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Editorial Savoir Faire:

Thoreau Transforms His Journal into "Slavery in Massachusetts" ¹

Sandra Harbert Petrulionis

The summer of 1854 was an unusually public one for the reclusive Henry Thoreau. At a Fourth of July gathering in Framingham, Massachusetts, he spoke in the company of the most militant abolitionists of the day, vigorously protested the rendition (return to his owner by federal authorities) of fugitive slave Anthony Burns, and seconded the call for an end to the Union that continued to condone slavery. His increased anger over slavery coincided with anticipation, however, as Thoreau looked forward to the publication of his eight-year work-in-progress, *Walden*. By the spring, he had completed many revisions to the final manuscript, and at least by early May, he had sent the printer's copy to Ticknor & Fields ([Shanley 32](#)). *Walden* would be published on 9 August, and Thoreau's name was in the papers often that summer as excerpts from the book ran in various publications. Additionally, Charles Scribner notified Thoreau in May that *Walden* would be included in Scribner's *Cyclopedia of American Literature*, published the following year ([Harding and Bode 326](#)). It seemed that Thoreau was finally being taken seriously after years of writing and publishing, and he obviously pinned many professional hopes on *Walden*. Steven Fink claims that, "despite [Thoreau's] protestations to the contrary, he was hardly indifferent to the public's response to this work," and he estimates that the publicity Thoreau received that year "contributed significantly to the establishment of Thoreau's general reputation as an American author of merit" ([Prophet 267](#)).

Fink argues that Thoreau's Fourth of July speech, soon published as "Slavery in Massachusetts," exposed him to a potentially new audience for *Walden*. The public appearance clearly associated him with radical abolitionism, and those who would not normally have read his works might have viewed with interest a book written by a Transcendentalist who doubled as an antislavery spokesman ("[Thoreau and His Audience](#)" [86–87](#)). When he decided to speak in Framingham, Thoreau began to put together a speech culled from his 1854 journal commentary about Anthony Burns and earlier journal entries in April 1851 regarding fugitive [\[End Page 206\]](#) slave Thomas Sims. As any good editor would, Thoreau revised his rough prose in order to turn it into a public address: he cleaned up rambling passages, added to and deleted sentences, and clarified points. Yet he did more than this. The journal entries from late May through mid-June 1854 contain Thoreau's strongest condemnation to that date of northern complicity with proslavery forces. However, the most vehement and sarcastic examples of this rhetoric of condemnation do not show up in "Slavery in Massachusetts." ² A

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comparison of the text of "Slavery in Massachusetts" with the journal from which it derives reveals that Thoreau curtailed the journal's stridency, revising or cutting more than twenty passages that, with few exceptions, can be categorized as blasphemous, revolutionary, or, at best, politically incautious. In the journal, Thoreau equates the suffering of slaves with Christ's, and he unequivocally advocates violence in the fight to end slavery. Why did Thoreau trouble to make these changes? I would propose that in the summer of 1854 Thoreau wanted to be regarded as a credible and an important author, probably more than at any other time in his maturation as a writer; the Independence Day rally provided an opportunity for him to become visible both as an antislavery spokesman and as the author of *Walden*. Had Thoreau read from the unexpurgated journal when he spoke at Framingham, he would doubtless have offended many in the audience. So he pointedly removed from the speech the most inflammatory remarks about Christ and religious and government officials—statements that would have reflected negatively on the man who uttered them. These two concerns—slavery and the reception of *Walden*—should be considered equally important in evaluating why Thoreau spoke at the antislavery meeting and in determining why his remarks there "toned down" the harsh rhetoric of the journal (**Richardson 315**). In order to appeal to his Fourth of July audience as an impassioned abolitionist, *and* in order to cultivate a potential audience for *Walden*, Thoreau displayed the skills of a savvy editor who uncharacteristically repackaged private fury into acceptable public discourse.³

Thoreau's passionate commitment to antislavery is well documented. From his 1844 essay praising the antislavery weekly the *Herald of Freedom* and its editor Nathaniel P. Rogers, to his advocacy for Wendell Phillips's appearances before the Concord Lyceum in the early 1840s, to the inspiration for his militant essay "Resistance to Civil Government," and, finally, to his increasingly enraged journal commentary in the 1850s, Thoreau makes clear his abolitionist sympathies. His mother and sister Helen were among the founding members in 1837 of the Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society, and they and others often involved Thoreau in their activities. The Thoreau family hid fugitive slaves in their home, [End Page 207] and Thoreau assisted the runaways by purchasing their railway tickets, driving them to the train station, often riding with them to the next station, and nursing back to health those who were unable to travel (see **Thoreau, Journal 4 113** and **Journal VI 472**; **Conway 141**; and Emerson). In fact, Concord resident Ann Bigelow recalled years later that "Henry Thoreau went as escort probably more often than any other man" when she discussed the town's participation in the Underground Railroad (Emerson). As Gary Collison points out, runaway slaves who made it to the northern states usually had to depend on whites for assistance to continue their journey to Canada; local free blacks typically did not have the financial wherewithal to help them (151). Thus, in addition to voicing his antislavery convictions in various forums, Thoreau also acted on these beliefs, often at considerable personal risk.⁴

But heretofore Thoreau had largely confined his abolitionism to local and individual efforts. What motivated him in the summer of 1854 to unite with the radical voices who came to Framingham for the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society—the largest gathering of abolitionists anywhere in the country—and to give a speech that clearly catered to this audience? Scholars generally cite "Slavery in Massachusetts" as a more militant example of Thoreau's political philosophy than "Resistance to Civil Government." A few critics, such as Henry A. Hawken, have commented on the marked difference between "Slavery in Massachusetts" and the journal (207), but no one has

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satisfactorily explained why Thoreau made the specific changes that he did to construct this speech. Robert C. Albrecht claims that the speech omits the journal's "strong statements" because Thoreau's "ultimate purpose in this address is not destruction but the establishment of principles" (184). While I agree with this conclusion, I would like to concentrate on *why* it was important for Thoreau to achieve that relationship at that time with that audience. The timing of the Framingham gathering is crucial to an assessment of "Slavery in Massachusetts." The care with which Thoreau reconstructed his often militant journal into this less offensive speech reflects how attuned he was to his audience that day, and it demonstrates a surprising willingness to soften his rhetoric and tailor his public image, even as it continues to remind us how deeply Thoreau felt about the injustice of human slavery.

The rendition of Anthony Burns, to quote Walter Harding, was "perhaps the turning point in Massachusetts in the anti-slavery fight" (317). Historians surmise that Boston's shame over its inaction in 1851, when **[End Page 208]** Thomas Sims was returned to slavery, at least partially motivated abolitionist zeal with regard to Burns, so that Thoreau's engagement with the issue of slavery mirrored the growing antislavery sentiment of many New Englanders.⁵ On 22 May 1854, Congress had passed the Kansas Nebraska Act, legislation that effectively repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820. Western territories could now determine by popular sovereignty whether to admit new states as free or slaveholding, and enraged Bostonians and antislavery voices throughout the nation protested what they regarded as a blatant victory for the proslavery Congress.

Burns's arrest and imprisonment were authorized through a warrant issued by U.S. Slave Commissioner Edward Greeley Loring, who concurrently served as a Massachusetts probate judge. Burns, a fugitive slave from Alexandria, Virginia, had arrived in Boston earlier that spring and had been living and working in a clothing store on Brattle Street. On 24 May, two days after Congress approved the Kansas Nebraska Act, Burns was arrested under trumped-up charges of jewelry theft and immediately jailed in the Boston courthouse.⁶ New England abolitionists quickly mobilized, eager to capitalize on the timing of this propitious event, and the Boston Vigilance Committee called a meeting in Faneuil Hall on the night of 26 May to protest Burns's detention. Unfortunately, the impassioned and eloquent group, which included Wendell Phillips and Theodore Parker, was poorly organized. Their attempted rescue of Burns, which Thoreau characterized in the journal as a "heroic attack," failed, leaving Thomas Wentworth Higginson with a saber cut on his chin and courthouse guard James Batchelder dead (**Journal, MS volume XVII 256**).⁷ But the action served to notify federal and civic leaders that Burns's imprisonment had provoked unanticipated hostility in the city, and the authorities acted quickly, under orders from President Franklin Pierce, to quell the commotion before another rescue could be planned. Mayor Jerome van Crowninshield Smith declared Boston under military law during the three days of Burns's trial, and he welcomed federal officials as they staged an overwhelming show of military might in the streets of Boston. On 2 June, Commissioner Loring rendered Burns to his owner, Charles Suttle, and he was taken back to Virginia, the last fugitive slave to be given up by Massachusetts.

The sensation of another fugitive slave held in Boston, and all of the details surrounding Burns's arrest, trial, and attempted rescue, were important news in Concord and in the Thoreau household. According to Leonard Gougeon, Ralph Waldo Emerson

was so upset by the situation that he started writing a new antislavery speech; and on Independence Day, while Thoreau traveled to speak in Framingham, Emerson's wife, **[End Page 209]** Lidian Emerson, "covered the front gate with black bunting to demonstrate her feeling that the country was 'wholly lost to any sense of righteousness'" (**Gougeon and Myerson xliii**). Although Thoreau had generally found it easy to ignore the external distractions of neighbors, family, and community, he reacted furiously to the reality that Massachusetts officials had once again caved in to the enemies of justice. His journal for the spring months of 1854 records the annual break-up of the ice on Walden Pond, a trip to the Boston Society of Natural History Library, and the purchase of his first spyglass. But beginning on 29 May, the journal offers much more. Interspersed among canoe trips, forest walks, and sightings of spring flowers and birds are twenty-eight manuscript pages that attest to how deeply Thoreau had become caught up in the social and political fervor caused by Burns's rendition and the state's capitulation to the Fugitive Slave Law.

Twenty-eight pages on any single topic other than natural phenomena or extended outings is somewhat unusual in Thoreau's later journal, which by this time had become what Lawrence Buell describes as "a record . . . of daily extrospection" (***Environmental Imagination* 117**). Although in his April 1851 journal Thoreau discussed at length the rendition of Thomas Sims, and in the fall of 1859 he devoted several pages to the arrest and hanging of John Brown, rarely did Thoreau use his journal to document important events in his life or community.⁸ The publication of *Walden* itself merits but a scant two lines on 9 August 1854 (**Journal, MS volume XVII 379**).⁹ But by this summer, Burns's arrest had inflamed Thoreau's rage over slavery to such an extent that it repeatedly spilled over into his most private writing. On 29 May, five days after Burns was arrested, Thoreau wrote, "Why the U.S. Government never performed an act of justice in its life. And this unoffending citizen is held a prisoner by the united states [sic] soldier—of whom the best you can say is that he is a fool in a painted coat. Of what use a governor or a legislature? they are nothing but politicians" (239). Thoreau then continued for four and a half pages to indict Loring, the U.S. Government, the governor, the chief of Massachusetts's armed forces, the press, and all who fail to be "men of principle" (238–39, 241).

In addition to his journal, Thoreau soon found another outlet in which to sound his rage. On 28 June the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society called for "ALL who mean to be known as on LIBERTY'S side" to attend an Independence Day gathering in Framingham (**Dean 12**). The *Liberator's* announcement of this meeting asked that, in memory of Anthony Burns's reenslavement, the Fourth of July be "observed, every where, as a day of deep humiliation and sorrow" (16 June 1854). In an extraordinary response to these entreaties, Thoreau joined with New England's most outspoken abolitionists and addressed the crowd at this **[End Page 210]** event. Held annually on the Fourth of July at Harmony Grove, a popular recreation spot in Framingham, these rallies typically attracted thousands of spectators. Stephen W. Herring characterizes the 1854 gathering as the "peak" of the antislavery meetings (4), and estimates of that day's crowd vary from six hundred to thousands (**Mayer 443**; Dean). In his recent biography of William Lloyd Garrison, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*, Henry Mayer describes the setting at Harmony Grove that day: "A portion of the grove had been formed into a little amphitheater with benches banked into the hillside and a speaker's platform, festooned this day with two white flags labeled Kansas and Nebraska and banners depicting a downcast Massachusetts chained to a

triumphant Virginia” and “an American flag turned upside down and edged with black crepe” (443).

Thoreau was not included in any of the publicity announcements for the event that ran in *The Liberator* on 16, 23, and 30 June, and so most critics surmise that he was included in the lineup at the last minute (**Dean and Hoag 214; Glick 331–33**). Possibly Moncure Daniel Conway, a young Unitarian minister and abolitionist with whom Thoreau had become friends the previous summer, urged him to come, since it fell to Conway to introduce Thoreau that day; or perhaps Thoreau was encouraged to attend by fellow Concordian and abolitionist Colonel William Whiting, who not only attended the rally, but was elected one of the day’s vice presidents (*Liberator*, 7 July 1854). Fink contends that by this point in his life Thoreau wanted to “be taken seriously as a social critic and moral reformer” (“**Thoreau and His Audience**” 79), and the Framingham meeting provided a widely publicized opportunity for him to expand on both roles. Thoreau had previously spoken out against slavery, but his participation at an organized antislavery gathering such as this one was unprecedented, and it signaled a shift in his reluctance to contribute publicly to the furor over slavery. ¹⁰

Thoreau had been earning meager income from the lecture circuit since the 1840s, but these speaking engagements typically addressed “Walking,” “The Wild,” “Economy,” or his excursions to Maine and Cape Cod. Seldom, with the exception of his lectures in 1848 that led to “Resistance to Civil Government,” did Thoreau deal with overt political topics when he appeared before local lyceums and town gatherings, and he had been speaking as an individual, not as part of a group that espoused particular allegiances (see **Dean and Hoag 127–288**). Although in April 1851, following Thomas Sims’s return to slavery, Thoreau apologized to a Concord audience for addressing “absolute freedom & wildness” rather than the Fugitive Slave Law, by July 1854 he apparently felt that he must speak about it (**Dean and Hoag 199**). The arrest of Burns enraged Thoreau anew—he simply could not sit idly [**End Page 211**] writing in his journal in the face of what he now regarded as a threat to his own liberty, as Barry Kritzberg and Alfred A. Funk explain in their studies of “Slavery in Massachusetts” (**Kritzberg 548; Funk 168**). Perhaps Thoreau felt embarrassed that he had been busily writing angry words but doing nothing when others close to him had acted on their principles. After all, his friends Bronson Alcott and T. W. Higginson had planned and led the courthouse raid that attempted to free Burns, and their efforts had been praised by the antislavery press. ¹¹ Bradley P. Dean and Ronald Wesley Hoag contend that Thoreau felt “compelled to interrupt his principal tasks by the moral urgency of the situation” (221), an argument substantiated by his journal entry of 16 June 1854: “I feel that to some extent the state has fatally interfered with my just & proper business—It has not merely interrupted me in my passage through court-street on errands of trade—but it has to some extent interrupted me & every man on his onward & upward path in which he had trusted soon to leave Court street far behind—I have found that hollow which I had relied on for solid” (291). Thoreau made it clear that freedom could not exist for anyone while slavery remained, because the government that guaranteed his liberty could not be relied upon as long as it sanctioned slavery.

When Thoreau stepped up to the lecture platform in the sweltering afternoon heat that Independence Day, he did so as an abolitionist who believed that the time had come for him to add his voice to others. We must not fail to appreciate the significance of this event: on a remarkably public occasion for an unusually private man, Thoreau stood

next to America's most fanatical antislavery zealots, denounced the U.S. and Massachusetts governments, and advocated disunion. The antislavery crowd, however bemused by his Transcendentalism, quite possibly also knew of his activities on behalf of Concord's antislavery effort and were no doubt gratified, as Conway's introduction suggested, by Thoreau's show of solidarity with them on that symbolic day (184). Despite the fact that Thoreau had lampooned professional reformers, he respected those who were sincere and whose deeds embodied their words: friends such as Alcott and Higginson, and abolitionist Wendell Phillips. Surely, as Albrecht points out, Thoreau must have realized that here, gathered together on the Fourth of July, would be a sympathetic audience who would listen appreciatively while he joined his rage with theirs (186). Therefore, as Funk describes, Thoreau delivered a speech that "mirrored perhaps more effectively than any other of his public addresses the tone and temper of his audience, stating in words better than they could express what they wanted to hear" (167). **[End Page 212]**

Various studies of "Slavery in Massachusetts" focus on the journal passages from which the speech derives, but I want to examine instead the journal text that Thoreau deleted from his public remarks in Framingham. The majority of the speech includes material from his journal of April 1851 (regarding Thomas Sims) and from late May through mid-June 1854. The manuscript of the 1851 Journal reflects minimal editing, but, in contrast, the manuscript journal for May and June 1854 contains many pencil corrections as Thoreau refined his thoughts about Burns's arrest and trial into a formal talk. ¹² Instead of the journal's explosive avowals, "Slavery in Massachusetts" trod cautiously as Thoreau took out the most revolutionary or overtly contemptuous words and phrases. Throughout the speech, Thoreau muted the journal's tirade against the state, and although he strongly condemned state officials, likening their rhetoric to "the creaking of crickets and the hum of insects," he deleted the journal's more biting assertions, such as one that declared that "the U.S. gov [government] never performed an act of pure justice in its life" ("**Slavery in Massachusetts**" 92; **Journal, MS volume XVII 242**). Albrecht finds that the removal of certain journal passages, including this one, "is perhaps understandable," and he hints that Thoreau may have feared legal action resulting from his strong language (184–85). Given William Lloyd Garrison's incendiary scene at Framingham that morning in which he set fire to the U.S. Constitution ("a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell") (**Dean and Hoag 216**), the Declaration of Independence, and a copy of Commissioner Loring's decision rendering Burns, it is doubtful that Thoreau, who spoke later in the day and well after Garrison's actions, would have worried about the personal repercussions of his remarks. Indeed, Thoreau likely would have welcomed another stint of incarceration in light of his commemoration five years earlier of his one night in jail to protest slavery and the Mexican War, which he proudly describes in "Resistance to Civil Government." Rather, the revisions that produced "Slavery in Massachusetts" result from Thoreau's sensitivity that summer to his audience.

Other deletions from the journal continue to corroborate Thoreau's awareness of his audience. On 9 June Thoreau had written that "the Authorities the Governor—Mayor—Commissioner—Marshall &c—are either weak or unprincipled men . . . or else of dull moral perception" (**Journal, MS volume XVII 270**). But this conclusion does not appear in the speech. Thoreau freely excoriated Commissioner Loring throughout "Slavery in Massachusetts," yet removed this journal passage regarding Loring:

“Witness the President of the U.S. What is the position of [End Page 213] Massachusetts Massa-chooses-it—? She leaves it to a Mr. Loring to decide whether one of her citizens is a freeman or a slave” (241). Thoreau also omitted the observation that Loring’s “existence . . . is as impertinent as the gnat that settles on my paper” (238–39). Possibly Thoreau excised these statements because they belittled Loring as a man rather than as a slave commissioner, especially since Thoreau retained most of the following journal passage, which, rather than criticizing Loring personally, scoffs at what Thoreau considered irrelevant—the Commissioner’s insistence on the constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Law:

The judges & lawyers & all men of expediency—consider not whether the Fugitive Slave Law is right but whether it is what they call constitutional—They try the merits of the case by a very low & incompetent standard. Pray, is virtue constitutional—or vice—is equity constitutional or integrity. It is as impertinent in important moral & vital questions like this to ask whether a law is constitutional or not as to ask—whether it is profitable or not—They persist in being the servants of man & the worst of men rather than the servants of God—Sir the question is not whether you or your grandfather 70 years ago entered into an agreement to serve the devil—and that service is not accordingly now due—but whether you will not now for once & at last serve God—in spite of your own past recreancy or that of your ancestors—and obey that eternal & only just Constitution which he & not any Jefferson or Adams has written in your being.

(297–98)

One of the most striking examples of Thoreau’s editorial shrewdness can be seen in the revision of his warning in the journal: “I would touch a match to blow up earth & hell together.” Next to this sentence Thoreau penciled in another remark: “I shall not accept life in America or on this planet on such terms” (242). In “Slavery in Massachusetts,” however, Thoreau transfigured this uncompromising language into a more circumspect nonthreat: “I need not say what match I would touch, what system endeavor to blow up” (92). And while the speech did retain the infamous proclamation that “my thoughts are murder to the state,” it pointedly left out the penciled line that followed in the journal: “I am calculating how many miscreants each honest man can dispose of” (294).

Other deletions demonstrate Thoreau’s special care with regard to the crowd’s religious makeup. Not one of the irreverent journal passages that refer to Christ, Christians, and church leaders appears in “Slavery in Massachusetts.” On 9 June Thoreau wrote: “The citizens of Mass. not being men of principle—will it appears send back this fugitive slave—i.e. to call the same thing by another name will crucify christ” (271). Eight days later, he recorded, “While they are hurrying off christ [End Page 214] to the cross—the ruler decides that he cannot *constitutionally* interfere to save him—The christians now & always are they who obey the higher law. This was meaner than to crucify Christ—for he could better take care of himself” (298). From the April 1851 journal, Thoreau cut a similar reference: “Of course it makes not the least difference I wish you to consider this who the man was—whether he was Jesus christ or another—for in as much as ye did it unto the least of these his brethren ye did it unto him” (*Journal 3 203*).

In truth, such assertions merely affirmed Thoreau’s Transcendental belief that we each participate equally in Christ’s divinity and share in his suffering. But Thoreau knew his audience well enough to predict that some would seriously object to such a blatant comparison of the suffering of slaves and that of Christ—let alone to the

suggestion that Christ was less a victim than the slave. Albert Von Frank points out that the abolitionists commonly linked Anthony Burns to Christ (173), citing a sermon in which Octavius Brooks Frothingham spoke of Burns as “*Christ* himself, in the person of one of the least of his disciples” (qtd. in **Von Frank 269**). But Von Frank also notes that such rhetoric was not taken lightly; indeed, many of Frothingham’s congregation left the church well before that sermon had ended (269). Thoreau no doubt realized that it was one thing to turn Burns into a Christ-like figure, similar to Uncle Tom, but an entirely different matter to elevate the slave’s suffering to Christ’s or literally to refer to Burns as “Christ.”

In what must have been a bow to the legal professionals in the crowd, Thoreau excluded this barb from the Journal: “Why will men be such fools as to trust to lawyers for *moral* reform” (292). Likewise, in deference to many of the day’s speakers, as well as a good portion of the audience who were clergymen, Thoreau deleted the biting portrayal of church leaders that he’d written on 16 June: “I heard the other day of a meek & sleek devil of a bishop somebody—who commended the law & order with which Burns was given up—I would like before I sit down to a table to inquire if there is one in the company who styles himself or is styled bishop—& he or I should go out of it—.” Beside this sentence, Thoreau wrote in pencil: “I would have such a man wear his bishops [sic] hat & his clerical bib & tucker that we may know him” (292). The exclusion of this religious commentary contrasts with Thoreau’s criticism five years later in “A Plea for Captain John Brown,” where he chastises the church and “the modern Christian . . . a man who has consented to say all the prayers in the liturgy, provided you will let him go straight to bed and sleep quietly afterward.” In this speech, Thoreau also scoffs that America’s “government . . . pretends to be Christian and crucifies a million Christs every day!” (121, 130–31). By 1859, however, **[End Page 215]** Thoreau’s concern for his reputation had waned, and he freely praised what he contended was the heroism of John Brown.

“Slavery in Massachusetts” echoes the journal’s indictment of the press, but at the same time softens yet another caustic reference to religion. In the 1851 journal, Thoreau accused his countrymen of putting more faith in their newspapers than in the Bible. But where the journal recorded, “I believe that in this country the press exerts a greater and more pernicious influence than the Church,” Thoreau qualified this declaration so that the speech read “than the Church did in its worst period.” He therefore censured not the collective entity of “the Church,” but, rather, the institutional Church of the distant past, and thus he safely mitigated his usual scorn for all religious institutions (***Journal 3 206***; ***“Slavery in Massachusetts” 99***).

Curiously, many of the penciled changes Thoreau made to the journal in order to revise it for the speech do not in fact appear in “Slavery in Massachusetts.” Clarifications to a number of specific journal passages are excluded along with the original text itself. For instance, two of the penciled additions I have mentioned—“I would have such a man wear his bishops [sic] hat & his clerical bib & tucker,” and “I will not accept life in America or on this planet on such terms”—either precede or follow the original journal entry and therefore were seemingly added for inclusion in “Slavery in Massachusetts.” Yet Thoreau ended up omitting these entire sections from the speech. These deleted passages strongly suggest that, as Thoreau deliberated about his Framingham appearance, he reconsidered material that he had initially thought of including but ultimately opted to remove. While such revisions typify his method of composition in the journal, this decision process denotes un-Thoreauvian caution as he

strove to balance his ethos of honest self-expression with a desire to engage his audience.

If Thoreau saw the announcement for the Fourth of July gathering, as he quite likely did since his family subscribed to *The Liberator*, then he also would have read the list of planned speakers and therefore known who would be sharing the platform with him that day. He knew and had long admired Wendell Phillips; he had read William Lloyd Garrison's outspoken articles in *The Liberator*; and, in general, he was familiar with the abolitionist jeremiads that often invoked scripture and proclaimed antislavery as the only moral choice for the true Christian. ¹³ Simply scanning this list of speakers, Thoreau would have surmised the (at least) moderately religious character of the Framingham speakers and their audience, many of whom were abolitionists solely because of their religious convictions. True to form, Garrison opened the meeting by reading from "appropriate passages of scripture," followed by an antislavery hymn (*Liberator*, 7 July 1854). Similarly, Phillips's speech that day [End Page 216] portrayed the rendition of Burns in quite biblical parlance: "God has given us a text in the late events in the city of Boston, and now our object is to take out the burthen of that rebuke and preach a sermon upon it in every great town in Massachusetts" (**Hawken 223**). Others who addressed the group included Unitarian minister Moncure Daniel Conway; outspoken abolitionists Abby Kelley Foster and her husband, Stephen S. Foster; Lucy Stone; the Reverend John Pierpont; and Sojourner Truth, who chastised whites for tolerating slavery in spite of their religious convictions (**Painter 137–38**). ¹⁴ When Garrison concluded his performance by burning the U.S. Constitution, many in the crowd were shocked and loudly objected, and the well-publicized moment resulted in some negative press for the entire meeting (Dean; **Mayer 445**). Undoubtedly, Thoreau was correct in assuming that this crowd would have objected to his criticism of the church and religious leaders, let alone to his remarks about Christ. To woo an audience meant that Thoreau couldn't insult it and, thus, he suppressed the scorn he had expressed in his journal.

Conway observed Thoreau's impact on the Framingham audience, and he confirms the crowd's sensitivity to blasphemous remarks:

Thoreau had come all the way from Concord for this meeting. It was a rare thing for him to attend any meeting outside of Concord, and though he sometimes lectured in the Lyceum there, he had probably never spoken on a platform. He was now clamoured for and made a brief and quaint speech. He began with the simple words, "You have my sympathy; it is all I have to give you, but you may find it important to you." It was impossible to associate egotism with Thoreau; we all felt that the time and trouble he had taken at that crisis to proclaim his sympathy with the "Disunionists" was indeed important. He was there a representative of Concord, of science and letters, which could not quietly pursue their tasks while slavery was trampling down the rights of mankind. Alluding to the Boston commissioner who had surrendered Anthony Burns, Edward G. Loring, Thoreau said, "The fugitive's case was already decided by God,—not Edward G. God, but simple God." This was said with such serene unconsciousness of anything shocking in it that we were but mildly startled.

(184–85)

Conway is mistaken that Thoreau had not previously lectured outside Concord, and he misquotes Thoreau slightly with regard to whose case God as "Commissioner" was judging. In this instance, the speech replicates the journal: "It was really the trial of Massachusetts. Every moment that she hesitated to set this man free—every moment

that she now hesitates to atone for her crime, she is convicted. The Commissioner on her case is God; not Edward G. God, but simple God" ("**Slavery in Massachusetts**" **96**). [End Page 217] So instead of God (rather than Commissioner Loring) deciding the slave's fate, as Conway has it, "God" the commissioner in Thoreau's version will judge Massachusetts for her crime of returning the slave. What Conway's remarks do verify, however, is that the Framingham audience would ordinarily have been disturbed to hear Thoreau trifle with the word *God*. But because he had moderated the scornful rhetoric of the journal, they were only "mildly startled." If Conway correctly assessed the crowd's reaction to this one comment, then Thoreau's editorial prudence was in order.

Thoreau did not normally take such pains to accommodate the public's sensitivities. Fink explains that, generally, "the Transcendentalists tended to regard any active consideration of audience as adulterating or debasing the work" ("**Thoreau and His Audience**" **73**). Richard H. Dillman concurs and claims that Thoreau regarded catering to an audience as "demeaning to the writer or speaker" (83). Examples from Thoreau's spotty publication record bear out Fink's and Dillman's conclusions. In early 1853, Putnam editor George William Curtis deleted derogatory remarks about Catholic priests from Thoreau's essay "An Excursion to Canada," which was then appearing serially in *Putnam's*. Thoreau refused to sanction the changes, and publication ceased after three of the five installments of the essay had run (**Harding 282–83; Fink, "Thoreau and His Audience" 83–84**). Thoreau endured a similar bowdlerization in 1858 when editor James Russell Lowell excised a line from the *Atlantic Monthly's* publication of the "Chesuncook" essay because it bestowed immortality on a pine tree. Thoreau angrily wrote to Lowell and protested "the mean and cowardly manner" in which his words had been omitted (**Harding and Bode 515–16**).¹⁵ These incidents establish that both *before* and *after* 1854 Thoreau refused to alter his prose for the sake of catering to his readers. The revisions to "Slavery in Massachusetts" therefore stand out as a conspicuous example of Thoreau's deliberate moderation of his public remarks. To ensure that Framingham's crowd embraced his message, Thoreau extended to his listeners in July 1854 a courtesy that he denied his editors throughout much of his career.

The ending of "Slavery in Massachusetts," with its testimonial to nature as teacher and healer, further exemplifies Thoreau's attentiveness to his Framingham reception. Hawken claims that the speech "endeavor[ed] to protest Burns's rendition in vigorously introspective transcendental terms" (202), but Thoreau did not wax philosophical until the poignant [End Page 218] conclusion and its extended discussion of the white water lily. This water lily passage occurs in the journal on 16 June, well before the end of Thoreau's diatribe against slavery, so that Thoreau purposefully chose to conclude the speech with this image. Albrecht asserts that the description of nature's redemptive power residing in a white water lily enables Thoreau to retain his belief in the potential for human justice (183–84), and it is this hope that Thoreau proffers to his listeners. From the beginning, "Slavery in Massachusetts" was a social and political tirade. But in its symbolic closing, Thoreau transformed the antislavery speech into a Transcendentalist benediction—an opportune move for the author of *Walden*.

In the speech's version of this water lily passage, Thoreau dramatically related the purity of the flower to Anthony Burns.¹⁶ To appreciate fully the symbolic elevation of

the water lily and its relation to Burns, I quote the entire passage as Thoreau read it at Framingham:

But it chanced the other day that I scented a white water-lily, and a season I had waited for had arrived. It is the emblem of purity. It bursts up so pure and fair to the eye, and so sweet to the scent, as if to show us what purity and sweetness reside in, and can be extracted from, the slime and muck of earth. I think I have plucked the first one that has opened for a mile. What confirmation of our hopes is in the fragrance of this flower! I shall not so soon despair of the world for it, notwithstanding slavery, and the cowardice and want of principle of Northern men. It suggests what kind of laws have prevailed longest and widest, and still prevail, and that the time may come when man's deeds will smell as sweet. Such is the odor which the plant emits. If Nature can compound this fragrance still annually, I shall believe her still young and full of vigor, her integrity and genius unimpaired, and that there is virtue even in man, too, who is fitted to perceive and love it. It reminds me that Nature has been partner to no Missouri Compromise. I scent no compromise in the fragrance of the water-lily. It is not a *Nymphaea Douglassii*. In it, the sweet, and pure, and innocent, are wholly sundered from the obscene and baleful. I do not scent in this the time-serving irresolution of a Massachusetts Governor, nor of a Boston Mayor. So behave that the odor of your actions may enhance the general sweetness of the atmosphere, that when we behold or scent a flower, we may not be reminded how inconsistent your deeds are with it; for all odor is but one form of advertisement of a moral quality, and if fair actions had not been performed, the lily would not smell sweet. The foul slime stands for the sloth and vice of man, the decay of humanity; the fragrant flower that springs from it, for the purity and courage which are immortal. [End Page 219]

Slavery and servility have produced no sweet-scented flower annually, to charm the senses of men, for they have no real life: they are merely a decaying and a death, offensive to all healthy nostrils. We do not complain that they *live*, but that they do not *get buried*. Let the living bury them; even they are good for manure.

("Slavery in Massachusetts" 108–9) ¹⁷

The uplifting tone of this passage contrasts sharply with the damning rhetoric of the entire speech that comes before. In fact, the speech's most threatening pronouncement immediately precedes the lily passage: "My thoughts are murder to the State, and involuntarily go plotting against her" (108). As Buell contends, this lily "section is one of [the speech's] most provocative parts, not because of any overt political radicalism, but rather because of its abrupt-seeming swerve *from that*" ("**American Pastoral**" 6). Thoreau expresses his conviction that nature's capability for purity in the face of "the slime and muck" should serve as an example to the audience: they should believe in the comparable potential for human justice to prevail over humanity's corrupt institutions. Concluding on this note of promise set Thoreau apart from the other speakers that day and augmented his antislavery persona. In short, what Thoreau became here in these final moments on the lecture platform was none other than the author of *Walden*, the social critic and philosopher who felt compelled to share his hope with his listeners. "Slavery in Massachusetts" is an emotionally charged text. It castigates, accuses, invites revolution. Then it ends, with the Transcendentalist author returning to his source of inspiration and hope—going back to nature. And here, significantly, Thoreau brought both of his midsummer audiences: Framingham's and *Walden's*.

Similar to the terse announcement of *Walden's* publication later that summer, Thoreau glosses over the antislavery meeting in his journal entry for that date. On 4 July, Thoreau records "8 Am to Framingham," but he mentions neither the purpose of the trip, nor the rally, nor his speech (323). Back to charting the progress of seasonal phenomena such as the color of diervilla leaves and the song of the woodthrush, the

Jump

journal remains equally silent during the weeks following the Fourth of July and does not report any of the laudatory newspaper accounts of "Slavery in Massachusetts" (352, 355). The press, however, exploited the connection between the speech and *Walden*, and in the weeks immediately preceding *Walden*'s publication, editors heralded Thoreau as a voice of reason and justice—one who extolled the sanctity of a "higher law." *The Liberator* summed up Thoreau's lecture as "a racy and ably written address" (7 July 1854), and William Lloyd Garrison published "Slavery in Massachusetts" in the 21 July issue. The *New York Tribune* also ran the text of the speech on 2 August, and editor Horace Greeley praised its "'racy piquancy and [End Page 220] telling point"; for its part, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* reported Thoreau's presence at the rally under the heading "'Words that Burn'" (**Scharnhorst 23, 25, 28**). After reading it in *The Liberator*, T. W. Higginson wrote to ask Thoreau for a copy of what he called "a literary statement of the truth [that] surpasses everything else," and, at the same time, he congratulated Thoreau on *Walden*, "which [he had] been awaiting for so many years" (**Harding and Bode 336**).

Robert D. Richardson Jr. views the convergence of "Slavery in Massachusetts" and *Walden* as a consummate example of Thoreau's obsession with the overriding issue of freedom for all individuals: "It is thus entirely fit that the final stages of the printing and publishing of *Walden* should coincide with Thoreau's renewed involvement in the antislavery movement, and the aftermath of the Anthony Burns affair" (316). Although Thoreau mentions the issue of slavery only briefly in *Walden*, a few of these comments reinforce his personal involvement in and commitment to the abolitionist cause. In "Visitors," he describes providing aid to a runaway slave during the years spent at Walden Pond; and in "Brute Neighbors," Thoreau refers to "Webster's Fugitive-Slave Bill," a derisive remark about Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster's sellout of his antislavery constituents when he supported passage of the Fugitive Slave Act (152, 232).

"Slavery in Massachusetts" thus advanced Thoreau's reputation and enlarged his public following just as *Walden* began to garner its own attention. Despite the absence of journal commentary, Thoreau must have been gratified that the connection between his two most pressing concerns that year had been grasped by the media. "Slavery in Massachusetts" positioned Thoreau that summer as a new and potentially significant abolitionist voice, and it reveals a pre-*Walden* Thoreau at what we might call his most conciliatory, and perhaps his most highly wrought, self. The speech provides a case in point where Thoreau acknowledged the importance of converting his raw, private venom into constructive public discourse. Speaking before the antislavery rally in the company of ardent abolitionists might not have been a calculated move, but when he decided to face the crowd on that Fourth of July, Thoreau crafted a speech that conferred an abolitionist's wrath even as it dispensed a Transcendentalist's sense of hope. For the sake of opposing slavery and promoting *Walden*, Thoreau conceded the importance of watching what he said, at least on one auspicious occasion.

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Below are excerpts from Thoreau's 1854 journal in which Thoreau discusses Anthony Burns and slavery. Italicized words, sentences, and [End Page 221] phrases do not appear in "Slavery in Massachusetts." This listing does not include all of the journal that was incorporated into the speech, but only those portions that precede or follow significant passages of omitted text, and the omitted text itself. All underlined words below are actually double-underlined in the manuscript. Square brackets indicate either Thoreau's errors ([sic]) or indecipherable manuscript text.

Date of Journal Entry Manuscript Journal Text

- 29 *These days it is left to one Mr Loring to say whether a citizen of*
 May *Massachusetts is a slave or not.* Does any one think that Justice or God
 1854 awaits Mr. Loring's decision? Such a mans [sic] existence in this capacity
 under these circumstances is as impertinent as *the gnat that settles on my*
 paper. We do not ask him to make up his mind, but to make up his packs. *Why*
 the U.S. Government never performed an act of justice in its life. And this
 unoffending citizen is held a prisoner by the united states soldier—of whom the
 best you can say is that he is a fool made conspicuous by a painted coat. Of
 what use a governor or a legislature? they are nothing but politicians.
 A distinguished clergyman once told me that he chose the profession of a
 clergyman because it afforded the most leisure for literary pursuits—I would
 recommend to him the profession of a governor—*Time somebody worked* At
 last the Governor is heard from at a congratulatory dinner & *what a governor*
 was there?—We don't complain of what a coward does.—but of what he does
 not do. I see the papers full of soft speeches of the mayor & the governor—&
 *brother editors—*I see the court house full of armed men holding prisoner &
 trying a Man to find out if he is not really a Slave. *It is a question about which*
 there is great doubt. It takes all the legal heads & they they [sic] cannot settle
 it.
 It is really the trial of Massachusetts—every moment that she hesitates to set
 this man free—she is convicted. The commissioner on her case is God. not
 Edward G. God—but simple God. *Perhaps the most saddening aspect of the*
 matter is the tone of almost all the Boston papers—connected with the fact that
 they are & have been of course sustained by a majority of their readers—
 They are feeble indeed—but only as sin is feeble compared with
 rihgtheousness [sic] & truth. They are eminently time-serving. *I have seen*
 only the Traveler—Journal—& Post. I never look at them except at such a
 time as this. Their life is abject even as that of the marines. Men in any office of
 government are everywhere & forever politicians. Will mankind never learn
 that policy is not morality—that it never secures any moral right but alway [sic]
 considers merely what is 'expedient'—chooses the available candidate—who
 when moral right is concerned is always the Devil. *Witness the President of*
 the U.S. What is the position of Massachusetts Massa-chooses-it—? She
 leaves it to a Mr [sic] Loring to decide whether one of her citizens is a freeman
 or a slave. What is the value of such a She's Freedom & Protection to me?
 Perhaps I shall so conduct that she will one day offer me the Freedom of
 Massachetts [sic] in a Gold casket, made of California gold which she has
 stolen in the form of a Court-House—perchance I spurn with contempt any
 bribe which she or her truckling men can offer. I do not vote at the polls—I
 wish to record my vote here.
 Rather than thus *consent to establish Hell upon earth—to be a party to this*
 establishment—I would touch a match to blow up earth & hell together. I will not
 accept life in America or on this planet on such terms. As I love my life I would
 side with the Light & let the Dark Earth roll from under me—Calling my mother
 & my brother to follow me. *The US gv never performed an act of pure justice in*
 its life—
 4 *In some cases fame is perpetually false and unjust.* Or rather I should say that
 June she *never* recognizes the simple heroism of an action, but only as connected
 1854 with its apparent consequence. It praises the interested energy of the Boston
 tea party, but will be comparatively silent about the more bloody &
 disinterestedly heroic attack on the Boston Court House—simply because the
 latter was unsuccessful. *Fame is not just.* It never finely or discriminatingly
 praises, but coarsely hurrahs. *The truest Acts of heroism never reach her ear*
 —are never published by her trumpet.
 9 Covered with disgrace—this state has sat down coolly to try for their lives the
 June men who attempted to do its duty for it. And this is called justice! They who
 1854 have shown that they can behave particularly well—they alone are put under
 bonds 'for their good behavior'! And the one whom truth requires at present to
 plead guilty is perchance the one who is preeminently innocent—*Such a judge*
 & court are an impertinence.
 Only they are guiltless who commit the crime of contempt of such a court. It
 behooves every man to see that his influence is on the side of justice—& let
 the courts make their own characters. *What is any political organization worth*
 —when it is in the service of the Devil? I see that the Authorities the Governor
 —Mayor—Commissioner—Marshall &c—are either weak or unprincipled men
 —i.e. well disposed but not equal to the occasion, or else of dull moral
 perception—with the unprincipled & servile in their pay. All sound moral

sentiment is opposed to them. I had thought that the governor was in some sense the executive officer of the state—that it was his business to see that the laws of the state were executed—but when there is any special use for him he is useless—permits the laws to go unexecuted—& *is not heard from.* While the whole military force of the state if need be is at the service of a slaveholder—But the worst I shall say of the governor *this particular Gubernator now at the wheel* whom I never saw is that he was no better than the majority of his constituents—he was not equal to the occasion

The citizens of Mass. not being men of principle—will it appears send back this fugitive slave—i.e. to call the same thing by another name will crucify christ just so long as the majority decide that it shall be done. The marines & the militia whose bodies were used lately—were not men of sense nor of principle—in a high moral sense they were not men at all.

16 Every man in New England capable of the sentiment of patriotism—must have
June lived the last three weeks with the sense of having suffered a vast indefinite
1854 loss. I had never respected this government near which I lived—but I had foolishly thought that I might manage to live here—minding to my private affairs—& forget it. *It is the discovery of What [sic] kind of men your countrymen are*—For my part I did not know at first what ailed [sic] me my old & worthiest pursuits have lost I cannot say how much of their attraction. and I feel that my investment in life here is worth many percent less since Massachusetts—since Massachusetts last deliberately & forcibly restored an innocent man anthony [sic] Burns to slavery.

Suppose you have a small library with pictures to adorn the walls—a garden laid out around—& contemplate scientific & literary pursuits &c &c & discover suddenly that your villa with all its contents is located in hell—and that the justice of the peace *is one of the devil's angels* has a cloven foot & a forked tail—do not these things suddenly lose their value in your eyes. *Are you not disposed to sell at a great sacrifice*

It is time we had done referring to our ancestors—We have used up all our inherited freedom—like the young bird the albumen in the egg—It is not an era of repose. If we would save our lives we must fight for them. The discovery is what manner of men your countrymen are. They steadily worship Mammon—and on the 7th day curse God with a tintimmarre from one end of the Union to the other. *I heard the other day of a meek & sleek devil of a bishop somebody—who commended the law & order with which Burns was given up—I would like before I sit down to a table to inquire if there is one in the company who styles himself or is styled bishop—& he or I should go out of it—I would have such a man wear his bishops [sic] hat & his clerical bib & tucker that we may know him—*

*Why will men be such fools as trust to lawyers for moral reform—*I do not believe that there is a judge in this country prepared to decide by the principle that a law is immoral & therefore of no force.

But what signifies the beauty of nature when men are base? We walk to lakes to see our serenity reflected in them—When we are not serene we go not to them. Who can be serene in a country where both rulers & ruled are without principle? The remembrance of the baseness of politicians spoils my walks—my thoughts are murder to the state—I endeavor in vain to observe Nature—my thoughts involuntarily go plotting against the state—*I am calculating how many miscreants each honest man can dispose of I trust that all just men will conspire.*

17 Slavery has produced no sweet scented flower *like the water-lily—for its
June flower must smell like itself. It will be a carrion-flower.*
1854

Sir the question is not whether you or your grandfather 70 years ago entered into an agreement to serve the devil—and that service is not accordingly now due—but whether you will not now for once & at last serve God—in spite of your own past recreancy or that of your ancestors—and obey that eternal & only just Constitution which he & not any Jefferson or Adams has written in your being. *Is the Constitution a thing to live by? or to die by? No as long as we are alive we forget it & when we die we have done with it. At most it is only to swear by. While they are hurrying off christ to the cross—the ruler decides that he cannot constitutionally interfere to save him—The christians now & always are they who obey the higher law. who discovers it to be according to their constitution to interfere—They at least cut off the ears of the police the others pocket the 30 pieces of silver*

This was meaner than to crucify Christ—for he could better take care of himself.

Let the judge & the jury—the sheriff & the jailor [sic] cease to act under a corrupt-government—cease to be tools & become men. The fate of The [sic] country does not depend on how you vote at the polls but on how you vote everywhere *though you should be removed to solitary confinement on what manner of man you are*

Certainly Slavery—and all vice & iniquity have not had power enough to create any flower thus annually to charm the senses of men—It has no life—It is only a constant decaying & a death—offensive to all healthy nostrils—*The unchangeable laws of the universe—by partial obedience to which even sin in a measure succeeds—are all on the side of the just & fair—It is his few good qualities mis-allied—which alone make the slaveholder at all to be feared—it is because he is in some respects a better man than [sic] we—Why who are the real opponents of slavery—? The slave holders know—& I know Are they the*

governors—the judges—the lawyers the politicians—? Or are they Garrison—Phillips Parker & Co.? The politicians do now & always will instinctively stand aloof from such

18 June 1854 What we want is not mainly to colonize Nebraska [sic] with free men—but to colonize Massachusetts with free men to be free ourselves—As the enterprise of a few individuals that is brave & practical—but as the enterprise of a state it is cowardice & imbecility. What odds where we squat or how much ground we cover! It is not the soil that would make free—but men—

As for asking the south to grant us the trial by jury in the case of run away slaves—It is as if—seeing a righteous man sent to Hell we should run together & petition the Devil first to grant him a trial by jury—forgetting that there is another power to be petitioned—there there [sic] is another law and other precedents [indecipherable word(s)] office is indeed another President.

It is not any such free soil party as I have seen—but a free man party—i.e. a party of free men—that is wanted—It is not any politicians even the truest & soundest—but strange as it may sound even godly men as Cromwell discovered—who are wanted to fight this battle—men not of policy but of probity. Politicians! I have looked into the eyes of two or three of them—but I saw nothing there to satisfy me—They will will [sic] vote for my man tomorrow if I will vote for theirs today—They will whirl round & round not only hoziontally [sic] like weather cocks—but vertically also—

My advice to the state is simply this—to dissolve her union with the slave holder instantly. She can find no respectable law or precedent which sanctions its continuance—and to each inhabitant of Mass. to dissolve his union with the state as long as she hesitates to do her duty.

19 June 1854 Men may talk about measures till all is blue & smells of brimstone—and then go home & sit down & expect their measures to do their duty for them—The only measure is integrity & manhood.

[End Page 222] [End Page 223] [End Page 224] [End Page 225] [End Page 226] [End Page 227]

Footnotes

1. I'd like to thank Gary Collison and Ian Marshall for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

2. All references to Thoreau's 1854 Journal are from the holograph manuscript journal, volume XVII, MA 1302.23, housed in The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. Permission to quote from MA 1302.23 is gratefully acknowledged. This manuscript Journal volume is forthcoming from Princeton University Press as *Journal 8: 1854*, ed. Sandra Harbert Petruilionis, in *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau*. This volume has also been published, with some variations and omissions, in Thoreau's *Journal VI*.

3. No manuscript of "Slavery in Massachusetts" is extant. The speech was first published in *The Liberator* on 21 July 1854 after editor William Lloyd Garrison asked Thoreau for a copy. It was then reprinted in whole in the *New York Daily Tribune* on 2 August 1854; in part in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* on 12 August 1854; and, after Thoreau's death, in its entirety in the 1866 volume *A Yankee in Canada, with Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers* (see Glick). For this article, I have used the text of "Slavery in Massachusetts" edited by Wendell Glick in *Reform Papers*; Glick's copy-text is based on the version of the speech that appeared in *The Liberator*, with a few textual changes, which he describes in his textual notes. Since Garrison wrote in the 7 July 1854 *Liberator* that "Henry Thoreau, of Concord, read portions of a racy and ably written address," it is quite possible that Thoreau did not read on the Fourth of July the entire speech that was published. Since there is no transcript of his actual oration, we cannot know which portions, if any, were omitted from the public presentation. My argument assumes that Thoreau did in fact give the majority of this speech in Framingham. If he did not, which we cannot know, I believe that my contention as to his probable motives for revising the journal—creating what he had intended to read—is still valid.

4. According to the provisions of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, the penalty for assisting fugitives was "a fine not to exceed one thousand dollars and imprisonment of not more than six months" (**Campbell 24**). Scholars have disagreed on whether to call Thoreau an "abolitionist," a debate that strikes me as largely semantic. Any nineteenth-century figure who publicly proclaimed his or her belief that slavery should be abolished, who assisted fugitive slaves, and who championed John Brown, all of which Thoreau did, can accurately be described as an "abolitionist," despite his or her lack of membership in an organized group.

5. Even in Concord, however, proslavery sentiments were still popular in 1851. A Concord newspaper reported the rendition of Thomas Sims in this manner: "The brig Acorn has arrived at Savannah with Sims the Fugitive Slave, after a passage of *five* days—all well" (*Middlesex Freeman*, 25 April 1851). See the following for the details of Burns's arrest, imprisonment, attempted rescue, and rendition: Von Frank; Stevens; **Maginnes 31–42**; **Campbell 124–32**; "The Trial of Anthony Burns"; Shapiro; and Pease and Pease.

6. Ironically, another E. G. Loring of Boston, Ellis Gray Loring, was an outspoken abolitionist who served on the Executive Committee of the Boston Vigilance Committee, the group most responsible for aiding fugitive slaves in the city. The *National Anti-Slavery Standard* and *The Liberator* reported that Burns was located by way of a letter that he wrote to his brother in Virginia. Even though Burns sent the letter to Canada to be postmarked and mailed, he apparently had written "Boston" at the top of the letter, along with the date (*National Anti-Slavery Standard*; *Liberator*, 2 June 1854). In 1851, Thomas Sims had also been arrested on the pretext of theft (see **Lane 73**).

7. Higginson calls the rescue attempt "one of the very best plots that ever—failed," and his account of the courthouse raid claims that Batchelder's death "was the first drop of blood actually shed" in fugitive slave violence (150, 154–55). Higginson obviously refers to white bloodshed. See also Von Frank and Stevens.

8. The journal's mature phase begins around 1850 with the later manuscript notebooks included in *Journal 3: 1848–1851*. By this time, the journal had assumed the structure and content that it would sustain until Thoreau's death in 1862. Robert Sattelmeyer explains that by 1850 Thoreau "turned increasingly to the Journal to record both his thoughts and the details of his study of New England natural history" (**Sattelmeyer 446**). For Thoreau's comments regarding Thomas Sims, see *Journal 3: 1848–1851 (203–9)*.

9. In its entirety, the journal entry for 9 August 1854 reads: "Wednesday Aug 9th To Boston Walden Published. Elder Berries. Waxwork yellowing" (**Thoreau, Journal, MS volume XVII, 379**).

10. Thoreau generally criticized the very reformers with whom he shared the platform in Framingham. For example, he complained a year earlier in August 1853 that the "Abolition Society" would not hire Bronson Alcott as a spokesman: "They cannot tolerate a man who stands by a head above them. They are as bad—Garrison and Phillips, etc., as the overseers and faculty of Harvard College. They require a man who will train well *under* them" (*Journal V 365*).

11. Although Higginson led the courthouse attack and was wounded during the ensuing fracas, Alcott came along later with others from the Faneuil Hall meeting after the original crowd had dispersed and the rescue had failed. According to various accounts, he walked up the steps to the door of the courthouse and asked, "Why are we not within?" (**Higginson 158**; see also **Dahlstrand 235–36**).

12. Thoreau wrote his journal entries in ink. Later changes to the text were usually in pencil and often reflected Thoreau's polishing of journal passages for use in lectures or published writings. For more information regarding these later revisions, see **Blanding (631–32)**.

13. Garrison leveled harsh criticism at proslavery organized religion and had therefore made many enemies in religious camps, but he still exploited the rhetoric of the Old Testament in asserting that slavery was an abomination against God and man. Many abolitionists, including members of the clergy, argued over the extent to which they should denounce the proslavery wing of the Christian church. For a profile of a crusading abolitionist who did not hesitate to condemn the church, see Robertson. Robertson points out that "no major denomination endorsed immediate emancipation prior to the Civil War" (189, n. 7).

14. Similar to Garrison's use of the Bible, Truth invoked the Old Testament in her speech as she likened the actions of whites toward blacks to those of Cain and Abel.

15. The omitted passage from "Chesuncook" reads: "It is as immortal as I am, and perchance will go to as high a heaven, there to tower above me still" (**Moldenhauer 122**).

16. James McIntosh finds that in this passage Thoreau "forgets the political outrage of the remission of Anthony Burns to slavery in contemplating a white water-lily"(214). Thoreau's linking of the lily and the muck from which it springs to the

Missouri Compromise and the entire abomination of slavery, however, clearly demonstrates that Thoreau has not forgotten Burns at all.

17. This excerpt differs only slightly from the journal version.

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