



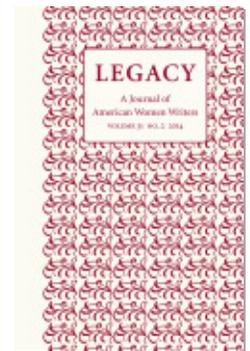
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Iconoclasm, Parody, and the Provocations of Lydia Maria
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Iconoclasm, Parody, and the Provocations of Lydia Maria Child's *A Romance of the Republic*

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If I live to be ninety years old, and go on at this rate, I shall be the rabidest radical that ever pelted a throne, or upset an image.

Lydia Maria Child to William Lloyd Garrison, 7 July 1865

In 1865, printer L. Franklin Smith and lithographer Max Rosenthal commemorated Abraham Lincoln's declaration of emancipation by publishing an extravagantly ornate print, *Proclamation of Emancipation* (see fig. 1). Adhering to the conventions for such patriotic displays, Smith and Rosenthal surrounded the text of the Emancipation Proclamation with ample decoration: cherished American icons like the flag and eagle, portraits of the founding fathers and well-known abolitionists, allegorical figures, and several intricate vignettes depicting, as an accompanying booklet explains, "the more striking results of the great Crime" (slavery) on the left and the results of "the great Justice" (emancipation) on the right (Smith 7). This elaborate construction, with the words of the proclamation spread between the scenes of slavery and freedom, implies that emancipation ended "the great Crime" and enacted "the great Justice." According to *Proclamation of Emancipation*, Americans had much to celebrate and only the past to grieve.

Yet racial injustice in the form of prejudice and segregation persist in the print. The images present clichéd scenes of black life before and after emancipa-

tion, and none of the scenes depict egalitarian integration. The only white figures pictured are slaveowners and overseers (on the left) and a white teacher, far more elegantly dressed than his black pupils (on the right). Between the scenes of slavery and freedom are white allegorical figures and formal cameo portraits of the white men and women celebrated for emancipation and America's commitment to liberty. These latter white figures are placed prominently toward the center at the bottom and top. As Harold Holzer, who has studied the art and history of emancipation, explains, in "nearly all these initial, tentative efforts to commemorate emancipation in popular prints, black Americans were emphatically not created equal." Blacks are "relegated to the sidelines," where they appear as generic figures, nominally free but still subordinate to whites (Holzer, *Emancipating Lincoln* 138). In this way, *Proclamation of Emancipation*, like most of the era's strategically patriotic prints, promotes white supremacy and Northern pride. It placates rather than provokes its white postbellum viewers.¹

This print, however, unwittingly broaches its own critique by featuring Lydia Maria Child. While it is fitting that Child should be honored for her fierce advocacy of abolition, it is also ironic that her image should appear on such propaganda. Throughout her career, as we will see, she challenged grandiose conceptions of the United States demonstrated by the type of iconography appearing in abundance on this print. Moreover, she was openly critical of the Emancipation Proclamation's compromises and failure to address the problem of racial injustice at large. On 30 October 1862, soon after President Lincoln issued the Preliminary Proclamation, Child wrote to good friend Sarah Shaw,

As for the President's Proclamation, I was thankful for it, but it excited no enthusiasm in my mind. With my gratitude to God was mixed an under-tone of sadness that the moral sense of the people was so low, that thing could not be done nobly. . . . The ugly fact cannot be concealed from history that it was done reluctantly and stintedly, and that even the degree that *was* accomplished was done selfishly; was merely a war-measure, to which we were forced by our own perils and necessities. (419)

In Child's view, emancipation was not only a selfish, stinted "war-measure"; it also left much for those committed to full equality to do. In a letter to Charles Sumner that same month, Child wrote, "I do not believe the step [emancipation] will now save the country" (417). Even after the final proclamation, the end of the war, and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, Child remained discontented. She was dismayed by the nation's lack of progress toward racial justice in the early years of Reconstruction and distraught by the persistence of prejudice. As she explained, "having fought against Slavery, till the monster is *legally* dead, I was desirous to do what I could to undermine Prejudice." There-

fore, as she explained in a letter to abolitionist Robert Purvis dated 14 August 1868, she wrote a novel, *A Romance of the Republic*, for she “thought a Romance would take more hold of the public mind, than the most elaborate arguments” (482–83). While *Proclamation of Emancipation* celebrates emancipation by presenting viewers with icons of national pride, Child’s *Romance of the Republic* deploys many of the same icons parodically and pushes readers to strive for greater justice by provoking them to see the realities of emancipation differently.

Romance questions the complacency promoted by prominent visual representations of the war and emancipation. In the novel, Child presents readers with a highly stylized vision of life before, during, and after the Civil War, and she does so through a complex iconography that highlights the dangers of stylization and uncritical celebration, what W. E. B. Du Bois described in *Black Reconstruction in America* as “the propaganda of history” (711). As did much of Child’s antislavery work, *Romance* invokes and interrogates national icons and ideals like those pictured on *Proclamation of Emancipation* to cultivate what Cornelius Castoriadis identifies as the “critical social imaginary” that enables people to ask, “Are our laws just? Are our gods true? Is our representation of the world right?” (58). Through iconoclasm and parody, *Romance* proffers a critical counter-image to works like Rosenthal’s and pushes readers to consider carefully each aspect of representations like *Proclamation of Emancipation* and *Romance* and to see themselves and their society more critically.

My focus on the function of the visual within Child’s work has precedent: scholars have repeatedly read Child’s novel as a promising yet disquieting vision.² In her introduction to the novel, Dana D. Nelson writes that “[t]he novel revolves around a double message of irony and vision” and urges “white citizens to learn to see more clearly, through sympathy and compassion,” in part by “underscor[ing] the perceptual invalidity of racial judgment and prejudice” (xii, xiii, xi). But, like many other critics, Nelson emphasizes that the novel ultimately “does not transcend the color line” (xvi). Carolyn L. Karcher similarly valorizes Child’s ambitious and hopeful “post–Civil War abolitionist vision” while noting that it reflects and thus perpetuates the racist status quo and ultimately endorses patriarchy, paternalism, classism, and racism (“Lydia Maria Child’s *A Romance*” 82).³ I acknowledge that *Romance* does depict what such endorsements might look like. The novel is marked by the icons, conventions, and stereotypes it deploys. However, I suggest that Child intends the novel to function as what W. J. T. Mitchell calls a “provocative” image, one with which viewers must work “dialectically, acknowledging and identifying [its] imperfections, using [it] as a starting point for a dialogue or conversation” (93–94). The contentiousness of the novel’s images are all the more evident when they are examined in the context of the visual culture of the Reconstruction era and Child’s earlier iconoclastic work. The faults of the novel mirror the

problems in ante- and postbellum culture that we see displayed uncritically in prints like Rosenthal's and that Child often critiqued in other works. In *Romance*, I argue, Child addresses these problems by presenting and sometimes parodying them.

My analysis will dwell especially on the final scene of the novel, which Eve Allegra Raimon describes as "the apotheosis of the reformer's vision . . . a hypostatization that only succeeds in reinscribing hierarchies of race even as it glorifies prevailing ideologies of Anglo-American supremacy" (60–61). Indeed, Raimon and others rightly problematize this scene, in which Child depicts numerous American icons in ways that trouble modern critics. But my examination of this tableau within the complicated context of Child's consistent iconoclasm and the iconography of emancipation and Reconstruction exemplified by *Proclamation of Emancipation* reveals the productive provocations of this image and *Romance* overall.⁴ As I argue, the contrasting visions Child presents throughout the novel and the parodic final tableau encourage critical engagement and suggest that she aspired to cultivate a critical, creative, and even skeptical citizenry, one capable of imagining and ultimately achieving a far greater emancipation than that enacted by American institutions or represented by the country's visualizations of itself in prints like *Proclamation of Emancipation*.

CHILD'S ICONOCLASTIC OEUVRE

Child frequently employed American icons iconoclastically in her nonfiction, fiction, and editorial work combating racial injustice. For instance, in *Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans*, a landmark text that exposes much American iconography and patriotic sophistry as "covering sin with a silver veil," Child pushes readers to view their country, and especially its icons and iconic ideals, with critical perspective (134). She asks readers to consider how foreigners "with enthusiastic ideas of American freedom" might react to an American "sight": "A troop of slaves once passed through Washington on the fourth of July, while drums were beating, and standards flying. One of the captive negroes raised his hand, loaded with irons, and waving it toward the starry flag, sung with a smile of bitter irony, 'Hail Columbia! happy land!'" (33). By juxtaposing the Fourth of July celebrations of the capital, the very seat of American democracy and the metonymic icon for the nation itself, with the country's most atrocious injustice, Child reveals the incongruity of American celebrations of liberty and associates the flag with the shame of the slave trade.⁵ Throughout her work, Child constructs such contrasts, often pairing text and image to strengthen her message.

THE
AMERICAN ANTI-SLAVERY
ALMANAC,
FOR
1843.

BEING THE THIRD AFTER BISSEXTILE, OR LEAP YEAR ;
AND UNTIL JULY 4th, THE SIXTY-SEVENTH
OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE
UNITED STATES.



Oh, hail Columbia ! Happy land !
The cradle land of Liberty !
Where none but negroes bear the brand,
Or feel the lash of slavery.

Then let the glorious anthem peal ! "aves"—
And drown, "Britannia rules the sea!"—
Strike up the song that men of feel—
"Columbia rules three million slaves !" DR. MADDEN.

COMPILED BY L. M. CHILD.

NEW-YORK:

Published by the American Anti-Slavery Society, 143 Nassau street,
New-York; 25 Cornhill, Boston; and 31 North
Fifth street, Philadelphia.

Fig. 2. Front cover of *The American Anti-Slavery Almanac, for 1843*. Compiled by L. M. Child. E449 .A509. Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

Child's arrangement of *The American Anti-Slavery Almanac, for 1843* evinces her commitment to bringing about the recognition of injustice through iconoclastic juxtaposition. The cover depicts an enslaved woman cowering on the ground, desperately trying to protect the infant she cradles in her arms as an eagle digs its claws into her back and threatens further harm (see fig. 2). The majestic dome of the Capitol, topped with waving flag, rises behind. Such icons (the eagle, Capitol, and flag) are usually connected with liberty and the protection of the law, but the woman clearly lacks both. Child pairs this image with lines that further belie such idealistic connections and make the implications of the visual irony explicit:

Oh, hail Columbia! Happy land!
The cradle land of Liberty!
Where none but negroes bear the brand,
Or feel the lash of slavery.

Then let the glorious anthem peal!
And drown, "Britannia rules the waves!"
Strike up the song, that men can feel—
"Columbia rules three million slaves!"

This poem focuses attention on the hypocrisy of antebellum Americans' vaunted commitment to liberty, especially as they imagined it through icons like the Capitol and anthems. Poem and graphic juxtapose the ideal with its betrayal and push readers to realize that America is not what it claims to be. Child's presentation of such contrasts continues throughout the almanac, which closes with another iconoclastic scene on its back cover (see fig. 3). This graphic depicts an enslaved man tied to a flagpole that bears a flag and liberty cap. The implication is that the man has been whipped while tied to American icons of union and freedom. Again, a poem beneath the image highlights the irony:

United States! Your banner wears
Two emblems—one of fame;
Alas, the other that it bears
Reminds us of your shame.

The *white* man's liberty in types
Stands blazoned by your *stars*;
But what's the meaning of your *stripes*?
They mean your *negro's scars*.



United States! Your banner wears
Two emblems—one of fame;
Alas, the other that it bears
Reminds us of your shame.

The *white* man's liberty in types
Stands blazoned by your *stars*;
But what's the meaning of your *stripes*?
They mean your *negro's scars*. THOMAS CAMPBELL.

PIOUS SLAVEHOLDERS.—BY ELIZUR WRIGHT.

“I have no more disposition than I ever had, to demonstrate how much men may dabble with dishonesty, or defile themselves with oppression, and yet be saved—how much men may vocally or silently consent with thieves, and yet be honest—how much they may involve themselves with laws and customs worthy of devils, and yet deserve sympathy and consolation at our hands, as Christians. There *may* be Christian pickpockets, Christian horse thieves, Christian swindlers, for aught I know. I am not profound on this argument. But I think such Christians do no honor to a church; much less to a pulpit.”

Fig. 3. Back cover of *The American Anti-Slavery Almanac, for 1843*. Compiled by L. M. Child. E449 .A509. Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

These stanzas complement the image and connect the flag's stripes with the scars left on the backs of slaves from the brutal use of the whip. Overall, Child's participation in the production of this and other issues of the often iconoclastic *Anti-Slavery Almanac* attests to her commitment to confronting slavery and prejudice with incongruous juxtapositions, thereby provoking readers to reconsider the status quo and view their world with a more critical eye.

In "The Stars and Stripes: A Melo-Drama," Child continues her confrontation of American ideals and iconography. Employing the inflated conventions of patriotic pageants, she orchestrates a performance of America's hypocritical commitments to freedom on the one hand and slavery on the other. That Child chose to write this as a drama indicates that she wanted readers to approach the play as something they could read, hear, and see. Like Child's work in the *Almanac*, the play functions as both a display and a critique of display. Child sets this highly visual contest between ideals and reality on a Southern plantation, where Mr. Masters, a wealthy planter, stages an outrageous Fourth of July celebration. The whites picnic on a shaded lawn, near "an arch made of evergreens, with the word LIBERTY interwoven with flowers" (122). Even slaves seem to celebrate by marching around carrying flags and other props of patriotism. Mr. Masters intends the flags, festoons, choruses of the "Star-Spangled Banner," much food, and much more drink to convince his visitor, Mr. North, that slavery enables all to live pleasant lives amid "a pleasant scene," as he puts it (124). Indeed, the scene is so delightful that Mr. North asserts that abolitionists who deplore slavery are liars, for he has "never set eyes on a happier set of fellows than your slaves." His declaration pleases Mr. Masters, who confirms, "You are a competent witness; for you have seen with your own eyes, and heard with your own ears" (126–27). Yet all is a ruse. Mr. Masters coerces his slaves to act happy and patriotic by threatening and beating them. All the while, Mr. North remains oblivious of his host's machinations.

Child's readers, however, see through the deceit and learn how misleading such grand presentations can be. In a "by-scene," which Mr. North does not see, the overseer repeatedly strikes one of the slaves, William, for picking up and putting on a liberty cap that falls from atop the flagpole (123). While the overseer beats William, the party continues: the slaves plant the flagpole and the "gentlemen wave their handkerchiefs" toward the flag and liberty cap that William briefly wore, singing "'Tis the star-spangled banner! O long may it wave / O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave!" (124). Like the graphics in the *Anti-Slavery Almanac*, this scene uses American icons to indict American hypocrisy. Further confirming the pretense of Mr. Masters's presentations, a later scene shows William and his wife, Ellen, running away in quest of freedom, the freedom celebrated by Mr. Masters and Mr. North but denied

to the slaves. And William and Ellen are not the only slaves risking their lives to escape from the “pleasant” plantation. Jim, “a merry-looking black lad” who sings and jokes habitually, also intends to run for freedom (132). Furthermore, a close look at the lyrics of Jim’s songs reveals that he engages with the world’s representations critically and imaginatively and actively seeks freedom:

I hearn massa tell `em so!
All de folks born free in dis `ere country, O!
But when I `ave ask if Jim born so,
Den my massa tell me no.

Mighty queer some tings I know,
If all folks born free in dis `ere country, O!
Dis nigger he know dat tings no go,
Jus as massa tole `em, O! (134)

These seemingly simple verses, like the opening scene, are layered with irony. Jim queries his master’s adamant assertion of native-born Americans’ right to freedom and contradictory denial of that right to American-born slaves. Jim hints that if Mr. Masters was wrong in his first statement (that those born in America are free), and if all Mr. Masters says is not indeed so (as Jim puts it, if “tings no go, / Jus as massa tole `em”), then Mr. Masters’s second claim (that Jim is not free) must also be wrong. Jim, therefore, ought to be free. Thus while Child suggests that Fourth of July celebrations of liberty can be fraudulent and hypocritical, she also indicates that American ideals, such as liberty for all, are still worth seeking and even singing about, as Jim does, as long as one does so with critical imagination.

Indeed, American ideals and icons were important to Child, and she longed to cherish them, but not when they represented—or, worse, covered up—injustice. In 1861 she explained to Sarah Shaw, “When [the United States] treats the colored people with justice and humanity, I will mount its flag in my great elmtree” (qtd. in Karcher, *First Woman* 469).⁶ For Child, icons like the flag and the Fourth of July were tools to be used to celebrate *and* critically assess the country’s achievement of the ideals they represented, ideals Child considered evacuated by slavery and the racist laws and policies that supported it. In letters to friends and acquaintances, she bemoans the hypocrisy of bombastic celebrations of patriotism and liberty like the one she satirizes in “The Stars and Stripes.” “I have a genuine, practical *belief* in *Freedom*,” she wrote to William P. Cutler in July 1862, “and it grieves me to see what a mere abstraction, what ‘a glittering generality,’ it is in many minds” (413). Even after emancipation and

peace were declared, she worried that Americans would be satisfied with partial justice and fail to see the dangers of unprotected freedom obscured by the “good-sounding generalities” of President Johnson’s prevarications and the hyperbolic celebrations of prints like *Proclamation of Emancipation* (“Through the Red Sea” 283).

THE PROCLAMATION OF EMANCIPATION AND
THE VEILING OF INJUSTICE

Proclamation of Emancipation, like most patriotic prints of the era, appeals to and promotes precisely those “glittering generalit[ies]” decried by Child. Such prints “reflected prevailing public taste” and praised the history and ideals most Americans cherished in order to secure places as “secular icons in the American parlor” (Holzer, *Emancipating Lincoln* 134). An advertising broadside describing the print’s grand intentions reveals this:

In presenting to the public, the Liberty-loving people of the United States, this elegant historical memorial, we feel that no comment is needed upon its great and noble subject, the undying parchment that sealed to Fame the name of our beloved Martyr-President, that made Abraham Lincoln the great liberator of a race, that made 1863 a great era in the history of the Republic, and wiped away the great stain that for eighty years had darkened its glorious annals. It is undying and immortal, beloved and revered, and further comment is unnecessary.

A suitable copy or memento of this great document should be and will be in the house of every lover of his country. One finer or better adapted to the demands of the public than this, we hesitate not to say, has not yet been produced. In beauty of design, artistic finish, and yet within the means of all, it is unsurpassed. (Holzer, “Picturing Freedom” 84)

This advertisement calls the proclamation “The Second Declaration of Independence” and presents it in accordance with the conventions for commemorations of that document. But the comparison is more apt than the advertisement intends, for just as the Declaration of Independence avoided mentioning the subject of slavery outright, so the Emancipation Proclamation avoids addressing so many of the issues—prejudice, segregation, and discrimination, for instance—that perpetuated racial injustice in America and that are visible in the print.

Indeed, emancipation had not “wiped away the great stain,” nor had it fully “liberat[ed] . . . a race.” It did not ensure that blacks would be treated as equals or be free from the bonds of prejudice, even though they were supposedly free from the chains of slavery. Child’s lament in a letter in the very year that Rosen-

thal's print appeared, well after emancipation, attests to this. She writes to Sarah Shaw: "The poor freedmen! I feel so anxious about them! I don't know what to make of Andy Johnson's course." Child was dissatisfied with how emancipation was ordained and obtained, and she was further distressed by what she described as "the shameful want of protection to the freedmen since they have been emancipated." She made her perspective clear when she wrote, "there has been no opportunity for any out-gushing of joy and exultation," which is precisely what the Rosenthal print calls for (Child to Shaw, 11 August 1865, 457-58). The makers of the print declare in their accompanying booklet, "EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THREE inaugurated a new era in the history of our nation, of humanity and of civilization . . . for then it was that Human Progress took one more of those gigantic strides scarcely measured by the centuries. . . . At the very moment of the new year's birth . . . it struck off at a single blow the shackles of four million of the earth's oppressed. Hosannas to the Lord soared heavenward from every lover of Liberty" (Smith 3). In striking contrast, upon the issuing of the proclamation, Child had written, "However we may inflate the emancipation balloon, it will never ascend among the constellations. . . . [N]o recognition of principles of justice or humanity surrounded the politic act with a halo of moral glory" (Child to Shaw, 30 October 1862, 419). The Rosenthal print undertakes exactly what Child asserts is inappropriate; it surrounds the proclamation with symbolic constellations of praise and crowns it with glory in the form of a grand American eagle with its wings outspread on a background of bright yellow, the word "LIBERTY" arching between its wings. This image bears an uncanny resemblance to the "arch made of evergreens, with the word LIBERTY interwoven with flowers" of Mr. Masters's Fourth of July fete in "The Stars and Stripes." Like Mr. Masters's incongruous celebration of liberty while surrounded by those he enslaved, this print glorifies emancipation despite the fact that universal freedom and liberty were far from achieved.

Emancipation certainly was an aspiration worth celebrating. However, the print portrays emancipation as a fait accompli and therefore supports the status quo, including the subservience of blacks to whites, the predominance of white men in politics, the relegation of the freedmen to menial labor, and the overall perpetuation of racial injustice. While it names and venerates the white men and women who worked for abolition, it offers viewers merely generic scenes of what it presents as the typical lives of freedmen contrasted with stereotypical views of slavery. Yet the situations of blacks, including the newly free, were far more complicated than such images indicate. Most troubling for advocates of equality and justice like Child, the print does not invite viewers to identify with the newly free men and women or critically to imagine the future of the nation. Instead it offers its audience a "panoramic perspective," as Teresa

A. Goddu calls such distancing scenes. Images presented from such a perspective lead viewers to believe they can see all there is to see and are in control of the scene. “Through the scopic subjugation of the slave, white antislavery viewers gained access to their own mastery,” Goddu explains (13). The construction Child features on the front cover of the *Anti-Slavery Almanac*, “implicates its viewers in the scene of slavery,” denying them a distanced perspective and signaling national guilt by figuring the Capitol dome, eagle, and flag in the same frame as the suffering slave. Yet much antislavery imagery “appropriates and redeploys the scopic structures of slavery in order to assert Northern superiority and the power of whiteness” (27, 34). The vignettes on *Proclamation of Emancipation* continue this trend. The views of black life that it presents, especially juxtaposed as they are with the portraits of famous and carefully named whites, perpetuate white supremacy. Not only are the black figures stereotypes put on display for white viewers, but the print also casts them as inferior.⁷ The print links white men and women—presented as the leading citizens of the nation—to the life of the mind and the ideals of the proclamation and its predecessor, the Declaration. *Proclamation* connects the freedmen, anonymous and generically representative, to the earth and labor.

For Child, emancipation was not enough; those formerly enslaved needed to be seen and treated as equals. This meant they should be able to possess land, marry whomever they please, seek education and prosperity, and, most importantly, vote.⁸ Significantly, to support her arguments for greater equality in “Through the Red Sea into the Wilderness,” Child praises art that depicts blacks in a variety of social positions, not just as laborers (279–80). But the politics of early Reconstruction prohibited a widespread change of worldview. Just as Lincoln was beginning to fight for universal suffrage, he was assassinated. His successor, Andrew Johnson, was unable to withstand the temptations attendant to political power and the lure of micromanaging what he wanted the world to see as the grand reunion of the country.⁹ The Johnson administration liberally doled out amnesty and power to many former confederates in the interest of preserving peace and white supremacy. As Child wrote in 1865, the United States had “passed through the Red Sea” of slavery but was now wandering “in the Wilderness, with multitudes ready to bow down and worship the golden calf of trade, and a doubtful sort of Moses [Johnson], who seems to occupy himself more earnestly with striving to save the drowning host of Pharaoh [leaders in the South] than he does with leading Israel into the promised land” (“Through the Red Sea” 282). While he placated white Southern leaders, Johnson offered only qualified protection to the freed slaves, to the great disappointment of activists like Child. “I like not the promise that the freedmen shall be ‘protected in their rights as laborers.’ It seems to imply a

distinction between the rights of *men* and the rights of *laborers*,” Child wrote (283). To counter the limited view of black men projected by the administration’s racist policies, Child praises art that depicts blacks in various positions as soldiers, leaders, and equals. She thus urges the president and the public to perceive and protect all Americans’ right to self-determination.

Despite the petitions of Child and other activists, the federal government largely refused to acknowledge and often covered up the persistence of prejudice. All around the South, Black Codes were instituted to hurl the nation “backward toward slavery” (Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* 708). Yet the government attempted “to whitewash the unhappy condition of the rebel states,” as Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts (one of Child’s friends and heroes) averred in one of his many pleas to stem the tide of regression. Congress was all too willing, in Sumner’s eyes, to “throw the mantle of official oblivion over sickening and heart-rending outrages, where Human Rights are sacrificed and rebel Barbarism receives a new letter of license. . . . [A]n immense region, with millions of people, has been surrendered to the machinations of slavemasters” (qtd. in Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* 271). In a speech he delivered in the Senate in December 1865, Sumner hoped to see a civil rights bill (which was in development) passed, but Johnson repeatedly opposed such acts. Sumner’s language points to the ideological and iconographic repercussions of the tragic years of presidential Reconstruction. The suffering of millions of black Americans was obscured—“whitewash[ed],” to quote Sumner—by the invidious spread of white supremacist notions, which dropped a veil between blacks and whites in the United States, the “veil of prejudice” that Child had long decried and which Du Bois famously described half a century later (“Reply of Mrs. Child” 251).¹⁰ This is why, in 1888, with hindsight garnered by years of witnessing the widespread failures of Reconstruction, Frederick Douglass declared emancipation a sham:

I here and now denounce his [Lincoln’s] so-called emancipation as a stupendous fraud—a fraud upon him, a fraud upon the world. It was not so meant by Abraham Lincoln; it was not so meant by the Republican Party; but whether so meant or not, it is practically a lie, keeping the word of promise to the ear and breaking it to the heart. (715)

As the promise of freedom was repeatedly declared but broken in the years following Lincoln’s decree, so it was repeatedly but disingenuously depicted, as Rosenthal’s *Proclamation of Emancipation* demonstrates. Emancipation was too often portrayed as already achieved in the popular culture of the era, and such images obscured the work to be done.

RAISING THE VEIL

In *A Romance of the Republic*, Child at once points to and pulls back the veil. As she had many times before, she confronts the heedlessness of prejudice with iconoclastic juxtaposition and irony to encourage readers to take another look and discover that problems persist. The novel provokes readers to see that injustice cannot be covered over—whitewashed—by touting union, policing the color line, or countenancing prejudice. While prints like Rosenthal's and government policies placated the white public and preserved the status quo, *Romance* exposes the problems of Reconstruction and the dangers of covering them up.

Romance tells the story of biracial sisters, Rosa and Flora, who were born as slaves but did not know it. These sisters ultimately find their way from the South to the North, to marriage, and, we suppose, to freedom. Yet through the story, readers learn to question such “glittering generalit[ies]” as freedom, for *Romance* exposes many American ideals as shams. The lover of the elder sister, Rosa, tricks her into a marriage that her enslaved status renders illegitimate—illegal, in fact, as her so-called husband knows full well. This husband then cheats the sisters' cherished servant (and fellow slave), Tulee, with a sham certificate of freedom, which is as worthless as Rosa's certificate of marriage. And so the story continues, with many horrendous and complex scenes. Yet *Romance* seems to end in joyous freedom, in the hosanna-filled world that the Rosenthal print and its attached booklet claimed the Emancipation Proclamation wrought. Significantly, however, Child never mentions the proclamation in this novel of almost five hundred pages. With this glaring omission and other, more apparent provocations, Child urges readers to consider history, vision, and the novel itself critically, for all are presentations that leave much interpretive work for readers to do, just as the proclamation, in Child's opinion, left much work for the nation to do to better understand, represent, and actualize liberty and equality.

Romance pushes readers to imagine and seek such ideals more rigorously in part by looking with a more critical eye. Throughout the novel, how people see one another and their world is crucial. Many of the characters learn to “look through the surface of things to the reality,” as one character puts it (251). Readers, too, learn to look differently. Their sense of vision is so consistently appealed to that one early reviewer praised the novel's “most vivid word painting” (“Literary Notices” 157). Indeed, the book opens with a pointed buildup to a picturesque scene of the paradisiacal world of the girls and their father, a seemingly prosperous businessman, Alfred Royal, whose lavish lifestyle complements his regal name. We meet Royal in the midst of a warm encounter with

a deceased friend's son, Alfred Royal King, who was named in honor of Royal. Since King is a visitor to the "Crescent City," seeking the "best worth seeing or hearing," Royal magnanimously invites him to his home, asserting, "there was nothing better worth seeing than my daughters" (1). He thus leads King and readers to meet his daughters as though they are spectacles, visual art objects presented for the viewer's enjoyment. Of Rosa the narrator reports, "The line from ear to chin was that perfect oval which artists love," and Flora's "proper place was among fountains and statues and pictured forms of art" (3, 14). Their father puts "[t]hese radiant visions of beauty" on display for the sake of his youthful guest, who appreciates their beauty and talents in singing, dancing, and painting. Awed by the girls and their surroundings, King exclaims, "'This is the Temple of Flora. . . . Flowers everywhere! Natural flowers, artificial flowers, painted flowers, embroidered flowers, and human flowers excelling them all,'—glancing at the young ladies as he spoke." Although King is clearly taken by the scene, this elaborate paean to Royal's floral paradise deconstructs itself; sham flowers are clustered next to the natural ones, fabricated flowers proximate to human, and even the human "flowers" are a sort of fabrication: the girls are humans, not flowers, despite their floral names. To add to the girls' objectification, "a statuette of Flora" graces one corner of the room and contributes to the conflation of the girls and their environment, the girls and the decorative objects—all properties of the scene (4–5).¹¹

Indeed, the girls are property. As mentioned above, Rosa and Flora are slaves, even if they do not know it. Significantly, they do not learn of their enslaved status until well after the narrative begins, after even King and the readers learn about their history from the man who plays the conventionally complex role of lover and villain. Gerald Fitzgerald (whose name evokes patriarchal associations, as do Royal's and King's) reveals the Royal family history after stating, rather boldly and bawdily, that the girls "are both rare gems of beauty. . . . If I were the Grand Bashaw, I would have them both in my harem." This tasteless remark, with its sexual implications, jolts King and is meant to shock readers as well. King queries Fitzgerald, trying to get at the root of his "levity," and finds out that Rosa and Flora have an "incredible" heritage; their mother was a "quadroon," and they are "Octoroons" (12–14). This news pushes King to reconsider the previous evening's "scenes of enchantment" and to recognize the "false position in which [the girls] were placed by the unreasoning prejudice of society" (15, 14).

As King learns from Royal, the girls' situation is dangerously complex. Their mother died a slave, despite her long marriage to Royal, since, as Royal himself explains, he neglected "such an obvious duty" as manumitting his wife and instead "allow[ed] circumstances to drift" (20, 23). After her death, he

never ventured to share her (and their) story with her children, because he felt that “there was much that he was obliged to refrain from saying, from reverence for their inexperienced purity” (30). Thus, when Royal dies soon after the beginning of the novel, he leaves his daughters vulnerable to the claims of his creditors; unbeknownst to the girls, they are “the best property Royal has left,” and his estate is encumbered with debt (43). They are only saved when a friend bluntly tells them, “*you* are slaves, and your father’s creditors claim a right to sell you” (54). This revelation encourages Rosa to rush into a marriage with her lover, Fitzgerald, who disingenuously promises the sisters their liberty and convinces them to don disguises and flee with him.

VEILS, CONTRASTS, AND CONTRADICTIONS

After a sham marriage, Fitzgerald sequesters the girls on an island off the coast of Georgia, a seeming paradise much like their father’s house in New Orleans. Although they have been spared the experience of overt enslavement—after an emancipation of sorts—the status quo resumes; once again, they are in the possession and power of another. The girls are relieved to be safe, although one obvious problem bothers them in their new “fairy-land,” as Rosa first refers to their island home: “The only drawback to the pleasure was, that Gerald charged them to wear thick veils, and never to raise them when any person was in sight. . . . [T]his necessity of concealment was a skeleton ever sitting at [Rosa’s] feast; and Floracita, who had no romantic compensation for it, chafed under the restraint” (79). Not only does Fitzgerald require them to wear veils when outside their isolated cottage, but he also forbids them from seeking society. Yet Rosa longs for Fitzgerald to acknowledge her publicly as his wife, and Flora longs to be free to roam and make friends. Their seclusion and veils are starkly symbolic. They are “shut out from [the] world by a vast veil” (Du Bois, *Souls* 16). Furthermore, they do not know the reality of their situation. Rosa’s marriage was a ruse, and she is not Fitzgerald’s wife, but his slave, as is Flora. In many ways, the girls and their world represent not only antebellum but also postbellum society—how it misremembered and misrepresented the past, failed to clearly see the present, and did not critically imagine the future. The novel, however, provokes readers to perceive how complicated the girls’ situation—like that of the United States—is.

While prints like *Proclamation of Emancipation* lead viewers to believe that slavery and freedom, complicity and innocence, are easy to discern, the novel troubles such simple distinctions. The print situates slavery clearly in the South; its scenes of slavery are dotted with palm trees and oaks covered in Spanish moss. In *Romance*, however, the borders of slavery are permeable.

When Flora escapes to the North, she still has to wear a veil.¹² And while many Northerners believed that they were not complicit in the nation's dark history, not involved with the atrocities of enslavement that were pictured on left side of celebratory emancipation prints, *Romance* pushes readers to recognize and relinquish such comfortable fictions by juxtaposing claims of Northern innocence with vivid scenes of Northern complicity. For instance, in one scene an antislavery character praises the Boston authorities for promoting freedom: "Boston policemen don't feel exactly in their element as slavehunters. They are too near Bunker Hill; and on the Fourth of July they are reminded of the Declaration of Independence, which, though it is going out of fashion, is still regarded by a majority of the people as a venerable document" (271). Yet merely a few pages later, the novel contradicts itself; several Boston policemen and soldiers are thoroughly implicated in the return of two runaway slaves to the South. Even the public joins in the chase: "lads and boys, always ready to hunt anything, joined in the pursuit" (307). These lads and the officers who ultimately imprison the runaways are as close to Bunker Hill as the policemen praised earlier. That Child punctuates the earlier statement with icons of America's commitment to liberty (Bunker Hill, Fourth of July, and the Declaration of Independence) should lead readers familiar with Child's earlier iconoclasm and parody to question her sincerity.

Such incongruous juxtapositions occur throughout the novel. To take another example, the narrator announces the Civil War melodramatically and glorifies its achievements but contradicts the statement later in the novel. The narrator admits that before the war, "[t]he North continued to make servile concessions, which history will blush to record," but then asserts that when "the Sumter gun was heard booming through the gathering storm," "[i]nstantly, the air was full of starry banners, and Northern pavements resounded with the tramp of horse and the rolling of artillery wagons. A thrill of patriotic enthusiasm kindled the souls of men. No more sending back of slaves. All our cities became at once cities of refuge; for men had risen above the letter of the Constitution into the spirit of the Declaration of Independence" (403). This announcement is patently inaccurate. As Child lamented repeatedly throughout the war, the Union army remanded escaped slaves to their masters, and strict adherence to a static interpretation of the Constitution delayed emancipation and perpetuated racial injustice throughout Reconstruction. Accordingly, just a few pages later, a Quaker farmer who guides fugitives along the Underground Railroad explains that he would have more hope of goodness from his fellow Northerners "if there was not so much pro-slavery here at the North." He testifies to what many celebratory records like *Proclamation of Emancipation* obscured: "thee knows that the generals of the United States

are continually sending back fugitive slaves to bleed under the lash of their taskmasters” (418). By setting up these contrasting reports and contradictory scenes, Child urges readers to be aware of the distortions of representation and therefore to engage critically with the past and present as well as with her novel.

Some readers recognized the book’s challenge. For instance, a reviewer for the *Independent* wrote:

It seems impossible that any thoughtful person can read this book without asking of his own heart whether he deserves the name of American; whether manhood and womanhood are sacred to him for themselves, untouched by any accident of birth, of race, of circumstance. For that is what the American idea insists on. There was never a time when this test of one’s birthright has been so rigorously applied as now. . . . To the believing, a book like this is a strong gospel. To the doubting, it is a mighty argument. To the faithless and the narrow, it is a terrible revelation saying, “Now ye have no cloak for your sin.” (“Mrs. Child’s Romance of the Republic” 2)

This reader perceives that *Romance* rends the veil hiding manifold injustices and urges readers to consider that being an American requires defending not only one’s own freedom but everyone’s “birthright” of liberty. One cannot celebrate liberty without sharing it. Other readers, however, failed to see the relevance of the novel’s revelations. “It belongs too much to the past,” a reviewer identified as E complained, elaborating, “not the very remote past which engages us because of its great antiquity, but the near past which to-day has been supplanted” (“Literary Notices” 157). E seems to believe what propaganda like *Proclamation of Emancipation* implies: emancipation was a success, and the problems of the antebellum era (slavery and racial injustice) do not plague the postbellum era. E was not the only reviewer to dismiss Child’s novel. Bruce Mills reports, “the response to Child’s work was apparently lukewarm at best” (139). This, Mills suggests, might have been because the novel does not present a dichotomized perspective or otherwise satisfy “readers’ demand for well-defined character types who embodied good and evil” (142). Instead, “[b]y embedding the message in the work’s emblems and incidents, [Child] trusts her readers’ own capacity to draw the correct conclusions” (140). Child’s vision thus may have been simultaneously too reformist, too ironic, too intertextual, and too ambiguous.

In some ways, this ambiguity opens the novel to being implicated in the abuses it decries. Most critics agree that the novel clearly critiques racism but worry that it perpetuates sexism and colorism.¹³ And many of its depictions do. White, male King, who marries Rosa after she flees from Fitzgerald, becomes the paternalistic benefactor of a large household of former slaves, and those with lighter skin receive preferential treatment. While King is in many ways

figured as the hero, he is not perfect. When viewed within the context of the novel overall and Child's provocative oeuvre, neither King nor his household appears ideal. They appear deeply flawed. Indeed, Alfred Royal King, named after Rosa and Flora's irresponsible father, betrays worrisome likenesses to his namesake. Certainly their names evoke similarly problematic paternalist and monarchical associations. Bearing out those implications, when the family and their former slaves reunite under his protection, King imagines his seemingly happy household to be like Royal's beautiful but corrupt home in New Orleans, which King considers the "entrance to the temple and palace of his life" (399).¹⁴

Furthermore, while the novel opens faulting Royal for having "acted in opposition to moral principles" for not manumitting his wife and for keeping his wife and daughters' history hidden, the daughters and their husbands also conceal the past from their children: "It was not deemed wise to inform them of any further particulars, till time and experience had matured their characters and views of life" (21, 287). Such concealment persists throughout the novel, at the end of which some of the children are already in their teens. Moreover, Tulee's history, especially the terror she experienced as a slave after she was left behind in the South, is "whispered only to Missy Rosy and Missy Flory," and later the narrator pointedly notes that "there are skeletons hidden away in the happiest households" (379, 399). Surely, Child, who wrote to raise veils and broadcast stories considered indecorous by polite society, presents these scenarios to highlight the problems and incite concern. In her introduction to Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Child declared far more boldly than these characters do that the truth must be known:

I am well aware that many will accuse me of indecorum for presenting these pages to the public; for the experiences of this intelligent and much-injured woman belong to class which some call delicate subjects, and others indelicate. This peculiar phase of Slavery has generally been kept veiled; but the public ought to be made acquainted with its monstrous features, and I willingly take the responsibility of presenting them with the veil withdrawn. (3-4)

In *Romance*, Child gives her readers the chance to recognize these veils and long for their removal. Such scenes provoke readers to be critically imaginative—to deconstruct the scenes, consider contexts, and seek out the stories that are only implied.

THE PROVOCATIVE TABLEAU

Child's method is most evident in the last chapter, which ends with a spectacle: an elaborate celebration of one character's birthday, the end of the war, and sev-

eral homecomings. The festive show resembles the outlandish fete that opens “The Stars and Stripes,” and it seems to praise the same “glittering generalit[ies]” and employ the same racist patterns that Rosenthal’s *Proclamation of Emancipation* does. For these reasons, many critics contend that this scene most clearly reveals the faults of a work they consider ambitious and forward-thinking but deeply flawed. This scene climaxes with the following tableau, which, according to such critics, best exemplifies “the strengths and weaknesses of the vision *A Romance of the Republic* offers” (Karcher, *First Woman* 526):

Under festoons of the American flag, surmounted by the eagle, stood Eulalia [Rosa’s daughter], in ribbons of red, white, and blue, with a circle of stars round her head. One hand upheld the shield of the Union, and in the other the scales of Justice were evenly poised. By her side stood Rosen Blumen [Flora’s daughter], holding in one hand a gilded pole surmounted by a liberty-cap, while her other hand rested protectingly on the head of Tulee’s [son] Benny, who was kneeling and looking upward in thanksgiving. (440)

This scene could be read as portraying and thereby promoting some strikingly patriarchal, paternalistic, and class- and color-stratified social configurations. However, when viewed with eyes trained by Child’s earlier iconoclasm and her consistent calls for readers to question what they see and critically to imagine beyond it, this scene appears full of thought-provoking incongruities that encourage criticism, conversation, and change.

For instance, the tableau, at first glance, seems a “hypostatization,” as Raimon puts it (61), of white supremacist hierarchies, since the darkest character, Benny, kneels below two lighter characters, Eulalia and Rosen. It could thus be seen as a version of the clichéd “emancipation moment,” where whites appear as the paternalistic benefactors of grateful blacks (Davis 69). Indeed, aspects of the scene recall the decorations on the lower left and right corners of *Proclamation of Emancipation*, where young black boys kneel in front of white female figures that represent, according to the advertising broadside, Liberty and Justice. Yet the tableau is revolutionary in ways not visible at first glance, for two mixed-race girls are Liberty and Justice, figures that were usually personified by white women. Of course, the revisionary implications of the tableau are imperceptible to viewers who do not know the girls’ complicated history, and the visibly darker character, Benny, still seems subordinate. Yet close readers may see Benny as the only participant in the tableau who is clearly free. Since the Emancipation Proclamation has not been mentioned and the girls and their once-enslaved mothers were never legally manumitted (as Tulee and Benny were), their status is ambiguous. Even the end of the war is announced ambiguously: “Another year brought with it what was *supposed* to be peace”

(431, emphasis added). Thus readers might question the freedom of Liberty and Justice, represented by Rosen and Eulalia. Of course, Child may not have intended such a reading, but she does present these conventional figures in new ways, and the overall ambiguous and perhaps ironic function of these images should provoke readers to respond critically and to see American icons and themselves in a more thoughtful and enlightened manner.

Moreover, Child signals that readers ought to look beyond the surface, for “striped festoons fell and veiled the tableau.” As we have seen, veils by no means carry positive connotations in this novel or in Child’s discourse.¹⁵ Usually they indicate that something is hidden or that the motives of the display are disingenuous. Further signaling the facetiousness of this scene, the festivities continue with a band of singers, led by Joe Bright (the most admirable and forthright character in the novel), singing patriotic tunes, along with, oddly, “a parody, composed by [Bright].” That the chorus sings a parody should lead readers to speculate, if they have not done so already, that the tableau was also presented, at least in part, as a parody, since Bright is the overall “director of ceremonies” (440–41). He also resembles Jim, the wise jester of “The Stars and Stripes,” whose songs communicated multiple and contradictory messages. Like Jim’s songs, Bright’s productions seem meant to provoke, to raise veils, as this finale encourages viewers and readers to do, ironically, by having a veil fall.

Further troubling any simple interpretation of this scene, the troupe sings “Whittier’s immortal ‘Boat Song,’” part of a poem written by John Greenleaf Whittier (441). Karcher describes Whittier’s piece as “an emancipation poem modeled on slave songs” and points out that the singers include several former slaves who would most likely have known real slave songs (*First Woman* 526). According to Karcher, Child thus seems to be “visualizing the incorporation of black elements into a white art form—or the appropriation of black culture by whites” (527). I concede the validity of Karcher’s point and agree that the inclusion of an inauthentic slave song spotlights the culture’s failings. However, I am struck by Child’s choice; the full text of the poem from which the song was taken encourages wariness and skepticism. In Whittier’s poem, the “negro boatmen” sing triumphantly, “We own de hoe, we own de plough, / We own de hands dat hold; / We sell de pig, we sell de cow; / But nebber *chile* be sold” (lines 53–56). The speaker of the poem, a white man, listens and admits the unvoiced thoughts of the white soldiers accompanying the black boatmen:

So sing our dusky gondoliers;
And with a secret pain,
And smiles that seem akin to tears,
We hear the wild refrain.

We dare not share the negro's trust,
Nor yet his hope deny;
We only know that God is just,
And every wrong shall die.
Rude seems the song; each swarthy face,
Flame-lighted, ruder still:
We start to think that hapless race
Must shape our good or ill;
That laws of changeless justice bind
Oppressor with oppressed;
And, close as sin and suffering joined,
We march to Fate abreast.
Sing on, poor hearts! your chant shall be
Our sign of blight or bloom,
The Vala-song of Liberty,
Or death-rune of our doom! (85–104)

The poem that frames the song seems at once to admit defeat, betray paternalistic notions of superiority, and hint of at least some self-critical awareness of prejudice and its delusions, as well as a hope to overcome them. Like the novel, it simultaneously depicts, admits, and points to injustice, all in quest of greater justice. Yet the novel employs more provocative irony and betrays an even greater self-awareness in part by including an excerpt from this conflicted poem. The composite construction—the striking image of the tableau paired with this problematic poem—recalls the iconoclastic patterns Child employed in her compilation of the *Anti-Slavery Almanac* and composition of “The Stars and Stripes.” Indeed, further connecting the novel’s final celebration with that parodic play, the performance ends when all join in singing “The Star-spangled Banner” (441), a song that Child deployed ironically in “The Stars and Stripes” and that one of the main characters of *Romance* at one point dismisses as disingenuous (314).

The final lines of the novel, spoken by Bright, further suggest that Child presents the tableau and the entire novel to rouse readers to question conventional iconography and the ideology of their nation. Bright stirs things up throughout the novel, calling things as he sees them, rarely obscuring his messages with sophistry. Even though he may regularly use satire and irony to communicate, he asserts: “I’m always in earnest myself. . . . I suppose some of us Abolitionists *are* a little rough at times; but I reckon the coarsest of us do more good than the false prophets that prophesy smooth things” (324). He stays true to his mission in his final speech, the last words spoken in the novel:

I don't want to bid you good night, friends; but I must. I don't generally like to go among Boston folks. Just look at the trees on the Common. They're dying because they've rolled the surface of the ground so smooth. That's just the way in Boston, I reckon. They take so much pains to make the surface smooth, that it kills the roots o' things. But when I come here, or go to Mrs. Blumenthal's [Flora's], I feel as if the roots o' things wa'n't killed. Good night, friends. (441)

These wise words metaphorically depict the deleterious effects of the headlong drive for reconciliation and settling that triumphed after the war and that prints like *Proclamation of Emancipation* celebrate and exemplify. Certainly Bright, committed as he was to brandishing the truth whenever and however he could, would not lead an uncritical performance of such patriotic ideals as the tableau seems to present without ironizing them, as I suggest the troupe—or at least Bright and, through him, Child—does. The icons of the nation are depicted incongruously, characters sing songs in jest and sincerity, and over a gaudy tableau that seems to support white supremacy a veil falls. All this is done under the direction of Bright, the master of ceremonies and grand satirist.

In the end, this performance does not smooth the surface or “prophesy smooth things” (324). The tableau, the finale, and the novel, composed of many cherished national icons, a bit of parody, and many iconoclastic incongruities, leave room for interpretation and push readers to view the novel and their own visions for the nation with critical imagination. Bright's words offer sage advice for Child's readers: they had to deal with the roots of the problems—slavery and the racialized structure of the nation—that sent them to war and to cultivate the roots of ideals that might unify them again. They had to do this not through placation and obfuscation but by looking critically at themselves and their society. Placing Child's appearance in *Proclamation of Emancipation* within the context of her iconoclastic oeuvre enables us to view that print with a more critical eye and trace the debates it unwittingly portrays. Similarly, looking closely at the images and icons of *Romance* in their complicated multimedia context allows exploration of the conversations and critiques that are not immediately apparent in the text. Mitchell explains, “The essence of the dialectical image is its polyvalence—as object in the world, as representation, as analytic tool, as rhetorical device, as figure—most of all as a Janus-faced emblem of our predicament, a mirror of history, and a window beyond it” (205). Such images invite questions, conversations, and creativity; *Romance* and Child's work at large suggest that these are key aspects of the critically imaginative process in which communities must engage in order to determine their futures. While *Proclamation of Emancipation* and other popular prints encourage viewers to accept and even celebrate the status quo pictured,

Romance functions as a provocative, dialectical image that throws its own representations into question, encourages revision, and paves the way for change.

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NOTES

1. As Holzer explains, “since [such prints] were entirely the creations of commercial entrepreneurs, their appearance almost always reflected prevailing public taste. They were not commissioned by politicians to influence public opinion. They were created by businessmen to meet public demand” (*Emancipating Lincoln* 134).

2. Mills points out, for example, that “Child turns to emblem rather than exhortation” throughout her work (145), and Raimon analyzes how many of the novel’s scenes function as “visual and cognitive experiments designed to appeal to genteel readers’ sense of aesthetic harmony to advance the sociopolitical goal of integration” (57). See Mills 137 and Yellin 75 for arguments about how the novel’s final tableau articulates a revision of the standard abolitionist emblem.

3. For readings of the patriarchal elements in the novel, see Karcher, *First Woman* 527 and Nelson, *The Word in Black and White* 82; on the novel’s paternalism, see Karcher, “Lydia Maria Child’s *A Romance*” 97; on its classism, see Karcher, “Lydia Maria Child’s *A Romance*” 99 and Piep 168; on its racism, see Karcher, “Lydia Maria Child’s *A Romance*” 87 and Yellin 74.

4. Many commemorative prints produced in the mid-1860s employ similar conventions to celebrate emancipation. For example, both Louis Lipman’s *Emancipation Proclamation* and William Roberts’s *Proclamation of Emancipation by the President of the United States of America* surround the text of the Emancipation Proclamation with illustrations strikingly similar to those in Rosenthal’s *Proclamation of Emancipation*: generic scenes of slavery on the left, segregated scenes of freedom on the right, and a grand American eagle at the top. An American flag and a portrait of Lincoln also appear on both prints. Additionally, Lipman’s work bears allegorical figures, such as Justice and Liberty. Thomas Nast’s well-known *Emancipation* includes many of these features but does not reproduce the text of the proclamation. All three of these prints and *Proclamation of Emancipation* signal the success of emancipation, locate the crimes

of slavery in the South, and gloss over—while unwittingly depicting—the problems of prejudice and segregation in post-emancipation America.

5. As Lapsansky explains of abolitionist print culture at large, “The actual and the allegorical joined in scenes of enslavement juxtaposed to American national symbols such as the flag or the Capitol, highlighting the contradiction between American slavery and American freedom” (206–7).

6. In a letter to friend Lucy Osgood, Child exclaimed, “God knows I *want* to love and honor the flag of my country; but how *can* I, when it is used for *such* purposes? When men strive to enslave others, the spirit of justice within me cries out, ‘May God do so unto them, and more also!’” (380).

7. Holzer notes that the majority of those who would have purchased such a print were most likely white (“Picturing Freedom” 114).

8. Child’s commitment to African Americans’ rights to financial prosperity, education, and a comfortable family life are evident in “Homesteads.” She addresses the right to freedom of marriage in “Emancipation and Amalgamation.” And her calls for suffrage are scattered throughout her letters. A letter to Sarah Shaw provides a particularly clear example: “I hope they [Congress] will learn that their best *policy* is to grant suffrage to the blacks” (17 June 1866).

9. See Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, especially chapter 8, “The Transubstantiation of a Poor White”; Foner 177; and Karcher, *First Woman* 492–95.

10. Du Bois writes that he became aware of this veil early in his life, but that many white Americans remained—perhaps intentionally—oblivious to it. He describes his painful recognition of the veil as follows: “Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others [white children]; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil” (*Souls* 16).

11. Rosenthal explores the implications of the girls’ floral names and the language of flowers that works throughout the novel, suggesting that through this schematic Child “redresses negative scientific discourse on hybridity” (233).

12. In “The Stars and Stripes,” Ellen also wears a veil in the North (163).

13. According to Alice Walker, colorism is “prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color” (290).

14. At the end of the novel, right before the revelation of the grand tableau, King similarly comments, “How the room is decorated with vines and flowers! It reminds me of that dear floral parlor in New Orleans” (438).

15. Other instances where Child uses this term negatively abound. As seen above, she uses the image of the veil to discuss prejudice and the manipulation of icons and ideals. In “To Abolitionists,” she points out that many anti-abolitionists used their sexism “to veil their hostility to anti-slavery” (195), and in her tribute, “William Lloyd Garrison,” she praises her subject’s “manner towards women,” which “had no tinge of that odious thing called gallantry, distasteful to sensible women, because it is obviously a mere veil for condescension and often for profligacy” (293).

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