime narratives include specific details about the offender and location. We can see how this plays out in the *Police Gazette*, particularly in a “Lives of the Felons” column from December 27th, 1845 featuring George Howell, the “celebrated American pickpocket.” The article is saturated with personal details about the offender. It starts by chronicling his early career as member of the Shippen Street Gang at the age of 15, while making clear the dysfunctional nature of his family. It even includes the minutest of physical details about Howell, all in an attempt to provide a visual portrait of the offender:

George Howell, alias Howard, is 5 feet 9 inches high – full face – full chest – broad shoulders, and handsomely proportioned. His hair is dark, but he is bald from the forehead to the crown. He generally wears a fine pair of black whiskers, and is considered a handsome man. His manner gives evidence of extreme conceit, and his person is generally decorated with a deal of jewelry – consisting of a heavy chronometer watch and handsome establishment, gold diamond broach, and finger signet ring, &c. His whole appearance denotes conceit and well dressed, and tolerably well disguised

vulgarity. He in short looks as much like what he is, as a man may, who has not “pickpocket” written on his forehead in absolute Roman letters. (145)

Even a later edition of the “Lives of the Felons” column from November 2nd, 1850, operates in the same manner. The focus here is two female offenders, Mary Read and Anne Bonney – “female pirates of the West Indies” (1). As the *Police Gazette*’s readership was predominantly male (Chudacoff 189), the article takes pains to ensure that even its male readers believe these women to be a viable threat to them. The story begins with an admission that “it would seem to be possible for man alone to be possessed of strength of nerve and atrocity of disposition to form that personification of all crimes known by the theme of pirate” (1). However, women are also in possession of this “character.” Just like the article on Howell does, this also chronicles the shameful childhood of both Read and Bonney. First, the article includes extra details about Read’s mother’s pregnancy, the subsequent death of her grandma and trials and tribulations aboard a man-of-war ship. In Bonney’s case, we are told of the circumstances surrounding her elopement with the Captain of a ship and how she later adopts a male disguise so she can remain with him at sea. Details of location are also offered – London is mentioned and then Jamaica, specifically Porte Meeria. These details function as part of a cautionary tale so that readers can envision themselves as the victims of these types of criminals. The *Police Gazette* cautions that anyone, even normal-looking people

might harm you. These kinds of details allow readers to imagine and thus vicariously confront these types of individuals.

As with the description of the pickpocket and pirate women, the *Police Gazette* also included detailed description of setting/location, the intention perhaps again being to enable a realistic envisioning of the situation. We can also think of this type of description in terms of fictionalization - these true events are told in a way that resembles fiction. A representative example of this technique comes from the “Lives of the Felons” December 28th 1850 edition:

In the midst of a dense wood, near the borders of Rock River...this patch was blooming, and on a night in September, the dwelling in its midst might have been heard to ring with revelry and to emit from its chimney the fragrant odors of substantial meats.

Though such details are essentially of no relevance to the crime committed, the column still begins with this descriptive rendering of the setting.

The *Police Gazette* also includes detailed accounts of the mindset of particularly dangerous groups of people. In yet another column, not part of the specialized “Lives of the Felons”⁶⁸ section, we read about the exploits of “The Spiritual Knockers,” a group of people who had arrived in Cincinnati with the intention of “commencing to raise the dead for the benefit of its incredulous citizens” (“Lives of the Felons: Mary Head and Anne Bonney” 2). This group claims to be able to raise the spirit of Benjamin Franklin, who comes to willing

⁶⁸ This is perhaps an allusion to *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; with Critical Observations On Their Works* (or *Lives of the Poets* as it is more commonly known) which offered a “celebratory survey” (Johnson vii) of the lives of English poets of the 17th and 18th centuries.

patrons saying, “God is with you, dear friends, and will bless you – I am Ben Franklin – fear not” (2). The following excerpt from the *Police Gazette* demonstrates the belief of these people well:

We call ourselves an enlightened community, emancipated from the thralldom of older superstition, and intolerant of all those absurdities which our forefathers swallowed with such remarkable ease...The ages since [the black arts] was practised, have called it blasphemy, and some have punished its teachers with prisons and chains. The nineteenth century, however, has surpassed the ages of the black art, improved on the method of operation and discarding the fasting and the regorging, now raise the dead with a single rap on the pine table, or a convenient nap slept according to order. The most marvellous part of the whole is that men who call themselves sane, stand by, open their mouths and ears, and say that they have actually held communion with their departed friends. (2)

The first few lines of the article appeal to the reader by suggesting that even the most sophisticated and mentally adept audience can be duped by these criminals. Details of this story contribute again to the readers’ overall sense of control by allowing them to feel that they can combat not only this specific group of individuals, but more importantly the number of imitators that have recently emerged.

Related to this hypothesis of the *Police Gazette* functioning as a control mechanism of sorts is the idea of Downward Comparison Theory, developed in Linda Heath’s work. She argues that people actually feel *better* when contrasting themselves with those who are far less fortunate than they are. Though they are able to envision themselves in the specific position of victim, they experience feelings of relief that they are not actually the ones being

victimized, and because of the details given by the report/article, they have a chance to avoid victimization altogether.⁶⁹

An interesting counterpoint to this idea of visualization is provided by Katz, who argues that more important than the ability to visualize themselves as victims (for either “control” or “downward comparison purposes”) is the crime narrative’s ability to “re-[create] daily moral sensibilities through shock and impulses of outrage” (Greer 232). Stories about criminals and deviants allow the public to develop their personal perspectives on pressing moral questions. Katz provides an effective schema explaining this phenomenon: on the one hand we have crime stories with implications about our personal competences/sensibilities, and on the other, we have stories that depict threats to sacred centres of society (Greer 232). The first category of implications enables us to assess whether in similar situations we would be as ingenious or as daring, for example (Greer 233). The second category enables the audience to assess the collective identity of the particular group they are a part of. Though important, Katz’s schema is somewhat problematic as it implies readers are far more preoccupied with assessing/developing moral positions than actually envisioning themselves as potential victims (Greer 235).

In addition to the idea of visualization, Lotz cites a further proposition about the allure of crime news – that it enacts a form of “entertainment” which,

⁶⁹ This idea of downward comparison is similar to the way New Yorkers think – Manhattan is “crawling with crime,” yet residents believe it to be far safer than Brooklyn. Interestingly, Brooklyn residents say Harlem (located in Manhattan) and the South Bronx are far more dangerous than Brooklyn (Lotz 6).

though applicable to the time of the *Police Gazette*, is less relevant to the more modern context of today. Lotz notes a number of sociologists who argue that crime news enacts a form of “entertainment.” The author refers first to Herbert Gans who posits that “to be suitable or newsworthy, an item must be important or interesting” (12). He then mentions Kai Erikson, who believes “newspapers provide readers the kind of entertainment they once got by observing public hangings and seeing people in stocks” (12). Finally, Lotz’s research refers to Leo Bogart, who claims crime news becomes entertaining only when it arouses emotions which are usually achieved through drama. The *Police Gazette* was certainly known for its use of extremes and dramatic headlines – particularly in later years of publication under Fox, but also in its years under Wilkes. A sample of headlines from the early years of publication includes the following: “Another Ellen Jewett Affair! Horrible Murder in Boston of A Young and Beautiful Female With An Attempt to Conceal the Crime by Arson!” (85). “Horrible Affair; Another Wife Murdered! Murderer Caught!” (5), and “City Correspondence; The Pauper Countess” (325). In the 50s, the headlines were equally as dramatic: “An Unaccountable Criminal Freak By a Deaf Old Man” (January 25, 1851), “Murder of A School Teacher by One of His Scholars” (January 25, 1851), and “Extraordinary Suicide of a Child of Fourteen” (c185x). Yet, while there may be evidence pointing toward an entertaining component of the *Police Gazette*, the very reason why it is so entertaining is difficult if not impossible to pinpoint (Lotz 12). Whether people are interested in crime because it is shocking and unpredictable, or for other reasons, is not clear.

Today's society offers the potential reader of crime news a wide range of other stimulating crime experiences (aside from the traditional crime narrative) such as crime shows, crime movies, urban myth stories or even pseudo crime journalism on social media sites.

Functionalism can help us a great deal; however, it is important to note there have been criticisms. Ironically, Robert Merton, one of the most well-known functionalist proponents, underscores the main difficulty with the doctrine. Most functionalists assume that every social practice and institution must be understood in terms of its adaptive functions for society as a whole; they tend to prioritize existing social forms (Feinberg 36), reflecting an inherently conservative bias. Merton highlights a further conceptual problem – how should the term “function” be defined? How does one separate functions from motives that individuals may have for participating in an institution or engaging in a particular practise (Feinberg 37)? Anthony Giddens points out yet another difficulty with functionalism, which is that the driving force behind the theory is the notion of some type of “system need” that takes the place of individual wants (Giddens 92). Giddens finds this idea entirely inappropriate since “social systems, unlike organisms, do not have any need or interest in their own survival, and the notion of ‘need’ is falsely applied if it is not acknowledged that system needs presuppose actors’ wants” (qtd. in Feinberg 39-40). The critic does not deny that individuals or groups will have particular interests, but argues that the *system* itself cannot have such interests as functionalism implies it does.

Despite having some drawbacks, the heart of functionalism is still relevant. Functionalism works to explain the functions or roles performed by things in the society (in this case deviance) as well as the ways that these functions ensure social survival. Studying American representations of deviance helps us to delineate which behaviours are acceptable or not (therefore deviant) as well as which qualities and characteristics are valorized by society.

Self-Reliant Cultural Icon or Individualistic Criminal

A functionalist inquiry of American literature enables us to trace the nuances of specific types of deviance. It permits an understanding of why a particular form of deviance is required and how definitions of this form are continuously shifting. Using the deviant actions of vagrancy (a form which occurs in the *Police Gazette* and *Walden*), I demonstrate how in one literary setting (elite) vagrants are legitimized and even considered heroic, but in the other (popular) setting other types of vagrants are shunned by society and criminalized. I use the slave's tireless quest for freedom in the *Police Gazette* and *Narrative* to illustrate this as well. I contend that the deviance engaged in by the characters in the *Police Gazette* is more akin to individualism (self-reliance's precursor) than actual self-reliance. As I have established earlier and will continue to do in the following chapters, Thoreau and Douglass both exhibit self-reliant characteristics.

The deviant activities of the vagrant,⁷⁰ first in the *National Police Gazette* and second, in *Walden* are a good point at which to begin the discussion of the discrepancy between how these figures are seen in each discursive setting. In this chapter, I am referring to the vagrant as it is defined after August 1846 – someone “who has no lawful employment whereby to maintain him or herself” (403). This is a definition that is carried forward in a much later 1867 edition where a vagrant was labeled as having “nothing to do” (“St. Louis” 3).

In their initial appearances in the *Police Gazette*, those associated with the crime of vagrancy were treated rather uniformly. From October 1845 to July 1846, vagrants were those who were either publicly inebriated (“Items” 70, “Article 8” 245) or those accused of being thieves – mainly pickpockets (“Lives of the Felons: Charles and James Webb” 121, “Life of George Barrington” 178, “Article 9” 236). On March 18th, 1846, the *Police Gazette* reported that a total of 535 vagrants were arrested at The Tombs and Essex Market (246), a number which increased in the period from May-November 1846 to 1259 (“Article 11” 90).

After August 1846, there is a decided shift in the type of individuals who are deemed “vagrants”; the magazine moves away from the idea of vagrancy as a “public” wrongdoing and more toward the idea of individuals who have no viable skills or talents with which to sustain themselves. Thus, this definition moves away from the vagrant’s actions to more of a focus on his/her character.

⁷⁰ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines this term as first used in 1461 to mean one who “[wanders] about without proper means of livelihood” (2013).

The August 8th edition from that year explicitly defines the vagrant as someone “who has no lawful employment whereby to maintain him or herself” (403). This first particular case deals with a female vagrant labeled as a “common prostitute” (403), but other such vagrants include an “old crone” arrested for fortunetelling (195), a male found wandering the streets “a little before daybreak in the morning” (“Article 11” 213), a female sailor illegally aboard a ship disguised as a male (“Boston” 854) and finally, a destitute man seeking willing citizens to give him enough money to return to his home in Newark (“Police Items” 387). In the 1850s, an article entitled “Vagrant Juvenile Females” describes vagrants as a “class of girls who habitually stay about the streets” with a particular emphasis that they are known for “doing nothing” except “begging and peddling apples” (c185x). Thus, over the course of the 40s and 50s, vagrancy shifted from a moral to an economic problem perhaps because of the expansion of business that was taking place across the country.

In *Walden* we also have a preoccupation with the vagrant figure. Thoreau’s distinction between the vagrant and the saunterer suggests that while he clearly appears to favour the divinely inspired saunterer, his behavior in *Walden* is ironically more aligned with the vagrant character. In his 1861 essay, “Walking”, the author outlines the contrast between the vagrant and the more spiritually elevated saunterer (not the vagrant after all):

I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks, who had a genius, so to speak, for *sauntering*; which word is beautifully derived "from idle people who roved about the country, in the middle ages, and asked charity, under pretence of going *à la sainte*

terre" — to the holy land, till the children exclaimed, "There goes a *sainte-terror*", a saunterer — a holy-lander. They who never go to the holy land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers and vagabonds, but they who do go there are saunterers in the good sense, such as I mean...He who sits still in a house all the time may be the greatest vagrant of all, but the Saunterer, in the good sense, is no more vagrant than the meandering river, which is all the while sedulously seeking the shortest course to the sea. (260)

In the "Sounds" chapter of *Walden*, Thoreau engages in precisely the sort of vagrant behaviour "Walking" claims one should avoid ("he who sits still in a house all the time may be the greatest vagrant of all") when he announces that

I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a revery, amidst the pines and hickories and sumachs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang around or flitted noiseless through the house, until by the sun falling in at my west window, or the noise of some traveller's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time...For the most part, I minded not how the hours went. The day advanced as if to light some work of mine; it was morning, and lo, now it is evening, and nothing memorable is accomplished. (79)

Under this literary definition, vagrancy can be a creative act (the roaming of the mind) and does not necessarily need to be a physical movement.

Thoreau openly admits that his behavior "was sheer idleness to my fellow-townsmen, no doubt" (79), but continues to pursue this sort of behaviour throughout the text. Later in the work, he admits that "idleness was the most attractive and productive industry" (131). The reference to being idle recalls Thoreau's previously quoted definition positioning him as a vagrant.⁷¹ There is a class element present here; the "vagrant" Thoreau is permitted in the literary

⁷¹ Some critics might disagree that Thoreau was idle while at Walden Pond. The "Economy" section of *Walden*, with its exhaustive budgetary lists/details, demonstrates that Thoreau is actually a productive, functioning member of society – he spends about \$15 on farming, which yields him an approximate profit of \$9. In a year, he spends a total of about \$62, which ultimately results in a \$25 profit.

realm to roam the country landscape (within which he owns property) without consequence, yet the city vagrant, as I will show, is punished for doing the same.⁷² Not only are Thoreau's aimless wanderings associated with some of the most thought-provoking revelations in *Walden*, they align him with the elite class of spiritually elevated Transcendentalists. The common, unentitled vagrant in the *Police Gazette* on the other hand, is grouped with the likes of other criminals such as murderers, rapists, arsonists and counterfeiters.

Thoreau's vagrancy is still lauded by the American community as cultural "icon"⁷³ according to Robert Sattelmeyer (85), though regrettably not until years after the publication of *Walden* and Thoreau's demise. The initial response to Thoreau was heavily influenced by original publishers Ticknor and Fields who promoted Thoreau as "The Massachusetts Hermit." This was a misguided myth of Thoreau as a man who simply "permanently withdrew from society and lived in the woods" (Petruionis & Walls 13). It was not until the early twentieth century that Thoreau's work – *Walden* in particular – was looked upon with fresh eyes (Sattelmeyer 16). This was in part due to what Lawrence Buell has termed a "gradual displacement" of the first "genteel canon" (America's first canon of great authors) by an "oppositional canon"⁷⁴

⁷² Recall here the "vagrant juvenile females" chastised for "habitually staying about the streets" or the man found wandering the streets in the wee hours of the morning.

⁷³ In "The Vagrant and American Literature" by D. Wills, the author proposes that American literature is rife with the hobo (vagrant) character. He names canonical figures like Walt Whitman, Jack London, John Steinbeck, and Jack Kerouac. He argues that their "influence upon America is undeniable. They celebrate and bring to popular culture the wandering cult of freedom, independence, and exploitation" (1).

⁷⁴ See Note 33 in Buell's *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* for instances of earlier discussions of the concept that he now terms the "oppositional canon."

(“Environmental Imagination” 357), which in Sattelmeyer’s words is a canon of “great artists whose works tend to dissent from the prevailing values of their times” (16). At this point, people began to recognize Thoreau’s heroic nature that was present all along. In fact, Sattelmeyer links Thoreau’s persona in *Walden* with the Adamic persona. He suggests that the Edenic overtones of *Walden* are unignorable – Walden woods are a “remnant of the Garden” (Sattelmeyer 81). Thoreau, like Adam, was able to find the secret passageway and astutely observed that “wildlife and wildness [were] part of the Creator’s handiwork” and that “Nature is one of the languages that God speaks” (Sattelmeyer 81). Alan Edmond, town manager of Concord, underscores *Walden*’s ability to “capture imagination” because of the ways in which it wholly exemplifies the “American Spirit” (Sattelmeyer 83). In particular, he praises Thoreau’s “initiative, self-reliance, defiance, and change” (Sattelmeyer 83). Even Wallace Stegner lauds Thoreau as iconic, labeling him as “excruciatingly American” (Sattelmeyer 83).⁷⁵

If we move back to the *Police Gazette* we realize that representations of the same vagrant figure are always criminalized – never legitimized. Recall the earlier example of the “old crone” arrested for fortunetelling; this woman is immediately “committed for examination, if discharged she will be sent to Blackwell’s Island for six months under the vagrant act” (195). The man found

⁷⁵ Readers of Thoreau’s other works also regard him in a heroic/iconic manner. After reading “Civil Disobedience”, Gandhi recognized and understood “Civil Resistance” as a principle of action (Sattelmeyer 85). President Kennedy in a speech outlining America’s future quoted Thoreau, “Eastward I go only by force; but Westward I go free...I must walk toward Oregon and not toward Europe. And that way the nation is moving” (Sattelmeyer 83).

walking in the streets during the wee hours was arrested and confined as a vagrant (“Article 11” 213). Finally, the man attempting to raise funds for a return to Newark was sentenced to six months labor in the penitentiary (“Police Items” 387).

To provide even more evidence for the ways in which the treatment of characters differ based on discursive setting, I also cite *Narrative*. Here Douglass’ quest for freedom engenders reader sympathy: he embodies the cultural characteristics often associated with the Emersonian hero: spontaneity, non-conformity, rebellion, and motivation. Notable reviews of his text during the 1840s refer to him in language suitable for describing this heroic figure: Margaret Fuller’s June 1845 review in *Tribune* labels him “excellent,” “of a strong character,” and of course “manly” (83-84), while an anonymous review from the *Spectator* in November 1845 claims the *Narrative* to be a “singular book”, but more importantly, Douglass to be a “singular man” (Anonymous 87-88). In recent years, Waldo E. Martin in 1986 pronounced Douglass to be the “prototypical black American hero” (253). Since then, sources like George E. Stanley, Darlene Clark Hine and *The Oxford Encyclopedia of African Thought* have all referred to Douglass as an “American hero.”

In the *Police Gazette* though, the very same quest for heroism as Douglass undertakes is decidedly criminalized. Stories of slaves’ non-conformity and rebellion are found in the regular feature “Under Sentence of Death!” and are simply one-line notes. For example, articles on January 3rd and 24th of 1846 both include in the list of those to be executed “a slave for

engaging in an insurrection” (157, 182). Another execution list from January 30th, 1847 mentions a slave set to pay the ultimate penalty, again for “insurrection”, and another one for “burglary” (162). According to a short note accompanying the January 30th article, the list outlines “the following dismal catalogue of criminals” (162), thus immediately labeling slaves as criminals. More important though is that their insurrections are grouped together in the list with the more serious activities of murder, arson, fraud, and piracy.

I believe the discrepancy between the heroic and criminal label has largely to do with the way the literature presents each figure’s motivations. On the one hand, in the literary context we are presented with protagonists wholly consumed by Emersonian (and more broadly Transcendental) dictates of self-reliance. Most striking in the literary context is not the protagonist’s commitment to their self-reliant endeavours – Thoreau dedicates two years and two months to his Transcendental experiment, while Douglass persists despite numerous obstacles and physical altercations – but instead it is their desire to encourage self-reliance in the community at large. In A. Bronson Alcott’s “The Doctrine and Discipline of Human Culture,” he writes of the ‘Perfect Man,’ an individual touted as one who endeavours to mould institutions, manners, and men since the true teacher in Alcott’s eyes is above all one who is able to inspire. This ‘Perfect Man’ is clearly inspired by Emerson’s “Self-Reliance” in which he writes that the common Man must “become powerful and take the revered position of Kings: “when private men shall act with original views, the lustre will be transferred from the actions of Kings to those of gentlemen”

(127). Emerson makes a sweeping call for change in all walks of life: “a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men; in their religion; in their education; in their pursuits; their modes of living; their association; in their property; in their speculative views” (132). The way to attract or “magnetize” others to take on self-reliance (which will inspire change) is through self-trust (127).

In the *Police Gazette*, we have instead figures who can be conceived of as individualists, at best. Recall the earlier distinction between the self-reliant and individualist American that was mapped out in the “Introduction.” The self-reliant American cultivates an innate self-trust through a recognition of his or her unique position within the universe and through an adherence to Transcendental doctrine; the term “individualist” instead often tends to conjure an idea of a “rugged American self” (Epstein 65). Individualism calls forth the image of one who “sheds social encumbrances and lights out for the Territory like in Huck Finn” (Epstein 65). This description of the “individualist” is one we might associate with the more lawless individual – a definition that many of the “characters” in the *Police Gazette* conform to. In fact, the *Police Gazette* consciously deploys this term on a number of occurrences. First, there are the handful of unfortunate criminals who ironically have the surname “Lawless,” but more importantly are the cases where the term is associated with non-conformist individualism. In “Article 3” from January 2nd, 1847, “lawless” is attached to a gang of ‘Regulators’ who deviate by taking the law into their own hands. In their own individualist brand of vigilante justice, they are responsible

for the release of a large group of prisoners and the subsequent whipping of several prominent grand jury members responsible for their indictment (130). Next, we have the aforementioned “lawless business” of Fry, implicated in the stealing of slaves and an attempt to secure their freedom/independence (“Article 8” 363). And finally, from a later 1867 edition, the deviant husband who has forsaken all conventional bonds of marriage and monogamy and instead has a number of “women” at “divers places in the city of New York” – a secret kept from his devoted wife (“Advertisement 1” 2)

The *Police Gazette*’s “Lives of the Felons” column represents motivations behind deviant behavior in particular ways; the series is designed to explore “the causes, character, and consequences of crime” (Reel 29), yet slaves are never featured in these excerpts as anything more than characters of secondary importance. In fact, these secondary characters are often portrayed as having an innate predisposition toward crime or deviance. In “Lives of the Felons” No. 8, Henry Thomas, The Burglar and Murder, encounters the head keeper’s slave, who within minutes “suggested to Thomas an idea of escape, and also urged the same design upon a one armed convict” (289). A story (not part of the “Lives of the Felons”) entitled “The Knife Again” from October 23, 1858 further demonstrates this innate predisposition toward crime, but suggests it not only applies to slaves, but to black characters more generally. In this particular article, we encounter two “colored men” arrested for stabbing another “notorious negro.” We soon find out that the man killed had been convicted for 18 months and upon his release was quickly convicted again for a minor charge

of stealing. After serving a short 4 month sentence, he immediately took to keeping a “rookery”, which he continued to do until he was brutally murdered (“The Knife Again” 2). Another earlier story describes a black man who strikes another man on the head with an axe “without any previous intention” (“Criminal Statistics” 2).

In episode No. 11 of “Lives of the Felons”, John Murrell, The Great Western Land Pirate, has a chance meeting with “an elderly negro slave, of vicious character...[the] proper instrument for his diabolical purpose” (201). Given his apparent innate criminal proclivities, the slave sides with the white man (Murrell) and willingly agrees to participate in criminal behaviour. These are clear cases of racial politics infiltrating the criminal sphere – the slave’s particular danger is not a direct, but indirect, one. He is dangerous because of his potential to render the white criminal (Murrell) even stronger. We see a similar instance of racial politics in a July 1847 column where a man named Fry is involved in “negro stealing.” Fry is accused of encouraging slaves to “leave [their] master by the promise...[that] he would meet him at Big Black River [where] he would take him to a free State and secure [their] Freedom” (“Article 8” 363). Again, the white Fry is rendered more powerful by the black slave’s willingness to comply with him. An article entitled “Horrible Assassination” (again not part of the Lives of the Felons series) from December 1850 re-iterates the ways in which this is applicable to free black characters as well. In this story, we are introduced to a “negro [who] was arrested on suspicion” who later

“confessed he was hired by two white men to commit murder, and that he received \$20 from them.”

There is perhaps one lengthy article in the *Police Gazette*'s early years entitled “The Slave Case,” which appeared on October 31st, 1846, outlined in great detail charges levied against George Kirk, a slave found secreted aboard the Brig Mobile. If read in tandem with the *Narrative*, there are noticeable similarities between these two young slaves. The behaviour of both can be characterized by swiftness and suddenness. Recall that in the *Narrative*, Douglass cleverly bides his time, and “while Covey was looking in an opposite direction, [he] started for St. Michael’s” (47). Similarly, Kirk’s escape happens when the Captain turns his back momentarily to drop the anchor. A few scenes later, Kirk suddenly springs into furious action to fend off his would-be captors, much as Douglass does in his fight against Covey. In both cases, the scenes leading up to the scuffle depict a weakened protagonist. Kirk is found “nearly exhausted” (61) by the Captain, and Douglass is so ravaged by exhaustion that he collapses in the woods on his way to St. Michael’s (48). Where the stories diverge, though, is the *Police Gazette*'s insistence on rendering the story in pseudo legal discourse which negates emotions in favour of external facts. For example, “The Slave Case” outlines precedent setting cases, with attention to an objective reporting of all facts, but devotes no attention to the self-reliant underpinnings of Kirk’s actions that we find in the case of Douglass. In fact, Kirk’s case is considered “remarkable” only for his “lack of intelligence and mental endowments” (61).

William Garrison's preface to the *Narrative* makes an interesting point; he cites a case from a March 1845 edition of the *Baltimore American* entitled "Shooting a Slave" in which a white man, who victimizes a slave, is treated with impunity:

We learn, upon the authority of a letter from Charles county, Maryland, received by a gentlemen of this city, that a young man, named Matthews, a nephew of General Matthews, and whose father, it is believed, holds an office at Washington, killed one of the slaves upon his father's farm by shooting him. The letter states that young Matthews had been left in charge of the farm; that he gave an order to the servant, which was disobeyed, when he proceeded to the house, *obtained a gun, and, returning, shot the servant*. He immediately, the letter continues, fled to his father's residence, where he still remains unmolested. (9)

Thus, this demonstrates a tendency to hold the white man unaccountable when slaves are their co-conspirators. In contrast, Douglass and Thoreau emulate the Transcendental 'Perfect Man.' In Douglass' case, his extensive work as Abolitionist speaker immediately comes to mind here, as does the clandestine Sunday School he ran for other slaves. In the *Narrative*, we are told by Douglass, "I succeeded in creating in [my fellow slaves] a strong desire to learn to read. This desire soon sprang up in others also" (54). According to the preface by Abolitionist William Garrison, the purpose of the *Narrative* is "expostulation" – "entreaty, rebuke, against that crime of crimes – making man the property of his fellow man" (8), with the greater aim of convincing others of the slave's plight.

In *Walden*, perhaps the kinship to this ‘Perfect Man’ is not as explicit, though still certainly there. The first page of the work offers a pretext for the story’s writing:

[v]ery particular inquires had [been] made by my own townsmen concerning my mode of life, which some would call impertinent, though they do not appear to me at all impertinent, but, considering the circumstances, very natural and pertinent. Some have asked what I got to eat; if I did not feel lonesome; if I was not afraid and the like. Others have been curious to learn what portion of my income I devoted to charitable purposes; and some, who have large families, how many poor children I maintained. (5)

Despite this, we soon realize that his true motivations are an examination of “the way most people seem to be spending their lives” (Andrews 26). I would clarify this even further to suggest that his principle goal is to *change* (mould “manners” and “men”) the way we live our lives, something he makes clear in this crucial passage of *Walden*:

It is never too late to give up our prejudices. No way of thinking or doing, however ancient, can be trusted without proof. What every body echoes or in silence passes by as true to-day may turn out to be falsehood tomorrow, mere smoke of opinion... (9)

And again when he writes:

so thoroughly and sincerely are we compelled to live, reverencing our life, and denying the possibility of change. This is the only way, we say; but there are as many ways as there can be drawn radii from one centre. (11)

The idea of awakening people to see the world differently is foregrounded by the epigraph in *Walden*: “I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to

brag as lustily as chanticleer⁷⁶ in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbours up” (5).

In the *Police Gazette*, none of the figures exhibit the lofty goal of inspiring others toward self-reliant behaviour. Instead, in both cases we have characters who have shunned conventional means – Douglass escapes to the North after careful planning, the vagrants pursue uncharacteristic forms of “employment” (prostitution, fortunetelling, begging). It seems that in the *Police Gazette*, the deviants all enact the most superficial form of self-reliance. They ironically adhere to Emerson’s teaching that “Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist” (122), yet mistakenly pursue individualism without any ulterior Transcendental purpose that might transform it into self-reliance.

The great difficulty here is that the criminals in the *Police Gazette* are never granted any form of complex motivation; we rarely (if ever) are permitted access to their psyche. Conversely, literary deviants are furnished with complex motivations and thought-processes, enabling us to comprehend and indeed sympathize with their actions. It is far easier for us to discern the ways in which these actions align with the noble Transcendentalist impulse which first and foremost (according to Emerson) requires an active mind.

As this chapter demonstrates, popular and literary discourses of self-reliant deviance can be read together. Both types of literature can be subject to a functional analysis which ultimately produces a more cogent understanding of

⁷⁶ “Chanticleer” in French means to “sing clear.” In Chaucer’s “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” it refers to a proud rooster and by metonymy refers to any rooster.

which acts are deemed acceptable in the literary context, but unsanctioned by popular works. This sort of analysis shows how deviance (whether sanctioned or not) contributes to the American social order.

Chapter 4: Strategies of Sentimental Self-Reliance in Elite and Popular Discourses of Female Deviance

Whereas Douglass and Thoreau shun any institutionalized means of achieving culturally lauded goals, women writers of self-reliance simultaneously encourage and dissuade their readers from conventional female behaviours. In this chapter, I compare elite and popular discourses of female deviance, exploring women writers who use strategies of sentimental self-reliance. I have elected to use the term “sentimental self-reliance” since I believe it adequately encapsulates the amalgamation between feminine (sentimental) and masculine (self-reliant) modes of thought. By sentimental self-reliance I mean the precepts of self-reliance embedded in dominant ideals of acceptable domestic conduct for women. Leading female transcendentalist, Margaret Fuller, will be explored for her thoughts on women and self-reliance. I will also analyze the sentimental forms of deviance enacted by females Ruth Hall (by Fanny Fern) and Sarah Hale (editor of *Godey’s Lady’s Book*⁷⁷) and examine how this compares with the sort of deviance carried out by the females in the more male-centered *Police Gazette*. My work shows that just like in the previous chapter, female deviants in the elite realm (*Ruth Hall* and *Godey’s*) is acceptable but in the popular *Police Gazette*, again repudiated. I will demonstrate that it is only via a technique of sentimental self-reliance (something lacking in the *Police Gazette*) that Transcendentalist (elite) women are able to preserve their conventional reputation – using strategies of

⁷⁷ Stella Blum, JoAnne Olian, and Ming-Ju Sun all shorten the title to *Godey’s* in their works. I have elected to do the same throughout the dissertation.

sentimental self-reliance, they simultaneously resist and abide by conventional norms.

Gendered forms of deviance in the nineteenth century can effectively be read through the framework of “cultural deviance.” Joanne Dobson’s *Dickinson and the Strategies of Reticence: The Woman Writer in Nineteenth Century America* surmises:

Women [in the nineteenth century] were aware, at both a conscious and unconscious level, of the potentially disastrous personal consequences of *cultural deviance* [emphasis added]. De Tocqueville describes the problem: ‘in the United States the inexorable opinion of the public carefully circumscribes women within the narrow circle of domestic interests and duties and forbids her to step beyond it... she is not slow to perceive that she cannot depart for an instant from the established usages of her contemporaries without putting in jeopardy her peace of mind, her honor, nay, even her social existence.’ (14)

In contemporary criminology writings, Cultural Deviance Theory is based on criminologist Thorsten Sellin’s finding that “crime is always relative to the norms of the group defining it as a crime – therefore it is a product of social definitions” (Gottfredson & Hirschi 76) – a point which has been made by earlier chapters of this dissertation. Ruth Kornhauser clarifies Sellin’s statement in 1978 by substituting the term “deviance” for “crime.” She writes: “People never violate the norms of their *own* groups, only the norms of other groups. What appears to be deviant is simply a label applied by an out group to the conforming behaviour endorsed in one’s own subculture” (qtd. in Gottfredson & Hirschi 76). In essence then, Cultural Deviance Theory suggests deviance or transgressive behaviour is the direct result of socialization into subcultural

values.⁷⁸ For the purposes of this dissertation, I rely on the basic criminological definition of a subculture as a “group that holds norms and values that are different from mainstream society” (Holmes 160). J. Mitchell Miller explains that what signifies one’s membership in a subculture is not simply commonality in behaviour patterns, but a sense of mutual cognitions pertaining to objects and actions (e.g. behaviours). In order to be a part of a subculture, the requirement is that “persons hold a salient and intense degree of identification with others who also make a decision to attribute similar meaning to factors in their social world” (Miller 229). While it is difficult to align the female deviants in the *Police Gazette* with some larger communal purpose, elite Transcendentalists writers, like Fanny Fern, Margaret Fuller, and Sarah Hale, certainly fit within Miller’s rubric. These Transcendentalist women all share the lofty goals of inspiring and inducing the self-reliant impetus communally in their female readers. What makes *Ruth Hall* of particular interest, though, is the way in which Fern unobtrusively thwarts the formulaic conventions of “women’s fiction” to carry out this subcultural purpose. Susan K. Harris’ *19th-Century American Women's Novels: Interpretative Strategies* agrees with this supposition, using the language of the “subcultural” specifically: “[Fern] waged a curious and confused battle in which she often utilized the techniques of the subculture to fight against it” (112). As Dobson surmises, Fanny Fern

⁷⁸ Recent studies in Cultural Deviance Theory have branched off into a number of directions such as Shaw & McKay’s Social Disorganization Theory (links delinquency rates with socioeconomic conditions), Sutherland’s Differential Association Theory (links conflicts of social attitudes and cultural norms with deviance/crime), and Sellin’s Culture Conflict Theory (links exposure to different and opposing attitudes as to what is right and wrong with deviant/criminal behaviour).

“transgress[es] the codes of feminine articulation” (23), but does so in a way that is couched in the rhetoric of the sentimental tradition. *Ruth Hall* begins with all the trappings of the sentimental text, but slowly and surely undermines any connections to the genre. Fern’s writing consistently vacillates between conventional and then unconventional sentimental models. The novel allows space for this gradual process, something not permitted by the space and form constraints of the *Police Gazette* – not to mention that at the time, the magazine envisioned itself as a man’s magazine, one that was decidedly anti-sentimental. *Godey’s* exhibits a similar approach; the magazine at once conforms with and repudiates conventional sentimentalism.

“Self-Reliance” and Women: Critical Perspectives

Before any further literary analysis, I will explore how female self-reliance was conceived of by the American literary community of the 1840s and 50s. Margaret Fuller was widely known for insisting that the category of self-reliance was one that should be equally available to women. Her ideas paralleled Emerson’s model of self-reliance a great deal, but her particular vision was based upon a

profound intuition of divinity within the self. Such independence, she later asserted in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, was of preeminent importance for women, who needed to realize that they, as well as men, were ‘in themselves the possessors of...immortal souls’ and could escape the ‘precepts’ of ‘guardians’ that had ‘impeded’ their minds with ‘doubts’. Achieving ‘self-reliance’ or ‘self-dependence,’ Fuller affirmed, women would no longer ‘learn their rule from without’ but “unfold it from within.” (Gaul 99)

By outlining the current condition of society and the requisite legal and institutional changes needed to allow equal opportunities for women as their male counterparts had, Fuller actively rebelled against prevailing notions of female intellectual inferiority. Specifically, she argued that as long as women were expected to “obey” they could not develop the “organization both of body and mind” (56), a requisite for self-reliance.

Fuller was criticized by many, but perhaps most interesting of all are Sarah Hale’s comments regarding her work. Hale, who undoubtedly encouraged self-reliance, as later parts of this chapter will show, outwardly defended Fuller’s right to publish *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, but ultimately denied Fuller’s intellectual prowess – Fuller’s work was not “destined to hold a high place in female literature” (Mitchell 36). Upon closer examination though, there are close parallels between Fuller and Hale. For one, they both wrote prolifically, favoured better education for women, and edited influential American magazines (Kleinberg 72). Hale’s specific comments on female independence align her even more firmly with Fuller and self-reliance more broadly. Hale vehemently argued that every woman “should be qualified by some accomplishment which she may teach, or some art profession she can follow to support herself creditably, should the necessity occur” (Kleinberg 72). Alongside Hale and Fuller existed other well-known Transcendentalist female thinkers such as Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Caroline Healey Dall, and Ednah Dow Littlehale Cheney who, in their own ways, each took up the notion of self-

reliance. Peabody⁷⁹ was aligned with male Transcendentalists like Orestes Brownson and Theodore Parker because of a similar interest in social issues and a conviction that “we belong in and to a community” (Ronda 10). In short, as Bruce A. Ronda summarizes, Peabody “saw the world as a harmonious whole” (10) as most Transcendentalists did. Dall was also known for thinking of herself as a “sort of universal sister to her male contemporaries” (Deese 2). She was a Transcendentalist writer, lecturer and teacher and was deeply involved in the women’s suffragette movement and anti-slavery reform. Finally, Cheney was deeply attuned to questions of women’s roles and status in society. She was a visible feminist activist, lecturer, and educator from the 1840s on. Her definition of “thought in unmaterial form” is considered to be an example of the Transcendentalist understanding of a direct link between philosophical values and the expression of those values in one’s work (Wayne 45).

Many male Transcendentalists of the period had “complex” and sometimes even “contradictory” attitudes toward women (Kleinberg 74), particularly Emerson himself who argued that women should be educated and intellectually stimulated, but only in “passive non-competitive ways” (Kleinberg 74). Namely, he argued that they should not be creative in themselves, but should do all by inspiring man to do all (Kleinberg 74). Perhaps most famous of all anti-female self-reliance statements though is

⁷⁹ Peabody is perhaps most familiarly known for being the subject of Henry James’ caricature, Miss Birdseye, in *The Bostonians* (1886).

Nathaniel Hawthorne's⁸⁰ preface to *The Scarlet Letter* in which he ultimately prefers "true womanhood to real independence of mind and spirit" (Kleinberg 74). According to *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism* even Charles Gohdes' recent "privileged list" of Transcendental works does not include any Transcendentalist periodicals with an orientation to women's rights or concerns (366). Following in the footsteps of genteel biographers and historians of New England culture, Gohdes "gives short shrift to the many Transcendentalists who fought for women's suffrage" (366).

With regard to the applicability of Emersonian doctrine to women, recent feminist scholars have argued against Fuller's position that women should be self-reliant by claiming that "Self-Reliance" reflects "narcissism" and therefore have "identified this concept as evidence of the supposed irrelevance of Transcendentalism to the lives of nineteenth century women" (Wayne 100). Oliver Steinert-Lieschied makes a similar argument, claiming that "Emerson had primarily men in mind when presenting his concepts, as he always uses androcentric terms such as "men," "man," and "manhood" (71).⁸¹ Elana Charles' *Muse in Minerva: Principles of Margaret Fuller's Feminism Inherent in Emersonian Transcendentalism* explicitly states: "Emerson's "Self-Reliance" was directed mainly at males with the ability to attain this independent state of

⁸⁰ Hawthorne was not a Transcendentalist, but became friends with both Emerson and Thoreau. He joined Brook Farm in 1841, not because he agreed with their Transcendentalist experiment, but because he was seeking a possible home for himself and Transcendentalist Sophia Peabody. He thought he might save enough money to eventually marry Sophia by living there.

⁸¹ Yet, Steinert-Lieschied does admit that in theory, Emersonian doctrine is "quite universal" and "embraces the whole of humanity" (71) while concluding that ultimately, Emerson "nowhere explicitly [excludes] women" (71).

being, with the aim of re-shaping society internally via the influence of new consciousness” (1). Charles even takes pains to outline the various discrepancies between Emerson and Margaret Fuller, the main distinction being in terms of their comments about “society.” Emerson dislikes society in general because it hinders individualism (Charles 2), while Fuller dislikes not all of society, but specifically “gender-repressive obstructions” because they impede independence for both men and women (2).⁸²

In opposition to the idea that self-reliance is applicable only to men, we have support for the opening up of the category of self-reliance to women, which emanates from of course Fuller and ironically from Emerson himself. *Woman* positions men and women as “twin exponents of a divine thought” (5). The preface of the work clarifies Fuller’s use of the term “Man” by announcing:

By Man I mean both man and woman: these are the two halves of one thought. I lay no especial stress on the welfare of either. I believe that the development of the one cannot be effected without that of the other. My highest wish is that this truth should be distinctly and rationally apprehended, and the conditions of life and freedom recognized as the same for the daughters and the sons of time. (5)

⁸² Like Steinert-Lieschied though, Charles unexpectedly aligns Fuller with “self-reliance”: the “two viewpoints are quite compatible, Fuller’s feminist thought in many ways demonstrates the agreeability of Emersonian Transcendentalism with the then radical notion of gender equality” (2).

This connectedness and interchangeability of men and women is carried forth by Emerson in his 1871 “Natural History of Intellect” in which he writes:

The spiritual power of man is twofold, mind and heart, Intellect and morals, one respecting truth, the other will. One is the man, the other the woman in spiritual nature. One is power, the other is love. These elements always co-exist in every normal individual, but one predominates. (56)

George Kateb argues that in this particular quote Emerson tries to “efface the stark distinction between men and women and hence between conventional masculinity and conventional femininity” (125). In Emerson’s mind, everyone is “hermaphroditic” (Kateb 125), a word that captures the amalgamation of feminine and masculine characteristic of women who aspire to be part of the Transcendentalist movement.

This notion of a hermaphroditic individual is also evident in *Woman*. Fuller claims “males and females represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are perpetually passing into one another” (68). Yet, the hermaphroditic individual is perhaps no clearer than in Fern’s *Ruth Hall* – Ruth, the protagonist whose role criticizes the traditional assumption of a woman’s place in society, is both male and female. When Professor Finman performs the phrenological⁸³ exam on Ruth, he reveals a number of

⁸³ In criminology, phrenology is referred to as a “pseudoscience” primarily focused on interpreting the shape of one’s skull and the bumps on their head to determine if these physical attributes were linked with criminal behaviour (Siegel 9). Phrenologists believed specific areas of the brain were associated with various behaviours and emotions – in particular a “destructive center” just above the ear (Siegel 10).

characteristics which Barbara Maria Zaczek points out are “usually considered masculine” (147). Zaczek notes that

‘[Ruth] can plan well; can lay out work for others to advantage,’ she exhibits ‘a predominance of the reflective intellectual, and the power to comprehend ideas,’ she ‘remembers and understands what [she] reads, better than what [she] sees or hears.’ Prof. Finman concludes his exam by remarking to Ruth that ‘very much might be said with reference to the operations of your mind, for we seldom find the faculties so fully developed, or the powers so versatile as in your case.’ (147)

This exam presents what was considered scientific proof that Ruth is perfectly capable of exercising her mental faculties to the same extent that most men are.⁸⁴

Linda M. Grasso’s *The Artistry of Anger* also underscores the hermaphroditic nature of Ruth: “Fern creates a female protagonist who not only *feels* in true womanly fashion, but also one who *acts* on those feelings in both a masculine and feminine manner” (149). Nancy Walker confirms this hybrid nature of Ruth, claiming that she “inhabits both conventionally masculine and feminine arenas” (9). Lynn Mahoney’s *Elizabeth Stoddard and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Culture* also uses similar language, deeming the entire text as “unfeminine” (55). Ultimately, the co-mingling of feminine and masculine in each work produces the sentimental self-reliance that these authors use in their writing.

⁸⁴ Ruth is not singular in this case though because her daughter Nettie also proves to have this “versatile” mind. John Walter aptly nicknames Nettie “Ruth 2nd.”

The Popular Magazine and Sentimental Traditions of the 1840s and 50s

The cultural context of the 1840s and 50s was in constant flux as a result of an economic shift. This shift engendered a corresponding ideological shift; the “hearth and home [now] reflected a woman’s role” and the marketplace instead “reflected male prerogative and patriarchal concerns” (Clinton & Lunardini 21). A woman’s role became increasingly segregated and her inability to earn a consistent wage resulted in her devaluation (Clinton & Lunardini 21). According to Clinton, “the abstract division into gendered spheres had very serious consequences for American women” (21). As a result, in the antebellum period, females were increasingly subject to “accepted theories of feminine inferiority, which rejected distinct identities for women apart from those secured through marital bonds and even went so far as to deny that women were individuals at all” (Berg 3-4). Barbara Welter’s “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-60” famously envisions this “cult of domesticity”⁸⁵ as inclusive of four cardinal “virtues”: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Welter 44). Sentimental novels by Stowe, Cummins, and others

⁸⁵ The terms “cult of domesticity” and “cult of true womanhood” are often used interchangeably. While the majority of contemporary scholars privilege the term “cult of domesticity,” there are some like Susan Armitage, Shirley J. Yee and Venetria K. Patton who still revert to Welter’s original use (“cult of true womanhood”) of the term. I have elected to deploy the term “cult of domesticity” mainly to emphasize “domesticity” as a key facet of women’s behaviour during the nineteenth century. Welter herself underscores the significance of domesticity claiming, “[it] was among the virtues most prized by women’s magazines.” Scholars like Barbara J. MacHaffie (“domesticity was an essential feature of the ideal woman”) (159) and S.J. Kleinberg (domesticity was “the dominant paradigm”) (35) also highlight its importance. Charles Orser’s *Encyclopedia of Historic Archaeology* further demonstrates the significance of “domesticity,” listing other major “ideologies of domesticity” such as The Cult of Republican Motherhood, The Cult of Real Womanhood, The Cult of Idle Domesticity, and The Cult of Domestic Reform (607).

celebrated these ideals in their heroines. MacHaffie's *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition* cogently summarizes the mindset behind this ideal:

The male sphere was a competitive scene of brutal economic and intellectual struggle. In contrast, woman was to make the home a place of stability and calm, a refuge from the outside world. Her tasks were ones of nurturing and support. She was to comfort and cheer her husband, raise her children, and manage the housework, and care for the sick. What little time was left over could be devoted appropriately to home decorating, needlework, flower arranging, letter writing, and the reading of inspiring literature. (160)

During this time women were expected to internalize these “virtues” of femininity that were typically encouraged by men (ministers, editors, statesmen) (Clinton & Lunardini 3). This cult of domesticity entailed an ennoblement of motherhood and home management, thus further marking off the private sphere.

⁸⁶ Work became firmly aligned with the public, masculine sphere (Kleinberg 11). Clinton and Lunardini make clear the fate of women who subverted the cult of domesticity: these women were “shunned and ostracized for ‘deviant’ behaviour, such as using their own intellects and talents in contradiction of a socially decreed female inferiority” (3). Cathy Davidson's *No More Separate Spheres!: A Next Wave American Studies Reader* also provides a clear summary

⁸⁶ Barbara Berg's *The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism* outlines the “woman-belle ideal” which bears striking similarity to Welter's: this ideal has the same features of piety, submission, domesticity, and purity that Welter identified... as the Cult of True Womanhood” (Sklar 377). The signal difference comes about though in Berg's postulation that the woman-belle ideal was the exclusive construct of men – their intention being to dominate and control women: “Thwarted in efforts to dominate the changing national, economic, political and social scene and overwhelmed in attempts to alleviate urban problems, men became desperate to exercise some measure of control over their existences and environments. They finally found an outlet for these emotions through their domination of women” (72).

of the history of the separate spheres debate whilst problematizing the paradigm. She argues that in the 1960s, the ‘separate spheres’ metaphor was employed by major feminist historians as a tool for depicting the legal, institutional, occupational, and affective limitations placed on women (10). She further suggests that it was a generation of women historians who felt marginalized by the previous neglect of women’s history that actually used the ‘separate spheres’ metaphor to project their own sense of marginalization onto those women of the previous century.

Popular magazines during this era were largely concerned with representations of sentimental women. Perhaps most significant of all magazines strategically marketed toward females, though, was the popular *Godey’s* (1840-1878), which upon first glance seemingly conforms with the domestic/sentimental ideals, but upon closer examination proves to work in much the same covert manner as I argue Fanny Fern’s *Ruth Hall* does. In the magazine, discussions of women’s rights and employment were “couched within sentimental fiction and elaborate fashion plates” (Mankiller & Smith 352). In keeping with sentimental traditions of having “designs” upon their readers, the magazine featured stories that were always “moral and instructive” (Nash 185); women were taught repeatedly to conform and submit to domestic ideals, yet an undercurrent of Transcendentalism was ever-present. Regular sections of the magazine featured titles preoccupied with domestic concerns like: “A Splendid Steel Engraving”, “Dress (How to Adorn the Person)”, “Blunders in Behaviour Corrected”, “A Whisper to a Newly Married Pair”,

“The Art of Knitting Imitations of Natural Flowers”, and “Articles That Can Be Made for Presents or Fancy Fairs.”

Amidst some of the homely concerns of the magazine cited above existed an under-current of self-reliance. From 1837-78, the magazine was run by Sara Josepha Hale, the first female editor in the United States and “a true daughter of the republic...her chief interest lay in using the printed page as a forum to champion women’s rights” (Olian iii). Hale was always careful to strategically ensconce the message of self-reliance within a frame of fashion, beauty, and domesticity. For example, even in discussions of the latest French fashions, these articles were concerned with the “slavish” manner in which American women followed Paris, declaring openly that “French fashion did not answer any exigence in our own affairs” (Olian iii). With careful editing, Hale cleverly turned what might appear as frivolous concern over fashionable dress patterns into a treatise on self-reliance – a doctrine which advises individuals to resist conformity to previous models. Thus, in one article we are told: “Our engraving of the ‘Fashions’ ... is not given as a pattern for imitation but as a study for each reader to examine and decide how far this costume is appropriate to her own figure, face and circumstance” (Olian iii). In an 1840 edition of the magazine, Hale includes a discourse on the progress of a higher learning institution specifically for women, just below a column featuring fashion advice. Hale remained outspoken about things like tight-lacing and often offered modernized American versions of European fashions, claiming that they rendered women invalids and forced them to conform with notions of gentility

or propriety which she believed they must resist. In 1847, under Hale's direction, *Godey's* began a regular feature entitled "Health and Beauty," which focused on women's health and fashion reform, seemingly appropriate topics. Alison Piepmeier's *Out in Public: Configurations of Women's Bodies in Nineteenth Century America* notes that this was hardly a superficial column, but instead one that promoted freedom, movement and independence (40). These sections promoted a female body that was "active, vigorous, and capable" (40), unlike the submissive depiction of women characterized by sentimentalist models.

The editorial strategies deployed by *Godey's* contrasted significantly with those of the *Police Gazette*, a magazine that American historicist Howard Chudacoff establishes as primarily intended for working class male consumption and therefore decidedly anti-sentimental (193). In 1838, New York Secretary of State John Dix announced that while in England the ratio of male to female criminals was 5:1, in New York City it was 16:1, clearly favouring the "morals of the female sex" (Freedman 11). The makeup of the magazine's deviants clearly reflected this anomaly and depictions of female deviants were limited in early years of publication. Aldophe Quetlet's writings on the division of labour provide explanation for this phenomenon of lower rates of female crime/deviance by claiming that the "strict sexual division of labour in America kept women closer to the home than in Europe, and provided fewer opportunities for female crime" (qtd. in Freedman 11-12). New York state politician Samuel Young explains this notion further by claiming that in

the 1840s, women only accounted for 1/114th of New York state's criminal convictions (Freedman 12). The reason for this was explained:

‘partly by the reluctance to prosecute females, partly by their domestic life and habits, leaving them less exposed to temptation, and partly by the unavoidable inference that they are superior to men in moral honesty.’ (Freedman 11)

Statistics like these demonstrate the need for us to pay particular attention to female instances of deviance in the *Police Gazette*.

In the 1840s and 50s, the *Police Gazette* predominantly depicted women in a manner that conformed with sentimental/domestic conventions and therefore results in the expectation that women would be largely helpless. Countless stories featured helpless females who were the victims of heinous crimes like seduction, rape, or murder. Numerous accounts from the first year of publication entitled simply “Rapes” (October 18, 1845, October 25, 1845, November 8, 1845) or “Seduction, Rape, &c” (October 11, 1845) provide a list of men accused and found guilty of rape and the particular ways in which they carried out their deviant acts. In later years, titles become more specific and more space was devoted to individual stories with titles like “Investigation of the Singular Case of Rape on Susan Ann Willis” (March 13, 1847) and “Seduction of A School Girl by A Married Man” (January 25, 1851). Cases of murders of women are treated similarly; early headlines entitled “murders” (January 3, 1846, January 31, 1846, December 19, 1846, May 15, 1847) group murderers together with specific details as to how each murder was executed. Again, headlines in later editions are slightly more specific: “A Husband in a

Saturnalia of Murders: He Slays His Own Wife and Mother” (February 2, 1867), “A Maniac Murders His Wife” (November 13, 1886) and finally “Scorned Suitor After Five Years Murders Two” (December 7, 1901). A January 1851 column retells the story of Mrs. Diana Eliza Burlew, who was forced to file charges against her husband Mr. Richard Burlew for abandonment. Mrs. Burlew and her 4 children were “ejected” from the house of the accused without any resources some two years prior. All these articles reinforced the idea of the women as having no choice and highlighted them as examples of powerlessness.

Alongside female victims, deviant women are also depicted in keeping with the sentimental tradition – many of them are portrayed sympathetically as their “deviance” is implied to have “domestic” motivations. As outlined in Chapter 1, according to prevailing antebellum discourses, male deviants were perceived to have made careful calculations as to whether or not the potential penalty would outweigh the eventual pleasure. Deviance was then a very rational choice, not one predicated upon emotions. Female deviants, on the other hand, were motivated by sentimental attachments. For example, an article from the 1850s⁸⁷ claims that Mary Dempsey, stole food for her family from John Kudson’s grocery store because she “could not procure [food] for she had been out of work on account of sickness.” Another article from January 11, 1851 tells of the maternal emotion of a woman who stole a baby from a couple:

⁸⁷ Exact date not known due to filing error at New York Public Library.

“when she saw him with some persons, and thinking that the child did not belong to them, she took him from them.”

Even some of the stories featuring violent female characters appear to have domestic inclinations.⁸⁸ The first is the story of Mrs. Philbrook, who assaults a male by “giving the rascal a not very slow pull back upon the floor, she seized him by the throat and there held him securely.” In the second, the “Burglars and the Heroic Daughter” (December 21, 1850), a daughter seizes “a chair, rushe[s] upon the assassin, dealing him several blows on the head and arms.” While both women seemingly do not conform with the sentimental idea of the passive, submissive female, their violent actions are explained in terms of domestic preservation – whether this be repudiating assaults against their home, family, or potentially their purity.⁸⁹

Conversely, the women who did not conform with the ideal of submission espoused by the cult of domesticity were instead ostracized from the community, particularly those so-called “fallen women.” For example, a story about Amelia Switzer, alias Klutz, a woman suspected to be the mistress of Mr. Morgan, reveals that Switzer is apprehended and arrested twice by the police and subject to multiple and thorough investigations. Her personal trunk was

⁸⁸ There are some anomalies here. A notable example is a lengthy story from January 25, 1851 entitled “Extraordinary Robbery” which details the exploits of Sarah Burke, Sophia Dilbury, Jane Finnerty and Eliza Jones. These women together carried out the brutal murder of Mary Ann Foster Simmons. The article reads: “one of them immediately seized her, and threw her upon the bed. She screamed, when one of them knelt upon her head and chest, holding her hand over her nose and mouth until she was nearly suffocated.”

⁸⁹ Many of these stories follow the same format so I have selected here two representative samples.

confiscated and its contents were described by the *Police Gazette* for its readers as having had “several hundred letters” from men in cities “of the Union as well as Europe” (October 18, 1845) accompanied by the finest of silk dresses totaling about \$1000. Short snippets like the following forever tarnished women’s names making it impossible for them to lead respectable lives: “Mary Ketley, Chadwick Street charged with having had three men, one of whom was drunk in her house 25 minutes past 12 on Saturday night” (November 1, 1845).

Unlike the early years of publication, Shrock’s *The Gilded Age* suggests that in later years of publication (after Fox),⁹⁰ women were actually “constructed as more capable of taking care of themselves than was typical in middle class literature” (175) and therefore in opposition with the cult of domesticity. Between 1879 and 1906, approximately 90% of the covers of the *Police Gazette* featured women, mostly white, who were engaged in some kind of “unwomanly activity” (Patterson 49). The masculinity of these types of women prevented them from gaining acceptance in the feminine realm. While the magazine primarily featured women who were scantily clad, these were often women who “did things typically reserved for men” (175). Women were often capable of not only extreme violence, but also other feats which “directly contradicted middle class notions of feminine weakness and innate morality” (177). For example, Miss Lulu Scott embarks on a pleasant ride down an oceanic road when suddenly a set of buggies comes toward her and her male companion. While the male “[loses] all presence of mind,” it is Lulu who takes

command of the situation and is able to save herself with her expert horse riding skills, something typically reserved for men. Because of her courageousness, Lulu is able to save herself, but sadly her companion perishes from a swift fall to the ground (October 23, 1886). There is also an article entitled “Mexico’s Woman Bandit: How She Murdered Fellow-Passengers and Held Wealthy Men for Ransom” (July 19, 1884) which features a woman who does precisely what the title suggests. Finally, perhaps the most famous of all is Belle Gordon, the champion Lady Bag Puncher (March 28, 1903), who has “beaten many professional [male] boxers who claim to be expert bag punchers.” Strong females like these, especially Belle Gordon, were some of the *Police Gazette’s* most colorful characters.

Disrupting the Sentimental in Ruth Hall

Ruth Hall is an interesting character because she is hermaphroditic – at once rational (more masculine) and sentimental (female), as I will show later. Ruth undermines the cult of domesticity and sentimental tropes, a move which distances her from cultural notions of femininity but aligns her more with what some might consider a more masculine sphere of Transcendentalist self-reliance. This move away from sentimentalism comes from Fern’s refutation of traditional sentimental literary tropes. In the novel’s preface, Fern makes clear her refusal to undertake the rules for writing: “I am aware that [the story] is entirely at variance with all set rules for novel-writing” (1). For a woman writer

of that time, these rules would have included an adherence to sentimental tropes.

During the nineteenth century, marriage was presented as the “culmination of nineteenth century womanhood...marriage was both a private and public concern. It provided a woman with happiness, respectability, and usefulness to society” (Wegener 54). Signe O. Wegener claims that both explicitly and implicitly women’s literature during the period extolled the “physical and spiritual benefits of matrimony” (54) – something which many might argue is still the case today. Even magazines like *Godey’s* were involved in this project; between the 1830s and 50s there was a significant presence of articles on topics such as “Marriage,” “Hints on Marriage,” and “Cursory Remarks on a Wife” (Wegener 56). Yet, *Ruth Hall* maintains that women can still have stable lives even *without* marriage. Although Ruth is essentially at a complete loss once her husband dies, she manages to construct a “different” or new model for herself – one of self-reliance. Susan Belasco’s “Introduction” to the story notes: “the novel concludes not with a romance, marriage, and the promise of a conventional domestic life, but with Ruth in possession of her fatherless children, a successful career as a journalist, a comfortable income and a formidable bank account” (xxxvii). Kathy Whitson concurs, claiming that in a distinct reversal of nineteenth century formula fiction, the story ends with “its heroine neither on the altar nor beside the hearth” (90). Ruth in many ways stands in opposition to other heroines of the period. The description of these characters often resembles that of a man or boy, perhaps in an attempt to

indicate their independence. For example, E.D.E.N. Southworth's *Hidden Hand* (1859) features the heroine Capitola, who is described by a character named Old Hurricane as

A handsome boy, too, notwithstanding the deplorable state of his wardrobe. Thick, clustering curls of jet black hair fell in tangled disorder around a forehead broad, white, and smooth as that of a girl; slender and quaintly-arched black eyebrows played above a pair of mischievous, dark grey eyes, that sparkled beneath the shade of long, thick, black lashes; a little turned up nose, and red, pouting lips, completed the character of a countenance full of fun, frolic, spirit and courage. (33)

Capitola, as Ruth, engages in many masculine oriented behaviours – she roams the countryside on horseback seeking adventure, battles with bandit Black Donald and his gang and even rescues an imprisoned maiden. Yet, even this heroine, who Warren describes as “the most aggressively independent heroine of all these novels” (xxiii), eventually marries at the end. Thus, despite everything, what wins out in the end is Capitola's need for a man. In opposition to heroines like Capitola, Ruth is never described as looking manly or boyish. According to Susan K. Harris, Fern employs “stylistic codes to identify [her] characters with appropriate feminine virtues” (Walker 114). For example, Harris points out that associations between Ruth and things like piety, flowers, birds, and sunlight are intended to signal her femininity (114). Thus, the critic remarks that the novel opens with Ruth focusing intently upon the sound of the church clock's bells. Similarly, at the very end of the story Ruth is envisioned alongside a “little bird... [who] trilled forth a song as sweet and clear as the lark's at heaven's own blessed gate” (272)

Most sentimental novels underscore the importance of religious transformation to the tale: “religious conversion [is] the necessary precondition for sweeping social change” (Tompkins 132). Tompkins uses Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) as the ultimate example of this:

The novel is packed with references to the four last things – Heaven, Hell, Death, and Judgment – references which remind the reader constantly that historical events can only be seen for what they are in the light of eternal truths. When St. Clare stands over the grave of little Eva, unable to realize ‘that it was his Eva that they were hiding from his sight,’ Stowe interjects, ‘Nor was it! – not Eva, but only the frail seed of that bright, immortal form with which she shall yet come forth, in the day of the Lord Jesus!’ And when Legree expresses satisfaction that Tom is dead, she turns to him and says: ‘Yes, Legree, but who shall shut up that voice in thy soul? That soul, past repentance, past prayer, past hope, in whom the fire that never shall be quenched is already burning!’ (451)

In contrast with other sentimental novels, the moment of conversion in *Ruth Hall* is removed from religion but instead becomes a “professional and vocational epiphany” (Crane 123): “Ruth leaped to her feet. ‘Sooner than he dreams of, too. I *can* do it, I *feel* it, I *will* do it... but there will be a desperate struggle first...[but] it shall be *done*. They shall be proud of their mother’” (Fern 147). The passage ends with Ruth instructing her daughter Katy that “when you are a woman you shall remember this day, my pet” (147). This marks the day on which Ruth decides to become a writer.

As Zaczek notes, unlike other typical sentimental heroines, Ruth “eliminates completely love letters, or any other forms of sentimental communication” (143). When Mr. Lescom gives “Floy” (Ruth) a letter – one from “another lover, I suppose” (183), instead of reading it, Ruth initially

“thrust it unread into her apron pocket. She was thinking of her book, and many other things of far more interest to her than lovers, if lovers the writers were” (183). As Zaczek points out here, Ruth’s reaction openly “contradicts the tenets of the sentimental novel” (144). Zaczek even compares her with Susanna Rowson’s protagonist in *Charlotte Temple* (1791) where on a similar occasion, the narrator of that story writes of Charlotte “drawing the letter from her pocket while a gentle suffusion of vermillion tinged her neck and face” (29). Ruth, on the other hand, consistently repudiates all love letters or those intended to appeal specifically to the emotions/sentiments. Fern writes of a letter she receives from a would-be suitor: “It was an offer of marriage from a widower. He had read an article of hers on ‘Step-Mothers,’ and was “very sure that a woman with such views could not fail to make a good mother for his children” (233) to which Ruth replies “Oh pshaw!” (233) and tells Nettie she can “make anything you like of it, pussy; it is of no value to me” (233). In fact, early on, Ruth makes her aversion to matters of the heart obvious – “in the all-absorbing love affairs which were constantly going on between the young ladies of Madame Moreau’s school and their respective admirers, Ruth took no interest” (6).

Perhaps Fern’s most egregious disruption of the sentimental comes in her ascription of a sexual desire to both Harry’s mother and Ruth herself. We see a form of sexualized jealousy on the part of Ruth’s mother-in-law when she laments (after snooping through Ruth’s bureau drawers): “What is the use of all those ruffles on her under-clothes, I’d like to know? Who’s going to wash and

iron them?” (10). Ruth’s own sexual desire is also implicit in Fern’s descriptions of her feelings toward her newfound freedom: “how odd to see those razors lying on *her* toilet table! then that saucy looking smoking-cap, those slippers and that dressing-gown, those fancy neckties, too, and vests and coats, in unrebuked proximity to her muslins, laces, silks and de laines” (11). These two examples speak volumes since they both acknowledge a female sexual desire which typically remains unspoken in sentimental fiction (Walker 123).

In distancing herself from sentimental modes of communication, Ruth has positioned herself as eminently rational or masculine. However, a closer examination of the novel reveals that in many ways, Ruth Hall is actually rather sentimental. Ruth engages in a hermaphroditic form of deviance then, one that is both masculine (repudiates sentimentalism) and feminine (adheres to sentimentalism). Warren perhaps summarizes it best: on the one hand Fern’s work is “satirical, outspoken, polemical – even outrageous” (ix). Yet, on the other hand, Fern was more than capable of sentimental writing. Warren argues that until recent years, most critics characterized Fanny Fern as “nothing more than a tear-drenched sentimentalist” (ix). Warren cites *Fern Leaves From Fanny’s Portfolio* (1853) (one of her first books which featured a number of her columns) as the culprit since it did contain a large number of her sentimental writings. However, Warren does not blame Fern’s body of work entirely; most twentieth century critics equated the “popular nineteenth century American woman writer” with “sentimental nonentity” (x) and therefore dismissed Fern as

the “grandmother of all sob sisters” (x). Fred Lewis Pattee’s *The Feminine Fifties* was one of the main proponents of this view. Warren accuses him of not having read beyond the first part of *Fern Leaves* since he labels Fern as the “most tearful and convulsingly ‘female’ moralizer of the period” (x).

In many ways, the beginning of *Ruth Hall* can be described as sentimental and therefore sets up the reader’s expectations of this as a sentimental piece of work. The text does indeed have designs upon the reader, the sort that are stereotypically expected of sentimental fiction. According to Thomas Nelson Baker, the text “[implores] its readers to turn right feeling into right action on a stage beyond the purely personal” (169). More specifically, Sacvan Bercovitch argues that “the first half of *Ruth Hall* might be described as sentimental” (99). We only have to look at the marriage between Ruth and Harry – which is a loving one certainly – to see this. Ruth places her husband above all, even her children. When the doctor reminds her of her duty to her children, she promptly replies, “my *husband* has the *first* claim” (60). Regardless of hunger, thirst or weariness, Ruth remains at his bedside – “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (60).

Modern-Day Instantiations of Sentimental Self-Reliance

Although the era of sentimentalism has long passed, its undercurrents are still present in popular American culture. In fact, the same tension between resisting conventions of sentimental tropes still exists. Perhaps the best

modern-day example of the hermaphroditic individual – one that is both self-reliant *and* sentimental would be Oprah Winfrey.⁹¹ In this sense, Oprah is like a modern-day instantiation of Ruth Hall. As Diana Kendall observes: “by making herself and her struggles central to her message, [Winfrey] taps deeply in the American psyche and its desire for self-reliance” (41). Kendall continues that for today’s generation “Winfrey has become one of the most influential spiritual leaders in America by seeking to empower others” (41-42), a sentiment that I argue was equally applicable to Margaret Fuller and Fanny Fern during the nineteenth century. According to Kendall, Oprah’s gospel includes the belief that people are responsible for their own destinies (42) – a Transcendental and Christian idea in itself. In both the doctrines of Oprah and self-reliance, we have a distinct envisioning of the self as the final and ultimate word. George B. Davis’ *Oprah Theology* summarizes this best: “In essence, Oprah’s “What I know For Sure” and Emerson’s “Trust Thyself” philosophies reflect the same philosophical perspective: as self-knowledge increases, the individual becomes more self-reliant which supposedly leads to authentic truth” (64).

Oprah’s connection to Emerson is further cemented in the very language that she consciously deploys. *O Magazine* features a monthly column entitled “What I know for Sure”⁹² whose February 2003 edition claims “Nothing can

⁹¹ Oprah Gail Winfrey (born January 29, 1954) is an American media proprietor, talk show host, actress, producer, and philanthropist. She is best known for her multi-award-winning talk show *The Oprah Winfrey Show* which was the highest-rated program of its kind in history.

⁹² Title was inspired by Oprah’s first column where she wrote: “we are all the causes of our own effects... that’s why I’ll never stop asking the question, “What do you know for sure”

bring you peace but yourself” – a direct quotation from the penultimate line of Emerson’s “Self-Reliance” (137). In the same issue, she also writes, “you, alone, make a whole person” – an idea espoused directly by Emerson who encourages his disciples to find self-fulfillment within themselves only. Davis makes one final connection between Emerson and Oprah. Emerson in 1841 writes, “To Believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men – that is genius” (Davis 121) is directly invoked by a March 2002 “What I Know for Sure” column of *O* where Oprah writes:

What I know for sure is that if you’re looking for your happily-ever-after in the arms and eyes of another person, you will always be disappointed. Even in the most mature spiritual partnership, a mate is only there to give you back yourself. In the end, you’re the only person who can satisfy the deepest craving that every one of us shares – the need to feel significant. (63-4)

In April 2011, in preparation for her final show, Oprah compiled a definitive list of “The Top 20 Things Oprah Knows for Sure.” Out of the 20 items listed, at least three bear explicit reference to Emersonian doctrine. Number two on Oprah’s list reads “You define your own life. Don’t let other people write your script,” a distinct reminder of Emerson’s dictum that “What I must do, is all that concerns me, not what the people think” (123). Number ten reads “If you make a choice that goes against what everyone else thinks, the world will not fall apart” again invoking Emerson’s ideas on non-conformity: “For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a sour face...the sour faces of the multitude,

like their sweet faces, have no deep cause, but are put on and off as the wind blows” (124). Finally, when Oprah writes “Trust your instincts. Intuition doesn’t lie,” we immediately recall “Trust thyself, every heart vibrates to that iron string” (121).

If Oprah is self-reliant, she is equally sentimental. Many critics underscore her sentimentalism as being particularly obvious through her book club selections. The focus of her book club then, as now, remains oriented toward her viewers’ “personal, rather than political responses to the texts they’ve read” (McHenry 311). Further, Oprah explicitly invokes the sentimental when she reveals to her audience that she selected only those works “I have been emotionally moved by” (McHenry 311). As McHenry stipulates, “[this] desire to hear from her audience how the books she has assigned affected them and her promise that they will change her viewers’ lives underscores the extent to which the book club is in keeping with the emphasis on personal revelation and sentimental response that is at the heart of the show format” (311).

In *The Suffering Will Not Be Televised: African American Women and Sentimental Political Storytelling* Rebecca Wanzo describes Winfrey as one of the best examples of American sentimental politics mainly because of her innate ability to tell those stories which “homogenize suffering as a means of identification among dissimilar people” (79). Wanzo continues by providing an in-depth analysis of Oprah as a “sentimental subject.” Wanzo claims Oprah is consistently the object of her texts whether it be on her talk show, *The Oprah*

Winfrey Show, or the cover of her *O Magazine*. Oprah is simultaneously the principal object for her audience and the agent who models sympathetic identification for her viewers and readers (Wanzo 83). As Wanzo points out, on her television show Oprah is almost always supposed to be more interesting than the people she interviews since the show is typically about Oprah's history and her personal identification with each guest (85). Oprah "collapses the divide between 'us' and 'them' by translating the various levels of her subjected status into the means by which she can identify with anyone" (86).

In this chapter, what some critics refer to as being hermaphroditic, I am categorizing as sentimental self-reliance. This term is useful to the study of the American culture of deviance because it underscores the internal antagonisms of women's lives. This strategy of sentimental self-reliance renders Ruth Hall's deviance palatable because of Fern's tactic of abiding by and resisting sentimental tropes. Ruth is thus lauded, but other women who do not have access to Fern's tactics, like those in the *Police Gazette*, are instead ostracized.

Chapter 5: Re-inscribing the `Cult of Domesticity`: Nathaniel Hawthorne`s "Unwomanly" Women

Hawthorne is well known for his fascination with women who challenge the conventions of femininity. This chapter is concerned with the deviant actions of main characters Hester and Zenobia in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) respectively. Whereas in previous chapters my analysis of deviance has crossed the cultural hierarchy, here I want to focus exclusively on a case study of an author of some of the most well-known deviant women in American literature.

At a rudimentary level, Hester and Zenobia are quite similar; they both grew up without their mother`s guidance and are both romantic heroines. We can also point out that both women are provocatively self-reliant, challenge the acceptable norms, and are initially shunned. However, the signal difference between the two is that one is literally punished while the other is recuperated back in the American family. This disparity stems from the women`s willingness (or unwillingness) to embrace the maternal role. While Hester openly announces and claims her role as mother (and therefore acts in keeping with models for "feminine" conduct), Zenobia`s inability/refusal to do so poses a considerable threat to American beliefs of the time. As this chapter will demonstrate, we can use functionalism to understand how Hawthorne uses deviance to highlight how society is unified against those women who threaten group solidarity with their "unfeminine" or "unwomanly" ways. A functionalist

interrogation of these two novels is useful in that it reveals an inherent contradiction within American society; notions of Emersonian self-reliance are fundamentally at odds with notions of femininity.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, functionalism is a productive theory for this dissertation since it regards deviance as a positive component in society. Jon Shepard, though, points out that this is not typically how deviance is conceived: “[i]t is easy to think of deviance as having [instead] negative social consequences. It is harder to imagine the benefits of deviance” (178). Indeed, the negative consequences of deviance come easily to mind. First, it erodes trust. As Shepard notes, “a society characterized by widespread suspicion and distrust cannot function smoothly” (179). He cites the growing instances of rape in the United States – one fourth of college women report being victims of rape. Since perpetrators are typically known to the victim, this has led to an increased female distrust of men and barriers to normal dating relationships (179). Secondly, unpunished deviance prompts others to engage in non-conformity – “deviance stimulates more deviance” (179). For example, Shepard claims that if bus drivers consistently pass people waiting for the bus, passengers may retaliate by throwing rocks at the bus (179). Or, if parents neglect their children, these children might turn to delinquency of their own (179). Finally, and perhaps most self-explanatory is that deviant behaviour can be expensive since it diverts resources, both human and monetary (179). Police might have to spend more time dealing with wayward bus drivers and irate passengers than actually focusing on more serious tasks (179).

On the other hand, and perhaps more convincingly, as *Deviant Behaviour* elucidates, functionalist theories focus on the “purpose, usefulness, or contribution that a given social phenomenon makes to the social order” (Thio & Taylor 56)—that is, on the positive impact deviance has on society. These theorists contend that patterns in society (even things like deviance) exist because they serve some type of useful purpose and ultimately contribute to the survival of society somehow (Thio 56). Kendall outlines three significant functions⁹³ of deviance, each of which is applicable to a chapter of my dissertation. The first, and perhaps most commonly recognized function, is the clarification of rules: “by punishing deviant behaviour, society reaffirms its commitment to the rules and clarifies their meaning” (Kendall, *Sociology* 184). The chapters on the *National Police Gazette* and Fanny Fern’s *Ruth Hall* clearly reinforce/confirm this function by demarcating the parameters within which acceptable behaviours lie. In the real world, we might think of those situations where children are taken into custody by child services because of neglect. Outwardly situations like these send a clear message to both parents and children about appropriate behaviour (Shepard 179). The second positive function of deviance is the promotion of social change – “deviants may violate norms in order to get them changed” (Kendall 184). Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience” and Douglass’ *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

⁹³ Emile Durkheim too provides a similar list of 4 major functions of deviance: 1) it affirms cultural values and norms 2) it clarifies moral boundaries 3) it promotes social unity 4) it encourages social change (Palispis 216). I have elected to use Kendall’s list because it is generally agreed upon by contemporary sociologists in the field (184). Kendall combines functions 1 and 2 of Durkheim’s original list to produce a more contemporary version.

both perform this function as each text has the ultimate goal of engendering specific systemic changes. We might also make reference back to the suffragette movement in the early 1900s, which helped bring to women the right to vote (Shepard 179). The final function, and the one discussed in this chapter, is the unification of a group: “when deviant behaviour is seen as a threat to group solidarity and people unite in opposition to that behaviour, their loyalties to society are reinforced” (Kendall 184).⁹⁴ This immediately calls forth the image of the “throng” of men and women “assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes” (45) at the beginning of *The Scarlet Letter*. The very aura surrounding the scene suggests conformity:

There was very much the same solemnity of demeanour on the part of the spectators; as befitted a people amongst whom religion and law were almost identical, and in whose character both were so thoroughly interfused, that the mildest and the severest acts of public discipline were alike made venerable and awful. (47)

Even *The Blithedale Romance* takes place at the utopian community of Blithedale⁹⁵ - a place where the Transcendentalists could live as they desired, away from the derision of the dominant society. As functionalists argue, this

⁹⁴ Interestingly, Humphrey and Schmallegger add two other more modern functions of deviance claiming that it increases employment – “societies around the world invest a significant amount of their financial resources and social capital in attempting to control and treat their deviant members” (19). They also contend it encourages the formation of an identity – “involvement in various forms of deviance provides a sense of identity, albeit a negative identity, to persons who are unable to gain status or recognition in legitimate ways” (17).

⁹⁵ In the novel’s Preface, Hawthorne admits “many readers will probably suspect a faint and not very faithful shadowing of BROOK FARM, in Roxbury... the author does not wish to deny, that he had this Community in his mind, and that (having had the good fortune, for a time, to be personally connected with it) he has occasionally availed himself of his actual reminiscences, in the hope of giving a more lifelike tint to the fancy-sketch in the following pages” (3).

function of deviance reminds people of something they value and often strengthens the community's commitment to that value (Shepard 179). For example, exposing disloyal government spies who sell secrets to other nations often intensifies feelings of patriotism (Shepard 179).

Hawthorne's Transcendentalist Inclinations

The Emersonian self-reliance of Hester and Zenobia has two important functions in Hawthorne's work: it at once reinforces the way in which Transcendentalist tenets were ingrained into the American ethos, but also underscores the incompatibility of self-reliance with true womanhood and ideals of motherhood. A functionalist interrogation enables us to appreciate how the deviance of these two women reinscribes the dominant patriarchal ideology regarding a woman's role while uniting the community in opposition against women who do not abide by the socially prescribed rules.

Hester conducts herself in accordance with the American pioneer spirit and also has ties to Spiritualism (linked with Transcendentalism) while Zenobia shares obvious parallels with Margaret Fuller.⁹⁶ These connections are particularly interesting since Hawthorne's own relationship with the Transcendentalists was so fraught with contradictions. On the surface, he was "critical" of Transcendentalism (Wayne 14). While he did live at Brook Farm,

⁹⁶ Emerson's own comments in his journal suggest that he felt Hawthorne had been insensitive in using Margaret Fuller as the model for Zenobia because he felt it was a "slur upon Margaret's generous character and mental abilities" (Martin 21).

he did not move there for any lofty Transcendental purposes. He simply thought it would be a place where he would be able to write: instead, he found himself consumed by agricultural labour (Wayne 140). His wife (Sophia Peabody) and sister-in-law (Elizabeth Palmer Peabody) were very active in the Transcendentalist scene, but Hawthorne “remained aloof from many of the social and cultural interactions that defined the Transcendentalist community throughout the 1840s” (Wayne 140). John Stephen Martin’s *The Scarlet Letter: A Romance* outlines a list of Hawthorne’s objections to the movement: Echoing Orestes Brownson’s essay on “Transcendentalism”, Hawthorne disdained the “apparent self-validation of ideas and the misappropriation of religious terms to the ‘new age’ secularity” (20). On a personal note, he felt that the Transcendentalists’ behaviour undermined their ideas – “their intellectual behaviour barely masked an unacknowledged core of instinctive and sexual forces” (20). In his private notebook, Hawthorne recorded observations regarding the constant flirtations between Emerson and Fuller which prompted him to inquire if the Transcendentalists were truly aware of what was motivating them (21). And finally, he truthfully found life at Brook Farm too intense because the conversations were usually overly stimulating and required a special vocabulary” (21).

Despite such public objections, though, Wayne argues that “[Hawthorne’s] personal associations with the Transcendentalists meant that he was both closely influenced by and himself influenced the mid-nineteenth century movement (140). He had strong friendships with his neighbour,

Emerson, and was good friends with William Ellery Channing, Henry David Thoreau and Margaret Fuller. Wayne even highlights the fact that though he was not officially a Transcendentalist, “his novels and short stories engage a range of Transcendentalist philosophical and social themes, and many of his characters were drawn from his Transcendentalist acquaintances” (140). She claims that the most striking similarity he bore to the Transcendentalists was that he tended to look into the “interior life for clues about the outward life” just as they did (141). Lawrence Buell also concurs with Wayne, announcing that “Hawthorne was not as detached from the Transcendentalist circle as he liked to make himself out to be” (429). In fact, Hawthorne applauded the Transcendentalists for their aesthetic devices which enabled them to free themselves from the prescriptions of the British and European models and practices, something he himself endeavoured to do.

Hawthorne made a concerted effort to live a life of “self-reliant masculinity” (a very Transcendentalist endeavor): “committed to the rising capitalist and democratic order, Hawthorne pledged his allegiance to self-reliance and manly self-making; but he was uncannily attuned to the unmaking of such manliness and to the injustices that it systematically inflicted on women” (Millington 64). In this chapter I am concerned with the ways in which Hawthorne has created these women to re-affirm mainstream values. At the same time though, we cannot deny that, although punished, Hawthorne really does *like* the two female characters: we have characters like Hester Prynne and Zenobia who are both “condemned for violating their womanly

‘nature,’ but are still among the writer’s most powerfully realized and enduring creations”

(Millington 74).

Hester Prynne: The Self-Reliant Deviant Woman

Before interrogating the incompatibilities between femininity and self-reliance, we must first examine the particular nature of Hester and Zenobia’s deviance and the specific functions it has within the society. Lucy Pollard-Gott suggests that Hester “displays the self-reliance, freedom of thought, and active courage that typifies the American pioneer” (294). Harold Bloom also announces that “Hester is, in many ways the American Eve, the Emersonian vision that atones for our lack of any ideal representation of the American Adam” (9). Bloom adds that her “self-reliance is her authentic religion, and it enables her to survive the outrages of societal ostracism and erotic repression” (9). Linda Fondrk cites a particular description of Hester from *The Scarlet Letter* which demonstrates her self-reliant character:

Hester Prynne, with a mind of native courage and activity, and for so long a period not merely estranged, but outlawed, from society, had habituated herself to such latitude of speculation as was altogether foreign to the clergyman. She had wandered, without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness; as vast, as intricate and shadowy, as the untamed forest, amid the gloom of which they were now holding a colloquy that was to decide their fate. Her intellect and heart had their home, as it were, in desert places, where she roamed as freely as the wild Indian in his woods. For years past she had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions,

and whatever priests or legislators had established; criticizing all...
(233)

Fondrk traces the correlation between this passage and Emerson`s dictum in “Self-Reliance” that “It is only as a man puts off from himself all the external support and stands alone that I see him to be strong and to prevail. He is weaker by every recruit to his banner” (136). Finally, we might also look to Nina Baym who suggested that by end of the novel, “Hester has become altogether self-reliant” (80) and uses this theory to explain why she is no longer sexually attractive to men.

Sacvan Bercovitch is the dissenting voice with regard to Hester`s self-reliance. In opposition to other critics, *The Office of the Scarlet Letter* argues that by the end, Hester can no longer be conceived of as a self-reliant figure - “Hester abandons the high, sustained self-reliance by which we have come to identify her... choosing for no clear reason to abandon her heroic independence and acquiesce to the A after all” (1). Carolyn R. Maibor`s *Labor Pains: Emerson, Hawthorne, and Alcott on Work and the Woman Question* complicates Bercovitch`s statement by pointing out that perhaps the critic is not as convinced about Hester`s self-reliance as he initially appears. In his chapter “The Red Badge of Compromise”, he admits via footnote that “Hester retains her old and rebellious ways” (79) therefore suggesting that her transformation (from self-reliant to non self-reliant) is perhaps not as final as one might anticipate.

I believe three well-known scenes in the text beautifully illustrate the specific nuances of Hester's self-reliance. In the scene at the beginning of the story where Hester emerges from the prison to take her place upon the scaffold, we are told of the "new life" that awaits her (55), alluding to the fact that the old conceptions of herself no longer fit with the new ones. The rough form of free indirect discourse used here renders this idea in such a way that we feel as though Hester herself is alluding to this, instead of Hawthorne. In this scene, the narrator speaks in the third person, but simultaneously reveals Hester's private thoughts:

Lastly, in lieu of these shifting scenes, came back the rude market-place of the Puritan settlement with all the townspeople assembled and leveling their stern regards at Hester Prynne – yes, at herself – who stood on the scaffold... Could it be true? She clutched the child so fiercely to her breast, that it sent forth a cry; she turned her eyes downward at the scarlet letter, and even touched it with her finger, to assure herself that the infant and the shame were real. (55)

This instinctual recourse to Pearl represents the importance of her acknowledging her sin. In so doing, she self-reliantly distances herself from the ideals and rules of the Puritan society and is attempting to forge a new identity for herself. Her "haughty" defiance of the crowd gathered in front of the prison (50) further reinforces this image.

Second, the notion of self-reliance is also particularly present during the meeting between Hester and Dimmesdale in the forest. When she blatantly reminds Dimmesdale of their sin - "what we did had a consecration of its own" (170) – according to Wendy Piper, she is:

embodying what will become Emerson's doctrine of American self-reliance and the optimism of the Transcendentalist movement, in general. [Hawthorne] expresses her belief in the potential divinity of the individual and in the ability to reconstruct the self and society anew. (51)

Her urging of Dimmesdale to "begin all anew!...Exchange this false life of thine for a true one. Be, if thy spirit summon thee to such a mission, the teacher and apostle of the red men...Give up this name Arthur Dimmesdale, and make thyself another, and a high one, such as thou canst wear without fear or shame" (172) reflects exactly the type of self-making, newness and spontaneity that Emerson preaches in "Self-Reliance."

Finally, Hester's ultimate act of self-reliance, though perhaps undermined,⁹⁷ comes when she casts the A off and in so doing casts aside the strict rules imposed upon her by the Puritan society. Hawthorne describes in detail the sense of freedom and independence Hester feels without the A: "The stigma gone, Hester heaved a long, deep sigh, in which the burden of shame and anguish departed from her spirit. O exquisite relief!" (176). I argue, though some critics might disagree, that Hester Prynne is an eminently self-reliant character.

Hester's self-reliance and Hawthorne's continuous efforts to reiterate these self-reliant activities throughout the text have significant functionalist implications. She is at once a social outsider, but more importantly, her actions highlight a particular inconsistency within American society. Hester's deviance

⁹⁷ Though she initially casts the A aside, Pearl's strong reaction forces her to take up the letter again and re-fasten it to her bosom (184).

is the self-reliant kind that does not typically belong to a woman. We realize then that it is only when this type of deviance is enacted by, say, vagrants in the *Police Gazette* or women that it becomes problematic or unusual for Americans.

Hester's Spiritualism

Hester's relationship with Spiritualism further connects her with Emersonian self-reliance and thus cements her deviance within the American community. Most Spiritualists agree that the movement was sparked by occurrences in Hydesville, New York⁹⁸ (Cox 5). Between the years 1847 and 1848, the home of John Fox was prone to a series of mysterious "raps" that appeared without any distinguishable source. The raps became more insistent and soon the family was the subject of the town's attention (Cox 6). Fox discovered this was a spirit who was using Fox's daughters as communication vessels (Cox 6). Others attribute the origins of Spiritualism to a man named Andrew Jackson Davis ("The Poughkeepsie Seer"). Davis began explorations of the afterlife in 1844 and was at one point entranced during a lecture on mesmerism (Cox 7). In this heightened state, he was able to perceive the "interiors" of those around him and developed a gift which "exposed the boundless system of nature" (Cox 9).

⁹⁸ Hydesville is a small village located near Rochester.

Ann Braude's *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth Century America* suggests resonances between the theory of self-reliance and Spiritualism⁹⁹:

Spiritualism asserted that divine truth was directly accessible to individual human beings through spiritual communication. [This] new faith provided a religious alternative that supported the individualist social and political views of antebellum radicals. Spiritualists in turn adopted a radical social program based on the same individualist principles that supported its unconventional religious practice. If untrammelled by repressive social or religious strictures, Spiritualists believed that individuals could serve as vehicles of truth because each embodied the laws of nature in his or her being. Such individualism laid the foundation for Spiritualism's rejection of male headship over women – or indeed of any individual over any other. (6)

The Arcana of Spiritualism: A Manual of Spiritual Science and Philosophy cites American “seer” Hudson Tuttle's thoughts on spiritualism:

[it] encourages the loftiest spiritual aspirations, energizes the soul by presenting only exalted motives, prompts to the highest endeavors, and inculcates noble self-reliance. It frees man from the bondage of authority of book and creed. Its only author is truth; its interpreter, reason. (17)

James Burns also claims that “The Spiritualist is a self-reliant original...a man who follows his reason and his intuitions... follows truth and lives by the application of truth to all the relations of life” (2). And finally, John S. Farmer furthers this argument for a connection between spiritualism and self-reliance

⁹⁹ In works like “Success” (1870), “Demonology” (1877) and *The Conduct of Life* (1860), Emerson was critical of Spiritualism, labeling it as a “black art” with “no value for scientific knowledge or advances, which represented a regression of human moral development” (Wayne 264). With particular reference to the Hydesville rappings, he announced “we ape our ancestors...stagger backward to the mummeries of the Dark Ages” (Wayne 264). Despite such strong feelings though, he “did not reject the idea that a spiritual or non-material world, an alternative reality, existed” (Wayne 264). In fact, this metaphysical belief in Spiritualism was central to the Transcendentalist philosophy.

by citing British naturalist Professor Alfred Russell Wallace's statements from 1874:¹⁰⁰ "Spiritualism inculcates investigation and self-reliance as the first duties of intelligent beings; which teaches that happiness in a future life can be secured by cultivating and developing to the utmost the higher faculties of our intellectual and moral nature" (103).

As literary critics have said, *The Scarlet Letter* suggests specific resonances between the self-reliant Hester and Spiritualism. The figure of the "A" that Hester wears upon her breast is clearly associated with the spiritual realm. Hawthorne is aware of Spiritualism, noting the New England tendency to interpret meteoric appearances as "revelations from a supernatural source" (135). This is confirmed when Dimmesdale believes he sees the specter of an "A" in the sky – "there the appearance of an immense letter, the letter A, marked out in lines of dull red light" (136). Even Hawthorne's depiction of Hester's daughter, Pearl, pertains to Spiritualism. She is described as the amalgamation of the spiritual and the material worlds. Pearl has "[imbibed] her soul from the spiritual world and her bodily frame from its material of earth" (81). A well-known scene in the text further describes her as a co-mingling of "the material union and the spiritual idea" (180).

¹⁰⁰ Wallace was also known as an explorer, geographer, anthropologist and biologist. He was best known, though, for independently proposing a theory of evolution due to natural selection which prompted Charles Darwin to publish his own theory.

Zenobia and the Transcendentalist Connection

Zenobia's ties to self-reliance are more overt and thus require far less explanation than Hester's do. Zenobia's behavior has the same functionalist underpinnings as Hester's – she functions as a representative of the type of female behavior (or deviance) that is not tolerated by Puritan American society.

Zenobia is depicted throughout *The Blithedale Romance* as an independent and intellectual advocate for women's rights, and the leader or "Queen" as she is referred to, of Blithedale. Joel Pfister cites a number of possible sources for Zenobia: In Lydia Maria Child's *Brief History of the Condition of Women, In Various Ages and Nations*, Queen Zenobia was a distinguished master of languages, hunter and skilled in the art of war (97). An 1851 women's rights journal described her as "the celebrated Queen of the East...not exceeded by any king on record for talent, courage, and daring ambition (Pfister 97)." And finally, Charles Anthon's early 1850s classical dictionary describes Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, as "disdaining of the female litter" (Pfister 98). Pfister however stipulates that Hawthorne was probably most familiar with William Ware's 1836 novel *Zenobia* which was a historical romance about the reign and fall of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra who was known for her self-reliant and masculine ways. Ware's Zenobia¹⁰¹ was heavily associated with the concept of androgyny, or what Hawthorne termed the "man-

¹⁰¹ Ware's literary Palmyra includes a number of Amazon women who think of Zenobia as their role model. Fausta, for example is like Faust: "ostensibly an overachiever, but simply developing her abilities in so-called 'masculine' as well as 'feminine' ways. She is skilled not only at plying the needle but more especially at throwing the lance" (Pfister 98).

like woman” (Pfister 98). She was anti-romantic and more devoted to her role as “head” of state than preoccupied with emotions (Pfister 98).

Hawthorne’s Zenobia bears resemblance to this “man-like woman” particularly in the initial description of her:

She was dressed as simply as possible, in an American print...Her hair – which was dark, glossy, and of singular abundance was put up rather soberly and primly, without curls or other ornament, except a single flower...Her hand, though very soft, was larger than most women would like to have – or than they could afford to have. (17)

This flower has significant import for our association between Zenobia and the masculine. At a basic level, we are struck by the detailed description

Hawthorne provides of it:

It was an exotic, of rare beauty, and as fresh as if the hot-house gardener had just clipped it from the stem. That flower has struck deep root into my memory. I can both see it and smell it, at this moment. So brilliant, so rare, so costly as it must have been, and yet enduring only for a day, it was more indicative of the pride and pomp, which had a luxuriant growth in Zenobia’s character, than if a great diamond had sparkled among her hair. (17)

What many readers might not know is that Margaret Fuller, staunch proponent of self-reliance was also known for wearing flowers in her hair on a daily basis.

Functionalist Discourses On a Woman’s Role: The Ovarian Model

Both *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Blithedale Romance* were published during an era in which socially prescribed roles for women were quite restrictive. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg’s *Disorderly Conduct* explains that

between the 1840s and 90s, the “ovarian model” was a popular guideline for women’s conduct. This model argued that women were “prisoners” not only of their reproductive functions, but in particular of the often ignored ovaries (184). Smith-Rosenberg cites conduct novels from that period which argued that “from the onset of menstruation until marriage, [a woman] must concentrate on the healthy development of her reproductive organs” (87). Almost every nineteenth century gynecological textbook and most of the popular medical guidelines devote considerable attention to puberty and menstruation. In non-medical texts of the American 19th century, such as the texts studied by this dissertation, these subjects remained veiled (Smith-Rosenberg 182).¹⁰² According to medical literature of the time, while a man’s sexual impulses were subject to their will – they could choose to “indulge” or “repress” them, women’s sexual organs were hidden within the body and therefore subject not to her own will, but instead to a biological clock. This was something women were only faintly aware of and which they were clearly unable to control (Smith-Rosenberg 183). A mid century physician provides a typical explanation: “[the ovaries] exercise a controlling influence upon her entire system, and entail upon her many painful and dangerous diseases. They are the source of her peculiarities, the centre of her sympathies, and the seat of her diseases. Everything that is peculiar to her, springs from her sexual organization” (Smith-Rosenberg 183-4). Proponents of this model argued that “women’s only sexual desire was reproductive” (23).

¹⁰²In a footnote to *Disorderly Conduct*, Smith-Rosenberg clarifies that “this is not to say that the question of adolescence and aging in women did not appear in nineteenth-century fiction; quite the contrary. Fictional discussions, however, lack the explicit physiological and sexual detail that characterized medical accounts” (327).

Rhetoric like this dictated a woman's life and cemented her role as submissive child bearer instead of a self-reliant individual.

The Scarlet Letter and *The Blithedale Romance* demonstrate the ways in which theories of a woman's ordained role as mother (and a woman's subsequent perception as deviant if she does not conform to this role) served two key functions. Society was able to acknowledge and recognize women's sexual nature, but at the same time limit that sexuality within a specific reproductive framework. Such ideas warned women that any form of sexuality without the prospect of maternity was unacceptable. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg makes clear, nineteenth century Transatlantic society "successfully defined as 'unnatural' the bourgeoisie matron who avoids motherhood" (245). Thus, a character like Hester is allowed to survive in the pilgrim society as a demonstration of nineteenth century Hawthorne's feelings about the roles of women in society. At the same time though, Hawthorne is working against the grain in his representation of women because they are, after all, deviant. Thus, while Hester is undeniably self-reliant in the text, I argue that this is largely overshadowed by her role as mother. It is this acquiescence to her role as "mother" that separates and distinguishes Hester from Zenobia. I agree with Alfred Bendixen's supposition that it is Hester's maternity that protects her: "the narrator does not feel the need to kill off a strong or sexual woman...because in Hester's case, she is cloaked in maternity" (384). In this sense, she differs considerably from Hawthorne's early heroines like the childless Georgiana ("The Birthmark") whose birthmark symbolizes the

“liability to sin, sorrow, decay and death” (Hawthorne 650). Nina Baym sees Georgiana’s husband’s aversion to the birthmark as a “rationalized distaste for sexuality” (110). Hester also provides contrast with Beatrice (“Rappaccini’s Daughter”), a character whose “luxurious sexuality has [a] contaminating potential” (Mancall 43) which ultimately results in her death. Amy Schrager Lang also recognizes the importance of Hester’s maternity in preserving her within the American landscape. She notes Hester’s “maternity alone has the power to save her” (173). John L. Idol concurs, claiming that “Hester’s sexuality is permissible only as long as it is allied with the maternal...maternity becomes a safe outlet for her sexuality” (266).

Self-Reliance and Maternity: Inconsistencies and Incongruities in the American Ethos

Looking at Hawthorne’s text carefully, it becomes apparent that we begin with Hester as mother and end with the same vision. According to Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, “Hester is primarily defined not as a lover or a wife, but as a mother” (108). Indeed, the very first time we see Hester, her maternity is emphasized: “she bore in her arms a child, a baby of some three months old, who winked and turned aside its little face from the too vivid light of day” (49) and then a few lines later: “when the young woman – the mother of this child – stood to clasp the infant closely to her bosom” (50). Mary Wearn also underscores Hester’s maternity: “the major theme of *The Scarlet Letter* is the

assertion of the maternal principle and the redemption it promises personally and culturally... Hester's character is fundamentally bound to her maternity from the moment she emerges from the prison door with a baby in her arms" (45).¹⁰³

A few pages later, Hawthorne makes another key maternal analogy between Hester and Mary:

Had there been a Papist among the crowd of Puritans, he might have seen in this beautiful woman, so picturesque in her attire and mien, and with the infant at her bosom, an object to remind him of the image of Divine Maternity, which so many illustrious painters have vied with one another to represent. (53)

John Gatta points out the significance of this unusual linkage, claiming that though Hester is clearly not a virgin, her child (Pearl) still lacks a visible father. It is "the mother rather than the virgin aspect of Mary that Hester invokes most pointedly in his image of 'Divine Maternity'" (Gatta 16).

Hester's maternity is further underscored throughout the text in the use of disciplinary commands. According to Gleason and Greif, studies of fatherly language show that men typically send many "direct orders to female children", but in *The Scarlet Letter*, Mary Jane Hurst points out the lack of regulatory commands from Dimmesdale, which underscores and emphasizes Hester's motherly responsibilities. In the seminal forest scene, Hester is the disciplinarian and primary caretaker as she has been throughout the text. She provides a number of commands to Pearl: "Hasten, Pearl; or I shall be angry

¹⁰³ There might be a few instances at which Hester is unmaternal, but I argue that these are overshadowed by the predominance of instances where she is maternal.

with thee!” “Leap across the brook, naughty child, and run hither! Else I must come to thee!” (183). This is in stark contrast with Dimmesdale’s speech.

Instead of commanding Pearl as a typical fatherly figure might, he instead seeks Hester’s help: “if thou has any means of pacifying the child, do it forthwith!... Pacify her if thou lovest me!” (183)

According to Gatta, by the end of the text we realize that Hester’s maternity extends even beyond her mothering of Pearl, who is her constant companion throughout the text (16). She provides motherly comfort and advice to a number of “lost souls” in the community:

As Hester Prynne had no selfish ends, nor lived in any measure for her own profit and enjoyment, people brought all their sorrows and perplexities, and besought her counsel, as one who had herself gone through a mighty trouble. Women, more especially, - in the continually recurring trials of wounded, wasted, wronged, misplaced, or erring and sinful passion, - or with the dreary burden of a heart unyielded, because unvalued and unsought, - came to Hester’s cottage, demanding why they were so wretched, and what the remedy! (227)

Hester even mothers Dimmesdale himself since he “proves more a helpless child than lover in the forest scene” and it is Hester who ultimately helps him reach the liberating moment of his confession (Gatta 16). Most significant, though, is Hawthorne’s use of the *tableau vivant* technique – a staged scene where women were typically the focus, often appearing as mythological, allegorical, historical, or biblical characters – in the last chapter. While Hester is described in many tableausque scenes throughout the novel, the most memorable is the last scaffold scene: “down he sank upon the scaffold! Hester partly raised him, and supported his head against her bosom” (221). In this

Pieta¹⁰⁴ scene, Hester resembles Mary, ministering to her suffering son Jesus (Bendixen 384). The correlation between this scene and the pieta pose is also noted by John Gatta, Harold Bloom, and Michael Helton. Even though at the story's end Pearl has gone off to be married, Hester resumes the letter A which had heretofore been interchangeable with Pearl. In so doing, she "takes on the mantle of selflessness that seems quintessentially maternal" (Mariniello 162).

Where Hester is maternal, Zenobia is anything but and therefore is not permitted a space within the American landscape. Harold Bloom's *Nathaniel Hawthorne* cites conservative critics who argue that Hawthorne should have "converted her, by marriage – making the best remedy for such a case [and] left her, a mother, with good prospects of a numerous progeny" (234). Without making Zenobia a "respectable" woman by suggesting any maternal desires, Hawthorne has no choice but to remove her from the pages of *The Blithedale Romance*.

Yet, John Gatta is one of the only critics who points out that there are moments in which we might trace a connection between Zenobia and motherhood. He argues that she has a role as a quasi "fecundity goddess" and as such that she is reminiscent of the "Earth Mother's fecundity" (24). He also claims that Zenobia resembles "Mother Ceres, the earth-mothering grain goddess" (24). Even the previously discussed references to her as an Eve-like figure make her literally "the mother of all living" (24). Such allusions are

¹⁰⁴ The Pieta is a Renaissance sculpture by Michelangelo which depicts the body of Jesus on the lap of his mother Mary after Crucifixion.

ultimately overshadowed as Gatta admits that Zenobia “ends up as mother of no one and nothing. She engenders no progeny, just as Blithedale’s field of dreams yields no enduring harvest” (24).

Eve Tempted: Writing and Sexuality in Hawthorne’s Fiction suggests an “incestuous” thread that runs through the text which perhaps might signify maternity, but underscores the fact that this is only an imaginary one. Allan Lloyd-Smith argues that Zenobia endeavours unsuccessfully to construct a “fantasy family [that] is composed of Zenobia as mother, Hollingsworth as father, Coverdale as son and Priscilla as daughter” (83). There is then a mother-daughter relationship suggested, but never actually realized in the work. Frederick C. Crews shares a similar perspective on the incestuous underpinnings of the text by exploring Coverdale’s preoccupation with Zenobia’s blatant sexuality:

Zenobia, Coverdale’s first and most deeply enraging figure of challenge, incites anxiety and defensive sarcasm by flaunting her sexuality before him...The significant fact, however, is that he can scarcely accept the blatantly obvious fact of her sexual experience, but must dwell on the question with prurient concern...Zenobia is, for Coverdale’s mind, less an individual person than ‘womanliness incarnated’ and that his view of this womanliness is rather that of a scandalized son than a sophisticated bachelor. Like his younger predecessors Goodman Brown and Robin Molineux, Coverdale has not yet forgiven womankind for its deviation from the maternal ideal. (203)

Further analysis of the initial meeting between Coverdale and Zenobia underscores her overt sexuality. T. Walter Herbert suggests that Zenobia’s

sexual vitality strikes him as evidence of an authentic womanhood that has been ‘refined away out of the feminine system’ by social convention: she evokes the naked splendor of ‘Eve, when she was

just made, and her Creator brought her to Adam, saying – ‘Behold, here is a woman!’ (19)

This sexuality is problematic because unlike Hester’s it is not allied with redemptive maternity and thus violates the domestic ideals cherished by the society. Coverdale becomes almost guiltily obsessed in trying to ascertain whether she has been married before (Hawthorne 44) since he think she is sexually experienced (Herbert 19). He announces pertinaciously, “Zenobia is a wife! Zenobia has lived, and loved! There is no folded petal, no latent dew drop, in this perfectly developed rose!” (45).

This chapter provides an overview of womanhood from a male perspective. Functionalist interpretations of these two texts indicate that Hawthorne has provided for his readers new kinds of women who both reaffirm the ovarian model, but also challenge it through their deviance. This type of functionalist reading is fruitful because it sees the deviance of these women as positive and productive. Together, Hester and Zenobia help to test and rework the boundaries of Emersonian self-reliance.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have examined different permutations of deviance in selected American literary works between the 1840s and 1850s. I have attempted to select representative texts from the period by authors who are on the one hand, openly Transcendentalist (Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller) and on the other hand, not affiliated with the movement, but nevertheless invoke its tenets (Douglass, Fern, Hawthorne). I have also chosen texts which represent a variety of literary genres: the novel, the slave narrative, the essay, and the magazine. The central move of this dissertation has been to fix quotations around the term ‘deviance’ and qualify its bearing upon American self-reliance. Throughout the thesis I make reference to contemporary popular American culture with the intention of reinforcing the linkages between deviance then and now, as well as between self-reliance (in its original instantiations) and contemporary notions of self-reliance. The specific instances of what we now call deviance may have altered radically since the 1840s and 50s, but much remains the same; today’s deviants are still those who in some way violate socially dictated norms. The ultimate goal of this work has been to bring interest and conversation to the intersections between literature and the social sciences and examine the ways literature of the 1840s and 50s (or perhaps any time period) often anticipates sociological theory.

The chapter on Douglass and Thoreau is the first example of how deviance is endorsed by classic American texts of self-reliance. This work effectively re-conceives the concept of *strain* in terms of the cultural goal of

self-reliance instead of the American dream/wealth. Here, I suggest, as Bourdieu does with his concept of “cultural capital”, the idea of using literature as an institutional means of attaining self-reliance for those unable to achieve it through more socially sanctioned “legitimate” means. Douglass and Thoreau’s works lend themselves well to the rigours of Merton’s schema for the individual adaptations to *strain*. Each text provides a further caveat to the original schema, again demonstrating the interconnectedness between literature and the social sciences.

The National Police Gazette provides an important popular counterpart to the classic literary texts studied. I use “popular” or “entertainment” literature to represent those texts consumed by the so-called ordinary masses, not just the elites. It allows us to pinpoint the exact types of acts that were deemed deviant during the 1840s and 50s and for whom. In my study of the *Police Gazette*, I acknowledge the limitations and shortcomings of functionalist theory, but ultimately still employ it since it enables us to better trace the evolution of self-reliance as a deviant form of behaviour over the years. Set in juxtaposition against the classic works *Narrative* and *Walden*, I tease out the implications of my findings that certain types of deviance are sanctioned and legitimized in the classical context, but shunned in the popular.

In my discussion of *Ruth Hall*, I introduce a new concept in the study of American literature – that of sentimental self-reliance. I contend that female deviance is made distinctly more palatable by an engagement in sentimental tropes – it allows the women to seemingly abide by the dictates of the cult of

domesticity whilst subverting such structure from within. My work further outlines the specific ways in which this amalgamation between masculine and feminine plays out in the literary field.

I end on a canonical note, reinvoking and clarifying the concept of functionalism to shed light on what specific function is performed by Hester and Zenobia's deviance – namely uniting society against those women who are classed as unwomanly or unfeminine. In particular, I focus on maternity as a distinguishing characteristic of the quintessential American women during the mid-nineteenth century.

I believe that sociological theories of deviance will benefit from work like mine since I provide unique insight into what behavior was and perhaps still is deemed acceptable or not by Americans. Literature is extremely helpful in this regard because it provides something of a real-life context for understanding the specific nuances of deviance. This dissertation presents a much clearer picture of which individuals were classed as outsiders during the mid-nineteenth century and how this picture may (or may not) still be applicable to today's outsiders. This work helps us to better understand how self-reliance or individualism becomes deviant or socially transgressive and how the American community formulates cohesive ideas about acceptable behaviour for its citizens.

There is also herein a greater understanding of Emersonian self-reliance and which groups of people could realistically achieve it. My work seeks to

broaden the category of the self-reliant individual to include, for example, females and African-American slaves who were otherwise not imagined to possess such tendencies. Thus, my aim is to revise notions of Emerson's concept of self-reliance by positioning it instead as a call to arms for all types of Americans to engage in deviant or socially transgressive behaviour.

In my future research I intend to incorporate the suggestions of my external examiner, Dr. Christiana Gregoriou, and include quantitative methods of literary analysis. Using corpus linguistic tools, I think it will be extremely beneficial to examine the specific adjectives associated with deviance or self-reliance (by creating a "concordance"). I would also like to use something like a keyword tool in order to populate a list of words which characterizes these selected texts of American deviance. These two methods will help add even more precision to the term deviance, which I admit is a slippery one.

In addition, after reading Dr. Gregoriou's work, I might also like to take my study of the *Police Gazette* in the direction of reality television which, like the magazine, is known for its representation of non-elite deviants. Reality television erodes the distinction between fiction and reality which is how I believe the *Police Gazette* also operates. On the one hand, we have many of the conventions of fiction (narrative form, narrative devices, level of detail, and setting) and on the other hand, we have the fact that these are actual events, people, and occurrences – a supposedly "realistic" portrayal of deviance. In terms of the authors studied by this dissertation, I believe that there is potential for expansion in my work on the slave narrative. I think a socio-literary reading

of female slave narratives - for example, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (by Harriet Jacobs) or *Our Nig* (by Harriet Wilson) would be rather interesting.

This dissertation represents yet another step forward in the traffic from sociology to literary studies. The aim of this work is to continue to inspire and stimulate the conversation about the nature of deviance and its representation in literature. I hope in the future to make a more fulsome argument about us re-assessing our theoretical approach to deviance in light of what literature can offer. My hope is that I have already started this gradual process by breathing new life into Emersonian studies through the lens of criminology. Ultimately, this project encourages us to propel criminology forward by examining disciplines (like literature) that are typically ignored by the field. I believe that examining literary forms of deviance situates contemporary deviance theories within a larger historical context whilst supplementing the current state of knowledge regarding literary and sociological studies.

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