Buried Lives

Incarcerated in Early America

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Harry Hawser's Fate

Eastern State Penitentiary and the Birth of Prison Literature

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IN THE VAST ARCHIVE OF TEXTS from the early decades of the U.S. penitentiary system—the pamphlets, treatises, open letters, architectural plans, rules and regulations, prayer books, travel narratives, records of costs and profits, medical reports, outraged protests, reasoned defenses, and myriad other, sometimes unclassifiable documents—only a few pieces offer the testimony of the inmates who lived and died in the controversial new institutions. Early American prison discourse was mainly composed by prison inspectors, reformers, and men and women of letters from the world at large. Occasionally, as Daniel E. Williams's essay in this volume shows, an extraordinary ex-prisoner like Ann Carson might describe her time behind bars in an effort to bring public shame on the institution. Elsewhere, the archive offers interviews with the incarcerated, such as those appended to Gustave de Beaumont and Alexis de Tocqueville's classic *On the Penitentiary System in the United States*; or brief, formulaic autobiographical narratives describing the convict's fall from virtue into a wretched life of crime. Such accounts, though, seem to bear the marks of careful editing by prison officials who sought to

conscript inmates into the propaganda wars over the meaning and value of reform.

The authorities who oversaw the first full-scale American penitentiaries enforced a regime of solitude that depended on their control over the production and circulation of texts. Many inmates were illiterate when they entered the prison. Those who could read were provided with materials at the discretion of their keepers. Those who wrote had to submit to a severe censorship. The general rule of silence was broken, however, in 1844, with the publication of *Buds and Flowers, of Leisure Hours*, a book of poems by a Philadelphia convict using the pen name Harry Hawser.[1] Composed at Pennsylvania's renowned Eastern State Penitentiary, it is the work of a literate, articulate inmate, reflecting at length on his experience in solitary confinement, on how captivity remakes the self, and on the place of the prison in a modernizing world. In his preface to the volume, Hawser identified himself as a man addressing the public from the hidden world of the prison interior: "The author of the following pages, during a period of involuntary seclusion from society, devoted his leisure hours to reading and reflection, and the while, he composed these fugitive pieces, now offered to the reader."[2] Here, Hawser suggested, was the work of one who had lived through the reality of confinement that others had only wondered or dreamed about—a piece of authentic testimony from a zone beyond the pale. Overlooked by all but a few scholars of Pennsylvania penal history, Hawser's book might be recovered as a founding document of the genre that we have come to call "prison literature." Indeed, I will argue that some of the defining interpretive problematics and characteristic tropes of American prison literature in the age of the penitentiary were developed, in part, by the publication and reception of *Buds and Flowers*.

While its appearance was an event of note during the reform movement of the 1840s, Hawser's book has not become part of the scholarly canon of prison literature, in part because studies of the genre rarely look to the nineteenth century for sources. A brief discussion of *Buds and Flowers* by Negley K. Teeters and John D. Shearer, in their 1957 history of Eastern State, establishes the identity of the author (a sailor and convicted larcenist named George Ryno) but dismisses the poetry as "a kind of doggerel verse" unworthy of careful reading.[3] Along with this aesthetic judgment, there are also political reasons for leaving Hawser outside the tradition of prison literature. The value of this tradition, for the scholars and activists who have been shaping its canon since the

1960s, is its peculiar capacity to expose the secret, grotesque violence of the carceral interior, and to record the spiritual and social resistance devised by the men and women who have endured that violence. As Angela Davis writes in a review of recent anthologies, prison literature "comprises a literary genre whose significance resides not so much in its formal qualities, but rather in the alternative knowledges it is able to generate about the prison."[4] It records the experiences of the "imprisoned men and women [who] have managed to invent subversive spaces within which to nurture their knowledge and creativity."[5] By contrast, Hawser's 1844 book is neither an exposé of prison violence nor a memoir of subversion. Instead, its author seems to celebrate the prison system and its benevolent effects on his character. Hawser refers to his time in solitary as a period of "leisure hours"; he calls his incarceration "the happiest event of his life"; and he dedicates his book to Richard Vaux, the president of the board of inspectors at Eastern State and the chief defender of the Pennsylvania system of prison discipline. Again and again, Hawser's verses return to the ideals of repentance, sobriety, and moral and social responsibility that modern prison discipline was supposed to instill. On first reading, the entire book can seem to be a sustained utterance of blessing by the inmate upon his keepers.

On a closer reading of Hawser's poetry, however, other accents and other modes begin to emerge. Devoting a few pages to Hawser in a recent history of Eastern State's early decades, Leslie C. Patrick-Stamp notes, for example, that the poem "Our City Not a Paradise" advances a subtle critique of the criminal justice system. "Some starve, or force a livelihood by stealth," Hawser writes, "While others unconcern'd may roll in wealth" (55).[6] There is the suggestion, in such lines, that the causes of crime lie in an unjust economic order, not in the moral failings of the incarcerated; the prison is an instrument of oppression, wielded by the rich against the poor.

In my own studies of the nineteenth-century prison system, I have been haunted by another of Hawser's poems, "The Captive." Here, the poet leaves aside his characterization of the prison as a place of leisure and self-cultivation. He turns instead to the imagery of living death:

> But, fated to a living tomb,
> For years on years in woe to brood
> Upon the past, the captive's doom,
> Is galling chains and solitude. (70)

In "The Captive," Hawser's ordinarily pious and sentimental tone grows grim, and his usually plodding verse becomes more sophisticated. The long vowels in the final words of each line, a series of rhymes and off-rhymes, toll like solemn bells. The enjambment at the center of the quatrain extends the phrase "to brood / Upon the past," communicating the sense of a long, dismal confinement. The ghostly imagery recalls Poe's gothic tales of live burial and Dickinson's poems spoken from the grave. In both its careful composition and its cold depiction of a dehumanizing confinement, the poem belongs to the richest tradition of writing from the modern penitentiary. If the dominant mode of *Buds and Flowers* is a blessing spoken by a redeemed convict to his benefactors, "The Captive" sounds more like a curse from the lips of the living dead.

This essay is a study of Harry Hawser's *Buds and Flowers* in its historical context. Attending to the complex forms of mediation between the secluded space of the solitary cell and the public world of letters and opinion, I examine the conditions that helped to produce, circulate, and interpret this odd, self-contradictory book of poems. My approach seeks to move beyond the oversimple division between "inside" and "outside" that shapes much discussion of prison writing. I argue that the modern understanding of prison literature was born out of the encounter between a divided prison-reform movement and the mass public of the 1840s, an emergent collective entity whose social imaginary was mediated by the wide circulation of inexpensive texts. As prison authorities called on inmates like Hawser to testify before the mass public, the prisoner was endowed with new kinds of authenticity, becoming a figure whose formative experience in the prison enabled him to reveal the truth about the hidden, mysterious interior of the institution. As it happened, the rhetorical conflict between the critics and the defenders of the Pennsylvania system of prison discipline also took shape around a trope that has continued to inform prison literature for more than a century and a half—the image of the cell as a living tomb. In the end, the very circumstances that required Harry Hawser to give his blessing to the penitentiary also enabled him to pronounce his bewitching curse.

Prisons and Publics

What are the forms of contact and communication between the prison interior and the outside world? One account of the birth of the prison in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, sometimes associated

with Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975), holds that punishment in this transformative period was withdrawn from the town square and hidden behind the imposing walls of new institutions.[7] The spectacle of bodily violence, a ritual enacted before an assembled crowd, gave way to a secret discipline conducted by experts in penal science who carefully kept and controlled the records of their experimental systems. In short, punishment disappeared.

Certainly some of the early authorities on prison discipline saw their projects in this light. In an influential and often cited essay from the early days of penal reform in Philadelphia, the physician Benjamin Rush protested the many evils of spectacular torture and executions: "public punishments," he argued, "are injurious to criminals and to society."[8] In place of the terrible scaffold, Rush called for a secluded "house of corrections" where officials would administer a punishment of justly measured pain, labor, and spiritual reflection. After a period of subjection to this invisible discipline, the reformed convict would emerge from the penal cloister like a man reborn from the darkness of the grave: "His friends and family bathe his cheeks with tears of joy; and the universal shout of the neighborhood is, 'This our brother was lost, and is found—was dead and is alive.'"[9]

For Rush, the precondition for the convict's resurrection was a near-total separation between the prison and the rest of society. The generation of reformers who followed him, and who built the first great model penitentiaries, made this ideal a part of their designs. The penal code enacted by Pennsylvania in 1829, when Eastern State received its first inmates, established it as policy: "None but the official visitors can have any communication with the convicts, nor shall any visitor whatever be permitted to deliver to or receive from any of the convicts, any letter or message whatever."[10] The prison was to be removed from the common spaces of communication and circulation.

Scholars of prison literature have generally accepted the institution's claim to have raised an almost absolute barrier between two worlds. For many commentators, prisoners' writings provide precious insights into an otherwise unknowable zone of dark miseries and struggles. Thus Tom Wicker, in his preface to a recent volume of prison writings, writes that they "disclose the nasty, brutish details of the life within—a life the authorities would rather we not know about, a life so far from conventional existence that the accounts of those who experience it exert the fascination of the unknown, sometimes the unbelievable."[11] Having spent

time behind bars confers a particular kind of authority on the writers of prison literature, giving a special, revelatory force to their narratives and poems. The documentary work carried out by these writers is thus presumed to be a threat to the system that confines them; it exposes abuses and promises to mobilize readers in opposition to the prison system.

The history of the prison, however, is not simply a history of disappearance. As Foucault himself was careful to emphasize, the decline of the scaffold entailed the rise of new modes of observation and representation; indeed, the whole modern discourse of penal science took shape with the development of new prison systems around the turn of the nineteenth century. Interdisciplinary research by several scholars has explored the complex set of mediations between prisons and the societies that build them. John Bender's *Imagining the Penitentiary*, for instance, shows how certain literary innovations in the depiction of character helped to shape the Anglo-American reform movement's conceptions of "the architecture of mind."[12] Thomas L. Dumm's *Democracy and Punishment* describes the relations between modern forms of citizenship and the disciplinary subjectivity enforced in the penitentiary.[13] And Michael Meranze's major studies of the institutional and cultural history of Pennsylvania in the Revolutionary era demonstrate how carefully the reformers attended to the public display and discussion of punishment as they attempted to create a new penal system commensurate with their dream of a virtuous republic. Echoing Foucault, Meranze writes that the establishment of the "reformed system of punishment" in the penitentiary "replaced the public symbol of the body with the concealed practice of discipline"; but Meranze goes on to stress that "as punishment receded from public view, the distance between everyday life and the world of penalty was filled with mechanisms of observation, communication, and imagination."[14]

Rather than describing the penitentiary as a space of concealment, then, we might attend to the ways in which the authorities behind the institution sought to address, and to transform, a variety of publics. Indeed, the media through which they communicated included the very walls that separated prison cells from society at large. The architect John Haviland's plans for New York's "Tombs" and Philadelphia's Eastern State, among other prisons, surrounded their technologically and philosophically modern interiors with gothic facades that recalled the dungeon-tombs of the old world. In accounts circulated by reformers, the result was praised as an architecture of a "grave, severe, and

awful character" that "produces on the imagination of every passing spectator . . . [a] peculiarly impressive, solemn, and instructive" impression.[15] Prison architecture placed the structures of humane correction behind imposing walls designed to menace a public which was presumed to have criminal tendencies, needing a visible reminder of the "awful" power of the law.

Prison architecture, though, had a limited audience; rather like the scaffold, it could communicate its "grave" message only to the spectator who passed within view of the scene of punishment. A wider audience could be reached through the spoken word. In his essay on the house of corrections, Rush had described how the public circulation of "tales" from the new "abode of misery" would replace the theater of the scaffold. He suggested that people who were kept ignorant of the realities of the prison interior would invent the liveliest ghost tales and horror stories. "Children," Rush wrote, "will press upon the evening fire in listening to the tales that will spread from this abode of misery. Superstition will add to its horrors: and romance will find in it ample materials for fiction, which cannot fail of increasing the terror of its punishments."[16] Rush and his followers wanted punishment out of sight, but not out of mind. Jason Haslam makes this point clear: "Although the visual spectacle of punishment might disappear from the public square, the spectacle would (and should, according to Rush) continue to exist—and have an impact on society—in publicly circulated narrative forms."[17] Public torture was too grotesque, too difficult to manage, and an American polity conceived in enlightenment should extend its humanizing embrace even to the unfortunate criminal. At the same time, authorities hoped to cultivate a salutary terror by encouraging the circulation of imaginative tales.

If reformers depended on gothic fantasies to instill a fear of punishment in potential criminals, however, they also developed other genres for other publics. In their many pamphlets, open letters, and reports, they attempted to explain the aims and practices of prison reform to an educated audience; in the process, they hoped to win the support of enlightened public opinion for their costly, controversial plans. Consider, for example, the civil tone and humble style of an open letter from Franklin Bache, the Philadelphia penitentiary physician, to the reformer Roberts Vaux, printed and circulated in 1829: "My Dear Sir, I regret very much that I have not been able, sooner, to reply to your letter . . . in which you pay me the compliment of requesting my opinion on the

subject of the separate confinement of prisoners."[18] Documents like this one offered readers a glimpse, behind facades and fictions, into the hidden processes of modern prison discipline—and, no less, into the polite social world of those who managed penal policy. Here, the reformers developed the theory and grammar of their systems. They built a canon of authorities that included such founding figures as Cesare di Beccaria, John Howard, and Benjamin Rush. They explored the relations between prison discipline and mental health reform, poverty relief, temperance, and the antislavery movement. They assessed the progress of their endeavor and the obstacles it continued to face. Above all, they debated the merits of the Pennsylvania and New York systems, the two rival models of discipline that divided their movement.

The accounts of the prison interior that circulated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, then, addressed not a single audience but multiple and divided publics. According to the reformers' conception of a stratified public sphere, lower-class audiences would be terrified by nightmarish tales from the abode of misery, while educated readers were enlightened and persuaded by reports on the methods of humane correction. For an unruly, semiliterate public of "children" and the poor, imaginative fiction would carry on a version of the ritual performances associated with the disappearing scaffold. Among the governing elites, rational, polite discussions of prison administration would inform public opinion and, in turn, influence official policies.

This distinction between ritual and reason, however, would not hold forever. By the mid-nineteenth century, the character of the public sphere was being transformed by the rise of mass literacy and the mass media. At the same time, the reading audience that knew the details of prison reform—the difference, for example, between the Pennsylvania system of near-total solitude and the New York system that permitted congregate labor—had split into antagonistic factions. It was to this expanded and divided public that the prisoner-poet Harry Hawser was called to testify in 1844. As the case of Hawser's book shows, the reform movement would create new uses for sentimental appeals and gothic terror as the mass public became fascinated by the prison interior.

Live Burial and General Circulation

Hawser's public life had begun two years earlier, in 1842, when Charles Dickens visited the Philadelphia prison and wrote the famous exposé

of the institution that appeared as part of his *American Notes, for General Circulation.*[19] On his way to the United States, Dickens remarked that he wished most of all to see two world-famous sites, Niagara Falls and the Eastern State Penitentiary. Like other transatlantic voyagers including Alexis de Tocqueville and Harriet Martineau, Dickens seems to have felt that the new penitentiaries were capable of revealing certain peculiar aspects of America's social and political character. The Pennsylvania administrators obliged the famous author by opening the doors of the prison and guiding him through its corridors and into its cells. Dickens spent most of a day at Eastern State, talking with the inspectors and with several of the inmates. The long passage he wrote about the penitentiary was one of the most disturbing and controversial in his wildly popular travel book.

Although he would turn to a gothic mode in his depiction of the prison interior, Dickens recognized the penitentiary as a new development in the Anglo-American social order. Eastern State was not a dungeon lingering from ancient times. It was a novel experiment undertaken in the name of enlightenment and humanity. Dickens described the keepers as men of learning and compassion; he defined their system, as they did, against the ritualized bodily violence of the past. In the end, though, Dickens's conclusions were damning. "In its intentions," he wrote, "I am well convinced that [the Pennsylvania system] is kind, humane, and meant for reformation; but I am persuaded that those who devised this system of Prison Discipline, and those benevolent gentlemen who carry it into execution, do not know what they are doing" (90). In Dickens's judgment, the system at Eastern State was a well-meaning endeavor gone horribly, monstrously wrong: "I hold this slow and daily tampering with the mysteries of the brain to be immeasurably worse than any torture of the body" (90). The penitentiary was devised to lead convicts through mortification to reflection and redemption, but it left them lingering instead in a nightmarish living death.

In Dickens's view, isolation—the guiding principle of reform at Eastern State—was no means of rehabilitation; it was a dehumanizing violence. His account of the prison was built around several portraits of inmates, each in a state of miserable abjection. "In every little chamber that I entered," he wrote, "I seemed to see the same appalling countenance" (99). There was one convict who "look[ed] as wan and unearthly as if he had been summoned from the grave" (94); there was

another "dejected, heart-broken, wretched creature" who represented the "picture of forlorn affliction and distress of mind" (93); there was the "helpless, crushed, and broken man" (95); and there were three young women, in adjoining cells, whose "looks were very sad, and might have moved the sternest visitor to tears" (95). Dickens's readers watched these figures appear like a ghostly parade, gothic others to whom the author offered his tearful sympathy.

American Notes was an international sensation. According to one study, 3,000 copies were sold in Philadelphia in the first thirty-five minutes after they became available, and more than 100,000 pirated copies would be in circulation by the end of the year.[20] Clearly, a wide American audience was eager to learn the English author's views of their culture and their institutions. Soon, his remarks on Pennsylvania's prison system would be known not only to those who bought his book but also to anyone following the news in England and the United States. The *Times* of London, for example, recommended *American Notes* for both its ethical insights and its graceful style, calling it a "powerful and masterly sketch of the painfully-depressed and despondent feelings by which the imprisoned convict is in all possibility racked, when he awakes to a full sense of the dismal monotony of his doom."[21] A more measured response in *The New World* acknowledged the "powerful language" of Dickens's portrayal of Eastern State and conceded that the novelist would have "some influence in forming public opinion in regard to the Prison Discipline of Pennsylvania."[22]

Thus the reformers who had welcomed Dickens into Eastern State, perhaps in the hope that he would support their cause, found themselves instead defending their system against his protest in the public sphere. They mobilized to answer him in print, attempting to discredit his motives and his right to judge the institution. The author of "British Critics and British Travelers," for instance, writing in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* in April 1844, argued that Dickens's real aim in visiting the United States had been to advocate for an international copyright law; the sentimental novelist was "utterly disqualified" to judge American society or its institutions, and it was regrettable, "in this reading age, when the circulation of books is growing every day more general" and "national curiosity has become of the greatest consequence to the peace of the civilized world," that Dickens's distorted views had gained such significant influence.[23]

In response, authorities including the British consul-general William Peter and the esteemed South Carolina Professor Francis Lieber, who had translated and introduced Beaumont and Tocqueville's study of American prisons for an Anglo-American audience, were called to Philadelphia to meet with the inmates Dickens had encountered. Peter's report would appear in the inaugural issue of the *Pennsylvania Journal of Prison Discipline and Philanthropy*, a quarterly publication launched in support of the separate system. There, Peter gave his own brief descriptions of the several inmates who had made their way into Dickens's work, including the "Poet" who, according to Peter, had been discharged from Eastern State in 1843 and was "now in respectable business, reconciled to his father, and respectably married."[24]

Lieber made his rebuttal to "Mr. Dickens's sentimental tirade against eremitic imprisonment" in an open letter to the Honorary Secretary of the Philadelphia Prison Society.[25] He paid special attention to one of the female inmates whom Dickens had portrayed with such pathos. As if to undermine the sentimentality of Dickens's description of a lovely but ghostly creature, Lieber described her as "a yellow mulatto, rather short and not ill-looking," of a "disreputable" character, who had been convicted with two others of seducing and robbing several men. Much of Lieber's letter, though, was a transcript of the inmate's own purported speech. Lieber's rhetorical strategy was not to answer Dickens in his own voice but to present this convict's testimony as evidence against Dickens's "sentimental effusion upon a subject he is absolutely ignorant of." Dickens's "tirade" thus became the occasion for Lieber's publication of a convict's own first-person testimony about the effects of solitude on the self.

According to Lieber, the inmate confessed, "I am nearly twenty-one years old, and feel very well here. They treat me with much kindness. I have learned here to read and write, and pray." She continued: "It is sometimes lonely here, but now I am accustomed to it; it lasted about six months before I got accustomed to it. I felt, then, sometimes very down." The period of loneliness and low feeling was followed, happily, by a moral reawakening: "I have been very bad: I will surely try to live like a good girl, if they will give me a chance." The inmate's words were recorded as the truth that would dispel the novelist's "ignorant" and fanciful fiction. Along the way, her testimony did not deny that incarceration at Eastern State involved a painful loneliness, but it represented this

abjection as an initial phase that had prepared the inmate for her moral rebirth. The old, criminal self was mortified so that a new, redeemed self—literate, prayerful, reconciled to family and society—could be born.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the response to Dickens was taken up by Lieber's correspondent Joseph Adshead, a reformer who supported the adoption of the Pennsylvania system in English prisons. Adshead's *Prisons and Prisoners* (1845) was, according to the Dickens scholar Philip Collins, the most sustained critique to be published during the controversy and "the basis for most of the subsequent attacks on *American Notes* during Dickens's lifetime."[26] Like Lieber, Adshead insisted that Dickens was ignorant of the realities of prison discipline. The aesthetic and market demands that had informed Dickens's work were those of a popular novelist, not a serious reformer: "a book had to be written . . . ; effects must be produced; the mere dry detail of fact was not contemplated, by [Dickens], as sufficiently exciting; the regions of fiction, therefore, had to be explored, to supply what truth would not furnish."[27] *American Notes*, Adshead argued, offered no true glimpse into the secret recesses of the penitentiary; it was a work of sensational fiction.

Of course, reformers since Benjamin Rush had allowed fiction—including sensationally gothic tales—a role in mediating between punishment and a certain uninformed public. The new problem, as Adshead and his circle understood it, was that Dickens's fiction had been falsely advertised and received as the authoritative truth about the system of prison discipline in practice at Eastern State. A category mistake had been made in the public sphere of letters:

> The flights of fancy may take what altitude they please in works of fiction; the imagination may range discursively in the regions of romance; but the public ought not to be deceived by misstatements in matters of vital importance to the well-being and regulation of society; however pleasing the style, or fascinating the language, if a narrative *which should have the impress of truth* be marked by a departure from it, much as genius may be admired, it must be matter of regret that talent should thus defeat its more noble purpose. (114)

Dickens's work, Adshead argued, had violated the boundary between popular romance and the refined public opinion responsible for "the well-being and regulation of society." Adshead's collaborators in Philadelphia followed his lead in attempting to reinforce this distinction: Richard Vaux wrote that Dickens's "delineation of character" in *American Notes* "is marked by the strong contrasts which he paints in his fictions" and dismissed his protest as so much "crude and emotional criticism."[28]

What neither Adshead nor Vaux quite acknowledged was that this problem of genre—Dickens's fiction masquerading as the truth about the Philadelphia prison—was also a problem of audience. In the ideology of reform, gothic and sentimental "tales" from the "abode of misery" were appropriate for the lower classes. Such fictions might even serve as part of the system of law and order, frightening would-be offenders and thus deterring crime. But Dickens had addressed this sensational material to readers who thought of themselves as enfranchised members of the governing order; in the process, he threatened to turn public opinion against Eastern State Penitentiary and its solitary system. The Reverend J. Field, an English chaplain whose work was cited with admiration by Richard Vaux, seems to have grasped the challenge, complaining that Dickens's "works have obtained a wider circulation than his veracity deserved."[29] The hierarchical relationship between rational discussion and gothic sensation had somehow shifted to become a conflict between two groups with competing claims to sovereignty in the "regulation of society."

The problem confronting the reformers, then, was more than an eloquent protest by a celebrated author. It was a public sphere whose character was being transformed by the emergent mass market for popular printed texts such as *American Notes*. As they had designed the relationship between the prison interior and the outside world in the late eighteenth century, Rush and his contemporaries had never reckoned with such a public. They had addressed a stratified society, where the appetites of the lower classes could be satisfied (and suppressed) with terrifying tales, while the educated readers who considered themselves the engineers of civilization could engage in refined discussions about penal policy. Rush's formulation had gone so far as to imply a distinction between the printed medium of his own "Enquiry," circulated among likeminded reformers, and the oral medium of the terrifying tale, which mutated like gossip as it traveled through the community and reached the ears of eager children. By the 1840s, the old patterns of publication that informed Rush's system were becoming obsolete. Dickens's haunting vision of the prison interior had addressed an audience that could

be moved by sensations of terror and sympathy but which might also consider itself a sovereign people capable of organizing to influence state policy.

Harry Hawser's Fate

In response to this disturbing phenomenon, Adshead undertook what he imagined as a kind of surgery on the collective psyche: "We cannot . . . suffer the public mind," he wrote, "to retain the prejudicial taint with which it must necessarily be affected by the remarks of Mr. Dickens, and it shall be our study to remove it" (95–96). Adshead's rhetorical technique was to quote at length from Dickens's portraits of Philadelphia prisoners and to answer each of them with a more authoritative—less fictionalized—account, informed by his correspondence with Lieber and others who had conducted their own interviews. Of the three women whose mournful beauty had moved Dickens to tears, for example, Adshead wrote that "they were of the inferior class of low women to whom the appellative, 'beautiful,' was inappropriate and unworthy; two of them were Mulattoes, and one of them a Negress!" (115), as if this excited identification of their race would suffice to give the lie to Dickens's sentimentality.[30]

Adshead's most elaborate discussion, though, was devoted to another inmate to whom Dickens had referred in passing as "a poet, who . . . wrote verses about ships (he was by trade a mariner), and 'the maddening wine-cup,' and his friends at home" (94). Adshead would not reveal the poet's identity; the young convict, he wrote, "is tenacious of his name; and inquiry respecting it, fallen though he be, would be altogether improper" (105). The anonymity of the inmate's identity was important to the program of reform, since it ensured that rehabilitated convicts would not carry the shame of their past crimes into their future lives as responsible citizens. Calling on his sources in Philadelphia, though, Adshead purported to give a full picture of this particular inmate's life, crimes, and redemption. Dickens's "mariner" was the poet who would soon be known as Harry Hawser.

"This young man," Adshead wrote, "had been a clerk in a sailing packet, and was well educated, but being in a frolic in which several were intoxicated, he joined in taking a pocket-book, containing about seventeen dollars, from a passenger, which were spent during their state of inebriety" (105). As a consequence of this drunken spree, the "clerk" was sentenced to three years of solitary confinement at Eastern State. Prison discipline, Adshead assured his readers, had been good for the young sailor:

> It cannot fail to be pleasing to Mr. Dickens, to be informed, that this writer about "the maddening wine-cup," &c., when discharged, carried with him the respect and esteem of all the officers of the prison; he had signed the temperance pledge, and had become, in the opinion of every one who knew him, a thoroughly reformed man; and was reconciled to his father, with whom he has since been engaged in a respectable business. He married an industrious, reputable tradeswoman . . . with whom he has lived happily since. Upon application to the Governor of the State, this young man was restored to the enjoyment of his civil rights, of which his conviction as a felon had deprived him. (111–12)

Adshead's representation of the anonymous prisoner-poet followed the model laid out in Lieber's earlier letter. Against Dickens's portrayal of crushed, abject figures, the prison's apologists advanced a narrative of just conviction, severe but humane punishment, and moral reformation. Where Dickens had seen the monotonous wretchedness of living death, they saw a phase of mortification leading to rebirth.[31] Their prisoner was one who, as Benjamin Rush had imagined, "was dead and is alive."

In composing their resurrection narratives, Lieber and Adshead drew from a range of popular discourses, each of which involved some kind of personal transformation. They used the language of labor discipline and education, emphasizing the literacy and penmanship learned in prison. The once "fallen" poet, Adshead observed, "writes well in verse, his pieces are of an ethical tendency, and executed in an elegant style of calligraphy" (105). They told stories of families broken and repaired. They alluded to Protestant narratives of conversion—"I have learned to pray here," says Lieber's "yellow mulatto," "for I had forgotten since my childhood" (117)—and to the legal restoration from civil death to civil rights. And, in the case of Harry Hawser, Adshead made the passage from "inebriety" to temperance the central event in the convict's career. The once intoxicated young man, seduced into a criminal frolic, had been persuaded in prison to sign the temperance pledge, beginning a new life of sober responsibility.

As the centerpiece of his polemic against Dickens, Adshead reproduced a poem of over 120 lines, entitled "The Inebriate's Solitary Thoughts" (107–11). Adshead must have received the poem from his

correspondents in Philadelphia. Introducing the five pages of verse, he noted that he was in possession of "an autograph copy by the author," which he would "give . . . entire, without further note or comment," allowing the reformed convict to speak, as it were, for himself (107). In "The Inebriate's Solitary Thoughts," Hawser adopts the persona of the reformed drunkard. He recalls the miseries his intemperance had brought to himself and his family, and he offers his apology:

> Would I could drown, in Lethe's gloomy stream,
> The memory of two and thirty years,—
> That vast amount of precious time misspent,—
> But conscience whispers, "thus it may not be!"
> Nay, in my waking hours, and when in sleep
> My eye-lids close upon life's chequer'd scene,
> Her voice is heard within this tortured breast,
> Speaking of crime. (107)

Afflicted by regret in his solitary cell, the convict recalls how his drinking and other transgressions have broken his mother's heart, estranged him from his father, and wasted his life. He looks back in sorrow on "Base Dissipation's poison-teeming bowl" and the other "wiles" that led "the artless youth / From virtue's track to that of crime and woe" (110). In the final stanzas, he prays to Christ, "who died a felon's death," to redeem his soul and restore him to virtue.

Designed to appeal to an emergent mass public, "The Inebriate's Solitary Thoughts" united three discourses of rebirth—the correction of the convict in prison discipline was linked to the reformation of the drunkard in the personal commitment of temperance and the salvation of the sinner in evangelical conversion. In the constellation of prison reform, temperance, and evangelicalism, we can begin to see why Adshead made Harry Hawser the key figure in his response to Dickens, and why he chose "The Inebriate's Solitary Thoughts" to be Hawser's testimony in support of the Philadelphia system. The poem makes the solitary misery of incarceration, the suffering that provoked Dickens's sentimental response, a precondition for the glorious reformation of the soul. At the same time, it links the invisible transformation of the convict, locked away from the world, to the forms of publicly performed conversion that readers were likely to have seen in the immensely popular evangelical revivals and temperance meetings of the age. Through several layers of mediation—the poem composed in solitude, published under

a pseudonym, and quoted and framed by Adshead in his debate with Dickens—Hawser appeared to enact his own humble reformation before a transatlantic audience.

The relationship between prison reform and temperance went back at least to the first generation of post-Revolutionary reformers in Philadelphia, where the two forms of discipline had been advocated by such prominent figures as Benjamin Rush and Benjamin Franklin. The cultural historian David S. Shields describes the emergence of temperance discourse in the city in the eighteenth century, when the taverns that served as the centers of anti-Quaker society were attacked in pamphlets and newspapers as "site[s] of corruption."[32] The temperance movement that took shape in the public sphere, Shields observes, gave rise to a new mode of address that drew from both religious and political vocabularies but could speak to a variety of social problems. "As print consolidated a sense of the public distinct from state and church, particularly after the founding of newspapers in the provincial metropolis, the old objectors were supplied a new mask through which to voice their criticisms: the 'sober citizen.' The sober citizen was a figure of sufficient generality to encompass both religious and state interests."[33]

By the early 1840s, as Harry Hawser's poems began to circulate in Philadelphia and beyond, the radical, mainly working-class temperance advocates known as the Washingtonians were renovating temperance rhetoric—and stirring up new controversies—with their grotesque, sensational stories of the crimes and sufferings produced by drink. Their mass movement, claiming half a million members by the mid-1840s, involved not only crowded lectures but also the publication of enormously popular stories and novels, including best-sellers like George B. Cheever's *Deacon Gile's Distillery* and the young Walt Whitman's *Franklin Evans, or, The Inebriate*, first published in 1842, the same year as Dickens's *American Notes*. While temperance literature was generally published in cheap editions for mass audiences, its tropes and rhetorical modes found their way even into some of the canonical literary works of the antebellum period.[34]

In *Publics and Counterpublics*, Michael Warner notes that, between the late 1820s and the early 1840s, the press and American social movements "transformed each other in the context of temperance. The early national entrepreneurial press became a mass medium, and the temperance reform societies that had been popping up in every American locale became a full-scale, mass mediated social movement—that is, one

that understood itself as such." Thus, Warner adds, "temperance and the mass press planted each other on the national scene."[35] Aligning Harry Hawser—and, by extension, the personal transformation enacted by prisoners in the Pennsylvania system—with the temperance movement, then, Adshead and his fellow reformers attempted to address the new kind of public that was taking shape, the audience that had been so feverishly agitated by Dickens's revelations. As they did so, they helped to invent a new subject of public address, claiming peculiar new kinds of performative force and authenticity: the anonymous convict whose verses would testify to his own conversion, in solitude, from the wretchedness of crime to a redeemed life of virtue. Through the mouthpiece of Harry Hawser, the inmate invited to speak so that his testimony could express his own reformation and exonerate the prison from Dickens's charges, the Pennsylvania system sought a way to legitimate itself in the court of public opinion. In the encounter between an embattled reform movement and an emergent mass public, the figure of the prisoner-poet was conceived.

From the Gallows Confession to the Prison Poem

Of course, Harry Hawser's prison poetry had a cultural lineage. As Patrick-Stamp observes, Hawser's verses in some ways "conform[ed] to the earliest literature by convicted American criminals in its purely confessional character."[36] Most clearly, *Buds and Flowers* evolved from the gallows confession, in which condemned felons addressed the execution day crowd, acknowledging their guilt, recognizing the justice of the legal power that had convicted them, and praying for forgiveness in the next life. These speeches had been transcribed and circulated on both sides of the Atlantic for centuries in such volumes as Cotton Mather's *Pillars of Salt.* Like the condemned men and women who were their purported authors, Harry Hawser performed an act of expiation; he confessed to his guilt and justified the powers that punished him. "Intemperance consigned [the author] to a prison," Hawser wrote in his preface. "Justice to a system of prison discipline, which has received the severe and unjust criticism of many intelligent persons, has induced him to lay before the public the results of its operation upon himself, as the best and most indisputable refutation of the criticism it has received." Such self-referential lines, as well as many of the poems themselves, suggest that Hawser's book was rehearsing some of the conventions of the gallows confession.

Yet, *Buds and Flowers* also departed from the confessional tradition in meaningful ways, evolving into a new genre of literature that would be viewed through a new set of interpretive lenses. The old gallows speech had conventionally been delivered by a known member of the community. Even readers who encountered the confession in print were invited to imagine a familiar scene of address, a man or woman speaking to his or her neighbors. The author of the confession had a proper name and a life story that proceeded from the innocence of childhood into the corruption of crime, concluding with the righteous punishment that was about to be executed. By contrast, "Harry Hawser" was a pseudonym that functioned, like many other features of the Pennsylvania prison system, to conceal the convict's identity. Even reformers such as Adshead and Vaux, who knew the author's real name, declined to reveal it.

The authenticity of the prisoner-poet's testimony, then, would have to depend not on his recognizable face or name, but on how his book was presented to the public. It required a set of framing texts, including Adshead's biographical sketch and the preface attributed to Hawser. These commentaries claimed that the poet's personal experience of solitary confinement—the system's "operation upon himself"—had enabled him to compose "the best and most indispensable refutation of the criticism [the prison] ha[d] received." Unlike the professional writer of fiction, with his wild imagination and his disposition to produce sensational best-sellers, the prisoner's concern was to tell the truth about what had happened to him in the solitary cell. Anonymity also allowed Hawser and the reformers who published him to suggest that his experience of personal transformation could be generalized. Hawser's story was presumed to stand for the reformation of many other, perhaps less articulate inmates at Eastern State. Thus, by way of the pseudonym, a special kind of authenticity was enabled: the veracity of the testimony depended on the remaking of the author's subjectivity through a system of discipline, but any number of such subjects might be created by the same prison.

As it turns out, though, the convict who was called on to answer Dickens's charges in his own voice, the reformed prisoner-poet known as Harry Hawser, was himself something of a fiction. The prison records examined by Teeters and Shearer show that George Ryno, the inmate behind *Buds and Flowers,* had been convicted of two counts of larceny and confined at Eastern State from July 1840 until July 1843. Adshead referred to Hawser as "a clerk in a sailing packet," but the official

documents suggest a more weathered mariner. Ryno had been "7 or 10 years at sea," much of that time in the U.S. Navy. He was described as a "reckless and hardened man," with a "long scar" across his face and the initials "G. R." tattooed on his arm. He seemed "of a light and trifling spirit" and was "disposed to smile at the introduction of any serious topic." Upon his release, prison authorities noted in his file that he "reads and writes" and that he "drinks." He was paid thirty dollars for extra labor performed in the prison and fifty dollars for the copyright to his book.[37]

The archive reveals, then, that the convict George Ryno had little in common with the public persona known as Harry Hawser. Along the way, there are also hints that Ryno may have known a good deal about how to address the mass public for whom his book was published. His fluency in the idiom of the evangelical temperance movement, for instance, offers some insight into what he may have been reading at Eastern State. His verses also indicate other encounters with popular and didactic texts. "To a Dying Slave" uses the imagery of suffering and the sentimental affect common to antislavery writing on both sides of the Atlantic.[38] Likewise, an occasional poem on the death of William Henry Harrison indicates that the inmate was following the national news from his cell; Harrison died on April 1, 1841, several months into Ryno's sentence.

Beyond his knowledge of temperance and other national causes, Ryno may have been familiar with prison reform debates even before he entered the controversial penitentiary and talked with Dickens. The prison records mention that Ryno had a brother who died while incarcerated at Eastern State, and that his father was "a cruel and bad man" who had served as "head keeper of Trenton prison."[39] This unsavory character must have been Ephraim Ryno, the notoriously corrupt keeper who had presided over the New Jersey State Prison during the scandal of 1829–1830.[40] Under Ephraim Ryno's administration, conditions in the institution so deteriorated that the legislature commissioned a detailed report by a committee of specialists, to be supervised by the eminent Boston reformer Louis Dwight. The penal historian Harry Elmer Barnes, in his study of New Jersey prisons, refers to their report as "the most important document in the history of New Jersey penal institutions up to that time, and both an epitaph of the old system and a prophesy of a new order."[41]

The committee reported that the State Prison under Ephraim Ryno was losing money and that its accounts were poorly kept; that the outmoded construction of the building did not permit the solitude and surveillance necessary for maintaining discipline; that the subordinate officers were unruly, often consorting with the prisoners and neglecting their duties; and, above all, that the institution had a destructive influence on its inmates. A semisecret organization called the Staunch Gang organized conspiracies and escapes, threatening to murder anyone who exposed them. "They consider him a traitor, who informs on their deeds," a witness told the inspectors. "Such men are called snitch."[42] In an inept and arbitrary effort to enforce discipline, the keeper inflicted severe punishments including an "iron neck yoke," chains, and prolonged solitary confinement in an unheated cell. The inmates were wounded and debilitated, often "requir[ing] nearly as much time in the hospital . . . as they have had in the cells"; and at least ten prisoners had died "in consequence of being severely punished."[43] From the details of bookkeeping to the administration of labor and discipline, the Trenton prison was an appalling institution in the eyes of the era's leading reformers. The committee recommended "a speedy remedy" to the "evils" of the prison in the form of a new penitentiary. After some years of discussion and negotiation, including a long debate about the relative merits of the rival systems, New Jersey opened a new state prison, designed by John Haviland and operated on the Pennsylvania model, in 1836.[44]

Louis Dwight's committee had been aggressive in its attacks on the evils of the New Jersey State Prison, but it had been circumspect in the attribution of blame. In general, the reformers faulted the architecture of the institution, which made it impossible to enforce anything approaching the ideals of modern prison discipline: solitude, silence, and vigilant surveillance of the officers and the inmates. It seems clear, however, that the head keeper, Ephraim Ryno, was embarrassed by the scandal. Ryno kept the position for only one year, and the occasional mention of him in histories of Trenton and its institutions takes an apologetic tone.[45] In any case, the family history of George Ryno, the keeper's son and the poet who would call himself Harry Hawser, involved deep entanglements with the penal system and the reform movement. Nor did George Ryno's own relationship to the penitentiary end with his release in 1843. Five years later, he was again convicted of larceny and confined at Eastern State from January 1848 until February 1850.[46]

None of this, however, would be known to the public that read the work of Harry Hawser. In England and the United States, the reception of the poetry was shaped by Adshead, who had used it to refute

the "fictions" of Dickens. Thus the *Manchester Guardian* praised Adshead for correcting the "mistakes and erroneous statements of Charles Dickens."[47] The *New York Herald*, reviewing Adshead's book, was "glad to see a work of this kind come from the English press."[48] An open letter on the Pennsylvania system from the English reformer William Tallack, reprinted in at least two American periodicals, quoted extensively from the preface of Hawser's book and repeated Adshead's interpretation of its meaning: "This testimony is very important, for this reformed prisoner [Hawser] thus fully refutes the jail fictions of the genial, imaginative novelist [Dickens]."[49] The peculiar new relationship between the prison interior and the mass public—the reformers' need to answer sensational fiction with an inmate's true testimony—definitively informed the rhetoric and reception of *Buds and Flowers*, making the poet's authenticity a central issue in the meaning and political force of the poetry. This new kind of authenticity, however, was paradoxically an effect of the inmate's anonymity; it depended on the reformers' capacity to obscure the life of George Ryno behind the screen of Harry Hawser.

At the same time, Hawser's book also reworked the tradition of the gallows confession in another significant way, by shifting the speaker's orientation toward death. The confession had traditionally expressed the convict's readiness to meet death, with a prayer for God's mercy. Hawser's task, instead, was to show how he had already passed through a disciplinary mortification and emerged into a new life. Very much unlike the gallows confession, the testimony of the reformed inmate had to display the author's bodily and psychic well-being. Thus the unnamed girl tells Lieber that she "feel[s] very well" in the prison; and Hawser insists that he "is neither morose, imbecile, dispirited, or deranged" (preface). His abjection in the prison had been a virtual death, but it had been absorbed into a narrative of spiritual resurrection.

This was the heart of the Philadelphia reformers' response to Dickens: where he saw the wretchedness of men and women buried alive, they sought to display a stern discipline that broke down the offender in order to nurture the awakening of a disciplined subject. As the public's fascination with the prison interior continued to grow, this fundamental opposition between the gothic nightmare of living death and the sentimental fantasy of personal rebirth would inform the tropes and modes of popular representation. In order to defend the prison system, Hawser had to communicate the blessings it had conferred on him. Line by

line and page by page, his poems were supposed to manifest his earthly redemption.

In the years following the publication of *Buds and Flowers*, the connection between prison discipline and other forms of personal transformation, especially temperance, would be fortified. By 1852, the reformer Joseph Edward Turner had applied to the New York legislature for the incorporation of the first state-run asylum devoted to reforming drunkards. Chartered in 1854 and finally opened in 1864, the New York State Inebriate Asylum was a central institution in the formation of modern addiction treatment. Its practices included temperance lectures, group meetings, and a "literary and social support club" known as the Ollapod Club.[50] Meanwhile, the rival to the Philadelphia system, the "congregate" system in place in the penitentiaries of New York and Massachusetts, began to circulate its own examples of prison literature in such publications as *The Prisoner's Friend*, a monthly magazine founded in Boston in 1845. The editors would later claim to have issued "probably four hundred thousand copies" of the magazine in its first four years.[51] *The Prisoner's Friend* published essays and reports by reformers as well as original works by convicts. An 1846 poem by Charles Meadows, for example, concluded with this celebration of the temperance pledge:

> We, who now pace the prison cell,
> We who have drained the cup and fell,
> Oh, is there naught for us to do,
> Yes, *take the pledge*, and keep it too,
> Look up and breathe an earnest prayer,
> And hope will bid us not despair,
> But cheer us with its warmest ray,
> And show a future brighter day.[52]

By way of such poems, the advocates of the congregate system suggested that their institutions, no less than the solitary prison in Philadelphia, could lead the inmate through "despair" to "a future brighter day"—through the darkness of abjection to the awakening of a new life. (It was in the pages of *The Prisoner's Friend* that, after an absence of six years, Harry Hawser returned to the world of letters in 1850 with the publication of "Youth's Hopes," a mournful poem of unfulfilled promises. Amid the conventional, trite phrases—"airy dreams," "pathways green"—is one remarkable command to the reader, "Peruse my life,"

which faintly gestures toward the textual, even fictional character of the author.[53])

Those who wished to attack the prison in the public sphere, meanwhile, would cast doubt on its promise of resurrection by insisting that its secluded interior was a dungeon-tomb of living death. Karen Halttunen has identified a whole subgenre of mid-nineteenth-century popular fiction that used a gothic literary mode to protest the abuses suffered by inmates. These "gothic exposés of asylum life," Halttunen argues, revealed the gap between enlightened theory and violent practice, between humane intentions and cruel realities.[54] Such exposés both influenced and were influenced in turn by the most famous of such works, the depiction of Eastern State in Dickens's *American Notes*, with its memorable passages on the living entombment of the prison interior:

> Over the head and face of every prisoner who comes into this melancholy house a black hood is drawn; and in this dark shroud, an emblem of the curtain dropped between him and the living world, he is led to the cell from which he never again comes forth until his whole term of imprisonment has expired. He never hears of wife or children; home or friends; the life or death of any single creature. He sees the prison officers, but, with that exception, he never looks upon a human countenance, or hears a human voice. He is a man buried alive; to be dug out in the slow round of years; and in the meantime dead to everything but torturing anxieties and horrible despair. (91)

Returning, by way of conclusion, to Hawser's "The Captive," the poem of "living doom" that first drew me to *Buds and Flowers*, its haunting power now seems to arise from its resonance with Dickens's narrative, the very text it was published to refute, and with a whole tradition of imaginative prison literature that has developed the imagery of the penitentiary as a dungeon of civil death, bodily violence, and psychic dissolution. "The Captive" abandons the idiom of personal reformation and, calling incarceration a "doom," interrupts its blessing with a curse. Yet, this is not exactly, or not only, the subversive power of an incarcerated artist exposing the dehumanizing force of an institution he had been required to justify. Rather, the curse of "the captive's doom," the subversive potential of prison literature, is the menacing counterpart created alongside a genre whose official purpose was to bless or legitimate the modern regime of punishment. *Buds and Flowers* is animated by the deep contradictions—between authenticity and sensationalism, between subversion and complicity—in the very concept of prison literature that it communicated to the emergent mass public and its collective imagination.

NOTES

1. Harry Hawser was the name of a character in Samuel James Arnold's comic opera *The Shipwreck, or The Female Sailor*, performed in Boston and elsewhere in the United States in the early nineteenth century. For the text, see Arnold, *The Shipwreck, or The Female Sailor* (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, Printers, 1820).

2. Harry Hawser, *Buds and Flowers, of Leisure Hours* (Philadelphia: Geo. W. Loammi Johnson, for the author, 1844), preface (n.p.). Subsequent references cited parenthetically in the text.

3. Negley K. Teeters and John D. Shearer, *The Prison at Philadelphia, Cherry Hill: The Separate System of Prison Discipline, 1829–1913* (New York: published for Temple University Publications by Columbia University Press, 1957).

4. Angela Davis, "Writing on the Wall: Prisoners on Punishment," *Punishment and Society* 3, no. 3 (2001): 428.

5. Ibid., 427.

6. See Leslie C. Patrick-Stamp, "George Ryno: Prisoner-Poet, 1840–1850," in Eastern State Penitentiary Task Force of the Preservation Commission of Greater Philadelphia, *Eastern State Penitentiary: Historic Structures Report* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Historical Commission, 1994), 140–42.

7. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1977).

8. Benjamin Rush, "An Enquiry into the Effects of Public Punishments upon Criminals and upon Society" (1787), in *Essays: Literary, Moral and Philosophical*, ed. Michael Meranze (Schenectady, N.Y.: Union College Press, 1988), 89.

9. Ibid., 91.

10. Quoted in Richard Vaux, *Brief Sketch of the Origins and History of the State Penitentiary for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: McLaughlin Brothers, Printers, 1872), 48.

11. Tom Wicker, preface to *Prison Writing in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. H. Bruce Franklin (New York: Penguin, 1998), xi.

12. John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

13. Thomas L. Dumm, *Democracy and Punishment: Disciplinary Origins of the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

14. Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue: Punishment, Revolution, and*

Authority in Philadelphia, 1760–1835 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1996), 173, 174. See also Meranze's "A Criminal Is Being Beaten: The Politics of Punishment and the History of the Body," in *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America*, ed. Robert Blair St. George (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000); Jason Haslam, "Pits, Pendulums, and Penitentiaries: Reframing the Detained Subject," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 50, no. 3 (September 2008): 268–84; and my book, *The Prison and the American Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

15. Thomas M'Elwee and George W. Smith, quoted and reproduced in Vaux, *Brief Sketch*, 56–61.

16. Rush, "Enquiry," 88.

17. Haslam, "Pits, Pendulums, and Penitentiaries," 269.

18. Franklin Bache, "On the Penitentiary System: A Letter from Franklin Bache, M.D., to Roberts Vaux" (Philadelphia: Jesper Harding, Printer, 1829), 3.

19. Charles Dickens, *American Notes, for General Circulation* (1842; reprint, New York: St. Martin's, 1985). Subsequent references cited parenthetically in the text.

20. James M. Volo and Dorothy Denneen Volo, *The Antebellum Period* (New York: Greenwood, 2004), 220. On the many pirated editions of Dickens's texts in America, especially *American Notes*, see Meredith McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834–1853* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

21. *Times* (London), quoted in Philip Collins, *Dickens and Crime*, 3rd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 130.

22. J. J. Telkampf, "Remarks on Prison Discipline in the United States, Suggested by the Chapter on Philadelphia and Its Solitary Prison in the 'American Notes' of Charles Dickens," *New World* 6, no. 3 (January 21, 1843): 67.

23. "British Critics and British Travelers," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 14, no. 70 (April 1844): 335–44.

24. William Peter, "Mr. Dickens' Report of His Visit to the Eastern Penitentiary," *Pennsylvania Journal of Prison Discipline and Philanthropy* 1, no. 1 (January 1845): 85–88. Quotation is from 87.

25. Francis Lieber, Letter to Mr. Barclay, Honorary Secretary of the Philadelphia Prison Society, September 18, 1843, reprinted in Joseph Adshead, *Prisons and Prisoners* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1845), 115–17. All quotations are from these three pages.

26. Collins, *Dickens and Crime*, 118.

27. Adshead, *Prisons and Prisoners*, 99. Subsequent references cited parenthetically in the text.

28. Vaux, *Brief Sketch*, 112–13.

29. J. Field, *Prison Discipline* (1846; 2nd ed. 1848), quoted in Collins, *Dickens and Crime*, 119.

30. Commenting on Dickens's treatment of the female prisoners, Philip Collins notes that "the bitterly hostile reception which *American Notes* received in the United States was caused by many other features of the book than its penology, . . . and the vigour of the counter-attacks in defence of Philadelphia doubtless owed something to the general indignation which his sympathy for negroes excited" (*Dickens and Crime*, 127).

31. My use of the term "mortification" follows Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: Anchor, 1961).

32. David S. Shields, "The Demonization of the Tavern," in *The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature*, ed. David S. Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 10.

33. Ibid., 15.

34. On the Washingtonians, the varieties of temperance rhetoric, and literature, see David S. Reynolds, "Black Cats and Delirium Tremens: Temperance and the American Renaissance," in Reynolds and Rosenthal, *Serpent in the Cup*. On Whitman and temperance, see also Michael Warner, "Whitman Drunk," in his *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005).

35. Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 270. On the transformation of the economics and technology of print in early national Philadelphia, see Rosalind Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital: Philadelphia Book Publishers in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996). On the formation of wider, national and international book markets in the antebellum period, see Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

36. Patrick-Stamp, "George Ryno," 140.

37. Teeters and Shearer, *Cherry Hill*, 126–27.

38. On the transatlantic tradition and popularity of the dying slave genre, see Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and Russ Castronovo, *Necro-Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001).

39. Teeters and Shearer, *Cherry Hill*, 127.

40. Ephraim Ryno is named as the keeper of the state prison in 1829 in the records of the New Jersey state legislature and in John O. Raum, *History of the City of Trenton, New Jersey* (Trenton, N.J.: W. T. Nicholson, Printers, 1871), 262.

41. Harry Elmer Barnes, *A History of the Penal, Reformatory and Correctional Institutions of the State of New Jersey: Analytical and Documentary* (1918) (reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1974), 73.

42. New Jersey Legislative Committee on Prison Discipline, "Report to the Legislature" (1830) (reprinted in Barnes, *History of the Penal, Reformatory and Correctional Institutions*, 396–423), 405.

43. New Jersey Legislative Committee, "Report," 411.

44. Barnes, *History of the Penal, Reformatory and Correctional Institutions*, 81–118.

45. See Raum, *History of the City of Trenton*, 262: "Ephraim Ryno, being a member of the board [of inspectors], succeeded in getting the appointment by having a majority of the board in his favor, and this, with his own vote, bestowed the appointment of keeper upon himself. He held it for one year only."

46. Teeters and Shearer, *Cherry Hill*, 127.

47. "Varieties," *Manchester Guardian*, October 22, 1845, 5.

48. "Literary Notices," *New York Herald*, January 40, 1846, 2.

49. William Tallack, "Charles Dickens's Prison Fictions," *Journal of Prison Discipline and Philanthropy* (January 1, 1895): 33. Tallack's essay was excerpted and reprinted in *The Friend: A Religious and Literary Journal* 68, no. 29 (February 9, 1895): 226.

50. See John W. Crowley and William L. White, *Drunkard's Refuge: The Lessons of the New York State Inebriate Asylum* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004). On the Ollapods, see 67–68.

51. "History of *The Prisoner's Friend*," *Prisoner's Friend* (September 1848): 3.

52. Charles Meadows, "Poem by Charles Meadows, a Convict," *Prisoner's Friend* (December 9, 1846): 193.

53. Harry Hawser, "Youth's Hopes," *Prisoner's Friend* 2, no. 12 (August 1, 1850): 544. Thanks to Ryan Carr for calling my attention to this source.

54. Karen Halttunen, "Gothic Mystery and the Birth of the Asylum: The Cultural Construction of Deviance in Early-Nineteenth-Century America," in *Moral Problems in American Life: New Perspectives on Cultural History*, ed. Karen Halttunen and Lewis Perry (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), 42.