ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	THOMAS SATTERWHITE NOBLE (1835-1907): RECONSTRUCTED REBEL
	Tuliza Kamirah Fleming, Doctor of Philosophy, 2007
Directed By:	Professor, Sally Promey, Department of Art History and Archaeology

Thomas Satterwhite Noble was a Southerner, a member of slave-owning family, a confederate soldier, and an artist who painted history paintings relating to slavery and freedom in the United States. Between 1865 and 1870, Noble created a series of paintings that directly confronted white America's ambivalent feelings with regard to the issues of slavery, emancipation, and integration—earning him the moniker "reconstructed rebel."

The American Slave Mart, 1865 was the first monumental treatment of a slave auction by an American painter and effectively launched his career as an artist of national recognition. Noble was strongly influenced by his French teacher and mentor, Thomas Couture, and his seminal painting *Decadence of the Romans* when he painted *The American Slave Mart*. Two years later, buoyed by his success of his first history painting, Noble created the contemporary history paintings *Margaret Garner* and *John Brown's Blessing*. Both paintings featured individuals who risked

themselves and those they loved in the pursuit of freedom and liberty. In 1868 Noble *The Price of Blood, A Planter Selling His Son*, a painting which revealed the Southern practice of slave owners selling their slave/children for profit. In 1870, Noble painted a simplified replica of *The American Slave Mart* titled, *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis*. This painting was created at a very difficult time in the artist's career and represents a desire for him to be seen as part of the greater Cincinnati community.

Thomas Satterwhite Noble: A Reconstructed Rebel examines how Noble's African American imagery reflected and interpreted issues concerning slavery in the upper South, the internal slave trade, miscegenation, and abolition. This study shifts the scholarly emphasis on Noble's oeuvre from discussions relating to the manner in which African Americans were portrayed before and after slavery to how these images were perceived by contemporary reconstruction audiences.

THOMAS SATTERWHITE NOBLE (1835-1907): RECONSTRUCTED REBEL

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2007

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, John Fleming, Barbara Fleming, and Diara Spelmon who encouraged me and loved me with all of their hearts.

Acknowledgements

I want to express my gratitude to the Department of Art History and Archaeology of the University of Maryland at College Park for the generous support that made this dissertation possible. I want to warmly thank my advisor, Sally Promey, whose professional and moral support aided me throughout the process of writing my dissertation. Her encouragement and advice were both critical and welcome in this exercise. I am grateful to my dissertation committee, who included Franklin Kelly, Renee Ater, and Anthony Colantuono, for providing useful insight and commentary on my dissertation. Special thanks go out to Anthony Colantuono for agreeing to serve on my committee at such a late date. I am especially thankful for the generous support of David Driskell, my Dean's representative, for all of his guidance, inspiration, and generosity with his time. His ongoing encouragement while I worked on this project went above and beyond the call of duty and for that I am truly grateful.

I would like to thank the David C. Driskell Center for the Study of The African Diaspora for awarding me a dissertation fellowship in the 2005-2006 academic year. This funding, which was supported by the National Associates Fund (established by Arthur and Ruby McZier), afforded me much needed time to dedicate to the research of this project.

In addition to the wonderful people at the University of Maryland, there were many other people who have provided me with professional and moral support during my journey. Many thanks go out to Ellen Rohmiller, the librarian at The Dayton Art

Institute, who tirelessly worked with me to get the research materials I needed to complete my dissertation. I would like to thank James Birchfield who provided me with much needed contacts and information. Thanks go out to Rosamond Dauer who spoke to me at length about her great grandfather, Thomas Satterwhite Noble. I also wish to thank William H. Gerdts for generously granting me access to the Thomas Satterwhite Noble research collection located in his private collection.

My friends and colleagues Martha Bari, Leslie Brice, Elizabeth Tobey, Chris Slogar, Akua McDaniel, Jackie Francis, and Adrienne Childs deserve special notice for their encouragements and insights into my project.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for all their tireless support of me during this entire process. My sister, Diara Spelman, has always been there for me to discuss my project and offer me unconditional love and support. I am eternally grateful to my parents John and Barbara Fleming who stood by me every step of the way. Both of them generously agreed to read my dissertation and discuss with me points of history, art history, and style. Their dedication to me and my work during this period has been a blessing and I am truly thankful for their time and their steadfast love.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The image of African Americans in post-Civil War nineteenth-century American art has received ever-increasing consideration by scholars over the past thirty years. Most of this scholarship has revolved around concerns with racial identity and the politics of representation. Understanding how images of African Americans functioned as visual signifiers for a nation engaged in the difficult process of reconstruction requires an investigation into issues relating to national politics, social values, and public policy as they intersect with and respond to the abolition of slavery.

Between 1865 and 1870, white Kentucky native Thomas Satterwhite Noble (1835-1907) [Figure 1] painted a series of canvases that directly confronted America's ambivalent feelings with regard to the issues of slavery, emancipation, and integration—earning him the moniker of the "reconstructed rebel." Although these paintings represent only a portion of his life's work, the positive reception garnered by these works enabled him to gain national recognition as a major American artist. The significance of Noble's African American-inspired images is evident not only in their former popularity, but also through the continued attention they have received among contemporary scholars of nineteenth-century American genre painting.

In recent years, the majority of Noble's African American paintings have been discussed, analyzed, and exhibited as examples of images relating to the inhumanity of the slave system and the question of black competency.[1] There is, however, much

[1] James D. Birchfield, Albert Boime, and William J. Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Art Museum, 1988), 30. Leslie Furth, "*The Modern Medea* and

more to these works than this one particular disposition of inquiry can reveal. A careful analysis of the paintings' context and reception indicates that they illuminate not only the particular environment of a nation divided by war in the midst of social and political reconstruction but also reveal complex philosophies concerning slavery and abolition in America.

Thomas Satterwhite Noble: A Reconstructed Rebel will examine how Noble's African American imagery reflected and interpreted issues concerning slavery in the upper South, the internal slave trade, miscegenation, and abolition. This study will shift the scholarly emphasis on Noble's oeuvre from discussions relating to the manner in which African Americans were portrayed before and after slavery to how these images were perceived by contemporary reconstruction period audiences.

The primary focus of *Thomas Satterwhite Noble: A Reconstructed Rebel* is a contextual analysis relating to the series of paintings produced by Noble between 1865 and 1870 which include: *The American Slave Mart*, 1865; *Margaret Garner*, 1867 [Figure 2]; *John Brown's Blessing* (*John Brown Led to Execution*), 1867 [Figure 3]; *The Price of Blood: A Planter Selling His Son*, 1868 [Figure 4]; and, *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis*, 1870 [Figure 5].

<u>*Methodology*</u>

This study will employ concepts of social history and critical reception to assess Noble's series of African American-inspired paintings in the cultural, historical

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Race Matters: Thomas Satterwhite Noble's *Margaret Garner*," *American Art* 12, no. 2 (1998). Guy C. McElroy, *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art, 1710-1940* (San Francisco, CA: Bedford Arts, Publishers in association with The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1990). Albert Boime, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble Casts Couture's Spell in America," in *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1980).

and political context of the post-Civil War era. Acknowledging the importance of social history in determining general patterns in artistic production and consumption, my dissertation will evaluate the circumstances concerning changes in critical and popular taste, artistic patronage, and the distribution and reproduction of slavery- and emancipation-related images.

An analysis of the critical reception of the works is crucial to this study. Thomas Satterwhite Noble left no extant text that would give the reader insight into his intended meaning for his paintings. Given this lack of information, it is necessary that I examine the critical response to his paintings during the era in which they were created to gain a more nuanced understanding of how these works were perceived in terms of meaning, narrative, and social and political purpose.

The concept of historical memory will be fundamental to my analysis of how Noble's images were perceived and received in the years dating from the creation of *The Slave* Mart in 1865 to 1870 when he painted *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis*.[2] According to historian David Blight, "The historical memory of any transforming or controversial event emerges from cultural and political competition, from the choice to confront the past and to debate and manipulate its meaning."[3] Therefore, there is more than one kind of memory of slavery following the Civil War. The first memory emerged in the North immediately following the abolition of slavery. The Civil War was perceived by northerners as a moral victory over slavery and many people sought

[2] Although I am familiar with David Blight's concept of ideological memory from his book, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), its time frame ,1865-1915, was not especially useful in analyzing the manner in which memory intersects with Noble's artwork between the years 1865 and 1870.

[3] David W. Blight, "'for Something Beyond the Battlefield': Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for the Memory of the Civil War," *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 4 (1989): 1159.

to claim some sort of involvement regarding efforts to eliminate slavery, i.e. the abolitionist and Underground Railroad movements.

Noble's slavery-related paintings served as a part of the formation of this early northern-based historical memory. Noble used his paintings to recall transforming and/or controversial events and by virtue of depicting these events on canvas manipulated their meanings. They are also sites of public memory as they were presented to the public as history paintings and reviewed by the visual critics of Noble's day. How these critics responded to the way his paintings visually manipulated many of the ideas and events surrounding the struggle to end slavery will be an important component of this dissertation.

Literature Review: Exhibitions and Catalogues

Between 1866 and 1990, Noble's artwork was exhibited in 89 galleries, museums, and cultural institutions. Over one third (34) of these exhibitions featured at least one of Noble's slavery-related paintings.[4] The vast majority of exhibitions containing work by Noble occurred during the artist's lifetime. Although there was a brief resurgence of interest in Noble and his artwork, following his death in 1907, the

[4] Although Noble painted other images of people of African descent including *Boy in Brown Suit*, c. late 1860s (oil on canvas, 10 x 10 inches, Collection of the Yale University Art Gallery), *The Blind Man of Paris*, 1895 (oil on canvas [laid down on aluminum], 45 x 35 inches, Collection of the Yale University Art Gallery, H. John Heinz III, B.A. 1960, Fund), and *The Sibyl*, 1896 (oil on canvas, 50 x 40 inches, Collection of the Greenville County Museum of Art), for the purpose of this dissertation, I have limited my account of Noble's slavery-related paintings to those works that specifically address issues of slavery and Freedom created during the decade following the Civil War.

public interest in and awareness of Noble's life and work declined severely between 1915 and 1969. [5]

As stated earlier, the first major series of exhibitions of Noble's work in the twentieth century occurred in the years following Noble's death in 1907. As a memoriam to Noble's life-long accomplishments, four institutions hosted retrospective exhibitions on the artist. These venues included: the Cincinnati Art Museum (Oct. 19 – Nov. 10, 1907); The Art Institute of Chicago (Sept. 8 – Oct. 7, 1908); the St. Louis Museum of Fine Arts (Dec. 6, 1908); and Ralston Galleries (Jan. 31 – Feb. 12, 1910). Each venue published a small exhibition catalogue that contained a brief biographical sketch and a listing of the 124 painting and drawings exhibited, including *John Brown's Blessing*, *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis*, *Study Head for Picture,--John Brown's Blessing*, and *Study Head for Composition,--Fugitive Slave*. [6] In Chicago, the exhibition was especially heralded by the local press. Often these reviews would include addition biographical information on the artist and his work. [7]

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[5] Cincinnati Art Museum's Exhibition of the Work of the Late Thomas S. Noble for Many Years Principal of the Art Academy of Cincinnati, 19 October to 10 November 1907; the Art Institute of Chicago's Paintings by Thomas S. Noble, 8 September to 7 October 1908; the St. Louis Museum of Fine Arts' Paintings by Thomas S. Noble, et al., 6 December 1908 to **?**; and, the New York based Ralston Galleries, Paintings by Thomas S. Noble, 31 January to 12 February 1910.

[6] Cincinnati Art Museum, "Exhibition of the Work of the Late Thomas S. Noble for Many Years Principal of the Art Academy of Cincinnati," (Cincinnati, OH: Cincinnati Art Museum Press, 1907). The Art Institute of Chicago, *Paintings of Thomas S. Noble, 1835-1907* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1908). St. Louis Museum of Fine Arts, *Collections Comprising Paintings by Mr. Thos. S. Noble, Paintings by Mr. Edward Lind Morse, Paintings by Southwestern Artists, Prints, the Work of French Engravers*, *Special Exhibition Catalog* (St. Louis, Miss.: St. Louis Museum of Fine Arts, 1908). Ralston Galleries, *Paintings by Thomas S. Noble* (New York: Ralston Galleries, 1910).

[7] These texts include, but are not limited to, the following articles: "Art and Artists," *The Chicago Evening Post*, 19 September 1908. *The Chicago Evening Post*, Saturday, 3 October 1908. "Slave Scenes in Art Exhibit: American History Seen in Paintings of the Late T. S. Noble," *The Daily News*, Friday, 11 September 1908. "Noble Exhibit at Art Museum," 1908. "Paintings by Noble, Chicago Artist, Are on Exhibition," *Chicago Daily Journal*, Saturday, 12 September 1908. "To Exhibit Noble's Paintings: Canvases of Great American Artist Shown at Art Institute," *The Chicago Record-Herald*,

During the decades that followed these memorial exhibitions, interest in Noble's life and work fell into a serious decline. Between 1910 and 1970 only three exhibitions featured work by the artist. Included among these exhibitions are: *Panama-Pacific International Exposition*, (Department of Fine Art; San Francisco, California, 1915), *Special Exhibition of Former Cincinnati Artists*, (Cincinnati, Ohio, 7 - 23 April, 1923); and, *Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition of Work by Teachers and Former Students of the Art Academy*, (Cincinnati Art Museum; Cincinnati, Ohio, 27 November - 2 January, 1987). None of these shows featured any slavery-themed paintings by the artist.

In 1970, Noble was reintroduced to the art world through the exhibition titled *American Pupils of Thomas Couture*, curated by Marchal Landgren at the University of Maryland's Art Gallery. This exhibition, which explored the relationship between Couture's atelier and his American students, included Noble's painting of John Brown. Fourteen years later in 1984, The Owensboro Museum of Fine Art in Kentucky featured three of Noble's landscapes, and one genre painting in the exhibition, *Kentucky Expatriates: Natives and Notable Visitors: The Early 1800's to the Present*.[8] The exhibition's catalogue comprises nine essays—three of which mention Noble. The two essays that briefly discuss Noble are entitled, "Kentucky's Expatriated Artist: An Introduction," and "Hart, Yandell, Duveneck and Other 19th

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Friday, 11 September 1908. *Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago* 2, no. 2 (1908). Maude I. G. Oliver, "Art and Artists," *Chicago Sunday Record-Herald*, Sunday, 27 September 1908.

[8] The exhibition opened on April 29th and closed on June 24th, 1984. The four paintings by Noble displayed in the show were: two untitled landscapes, c. 1905; *Mt. Adams*, nd; and, *The Jester*, 1877. Owensboro Museum of Fine Art, *Kentucky Expatriates: Natives and Notable Visitors: The Early 1800's to the Present* (Owensboro, Kentucky: Owensboro Museum of Fine Art, 1984).

Century Expatriates: The Kentuckian's View of the Artists Who Left," by Mary Bryan Hood and Arthur F. Jones respectively. The third essay, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: Artist and Teacher," written by James D. Birchfield, is essentially a very brief biography of the artist.[9]

In 1987, The Cincinnati Art Museum displayed the cabinet version of *Margaret Garner* in their exhibition *The Procter and Gamble Art Collection*.[10] One year later, the most comprehensive exhibition on the life and work of Noble since the artists death in 1907 was mounted at the University of Kentucky Art Museum. The retrospective exhibition and catalogue, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 1835-1907*, was organized by that institution.[11] James D. Birchfield, Albert Boime, and William J. Hennessey (the exhibition's curator), all contributed essays to the catalogue. This collaboration between these three scholars resulted in the only publication and/or exhibition text that includes both an extensive biography and a contextual analysis of the artist's work.[12] Although this text was created to serve as a precursor to more concentrated studies on the artist and his oeuvre, to date it remains among the most significant published contribution to this field of inquiry.

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[9] Ibid., 25, 34, 49, 112-13.

[10] Cincinnati Art Museum, *The Procter and Gamble Art Collection* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Cincinnati Art Museum, 1987).

[11] The exhibition, *Thomas S. Noble: 1835*-1907 premiered at the University of Kentucky Art Museum (10 April – 29 May 1988). The show traveled to the Greenville County Museum of Art (19 July – 4 September 1988) and concluded at the Art Academy of Cincinnati (18 September – 6 November 1988). According to William J. Hennessey, this exhibition was the first time since 1910 that any sizable group of Noble's paintings had been gathered together in one place. He also stated that the accompanying catalogue was the first attempt to provide a coherent assessment of the artist's career and production. Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble*, ix.

[12] William J. Hennessey organized the exhibition and wrote the preface, acknowledgements and catalogue entries. James D. Birchfield and Albert Boime each contributed essays to the catalogue. Ibid., iv.

The catalogue, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 1835-1907* was organized into three distinct sections: "The Artistic Career of Thomas Satterwhite Noble," a general biographical essay written by Birchfield; "Burgoo and Bourgeois: Thomas Noble's Images of Black People," an analytical essay examining the social and historical contexts of Noble's African American imagery by Boime; and, "Catalogue," an annotated catalogue of Noble's art, exhibition history, and provenance.

The first section of the catalogue, the linear biography, describes Noble's life from his birthplace and parentage to his experiences and achievements as an artist and an art administrator. This essay is only a slightly different version of a two-part article entitled, "Kentucky Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter,'" published by Birchfield two years earlier in *The Kentucky Review*.[13] "The Artistic Career of Thomas Satterwhite Noble," and *The Kentucky Review* articles have proven to be invaluable resources and have added much to the field's knowledge and understanding of Noble's as a person, an artist, and an arts administrator. Not only did Birchfield combine all of the previous information that had been published on the artist with new information and insights, but his intensive archival research resulted in the creation of the Noble archives.[14]

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[13] James D. Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter,' Part 2," *The Kentucky Review* VI, no. 2 (1986). James D. Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1," *The Kentucky Review* VI, no. 1 (1986).

[14] Birchfield is curator of rare books for Special Collections & Archives at the University of Kentucky's Margaret I. King Library. He was able to conduct his extensive research on Noble though a grant from the University of Kentucky Faculty Research Committee. The archival files Birchfield compiled in preparation for this study, which henceforth will be referred to as the Noble Research Collection, are currently located in the private archival collection of American art historian, William Gerdts (New York, New York), and are available only by appointment. "Noble Research Collection," (New York).

The next section, "Burgoo and Bourgeois: Thomas Noble's Images of Black People," analyzes Noble's work from the social and historical context of Noble's heritage as a southerner, a native of Kentucky, and a participant as a Confederate soldier in the Civil War. As part of this analysis, Boime examines three themes in Noble's series of African American paintings: the inhumanity of the slave system and its dehumanizing effect on both slavery and slave; the question of African American competency and the capacity of this group to integrate wholly into the dominant society; and, the question of whether African Americans have the capacity to overcome their "brute" status and rise to the level of "spiritual" enlightenment.[15]

By utilizing social history to extrapolate the possible motivations behind Noble's series of African American paintings, Boime concludes that Noble's southern upbringing and familiarity with slave life, the socialist influence of his Parisian art instructor, Thomas Couture, his exposure to anti-slavery organizations and literature throughout his life, and the opening of a lucrative market for images of slave subjects in the North ultimately led to his production of this particular series. In addition to his discussion of Noble's multi-faceted interest in creating images of African Americans, Boime also interprets the basic narratives of the images themselves.

Boime is the first scholar to examine Noble's slavery-related paintings using formal, social, and historical methodologies. Boime's contextual analysis of these works provides the field with a new and fresh perspective on the issues and events that may have influenced the reception of Noble's work. Unfortunately, his reliance upon general historical texts and Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,

[15] Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble*, 30.

as his primary historical sources obscured the more nuanced aspects of Noble's canvases.

The third and final section of *Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 1835-1907* is a catalogue of images. Written and compiled by William J. Hennessey, the images in this section relate to the artist's entire body of work. As a secondary source, this section is invaluable as each image is accompanied by a brief explanatory essay and section on its provenance.

In 1990, Guy C. McElroy curated and wrote the catalogue for the exhibition, *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art, 1710-1940*. The purpose of this exhibition was to explore the manner through which two centuries of images representing African American identity was related to social and political status within American culture. [16] McElroy asserts that his publication "documents comprehensively the variety of ways artists created a visual record of African-Americans that reinforced a number of largely restrictive stereotypes of black identity." He adds that the aim of *Facing History* is to "provide a panorama that illuminates the shifting, surprisingly cyclical nature of the images white men and women created to view their black counterparts."[17] As an exhibition, McElroy's compilation of images is impressive and his assertion that these works are essential barometers for measuring the political beliefs, economic assumptions, and

[16] The exhibition debuted at The Corcoran Gallery of Art (13 January – 25 March, 1990) and traveled to The Brooklyn Museum of Art (20 April – 25 June, 1990). McElroy, *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art, 1710-1940*.

[17] Ibid., xi.

philosophical or religious credos that formed the foundation of American society is extremely persuasive.

The exhibition and catalogue included three works by Noble, the cartoon for *Margaret* Garner, *The Price of Blood,* and, *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis*. Unfortunately, outside of the visual evidence provided by the images, many of the works included in this catalogue (including those painted by Noble) lack the depth of research and analysis that would give additional support to his thesis of the panoramic shift of meaning that occurred during the nineteenth century with regard to the constructed image of African Americans by white male artists.[18]

Literature Review: Articles and Essays

Very little detailed biographical information was published on Noble during the artist's lifetime. The documents that did exist generally were limited to newspaper articles, exhibition pamphlets, and short essays in regional and biographical reference books. These documents were generally relegated to discussions relating to Noble's birthplace, his education in Paris under Thomas Couture, and a cursory description of his series of paintings highlighting aspects of African American life prior to and after emancipation.[19]

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[18] McElroy discussion of these works does not contribute any new information to the scholarship on the artist. Ibid., 67-69.

[19] *St. Louis Times*, 12 August 1866. Alfred Jingle, "Noble's 'Last Sale'," *St. Louis Daily Times*, 12 August 1866. *New York Standard* 1867. "Art Gossip," c. 1867. "Pictures in Boston: The Price of Blood," *Boston Daily Evening Transcript Supplement*. "Fine Arts: Art Notes," *The Alluon*, 1 February 1868. "The Price of Blood," *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, 6 October 1869. "The Price of Blood," c. 1871. Lewis Collins, "Thomas S. Noble," in *History of Kentucky: By the Late Lewis Collins, Judge of the Mason County Court* (Covington, Kentucky: Collins & Co., 1874). "Thomas S. Noble," in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Kentucky of the Dead and Living Men of the Nineteenth Century* (Cincinnati, Ohio: J.M. Armstrong & Co., 1878). Henry Theodore Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*

However among these documents, two essays stand out as the most complete assessments of Noble's career during his lifetime. The first is an essay published in 1874 by Lewis Collins in his reference book, *Collins' Historical Sketches of Kentucky*.[20] Located in the section of the book dedicated to Kentucky's art and artists, Collins's essay briefly describes Noble's formal education as an artist, from childhood until he began working as a professional artist, his achievements as an artist, and his position as the first director of the McMicken Academy of Design (now the Cincinnati Art Academy). Even though Collins refers to Noble as "probably the most distinguished living artists (painters) of Kentucky," he does qualify that statement by stating that "The engagements of his responsible position have left Mr. Noble but little time to cultivate his profession as before."[21] It is interesting to note that Collins only mentions two paintings by the artist in his essay, the painting that launched his career entitled, *The American Slave Mart*, and a portrait of the Hon. Ricard H. Menefee, then located at the court house at Owingsville, Kentucky.

The second essay was written by one of Noble's students, James Ward Dunsmore. Published in 1895 in the *Cincinnati Tribune*, Dunsmore's article was the

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(New York: American Artist Life, 1882; reprint, New York: James F. Carr, 1966). "Cincinnati Artists: Thomas S. Noble," *The Sunday Chronicle*, Sunday, 21 March 1886. "Cincinnati Artists," *San Francisco Sunday Chronicle*, 21 March 1886. "The Slave Mart," *The Chicago Sunday Herald*, 20 May 1888. "A Son of Lexington," *Kentucky Leader*, 23 December 1894. S. Tudor Delery, "Art and Artists of Cincinnati," *The Angelus Magazine: An Illustrated Periodical of Art, Literature and Living Issues* (1895). "Thomas Satterwhite Noble," *The Cincinnati Tribune*, Sunday, 24 November 1895. Charles Theodore Greve, *The Centennial History of Cincinnati*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Biographical Publishing House Co., 1904).

[20] The first edition of *History of Kentucky* was written by Lewis Collins and published by Collins & Co. in 1874. In 1966, Collins's son, Richard H. Collins revised and enlarged his father's publication. Since Noble's biography lists him as still living, we can assume that this passage was written by the father, Lewis Collins. Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *The History of Kentucky*, Reprint ed. (Frankfort, Kentucky: Kentucky Historical Society, 1966), 623.

[21] Ibid.

most complete assessment and celebration of Noble's life and career as an artist, an arts administrator, and teacher written during the artist's lifetime.[22] In his essay on Noble, Dunsmore names and discusses the great number of artists who graduated from the Art Academy of Cincinnati during Noble's 27-year tenure as its principal. He also gives a detailed account of his experiences as a young art student under Couture, his professional career as a painter, and the acclaim he received for his slavery-related paintings. This article was so popular that it was also reprinted in New York as a biographical essay.[23]

Following Noble's death in 1907, several newspaper articles were published that gave detailed descriptions of the artist's career.[24] Although these articles were thorough for their era, they did not contribute any more new information than the essay that was published by Dunsmore in 1895. During the decade of the 1980s, however, several scholars began to investigate the imagery and meaning of Noble's work.

The first art historian to seriously investigate Noble's life and career was Albert Boime. In 1980, he published the book, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision* in which he dedicated a chapter to Noble entitled, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble Casts Couture's Spell in America."[25] In this section, Boime briefly discusses Noble's

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[22] John Ward Dunsmore, "In the Academy," *The Cincinnati Tribune*, 24 November 1895.

[23] John Ward Dunsmore, "Sketch of Thomas S. Noble," in *Noble Archives* (New York: 1895).

[24] Catherine A. Lord, "The Late Thomas S. Noble," *The Commercial Tribune*, Wednesday, 1 May 1907. "Having Great Talent as a Painter, He Devoted His Life to Teaching," *The Cincinnati Tribune*, c. 30 April 1907.

[25] Albert Boime, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980), 580-92.

early artistic training and the artists George Peter Alexander Healy (1813-1894) and Oliver Frazier (1808-1864), who may have encouraged him to study with Couture.[26] Boime then reflects upon Noble's deep admiration for Couture and how Noble assimilated his teacher's penchant for creating a more contemporary, accessible style of elevated genre.

When Boime wrote this essay, two of Noble's best known slavery works, *Margaret Garner* and *The Price of Blood*, had yet to be located. As a result, Boime limits his analysis of Couture's influence on Noble's work is limited to his painting of John Brown. Boime dedicated the majority of his essay to a detailed review/analysis of Noble's later, less controversial genre paintings and the various manners through which they reflect the Couture's teaching and philosophies. Noble's work was not mentioned again, outside of an exhibition context, until 1985, when American historian Bruce W. Chambers briefly mentioned Noble's "paintings based on his opposition to slavery," in his article, "The Southern Artist and the Civil War."[27]

In 1986, James D. Birchfield, published the first of two extensively researched articles on Noble's life. The first, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter'/Part I," detailed the artist's life from birth up to his appointment as head of the McMicken School of Art.[28] The second article, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble:

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[26] Ibid., 580.

[27] In Chambers' article, he asserts that Noble was opposed to slavery and joined the Confederacy to fight for his strong belief in states' rights. Unfortunately, he did not support this statement with supplementary materials. Chambers mentions the paintings, *The Last Sale of Slaves* (*The Slave Mart*), *The Capture of Margaret Garner* (*Margaret Garner*), *John Brown's Blessing*, and *The Price of Blood*, which is illustrated within the text. Bruce W. Chambers, "The Southern Artist and the Civil War," *The Southern Quarterly: A Journal of the Arts in the South* XXIV, no. 1 & 2 (1985): 78-80.

[28] Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1."

'Made for a Painter'/Part II," completed Noble's life story with a detailed account of his accomplishments as an arts administrator, a teacher, and an artist.[29]

In 1990, Boime wrote his third essay on Noble in his publication *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (the second essay was published in the University of Kentucky's retrospective exhibition on Noble which is discussed in the following section).[30] Considered a groundbreaking text, *The Art of Exclusion* was one of the first books to move beyond the mere identification and cursory explanation of nineteenth-century artworks with African American themes. Boime's essay, "Burgoo and Bourgeois: The Images of a Border-State Consciousness," is an expanded version of his earlier essays, "Burgoo and Bourgeois: Thomas Noble's Images of Black People," and "Thomas Satterwhite Noble Casts Couture's Spell in America."[31]

In all three of these essays, Boime applied the methodological structure of social art history to his discussion of Noble's unique situation of being a southerner living in the border-state of Kentucky. Additionally, he situates Noble's slavery-related paintings within the broader spectrum of African Americans genre/historical images created by American artists during the nineteenth century.

Boime introduced his audience to Noble's work by first discussing the impact that antebellum Kentucky's environment may have had on his life and art. He then

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[29] Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter,' Part 2."

[30] James D. Birchfield, Albert Boime, and William J. Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble, 1835-1907* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Art Museum, 1988), Albert Boime, "Burgoo and Bourgeois: The Images of a Border-State Consciousness," in *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 125-52.

[31] Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble*. Boime, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision*.

elaborated on Noble's early art education and the stylistic and philosophical influence of his Parisian teacher, Thomas Couture. It was only after these discussions on Noble's social, political, and artistic background that he launched into an in-depth analysis of his slave series. Throughout his essay, Boime alluded to the possible motivations that Noble may have experienced and sources he may have used when creating this series of works. To support his arguments, Boime relied heavily on general historical texts, historical critical reviews of Noble's paintings, and Harriet Beecher's Stowe's seminal publication, *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

Like many other scholars writing on the image of the Black in Western art, Boime's analysis of *The Slave Mart*, *John Brown's Blessing*, and *Margaret Garner* concentrated specifically on the meaning and relevance of the African American presence. Although this line of inquiry certainly broadened the scope of research on the artist, Boime's decision to restrict his analysis of Noble's series to his images of African Americans limited his ability to provide a complete explanation of the symbolic nature of the compositions.

In the summer of 1998, Leslie Furth published the last significant text on the work of Noble in the journal *American Art*. The article, "'The Modern Media' and Race Matters: Thomas Satterwhite Noble's Margaret Garner," is an in-depth study of Noble's depiction of the recapture of the famous fugitive slave Margaret Garner immediately after she killed one of her children and injured her other three.[32] In this

[32] Apparently, Leslie Furth began work on her dissertation at the University of Boston entitled, "Imaging Transgression: Subverting the Victorian Norm in the Work of Thomas Satterwhite Noble, John Singer Sargent and John White Alexander" (P. Hills, J. Ribner), 2003. This dissertation was never completed. This article was probably adapted from one of her dissertation chapters. Furth, "*The Modern Medea* and Race Matters: Thomas Satterwhite Noble's *Margaret Garner*."

article, Furth challenges Boime's and Birchfield's assessment of the painting as a narrative indictment of slavery, stating:

> Rather than sustaining a monolithic narrative on the evils of slavery, the painting seems to oscillate between two discourses, one exposing the horrors of slavery and the other heightening the spectacular horror of Garner's act itself. Rich with unexpected complexities, the image echoes post-Civil War tensions over the place of blacks in American society. The picture's ostensibly sympathetic portrayal of Garner as a slave mother is compromised by competing claims that bear their own covert logic and testify to Noble and his era's ambivalence about blacks and women.[33]

Furth utilizes art, cultural, and literary history as a foundation for her argument against reading of the painting as a heroic monument to Margaret Garner. Although her hypothesis is theoretically plausible, her exclusion of contradictory contextual evidence relating to the both positive perception of Margaret Garner during and after her trial and the reception of Noble's image by the general public undermines the verity of her thesis.

The following year, John Wilson wrote a collection catalogue for the Cincinnati-based company Procter & Gamble. The catalogue entitled, *American Paintings at Procter & Gamble: The Historic Cincinnati Collection*, includes two works by Noble, *Back to School*, 1859, and the small version of *Margaret Garner*.[34] Due to the nature of the publication, that only featured short catalogue descriptions of the works, Wilson only provides his audience with the barest descriptions of Noble, the two paintings, and Margaret Garner.

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[33] Ibid.: 37.

[34] John Wilson, *American Paintings at Procter & Gamble: The Historic Cincinnati Collection* (Cincinnati, Ohio: The Procter & Gamble Co., 1999).

Literature Review: General Texts

As indicated earlier, there are only a few texts within the art historical canon that specifically address Noble and his body of work. However, examples of Noble's art have been discussed in other types of publications. One of the earliest examples of Noble's images of African Americans in a general text can be found in the fourth volume of *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, entitled, *From the American Revolution to World War I, Part I, Slaves and Liberators*.[35] Between 1960 and 1990, The Image of the Black in Western Art Research Project and Photo Archive produced this four-volume, award-winning series of illustrated books to systematically document how people of African descent have been perceived and represented in western art.

Composed by Hugh Honour, the book *Slaves and Liberators* is devoted to images of blacks in Western art from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century and how those images reflect Western attitudes toward African Americans and the social and historical factors that shaped them. Noble's paintings, *John Brown's Blessing*, 1867, and *The Last Sale of Slaves*, 1870, are discussed in the book's third chapter, "Uncle Tom or the Freed Slaves 1852-76." Listed under the subject-heading, "Heroes and Martyrs" Honour reveals how Noble captured, on canvas, the popular European and American sentiment that transformed John Brown's violent image into that of an abolitionist martyr. His discussion of *The Last Sale of Slaves* is less compelling, adding little substantive information to preceding investigations of the painting.

[35] Hugh Honour, *From the American Revolution to World War I: Slaves and Liberators*, vol. 4, *The Image of the Black in Western Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Pres, 1989).

There are a number of texts that discuss issues of representation of African Americans in nineteenth-century American art that do not include images by Noble. These publications include but are not limited to the following: Kimberly Pinder's *Race-ing Art History: Critical Readings in Race and Art History*; John Michael Vlach's *The Planter's Prospect: Privilege & Slavery in Plantation Paintings*; Elizabeth Johns's *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life*; Peter Wood and Karen Dalton's *Winslow Homer's Images of Blacks: The Civil War and Reconstruction Years*; Bowdoin College Museum of Art's *The Portrayal of the Negro in American Painting*, and The Museum of the Confederacy's *Before Freedom Came: African-American Life in the Antebellum South*.[36]

Chapter Topics

I have organized my thesis into six distinct chapters:

Chapter 1—Introduction: Thesis, Methodology, Literature Review, and Chapter Synopsis.

Chapter 2—Thomas Satterwhite Noble: Historical Context, Biography, and Artistic Influences.

Chapter 3—*The American Slave Mart*: A Bid for National Recognition.

[36] The Bowdoin College Museum of Art, *The Portrayal of the Negro in American Painting* (Brunswick, Maine: The President and Trustees of Bowdoin College, 1964), Edward D. C. Campbell and Kym S. Rice, eds., *Before Freedom Came: African-American Life in the Antebellum South* (Richmond, VA: The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond and the University Press of Virginia, 1991), Kymberly N Pinder, *Race-Ing Art History: Critical Readings in Race and Art History* (Routledge, 2002), John Michael Vlach, *The Planter's Prospect: Privilege & Slavery in Plantation Paintings* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), William Walton, "Eastman Johnson, Painter," *Scribner's Magazine* 40, no. 3 (1906), Peter H. Wood and Karen C. C. Dalton, *Winslow Homer's Images of Blacks: The Civil War and Reconstruction Years* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988).

Chapter 4—The Making of a Reconstructed Rebel: *Margaret Garner* and *John Brown's Blessing*.

Chapter 5—*The Price of Blood*: Miscegenation and the Internal Slave Trade.

Chapter 6—Conclusion.

In the first chapter of my dissertation my aim is to lay out and explain my thesis relating to Noble's slavery-based paintings. This section includes an explanation of methodological structure, a review of relevant texts related to Noble and his work, and a synopsis of my dissertation chapters.

Topics to be explored in the second chapter include the social, political, and economic environment that promoted the creation of these images in general as well as those factors that may have influenced Noble in particular. Additional topics addressed are Kentucky and Missouri's position as leading centers for the internal slave trade, the sexual slave trade and its relation to Kentucky and Missouri's unusually high mulatto population, and the slave trade's role in the separation of African American families. I will also discuss the issue of slavery in Kentucky, the Noble family's relation to slavery, and the influence of American painters in Noble's life prior to his study in France.

Chapter three examines the context and reception of Noble's first successful painting. *The American Slave Mart* was widely exhibited throughout the America's northern and border-states and launched his career as a nationally recognized American artist. Noble painted *The American Slave Mart* the same year that congress ratified the Thirteenth Amendment, abolishing slavery. Unfortunately, the original painting was destroyed in a fire at Chicago's Langham Hotel. Shortly after its

destruction, Noble painted a simplified replica of it that he named, *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis*, 1870. In this version, he included himself and his family as well as several of his friends as spectators. Topics explored in chapter three will include the effect of Thomas Couture on Noble's work and philosophy and the rise in interest, on the part of the American public, in images relating to the past, present, and future status of African Americans in the United States following the Civil War. I specifically address how these images not only functioned as a visual reminder of the North's moral superiority in their fight against the South and its system of enslavement, but also how these images reflected white America's ambivalence, hopes, and fears regarding the new social and political structure of the United States during the era of Reconstruction.

The first part of chapter four reviews the dramatic saga of Margaret Garner's struggle to attain freedom with and for her family. This historical biography includes contemporary and historical accounts of Garner's life, escape from slavery, capture, trial, and eventual death and serves as the primary basis of inquiry into the visual iconography of Noble's painting. As the Garner painting was the only commissioned slavery-related painting by Noble, I also explore the possible reasons why Harlow Roys, a leather broker in lower Manhattan with a share in the art dealership known as the Roys Art Gallery, would have requested such a powerful subject.

Another subject discussed in this chapter is the relationship between the Garner family, miscegenation in Kentucky, and the title, *The Modern Medea*—attributed to the lithograph published of Noble's painting in *Harper's Weekly* (May of 1967). Here I also explore possible reasons for Noble's decision to omit the obvious

visual connection (skin color) between Garner, her children, and her owner, Archibald Gaines.

In the second part of this chapter I examine Noble's painting of John Brown (1800-1859). Brown was an anti-slavery activist, best remembered for orchestrating an unsuccessful raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in an attempt to incite a large-scale slave rebellion in 1859. Following his capture, he was tried for murder, slave insurrection, and treason against the state, and was convicted and hanged for his actions. For some, this event transformed Brown into an abolitionist martyr.

Noble painted *John Brown's Blessing* (*John Brown Led to Execution*), in 1867—eight years following the militant abolitionist's death.[37] Although Noble's rendition of Brown's last moments before his death was not the first of its kind, it does contain certain specific qualities that deserve further consideration. In this section, I discuss the following issues: the popular perception of John Brown during his lifetime and the modification of his image following his execution, Noble's portrait's connection to and impact on John Brown's post-mortem image, and the significance of the supporting characters in Noble's John Brown painting.

Chapter five continues this exploration of miscegenation on the southern plantation. In this instance, the "tragic mulatto" is the indignant male son of a southern planter who is in the process of being sold to secure funding to support the

[37] The title of this painting is listed in Boime's essay "Burgoo and Bourgeouis: Thomas Noble's Images of Black People," as both *John Brown's Blessing* as well as *John Brown Led to Execution*. Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble*. However, the Smithsonian Institution Research Information System's Art Inventory search engine refers to the painting as, *John Brown's Blessing Just Before his Execution*.

lavish lifestyle of his father/owner. Topics discussed in this chapter include: the relationship of the painting's title to passages in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to abolitionist rhetoric, and to biblical history, the significance of Albert Pike as the planter, the perception of miscegenation and mulatto slaves in Kentucky and in popular culture, and the symbolic relevance of the *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, a representation of which Noble included within this work.

Chapter 6, "Conclusion." My dissertation concludes with an overview of the ways Noble's series of paintings on slavery and emancipation reflected and responded to the nation's shifting cultural, social, moral, and political values in the decade immediately following the Civil War.

Chapter 2: Thomas Satterwhite Noble: Historical Context, Biography, and Artistic Influences

Thomas Satterwhite Noble's slavery-related paintings were all created and exhibited within five years of the closing of America's bloodiest and most devastating conflict, the Civil War. To our twenty-first-century eyes, these unusual thought-provoking history paintings appear to be clear indictments of the institution of slavery and all who participated in it. However, our perception of these images lay far beyond the context in which the artist originally intended them to be seen. Rather than indictments of the institution of slavery, these images were created right at the moment when the issue of slavery in the United States would finally and painfully be resolved for all concerned.

Noble's post-Civil War audience was primarily northern and fully understood the complexity of issues embedded in his paintings as they related to the intricacy and diversity of American slavery, that is the horrors of the internal slave trade, the slippery moral slope of miscegenation, and the wide variety of thoughts and opinions with regard to the emancipation of slaves. In the twenty-first century, many of these subtle nuances relating to the question of slavery or even the practice of slavery within this country are no longer a part of our collective memory. However, it is in these very details that we can best grasp the full meaning of Noble's work in this genre. Therefore, in order fully to understand the content, meaning, and reception of Thomas Satterwhite Noble's slavery-related paintings, one must first endeavor to understand the context from which they were created, that is, the history of slavery as

it relates to Noble's home state of Kentucky; the relation of the institution of slavery to Noble and his immediate family; and, the impact of Noble's early art education as it intersects with his decision to create socially relevant and highly controversial images about slavery.

Particular attention will be paid to the development and practice of slavery in Kentucky as it was markedly different from slavery in the lower South's industrial plantation system. Topics of special interest will include: the development of slavery in Kentucky, the agricultural base and climate which mitigated Kentucky's slave system, and, the growth of Kentucky's internal slave trade. This evaluation of Kentucky's unique slave system will ultimately provide insight into the manner through which Thomas Satterwhite Noble represented slavery in his paintings.

The decades surrounding Noble's birth witnessed an unusual amount of social and political ferment in the United States. During the 1820s philosophers and transcendentalists dreamed of and sometimes attempted to create new and revolutionary social utopias such as Brook Farm and Fruitlands. Democratic leaders conceived of and struggled to implement the radical socialist program called public education. And, schools of higher learning, such as Ohio's Lane's Seminary (established in Cincinnati in 1833) and Oberlin College (established in 1835), became hotbeds of social, political and moral reformation.[1]

An important component of the reformations expoused by these institutions was abolitionism. According to historian Thomas D. Clark,

[1] Lane Seminary and Oberlin College were established in 1833 and 1835 respectively. Thomas D. Clark, "My Old Kentucky Home in Retrospect," *The Filson Club History Quarterly* XXII, no. 2 (1948): 4.

> It was with malice of aforethought which prompted the location of Lane Seminary and Oberlin College near the border line of slavery. It was from these bases of operation that a successful attack on slavery was conducted. From these points antislavery agents and literature were sent in to the South with the hope of abolishing the institution of chattel slavery.[2]

As a border state to Ohio and a major center for America's internal slave trade, Kentucky found itself in the forefront of abolitionist attention and action. The tremendous growth of antislavery movement on the northern border as well as within the state was met with considerable resistance by Kentucky slave-owners as they found themselves having to defend the ethical and moral grounds of slavery with ever increasing frequency.[3] According to Harold D. Tallant, Jr.,

> Virtually every variety of pro-slavery and anti-slavery thought existed in Kentucky. Until the 1850s most white Kentuckians thought of slavery as a necessary evil, to be tolerated because no satisfactory plan of emancipation existed. For most Kentuckians, this served as a rationalization for doing nothing about the problem of slavery. Even so, Kentucky had the largest and most enduring antislavery movement among the slave states.[4]

The prevalence of the antislavery movement in Kentucky is important as it may have influenced Noble to feel sympathy for his family's slaves and perhaps later prompted him to paint his slavery-related history paintings.

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[2] Thomas D. Clark, "The Slavery Background of Foster's My Old Kentucky Home," *The Filson Club History Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1936): 5.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Harold D. Tallant, "Slavery," in *The Kentucky Encyclopedia*, ed. John E. Kleber (Lexington, Kentucky: 1992), 827.

Kentucky and the Dilemma of Slavery and the Internal Slave Trade

The institution of slavery in Kentucky began with the initial exploration of the region by whites and people of African descent in the 1750s and 1760s. Explorers, such as Captain Billy Russell, Michael Stoner, and Daniel Boone (who owned at least three slaves), brought African American bondsmen into Kentucky to serve as guides, help clear land, plant crops, and subdue the native Indians.[5] By 1775, slaves were also the permanent residents in the area. When Kentucky became the fifteenth U.S. state in 1792, its first constitution both continued and ensured the legal practice of slavery within the region. As a result, the imprint of slavery became present in almost every segment of Kentucky's economic structure. By the turn of the century, slaves were used to build homes, work on farms and plantations, labor in salt mines, iron works, bridge and road construction as well as being employed as specialized laborers such as blacksmiths, wagoneers, boot- and shoe-makers, rope spinners, and carpenters.[6]

Slavery was an important element of region's economic system, yet in comparison with the lower South (where the number of slaves sometimes exceeded the number of free residents), Kentucky's slaves never made up more than one quarter of the state's total population.[7]

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[5] John E. Kleber, ed., *The Kentucky Encyclopedia* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 3. J. Winston Jr. Coleman, "Lexington's Slave Dealers and Their Southern Trade," *The Filson Club History Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1938): 1.

[6] Kleber, ed., *The Kentucky Encyclopedia*, 3-4.

[7] In the lower South, the average farm operated with 11.7 slaves as opposed to Kentucky where the the average farm only required 5.5 slaves. Tallant, "Slavery," 827.

The U.S. Census Bureau's statistical population totals for whites, free Blacks, and slaves living in Kentucky between 1790 and 1860:[8]

Census Year	Total Population	Whites	Free Blacks	Slaves
1790	73,677	61,133	114	12,430
1800	220,955	197,873	739	40,343
1810	406,511	324,237	1,713	80,561
1820	564,317	434,826	2,759	126,732
1830	687,917	517,787	4,917	165,213
1840	779,828	590,253	7,317	182,258
1850	982,485	761,413	10,011	210,981
1860	1,155,684	919,484	10,684	225,483

Kentuckians took great pride in the fact that they owned far fewer slaves per capita than their southern counterparts, feeling that their domestic brand of slavery was far more humane than the industrial plantation system. However, although it is difficult to imagine any system of slavery as humane, many slaves whose "misbehaved" were threatened with and feared the prospect of being sold down South.

[8] Cambell Gibson and Kay Jung, *Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970-1990, for the United States, Regions, Divisions and States* (Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, 2002 [cited September 19 2006]); available from http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056.html.

The difference between Kentucky's slave system and the slave systems in the Deep South can be attributed in part to Kentucky's specific climatic conditions. Kentucky's climate did not allow for the growth of certain types of labor-intensive cash crops such as cotton, sugar, and rice which were raised by large plantations in the lower South. Furthermore, most Kentucky farmers grew a variety of crops such as cereal, hemp, and tobacco, spreading the growing season out over the course of the year. This type of farming generally did not require a large amount of slave labor, resulting in a domestic rather than absent-master (the use of an overseer) slavery system. However, it did mean that Kentucky slaves worked throughout the year with fewer slack periods than their southern counterparts.[9]

By the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the agricultural base and climate which mitigated Kentucky's unique system of slavery system also generated many of the issues that became fodder for abolitionist critique. For example, once the majority of Kentucky's land was cleared for farming, businesses, and homes and the basic construction needs of various towns and cities were met, the business of slavery in Kentucky became increasingly less profitable. At the same time, Kentucky's slave population was expanding at a rate beyond the state's available labor needs. To remedy this problem and to turn slavery back into a profitable industry, many Kentucky slave owners began to enter into the then illegal business of the internal slave trade.[10]

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[9] Coleman, "Lexington's Slave Dealers and Their Southern Trade," 1.

[10] Jeff Jones, *Timeline of the African-American Lexington* (Afro-Lex, 1998 [cited September 18 2006]); available from http://www.qx.net/jeff/afrolex/timeline.htm.

Evidence of Kentucky's slave exporting industry can be traced to as early as 1818, when English traveler Henry B. Fearon noted in his, *Sketches of America*, that he had seen fourteen flatboats loaded with Kentucky slaves on their way down the Mississipi River to southern slave markets.[11] It was not until 1833, however, with the repeal of the Kentucky's Non-Importation Act, that the importation and exportation of slaves for sale became legal in the state.[12]

To prevent the region's slave population from becoming too large, the Kentucky legislature passed an act ending the importation of slaves into the state in 1794. A later slave code, established in 1798, "carried out the constitutional framers' instructions regarding the prohibition of foreign slave importation to Kentucky and established a three-hundred-dollar fine for persons importing slaves as chattels."[13] Until 1833, the importation of slaves into the state was only permitted to those immigrating to the state who would swear an oath that the slaves imported were for personal use. However, there apparently were major infractions to this law as many state courts in Kentucky did not or were not able to enforce the law, allowing owners to evade punishments for importing and exporting slaves for the slave market.[14]

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[11] This reference comes from a citation by Coleman of Henry B. Fearons, *Sketches in America* (London, 1819), 268. Coleman, "Lexington's Slave Dealers and Their Southern Trade," 2.

[12] According to Cole, the history of the Non-Importation act dated back to Kentucky's first constitution when it was adopted in 1792 as a reflection of the state's Virginian heritage by maintaining slavery as a legal institution. Jennifer Cole, "'for the Sake of the Songs of the Men Made Free': James Speed and the Emancipationists' Dilemma in Nineteenth-Century Kentucky," *Ohio Valley History* 4, no. 4 (2004): 28-29.

[13] Ibid.: 29.

[14] Ibid.

Although it is clear that many slaves were imported and exported in and out of the state via the internal slave trade, Kentucky did not become a major center of the trade until the Non-Importation Act was repealed in 1833 by the Kentucky legislature. Once this barrier was removed, the business of trafficking in slaves began to rise exponentially and Kentucky essentially became an active slave market for the southern states. According to historian, George C. Wright,

> The ownership of slaves was profitable to Kentucky whites; the slave trade shipped approximately 80,000 Afro-Americans southward during 1830-1860. The income from this trade constituted an appreciable part of the state's financial resources during these years. In antebellum Kentucky, the ownership of human beings who could be exploited as labor or sold in the marketplace was an important economic advantage.[15]

There are several factors which lead to the expansion of both the southern market for slaves and the internal slave trade in Kentucky. First, the Haitian slave revolt lead by Toussaint L'Ouverture in 1801, was one of the factors which prompted the U.S. Congress in 1807 to ban the importation of African slaves into the country effective January 1, 1808. As a result, planters running the newly developed plantations in the Deep South turned to Kentucky and Virginia as a source of slave labor. Second, the conclusion of the War of 1812 fostered rapid development in the southern states of Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana, which required an enormous influx of slave labor to clear wooded lands in preparation for sugar cane and cotton production. This trend occurred again when Texas was admitted into the union in 1845. Finally, as land, crop production, and the price of sugar and cotton expanded in the South, the price of tobacco (one of Kentucky's major slave-labor-based cash

[15] Kleber, ed., *The Kentucky Encyclopedia*, 4.

crops) dropped precipitously, causing the value of slave-labor in Kentucky to drop as well.[16]

To boost their financial prospects, many Kentuckians moved their families and their slaves to the newly expanded lands in the South to cash in on the growing sugar and cotton markets. Once there, they often discovered that they required substantially more labor to clear their own lands, creating a demand for more slaves to be shipped from Kentucky southward.[17]

Given the prosperous nature of the business of selling slaves from Kentucky to the lower South, it is interesting to note that many of the state's anti-abolitionist conservative slave-owners publicly rejected the slave market on moral grounds. For example, Robert Wickliffe, one of the largest slaveholders in Kentucky who in 1833 voted against the Non-importation Act, also lobbied against the massive public growth of the slave market when he addressed the Kentucky legislature seven years later in 1840. He stated,

> We most ardently hope that for the honor, as well as the security of our state, our next Legislature will put a stop to the abominable traffic. We believe that, generally speaking, slaves are treated with more humanity in Kentucky than any other state in the union; and could the horrid practice of dividing them like cattle to market be broken up, a great blot would certainly be wiped off from our moral character. [18]

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[16] Although the exact dates relating to the beginning of Kentucky's slave trade with the cotton and sugar industries of the South is not clear, Coleman cites several documents that reveal the presence of this trade as early as 1818. Coleman, "Lexington's Slave Dealers and Their Southern Trade," 1-2.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Hambleton Tapp, "The Slavery Controversy between Robert Wickliffe and Robert J. Breckinridge Prior to the Civil War," *The Filson Club History Quarterly* XIX (1945): 160.

This sentiment, which was also echoed by other prominent Kentuckians such as lawyer and politician James Speed, reflected the real concern that the practice of separating families and sending them down South to labor under the harshest conditions via internal slave trade left them wide open to ethical and moral attacks by northern abolitionists. However, this sentiment should not be confused with abolitionism or even gradual emancipation, for many of these conservative slave-owners, like Wickliffe, also believed that abolishing slavery would lead to Kentucky's economic ruin.[19]

In addition to the aforementioned conditions experienced by slaves heading for the deep southern slave markets, the Kentucky slave owners also faced another ethical dilemma, the sale of enslaved mulattos. By 1860, Kentucky boasted the highest number of enslaved mulatto populations in the country (47,359 people or 20.1 percent of the slave population).[20] Historical studies have suggested that this phenomenon is due in part to the fact that in border states like Missouri and Kentucky, farmers owned fewer slaves and, as a result, lived in closer proximity to them than the larger plantations of the lower South. This situation, in all likelihood, led to the sexual abuse of slave women by their white owners.[21] Miscegenation was

[19] Wickliffe was a proponent of idea of African colonization, not abolition, as a method to solve Kentucky's increasing slave population. According to Tapp, Wickliffe believed that "freeing the slaves would bring tragic condition upon the State: the black would be made wretched, the whites perhaps massacred, and economic stability wrecked." Ibid.: 159.

[20] Edward Byron Reuter, *The Mulatto in the United States* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1969), 121.

[21] Tallant, "Slavery," 827.

so prevalent in Kentucky that at least one slave dealer, Lewis C. Robards, specialized in the sale of mulatto women to southern brothels and plantations.[22]

The destabilization of slave families due to the internal slave trade coupled with Kentucky's rampant miscegenation rate fostered varied critiques of slavery from abolitionists as well as many slave owners. As a southerner and member of a slave-owning family, Thomas Satterwhite Noble was well aware of these debates. In fact, three of his paintings, *The American Slave Mart*, *The Price of Blood*, and *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis* directly confronted issues of miscegenation and the internal slave trade. However, in order to fully comprehend Noble's specific position surrounding this peculiar institution, it is essential that we investigate the manner through which Noble's familial heritage intersected with slavery in Kentucky and how that heritage may have effected his own views regarding the efficacy of the institution.

The Noble Family and Slavery

Thomas Satterwhite Noble entered to the world as a member of the fourth generation of a very prominent Kentucky family. The first Noble of his genealogical line to live in Kentucky was Thomas Noble's great grandfather, David Noble (1750-1797) who first settled in the region around 1785. Very little is known about David Noble's life and virtually nothing is known of his ancestry other than he may have

[22] Coleman, "Lexington's Slave Dealers and Their Southern Trade," 10.

been born in either England or Pennsylvania and he was of Irish descent.[23] However, we do know that before moving to Kentucky, he lived in Pennsylvania. He was in the state when he married Anna Powell (1760-1817). They had two children, Jane Noble (1773-unknown) and Jacob Noble (1775-1853). During the Revolutionary War, he enlisted as a ranger and served out west near Fort Bedford. Around 1778 he abandoned his wife and children to forge a new life in the [old] southwest along the Appalachian Mountains.[24] During his journey, he met his second wife, Susannah Emmons (1760-1817). They married on February 27, 1784 in Fincastle County (later named Botetourt County, Virginia) and moved to Clay County and later Madison County, Kentucky where they raised their family.[25]

David Noble and Susannah Emmons had seven children. William (c. 1784 – 1813), Elijah (1785 –1870), Adam J. (1786 –1856), Samuel (c. 1786 – unknown), and Anna Noble (c. 1790 – 1817), were probably born in Clay County or Madison County, Kentucky. Elizabeth (c.1797 – 1880) and David Noble (c.1796 – 1826) were born in Fayette County (Lexington), Kentucky.[26] Since the U.S. Census did not begin

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[23] Although ancestors of the Noble family have divergent views with regard to Noble's birthplace, the *Biographical Dictionary of Kentucky* states that the Noble family was of Irish descent. *Biographical Encyclopedia of Kentucky of the Dead and Living Men of the Nineteenth Century*, (Cincinnati, Ohio: J. M. Armstrong & company, 1878), 50. Teresa Hall, *Noble, Higdon, Dodson, Blubaugh* (RootsWeb.com, June 7, 2003 2003 [cited September 19 2006]); available from http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=:2556734&id=I147. Denise Noble, *Noble* (RootsWeb.com, 2003 [cited September 19 2006]); available from http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=:2849399&id=I566237793.

[24] Stanley Noble Jones, *Re: Noble Immigrants/1700-55* [email] (Noble Family Genealogy Forum, 2001 [cited 2006]); available from http://genforum.genealogy.com/noble/messages/1438.html.

[25] Stanley Noble Jones, *David Noble/Susannah Emmons* (RootsWeb Message Boards Adminstration Center, 2001 [cited September 19 2006]); available from http://boards.ancestry.com/mbexec?htx=message&r=rw&p=surnames.noble&m=320.793.

[26] See Appendix: Descendants of David Noble.

registering slaves until 1850, it is unknown whether or not David Noble was a slave owner.

David's son, Elijah Noble (Thomas Satterwhite Noble's grandfather), was, at one time, one of the most profitable and most respected merchants of Lexington, Kentucky. He owned and managed six to eight store-houses in different villages in Central Kentucky. Unfortunately, he lost most of his money when his stock holdings greatly depreciated at the close of the War of 1812, bringing disaster to his business, from which he never recovered.[27]

Elijah Noble was raised by Eleanor Grosch Hart and Thomas Hart, Jr. (c. 1772 – 1809), the brother-in-law of Henry Clay. On April 30, 1807, he married Louisa Smith Platt (1786 - 1868), who was also raised by Eleanor and Thomas Hart, and the couple had six children: Thomas Hart (1809 –1870), John C. (1815 – unknown), Ebenezer (1817 – 1835), Robert (1829 – 1836), Ellen (c. 1837 – unknown), and Susan (c. 1839 – unknown).[28] By 1860, he was listed on the United States Federal Census as a farmer residing in Louisville Ward 8, Jefferson, Kentucky with an estate valued at $4,000.[29]

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[27] *Biographical Encyclopedia of Kentucky of the Dead and Living Men of the Nineteenth Century*, 50. One of the early businesses owned by Elijah was a tavern called "Old Ironsides" which was listed in the *Kentucky Gazette* on April 23, 1805. Mary Estelle Delcamp, *The Early Life of Lexington [Ky] before the Year 1820* [A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Transylvania College in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts June, 1916] (www.rootsweb.com, Transcribed March 2001 [cited September 19 2006]).

[28] See Appendix: Descendants of David Noble.

[29] James Birchfield, "The Noble Family," in *The Noble Archives,* "Thomas S. Noble."

One of Elijah's sons, John C. Noble, was also an extremely successful and prominent Kentucky citizen and considered "one of the oldest and best newspaper men of the State." John C. Noble was educated in the schools of Fayette County, Lexington, and the Grammar School of Transylvania University. After completing his apprenticeship in the printing business, he studied German and French. He later studied law in Louisville, but never endeavored to practice the profession. He was an ardent Democrat, and formed a career as the political editor of the Pacudah *Herald*, through which he exerted a large influence over Kentucky and gained the reputation of being "a forcible and brilliant writer and sagacious politician."[30] In 1861, he joined the Confederate army as a private soldier. Soon after joining, he was appointed to the position of regimental Quartermaster, and a few months later, he was promoted to the rank of Captain. Subsequently, he was placed on the staff of General Abe Buford where he ascended to the rank of Major, and served the Confederacy until its surrender. Following the War, he resumed his position as political editor of the Paducah *Herald* until at least 1878.[31]

When Thomas Satterwhite Noble was born on May 29, 1835 in Lexington, he entered the world as a member of a very established and distinguished Kentucky family. His parents were wealthy hemp manufacturer Thomas Hart Noble (Elijah's eldest son), and Rosamond Clark Johnson (1808 – 1847), daughter of Leroy Johnson

[30] *Biographical Encyclopedia of Kentucky of the Dead and Living Men of the Nineteenth Century*, 50.

[31] When this essay on John C. Noble was published in 1878, he was still working as the political editor of the Paducah *Herald*. Ibid.

(head of Transylvania Medical School).[32] Thomas Satterwhite Noble had four brothers and sisters: William R. (1829 – c. 1900), Eleanor Louisa (c. 1837 – c. 1896), Francis E. (1843 – 1888), and Mary Caroline (1849 – 1846).[33] It is thought that Thomas Satterwhite Noble was named after Dr. Thomas P. Satterwhite (d. 1845), a distinguished physician in the area.[34]

Growing up, Thomas Satterwhite Noble was intimately acquainted with the institution of slavery as his father, Thomas Hart Noble, his grandfather, Elijah Noble, and his uncle John C. Noble all owned slaves. Unfortunately, the time period or extent of their slave holdings are not known since, for the first half of the nineteenth century, the Federal government did not survey the country's slave population. There are records of the slaves they owned from 1850 and again in 1860, when the U.S. census published its first comprehensive survey of America's slave populations called the Slave Schedules.[35] The Slave Schedules reveal that in 1850 Thomas Hart Noble

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[32] Birchfield, "The Noble Family." James D. Birchfield, "The Noble-Yellman House," in *Noble Archives* (New York: 1988), 4.

[33] Birchfield, "The Noble Family." See Appendix: Descendants of David Noble.

[34] In the early 19th century, there was a man named William Satterwhite who operated a tavern and a hotel at the same time that Elijah Noble ran his tavern "Old Ironsides" who may have been a close relative of Dr. Thomas P. Satterwhite. Delcamp, *The Early Life of Lexington [Ky] before the Year 1820. Biographical Encyclopedia of Kentucky of the Dead and Living Men of the Nineteenth Century*, 721. Noble Research Collection.

[35] "Although free African Americans were enumerated by name in 1850 and 1860, slaves were consigned to special, far less informative, schedules in which they were listed anonymously under the names of their owners. The only personal information provided was usually that of age, gender, and racial identity (either black or mulatto). As in the free schedules, there was a column in which certain physical or mental infirmities could be noted. In some instances, the census takers noted an occupation, usually carpenter or blacksmith, in this column. Slaves aged 100 years or more were given special treatment; their names were noted, and sometimes a short biographical sketch was included. In at least one instance, that of 1860 Hampshire County, Virginia, the names of all slaves were included on the schedules, but this happy exception may be the only instance when the instructions were not followed." David T. Thackery, *The Transition from Slavery to Freedom* (Ancestry Daily News, 2001 [cited September 20 2006]); available from http://www.ancestry.com/learn/library/article.aspx?article=3318.

(his father) owned six slaves: four males (aged 30, 25, 20, and 12) and two females (aged 33 and 8). The same schedule shows Elijah Noble (his grandfather) owned three slaves: two males (aged 14 and 2) and one female (aged 30) and that John C. Noble (his uncle) owned three slaves: two males (aged 4 and 2) and one female (aged 1). The 1850 Slave Schedule lists all three men as residents of the Louisville District 2, Jefferson, Kentucky. Additionally, both Thomas Hart's and Elijah Noble's slaves are described as Black whereas John C. Noble's slaves are all listed as mulatto.[36]

When the 1860 Slave schedule was taken, only one member of the Noble family was listed as owning slaves, David Noble (a farmer and Thomas Satterwhite Noble's great uncle). That census lists David Noble as owning one slave, a fifty-five year-old Black male.[37] According to Thomas Satterwhite Noble's grandaughter, Mary Noble Welleck Garretson, Thomas Hart Noble freed his slaves shortly before the Civil War and hired them at wages, allowing them to live in the same quarters as they had as slaves.[38]

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[36] *1850 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedule [Database Online]* (Ancenstry.com. Provo, Utah: MyFamily.com, Inc., 2004. Original data: United States. *1850 United States Federal Census*. M432, 1009 rolls. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., 1850 [cited January 10 2006]); available from http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?rank=1&gsfn=thomas+h&gsln=noble&=&f4=Kentucky&f5=&f6=&prox=1&db=1850slaveowners&ti=0&ti.si=0&gl=&gss=IMAGE&gst=&so=3.

[37] David Noble was Elijah Noble's brother. He is listed as living in Western Subdivision 2, Madison, Kentucky. *1860 U.S. Federal Census-Slave Schedule [Database Online]* (Ancenstry.com. Provo, Utah, USA: MyFamily.com, Inc., 2004. Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1860. M653, 1,438 rolls, 2006; available from http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?rank=1&f5=&f6=&f7=&gsfn=&gsln=noble&=&f13=Kentucky&f14=&f15=&prox=1&db=1860slaveschedules&ti=0&ti.si=0&gl=&gss=IMAGE&gst=&so=3.

[38] Mary Noble Welleck Garretson, "Thomas S. Noble and His Paintings," *New York Historical Society Quarterly* XXIV, no. 4 (1940): 113.

Although it is unclear what happened to Elijah's slaves, he may have freed them as well, perhaps even sending them to Liberia to live. According to a timeline produced by James Birchfield, in 1822 Elijah Noble traveled to New Orleans as a representative of the Lexington Emigration Society to forward letters to Stephen F. Austin from Henry Clay and from Thomas Hart, Henry Clay's father-in-law.[39] This action strongly indicates that Elijah was an advocate and perhaps even a member of the American Colonization Society which was established in 1817 to send free African Americans to Africa as an alternative to emancipation in the United States. The year that Elijah traveled to New Orleans also marks the year that the society established a colony on the west coast of Africa for free African Americans. In 1847, this colony became the independent nation of Liberia. By 1867, the society had successfully sent more than 13,000 emigrants to the nation.[40]

The fact that various members of Noble's immediate and extended family owned slaves, that Elijah Noble was most likely a member of the American Colonization Society, that Noble's Democratic uncle was the political editor of the Paducah *Herald* and owned three very young mulatto slaves, combined with the assumption that Thomas Hart freed his slaves indicates that, in all likelihood, Noble would have been fully aware of the debate surrounding miscegenation, the internal slave trade, abolition, emigration, and the impact of slavery on the Kentucky economy during his youth and young adulthood. These factors also point to the

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[39] James D. Birchfield, "Rough Chronology of Noble Events," in *Noble Archives* (New York). Birchfield, "The Noble-Yellman House," 4.

[40] *Colonization* (Library of Congress, 2005 [cited September 22 2006]); available from http://loc.gov/exhibits/african/afam002.html.

complexity surrounding the issue of slavery and emancipation in Kentucky generally and in the Noble family specifically.

Thomas Satterwhite Noble was raised in what his granddaughter described as a typical well-to-do household of the time. His father owned and operated a prosperous plantation and a rope walk (both run using slave labor). According to his granddaughter, Mary Noble Welleck Garretson, "Thomas spent much of his boyhood among the negroes in their quarters, listening to their songs and stories," and "gained his deep understanding of negroes and his strong feeling for social justice from his early associations."[41] Although historians such as Bruce A. Chambers, Albert Boime, and Galusha Anderson, have stated that Noble opposed slavery, Noble did not leave any written evidence regarding his exact feelings on the institution. Thus, the question of whether or not he was an abolitionist, gradual emancipationist, and/or an African colonization supporter remains unclear.[42] However, one can extrapolate certain themes and issues that may have been important to the artist through a thorough examination of his artistic influences and his slavery-related paintings. These themes and issues include the internal slave trade, miscegenation, the Fugitive Slave Law, and immediate abolition.

[41] Garretson, "Thomas S. Noble and His Paintings," 113-14.

[42] Chambers, "Special Issue, Art and Artists: From a Southern Point of View," 78. Albert Boime, "Burgoo and Bourgeois: Thomas Noble's Images of Black People," in *Noble Archives* (New York), 11. Galusha Anderson, *The Story of a Border City During the Civil War* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1908), 155.

Noble's Art Education and Influences

Very little is known about Noble's experiences as a youth. Several documents in the Noble Archives mention that he initially attended the school of Mr. Wright Merrick then later enrolled at the Preparatory Department of Transylvania University.[43] Noble's first exposure to the visual arts occurred in 1840, at the age of five. That year, Noble's parents hired a traveling artist to paint their portraits in their Kentucky home. The experience of watching an artist recreate his parent's visage on canvas is thought to have played a major role in determining the future path of Noble's career.[44] His granddaughter recalled, "His spontaneous efforts were noticeable even before an itinerant artist painted portraits of his parents, which, very good of their kind, intrigued the small boy and made him ambitious to try his hand at painting."[45]

Noble initially began to distinguish himself as a gifted and determined draughtsman at the age of six, when he made a faithful drawing on his slate of the schoolroom stove "accurate even to the cracked firepot."[46] According to Birchfield,

> His father discovered once that he had remained awake all night preparing a drawn replica of Charlet's *Retreat from Moscow* from a popular print. A

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[43] Wright Merrick was a native of Massachusetts. He taught at a parish school in Lexington, Kentucky and was considered to a strict disciplinarian who strongly adhered to church principles. Prior to his death (1882, in Lexington, Kentucky), he was the oldest living graduate of West Point. "Merrick, Wright," *Lexington Transcript*, March 27 1882. H. E. Everman, *The History of Bourbon County, 1785-1865* (Bourbon Press, 1977), 106.

[44] *Biographical Information for George Peter Alexander Healy* [Website] (AskART.com, 2004 [cited November 26 2004]); available from http://askart.com/biography.asp?ID=21358. This quote is also supported by statements made by Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1," 37.

[45] Garretson, "Thomas S. Noble and His Paintings," 114.

[46] Ibid. Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1," 35.

> columnist and contemporary on the Lexington *Daily Press* staff wrote in 1872 that "our young companion occasionally would draw upon his slate a group of boys as they sat upon the bench, and how readily we could recognize each picture. We then predicted this natural artist would make his mark in life.[47]

Noble's granddaughter asserts that Noble "studied sporadically with whatever teachers were available throughout his boyhood, but his progress at that period was due mainly to his own talent."[48] He received his first formal instruction in art from the Reverend John C. Venable, a former itinerant miniaturist portrait painter who traveled through Virginia and Maryland.[49]

Noble utilized his art lessons to create portraits and caricatures of his associates which he sold to purchase additional art materials.[50] According to an unidentified manuscript in the Noble Archives, Noble made his own colors from the juices of weeds, until he obtained his first real paints which were bought at a public auction in Lexington and which apparently had belonged to an itinerant painter who had been found dead on the outskirts of town.[51]

On March 29th, 1847, when Noble was thirteen, his mother, Rosamond, died after a brief but painful illness.[52] In 1848, a year following his wife's death, Thomas

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[47] Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1," 37.

[48] Garretson, "Thomas S. Noble and His Paintings," 114.

[49] Between 1851 and 1882, Venable (formerly the assistant minister of the Ascension Church in Frankfort, Kentucky) was employed as the rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Versailles, Kentucky. John C. Venable, *John W. Venable Journal, 1840-1842* [35mm microfilm reel 1321] (Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560.

[50] Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1," 37.

[51] "Noble Biographical Manuscript," in *Noble Archives* (New York: after 1907), 2.

[52] Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1," 1.

Hart Noble moved his family to Louisville, Kentucky.[53] In the early 1850s, while living in Louisville, Noble's father tried to discourage his son's interest in pursuing art as a career by placing him in a local business to learn a trade. Thomas Hart seems to have changed his mind with regard to his son's future following an incident when,

> Mr. Noble retired for the night leaving his son copying an elaborate engraving of *Napolean Crossing the Alps*. The next morning when the elder man came down to breakfast, he found the lad still at work on the same composition; he had forgotten sleep, in his interest in drawing.[54]

Following this incident, the seventeen-year-old Noble was granted the privilege of studying art under Kentucky portrait painter, Samuel Woodson Price (1828-1918).[55]

Price was born on August 5th, 1828, at Sugar Grove, near Nicholasville, Kentucky, to Major Daniel Branch and Elizabeth Crockett Price. Like Noble, Price also exhibited an early talent for drawing and the arts. In 1847, at the age of nineteen, he began to study art under the guidance of artist William Reading (or Redding) of Louisville, who had traveled to Nicholasville to paint some of the community's leading citizens. Later that year, Price moved to Lexington, and began studies under Oliver Frazer (1808-1864), a noted Kentucky portraitist.[56] Since Noble exhibited a

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[53] In August of 1848, Thomas Hart Noble purchased his father's interest in his Lexington property for $146. A year later, he sold his hemp factory (Laudeman Hemp Factory) to John George Yellman. In February of 1850, T. H. Noble began to buy lots (15 acres in total) along the south side of Portland Avenue in Louisville.

[54] "Noble Biographical Manuscript," 2.

[55] Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble," in *The History of Kentucky: By the Late Lewis Collins, Judge of the Mason County Court* (Covington, Kentucky: Collins & Co., 1874; reprint, *History of Kentucky: Revised, Enlarged Four-fold and Bround Down to the Year 1874 by his son, Richard H. Collins, A.M., LL.B*. Covington, Kentucky: Collins & Co., 1874), 623. Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1," 37.

[56] J. Winston Coleman, Jr., "Samuel Woodson Price Kentucky Portrait Painter," *The Filson Club History Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (1949): 5-6.

strong interest in art throughout his childhood, he may have visited Frazer's studio prior to and/or during Price's apprenticeship.

In the winter of 1848, following the advice of Frazer, Price traveled to New York to study at the National Academy of Design. A year later, Price painted one of his best-known paintings, a portrait called, *King Solomon* (1849), of a Lexington, Kentucky town vagrant who "habitually drank whiskey instead of water and thus, unwittingly remained immune from the deadly germs in the great cholera epidemic of 1833 which swept through Lexington killing one out of every seven persons."[57] Solomon became the town hero as he was one of the few people able to lay out the dead and bury them during the devastating epidemic. Price's three-quarter-length portrait of the vagrant/hero became an immediate success in the town of Lexington and following its completion led to many independent commissions.

Following this success and several other well-regarded portrait commissions, Price traveled to Louisville in 1851 to paint a portrait of the prominent and wealthy citizen, A. L. Shotwell and his family. Price's renderings of the Shotwell family was greatly admired and led to several other commissions keeping the artist employed in Louisville for several years.[58] It was during this period when Noble began lessons with the well-regarded artist. Unfortunately, there are no known images created during this time that would reveal Price's artistic influence on Noble.

Because both Price and Frazer were Lexington-based artists, historian James Birchfield contends that, "Two professional goals, both perhaps originating with

[57] Ibid.: 7.

[58] Ibid.: 9.

Frazer, may have established themselves for Noble while he was a youth in Lexington: first, to affiliate himself with the National Academy of Design in New York (as Frazer encouraged Price to do in 1848…); and, second, to study in Paris under Thomas Couture." [59] Prior to finally settling in Lexington in 1838, Frazer had studied with Matthew Harris Jouett (1787-1827) in Lexington, Thomas Sully (1783-1872) in Philadelphia, and history and mythology painter Antoine-Jean Gros (1771-1835) in Paris.[60] During his studies with Gros in 1834, Frazer met and became friends with Boston artist George Peter Alexander Healy (1813-1894)[61] and French academic painter Thomas Couture. So close were Healy and Frazer that when Healy was commissioned by the French king Louis-Phillippe to paint Henry Clay's portrait at Ashland in 1845 (Henry Clay's estate at Lexington, Kentucky), Frazer Joined him—sharing his home and studio.[62] Noble may have also met Healy (who was a collector of Couture's work and his lifelong friend) during this period as his grandfather, Elijah Noble, was well acquainted with Henry Clay and his family. Frazer was active in Fayette County from 1838 until his death in 1864 at his home at Eothen (Marlvern Hill), two miles away from Noble's boyhood home.[63]

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[59] Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1," 37.

[60] Ibid.

[61] George Healy was born and raised in Boston to impoverished parents. His talent for painting portraits was recognized early in his life by society sitters and portraitist Thomas Sully. Healy opened his own portrait studio at the age of seventeen. When he was twenty-one, he left for the first of many trips to Paris where he studied with Antoine Jean-Gros and with Thomas Couture (who became a close personal friend). He spent many years in Paris as a court portrait painter where he gained an international reputation. He spent the remainder of his life traveling between the United States and Europe. *Biographical Information for George Peter Alexander Healy*.

[62] Boime, "Burgoo and Bourgeois: Thomas Noble's Images of Black People," 10.

[63] Ibid.

In 1853, Thomas Hart granted his son a reprieve from the business world and sent him, at the age of eighteen, to winter in New York with the express purpose of exploring the art world. During this period, Noble visited a number of artists and galleries.[64] He also met and became friends with landscape painter George Inness (1824-1894).[65]

Noble returned to Kentucky in 1854 and his father placed him in a St. Louis business house so that he would have an alternative to painting. Two years later, in 1856, at the age of twenty-one, he left Kentucky to study art in Paris. In Paris, Noble was counseled by the English-born artist, Edward Harrison May (1824-1887), who advised him "to select a master by looking at the works of those who taught in Paris. After viewing Couture's *Décadence des Romans* in the Musée du Luxembourg, listening to May, and thinking back, perhaps, to the conversations of Frazer, Noble asked the older artist to introduce him to Couture."[66] May provided the young artist with a letter of introduction and Noble entered the atelier of the Parisian academic Thomas Couture (1815-1879).

When Thomas Hart Noble sent his son to Paris, Thomas Satterwhite had more than proven his intent on becoming a professional artist. However, the type of artist he would become would be shaped by both the instruction and example of Thomas

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[64] James D. Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: Artist and Teacher," in *Kentucky Expatriates: Natives and Notable Visitors, the Early 1800s to the Present* (Owensboro, Kentucky: Owensboro Museum of Fine Art, 1984), 49.

[65] Boime, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision*.

[66] Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1," 39.

Couture and his experience as a Confederate soldier in the Civil War. His experiences in Paris and as a soldier combined with his background as a gentleman from a slave-holding family from the industrial slave-trading state of Kentucky would have a tremendous impact upon the type of paintings he would eventually produce—especially his first major painting, *The American Slave Mart*, 1865.

Chapter 3: *The American Slave Mart: A Bid for National Recognition*

> *The impulse behind the public monument was an impulse to mold history into its rightful pattern. And history was supposed to be a chronicle of heroic accomplishments, not a series of messy disputes with unresolved outcomes. Even now, to commemorate is to seek historical closure, to draw together the various strands of meaning in a historical event or personage and condense its significance for the present in a speech or a monument. It is true that the process of commemoration often leads to conflict, not closure, because in defining the past we define our present. Yet in choosing to remember "historical" events or heroes we still hope to plunge them into a past secured against the vicissitudes of the present.*
>
> Kirk Savage
> *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*[1]

Painted the same year that congress ratified the Thirteenth Amendment, the no longer extant painting titled *The American Slave Mart*, 1865, was not only Noble's first nationally recognized canvas but it was also the first painting to commemorate the end of slavery as a legal institution in the United States, and thereby the end of the internal slave trade. *The American Slave Mart* was an eight by six foot painting that contained 75 figures. It was meant to announce his official entrance into the American arts scene as an accomplished history painter. His decision to paint a grand history painting about a recent yet pivotal era in American history did not go unnoticed. By painting the last sale of slaves in the United States, Noble placed himself in an interesting position. Although he was a southerner and a former

[1] Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 4.

Confederate soldier, his painting alluded to the fact that he was also a man who sympathized with the plight of the slave.

The American Slave Mart was widely exhibited throughout America's northern and border states and effectively launched Noble's career as a promising American history painter. The painting stands in testament to the future path of an artist who was to make his name creating images of an era when African Americans did not control their own destiny in a country whose founding premise was that all males were created free and equal.[2]

The American Slave Mart initiated the beginning of an entire series of public pictorial monuments created by Noble to chronicle the history of slavery, miscegenation, and the internal slave trade. Noble's decision to make a slave auction the subject of his first monumental painting may seem puzzling when one considers his southern heritage, his family's slave owning background, and his participation as a confederate soldier in the Civil War. It is my contention, however, that Noble's intimate exposure to slavery and the slave trade combined with his experience of studying with Thomas Couture contributed to the production of *The American Slave*

[2] Although previous scholarship had assumed that *The American Slave Mart* had been destroyed prior to 1870 (which would explain why Noble painted the simplified replica of the painting in 1870 entitled, *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis*), a newspaper article in the *Chicago Sunday Herald*, states that the painting was destroyed in a fire that took place in the Langham Hotel a few years prior to 1888 (the date of the article). The painting had been exhibited as late as 1875 (Cincinnati Industrial Exposition). Chicago millionaire William B. Howard, and personal friend of Noble, had purchased the painting in 1867 for the sum of $10,000. The simplified replica was probably painted because, following the purchase of the painting, it ceased to be available (outside of the 1875 showing in Cincinnati) for public viewing. However, Howard had planned to give the work to the Chicago Historical Society in the mid 1880s when he placed it in the lobby of the Langham hotel for presentation purposes. The day before he was to present it at the Historical Society's regular meeting the hotel and the painting were destroyed in a fire. "The Slave Mart." "Cincinnati Industrial Exposition," *The Cincinnati Commercial*, 15 August 1875. "The Exposition. The Art Exhibition--Cincinnati Artists: Thomas S. Noble," *The Cincinnati Commercial*, 19 September 1875.

Mart. Furthermore, as Noble's first major painting created after leaving the studio of Thomas Couture, the allegorical symbols present in *The American Slave Mart* closely follow the style and compositional techniques found in Couture's, *Decadence of the Romans*, 1847 [Figure 6].

As a young artist, Noble was eager to make his name in the art world once he returned from Paris to the United States. Like many young art students, Noble looked toward his mentor for guidance. Thomas Couture was an extremely important influence on the young Noble. Therefore it is no surprise that he looked to emulate the composition and style of Couture's most impressive and acclaimed painting, *Decadence of the Romans*, in his own endeavor at grand history painting.

Thomas Couture

French painter and art teacher, Thomas Couture, was a student of both Antoine-Jean Gros (between 1830-38) and Paul Delaroche (between 1838-39). An excellent draughtsman, Couture grew dissatisfied with the politics and outdated teaching curriculum of the French academic institution, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and withdrew from the academy to forge his own independent path. Early in his career, he gained notoriety at the Paris Salon with several moralizing paintings such as the *Young Venetians after an Orgy*, 1840; the *Prodigal Son*, 1841; and, the *Love of Gold*, 1844. His greatest success, however, would come with his monumental painting, *Decadence of the Romans*, which was hailed as the triumph of the 1847

Paris Salon.[3] In describing the *Decadence of the Romans* Albert Boime states that it was,

> An extension of the moralizing themes of his [Couture's] first Salon exhibits, it represents the waning moments of an all-night orgy in the vestibule of a vast Corinthian hall. The exhausted and drunken revelers are contrasted with the solemn tutelary statues of the great Roman republicans in the niches around the hall; the heroes' descendants have fallen into venality and corruption. The work was interpreted as a satire on the July Monarchy (1840-48) and a wide range of government critics—aristocratic, radical and bourgeois—perceived it as a forecast of the regime's impending doom.[4]

In 1848, the July Monarchy did indeed collapse bringing even more attention to Couture and his painting.[5] Based on the success of *Decadence of the Romans*, he was encouraged to produce another monumental work that would celebrate the Revolution for the Salle Des Séances in the Assemblée Nationale. Inspired by a series of lectures aimed to "regenerate French society through the invigorating impulses of its youth," given by Jules Michelet at the Collége de France, late in 1847, Couture began work on his second monumental history painting entitled, *Enrollment of the Volunteers of 1792* [Figure 7].[6]

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[3] Albert Boime, *Couture, Thomas* (Grove Art Online. Oxford University Press, 2006 [cited 22 October); available from http://www.groveart.com/.

[4] Ibid.

[5] The July Monarchy (1830-1848) was established in France with the reign of constitutional monarch Louis Philippe, the Orleanist "King of the French." This period is generally seen as a time of economic growth, a period of reform in the Catholic Church, and an era when the haute bourgeoisie was dominant in political affairs.

[6] Boime, *Couture, Thomas*. For further information on *Enrolment of the Volunteers of 1792*, see Albert Boime, "Thomas Couture and the Evolution of Painting in Nineteenth-Century France," *The Art Bulletin* 51, no. 1 (1969). Boime, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision*. Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts, *Enrollment of the Volunteers: Thomas Couture and the Painting of History* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Springfield Library and Museums Association for the Springfield Museum of Fine Art, 1980).

Enrollment of the Volunteers showed all classes of society creating a new national unity in the face of external threat.[7] Although Couture would never complete this painting, (the counter-revolution in June of 1848 followed by the installation of Louis-Napoléon as emperor altered the political climate to a degree that rendered its initial purpose void) he worked on it over many years, during which time Thomas Satterwhite Noble entered his atelier as a student.

Noble and Thomas Couture

Thomas Couture began taking on students in 1847, following the success of *Decadence of the Romans*. Among his better known European protégés were: Edouard Manet, Emile Zola, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, and Anselm Feuerbach. His American students included William Morris Hunt (1824-1879) [attended Couture's studio between 1846 and 1852], Thomas Hicks (1823-1890) [attended Couture's studio in 1849], Edward Harrison May (1824-1887) [attended Couture's studio in 1851], Eastman Johnson (1824-1906) and Enoch Wood Perry (1831-1915) [both attended Couture's studio around 1855]. Other American students who attended his studio at the end of the decade include: Elizabeth Lyman Boott Duveneck (1846-1888), Charles Caryl Coleman (1840-1928), Samuel Colman (1832-1920), John Ehninger (1827-1889), Hugh Newell (1830-1915), James Thom (1835-1898), and Edward V. Valentine (1838-1930).

[7] Boime, *Couture, Thomas*.

Albert Boime has described Noble as "the most impressive of Couture's American 'generalists'."[8] I concur with Boime's argument that between 1865 and 1869, Noble was indeed Couture's most successful history painter. However, once he was appointed head of the McMicken School in 1869 (which would later become the Cincinnati Art Academy), I believe his work suffered in terms of content and theme.

Noble arrived in Paris in 1856 at the age of twenty-one with a letter of introduction to the American artist Edward Harrison May, who advised him to chose a master by looking at the works of the most successful teachers in Paris.[9] According to a former student of Noble's named John Ward Dunsmore, "…after looking carefully through the [Musée de] Luxembourg—the galleries of contemporary art—at the works of the most eminent living painters, young Noble decided to enter his [Couture's] atelier, which was the most popular school then in Paris."[10] When Noble enrolled in the atelier, Couture was painting the *Enrollment of the Volunteers of 1792* and accomplishing a transition from the grand manner to his elevated genre style. Noble spent three years studying under Couture where he developed a lifelong admiration for the artist. So strong was his affection for Couture that in January of 1888, he wrote a letter to fellow Couture student, Edward V. Valentine stating,

> My love for him was for a lifetime, and I verily believe for eternity. As a man he may have had weaknesses. As an artist, to me he was adorable, and is and will ever be so long as I have a conscious being.[11]

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[8] Boime, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision*, 580.

[9] John Ward Dunsmore, "Arts and Letters in the Academy," *Cincinnati Tribune*, 24 November 1896.

[10] Dunsmore, "Sketch of Thomas S. Noble," 3.

[11] Letter from Thomas Satterwhite Noble to Edward V. Valentine, January 2, 1888. Valentine Museum, Richmond. Quoted from Marchal E. Langren, *American Pupils of Thomas Couture* (College Park: University of Maryland, 1970), 16.

In the latter years of his life, he wrote in his diary of his experience with Couture,

> I went with unerring instinct to that which was purest in Art: I selected my own Master, he of all was the embodiment of nearest my ideal, Thomas Couture (Ah, revered master how much of the fresh love of my young life was given to thee). He made the earth teem with a fresher life, he opened my eyes to see the loveliness of the color world, and to seek without rest and with an ever increasing love the subtleties of form. My work was my greatest delight, for in it I was seeding and attaining what I most loved. The atelier, the Louvre, the Luxenbourg [sic], these were the centers which gave my heart its most joyous pulsations. I had found the greatest happiness attainable to me in life with Couture for a Master.[12]

Albert Boime asserts that "Noble's unbounded verbal praise has its equivalent in the many pictorial references to Couture found throughout his career, starting with the student's informal replica of the *Falconer* (private collection, Scarsdale, N.Y.) and culminating with the late sketch from memory of the *Pierrot at the Correctionnel* jotted in a notebook."[13] Boime goes on to say that Noble's penchant for replicating and/or alluding to Couture's compositions in his own work included several attempts at allegorical painting and many more with paintings that directly confronted his own experiences as they intersected with social ideals. As my analysis of *The American Slave Mart* will illustrate, Noble did indeed display a penchant for alluding to Couture's compositions in his own work.

Noble's Participation in the Civil War

In 1859, Noble returned to America to live with his family in Rock Spring, located outside of the corporate limits of St. Louis, Missouri, where his father

[12] "Unidentified Manuscript," in *Noble Archives* (New York).

[13] Boime, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision*, 581.

maintained a grocery business.[14] During this period, he worked as a bank clerk to please his father and give him a career to fall back on in case he was not successful as an artist. He also socialized with other local artists, and began to create and exhibit numerous genre paintings.[15] In 1859, he painted *Back to School*, which depicted a young boy practicing sums in a room with several books and apples scattered on the floor and a map of the western hemisphere on the wall in the background.[16] This is the earliest extant work painted by Noble following his return to the United States. In 1860, he exhibited three paintings (*St. Germain de Luxerois*, *The Epicure*, and *The Fisher Boy* [an image of a Polynesian boy with a fish]) at the Western Academy of Art in St. Louis and four paintings (*Head of a Female*, *Haymaking* (after Rosa Bonheur), *Piece of Melon*, and *Vase Filled with Fruit*) at the St. Louis Agricultural & Mechanical Association both located in Missouri. That same year he also exhibited *The Music Lesson* and *The Young Fruit Dealer* at the Cosmopolitan Art Association in Sandusky, Ohio.[17] By 1861, however, Noble's initial foray into the American art market was cut short by the outbreak of the Civil War.

According to Birchfield, "Noble was not an ally of the slave cause… At first the painter made no commitment to the fight, but he sided at last with Missouri and

[14] Noble's family relocated to St. Louis, Missouri during his sojourn in Paris. Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble*, vii.

[15] On March 7, 1861, St. Louis artist William J. Hinchy noted that "Tonight at Sketch Club at oyster supper at Cantwanees where Nobel [sic] was rather noisy." Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1," 42. "Cincinnati Artists."

[16] *Back to School* is currently located at the Cincinnati Museum of Art.

[17] All of the paintings listed, with the exception of *Back To School*, are currently unlocated. Appendix.

with the conservative element of his native Kentucky in the southern cause."[18] Unfortunately, neither Birchfield nor Boime (who reiterates Birchfield's assertion) provide concrete explanations for their statements regarding Noble's political allegiances with regard to the institution of slavery.[19] Whereas Birchfield simply states that Noble was not an advocate of slavery, Boime asserts that the artist, who had been exposed throughout his life to both the horrors of slavery and to abolitionist sentiment, chose to fight with the confederates on the sole principle of states rights. Both Boime and Birchfield state that the Noble family did not own slaves, but merely employed slaves hired out by other local slave-owners.[20] However, evidence shows (from the 1850 and 1860 Slaves Schedules) that Noble's father, grandfather and uncle did own numerous slaves.[21] Additional information from the Noble Archives indicates that in addition to owning slaves, Noble's father hired out slaves from other plantations to assist in his businesses during more active periods. According to an article written in the late 1860s, when Noble returned to the United States from Paris, there "was no middle ground in politics in the city [St. Louis] at that time—it was the North or the South—and the parents, family, and friends of the artist were all on the side of secession. His sympathies and interests were southern; and, consequently, he accepted a commission in the Confederate army, devoting himself and all that he had

[18] It must be noted here that Missouri did not secede from the Union. Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble, 1835-1907*, 5.

[19] These assertions may be based upon the Noble's granddaughter's (Mary Noble Welleck Garretson) statement that Noble was "Never in sympathy with slavery, he used his art as propaganda for freedom, but as a loyal Kentuckian, on the question of states' rights he adhered to the Southern cause." Garretson, "Thomas S. Noble and His Paintings," 114.

[20] Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble*, 5, 30-35.

[21] *1850 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedule [Database Online]*. *1860 U.S. Federal Census-Slave Schedule [Database Online]*.

to the cause."[22] Even though Noble's granddaughter, Mary Welleck Noble, stated that Noble developed a strong feeling for social justice from his early associations with the African Americans slaves his father had once owned when they lived in Kentucky, he still sided with the confederacy.[23]

In 1861, Noble joined the confederate army in St. Louis, enlisted for three years, and was assigned to the cavalry. In late October he was sent to serve in the Ordnance Department at Camden, Arkansas, where he acted as a draughtsman, designing guns. From Camden he was transferred as captain to the staff of Gov. Henry Watkins Allen (1820-1866) of Louisiana. He worked in New Orleans where, once it became known that he understood the process of making rope (from working in his father's business), he operated a rope walk[24] to help supply the needs of the Confederate army and navy and assisted in building the first pontoon bridge utilized in the war.[25] At the close of the war Noble surrendered at New Orleans. He was repatriated there on July 10, 1865.[26] Following his repatriation, Noble returned to his home in St. Louis with a portfolio filled with sketches of his experiences and new

[22] "Noble's Great Picture, "Last Sale of Slaves in America"," (c. 1867).

[23] Garretson, "Thomas S. Noble and His Paintings," 113-14.

[24] A rope walk is a long narrow covered shed or alley where rope is manufactured.

[25] This information was taken from an unidentified typewritten manuscript located in the Noble Research Collection.

[26] National Archives and Records Service; autobiographical manuscript and repatriation document number 557, Noble Research Collection.

artistic purpose—to paint a series of images depicting the horrors and effects of American slavery.[27]

Noble Returns from the War

When Noble returned from the Civil War, he entered into a new milieu with regard to how African Americans were perceived as subjects for fine art in the United States. The enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation and the recruiting of African American troops in 1863, initiated an unusually fertile environment for the creation and positive reception of images relating to the past, present, and future status of African Americans in the United States. In the words of American historian David Blight, "The northern postwar ideological memory of the conflict as transformation in the history of freedom, as an American second founding, was born in the rhetoric of 1863 fashioned by [Frederick] Douglass, [Abraham] Lincoln, and others whose burden it was to explain how the war's first purpose (preservation of the Union) had transfigured into the second (emancipation of the slaves)."[28] This rhetoric had a tremendous impact upon the creation of these novel images of African Americans—images that functioned as visual reminders of the North's moral superiority in their fight against the South and its system of enslavement. Many of these images also reflected white America's ambivalence, hopes, and fears regarding

[27] Nobles civil war sketches are owned by Nobles great granddaughter, Rosamond Dauer. Currently they are in the process of being restored and stabilized in Amherst, Massachusetts and were not available to for public viewing. Conversation with Noble's great granddaughter, Rosamond Dauer, November 15, 2006. Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble*, 5.

[28] David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), 15.

the new social and legal position of African Americans as their status changed from that of chattel to citizen.

Even though he was a southerner, Noble's slavery-related painting series fit very neatly into most northerner's views with regard to the abolition of slavery. Furthermore, his status as a southerner and a Confederate soldier who championed the abolishment of slavery in his art reflected the hopes that many people in the North held during the early reconstruction period that the South could be successfully reconstructed and brought back into the Union.

In the two years between 1863 and Noble's repatriation into the United States in 1865, many other artists had responded to the sweeping political legislation and ideological rhetoric surrounding the status of African Americans. One prime example of this response is John Quincy Adams Ward's plaster model titled, *The Freedman*, 1863 [Figure 8]. Ward created this powerful study of an African American man on the verge of rising to his feet after the shackles symbolizing his enslavement have been severed directly following Lincoln's emancipation proclamation.[29] The image was so commanding that James Jackson Jarvis wrote in 1864, that "It symbolizes the African race of America,—the birthday of a new people into the ranks of Christian civilization. We have seen nothing in our sculpture more soul-lifting, or more

[29] John Quincy Adams Ward was a native of Ohio and made a living modeling busts and presentation pieces. He first exhibited *The Freedman* at the National Academy of Design in New York where he was elected a full member that same year. McElroy, *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art, 1710-1940*, 53.

comprehensively eloquent. It tells in one word the whole sad tale of slavery and the bright story of emancipation."[30]

Another work created one year before the emancipation proclamation by Eastman Johnson was called, *The Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves*, 1862 [Figure 9]. It also reflected the North's changing attitude with regard to the quest for freedom by African Americans.[31] It is interesting to note that one can trace the change in attitude within this painter's body of work from Eastman Johnson's earlier works such as *Negro Life in the South*, *Washington's Kitchen in Mount Vernon*, and *The Freedom Ring*, and an image of a "sad-eyed, barefoot black boy," all painted in 1860 prior to his entering the Union army to the later more radical *Ride for Liberty*, painted during his enlistment in the war.[32] Although all of these paintings focus on African Americans, according to art historian Guy McElroy, the paintings from 1860 all "avoid the controversial issues of slavery and abolition in favor of nostalgic recreations of a bygone era where blacks flourish under the generosity of benevolent whites."[33] *Ride for Liberty*, however, shows a great deal of self-agency on the part of African Americans (they are escaping without the aid of benevolent whites) as they

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[30] James Jackson Jarvis, *The Art-Idea,* ed. Benjamin Rowland, Jr., (1864; reprint ed., Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 225-26; excerpted from Hugh Honour, ed., *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the American Revolution to World War I, Part 1*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 223.

[31] Eastman Johnson created three versions of *Ride to Liberty*. On one version he wrote on the back of the painting, "A veritable incident in the Civil War, seen by myself at Centerville on the morning of McClellan's advance to Manassas March 2, 1862. Eastman Johnson." Ibid., 222-23.

[32] *Washington's Kitchen in Mount Vernon* is of a black woman nursing a baby in a dilapidated kitchen with two other children nearby and *The Freedom Ring* depicts a young quadroon or octoroon girl that Henry Ward Beecher had bought to save her from being sold down South who sits on a floor admiring a ring that Ward's congregation had purchased for her to symbolize to wedding to freedom. Ibid., 220.

[33] McElroy, *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art, 1710-1940*, 55.

make the harrowing journey toward their chosen future of freedom and self-sufficiency.

Famed portraitist Thomas Sully also contributed to the new art of this period when he painted the images of two high Liberian government officials, *Daniel Dashiel Warner*, c. 1864 [Figure 10] (who became president of Liberia in 1861) and *Edward James Roye*, c. 1864 [Figure 11] (who became the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia in 1865 and later the president of the country, again in 1865). Both portraits were commissioned by the Pennsylvania Branch of the Colonization Society and were painted in the three-quarter-length unfinished style of Gilbert Stuart's "*Antheneum"* portrait of George Washington. The fact that both portraits were painted during the final years of the Civil War is a testament to the growing interest in African American self-agency and government in the nascent country of Liberia.

One final example of northern interest in the emerging status of African Americans as free, conscious beings whose humanity equals that of their white contemporaries can be found in the small plaster sculpture, *The Wounded Scout, Friend in the Swamp*, 1864 [Figure 12], by John Rogers. Created using the same naturalistic style of John Quincy Adams Ward's *The Freedman*, *The Wounded Scout* depicts an African American (possibly a slave or newly freed man) assisting a wounded Union soldier to safety. Unlike Rogers' earlier pre-Civil War work, *The Slave Auction*, 1859 (which did not fare well on the public market), *The Wounded Scout* was one of his most successful works and was hailed by abolitionist poet, Lydia

Maria Childs as "a significant lesson of human brotherhood for all the coming ages."[34]

Noble, however may have been familiar with all of these works since, following his return home from the war to St. Louis, he relocated to New York where he temporarily resided with artist and former Couture student Henry Augustus Loop (1831-1895) at the Dodsworth Building, 212 Fifth Avenue.[35] Many of the aforementioned artists such as John Quincy Adams Ward, Eastman Johnson (who also studied under Thomas Couture), and John Rogers also lived in New York during the period these works were created and one of the pieces, *The Freedman* by Ward, was exhibited at the National Academy of Design.[36] Furthermore, given the history of involvement of Noble's grandfather, Elijah Noble, in the Colonization Society, Noble may have also been aware of Thomas Sully's portraits of Daniel Dashiel Warner and Edward James Roye.

This new trend in creating artwork documenting the humanity of African Americans during the Civil War may have contributed to Noble's decision to begin to create paintings with African American themes. According to an unidentified manuscript in the Noble Archives, Noble's first foray into this genre was a series of three paintings entitled, *Past, Present, & Future Conditions of the Negro*. The document states that these works created "quite a stir" in St. Louis, and being painted

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[34] Ibid., 59.

[35] "Fine Arts: 'the American Slave Mart'," *New York Evening Post*, 22 October 1866.

[36] The *Freedman* was exhibited in 1963 at the National Academy of Design. Maria Naylor, *The National Academy of Design Exhibition Record, 1861-1900*, vol. II (New York: Kennedy Galleries, Inc., 1973), 991.

immediately after the war, brought "wide spread fame to the artist."[37] The manuscript describes one of the paintings, most likely the one representing the present condition as follows,

> It depicted an old negro woman with a satisfied expression of countenance, who had just returned from market. She was seated before a newly kindled fire, and enjoying her pipe, while she counted the extent of her outlay. The vegetables she had purchased lay at her feet. On the wall over the fire place [sic] hung a picture of Abraham Lincoln, the author of her freedom and whose image and memory she cherished with grateful recollection.[38]

Until recently, there has been no other evidence to verify that these paintings ever existed. In March of 2006, however, Christie's auction house sold an unsigned and undated painting titled, *The Future*, which is purported to have been painted by Noble.[39] The painting received its title and author based upon a passage written by Albert Boime for the catalogue, *Thomas S. Noble, 1835-1907*, which paraphrased the above passage without a citation.[40]

The painting *The Future*, c. 1865 [Figure 13], depicts an elderly African American man wearing a three-quarters length jacket and spectacles sitting near a window reading a newspaper within an interior setting. The room appears to be a study with numerous books and ledgers lining the shelves on the wall, on two small tables, and on the floor. Although the room is rather shabby—the curtain is tattered, two window panes are broken, the carpet is dingy, and the space is crowded and

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[37] "Unidentified Manuscript."

[38] Ibid.

[39] Christie's, *New York: Fine American Paintings, Drawings and Sculptures* (New York: Christie's, 2006).

[40] Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble, 1835-1907*, 35.

small—it is obviously reflects the living space of a learned man who is engaged in keeping up with current events and the literature of the age.

Unfortunately, when examined closely, the stylistic manner in which the figure is delineated does not seem to match the clean and refined figures that characterized Noble's style early in his career (most readily recognized by his figures comparatively small hands and feet and the refined surface treatment of the canvas). Furthermore, it is difficult to assess whether the treatment of the painting's surface matched Noble's work as the painting had been relined, leaving its surface completely flattened. Based upon the lack of corroborating evidence as well as the lack of stylistic continuity, I am reluctant to include this painting as part of Noble's oeuvre.[41] Until further evidence is created to verify the existence of the survival of *Past, Present, & Future Conditions of the Negro*, it is historically more useful to analyze works that are known to have been painted by Noble.

Noble's first monumental historical painting, *The American Slave Mart*, is very well documented in past and contemporary literature.[42] According to a newspaper article from the Noble Archives, the subject of the painting was "suggested to Mr. Noble while witnessing the last auction sale of slaves held in St.

[41] In April of 2006 I went to New York to view the painting in person. At that time, the Head of Sales at Christie's informed me that although Albert Boime and James Birchfield had both seen the painting, neither one of them would formally agree to authenticate it as a work by Thomas Satterwhite Noble.

[42] According to Jingle, Noble worked on this painting for a period of ten months. Jingle, "Noble's 'Last Sale'."

Louis on the court-house steps in 1859, but the artist does not confine the spectacle to any special place."[43]

The American Slave Mart, was a noteworthy achievement not only because it effectively launched Noble's career but also because it was the first formal treatment of a slave auction by an American painter. In 1866, art critic Alfred Jingle stated in his article "Nobles' 'Last Sale,'" that the subject of Noble's composition "is a Sale of Slaves—a subject which I believe has never yet been treated by any of our American artists. The fact is a strange one."[44] The lack of interest in slave auctions as a suitable subject for the majority of American artists prior to and during the Civil War can most likely be attributed to the highly charged political environment surrounding the subject of the internal slave trade in the United States. However, the charged environment within the states did not prevent at least one American sculptor (John Rogers), one European painter (Eyre Crowe), and an unidentified painter from attempting to represent this event.

Between the years 1852 and 1853, British artist Crowe, painted *Slave Market in Richmond, Virginia* [Figure 14]. Although this painting does not portray the activity of the auction, it presents itself as a character study of various types of slaves while they contemplate their future before they are put up for public sale. The painting features five women, three children, and one man seated around a wood stove in a slave warehouse awaiting their imminent sale. In the background, in the far

[43] This quote was part of a series of undocumented newspaper clippings taken by Noble and/or his family and currently located in the Noble Research Collection. "The American Slave Mart," *Evening Post*, 22 October 1865.

[44] Jingle, "Noble's 'Last Sale'."

left corner of the painting under a door stand three white men, earnestly discussing a matter most likely relating to the impending slave auction. In the center of the painting, in back of the slaves, stands a white man holding open a door unobtrusively and imperiously observing the scene to his right—most likely the slave dealer.

The slaves awaiting sale are all well dressed, as it was the custom to dress slaves in bright new garments before the auction. All of the women, save one who is smiling at her daughter, seem quietly resigned to their fate. The children, a boy, a girl, and a baby, appear oblivious to their fate as they sit next to or in their mother's laps. The one African American man in the image, pictured in the prime of his life, is sitting alone to the right of the composition. He appears defiant and angry at the hand that life has dealt him as a slave.

Slave Market in Richmond, Virginia, was painted from sketches taken by the artist during a visit he made to a Richmond slave warehouse with famed British author William Thackeray in 1850.[45] Relating his experience of seeing slaves brought to market, Crowe noted that the slaves were "paraded like a flock of sheep, whose hair is not shorn from the top of their head merely because that kink of wool is not marketable."[46] Art historian Elizabeth Johns has suggested that Crowe's treatment of the three men at the left back corner of the composition, whom she identifies as buyers, suggests less psychological individualism than for the slaves. "Their clothing, however, suggests three distinct social groups in the South that have

[45] McElroy, *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art, 1710-1940*, 45.

[46] Honour, ed., *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the American Revolution to World War I, Part 1*, 207.

an interest in the proceedings—the aristocratic planter, the smooth urban businessman, and the rough plantation overseer."[47]

I agree that the treatment of the three white men in the picture is less individualized than the treatment of the slaves. The skin tone and clothing worn by the men match very closely in hue and tone to the overall background of the picture. This technique of relegating the white men to the background spatially and tonally does indeed give greater sense of life and vivacity to the figures of the slaves in the foreground.

Another painting of a slave auction is thought to have been created between 1850 and 1860, by an unidentified artist and entitled, *Slave Auction* [Figure 15].[48] Unlike Crowe's image, *Slave Auction*, actually depicts an auction, specifically the moment when a young octoroon woman is being auctioned off to a number of interested bidders, one of whom is in the process of fingering his potential "merchandise." This man, who is dressed from head to toe in a white plantation suit, is painted with one hand touching the young woman while the other hand is tucked in his left pants pocket, drawing back his coat and calling attention to his genital region. The other interested men stand a few feet back, as they also assess the young girl with intense, and perhaps carnal, interest.

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[47] Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1991), 132.

[48] Hugh Honour states although the painting appears to have been created by an artist influenced by the Düsseldorf School, the nationality (European or American) of the artist cannot be determined. Honour, ed., *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the American Revolution to World War I, Part 1*, 206-07.

The scene takes place at the "Planter's Hotel" near a commercially traveled southern river (as indicated by the southern styled steamboat in the background). There are three figures on the steps of the hotel, a seated man (perhaps the slave dealer) a standing man (the auctioneer) and the young woman being offered for sale. On the bottom left-hand side of the image, the artist has painted a rather dramatic grouping of an overseer in the midst of whipping a slave mother who refuses to relinquish her child who is simultaneously being examined by a perspective buyer. While all of this is going on, the woman's youngest child, an infant, lies wailing, helplessly at her feet. Situated behind the prospective buyer of the child is another woman who is crouched down and clutching her infant child while she watches the violent scene unfolded before her. On the right side of the composition, beyond the potential buyers of the young octoroon woman, sits a man on a horse talking to another man whose back faces the viewer. In front of them sit two men: a young man dramatically posed as if longing hopelessly to save the woman being auctioned off on the steps, and a much older gentleman looking away from the scene with resignation.

Elizabeth Johns describes the scene as an indictment of "the iniquities of slavery as though an abolitionist were reeling them off: The white male population, all classes and all ages, perpetuates slavery. They use female slaves to satisfy their lust (and in so doing beget children who are born into the system). They separate families. In fact, the entire South—its plantation system, its affluence, its economy—rests on this unthinkable exploitation."[49] Johns' statement with regard to the painting being an indictment of the iniquities of slavery rings true. The manner in which the

[49] Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life*, 134.

artist has depicted the plight of the slave, the cruelty of the overseer, and the utter nonchalance displayed by the whites as human flesh is sold on the auction block all speak to the fact that this artist was no friend of the slave owner but rather sympathized with those who were enslaved.

The third, and perhaps boldest example of an image of a slave auction prior to Noble's paintings, comes in the form of a small plaster sculpture by artist John Rogers. Entitled *The Slave Auction* [Figure 16], it depicts the moment with an auctioneer is selling off a slave family. The head of the family is an angry and indignant father/husband. His wife, and the mother of his children (indicated by a baby in her arms and a toddler at her feet), is obviously of mixed race. A Massachusetts native, Rogers completed this work soon after moving to New York where he resided in a fourth-story flat on Broadway. On September 20, 1860, Roger's *The Slave Auction* was reviewed by a sympathetic art critic for the journal, *The Independent*.

> His first work was a testimony to that love of freedom which was born in him under the shadow of his New England hills;—an admirable group of four figures called "The Slave Auction;" representing a negro, with his wife and child, standing under the hammer of an auctioneer; the father in defiance, the mother in grief the child in fear. The figures are expressively modeled and the effect produced upon the observer is one of mingled admiration and indignation.[50]

Although the critic found the work admirable in both form and theme, he quickly pointed out the unfortunate reaction the work engendered when Rodgers attempted to sell and/or exhibit the piece.

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[50] T. T., "A New and True Artist," *The Independent ... Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts (1848-1921)* 12 (1860).

> When the artist finished his work, he carried it for exhibition and sale to some of the most prominent stores of Broadway in which works are exhibited and sold; but the proprietors of these establishments, remembering that they had a Southern trade to preserve and a Northern conscience to stifle, rejected the guilty plaster-cast as if it had been a living, breathing conspiracy against the safety of the union. But notwithstanding this double indignity to the artist—first to his art, and then to his heart—he neither changed his politics, nor broke his work in pieces, nor gave up in despair! Not he!... The young martyr went back again to his garret, and immediately began some other works which he modeled with equal enthusiasm, and finished with equal skill.[51]

The fact that Roger's Slave Auction was rejected so thoroughly on the basis of its controversial subject-matter, would indicate that works depicting slave auctions were far too volatile for American artists to paint with the hopes of exhibitions or sales. In fact, when Rogers returned to his studio following his failure to sell *The Slave Auction*, he created much more benign images such as *The Checker Players* and another sculpture illustrating "Goldsmith's description of the village schoolmaster who never knew when he had lost his case."[52]

As stated earlier, when Noble began his six by eight foot painting on the subject of the American slave auction, the climate for the reception of such works had dramatically changed because of the Civil War. Upon its completion, the work, which consisted of some seventy-five figures, received favorable reviews, particularly in his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri, where it was shipped and exhibited at Pettes and Leathe's Gallery following its debut at the National Academy of Design. [53] Although there are no extant images of the work, there remain a few sketches of the

[51] Ibid.: 3.

[52] Ibid.

[53] All of the figures in Noble's painting were drawn from live models. "Amusements," *Chicago Tribune*, Thursday, 28 November 1867.

painting and several art critics wrote thorough reviews of the work which can be used to describe it in lieu of an actual image. [54]

According to critic, Alfred Jingle, the center of the painting was occupied by what he deems to be a "beautiful octoroon girl."[55] The girl was standing on an auction block at the foot of the St. Louis Courthouse steps with her head bowed and her eyes downcast as she is being auctioned off to the highest bidder.[56] The slave market auctioneer stood to the left of the woman and was depicted bringing his gavel down upon his left hand. In the immediate audience of the auction was a man who extends his arm as he motions for his higher bid. To the right of the young woman and the auctioneer was a table at which were seated two men that Jingle described as a "rising young lawyer" recording the sales and "a stationary old squire," examining bills of sale.[57] Two other accounts of the painting, from the Chicago-based newspaper *The Tribune* and an unknown article from the Noble archives entitled, "Noble's Great Picture 'Last Sale of Slaves in America'," called the two men clerks who are surrounded with books and papers, keeping the memoranda of the sale and granting sales." [Figure 17][58]

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[54] "The Slave Mart." Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble, 1835-1907*, 65-66.

[55] Jingle, "Noble's 'Last Sale'."

[56] "Amusements." "Noble's Great Picture, "Last Sale of Slaves in America"."

[57] Jingle, "Noble's 'Last Sale'." "Amusements."

[58] "Amusements."

Around the base of the platform were a group of five brightly dressed slave women and their children, including a large woman who was sleeping and another older woman who was leaning on a staff.[59] The slave women were described as having "sad and melancholy faces," while their children were said to seem "curious and expectant, and free from anxiety or fear."[60] To the left of this slave grouping was a second grouping of slaves who are in the process of being examined by potential bidders.[61] In the more distant audience, around the platform and the slaves were a crowd of interested bidders or curious spectators, in various styles of dress and countenance from the "Southern cultivated gentleman and planter down to the slave-dealer and trader."[62]

Directly in front of the slave auction, Noble painted a man and a fashionably dressed young woman wearing a "bright red India shawl" both of whom are idly gazing at the scene.[63] They were approached by a little girl selling apples (she offers them one from her basket). At the base of the girl's basket, a greyhound sniffed in interest.[64]

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[59] "Art at the Capitol," *National Intelligencer*, Saturday, 23 February 1867. "The Slave Market," 1867. "Noble's Great Picture, "Last Sale of Slaves in America"."

[60] "Noble's Great Picture, "Last Sale of Slaves in America"."

[61] Jingle, "Noble's 'Last Sale'."

[62] "Noble's Great Picture, "Last Sale of Slaves in America"."

[63] "Art at the Capitol."

[64] Jingle, "Noble's 'Last Sale'." "Amusements."

Noble depicted, on the left side of the painting, an aged black man bidding goodbye to his wife, both of whom appear to have been sold to different masters.[65] In back of this group there was an old man selling an ass to a trader who has money in his hand. Next to this grouping was a newsboy announcing to the pair conducting trade that his papers are for sale. In the background of this group Noble painted an Italian peddler selling plaster casts effigies, the most conspicuous of which was that of the dying Christ on the cross visible from a tray located on his head.[66] According to *The Tribune*, the Christ effigy on top of the tray "seems to look down upon the scene in sorrow."[67]

In the forefront of the left side of the painting, Noble placed three white men, grouped together as if engaged in a lively debate on "some important subject." Jingle saw these men as portraits of three different political sides "old fogyism [sic], conservatism and radicalism." *The Tribune* stated that "One can intuitively see that one of the three is an Abolitionist, one a Conservative, and the third a Pro-slavery man."[68] Another article described this group as,

> ….a striking group of three white men; one is a gentleman of the old school, an earnest believer in the divine character of the "institution,' and in the character of domestic relations of the master and slave; another is an earnest Radical, dissenting from the argument of the venerable old gentleman, to which the third listens in vacillating meditation, and undecided as to the great question at issue.[69]

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[65] "Amusements." "Noble's Great Picture, "Last Sale of Slaves in America"."

[66] "Noble's Great Picture, "Last Sale of Slaves in America"."

[67] Jingle, "Noble's 'Last Sale'." "Amusements."

[68] "Amusements."

[69] "Noble's Great Picture: 'Last Sale of Slaves in America'," c. 1866. Noble Research Collection.

Contemporary critics distinguished each character of the men from the clothing, stance, and age of the men in the trio. In the newspaper descriptions combined with the 1870's version of the painting, we can deduce that the pro-slavery man stands to the far left and wears a caped coat. The conservative man, who is undecided as to the issue of slavery is in the center and wears a top hat. The radical is the youngest of the three and stands on the far right of the trio and is gesturing earnestly in the pro-slavery man's direction.

Other figures in the painting were standing singularly or in groups. One group is engaged in a discussion on the steps of the courthouse, while another group of slaves stood under the courthouse's portico [Figure 18]. Sitting on pedestals in the buttresses on the portico were the statues of Liberty, half cast in shadow, and Justice, with her head averted.[70] In addition to the courthouse, there also was a church spire visible in the background and a building on which the words "United States Bank," were written on the front.[71] Noble's inclusion of the United States Bank in his painting implicates the Federal government in the American slave trade and slavery itself, as the American economy profited from slave labor and slave produced goods under the laws and constitution of the United States.

[70] Jingle, "Noble's 'Last Sale'." "Amusements."

[71] "Noble's Great Picture, "Last Sale of Slaves in America"."

Couture's Influence—Decadence of the Romans

Noble decided to enter Couture's atelier based upon his deep admiration of *Decadence of the Romans* which he viewed, prior to meeting Couture, at the Musée du Luxembourg.[72] When he left Paris and began working on *The American Slave Mart* following the Civil War, I believe that Noble used the compositional format, moralistic agenda, and ambiguous political commentary of *Decadence of the Romans* as a template for his own monumental contemporary history painting.

Decadence of the Romans was created in 1847, during the height of France's theatrical romanticist movement. Its primary theme is the depravity of the Roman Empire which supposedly led to its eventual destruction. The painting depicts the aftermath of a Roman orgy within a grand imaginary Corinthian hall framed by five tutelary sculptures representing great Roman republicans. The central figure in the composition is a young woman, most likely a concubine, who is reclining in a state of sated exhaustion. Directly in back of her is the statue of Germanicus. The composition is meant to be read from left to right and was created to highlight several groupings surrounding the central focus, the reclining concubine.

Couture painted *Decadence of the Romans* using a series of discrete vignettes, which convey individualistic action while maintaining an overall sense of unity. Couture historian Albert Boime believes that this technique of painting without a culminating or climactic point helps to sustain "the effect of hedonistic indolence and

[72] Dunsmore, "In the Academy."

sexual languor."[73] Boime sees the centrality of the concubine in Couture's painting as another pivotal clue to understanding the entire meaning of the painting. He states,

> First, Couture has projected the aftermath of an orgy whose participants are patricians and courtesans. Second, he has ingeniously juxtaposed these lazily draped figures with the upright Germanicus in the centre to maximize the contrasts between the noble ancient and the decadent modern.[74]

This dichotomy is thus directly highlighted with the placement of the recumbent concubine directly in front of the erect Germanicus.

When Couture painted *Decadence of the Romans* in 1847, it was his most ambitious painting to date. Boime states that Couture's purpose in creating this painting was "to embrace the great art of the past and present and to communicate his ideas of contemporary society."[75] Indeed, many of Couture's contemporaries perceived *Decadence of the Romans* as a thinly veiled commentary of the debased economic policies of the July Monarchy of France. *Decadence of the* Romans was a piece of social art—art that commented on society in an attempt to foster improvement. Its ambiguous nature, an academic history painting with modernist overtones, appealed to liberals, radicals, and conservatives alike, all of whom could read into it their own interpretation of symptoms of contemporary and social decay.[76]

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[73] Boime, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision*, 140.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 134.

[76] Ibid., 137.

Noble's The American Slave Mart

Although Noble's *The American Slave Mart* is a contemporary history painting, as opposed to Couture's more traditional romantic history painting, he utilized many of the same compositional and moralizing elements found in *Decadence of the Romans*. For example, both paintings have at their center the image of a woman who provides the key element to understanding the meaning of the painting. In Couture's painting the central figure is the recumbent concubine who boldly stares at the viewer, simultaneously inviting and indicting the male gaze. In Noble's image, the central figure is the octoroon woman on the auction block. Instead of looking directly at the viewer, Noble's woman looks down demurely so that the viewer can experience the most unsavory aspects of slavery—miscegenation, forced prostitution, and the breakup of families due to the internal slave trade—without feeling implicated in her plight.[77]

As with Couture's painting, the central meaning of Noble's painting is also underscored by contrasting statuary. In Couture's painting, the scene occurs in a great Corinthian hall where the statues of great Roman republicans witness the decline of the Roman Empire through debauchery and vice. In the case of Noble's painting, the scene occurs on the east side of the St. Louis Courthouse where the

[77] Noble's octoroon woman bears comparison to Hiram Powers's the *Greek Slave*. In his last variant of *The Greek Slave* (he created six full-size versions), he bound the hands of the slave by manacles instead of chains (used in the first five). Art historian Vivian M. Green asserts that the manacles may be a reference to slavery and its abolition as Powers took on an outspoken anti-slavery stance after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. In addition to referencing slavery, both the octoroon and the *Greek Slave* are represented looking demurely to one side—emphasizing their chastity in the wake of impending sexual violation by their potential buyers. For additional information on *The Greek Slave* and its relationship to abolition see Vivien M. Green, "Hiram Powers's 'Greek Slave:' Emblem of Freedom," *American Art Journal* 14, no. 4 (1982): 31-39.

statues of Liberty, half cast in shadow, and Justice, with her head averted, witness the end of an integral component of southern society, the buying and selling of slaves via the internal slave trade. Although slaves were actually sold on the east entrance (4th Street) of the St. Louis Courthouse, like the sculptures in Couture's imaginary hall, Noble chose to add the allegorical figures of Justice and Liberty in the portico of the courthouse for theatrical and symbolic effect.

Noble's painting exhibits further parallels to Couture's *Decadence of the Romans* through its compositional structure. Both paintings were created using a series of discrete vignettes of people who when combined, tell a story about the end of empire or an era. In Couture's painting, the vignettes depict patricians and courtesans drinking and eating to excess, or otherwise engaged in abhorrent and unrestrained sexual behavior. In Noble's painting, the vignettes are represented by men bidding on the life (and future sexual availability) of the octoroon woman, slaves being separated by their families, a trio of men engaged in a heated debate, a young couple idly standing by to watch and be entertained by the sale, and merchants selling animals (asses) and small Christian sculptures in the same square where humans are being sold.

Both paintings also include allusions to morality within the human vignettes. *Decadence of the Romans* exhibits this through the placement of three figures (the poet to the far left of the composition and the stern, heavily clad figures to the far right) who represent poetry and restraint in an otherwise raucous scene. In *The American Slave Mart* the symbols of morality are found in the Italian image vendor

selling small sculptures of Christ on the cross and the three men heavily engaged in debate (in the perception of several critics) over the ethical propriety of slavery.

Finally, both paintings use the compositional device of a still life arrangement in the center foreground of the picture. In Couture's painting, the arrangement consists of one upturned and one overturned urn and a cloth with grapes and other fruit piled on top. In Noble's painting, the mass is comprised of clothing, a trunk, and kitchen utensils piled up in the foreground. The still life in Couture's painting suggested the crumpled remains of the end of the evening and in a larger sense, the remnants of an empire. In Noble's work the still life represents the breaking up of slave families to be sent to unknown destinations.

It is no accident that the central figure in Noble's paintings is not a dark-skinned woman or man, but rather what Afred Jingle described as an octoroon (1/8 black and 7/8s white). In the American imagination, the "tragic mulatto" always elicited more concern and response from whites than their darker-skinned counterparts. Whites often felt that the presence of white blood raised the slaves level of intelligence, reason, and desire for freedom, therefore making them unfit for the institution of slavery.[78] Reverend John Dixon Long, an anti-slavery southern activist and son of a slaveholder himself, described mixed-race household slaves as the third class or the aristocracy of the slave population. He stated,

> They are the household servants of our Congressmen, judges, doctors, naval officers, wealthy merchants, clergymen, planters, and farmers. Very few of

[78] For a more detailed discussion of how the image of the mulatto or mixed race slave functioned in the minds of 19th century America, see George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny 1817-1914* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), 97-129.

> them are jet black; nearly all are more or less white. The men are fine looking. The women are beautiful, and many of them even opulent in charms. Nor is this a wonder. The best blood of the Saxon courses through their veins; the intellect of that race gleams in their eye. They have the health and beautiful form of the African, with the polish and gracefulness of the Caucasian race. They seldom mix with the common slave, and feel great contempt for poor white people. Many of them can read; and many of the female servants are brought up virtuously, sleeping in the same room with their young mistresses. Notwithstanding their accomplishments, they are often sold with mules, horses, and hogs. The females bring the highest prices in the South. For them there is no virtue after a certain age, unless they die the martyr's death.... I have seen them so white that a stranger could not have told that they were slaves or even negroes.[79]

Concern over the virtue of nearly white slaves was common for northern abolitionists. One example of the lengths some anti-slavery activists would undergo to prevent young women from undergoing a "fate worse than death" occurred in 1860 when Henry Ward Beecher set up a mock slave auction at his church to raise the funds to free a young, nearly white slave girl named "Pinky." Pinky, like all the slaves he placed upon his pulpit/auction block for the purpose of purchasing their freedom, was very fair of skin as he found these types of slaves best-suited to rouse his congregation into action through donations.[80] According to Henry Ward Beecher,

> [Pinky] came through the agency of G. Faulkner Black, a brother of one of our own members…. He learned from her old grandmother that "Pinky," who was too fair and beautiful a child for her own good, was to be taken away from the grandmother and sent South.
>
> To make a long story short, those interested in the girl wrote to me to see if I could purchase her. I replied, "I cannot unless you send her North"; and there was trouble in bringing her here. I wrote that I would be responsible for

[79] John Dixon Long, *Pictures of Slavery in Church and State; Including Personal Reminiscences, Biographical Sketches, Ancedotes, Etc. Etc. With an Appendix, Containing the Views of John Wesley and Richard Watson on Slavery* (Philadelphia: Rev. John Dixon Long, 1857), 22-24.

[80] Henry Ward Beecher began "auctioning" off fair-skinned slaves early as 1848 with the mock auction two women called the Edmonson sisters. The money raised during this event went toward the purchase of their freedom. Stephan Talty, *Mulatto America, at the Crossroads of Black and White Culture: A Social History* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2003), 3-6.

her, and that she would be lawfully purchased or sent back.

> ….So she was brought here and placed upon this platform; and the rain never fell faster than the tears fell from many of you that were here. The scene was one of intense enthusiasm. The child was bought, and overbought. The collection that was taken on the spot was enough, and more than enough, to purchase her. It so happened (it is not wrong to mention now) that a lady known to literary fame as Miss Rose Terry was present; and as, like many others, she had not with her as much money as she wanted to give, she took a ring off from her hand and threw it into the contribution-box. That ring I took and put on the child's hand, and said to her "Now remember that this is your freedom-ring." Her expression, as she stood and looked at it for a moment, was pleasing to behold; and Eastman Johnson, the artist, was so much interested in the occurrence that he was determined to represent it on canvas, and he painted her looking at her freedom-ring; and I have a transcript of the picture now at my house in the parlor, and any of you can see it by asking.[81]

As stated in Beecher's reminiscences, artists like Eastman Johnson, were attuned to the sympathy wrought by the image of a white-looking female slave. In addition to painting *The Freedom Ring* in 1860 [Figure 19], Johnson also incorporated mixed-race women in his painting, *Negro Life at the South*, 1859 [Figure 20], and *The Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves*, 1862. Another artist who employed the trope of the mixed-race woman in his art was John Rogers, whose sculptures of *The Slave Auction*, 1859, and *The Fugitives Story*, 1869 [Figure 21], both featured very Caucasian-looking women.

Like Eastman Johnson, Noble would have witnessed the sale of near-white female slaves on the auction block. However, unlike Henry Ward Beecher's mock auction, Noble's experience in this matter would have been real as his hometown of Lexington, Kentucky, was the center of the internal slave trade which had a

[81] A quote from Henry Ward Beecher excerpted from William C. Beecher and Samuel Scoville, *A Biography of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1888), 295-96. William C. Beecher is Henry Ward Beecher's son.

specialized market for female "fancy" slaves. Furthermore, Noble's paternal uncle, John C. Noble, owned at least three mulatto slaves himself.

In addition to inciting sympathy and occasional hysteria, as was the case with Henry Ward Beecher's auctions, mixed race slaves tended to be viewed by whites as more restive and/or resistant to the institution of slavery than darker-skinned slaves. In anti-slavery novels like Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Metta V. Victor's *Maum Guinea, and Her Plantation "Children,"* the mixed race characters were treated more sympathetically, and depicted as more intelligent and less docile than the full black characters. Many people believed that these character differences stemmed directly from the percentage of white blood coursing through the veins of the individual.

Noble's incorporation of the octoroon in *The American Slave Mart* as the central focal point of his canvas can be interpreted as a device to elicit sympathy and compassion from his white audience. Noble's audience did indeed react to the presence of the octoroon differently than they did to the other female slaves in the painting. The octoroon woman is the only slave woman in *The American Slave Mart* that is identified as beautiful.[82] Noble's decision to paint her looking demurely downward as she is being auctioned off to the highest bidder positions her as a helpless female at the mercy of whims of her future owner. This very demureness that is displayed by the octoroon woman implies that she is a virgin and that her status as a virgin is at great risk following her sale.

[82] Jingle, "Noble's 'Last Sale'."

The Decision to Show The American Slave Mart

In 1908, Union loyalist, dedicated abolitionist, and Baptist minister Reverend Galusha Anderson wrote a book titled, *The Story of a Border City During the Civil War*, detailing his remembrances of the war years in St. Louis, Missouri.[83] In the chapter, "Decision and Division," Anderson discussed the how and why certain individuals decided to become Unionists and the division their decision wrought in their lives. Among the stories he related was one specifically dealing with Thomas Noble's decision on whether or not he should publicly exhibit *The American Slave Mart* following its completion.

In this section Anderson recounted how even though Noble was a southerner he had disagreed with the institution of slavery since he was a small child. He then discussed how Noble witnessed a slave auction right before the outbreak of the Civil War and had made sketches of the scene with the intention of going back to his studio to "depict on canvas that sale of men and women under the hammer of the auctioneer." Anderson continued to explain how his plans to paint this canvas were

[83] Galusha Anderson was born in 1832 in Bergen, Genesee County, New York. As a child he converted to the Baptist faith. He graduated with high honors from Rochester University in 1854 and from Rochester Theological Seminary in 1856. That same year he ordained a pastor and took charge of the Baptist church in Janesville, Wisconsin. Between 1858 and 1866 he worked as the pastor of the Second Baptist Church in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1866 he resigned his position in St. Louis to become the Professor of Homiletics and Pastoral Duties at Newton Theological Institution in Massachusetts. Ten years later, he became the Pastor at the Second Baptist Church in Chicago. In 1878, he became the President of the University of Chicago where he served for eight years. In 1886 he resigned, and preached in Salem Massachusetts before becoming President of Denison University in Ohio (where he remained until 1890. Following his Presidency, he accepted the Chair of Homiletics in the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. During his career, he published several books including, *Border City During the Civil War* (1908); *Hitherto Untold* (1910); *When Neighbors Were Neighbors* (1911); and, *Science and Prayer and Other Papers* (1915). He died on July 20, 1918 in Wenham, Massachusetts.

deferred due to the Civil War and how following the war he commenced to work on the painting. He added that Noble's decision to paint this scene was an indictment against both the legalization and southern participation in the institution of slavery when he stated,

> In his [Noble's] mind this public sale of men and women was typical national crime. It was sanctioned by both State and national law. The steps of the Court-house in which both were interpreted and enforced became without protest a slave mart. The Stars and Stripes floating over the heads of the auctioneer and cowering slaves exposed to the gaze of the curious throng made the sale a national offence. Under a sense of this flagrant national injustice he began to paint and the product was a mighty protest against the crime of legalized bondage. With his sword he had just been fighting for slavery and the Southern Confederacy; now with his brush, he was contending against both. And his brush was mightier than the sword.[84]

Given the fact that *The American Slave Mart* was received and perceived as a painting that for some audiences supported the cause of slavery and for others indicted the system, it is difficult to believe that at this juncture, Noble was waging a full-scale war against slavery with his brush. Although I believe that Noble painted *The American Slave Mart* to make a statement against the practice of the internal slave trade, his stance against slavery and the Confederacy was not as strong as Galusha Anderson indicates.

Anderson continued his recollection when he stated that following the completion of the painting, he was faced with "the sharpest of trials." Apparently, some of Noble's southern friends who had seen the painting "at once felt the powerful protest which the new painting uttered against slavery and its accompanying evils" and questioned whether it would be prudent for Noble to display the painting at Pettes

[84] Anderson, *The Story of a Border City During the Civil War*, 155-56.

and Leathe's Gallery on Fourth Street. According to Anderson, Noble's southern friends informed him that if he chose to display *The American Slave Mart* in the window of Pettes and Leathe's Gallery, he would no longer have social standing with his southern friends and his association with them would end forever. He recalled,

> Almost all of the artist's intimate friends were Southerners. To be cut by them in that way seemed to him a very bitter trial. For the moment he hesitated. Up to that time I had not known him; but I was known in St. Louis as an uncompromising Union man; so, in his hesitation as to what he should do, he called at my house, told me his whole fascinating history, and asked my advice as to whether, in view of the threats of his old friends, he should put his painting of the slave auction in the show-window.[85]

Anderson counseled Noble to stick to his convictions and display his painting as planned. He added that although such a decision would impart certain sacrifices, namely losing a few of his friends, he would in fact gain more and better friends by being true to himself and his beliefs. He continued his story,

> The next day his "Slave Mart" was in the show window. Before it all day long stood a crowd, ever going, ever coming. Thousands viewed with admiration the work of the artist. There was a soul, a life in the picture, that appealed to every onlooker. Some subtle power in it laid hold of the imagination and touched the heart. The artist became more widely known. He entered on a new career. Friends such as he never had before sprung up on every hand.[86]

Response to The American Slave Mart

In the same manner that *Decadence of the Romans* appealed to a wide and varied audience, the apparently political narrative of *The American Slave Mart*

[85] Ibid., 156.

[86] Ibid., 157.

fascinated and intrigued both northern and southern audiences.[87] For example, St. Louis critic Alfred Jingle perceived Noble's painting as testament in support of the institution of slavery. He believed that the statues of Justice and Liberty were "emblematical of the sanction and protection which the institution of slavery met with under the *old* constitution."[88] Another article written for the southern paper, the *Missouri Republican* also perceived Noble's painting as sympathetic to the institution of slavery. It claims,

> The sale takes place under the shadow of the Court-House, the Goddess of Liberty on the one hand approving the transaction, while on the other stands Justice with scales, giving countenance to the transfer. The buildings of the rich encircle the scene, the spires of the Christian Churches look down upon it, while the conspicuous letters, "United States Bank," an imposing edifice, is the suggestion that the Government itself is a party to the "sale." It will then be seen the fertile conception and the skillful arrangement of the artist have historically represented Slavery, with all its adjuncts and muniments—a thing of constitution and laws—supported and fortified by Courthouses and the goddess of liberty and the dispense or justice—countenanced by refinement and wealth—sanctioned by Christianity and the Church—inwrought into the very constitution of society—protected by the Supreme Government—slaves, not human beings, but mere property, exchangeable like a donkey or an ox, in the public mart for money.[89]

The Christian referents of the church spires and the plaster cast of Christ on the cross deserve special notice in as much as the many American churches of the antebellum period, including the southern factions of the Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist Churches as well as the national Episcopal Church used scripture to condone

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[87] Albert Boime states that "Couture's eclectic propensities and his knack for the proverbial assured his picture of universal success. As in the case of *Love of Gold*, it came to mean all things to all people." Boime, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision*, 136.

[88] Jingle, "Noble's 'Last Sale'."

[89] *Missouri Republican*, 12 August 1867.

slavery. During the antebellum period, a significant percentage of slaveholding population was Episcopalian including Thomas Satterwhite Noble and his extended family.[90] In fact, two of the largest slaveholders in the country, Leonidas Polk of Louisiana and Stephen Elliott of Georgia, were Bishops in the Episcopal Church. Although this denomination did not split over the issue of slavery along sectional lines like the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist churches during the antebellum period, they did eventually split into northern and southern factions at the onset of the Civil War in 1861.[91] Although these referents could easily be interpreted as Noble indicting the Church's involvement in promoting slavery, Noble's inclusion of church spires and the crucifix can also be perceived, as many critics did, as an official sanctioning of slavery as a righteous institution.

Conversely, Noble's northern audience interpreted many of the same symbols in *The American Slave Mart* quite differently. When the painting was exhibited in Washington, D.C., at the United States Capitol in 1867, a critic from the *National Intelligencer* who mistakenly believed the scene was from New Orleans found the painting to be too benign in nature and divested of "all those dread horrors, those tears and agonies, popularly accepted as inseparable from the sale of human beings."

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[90] When they lived in Lexington, Thomas Noble and his family were members of the Episcopal Church on Market Street at the corner of Church Street. Julius P. Bolivar Maccabe and John C. Noble, "The History and Present Condition of Lexington, Fayette County, Kentucky," in *Directory of the City of Lexington and County of Fayette for 1838 & '39* (Lexington: Julius P. Bolivar Maccabe, J. C. Noble, 1838). *Biographical Encyclopedia of Kentucky of the Dead and Living Men of the Nineteenth Century*, 50.

[91] When the church split, it was not over the issue of slavery as the vast majority of Episcopalians, both southern and northern, condoned slavery, considering the institution, "even if morally suspect, to be no more eradicable than poverty or drunkenness." Rather, the split occurred over issues of nationality and loyalty. David Hein and Gardiner H. Shattuck Jr., *The Episcopalians* (Wesport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 76-78.

Although this critic found the painting to have great merit, particularly in terms of the paintings use of color, he stated that he did not think that it "truthfully represents the object it was intended for."[92]

Another Washington, D.C. critic believed the work to be "highly meritorious" and perceived the figures of Justice and Liberty as bitingly ironic symbols overlooking the sale and the sufferings of African American slaves. Instead of finding the fault in the benign nature of the image, this critic stated that "The spirit and tone of the creation (for it is more than a literal transcript of the slave mart) are truthful and impressive." He continued when he asserted that "Perhaps it is better that the revolting aspects of the slave block have been slighted. Thank God, the long, dark night of slavery is over, and the morning of freedom and justice has come to our whole country."[93]

Although many northern reviewers criticized Noble for excluding some of the less savory aspects of slavery and the internal slave trade in his painting, Noble may have omitted these highly emotional scenes to render the work more appealing to a universal audience. At the time Noble painted *The American Slave Mart*, he could not afford to alienate any members of his public as he was seeking to make a name for himself as well as his fortune so that he could marry his fiancé, Memphis, Tennessee, native Mary Caroline Hogan, whom he met in 1865 when he returned to St. Louis following the Civil War. In all probability, Noble began work on his monumental history painting to earn money so that he would be able to marry

[92] "Art at the Capitol."

[93] "The Slave Market."

Caroline Hogan, as his southern art patrons had fallen off and his family's fortune had been severely depleted by the end of the Civil War.[94] In fact, the couple did not marry until May of 1868, following the sale of the work for $10,000 to Chicago millionaire William B. Howard.[95]

Noble's first attempt to create a monumental modern history painting was an unmitigated success. Drawing upon the painting *Decadence of the Romans* as a template, he was able to blend the best traits he had learned from Couture's work with his unusual but extremely American theme, the slave mart. Noble's omission of overtly emotional scenes that often accompanied the sale of slaves families to separate owners combined with his inclusion of ambiguous religious, allegorical, and political symbols allowed for his painting to be viewed and appreciated by both a northern and a southern audience.[96]

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[94] Mary Caroline Hogan was the daughter of John Stephen Coates Hogan and Mary Susanna Borron Hogan. They became engaged in 1865 when Noble was thirty and Mary Caroline was sixteen. Garretson, "Thomas S. Noble and His Paintings," 114. Birchfield, "Rough Chronology of Noble Events."

[95] Noble married Caroline Hogan on May 21, 1868. They honeymooned in the Catskills at Leeds before returning to his home in New York City. "Brilliant Event Last Evening at Grace Church. A New York Artist Marries a Memphis Belle," *The Daily Avalanche* 1868. William B. Howard was a wealthy art collector who resided at the corner of Michigan Boulevard and Twentieth Street in Chicago, Illinois. He had befriended Noble prior to the purchase of the painting and took great pride in the purchase because it was by an American artist. "The Slave Mart." Noble's granddaughter, Mary Noble Welleck Garretson, misquoted the sum and date of the sale of the painting as two thousand dollars instead of ten thousand and states that the painting was sold in 1867 instead of 1868. Garretson, "Thomas S. Noble and His Paintings," 117.

[96] Like Noble's *The American Slave Mart*, fellow Missouri artist George Caleb Bingham's election series—*Country Politician* (1849), *Canvassing for a Vote* (1852), *The County Election* (1851-52), *Stump Speaking* (1853), and *The Verdict of the People* (1854-55)—also contained elements of political ambiguity and friction. This ambiguity and friction is present in Bingham's series because he was interested in depicting Missouri as a "civilized" participant in the process of electoral politics while simultaneously displaying his dissatisfaction with the Jacksonian Democrats of his home state. In addition to being similar on the basis their ambiguity of meaning, *The American Slave Mart* can be compared to Bingham's election series in that they both utilized discreet vignettes of people to tell an overall story. However, the paintings differed in the respect that Noble's painting was considered a

Prior to being sold to William B. Howard in 1868, *The American Slave Mart* had been exhibited twice at Pettes & Leathes Gallery in St. Louis (1866 and 1867). In November of 1866 it debuted at the Seventh Annual Artists' Fund Society Exhibition at the National Academy of Design in New York. The following year it was shown at Child's & Company's in Boston where its purchase was urged for the Athenaeum. In February and March of 1867 it was placed on view in the rotunda of the Capital in Washington, D.C. And, by the end of November in 1867, it was on view at the Chicago Opera House Gallery in Chicago. The last time the painting was exhibited was in 1875, when it was displayed at the Cincinnati Industrial Exposition.[97]

In 1870, Noble painted a replica of *The American Slave Mart* which he titled, *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis* [Figure 5]. This second treatment of the subject was a much simplified and significantly different version of the original painting. This second painting was never completed and remained with the Noble family until 1938 when it was presented to the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis.[98]

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history painting and Bingham's were considered to be genre. For more information on Bingham's election series, see Barbara Groseclose, "The 'Missouri Artist' as Historian," in *George Caleb Bingham* (New York: The Saint Louis Art Museum in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1990), 53-92.

[97] Jingle, "Noble's 'Last Sale'." Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists*, 438. . "Noble's 'Slave Mart'," *Chicago Tribune*, 26 March 1868. "The Slave Market." "Art at the Capitol." "Amusements." "Fine Arts," *Evening Post* 1867. "Art Gossip," *New York Sunday News*, 3 February 1867. "Fine Arts," *New York Evening Post*, 10 February 1867. "St. Louis Artist," *St. Louis Guardian*, 16 March 1867. *Chicago Republican*, 4 December 1867. "Art Matters," *Watson's Art Journal* 7, no. 17 (1867). Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1," 44. "Cincinnati Industrial Exposition." "The Exposition. The Art Exhibition--Cincinnati Artists: Thomas S. Noble."

[98] Mary Noble Welleck, Letter, 4 March 1939.

Noble began to work on *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis* at a very difficult time in his career. He had recently (1869) been hired to head the McMicken School of Design which was the first branch of the McMicken University (the school would later become the Cincinnati Art Academy).[99] Additionally, because Noble was not a native of Cincinnati combined with the fact he was trained in Paris, a number of local artists became incensed with his appointment to the position. They were particularly upset at his salary which was reported to be $2,000 per year.[100] The enormous burden of directing a newly created school, teaching all of its courses, and dealing with the constant jealous attacks of many Cincinnati artists may have led Noble to return to a tried and true subject that had garnered him his initial success.

In *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis*, Noble altered the central figure of the octoroon woman from a virginal young woman to a woman with a small baby in her arms. This alteration changes the perception of a woman from one whose virginity is about to be compromised to a woman who is either about to be sold away from her husband or whose virginity has already been compromised by an unscrupulous owner. Additionally, the allegorical figures of Justice and Liberty are missing as well as the many of architectural structures such as the bank and the church spires. Other

[99] In 1868, the trustees of the will of Charles McMicken decided to form a school of art as the first branch of the McMicken University. George Ward Nichols (an artist, musician, and art critic that Noble once shared rooms with in Paris) suggested that Larz Anderson, a member of the McMicken University board, interview Noble for the position of Professor and Principal of the school. Noble was hired for the job and resettled in Cincinnati before the schools first term opened in January of 1869. Dunsmore, "Arts and Letters in the Academy." Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter' Part 1," 53.

[100] Birchfield, "Thomas Satterwhite Noble: 'Made for a Painter,' Part 2," 45-47.

missing elements include the statues of the Italian effigy peddler, the newspaper boy, the old woman leaning on a cane (painted in replica as a man), the two men bargaining over the ass, the orange girl, the greyhound, and the still life of kitchen utensils and other household items.

It is unclear why the Noble omitted the statues of Justice and Liberty, the bank and church spires, and the remaining figures from *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis*. However, it is apparent that from the reduced scale of the painting (from 6 x 8 feet to 5 x 7 feet) and the number of figures (from 75 to 58), that the painting was created to be a simplified smaller version of *The American Slave Mart*. Noble may have made this painting smaller and with fewer people and architectural components simply because he was under a tremendous amount of stress his first year in Cincinnati.

It is interesting to note, however, that in his the second version of the painting, Noble included portraits of himself, his wife, and his son in the place of the distinguished young couple in the forefront of the earlier version of the composition. In addition to inserting his family, he also included several portraits of other prominent Cincinnatians in the crowd, including, from left to right: Matt Harbison, Dr. Kerr, Milo Dodd, Thomas S. Noble, Jr., Thomas Satterwhite Noble, Mary Caroline Noble, William P. Noble (artist, no relation to Thomas Satterwhite), Mr. Dodd, Mr. Gano (lawyer and author), and Thomas Jones (sculptor) [Figure 22].[101] Apparently, one of these figures (it is unclear which one) had been painted over with white paint by the artist. Following his death in 1907, his student John Ward

[101] This listing of prominent Cincinnati citizens was provided to the Missouri Historical Society by Mary Noble Welleck (Noble's granddaughter) in 1939 when she donated *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis* in 1939. Welleck. Noble File, Missouri Historical Society.

Dunsmore with permission from Noble's wife removed the white paint so that the painting could be exhibited.[102]

By placing himself and his family with other prominent people from Cincinnati, Noble may have also been attempting to visually insinuate himself as a member of Cincinnati's society. This painting would then serve to directly confront the role of unwelcome interloper that he was perceived to be by many Cincinnati artists. Another possibility is that Noble was insinuating himself and his family as passive witnesses to the horrors of the internal slave trade. This may allude to his past history of watching slave auctions in his home town of St. Louis. Irregardless of his intentions, Noble never finished nor did he exhibit the painting during his lifetime. Following his death, *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis* was exhibited in Cincinnati in 1907, in Chicago in 1908 and in St. Louis in 1908.[103]

[102] Maude I. G. Oliver, "Art and Artists," *Record-Herald*, 27 September 1908.

[103] The exhibition catalogue, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble, 1835-1907* states that the replica, *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis* was first exhibited in Cincinnati in 1875. However, an article written on September 19, 1875 in *The Cincinnati Commercial* clearly describes *The American Slave Mart* not the replica. "The Exposition. The Art Exhibition--Cincinnati Artists: Thomas S. Noble." Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble, 1835-1907*, 64.

Chapter 4: The Making of a Reconstructed Rebel: Margaret Garner and John Brown's Blessing

In 1867, several years after the successful debut of *The American Slave Mart*, Noble unveiled two new paintings, *Margaret Garner* [Figure 2] and *John Brown's Blessing* (*John Brown Led to Execution*) [Figure 3]. Completed first, *Margaret Garner*, depicts the dramatic recapture of Margaret Garner and her family in January 1856. Earlier that same month the twenty-two-year-old pregnant Garner gathered up her four children and fled from her life of slavery in Kentucky with her husband and her in-laws. Soon after crossing the frozen Ohio River into Cincinnati, the Garners were traced by their owners who demanded, under the terms of the Fugitive Slave Law, that their "property" be returned to Kentucky. Rather than see her children returned to slavery, Margaret Garner killed her oldest daughter and attempted to kill her three other children before she was finally subdued.

Noble's second work of 1867, *John Brown's Blessing,* was a tribute to the anti-slavery activist who is best remembered for orchestrating an unsuccessful raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in an attempt to incite a large-scale slave rebellion in 1859. This event transformed Brown into an abolitionist martyr when, following his capture, he was tried for murder, slave insurrection, and treason against the state, and was convicted and hanged for his actions. Noble created *John Brown's Blessing* eight years after the militant abolitionist's death. Noble's rendition of Brown's last moments before his death was not the first of its kind; Louis Ransom

painted *John Brown on His Way to Execution* in 1860. Noble's painting nonetheless contributed significantly to John Brown's post-mortem image as a martyr.

Both paintings depict instances where an individual defied the law for the higher moral purpose of gaining freedom for others and themselves. Margaret Garner and John Brown both risked their lives and those of their families and friends to live in a world free from the bondage of slavery. In the end, both were apprehended before achieving their goals. However, their actions, although incomplete, set a series of events into motion that would alter both the way Americans viewed the Fugitive Slave Law and the future of the institution of slavery in the United States.

Noble's overwhelming success with his first major slavery-related historical painting would have given the young artist the confidence to embark upon similar subjects with the hopes of receiving equal or greater praise. However, as a southern gentleman, his decision to create two historical paintings that directly confronted support for the fugitive slave law, self-emancipation, and radical abolitionists' ardent desire to demolish slavery through any means necessary was in itself an extremely radical decision which in 1867 earned him the moniker "reconstructed rebel."[1] In addition to discussing the history, meaning, and pictorial antecedents of *Margaret Garner* and *John Browns Blessing*, this chapter will explore why Noble would have

[1] Thomas Noble was called a "reconstructed rebel" in an article discussing his painting of John Brown in the *Milford Journal* (based in Massachusetts). Cantab, "Art Matters," *Milford, Massachusetts Journal* (1867). On May 9, 1867, in a review of *Margaret Garner* for the *New York Daily Standard*, the critic refers to Noble as a "reconstructed man." "Letter from New York," *New York Daily Standard*, 9 May 1867. The *Quincy Patriot* referred to Noble as a "reconstructed confederate officer" who "paints like a radical" on December 1, 1967. "The Martyrdom of John Brown," *Quincy Patriot*, 1 December 1867. In an article from the Noble Research Collection written of December 19, 1867, Noble is referred to as a painter who "carried a sword for the rebel army for three years but has been thoroughly reconstructed."

chosen to create paintings that directly confronted and negated the values connected with his southern heritage and familial background.

Margaret Garner

Margaret Garner was born in on June 4, 1833 on John Pollard Gaines' nearly three hundred acre plantation called Maplewood.[2] Maplewood was located in Boone County, Kentucky—eighteen miles south of Cincinnati, Ohio. John Pollard Gaines bought Maplewood from his father, Abner Gaines, in 1825 when he was thirty years old. When his father died in 1832, he inherited seven of his father's slaves, including Margaret's mother Pricilla.[3] Although Margaret was born and raised on this plantation, very little is known about her childhood or her young adult life. Indeed, it is even unclear whom Margaret's biological father was as her mother Pricilla was listed in the 1850 census as black and her daughter Magaret was listed as mulatto.[4]

We do know that in 1849, at the age of sixteen Magaret married Robert Garner (then fifteen) who was a slave from a neighboring plantation.[5] In March of 1850, the couple had their first child, Thomas Garner. It is generally believed that her first son was Robert's as the 1850 Slave Schedules listed her son as black. The same

[2] Maplewood was the region's thirteenth wealthiest plantation and one of its leaders in hog production.

[3] Abner Gaines moved from Virginia to Kentucky in 1797. At that time he owned four slaves, one of whom Magaret was descended from through a grandmother. Abner Gaines was a tavern-keeper and stage-line operator. According to Steven Weisenburger, by 1820, Abner owned 20 slaves, and by his death in 1832, seven of those slaves became the property of John Pollard Gaines. Steven Weisenburger, *Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 24.

[4] Although Magaret's biological father is unknown, a man named Duke who was Priscilla's husband and who worked as a slave on the Maplewood plantation is generally identified as her father (in spirit if not in the flesh). Ibid., 32-33.

[5] Although Margaret and Robert considered themselves husband and wife, slave marriages were not legally recognized in the United States.

year that Magaret was married, the ownership of Maplewood and its slaves was transferred from John Pollock Gaines to his brother Archibald Gaines.[6] Following the transfer of ownership of the Maplewood plantation, Magaret began to have a series of very light-skinned children beginning with Samuel (born in 1852), Mary (born in 1853) and Pricilla or Cilla (born in 1855). Garner biographer Steven Weisenburger, has conjectured about the possible parenthood of Magaret's later children,

> Who fathered Margaret's children? That Robert was responsible for her first (Thomas) seems clear. But Margaret's subsequent light mulatto children raised damning questions, and it is hard to see how the child she was carrying at the time of her escape was Robert's, for he had been on a lengthy and distant hiring-out until just a month before the Garner's fled. These signs pointed to a white father for most of Margaret's children. As Colonel [Archibald] Gaines was the only adult white male on Maplewood throughout these years, suspicion should quite naturally fall his way.[7]

On Sunday night, January 27th, in the winter of 1856, when Margaret was pregnant with her fifth child, she, her husband Robert Garner, her in-laws (Mary and Simon Garner), and her four children fled from Kentucky in a sleigh stolen from his master by Robert Garner. They rode the sleigh until they reached the Ohio River at Covington, crossing the frozen river on foot to freedom in Cincinnati, where they planned to head further North via the Underground Railroad. Once in Cincinnati, the

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[6] John Pollard Gaines left Kentucky to become a territorial governor of Oregon, selling his plantation and its slaves to his brother Archibald, who was then a plantation owner in Arkansas. Weisenburger, *Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South*, 34.

[7] Weisenburger adds that no one connected to the Garner case ever named Archibald Gaines as the father of Magaret's children. However he also states that "Not only did Margaret began having lighter-completed children *after* Archibald Gaines entered her life; those births also follow *a pattern* that lifts his paternity to the level of probability." According to Weisenbuger, Magaret's births all followed just months after Archibald's wife Elizabeth gave birth. This is important to Weisenburger because it follows the widely established rule of nineteeth-century sexual practices that allowed white women to regulate her husband's sexual access during the last three to five months of pregnancy and for several months postpartum. It was generally during these times that husbands sought sexual comforts elsewhere, often with their slaves if they had them. Ibid., 46-48.

Garners went to the cabin of Elijah and Mary Kite, free relatives of Margaret Garner, arriving just around dawn.[8] Their intention was to wait at the Kite's house until Margaret's cousin, Elijah, alerted Levi Coffin (a prominent Underground Railroad conductor), who would assist them in moving along the Underground Railroad to the next northern station.[9]

Unfortunately, events did not go as planned. By the time Elijah reached Coffin's house Archibald Gaines and James Marshall (the owners of the Garners) had realized their slaves had stolen themselves away and were already in Cincinnati. Shortly after eight o'clock in the morning, John Gaines and James Marshall's son, Thomas Marshall arranged to have the Kite's house surveyed by a deputy U.S. marshal and a Cincinnati constable. Around the same time, Archibald Gaines, Thomas Marshall, and an old Gaines family friend, Major William B. Murphy were busy procuring warrants pursuant to the Fugitive Slave Law and gathering additional deputies that they required to retrieve their slaves.[10]

At around eight o'clock in the morning, soon after Elijah returned home from Levi Coffin's house, the Garners and the Kites heard a lookout shout "They are coming!" At that moment the Kites and Garners barred the doors and the windows

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[8] Elijah Kite was the son of Joseph Kite. Elijah was Margaret's cousin and had previously been owned by a neighbor of Archibald Gaines. His father bought his freedom several years before Margaret ran away. "A Tale of Horror," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 29 January 1956.

[9] Abolitionist and Quaker Levi Coffin had moved to Cincinnati in 1847 where he owned and operated a free labor emporium which only sold goods that had not been produced by slave labor. He was one of the most prominent and efficient Underground Railroad conductors, leading, by the end of the Civil War, an estimated three thousand fugitives to freedom. Fergus M. Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2005), 402.

[10] "The Slave Tragedy in Cincinnati," *New York Daily Times*, 2 February 1856. Weisenburger, *Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South*, 62-65.

against a deputy U.S. marshal who demanded that everyone inside surrender.[11] According to the deposition of Mary Kite, they refused to allow anyone entry into the house. As the marshals attempted to enter the house, Robert Garner shot at the intruders with a six-shooter pistol he had stolen from his owner. He hit one deputy, John Peterson, severely wounding him in the face and forcing him to retreat. It was at this point that Margaret's mother-in-law, Mary Garner claimed that Margaret said "I will kill my children before they shall be taken back, every one of them." She added that Margaret ran to Mary, her three-year-old, and cut her throat. She then asked her mother-in-law to help her kill her remaining children, but her mother-in-law stated that she could not and left the room and hid under a bed.[12]

At this point, the U.S. Marshals burst into the Kite's home forcing the doors to the house open where they found Margaret in the midst of bludgeoning her youngest daughter Cilla with a coal shovel. The deputies tore the shovel away from Margaret and according an article from the January 29th edition of the *Cincinnati Times* (reprinted in the February 2nd edition of the *New York Daily Times*),

> The floor of the room and the garments of the children were found to be covered with blood. The youngest child, called Mary, and about three years old, was found lying on the bed rolled up in a quilt. It was taken up by a man named Murphy, who carried it into the yard, and there found that its throat was cut, and it was gasping in the agonies of death.[13]

Of course Mary was not the youngest child, it was Pricilla or Cilla, however, the statement adequately recalls the undoubted horror of the moment.

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[11] Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America*, 403.

[12] "The Slave Tragedy in Cincinnati."

[13] It's interesting to note that the author of this article repeatedly refers to the child Mary as "it" denoting a lack of perceived humanity for the child. Ibid.

The Garner's were captured and their ensuing trial gained the attention of both the local and national press as the case involved the already controversial Fugitive Slave Law.[14] Many militant abolitionists did not see Magaret's act of infanticide as murderous but rather a method of saving her children from slavery, a fate worse than death. For example, abolitionist Lucy Stone stated in a speech given at the courthouse where the Garner trial was held that she had expressed her wish to give a knife to Margaret Garner for the following reason,

> I thought, as I looked upon her [Margaret's] unexpressed grief, that if ever there was a time when it was a good deed to give a weapon to those who fought the battle of liberty on Bunker's Hill—if those patriots had the right to use the arms supplied to them—she who had said, "Let us go to God rather than go back to Slavery," had the same right. I turned to Mr. Brown, and expressed my wish that she could have a knife to deliver herself, dreading, as she did, Slavery to such an extent that she had taken the life of her dear child rather than return to it.
>
> Who that knows the depth of a mother's love does not estimate the sacrifice she had made? If she had a right to deliver her child, she had a right to deliver herself. So help me Heaven! I would tear from myself my life with my teeth, before I would be a slave![15]

Another example of support for Magaret's actions appeared in January 29th edition of *The Cincinnati Enquirer*,

> In the meantime there is much excitement existing, the bloody episode having invested the affair with a tinge of fearful, although romantic interest. The Abolitionists regard the parents of the murdered child as hero and heroine, teeming with lofty and holy emotions, who, Virginius like would rather imbue their hands in the blood of their offspring than allow them to wear the shackles

[14] The Fugitive Slave Law was passed by the United States Congress on September 18, 1850. The law stipulated that any federal marshal or other official who did not arrest an alleged runaway slave was liable to a fine of $1,000. The law made it a duty for any law-enforcement official to arrest anyone suspected of being a runaway slave on the basis of a claimant's sworn testimony of ownership. Additionally, anyone caught aiding a runaway slave, by providing the slave with food or shelter, was subject to six months of imprisonment and a $1,000 fine. This law was extremely controversial in the North as it required Northerners and their institutions to be responsible for enforcing slavery.

[15] "Ohio Fugitive Slave Case--Eloquent Speech from Lucy Stone," *National Era* 10, no. 478 (1856).

of slavery, while others look upon them as brutal and unnatural murderers.[16] Even though many believed Margaret Garner to be a martyr for her deeds, her supporters could not save her from being sent back into slavery. The Garner trial gained national attention because it challenged the Fugitive Slave Law. The point in question was whether Garner was a person or property. If she was a person, she could be tried for murder, if she was property as Gaines claimed, she could not be tried. Despite the best efforts of John Jolliffe, the abolitionist attorney who represented the Garners, the judge ruled in favor of the slave owners, upholding the Fugitive Slave Law. Five weeks after beginning their flight to freedom, the Garners were returned to slavery in Kentucky.

Upon her return to Kentucky, her owner Archibald Gaines, sent her to work on his plantation in Arkansas. During her journey down South, the steamboat on which she traveled, the *Henry Lewis*, was struck by another steamboat, splitting the boat in two and sending many people into the Ohio River. Margaret Garner and her baby went overboard. Margaret was saved but her baby was never found.[17] Two years later, Margaret died of typhoid fever in Arkansas.[18]

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[16] The mention of the Roman tragedy, Virginius (who murdered his daughter rather that see her corrupted and deemed a slave), points to the fact that this article was written before the press knew that Margaret, not Robert Garner, was responsible for the murder of Mary. "A Tale of Horror," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 29 January 1856. Weisenburger, *Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South*, 86-88.

[17] "The Late Slave Case at Cincinnati," *The National Era* 10, no. 481 (1856).

[18] Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America*, 403-05.

Margaret Garner—The Painting

In 1866, New York collector Harlow Roys commissioned Noble to paint the dramatic encounter between Garner and her captors. Little is known about Harlow Roys outside of the fact that he was a leather broker with a business in lower Manhattan and a share in the art dealership knows as the Roys Art Gallery.[19] Margaret Garner is the only work in Noble's series of slavery-related paintings that was created based upon a commission. By the time the commission was completed, Noble created several versions of *Margaret Garner*: a preliminary pencil study [Figure 23], a large painting, a small cabinet version of the larger painting, a lithograph, and a wood engraving (created from a photograph taken of the work by Mathew Brady). Although the location of the large exhibition-sized painting is unknown, based on the lithograph [Figure 24], it is apparent that the cabinet-sized version of the painting is basically an exact replica of the larger work.

Noble's *Margaret Garner* depicts the moment when four men entered into the Kite's home and were confronted by the murder of Mary Garner by her mother. The scene is organized on a shallow frontal plane and is ripe with tension as the men and Garner stand on opposite sides of the composition with two prostrate children between them. Both the men and Garner gesture toward these two children—the men in a state of shock and Garner as if she is offering the children as the inevitable result of her desperate attempt to avert the Fugitive Slave Law.

[19] On November 22, 1850 Harlow Roys is listed in the Federal Census as a thirty-five year-old tanner living in Norfolk, Connecticut. On June 4, 1870, he is listed in the Federal Census as a fifty-five year-old leather manufacturer living in Newark, New Jersey.

Unfortunately, there exists no literary evidence that reveals the identity of the men in the painting. However, it is a strong possibility that if Noble had access to any contemporary articles about the incident, he would have painted Archibald Gaines as the man holding a fugitive slave warrant in his hand while his face looks aghast at the horror of the scene. The other men could possibly include deputy U.S. Marshals William B. Murphy and/or Thomas Marshall.

Margaret Garner's gaze directly confronts her pursuers and her countenance bespeaks unheard accusations. As she engages the men in front of her, her two sons tug on her left arm and her skirts, in an act of pleading with their mother. This trio forms a strong pyramidal structure which counterbalances the four men lined up on the left side of the composition. The room is relatively spare with only a small still life on the left side of the composition to break up the barren background.

Noble took liberties with the setting of the painting as the events described in the January 29th edition of *The Cincinnati Enquirer* do not match the setting painted by Noble. In Noble's painting, Robert Garner is not present in the picture and all of Margaret's children are in the same room. According to *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, upon entering the room, Archibald Gaines seized the gun from Robert Garner's hands and in the same room found that,

> ….a deed of horror had been consummated, for weltering in its blood, the throat being cut from ear to ear and the head almost severed from the body, upon the floor lay one of the children of the younger couple, a girl three years old, while in a back room, crouched beneath the bed, two more of the children, boys, of two and five years, were moaning, the one having received two gashes in its throat, the other a cut upon the head.
>
> As the party entered the room the mother was seen wielding a heavy shovel, and before she could be secured she inflicted a heavy blow with it upon the

face of the infant, which was lying upon the floor.[20]

The fact that Noble has painted two children lying on the floor may relate to the fact that Margaret Garner not only slit the throat of her child Mary, but also beat her youngest child Cilla in the head with a coal shovel to try to end her life as well. Additionally, Noble may have decided to remove Robert Garner from the scene to eliminate any confusion as to who had committed infanticide.

In addition to removing Robert Garner from the image, Noble also eliminated the butcher knife that Margaret had used to kill her daughter, which he had included in the initial drawing but not in the final painting. Noble's decision to take out the knife may be attributed to the fact that he subsequently learned that before Archibald Gaines and the U.S. marshals entered the house, the knife had been disposed of in the backyard privy. Another reason for the removal of the knife may have been to blur the distinction between who really was responsible for the murder of the little girl: Margaret or the men trying to retrieve their slaves under the Fugitive Slave Law.

Noble's painting of *Margaret Garner* is clearly an indictment of the Fugitive Slave Law. The artist's depiction of the moment when four men entered the house of a freeman to capture and return their property to the South and the tragic results of those actions are both monumental and heartbreaking. By painting this moment, Noble asserted that he was no friend of the slaveholder and that he was even more deeply committed to painting the horrors of slavery than he was when he first painted *The American Slave Mart*.

[20] "A Tale of Horror."

Comparisons to David's Oath of the Horatii

In a manner similar to Noble's use of Couture's *Decadence of the Romans* as a template for his *American Slave Mart*, he also utilized the compositional structure of Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii*, 1784 [Figure 25] to create the visual tension in *Margaret Garner*. Albert Boime notes that the four adult male figures in *Margaret Garner* lined up in a row are analogous to the line of figures (the Horatii) in the *Oath of the Horatii*, while the figure of Margaret Garner confronts the row of men like their father, the elder Horatius.[21]

The story behind the *Oath of the Horatii* occurs in Roman history. During the reign of Tullus Hostilius (672-640 B.C.), the neighboring kingdoms of Rome and Alba Longa were on the brink of war due to a series of cattle raids along the border. Instead of mobilizing into armies to fight one another, both sides agreed to choose three heroes to go to battle over the issue. The Romans chose the Horatii, a set of male triplets, and the Albans chose the Curiatii, another set of male triplets around the same age as the Horatii. However, there was a problem with this arrangement. One of the Horatii was married to Sabina (a sister to the Curiatii) and one of the Curiatii was engaged to the Horatii's sister, Camilla.

When the two sets of triplets went to battle, the three Curiatii were wounded and two of the Horatii were killed. Knowing he could not fight all three of the Curiatii alone, the last of the Horatii, Horatius, turned to flee. The Curatii chased him but because they were wounded, they became separated from one another. Once apart, Horatius was able to kill each of the Curiatii separately.

[21] Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble, 1835-1907*, 51.

When Horatius returned victorious from battle, his sister Camilla cried out in grief over the death of her fiancé. In response, Horatius killed his sister stating that any woman mourning for the enemy should perish. Horatius was condemned to death for the murder of his sister, but appealed to the people and was saved.

Instead of painting the battle or the murder of Camilla, David chose to paint the moment with the Horatii's father exhorts his sons to fight the Curiatii despite the lamentations of the women. David's painting emphasizes the virtues of men who are willing to fight for a cause and their country despite familial complications.

The figures in the painting are organized on a frontal plane on a relatively empty stage-like background. The arrangement of the figures of the Horatii, the elder Horatius, and the lamenting women are accentuated by the three architectural arches in the background. Although Noble's painting of *Margaret Garner* does not contain any dramatic archways to emphasize the figures, the setting for the painting is just as sparse as David's *Oath of the Horatii*.

In addition to Boime's argument, I believe that both paintings deal with themes surrounding issues of allegiance. In David's painting, the theme is about how the Horatii brothers chose allegiance to the state versus allegiance to their family. In Noble's painting the division is over Margaret Garner's pursuer's allegiance to the Fugitive Slave Law versus her allegiance to pursuit of freedom.

I agree with Boime that unlike David's women who crumble under adversity, in Noble's painting, Margaret Garner rises up when faced with imminent capture and attempts to kill all of her children rather than see them go back into slavery. The

tension of restrained violence that was so aptly lauded in the *Oath of the Horatii* is transferred to the moment after the violence has been committed in *Margaret Garner.*

The Modern Medea—Miscegenation and the Garner family

One of the more sensational aspects of the Garner trial centered not only on the violence committed to the Garner children, but also upon their coloring. Margaret Garner was a mulatto (it was believed that her father was white) and based upon the fairness of her three youngest children, it was widely speculated they were not fathered by Margaret's husband, Robert, but instead by a white man.[22] In Noble's painting however, all of the African American characters appear to be almost fully African in both skin tone and features. The mystery of this particular visual omission is rendered even more problematical by the title of the engraving after Noble's painting, *The Modern Medea—The Story of Margaret Garner*. The reproduction of Noble's image, combined with this expanded title (published in *Harper's Weekly* in May of 1867), infers a paternal connection between Gaines and Garner's children.

Euripides' *Medea* was produced in 431 B.C. Set in Athens, the play is about a man named Jason who forsakes his wife, Medea, for Glauce, woman of purer racial heritage who was the daughter of Creon, ruler of Corinth. Due to her jealous temper, Creon orders that Medea be banished so that her jealousy would not lead her to harm her children. Medea begs for one day's delay and in that day murders her husband's bride Glauce, Glauce's father Creon, and the children she shared with Jason in

[22] Weisenburger, *Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South*, 157, 74-76.

revenge. When Jason confronts Medea over her actions, she states, "I do not leave my children's bodies with thee; I take them with me that I may bury them in Hera's precinct. And for thee, who didst me all that evil, I prophesy an evil doom." [23]

Did Noble's audience understand, through his use of the title Medea, that there was a plausible parental connection between Margaret Garner's children and Archibald Gaines? If so, why did Noble paint Margaret and her children as fully black and not mulatto and quadroon respectively? We know that during the time of the trial, Lucy Stone Blackwell alluded to a possible connection of Margaret's children to Archibald Gaines when she stated, "The faded faces of [Garner's] negro children tell too plainly to what degradation female slaves submit. Rather than give her little daughter to that life, she killed it."[24] Although this was reported in the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, Noble may not have been aware of it because he was in Paris during the time of the murder and trial. He may thus have been unaware that Margaret Garner's children, particularly the child she killed, looked nearly white.

Another possibility may be that as a commissioned piece, the patron may not have wanted that aspect of Garner's life revealed on canvas. Or perhaps Noble was unwilling to imply a parental connection between Margaret Garner's children and Archibald Gaines because both his family and the Gaines family were prominent citizens of Kentucky and such an accusation may have had unpleasant ramifications for his family. Unfortunately, unless additional evidence surfaces that could shed light on this matter, we will never know Noble's true intentions for ignoring Magaret

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[23] Alfred Bates, ed., *The Drama: Its History, Literature and Influence on Civilization*, vol. 1 (London: Historical Publishing Company, 1906), 192-96.

[24] *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 14 February 1856.

Garner and her children's mixed racial heritage in his depiction of them in the painting.

Response to Margaret Garner

Margaret Garner was unveiled in May 1867 at the National Academy of Design's annual spring exhibition.[25] The North had recently won the Civil War and Reconstruction was well underway creating an especially fertile and positive environment for the painting's reception. The painting was so well received that Noble was elected an associate member of the National Academy of Design based upon its merits. In addition to the National Academy of design, *Margaret Garner* was also exhibited in Boston in 1867 and 1869. The cabinet version of the painting was exhibited in Cincinnati in 1868. Almost immediately following its debut, allusions were made to Noble's background as a southerner and its impact upon the quality of the painting. *Margaret Garner* received a favorable review in the *New York Daily Standard* which lauded Noble for painting a subject so close to his southern experience. The article stated,

> The most remarkable picture here, it seems to me, is one which bears the title of "Margaret Garner"…. A terrible story is it, and most powerfully tragically told, and by whom do you think? Not by one of us, taught from childhood to hate and abhor that cursed institution which was the stain upon our civilization. No! The artist of this picture is one Thomas Noble, who for four years wore the rebel gray, and fought to preserve this very institution. But that very experience was the fiery trial out of which he came a surviving man. None but such as he who had lived in the very heart of this slave life and learned to detest it, who knew the negro character

[25] Since 1829, the National Academy of Design's rules stated that the annual exhibitions would always be arranged to open in the first week of May of every year for a period of eight weeks. *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record 1826-1860*, II vols., vol. I (New York: J. J. Little & Ives Company, 1943), xi.

> with all its possibilities, only such as one could have taken their life and given it upon the canvas and made it historical.[26]

The New York *Evening Post* commented on May 22nd,

> He [Noble] has succeeded in producing a work which gives strong evidence of his earnestness and enthusiasm, and one which does not fail to attract and rivet the attention of all who look at it. It is painted with a purpose, from which fact it stands out in strong contrast with a host of pictures that mean nothing. We honor the artist that talks thus boldly through his canvas. His chosen mission is to depict the horrors of slavery which, though a thing of the past, still furnishes ample material to the artist.[27]

Although many praised the painting for its fidelity to the historical moment and its elevated social purpose, others complained that the tension created by physical stance and facial features of his characters were forced and his colors were false. A review from the journal *The Round Table* stated,

> Every eyeball is strained to a painful degree of intensity. Teeth are gnashing; hands are clenching. The intensity of passion in all the characters is strangely forced and unnatural, and the drama rendered feeble and even ludicrous by the rant of the tragedian. Had the action been less forced, the picture might have been a good one. There is motive in it, and a gleam of promise that Mr. Noble, with faithful study in the right direction may yet achieve success in this line of art.[28]

In much the same vein as *The Round Table*, a review from the *American Art Journal* also commented, though more favorably, upon the coloring and the compositional balance of the figures.

> Mr. Noble is still a young painter, and there are faults in the present picture which only time and experience can remedy; one of the greatest of these is the want of compactness in the grouping of the figures, these being too much scattered to render the effect entirely harmonious; then again, the color is, in many instances, both false and unpleasant; but, for all of this

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[26] "Letter from New York."

[27] "National Academy of Design Forty-Second Annual Exhibition: Thomas Noble," *The Evening Post*, 22 May 1867.

[28] "Pictures at the National Academy," *The Round Table: A Saturday Review of Politics, Finance, Literature, Society and Art* 5, no. 121 (1867): 310.

> "Margaret Garner" is the gem of great things, a chrysalis from which at no distant day will emerge a painter who will do lasting honor to American Art.[29]

Unfortunately, since the original painting is missing, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not the colors in Margaret Garner were at times false and unpleasant. However, the colors in the cabinet-size version seem quite natural.

Noble was undoubtedly sobered by the criticism he received for the compositional strategies and coloring he employed in his painting. However, he must have also been buoyed by his election to the National Academy of Design and the tremendous amount of confidence placed upon him by his critics that he would improve his art with the passing of time. Noble must have taken this mandate to heart as that same year he began working on a third painting, one which would be strongly praised as a reigning achievement in theme, composition, and color. This painting was of the radical abolitionist, John Brown and named *John Brown's Blessing* or *John Brown on his Way to Execution*.

John Brown

John Brown was born in Torrington, Connecticut on May 9, 1800. He was the son of avowed abolitionist and devout Congregationalist Owen Brown who earned his living as a farmer, shoemaker, and tanner.[30] When John Brown was five years old, his father moved his family to Hudson, Ohio, where Brown received even greater exposure to anti-slavery sentiment from the Hudson community. In 1820, at the age

[29] *American Art Journal* (1867): 5.

[30] Louis Ruchames, ed., *A John Brown Reader: The Story of John Brown in His Own Words in the Words of Those Who Knew Him and in the Poetry and Prose of the Literary Heritage* (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1959), 16.

of twenty, Brown married Dianthe Lusk. Five years later, in 1825, he moved his family to Randolph, Pennsylvania. Beginning with his move to Randolph in 1825 through 1850, Brown invested in a series of unsuccessful business ventures. These included building and selling several tanneries, land speculation, raising sheep, and working as a wool merchant and exporter. In 1832 his first wife Dianthe died. A year later he married Mary Ann Day.

Even through Brown's family was growing (he eventually fathered twenty children) and his financial obligations were mounting, Brown never lost site of his interest in the goal of immediate abolition. In 1837 following the murder of abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy,[31] Brown publicly committed himself to the anti-slavery cause and became more militant in his abolitionist views and activities.[32] In 1847 Brown met Frederick Douglass for the first time in Springfield Massachusetts. It was at this meeting that Brown explained to Douglas about his future plan of leading a war to free slaves by establishing squads of armed men at various stations in the Allegany Mountains.[33] In 1849, Brown moved his family to a freedmen's community

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[31] Elijah Lovejoy (1802-1837) was a Presbyterian minister and a religious newspaper publisher who advocated the abolition of slavery. His first paper, *The St. Louis Observer*, was destroyed by a mob in 1836 because of its strident editorials against slavery. That year he moved to Alton in the free state of Illinois where he became the first pastor of the College Avenue Presbyterian Church and the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery in 1837. While living in Alton he began to publish a newspaper called the Alton Observer. His anti-slavery writings, combined with his active support of the Anti-slavery Society of Illinois, enraged Alton residents who destroyed Lovejoy's printing presses on three separate occasions. On November 7, 1837, Lovejoy and twenty of his supporters met at the Godfrey & Gilman warehouse to guard a new printing press until it could be installed at the observer. That night, a mob came to destroy the press and during the violent exchange, Lovejoy was shot and killed. *The Alton Observer*, 7 November 1837. "Opinions of the Press: The Murder of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy," *New York Evangelist*, 2 December 1837. *Elijah Parish Lovejoy: A Martyr on the Altar of American Liberty, 1802-1837* (Altonweb: The Riverbend, [cited 12 December 2006]); available from http://www.altonweb.com/history/lovejoy/.

[32] Benjamin Quarles, *Allies for Freedom & Blacks on John Brown* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: De Capo Press, 2001), 17.

[33] Ibid., 20-21.

in North Elba, New York.[34] Two years later, on January 15, 1851 he established the Springfield, Massachusetts, branch of the United States League of Gileadites. The United States League of Gileadites was a self-protection organization designed to empower free blacks and fugitive slaves to work together to protect themselves against possible slave catchers.

In 1854, following the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Brown decided to alter his opposition to slavery from a stance of active resistance to one of outright attack.[35] In 1855, he followed his five sons, who had left the previous year to Kansa, to strike a blow for the abolitionists. Brown fought against slavery in Kansas territory and in Missouri for one year, engaging in several serious confrontations such as the Wakarusa War,[36] the revenge killings at Pottawatomie Creek,[37] and the battle of Osawatomie.[38]

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[34] In 1846 anti-slavery activist Gerrit Smith gave one hundred and twenty thousand acres of land in northern New York for an African American settlement. The main settlement was located at the Township of North Elba. In 1849 Brown decided he wanted to move his family to this community to assist with the African American settlement. That year he purchased 244 acres from Smith for a dollar an acre. Due to the relative remoteness of the settlement and the fact that most of the settlers had previously made their living from service occupations and not farming, as they were required to do in North Elba, the settlement failed to prosper.Ruchames, ed., *A John Brown Reader: The Story of John Brown in His Own Words in the Words of Those Who Knew Him and in the Poetry and Prose of the Literary Heritage*, 19. Quarles, *Allies for Freedom & Blacks on John Brown*, 22-23.

[35] On May 30, 1854 the United States Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act which allowed people in the territories of Kansas and Nebraska to decide for themselves whether or not to allow slavery within their borders. This decision effectively repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820 which prohibited slavery north of latitude 36˚30′. As a result of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, pro-slavery and anti-slavery supporters rushed into the region in order to affect the outcome of the first election after the law was passed.

[36] The Wakarusa War was essentially a skirmish that took place in Lawrence Kansas when Brown and four of his sons traveled to the region to protect the anti-slavery town from being sacked by bands of pro-slavery Missourians gathered on the banks of the Wakarusa River near Lawrence. According to Benjamin Quarles, Brown arrived in Lawrence on December 7, 1855, heading the company of twenty men and bearing the title "Captain of the Liberty Guards". However, sensing the impending trouble, the governor of the territory negotiated an agreement with the free state spokesmen to which the pro-slavery leaders reluctantly agreed to acquiesce, thus averting any violence. Quarles, *Allies for Freedom & Blacks on John Brown*, 31-32.

After living for about a year in Kansas, Brown returned back east where he thought more seriously about his plan for inciting a war against slavery. However, instead of merely stealing away slaves from nearby plantations to armed forts in the Allegheny Mountains, this plan called for the action to take place in Virginia. For twelve months he raised money for his cause. On October 16, 1859 he set his plan in motion when he and twenty-one other men (five black and 16 whites) raided Harpers Ferry.

Brown chose to attack Harpers Ferry because it was the site of a Federal Arsenal. Brown believed that the weapons claimed at Harpers Ferry could be used to arm the thousand of slaves he believed would flock to his cause once they realized he was fighting for their liberation. However, the raid only lasted for two days and proved an abysmal failure. No slaves came to aid Brown and his men and out of the twenty-two men who began the raid, ten were killed, seven were captured and eventually hanged (including Brown), and five managed to escape.

On October 25, one week following his capture, John Brown was brought to trial. He was the first of his group to be tried. On November 2, he was found guilty of conspiring with slaves to rebel, treason, and murder. He received the death

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[37] On May 24, 1856, in an act of retribution for the constant aggression against anti-slavery settlements by those in favor of slavery, Brown and his anti-slavery company traveled to the proslavery settlement of Pottawatomie Creek where he ordered that five of their settlers be put to death. Ibid., 33-34.

[38] On August 30, 1856 John Brown traveled to Osawatomie after finding out that his son, Frederick, had been killed during a pro-slavery attack on the small settlement where his son resided. Brown led a band of around thirty-five men to fight against the pro-slavery attackers. Because the numbers on the pro-slavery side were much greater, Brown and his party eventually had to fall back and the settlement was torched. This battle is where Brown gained the namesake, "Old Osawatomie Brown." Ibid., 35.

penalty. He was executed on December 2, 1859 at half past eleven o'clock in the morning.[39]

John Brown Kissing the Negro Baby

Following his death, it was widely circulated by the *New York Tribune* that John Brown kissed an African American baby on his way to the scaffold. This story has proven to be untrue. The origins of this myth has been traced to an article written by Henry Steel Olcott, the assistant editor of the *New York Tribune*, who clandestinely attended Brown's execution and wrote a story in his paper which stated

> As he stepped out of the door a black woman, with her little child in arms, stood near his way. The twain were of the despised race, for whose emancipation and elevation to the dignity of children of God, he was about to lay down his life. His thoughts at the moment none can know except as his acts interpret them. He stopped for a moment in his course, stooped over, and with tenderness of one whose love is as broad as the brotherhood of man, kissed it affectionately….[40]

Although it would not have been out of character for Brown to have done such a thing, no women and children of any race were present at the execution due to the strict orders of Governor Henry A. Wise.[41]

However, I discovered that an article written by a reporter from the associated press related some of the last moments between John Brown and his wife the day

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[39] "Execution of John Brown. His Interview with His Wife. Scenes at the Scaffold. Profound Feeling Throughout the Northern States.," *New York Times*, 3 December 1859.

[40] Henry Steele Olcott, "From Another Correspondent, Harper's Ferry, Dec. 3," *New York Tribune*, 5 December 1859.

[41] Four days prior to Brown's execution, Governor Wise had directed General Taliaferro to see to it that women and children were barred from attending the event. Quarles, *Allies for Freedom & Blacks on John Brown*, 121.

before his execution that may have contributed to the baby-kissing myth. The reporter recounts that John Brown

> …desired no religious ceremonies either in the jail or the scaffold from ministers who consent or approve of the enslavement of their fellow-creatures; that he would prefer rather to be accompanied to the scaffold by a dozen slave children and a good old slave mother, with their appeal to God for blessings on his soul than all the eloquence of the whole clergy of the Commonwealth combined.[42]

Although Brown's last wishes to be accompanied by a dozen slave children and a slave mother were not granted, prior to his execution he was permitted to say a few words to his fellow captives. He gave each of them a quarter as a token of remembrance. Once outside, he was flanked by Assistant Captain John Avis (the jailer) on one side and Sheriff James W. Campbell on the other. On his way to the scaffold, Brown rode in an open wagon which also carried his coffin. The procession for the execution was made up of six companies of infantry and riflemen and one company of horsemen. General William B. Taliaferro[43] and a staff of twenty-five officers headed the procession.[44]

According to the *New York Times*, Brown's execution was conducted under the strictest military discipline.

> Mounted Scouts were stationed in the woods to the left of the scaffold, and picket guards were stationed out toward the Shenandoah mountains in the rear. The military on the field formed two hollow squares. Within the inner one was the scaffold, and between the inner lines and the outer lines, the

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[42] The interview between Brown and his wife took place the day before his execution and lasted from 4 o'clock in the afternoon until 8 o'clock in the evening. The interview mainly dealt with the settling of Browns financial affairs with regard to his last will testament and the future of his wife and his children. "Execution of John Brown. His Interview with His Wife. Scenes at the Scaffold. Profound Feeling Throughout the Northern States.."

[43] William Booth Taliaferro was a U.S. officer, lawyer, legislator, and a Confederate General during the Civil War.

[44] "Execution of John Brown. His Interview with His Wife. Scenes at the Scaffold. Profound Feeling Throughout the Northern States.."

> citizens were admitted, no one being allowed outside of the lines, except the moneted [sic] guards.[45]

Brown died with dignity, bidding farewell to Captain Avis and Sheriff Campell while standing on the scaffold and quietly dying as the scaffold was pulled away. His body was placed in a coffin and delivered to his wife under strong military escort.[46]

Early responses to Brown's raid were negative from the presses in both the North and the South. White southerners, in particular, perceived Brown and his actions as a possible preamble to further slave insurrections and rebellions. They despised and hated Brown, not just for what he did at Harper's Ferry, but also for what he represented—a desire from both African Americans (slave and free) and a small segment of the white population to end the tyranny of slavery at any cost.[47]

Although the vast majority of northerners deplored Brown's violent actions, calling them fanatical and the acts of a madman, many northern abolitionists supported Brown. However, in the immediate aftermath of the Harper's Ferry raid, only the Transcendentalists[48] of Concord, Massachusetts, strongly defended Brown.[49]

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] For a full discussion of the response to John Brown and his raid on Harper's Ferry, see Paul Finkelman, ed., *His Soul Goes Marching On: Responses to John Brown and the Harpers Ferry Raid* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

[48] According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Transcendentalism is an American literary, political, and philosophical movement of the early nineteenth century, centered around Ralph Waldo Emerson. Other important transcendentalists were Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Amos Bronson Alcott, Frederic Henry Hedge, and Theodore Parker. Stimulated by English and German Romanticism, the Biblical criticism of Herder and Schleiermacher, and the skepticism of Hume, the Transcendentalists operated with the sense that a new era was at hand. They were critics of their contemporary society for its unthinking conformity, and urged that each individual find, in Emerson's words, 'an original relation to the universe.' Emerson and Thoreau sought this relation in solitude amidst nature, and in their writing. By the 1840s they, along with other transcendentalists, were engaged in the social experiments of Brook Farm, Fruitlands, and Walden; and, by the 1850's in an increasingly urgent critique of American Slavery." Russell Goodman, *Transcendentalism* (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006 [cited 17 November 2006]); available from http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2006/entries/transcendentalism/.

Although Thoreau was the earliest supporter of Brown and his actions, it was the poetry of the nonviolent Quaker abolitionist John G. Whittier that would have the most impact upon the visual/artistic response to John Brown.[50]

In 1859 Whittier wrote his most powerfully influential poem *Brown of Osawatomie* to commemorate the life and death of John Brown. In the first three stanzas of his poem he states,

John Brown of Osawatomie
Spake on his dying day:
"I will not have, to shrive my soul,
A priest in Slavery's pay;
But, let some poor slave-mother,
Whom I have striven free,
With her children, from the gallows-stair,
Put up a prayer for me!"

John Brown of Osawatomie,
They led him out to die;
And, lo!—a poor slave mother
With her little child pressed nigh.
Then the bold, blue eye grew tender,
And the old, harsh face grew mild,
As he stooped between the jeering ranks
And kissed the negro's child!

The shadows of his stormy life
That moment fell apart:
Without, the rash and bloody hand,
Within, the loving heart.
That kiss, from all its guilty means,
Redeemed the good intent,
And round the grisly fighter's hair
The Martyr's aureole bent![51]

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[49] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 343.

[50] For a more thorough analysis of Whittier's poem, see Cecil D. Eby, Jr., "Whittier's 'Brown of Ossawatomie'," *The New England Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1960). Please note that Osawatomie is misspelled in this article.

[51] This poem was reprinted in Ruchames, ed., *A John Brown Reader: The Story of John Brown in His Own Words in the Words of Those Who Knew Him and in the Poetry and Prose of the Literary Heritage*, 295.

Whittier used the article written on the execution of John Brown by Henry Steel Olcott as inspiration for the first three stanzas of his poem. This poem, which was initially published in *New York Independent* on December 22, 1859, was reprinted many times.[52]

Louis Ransom's John Brown on his Way to Execution

Not only did Whittier's poem ignite the public imagination with regard to the last moments of John Brown, but it also inspired several artists to use the poem as the basis for their paintings of the martyred abolitionist. One of the first paintings to commemorate John Brown's last days was Louis Ransom's (1831-1926) *John Brown on His Way to Execution*, 1860 [Figure 26].[53]

Ransom's seven by ten foot painting of Brown is set before the Charlestown, Virginia, jail the moment John Brown is being escorted out of the building to be executed. The painting features seven figures: the central figure is of Brown standing on the stairs in a vested suit looking downward upon an African American mother and child. In addition to Brown, there are four other male figures on the stairs, two

[52] Eby, "Whittier's 'Brown of Ossawatomie'," 458.

[53] Louis Liscolm Ransom was born January 23, 1831 at Salisbury Corners, New York. He studied at the American Academy of design under the tutelage of Henry Peters Gray. Following his studies, he set up a studio in Utica, New York where he painted *John Brown on His Way to Execution*. In the summer of 1863, P.T. Barnum exhibited Ransom's painting of Brown in his museum in New York City. Between July 13-16, Barnum was forced to remove the painting in order to save his museum from draft rioters. The painting was never sold and after moving to Akron, Ohio in 1884, Ransom decided to give it to Oberlin College because of the institution's well-known anti-slavery policy (it was also the first college to admit African Americans). The painting was transferred to the college on July 8, 1886, where it was placed in the lobby of the recitation building (Peters Hall). It was later loaned to the Dunbar Highschool in Washington, D.C. (1919). It was removed from the stretcher and rolled for shipment to D.C. and was never restretched leaving the painting in its current condition of being badly cracked with a somewhat rotten canvas. Robert S. Fletcher, "Ransom's John Brown Painting," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (1940): 343-46.

flanking each side of the abolitionist. According to a published broadside that described the painting in 1886, the man on Brown's immediate left is a slave overseer in a militia uniform. Behind the overseer and farther to the left of Brown is another militia man in uniform. To the right of Brown there is the jailer and a second man who the broadside simply describes as "a friend."[54]

Brown's attention centers on a very light-skinned slave woman holding an even lighter-skinned baby sitting atop the banister of the steps. John Brown looks compassionately at the pair. Behind his head flies a yellow banner with the word "Tyrannis," forming what *Harper's Weekly* columnist George William Curtis described as "a halo" around Brown's head.[55] The banner is carried by the "overseer" character in militia garb who is attempting to push away the slave mother and child. In the forefront of the picture on the left side is another soldier wearing the continental uniform of the Virginia militia. To the left of the woman, located beneath the stairwell is a discarded statue of justice.

In 1863, Currier & Ives created a lithograph of the painting [Figure 27]. Although the vast majority of the details remain the same from the painting to the lithograph, there are a few changes worth noting. First, the flag behind the head of Brown is much more clearly depicted in the lithograph (the greater illumination of the banner in the painting may be due in part to the badly damaged state of the painting).[56] In the lithograph, the banner clearly shows the state flag of Virginia with

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[54] The broadside is completely transcribed in Robert Fletcher's article "Ransom's John Brown Painting." Ibid.: 345.

[55] George William Curtis, "Lounger," *Harper's Weekly* 7 (1863): 371.

[56] James C. Malin questions whether the current conception of the flag in the painting was always obscured since it is known that Ransom revised the painting later in life. Apparently it is unknown

its official seal of the Roman goddess Virtus standing over a defeated opponent. Dressed in Amazonian garb, she holds a spear and a sheathed sword. She represents the virtues of heroism, righteousness, freedom, and valor. She is pictured standing above a tyrannical foe whose crown has fallen from his head and lies on the ground. Surrounding the image are the works, "Sic Semper Tyrannis" ("Thus Always to Tyrants").[57]

Another marked change from the original painting to the lithograph is the skin coloring of the slave woman and child. In the original painting the pair looked almost Greek in visage. However, the lithograph depicts them as more recognizably African American although the child is still more light-skinned than the mother.

I believe that in the painting and the later lithograph, the inclusion of the Virginia state flag is both important and ironic. By referring to the state motto "Sic Semper Tyrannis," Ransom is pointing to the fact that Virginia gained its freedom from fighting the tyrannical British monarchy yet it continues to enslave its fellow human beings through its state laws and government as illustrated in the militia man pushing away the slave mother and child. John Brown thus is likened to the Roman Goddess Virtus, who attempted to violently destroy the tyranny of the land that is slavery. Additionally, Ransom changed the background of the flag from its traditional blue to yellow, thus emphasizing the halo effect. The fact that Ransom used a Greek model to fashion his slave mother and child further attests to his interest

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exactly what alterations the artist made to the painting. James C. Malin, "The John Brown Legend in Pictures Kissing the Negro Baby," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (1940): 340.

[57] *The Official Commonwealth of Virginia Home Page* (Virginia.gov, 2006 [cited December 12 2006]); available from http://www.virginia.gov/cmsportal2/facts_and_history_4096/facts_4104/trivia_facts.html.

in presenting John Brown and his mission with a classical construct while simultaneously calling attention to the problem of forced miscegenation between slave women and their masters.

Noble's John Brown's Blessing

Painted seven years following the debut of Ransom's *John Brown on His Way to Execution*, Noble's seven by five foot painting entitled, *John Brown's Blessing*, may have utilized both Ransom's painting and Whittier's poem on John Brown as a basis for the painting's compositional structure.[58] However, additional evidence points to another source for Noble's painting, James Redpath's biography on John Brown.

In 1860, *New York Tribune* journalist and editor, James Redpath wrote the first biography on John Brown entitled, *The Public Life of Captain John Brown: With an Autobiography of His Childhood and Youth*.[59] The biography was created with the full cooperation of the Brown family. The book was a huge success, selling over

[58] Albert Boime asserts that Noble was inspired to paint John Brown based upon Ransom's painting and Whittier's poem. Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble, 1835-1907*, 46-47.

[59] Scottish born James Redpath emigrated to the United States at the age of seventeen where he settled with his family in Allegan County, Michigan. Although he enjoyed pioneer life, his first love was writing and his favorite subject was slavery. Redpath used his writings to fight against the institution. Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune* heard about his passionate writing and invited him to work for the paper. He became an editor at the paper at the young age of nineteen. While working at the *Tribune* Redpath went down South to conduct interviews with slaves that he published in various antislavery newspapers and later as a collection entitled, *The Roving Editor*. In 1856 he moved to Kansas to cover the violence between the free-state and proslavery forces. It was during this time that he first met John Brown. John Brown's activist stance against slavery impressed Redpath to the degree that he began to write about him as a type of "warrior-saint." Redpath helped launch John Brown onto the national scene when he wrote about the battle of Osawatomie. *James Redpath (1833-1891)* (PBS, 2006 [cited 12 December 2006]); available from www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/brown/peopleevents/pande03.html.

40,000 copies during its first months of publication.[60] *The Public Life of Captain John Brown* mentions the baby-kissing incident in the section called, "The Victory over Death," which describes Brown's execution on the second day of December. The passage reads as follows,

> As he stepped out of the door, a black woman, with a little child in her arms, stood near his way. The twain were of the despised race for whose emancipation and elevation to the dignity of children of God he was about to lay down his life. His thoughts at that moment none can know except as his acts interpret them. He stopped for a moment in his course, stooped over, and with the tenderness of one whose love is as broad as the brotherhood on man, kissed it affectionately. That mother will be proud of that mark of distinction for her offspring; and some day, when over the ashes of John Brown the temple of Virginia liberty is reared, she may join in the joyful song of praise which on that soil will do justice to his memory. As he passed along, a black woman with a child in her arms, ejaculated, "God bless you, old man; I wish I could help you, but I cannot." He heard her, and, as he looked at her, a tear stood in his eye.[61]

Since Redpath and Henry Olcott both worked for the *New York Tribune* it is not surprising that Redpath liberally used Olcott's account of John Brown's kissing of the African American baby. Thus, if Noble was unable to read Olcott's article, he may have received the same information if he purchased Redpath's book to research his subject. Evidence suggests that since this book was offered for sale during an exhibition of *John Brown's Blessing* in December of 1867 at the De Vries gallery in Boston as "an excellent key to the picture," Noble would, in all likelihood, have been familiar with the book.[62]

In the current version of Noble's painting, John Brown is escorted out of the Charlestown, Virginia, jail by a group of Virginia militia men. His right arm is tied

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[60] A large percentage of the book's profit went to benefit the Brown family. Ibid.

[61] James Redpath, *The Public Life of Captain John Brown: With an Autobiography of His Childhood and Youth* (Boston: Thayer and Eldridge, 1860).

[62] "The Martyrdom of John Brown."

back with rope while his left arm remains free. As Brown and the militia exit the jail a young African American woman bends down in front of the abolitionist with her baby outstretched in her arms. Brown responds to this action by placing his free hand atop the head of a small African American baby as if he is blessing the child. The African American woman occupies the forefront of the composition and is bending down on one knee. To her right Noble utilized the trope of the Mammy by painting a trio of figures, two young white boys huddled close within the protective grasp of an aged African American woman. On the left side of Brown stands a Virginia militia man with sword drawn.[63] Further to the left of the composition is an old woman in peasant clothes sneering at the prisoner.

According to contemporary newspaper accounts of the painting, there were more figures present when the painting debuted than are currently in the painting. For example, an undated article from the Noble Archives describes the figures as follows:

> To the right, a crowd of unsympathetic spectators; but one face alone expressing the slightest sympathy for the unfortunate old man, a young girl who gazes half tearfully, half curiously upon him.[64]

Another article, published on March 1, 1868, also mentions these additional figures

> The other figures of the piece, really few, though they seem many—the soldiers, calm and quiet, as anger has passed in the long care of their prisoner; the sullen wrathful faces of the "rouglis" in the background, one of them with a score for himself to settle, as indicated by the wounded arm, the demoniacal hate on the visage of the virago who, for the first time, sees this interferer with providential decrees; the sympathy without power to help in the face of the old "mammy,"and the look of womanly pity mingled with half-contemptuous

[63] The uniforms worn by the militia men in Noble's painting are the Continental style of uniforms that were still being worn by Virginia militia men prior to the Civil War.

[64] "Art Matters," *Watson's Art Journal*. Noble Research Collection.

> wonder that one should risk life "for such as these," expressed by the delicate features of the lady—are all characteristic….[65]

Following the painting's debut, Noble commissioned a man by the name of William Endicott to make a lithograph of the painting [Figure 28].[66] In the lithograph all the figures mentioned in the reviews of the painting are present. It is unclear why or when Noble chose to remove the trio of figures (two men and one woman who are standing near the jail and looking at John Brown) from behind the elderly black woman and her charges. Perhaps it was because he felt the composition to be too crowded and that the extra figures detracted from the main point of the image, John Brown blessing the African American baby.

It's interesting to note that even though Olcott's article, Whittier's poem, and Redpath's biography of John Brown all mention that he kissed the little African American baby, Noble's image shows Brown laying hands upon the baby's head in blessing instead. A December 14, 1867 article in the Boston newspaper, *The Commonwealth*, explained Noble's decision to omit the actual kissing of the baby,

> Monday last, the eighth anniversary of the execution of "Old John Brown" was appropriately commemorated by the presentation to the Boston public of T. S. Noble's picture of Brown's passage to the scaffold, when he stopped on his way to bless a negro child. The tradition (somewhat apochryphal [sic]) is that he kissed the little fellow, but as the labial process in the picture would hide his countenance the artist has kindly taken the usual license and represents him as laying his hand on the child's head.[67]

Another contemporary review of the painting stated,

> The story is, that after leaving the prison, a negro woman presented her child,

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[65] "Noble's 'John Brown'," *The Art Journal* (1868). Noble Research Collection.

[66] The lithograph is mentioned in an article written in February 1st issue of the Alluon as a "well executed lithograph of the painting, by Endicott…." "Fine Arts: Art Notes."

[67] This article was quoted from Malin, "The John Brown Legend in Pictures Kissing the Negro Baby," 341.

> which he stooped to kiss. The artist, of course, not wishing to represent the attitude of stooping, has placed the hand of him "who died to make men free" upon the head of the child uplifted in the mother's arts; as, says the artist, the first time the white man's hand has been outstretched to the black man in recognition of brotherhood.[68]

If this is indeed the first time an American painting depicted a white man extending a hand to touch a black person in the spirit of brotherhood, then showing Brown kissing the baby may have been entirely too radical even for Noble.[69] In fact, it wasn't until 1885, with the painting, *Last Moments of John Brown*, [Figure 29] by Thomas Hovenden, that an artist would depict a white person kissing a person of color in the fine art world in the United States. However, even though Noble did not depict the actual kissing of the infant, he did go further than Ransom's image of John Brown in painting Brown touching the African American baby.

In addition to altering the baby-kissing story, Noble also altered the visage of John Brown to compliment the sentiment of his painting. In all likelihood, Noble used a print copy of a photograph by James Wallace Black (1825-1896) of John Brown to model his figure [Figure 30]. The photograph was taken in 1859 while Brown was in Boston and copies of the photograph were made following his death to provide a fund for the relief of Brown's family.[70] Although Noble's image of Brown is in many respects very similar to the photograph, he did make several important changes to his image that is worth noting. First, Noble softened the lines on Brown's

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[68] "Noble's 'John Brown'," 58.

[69] In 1864, John Rogers created the tabletop sculpture, *The Wounded Scout, Friend in the Swamp*, which depicted a African American man assisting a wounded Union soldier to safety. The white man is leaning on the black man and the black man is providing him support.

[70] Information about the photograph was located in the front matter of Ruchames book. Ruchames, ed., *A John Brown Reader: The Story of John Brown in His Own Words in the Words of Those Who Knew Him and in the Poetry and Prose of the Literary Heritage*.

face resulting in a gentler image of the man. He also lengthened, whitened, and split his beard. Instead of looking directly at the viewer, as he does in the photograph, Noble's image of Brown has him looking directly at the baby. The combination of these changes to Brown's image results in a painting that depicts Brown looking like a Moses-, saint-, or Christ-like figure that is very different from some southern images that portrayed Brown as demonic [Figures 31 and 32]. This likeness is further underscored by the compositional structure of the painting which depicts Brown blessing a kneeling supplicant in a very traditional academic gesture. Like many academic painters of his era, Noble would have looked toward European master artists for guidance in formulating his composition.

Comparisons to John Brown's Blessing

The theme and compositional structure of *John Brown's Blessing* is analogous to several earlier European paintings and prints. One of the most compelling images is a print titled, *Moses with Renewed Tablets*, c. 1640 [Figure 33] by Brussels-born French artist Philippe de Champaigne (1602-1674). The image of Moses with a split beard is extremely similar to Noble's altered image of Brown with a longer, whiter, split beard.[71] It is not unusual to see that Noble would have likened Brown to Moses as he was often compared to the prophet in life and following his death.

On November 18, 1859 the *Liberator* published an anonymous poem titled, *The Message to the Pharror* which associated John Brown with Moses and Christ.

[71] A less compelling image of comparison is Michelangelo's *Moses*, c. 1513-1516. In Michelangelo's version, the Moses' beard is curled and longer and his face reveals a powerful anger. In Noble's image of John Brown, his face is kind and benevolent.

The blow was struck bodly, with noble devotion;
And , blessed Potomne! Thou bearest adown,
To add its rich wealth to the treasures of ocean,
The blood of the hero,—the blood of John Brown…

Thou man of deep sorrows, with grief well acquainted
Rejected, despised—we hail thee as 'King'!
They name branded 'Traitor'!—with treason attainted,
We call the 'Deliverer, and Savior of men'![72]

In 1861 Osborne P. Anderson, one of the five African Americans who participated in the raid on Harper's Ferry, wrote a pamphlet titled, *A Voice from Harper's Ferry: A Narrative of Events at Harper's Ferry with Incidents Prior and Subsequent to Its Capture by Captain Brown and His Men*. In chapter one of the document, "The Idea and its Exponents—John Brown Another Moses," Osborne compared John Brown's actions to that of Moses. He stated,

> There is an unbroken chain of sentiment and purpose from Moses of the Jews to John Brown of America… When the Egyptian pressed hard upon the Hebrew, Moses slew him; and when the spirit of slavery invaded the fair Territory of Kansas, causing the Free-State settlers to cry out because of persecution, old John Brown, famous among the men of God for ever, though then but little know to his fellow-men, called together his sons and went over, as did Abraham, to the unequal contest, but on the side of the oppressed white men of Kansas that were, and the black men that were to be. Today Kansas is free, and the verdict of impartial men is, that to John Brown, more than any other man, Kansas owes her present position.[73]

Osborne completes this chapter by stating that although he is not a biographer of John Brown, close observation of the man "satisfies me that in comparing the noble old man to Moses, and other men of piety and renown, who were chosen by God to his great work, none have been more faithful, none have given a bright record."

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[72] "The Message to Pharror," *Liberator*, 18 November 1859.

[73] Osborne P. Anderson, *A Voice from Harper's Ferry: A Narrative of Events at Harper's Ferry with Incidents Prior and Subsequent to the Capture by Captain Brown and His Men* (Boston: Printed for the Author, 1861).

On August 3, 1865, a letter by Lydia Marie Child was published in newspaper, *The Independent* which stated,

> I shall always remember a meeting of the colored people in Boston, which I attended on the day John Brown was hung. Men and women knelt in tearful silence when the clock indicated the hour of execution. The stillness was broken by the tremulous voice of an old black man, a fugitive from slavery, calling out in pleading tones, "Oh Lord, Thou has taken from us our Moses."[74]

These three passages relate to the many parallels that can be found in the lives of Moses and John Brown. Both Moses and John Brown followed divine law versus civil law, both sought to lead a group of people out of bondage, and neither one of them lived to see the eventual movement of their people to the promised land (or emancipation as it related to African Americans).

Another compelling image is Gerbrandt van den Eeckhout's (1621-1674) painting entitled, *Isaac Blessing Jacob*, 1642 [Figure 34]. A favorite student of Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), Eeckhout's image of Isaac blessing Jacob has been compared to Rembrandt's *Dismissal of Hagar*.[75] The painting depicts the moment when Isaac (old and blind) is on his deathbed and wants to bless his eldest son, Esau, before he dies. As the story goes, Isaac sends Esau out to hunt for some meat to prepare him a meal before delivering the blessing. His wife Rebekah overhears this exchange and knowing that Esau had already sold his birthright, tells her youngest twin Jacob to fetch two goats so that she can prepare a good meal for Isaac in order that Jacob could receive the blessing instead. Jacob did as his mother told him and they disguised his hands and neck with goat hair to mimic Esau's hairy body. Jacob

[74] "Letter from Mrs. L. M. Child," *The Independent*, 3 August 1865.

[75] *Masterpieces of Biblical Art*, (New York: Avenel Books, 1973), Plate 13.

then goes to his father and disguises his voice to receive the blessing.[76] Eeckhout painted Isaac blessing a kneeling Jacob by laying his hand upon his head. He also shows Rebekah in the room attending and Esau arriving from his hunt just after Jacob's blessing.

Another very well-known artwork that serves as a good comparison to Noble's John Brown is Rembrandt's painting entitled, *Jacob Blesses the Sons of Joseph*, 1656 [Figure 35]. In this painting, Jacob, who is old and almost blind, is on his deathbed when Joseph takes his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim to him to be blessed. Like Isaac blessing of Jacob, Jacob gives the greater blessing to Joseph's youngest son Ephraim by crossing his hands and laying his right hand on Ephraim's head.[77] The painting depicts Jacob on his deathbed with Manasseh nearest to him but with Ephraim receiving the blessing. Joseph is standing behind the trio and on the left side of the painting is Joseph's wife, Asenath.

Another compelling example of blessing in European art can be found in *The Children Come to Jesus*, c. 1800-40 [Figure 36] by Italian painter Pietro Benvenuti (1769-1844). Biblical references to the moment when Jesus blessed the children can be found in the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In each instance, Jesus was teaching in the region of Judea when the villagers brought their children to him to be blessed. The disciples rebuked them but Jesus told them to let the children come to him for "the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." The children came and

[76] (Genesis 27.1-40) *The Holy Bible: New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 14-15.

[77] (Genesis 48.1-21) Ibid., 30.

Jesus laid hands upon them and blessed them.[78] In Benvenuti's painting, Jesus is sitting with his disciples standing behind him. Women from the village have brought forth their children to be blessed. In the foreground of the composition a young woman kneels in front of Jesus with a small baby in her arms as Jesus lays his hand upon the baby's head in blessing.

Both Eeckhout's and Rembrandt's paintings illustrate the blessing of the younger, or traditionally lesser son, over the eldest. These biblical stories may have held a certain resonance for Noble as he painted *John Brown Blessing* a child from what was, at that time, considered a lesser race of people. However, it is in Benvenuti's painting that we seem to find the most compelling compositional and thematic similarities. Like the children in the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who were deemed by the disciples to be unworthy of attention, much less a blessing by Jesus, African Americans were considered equally if not more unworthy in the minds of the majority of nineteenth-century white Americans. For Noble to paint John Brown reaching out to bless an African American child was akin to comparing him to a biblical character favored by God or perhaps even to Jesus himself.

It is also interesting to note that the figure of the kneeling female slave is analogous to the popular symbol of abolitionism of the kneeling male slave ("Am I not a man and a brother?) that was devised by the ceramicist Josiah Wedgewood in 1787 [Figure 37] This figure/image was reproduced countless times in prints, drawings, and on medallions.

[78] (Matthew 19.13-15) Ibid., 563.

During his trial and following his death, John Brown was often compared to a martyr, Christ-like figure, or a saint. For example, on December 2, 1859, a man named Dr. Cheever held a prayer meeting for John Brown at his church in New York. Renowned abolitionist Lewis Tappan was among those in attendance at the meeting. At the meeting Dr. Cheever read a passage of scripture relating to Stephen's martyrdom, drawing a parallel between John Brown and the martyr.[79] This comparison is extremely important as Stephen is the first Christian martyr and the story of his life, trial, defense, and death by stoning in Acts is considered to be an explicit literary parallel to Luke's story of Jesus.[80] Lewis Tappan also added a prayer for John Brown "speaking of Brown as a Christian Martyr in the hands of an infuriated mob and praying that posterity would rise up and call him blessed."[81]

Another example of John Brown being compared to a religious figure can be found in the song "John Brown's Body." In the fall of 1861, during a visit to Washington, poet and abolitionist Julia Ward Howe attended a public parade and a review of Union troops. During this parade she heard the troops singing "John Brown's Body"—the song at that time was not about John Brown the abolitionist but

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[79] "Execution of John Brown. His Interview with His Wife. Scenes at the Scaffold. Profound Feeling Throughout the Northern States.."

[80] Stephen is first mentioned in the Bible as a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. He is chosen as one of the seven appointed to ensure the equitable distribution of food between the widows of the Grecian and Hebraic Jews. Stephen began to do great wonders and miraculous signs among the people and opposition arose to him from the Synagogue of Freedmen. Stephen was charged with blasphemy and summoned to defend himself before the supreme Sanhedrin. He was found guilty and sentenced to death. (Acts 6.1-59) *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, eds., *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New york: Oxford University Press, 1993), 714.

[81] "Execution of John Brown. His Interview with His Wife. Scenes at the Scaffold. Profound Feeling Throughout the Northern States.."

rather a young Scotsman in the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia. The song was meant to tease the Scotsman about his sharing the same name as John Brown.[82]

After hearing the song at the parade, Howe made up her own lyrics to the song which she published in the *Atlantic Monthly* as "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." One of the lyrics of the song states,

> John Brown was John the Baptist for the Christ we are to see,
> Christ who of the bondsman shall the Liberator be;
> And soon throughout the sunny South the slaves shall all be free.
> For his truth is marching on.[83]

By comparing John Brown to John the Baptist, Julia Ward Howe had elevated John Brown to the realm of prophet.

Response to John Brown's Blessing

John Brown's Blessing was exhibited in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Vienna, Austria.[84] Critical response to the painting was overwhelmingly positive. A critic for Watson's Art Journal stated that Noble's painting of John Brown, "displays a higher finish, a truer appreciation of nature, and a more thorough knowledge of the value and quality of color than has been seen in any of his former efforts."[85] Another critic from St. Louis *Daily Democrat* lamented the lack of

[82] *History of 'John Brown's Body'* (PBS, 2006 [cited 25 December 2006]); available from http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/brown/sfeature/song.html.

[83] Ibid.

[84] "John Brown," *Boston Journal*, Friday Morning, 3 January 1868. "John Brown on His Way to Execution," *St. Louis Home Journal* (1868). "Art Matters." "Our Art Galleries." Noble Research Collection.

[85] "Art Matters."

historically elevating paintings in modern times then praises Noble's *John Brown's Blessing*:

> ….there is here in St. Louis a picture painted by an artist formerly of our city, which does come up to the standard of Ruskin we find material for exceedingly sweet reflection. Noble's historical picture, "John Brown led to execution," is in truth one of those productions from which the world sucks sweet instruction, and which makes the creator immortal….[86]

In addition to praising the painting, Noble was also heralded for his thorough reconstruction from a southern Confederate soldier to a radical anti-slavery painter. For example, on December 1, 1867 the *Quincy Patriot* of Boston stated in a review for *John Brown's Blessing* that "Thomas S. Noble the artist, is a reconstructed confederate officer, and paints like a radical." Another article on *John Brown's Blessing* from the Noble Archives states that "It adds to the interest of the picture to know that Mr. Noble, its painter, carried a sword in the rebel army for three years but has been thoroughly reconstructed, and knows what he is doing when he is bringing his pencil to bear against slavery, and in favor of freedom."[87] The political implications of these critics employing the term "reconstructed" are clear—Noble was viewed as a southerner who once beaten by the superior might of the northern States during the Civil War, saw the error of his ways (fighting for the Confederacy) and repudiated the institution of slavery.

On March 1, 1868, *The Art Journal* wrote the following in relation to the painting,

> Born and bred in the South, at the breaking out of the rebellion he entered the Southern army from conviction of duty, and with such convictions of duty we

[86] "Noble's Historical Picture," *Daily Democrat*, 28 May 1868.

[87] Unidentified article, 19 December 1867. Noble Research Collection.

> may judge of his earnestness as a soldier from the earnestness of his work now, that, like a new Balder, he is trying to bridge over the awful gulf, filled with dead, between North and South, between the black man and his oppressors, in lands of snow and lands of sun; for, like ourselves, Noble believes the sin of slavery was national, not sectional, though the punishment has fallen most heavily on those who longest resisted the inevitable.[88]

On December 14, 1867, *The Commonwealth* of Boston stated the following,

> Mr. Noble is a Southerner, and served in the rebel army four years, but he regarded the execution of Brown as one of the great historic events of the century, and has lost friends and position at home by representing SO unwelcome a matter to the South.[89]

These types of comments from Noble's reviewers indicate that they fully understood the enormity of Noble's decision to paint such a radical figure from Noble's position as a southerner, as a member of a slaveholding family, and as a former Confederate solder.

By the time Noble unveiled *John Brown's Blessing* he had indeed become a "reconstructed rebel." His painting of John Brown as martyr whose actions and personage were favored by God leaves no doubt with regard to Noble's feelings on slavery. Noble's feelings about John Brown also left little doubt in terms of his audience. Noble's obvious comparison of John Brown to biblical figures was noted in a review of Noble's painting in the January 12th edition of the Chicago paper, *The Tribune*.

> His best work, John Brown on his way to Execution, represents with skill and power, one of the strongest characters and most stirring incidents in our late history, as will be admitted by all; while not a few contend that it is the noblest and most Christ-like of modern times. Such will feel thankful for the artists' appreciation of what they deem highest and best in human nature. The moment chosen is when John Brown gives his blessing and

[88] "Noble's 'John Brown'."

[89] This newspaper article is quoted from Malin, "The John Brown Legend in Pictures Kissing the Negro Baby," 341.

> caress to the negro child, revealing in that act an elevation and nobility of the soul, and a devotion and love for the poor and outcast, which are indeed the very crown and flower of Christian grace and culture. In this act the stern, iron-gray old man walked closely in the steps of his great Master, who, in the depth of His affection, stooped to do the lowliest service for his followers, and refused not to wash the feet of his disciples. John Brown, in his true and deep love for the outcast child of a despised race, seems to have caught something of the spirit, and to have followed not to far off in the path of that divine example of unspeakable humility and love.[90]

It is clear from this review that Noble purposely meant, and his audience understood, that John Brown was to be perceived as a holy figure as he blessed the African American baby.

Unlike Noble's painting, *The American Slave Mart*, *John Brown's Blessing* leaves no room for ambiguity of meaning. John Brown was an extreme abolitionist radical who not only believed in immediate abolition, but abolition by any means necessary, even if that meant mortal violence. Even with his background in a slave state, being raised with slaves, and reaping the benefits of their labor, Noble's depiction of Brown reveals a strong admiration for his ideals and the manner in which he handled himself during his trial and on the day of his death.

The year 1867 was a pivotal year for Noble for many reasons. He sold his first slavery-related painting, the *American Slave Mart,* for the large sum of $10,000. He received his first commission to paint a slavery-related painting with *Margaret Garner*. And, based upon the merits of *Margaret Garner*, he was elected an associate member of the National Academy of Design. With these important events in place, Noble was in a position to create his most radical painting to date *John Brown's Blessing*.

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[90] "Art. Some New Pictures. Leutz's Godiva and Elaine--Noble's Contraband and John Brown--Le Clear's Portraits," *The Tribune*, 12 January 1868.

Noble lost many of his southern friends and connections due to the strong critique of the Fugitive Slave Law in *Margaret Garner* and the radical nature of *John Brown's Blessing*. However, the reviews he received from these paintings from his northern audience clearly indicated that Noble's perception as a "reconstructed" Confederate soldier and southerner was an advantage or, rather, a source of authenticity. Noble was a "reconstructed rebel" who not only fought against the Union during the Civil War, but in the pivotal year of 1867, would rebel against his southern heritage in his art and gain significant advancement in his profession for having done so.

Chapter 5: *The Price of Blood*: Miscegenation and the Internal Slave Trade

Noble continued the exploration of the mulatto theme that he began in *The American Slave Mart* in his next painting called *The Price of Blood, A Planter Selling His Son*, 1868 [Figure 4]. In this painting, instead of depicting the central character as a helpless "tragic mulatta," he chose to paint the mulatto as the indignant male son of a southern planter who is in the process of being sold to secure funding to support the lavish lifestyle of his father/owner.

Noble's painting of a southern planter, surrounded by luxury, selling his own son evokes ethical, moral, and religious issues that were prominent during the antebellum era, undermining many of the patriarchal and Christian justifications of slavery. Some of these issues are even embedded in the painting's title, *The Price of Blood, A Planter Selling His Son*. The phrase *The Price of Blood* is found in passages relating to betrayal in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in biblical history, and in abolitionist literature. This chapter will explore the theme of betrayal as it relates to the painting and its literary sources. This chapter will also discuss the role of religion and morality in Noble's composition as it relates to the symbolic presence of the painting *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, which Noble included as a painting within the painting, *The Price of Blood*. Finally, this chapter will illustrate how Noble's painting visually rejected the assumption put forth in the 1863 pamphlet on miscegenation that the emancipation proclamation would lead to wide-spread interracial mixing between former slaves and the white working class.

The Painting

The Price of Blood is a 39 ¼ x 49 ½ inch painting. It features a trio of men in various positions around a table in an elegantly appointed room. Seated on the far right of the painting is the planter, an older man with a receding hairline and a full gray beard. He is seated in a leather armchair adjacent to a table. His manner is very casual, his legs are crossed and his left arm rests against the back of the armchair. He is wearing a silk dressing gown and soft leather shoes. His left hand is adorned with an emerald ring and his right hand rests lightly upon the table. The planter looks out toward the viewer as if he is daring the audience to question the decision he is about to make, that is, the selling of his son.

In the center of the painting we see the slave dealer. He is standing behind the table reading what the audience may interpret as a bill of sale. He is wearing a dark plain suit and a hat, cocked casually on the back of his head.[1] His right hand rests on the table next to several stacks of gold coins. Immediately behind the dealer is a side chair upholstered in red velvet.

On the far left-hand side of the composition stands the planter's son who is also a slave. He is the color of caramel and his face bears a striking resemblance to his father. The son is located at the far end of the table opposite his father and is

[1] The physiognomy and dress of the slave trader is reminiscent of stereotypical images of Jews. Comparisons can be made of Noble's slave trader with the money-lending Jewish character of Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Like the slave trader in southern society, the Jew was the character audiences loved to hate in medieval and Renaissance drama. However, unlike the one-dimensional slave trader Noble portrays in *The Price of Blood*, Shakespeare's character of Shylock is often perceived as a "complex man, whose every action can be understood and who, finally, elicits understanding from his audience." Jami Rogers, *Shylock and History* (Masterpiece Theatre, 2007 [cited April 17 2007]); available from http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/merchant/ei_shylock.html.

dressed in a white shirt and charcoal pants. He is standing in a classical contrapposto pose. His left arm is bent as his hand rests on his hip. His right arm hangs down at his side and holds an old straw hat. The son is barefoot, indicating his slave status. He stares in the opposite direction of his father with a look of resignation and helplessness to alter his fate.

The room contains few pieces of furniture outside of the table and two chairs previously mentioned. The table is draped with an elegant ornate tablecloth. On the top of the table sits two glasses of brandy and a brandy decanter on a silver tray. To the right of the tray there is a inkwell and stand and the papers and gold coins mentioned earlier. There are several pieces of torn paper lying on the floor by the feet of the planter and one of the pieces lies between the planter and his son. Perhaps this torn document once held the promise of freedom for the planter's son, now discarded in the negotiation over the son's sale. Behind the planter, on the wall in the far upper right corner of the composition is a painting of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac.

The Title of the Painting

According to an article written in the *Alluon* on February 1, 1868, *The Price of Blood, A Planter Selling his Son* may have been originally titled, *The Bill of Sale*.[2] Prior to the painting's debut, the title changed to *The Price of Blood.* Noble may have

[2] "Fine Arts: Art Notes," 57.

taken the title from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,[3] the New Testament of the Christian Bible, or from various abolitionist newspapers and articles.

Harriet Beecher Stowe first published *Uncle Tom's Cabin or, Life Among the Lowly* as a 40-week serial in the abolitionist periodical the *National Era* beginning in the June 5, 1851 issue. It was published in book form on March 20, 1852 and during the first year of its release it sold over 300,000 copies. The book was popular becoming the bestselling novel in the world during the nineteenth century and the second best selling book after the Bible.

The phrase "the price of blood" occurs in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in chapter thirty-four which is entitled, "The Quadroon's Story." "The Quadroon's Story" tells the tale of a mulatto woman named Cassy who is working on Simon Legree's plantation with Uncle Tom. In this chapter Uncle Tom is whipped for refusing to flog a fellow slave. Afterwards, Cassy comes to the shed where she finds Uncle Tom and tends to his wounds. While they are together Cassy tells Tom that it is fruitless to try to be good and pious while living as a slave on Legree's plantation because God does not favor slaves. Tom counters by stating,

> Ye said the Lord took sides against us, because he lets us be 'bused and knocked round; but ye see what come on his own Son,—the blessed Lord of Glory,—warn't he allays poor? And have we, any on us, yet come so low as he come? The Lord hasn't forgot us….[4]

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[3] Albert Boime first made the connection to the title *The Price of Blood* and the phrase in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble, 1835-1907*. In this section of the catalogue Boime briefly recounts Cassy's story.

[4] Harriet Beecher Stowe Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 7th ed. (New York: New American Library, 1966), 387.

Cassy contemplates this statement then proceeds to tell Tom about her life and why she has come to give up on the Lord.

Cassy begins her story by describing her childhood as the daughter of a slave woman and a benevolent master in New Orleans. She discusses her early childhood experience of attending school in a convent where she learned music, French, and embroidery. At the age fourteen her father died of cholera and she was sold to help pay off her father's debts. Her new master was a lawyer who kept her as his mistress and whom she came to love as a husband. They had two children together and she felt happy and secure. During this time, her master's cousin came to New Orleans and he introduced the lawyer to gambling and another woman, with whom her master fell in love. Soon after, Cassy and her children were sold to her master's cousin to clear his gambling debts. The cousin was a much crueler master than the lawyer and out of spite sold both of her children. Cassy recalled, "He took me to ride, one day, and when I came home, they were nowhere to be found! He told me he had sold them; he showed me the money, the price of their blood."[5]

The phrase "the price of blood" also appears in the New Testament in Mathew 27:1-6 in the story of the remorse of Judas. In this section all the chief priests and elders of the people conferred together and decided to put Jesus to death. When Judas found out that Jesus had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests that he received from them for his treachery. When Judas returned the coins he said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."

[5] Ibid., 391.

The priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood."[6]

In abolitionist literature the phrase "The Price of Blood," was used to describe the betrayal of slaves for monetary gain under the Fugitive Slave Law in the mid-nineteenth century. Examples of such use can be found in abolitionist newspapers and journals. For instance, on April 17, 1851 an article called "The Price of Blood" ran in *The North Star*. The article detailed the material goods Daniel Webster and Henry M. West received for their services in favor of the Fugitive Slave Law. Another article entitled "The Price of Blood," ran in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* on December 22, 1854, deriding the military companies who aided the capture of fugitive slave Anthony Burns in Boston for refusing to accept the money there were entitled to under the Fugitive Slave Law. "Take the money gentlemen; though the price of blood, it belongs to you. You have earned it."[7]

Again, on March 2, 1855, *Frederick Douglass' Paper* used the phrase to describe the monetary reward northern marshals receive upon capturing a runaway slaves.

> The man who shall lend himself to the work of enslaving his fellow-man, who shall do the work and take the hire of the slave-catcher, will meet a slave-catcher's reward…. Wherever he goes he will be marked as a degraded man; for in all communities he who lives on the price of blood, is the most odious and infamous of living creatures.[8]

Another article in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* addresses the question posed by Mr. Basset of New Haven (a gentleman of color) in which he inquired whether a free man

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[6] *New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

[7] "The Price of Blood," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 22 December 1854.

[8] "The Infamy of Slave-Catching," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 2 March 1855.

of color would be safe if he came to visit Washington, D.C. The response came from Hon. Francis Gillette of Connecticut who stated that a free person of color is likely to be considered a runway slave and,

> By the law, if a free man of colored [sic] is apprehended as a runaway slave, he is subject to all the fees and rewards given for apprehending runaways, and upon failures to make such payment is liable to be sold as a slave and to crown the villainy, the United States Marshal is constituted the Judge, into whose pocket goes the price of blood.[9]

On March 20, 1856, *The National Era* ran an article entitled, "The Late Slave Case at Cincinnati," which used the phrase, "the price of blood" to describe the final days of Margaret Garner before she arrived in Arkansas.

> Our readers have noted the proceedings—the escape; the pursuit; the death of the child by the hands of the heroic mother to save it from a life of Slavery; the arrest of the victims of oppression, first as fugitive slaves under the United States, then as criminals, under State process... The summary decision of the Judge, and the hot haste with which the mother and her companions, under the escort of men, willing to stain their souls with the price of blood, were hurried across the river to Kentucky, and placed under the absolute power of a man calling himself their owner.[10]

In the August 11, 1854 issue of *Frederic Douglass' Paper*, an article ran under the title "A Fair Fugitive Slave," which described the "thrilling" account of a slave who just passed through Vermont to Canada. The slave was a woman about the age of twenty who ran away because her father and master, Ruffin Gilchrist, sold her to a South Carolinian for $1,100. The article states, "This Ruffin had sold his own flesh and blood for so much hard cash, and but for his daughter's own shrewdness and heroism, would have now been fingering the price of blood."

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[9] "Letter from the Senator Gillette," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 16 March 1855.

[10] "The Late Slave Case at Cincinnati."

All of these examples illustrate the wide-spread use of the phrase "the price of blood" in a nineteenth-century context. In both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the New Testament, the phrase "the price of blood" refers to a betrayal of innocents in exchange for money. Christ was betrayed by Judas and Cassy and her children were betrayed by their master. In abolitionist newspapers and journals, the phrase generally relate to the money received for capturing a runaway slave or freeman under the Fugitive Slave Law or the money garnered from the sale of a slave. All of these uses of the phrase relates to the painting *The Price of Blood* in the sense that the son, who is an innocent, is betrayed and sold by his father for money to help support the father's aristocratic and hedonistic lifestyle.

The Planter

When creating the image of the aristocratic old planter who betrays his son, Noble decided to use a portrait of his father-in-law's business partner, Brigadier General Albert Pike (founder of the Scottish Rite sect of the Freemasons) instead of merely employing an anonymous model. Noble had painted Pike's portrait in 1867 [Figure 38], a year before painting *The Price of Blood*. Apparently, Pike posed a second time in 1868 for Noble's last famous slavery-related history painting.[11] Noble's decision to use such a famous man to portray the luxury loving immoral planter is somewhat of a mystery. However, my contention is that Noble included

[11] In 1873, the *Cincinnati Courier* stated that "In a well-lighted room, there sits by a table, covered with variegated cloth, and aged slaveholder, a superb study from life," indicating that Pike did indeed pose for the portrait. Furthermore, Noble almost always painted his figures from life. "The Price of Blood," *Cincinnati Courier* 1873.

Pike in *The Price of Blood* because of his particular views of the institution of slavery.

Pike was born in Boston on December 29, 1809. At the age of fifteen he passed the Harvard entrance exam but he was unable to afford the tuition. Instead he began a program of self-education. Between the years 1824 and 1831, he taught school in Gloucester, Fairhaven, and Newburyport, Massachusetts and wrote poetry in his spare time. During this period he learned the classics and acquired a working knowledge of Sanskrit, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French.[12]

In 1831 Pike journeyed to Missouri where he joined a group of hunters and traders headed for Santa Fe, New Mexico. He settled in Arkansas in 1833 where he worked as teacher and wrote a series of articles for the Little Rock *Arkansas Advocate* under the pen name of "Casca." Pike married Mary Ann Hamilton in 1834 and used the money from her dowry to purchase an interest in the *Advocate*. In 1835 he became owner of the paper using it to promote the viewpoint of his political affiliation, the Whig Party. Pike sold his paper in 1837 and took up the practice of law. In 1849 he was admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States.[13]

Pike participated in both the Mexican American War and the Civil War. During the Mexican War he commanded a troop of volunteer cavalry in Archibald Yell's regiment. During the first year of the Civil War, Pike assisted General Ben McCulloch in formulating alliances with the friendly tribes of the Indian Territory.

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[12] Thomas W. Cutrer, *Albert Pike* (Handbook of Texas Online, 2007 [cited 31 January 2007]); available from http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/PP/fpi18.html.

[13] Ibid.

Prior to the war he had made many contacts among the Native American leaders and had helped the Creeks and other nations negotiate a settlement of $800,000 from the federal government.[14] In 1861, he was commissioned a brigadier general and given command in the Indian Territory. In March of 1862 he led a brigade of Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Cherokees at the battle of Elkhorn Tavern, at Pea Ridge, Washington County, Arkansas where he was defeated. Following the battle, Pike was faced with charges that his troops had scalped soldiers in the field and he was also charged with mishandling money and material. Although he was arrested briefly and held under the charges of insubordination and treason in Warren Texas, his resignation was accepted on November 11 and he was allowed to return to Arkansas.[15]

Due to his dishonorable conduct during the war, Pike was unable to return to public life in Arkansas and was forced to relocate to New York and later to Canada. On August 30, 1865, he was given a formal pardon by Andrew Johnson which enabled him to return to Arkansas and become an associate justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court. Later in 1867, he moved to Memphis, Tennessee, were he practiced law and served as co-owner and editor of the newspaper the Memphis *Appeal*.[16]

It is at this juncture, when he moved to Tennessee, that Noble first met Albert Pike. In 1867 Noble married Mary Caroline Hogan whose father, John S. C. Hogan was also a co-owner and co-editor of the Memphis *Appeal* along with Pike and a man

[14] Walter Lee Brown, *A Life of Albert Pike* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 303-07.

[15] Frederick William Allsopp, *Albert Pike: A Biography* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Parke-Harper Company, 1928), 192-207, Cutrer, *Albert Pike*.

[16] Cutrer, *Albert Pike*.

named John Ainslie.[17] That year Noble also painted Pike's portrait. The next year Noble would paint Pike as the father/owner in *The Price of Blood.* Perhaps, during the many sittings for the portrait and/or the painting, Pike and Noble exchanged thoughts regarding their feelings on slavery. Pike may have shared some of his views on slavery which he wrote in the document, *Letters to the People of the Northern States*:

> I believe I can think dispassionately upon the question of slavery. I have owned only such slaves as I needed for household servants… I am not one of those who believe slavery a blessing. I know it is an evil, as great cities are an evil; as the concentration of capital in a few hands, oppressing labor, is an evil; as the utter annihilation of free-will and individuality in the army and navy is an evil; as in this world *everything* is mixed of evil and good. Such is the rule of God's providence, and the mode by which He has chosen to arrange the affairs of the world. Nor do I deny the abuses of slavery… Necessarily it gives power that may be abused. Nor will I under-rate it abuses. It involves frequent separations of families. It, here and there, prevents the development of a mind and intellect… Marriage does not create an indissoluble bond among the slaves. It gives occasion to prostitution. The slave toils all his life for mere clothing, shelter, and food; and the last is heard sometimes upon the plantations, and in rare cases, cruelties punishable by the law are practiced.[18]

Although it is clear from this passage that Pike recognized slavery's inherent evil properties, particularly the problems of the separation of families, the lack of legal recognition of slave marriages, and the propensity for the slave-owner to sexually abuse his female slaves. However, he did not go so far as to favor its abolition. In his *Letters to the Peoples of the Northern States*, he writes that to rid the South of slavery

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[17] J. S. C. Hogan, Albert Pike and John Ainslie purchased the Memphis *Appeal* under the title J. S. C. Hogan & Co. on February 1, 1867. *Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby Counties of Tennessee*, (Nashville: C. and R. Elder Booksellers, 1887).

[18] Albert Pike, "Letters to the People of the Northern States," n.d., reprinted, in part, in Allsopp, *Albert Pike: A Biography*, 181.

would not only impoverish vast numbers of its citizens, but would also leave millions of African Americans without protection and employment.[19]

Pike's views on slavery therefore are not totally incongruous to Noble's inclusion of his image in *The Price of Blood*. Although Pike was by no means an abolitionist, in fact prior to the Civil War he became a Republican and he owned household slaves, he would have agreed with the ethical message that Noble was sending in his painting with regard to the issues of miscegenation and the separation of families via the internal slave trade. These factors may have made Pike amenable to the idea of posing for an image which repudiated the idea of interracial mixing between slaveholder and slave and the internal slave trade. However, since Noble did not leave any written records concerning his paintings, we may never know why Noble painted Pike as the planter in *The Price of Blood*.

On October 6, 1869, the *Boston Evening Transcript* hinted that they knew of the identity of the planter in Noble's painting. They reviewer wrote, "It has been stated that the portrait of the planter who is selling his own son, is intended to represent a northerner, by birth, who was for many years a popular writer in the South, and during the late war a most active and bitter rebel."

Miscegenation

Noble's painting, *The Price of Blood*, dealt very poignantly with the issue of miscegenation on the southern plantation. This interest may have had to do with his own personal experiences growing up in a slave-holding family or even seeing his

[19] Ibid.

uncle with his young mulatto slaves. Furthermore, during the decades of the 1850s and 1860s there was a dramatic increase in the whitening of slavery. This was particularly true in Noble's home states of Kentucky and Missouri which had the largest percentage of enslaved mulattos of all the slave-holding states. For example, in 1850, 14.1 percent of Kentucky's slave population was mulatto and 15.1 percent of Missouri's slave population was mulatto. In 1860, those figures rose so that 19.2 percent of Kentucky's slave population was mulatto and 19.1 percent of Missouri's slave population was mulatto.[20]

In 1865, when congress ratified the thirteenth amendment, all these enslaved mulattoes had become free combining in number with America's free mulatto populations. As the slaves gained their freedom and the percentage of mulattos became more visible in the United States, an interesting development occurred in the North over the issue of amalgamation, or mixing of races, during the 1860s. Shortly before Christmas in 1863 a pamphlet appeared on the newsstands of New York City entitled, "Miscegenation: the Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American white man and the Negro." This pamphlet coined the term miscegenation, miscere (to mix) and genus (race), because they felt the term amalgamation was insufficiently scientific. Its stated purpose was to promote the practice of miscegenation between whites and African Americans in order to create a superior race—morally, mentally, and physically—to the unmixed or pure races. Furthermore, this document maintained that miscegenation should be a goal of the Civil War. The

[20] The 1850 census was the first federal census enumerate slaves and to designate whether African Americans were black or mulatto by registering a "B" or an "M" on the schedule. John G. Mencke, *Mulattoes and Race Mixture* (UMI Research Press, 1979), 21.

pamphlet ended by stating that Lincoln should add a miscegenation platform to the Republican Party platform of 1864.[21]

This pamphlet, which was produced anonymously, was a hoax designed to inflame readers and discredit the Republican Party.[22] On February 17, 1864, Democratic congressman Samuel Sullivan Cox denounced the pamphlet, arguing that it represented the kind of social philosophies embraced by Republicans, in a speech he delivered in Congress. Cox's speech was reprinted in the Democratic press and soon, Republican and Democratic presses were making charges and countercharges about the merits of the pamphlet and how much, if at all, did the Republicans support the pamphlet.

As the 1864 election neared Democratic attacks on the Republican Party intensified, accusing the party of supporting marriage between the races, particularly amongst working class whites and African Americans. Many whites feared that emancipation would lead to widespread miscegenation. Thus, the goal of the Democratic Party was to appeal to the racism of northern whites and the white working class to convince them to vote against Lincoln in the election.

On November 1, 1864, a London newspaper called the *Morning Herald* revealed that the miscegenation pamphlet was a hoax. This news was reprinted in the

[21] For an in-depth discussion of miscegenation and the 1864 election see Sidney Kaplan, "The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864," in *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law*, ed. Werner Sollors (Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2000).

[22] Six years following the publication of the pamphlet it was discovered that one of its coauthors was New York *World* staff editor George Wakeman. At the turn of the century, the main author was reveal as David Goodman Croly, managing editor of the New York *World*. Ibid., 226.

American newspapers three weeks later. Despite the Democratic hopes, their racist efforts to try to discredit the Republican Party did not work, and they lost the election.

As a resident of New York where many of the chapters of this event played out, Noble would have been keenly aware of the events surrounding the miscegenation debate. The fact that *The Price of Blood* places the source of miscegenation in the United States with the white male planter class challenges the rumors of widespread interracial mixing by recently freed African Americans and poor whites instigated by the miscegenation pamphlet. Noble's knowledge of the true source of miscegenation, white masters and overseers on southern plantations, may have thus contributed to his desire to paint *The Price of Blood* as a political response to the vastly misleading miscegenation pamphlet and its controversy.

The Rebellious Mulatto

Indeed, Noble's depiction of the mulatto son in *The Price of Blood* is much more politically charged than his depiction of the mulatto woman in *The American Slave Mart*. In *The American Slave Mart*, the image of the mulatto woman was meant to induce sympathetic reactions from the audience with regard to the fate of this woman about to be sold. In *The Price of Blood*, Noble directly challenges his audience to face the source of the majority of cases of miscegenation in America—the plantation owner and his helpless female slaves. He also confronts the cruel nature of the southern practice of both enslaving and selling the children that come from these illicit unions (outside the bonds of marriage) with slave women and the moral and ethical price slave-owner/fathers ultimately pay for their actions.

In addition to challenging his audience to think about the ethical price the owner/father must pay for his actions, Noble also asks his audience to contemplate how the influence of white blood affects the mulatto son. For, unlike the mulatto woman in *The American Slave Mart,* the planter's son is not depicted as a tragic, helpless victim. His stance and demeanor suggest the sentiment of a man who is angry and disgusted at his father/owner's actions. These emotions displayed by the mulatto son are understandable especially when one considers the widespread mid-nineteenth-century northern belief in romantic racialism—belief in the concept of inbred national characteristics. Adherence to this belief system led to the practice translating these national characteristics into concepts of "racial" superiority.[23] For example, white Americans of Anglo-Saxon of Germanic heritage were perceived as embodying a love of liberty, a capacity for practical and reasonable behavior, and a spirit of individual enterprise and resourcefulness.[24] According to historian George M. Frederickson, even critics of the slave system bought into the notions of white or Anglo-Saxon superiority. He adds that this American "ethnologic" self-image was being formulated at the same time when the slavery controversy concentrated interest on the African American character.

In terms of how white Americans viewed African Americans, the fundamental belief was that African Americans were essentially innocent, affectionate, docile, childlike beings—essentially anti-Caucasian. Furthermore, these very qualities which

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[23] Frederickson traces the genesis of this movement to late-eighteenth-century German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder, who attempted to deal impartially with a variety of cultural or national groups identifying in each special gifts manifested in the course of historical development. For an in depth discussion of romantic racialism in the North see, Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny 1817-1914*, 97-129.

[24] Ibid., 98.

romantic racialists believed to constitute African American character also, in their view, made them inherently Christian. This view was encapsulated in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the character of Uncle Tom who never rebelled against his master, even when sold from his family, unless he was asked to violate his strong Christian principles. According to Fredrickson, romantic racialism which espoused the redeeming qualities in African Americans and racial difference, as opposed to the mainstream of racist thought which perceived no redeeming qualities in African Americans and a racial hierarchy, was widely promoted by northern humanitarians who were more or less antislavery.

This perception of racial difference diverged when it came to American mulattoes. Romantic racialism perceived the consequence of racial mixture to be a merging of both qualities of the Caucasian and African American races. This merger lead to the perception that mulattos had more white qualities such as an increased desire for freedom, a tendency to be dissatisfied with life as a slave, an increased level of intelligence, and a proclivity to rebel. For example, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* only the mulatto characters, George Harris and his wife Eliza and Simon Legree's slaves Cassy and Emmelene, actively resist slavery and attempt to run away. Additionally Stowe hints at this penchant for resistance and dominance in her book during a conversation between Augustine St. Clare and his twin brother Alfred, when Augustine responds to his brother's assertion that the Anglo-Saxon is the dominant race of the world,

> Well, there is a pretty fair infusion of Anglo-Saxon blood among our slaves, now,… There are plenty among them who have only enough of the African to give a sort of tropical warmth and fervor to our calculating firmness and foresight. If ever the St. Domingo hour comes, Anglo-Saxon

> blood will lead on the day. Sons of white fathers, with all our haughty feelings burning in their veins, will not always be bought and sold and traded. They will rise, and raise with them their mother's race.[25]

This sentiment directly relates to the depiction of the mulatto's desire for freedom in slavery-related artworks like Eastman Johnson's *Freedom Ring* (1860), and *Ride for Liberty* (1862), and John Rogers' *A Fugitive's Story* (1869) and, of course, reflected in the disgusted emotion present on the face of the mulatto son in Noble's *The Price of Blood*.

Eastman Johnson's *Freedom Ring* illustrates the innate desire of Pinky, a near white slave, to be free—signified here by her adoration of a "freedom-ring" given to her by Henry Ward Beecher to represent her newly emancipated status.[26] Johnson's *Ride for Liberty* also includes a mulatto woman who rides with her husband and mulatto child away from slavery toward the safety of the Union lines. John Rogers' *A Fugitive's Story* illustrates a mulatto woman with a near white baby telling her tale of escape to three abolitionists, Henry Ward Beecher, William Lloyd Garrison, and John Greenleaf Whittier. Both Johnson and Rogers engaged the trope of the restless mulatto to create images that commemorated the pursuit of freedom.

Noble also illustrates the trope of the restless, dissatisfied mulatto in *The Price of Blood*. Instead of being resigned to his fate of bondage and his immediate future as fodder for the auction block, Noble's mulatto seems to seethe with anger and disgust at the turn of events. Furthermore, despite the fact that he is a slave and is poorly clothed, the mulatto carries himself with all the dignity and haughtiness of a southern

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[25] Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 290.

[26] Beecher and Scoville, *A Biography of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher*, 295-96.

aristocrat. Noble accentuates the mulatto's aristocratic lineage not only by painting him so that he looks just like his father, but also by painting him in almost the exact pose of Thomas Gainsborough's (1727-1788) *The Blue Boy*, c. 1770.[27]

Gainsborough's most famous work, *The Blue Boy* [Figure 39], is thought to portray Jonathan Buttall, the son of a successful hardware merchant, who was a close friend of the artist. The work, which was executed during Gainsborough's extended stay in Bath before he finally settled in London in 1774, is a costume study as well as a portrait. The youth is dressed in a costume dating from about 140 years before the portrait was painted. Gainsborough would have been familiar with this type of costume through the portraits of the great Flemish painter, Anthony van Dyck (1559-1641. *The Blue Boy* is thought to be a painting created in homage to the Flemish master.[28]

By painting the young mulatto man in the elegant pose of Gainsborough's *The Blue Boy* and by depicting him as a slightly darker younger version of his planter father, Noble is clearly stating that the young man inherited many of his father's and, by proxy, the white man's racial traits. Unlike Stowe's character Uncle Tom, who is able to calmly accept his master's decision to sell him to cover his debts, Noble's mulatto cannot accept the decision with the same grace and passivity.

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[27] Albert Boime first drew a connection to the mulatto youth and *The Blue Boy* and believed that Noble's "pretentious gesture" would have been seen as ironic by nineteenth-century spectators. Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble, 1835-1907*, 55.

[28] The *Blue Boy* is currently owned by The Huntington Gallery. *The Huntington Gallery* (The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, 2007 [cited 19 January 2007]); available from http://www.huntington.org/ArtDiv/HuntingGall.html.

The Sacrifice of Isaac

Noble continues his moral attack on miscegenation and the internal slave trade through his inclusion, in the background in the upper left corner of the painting, of a painting within his painting of *The Price of Blood.* The second painting is of the sacrifice of Isaac, or the binding of Isaac, which takes place in Genesis 22.1-19. The story begins when God commands Abraham to take his son Isaac to the region of Moriah to sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains. The next day, in compliance to God's command, Abraham saddled his donkey, took two of his servants, his son Isaac, and enough wood for the burnt offering and journeyed to the place that God had specified. On the third day of their journey, Abraham saw in the distance the exact place where he was to sacrifice his son. He told his servants to remain where they were and said that he and his son would go on to the site to worship and then return.

Abraham brought the fire for the offering and he gave Isaac the wood to carry. As the two of them neared the designated place, Isaac asked his father why they didn't carry a lamb for the burnt offering. Abraham replied that God would provide the lamb.

When they reached the place, Abraham built an altar and bound his son and laid him upon the altar. As he reached out his hand to take the knife to slay Isaac, an angel of the Lord stayed Abraham's hand telling him that he need not kill his son because Abraham truly feared God and did not withhold even his son. At that moment, Abraham saw a ram caught in a thicket by its horns and sacrificed it as a

burnt offering in Isaac's place. In commemoration of this event, Abraham named the site "The Lord Will Provide."

According to the scriptural text, the angel then called down to Abraham a second time and said "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."[29]

In this narrative, Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his own son is a testament to his faith in, obedience to, and fear of God. It is also a testament to God's willingness to reward such unquestioning faith with blessings. In *The Price of Blood*, Noble's planter is not sacrificing his son for his faith in, obedience to, and fear of God, but rather for his love and need of money. In this case, God does not prevent the planter from selling or "sacrificing" his son to the slave dealer.

It is interesting that Noble chose to use the biblical patriarchs Abraham and Isaac for his internal painting as proslavery advocates often used both Abraham and Isaac's slave-owning practices to illustrate that the Bible and God supported the institution of slavery.[30] For example, in 1842 Alexander McCaine wrote a document, titled *Slavery Defended from the Scripture against the Attacks of the Abolitionists*, wherein he stated that, "Slavery was established and sanctioned by Divine Authority,

[29] Genesis 22.16-19. *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments*, (Concord, New Hampshire: Luther Roby, 1843).

[30] Genesis 24.35-36 and 26.13-14. Ibid.

among even the elect of Heaven—the favored children of Israel. Abraham, the founder of this interesting nation, and the chosen servant of the Lord, was the owner of *hundreds* of slaves."[31]

In the 1842 text, *A Brief Examination of the Scripture Testimony on the Institution of Slavery* by Baptist minister Thornton Stringfellow, Stringfellow asserted that his writing on the Biblical defense of slavery was to "gather up God's will in reference to holding men and women in bondage, in the patriarchal age." He added,

> …in the first place, that God decreed this state before it existed. Second. It is clear that at the highest manifestations of good-will which he ever gave to mortal man, was given to Abraham, in that covenant in which he required him to circumcise all of his male servants, which he had bought with money, and that were born of them in his house. Third. It is certain that he gave these servants as property to Isaac. Fourth. It is certain that, as the owner of these slaves Isaac received similar tokens of God's favor.

However, in the case of *The Price of Blood*, Noble was not so much criticizing the institution of slavery as attacking the practice of slavery, in this case, the practice of slave owners selling their slaves in general and children in particular as property. According to historian Phillip Shaw Paludan,

> Few southerners saw much contradiction in slavery as an institution. They believed that slavery identified them as a society more Christian than their foes. Indeed, the proslavery ideology deems to have been enlivened by the war, as the press and pulpit continued to insist that slavery was a Christian institution at its heart…. But if the institution of slavery itself was good in God's eyes, the practice came under increased scrutiny. As the war increased the influence of ministers, it also broadcast more widely their discussion of slavery in practice, even practices before the war. As the suffering from the war grew, some wondered if God was not punishing southerners for failing to live up to the ideal of Christianity that slavery could exemplify.[32]

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[31] Alexander McCaine, *Slavery Defended from the Scripture against the Attacks of the Abolitionists*, 1842, reprinted in Mason I. Lowance, Jr, ed., *A House Divided: The Antebellum Slavery Debates in America, 1776-1865* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 83.

The reality of southern slavery's failure to live up to the Christian Old Testament ideal brings us back to the image of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. In biblical history, Abraham met God's expectations by offering up his only son for the sacrifice. For his obedience, he was rewarded and he and all his descendents were blessed by God. The planter, on the other hand, selling his slave son for monetary gain, which was against Hebrew law, did not obey God's wishes. According to Albert Barnes' essay, *Inquiry into the Scriptural Views of Slavery*,

> A man, in certain circumstances, might be bought by a Hebrew; but when once bought, that was an end of the matter. There is not the slightest evidence that any Hebrew ever sold a slave…. It is said of Abraham that he had "servants bought with money;" but there is no record of his having ever sold one, nor is there any account of its ever having been done by Isaac or Jacob…. Permission is given in the law of Moses to buy a servant, but none is given to sell him again; and the fact that no such permission is given is full proof that it was not contemplated. When he entered into that relation, it became certain that there could be no change, unless it was voluntary on his part (comp. Ex. 21: 5, 6), or unless his master gave him his freedom, until the not distant period fixed by law when he could be free. There is no arrangement in the law of Moses by which servants were to be taken in payment of their master's debts, by which they were to be consigned to the keeping of others, or by which they were to be given away as presents.[33]

Barnes is obviously attempting to prove, through biblical exegesis, that there was a difference under the law of Moses between the value and treatment of servants/slaves and common material property. This difference is thoroughly ignored by Noble's planter who not only sells a person who is a slave but also his son. Therefore, even

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[32] Phillip Shaw Paludan, "Religion and the American Civil War," in *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall M Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 32.

[33] Albert Barnes, *An Inquiry into the Scriptural Views of Slavery*. (Philadelphia: Perkins & Purves, 1846) 133-4, quoted in Harriet Beecher Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Boston: John P. Jewett & Co., 1853), 118.

though the planter having a slave is not against God's law as explained by the bible, his selling of his slave/son for monetary gains is against the bible's law.

Noble's purpose in painting a scene where a wealthy planter is selling his son for money with an internal painting of the sacrifice of Isaac, was to allude to the South's failure to conquer the North in the war as an outcome of their failure to follow God's wishes concerning slavery.

Response to The Price of Blood

The Price of Blood was first exhibited at the National Academy of Design in New York (1868). It was awarded the gold medal in the Cincinnati Exposition in 1870. The painting was also exhibited in Boston (1869), Philadelphia (1869), Cincinnati (1871 and 1873), Chicago (1871), and Glasgow, Scotland (1975). Critical response to the painting was extremely positive. On November 4, 1869, a reporter in Boston's *Zion Herald* thought to compare the moral of *The Price of Blood* to the recent death of a popular temperance orator from New England named John B. Grough. Grough apparently met his demise when his appetite for liquor was triggered by the administration of brandy during a fainting fit and he was unable to stop drinking. According to the article, "The rum-sellers of this city took his watch, rings, and mementoes for whiskey, and murdered him in cold blood for gold… It is the price of blood. The slaveholder sold his boy. She [Boston] murders hers."[34] In this article the issue of miscegenation and the internal slave trade were relegated to "a vivid portraiture of times gone by," whereas, for this critic the sin of sacrificing one's

[34] "The Price of Blood," *Zion's Herald*, 4 November 1869.

ethical mores to profit was a contemporary issue worth further discussion, as it especially related to temperance.

The October 6, 1869, edition of the *Boston Evening Transcript*, described the painting as a picture that twenty years ago, "would have created a sensation in any community, and been greeted with equal degrees of admiration and condemnation." However, since the painting was created four years following the Civil War, the critic viewed the work as a historical subject, "valuable aside from its artistic merits, as a graphic and most truthful illustration of one of the abominations of an institution which, God be praised, was wiped out by the late civil war."[35] The critic, who described Noble as a reconstructed rebel, praised the painting for its excellent rendering of the figures and the admirably painted accessories which he attributed to Noble's careful training in the schools of France.

In 1871 *The Price of Blood* was exhibited in gallery in Cincinnati in the window of William Wiswell. The *Cincinnati Commercial* described the painting as calling forth "the admiration and praised of all classes, the educated and the uneducated, the people, the press and the connoisseurs of art."[36] The article goes on to relay the painting's "portrayal of one of those incidents too frequent in the late social and domestic polity and life of the South, which our northern people have been so reluctant to actually face to face and scrutinize as veritable facts—the disposal, by sale, of a piece of chattelised humanity by the father-master to a slave dealer—a tragic drama, social, domestic, and moral, none the less though no blood was directly

[35] "The Price of Blood."

[36] "The Price of Blood," *Cincinnati Commercial* 1871.

shed."[37] At this point, the critic was describing the heart of the subject of *The Price of Blood*, Noble's criticism of the slavery system which allowed for sexual liaisons with slave women outside the laws of marriage, the selling of people away from their families and even by their families to unknown futures in the deep South, and the devaluation of human beings as mere property available at any moment to exchange for gold.

The critic recognizes Noble's biblical dimension in his painting when he states "On the table between the buyer and the vender lies heaped the gold with which the owner has been tempted to sell a son of God, a brother of Christ, and a human soul, in the person of his own son."[38] Unlike the pro-slavery biblical defense of slavery which extensively utilized Old Testament texts, the *Cincinnati Commercial* critic here makes use of the anti-slavery arguments, which used very little biblical exegesis, but rather relied on the anecdotal moral teachings relating to Jesus Christ who preached that his followers should love their brethren as they loved themselves. The critic added to this antislavery biblical argument when he stated, "That there were many kind-hearted, generous, and comparatively just men among these slaveholders few will doubt or deny; but the institution was accursed by God, and it accursed all who came into relationship with it." This statement followed a famous antislavery argument put forth from minister and reformer, James Freeman Clark, who on November 24, 1842, delivered a sermon titled "Slavery in the United States." In the sermon Clark elaborated,

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

> I have spoken of a few of the evils of the system of slavery to the slave himself. The evils to his master are, perhaps, nearly as great. This is admitted by intelligent slaveholders. It was admitted by Mr. Clay, when he said at a speech at Lexington, before he became the champion of the institution,--"that he considered the system as a curse to the master as well as a bitter wrong to the slave, and to be justified only by an urgent political necessity." It is evil to the slaveholder everyway….[39]

The *Cincinnati Commercial* critic concludes his review of Noble's *The Price of Blood* by stating that not long before this painting would have "called down on the head of the artist the most bitter denunciations of the press and people, and perhaps eventuated in the mobbing of its exhibitors. That day, thanks to the madness of the oligarchy of the South and the persistent bravery of the true men of the North, has gone, as we trust, never to return."[40] He then added that the painting was of high merit in terms of its art qualities, composition, posing, drawing, coloring, expression, and accessories, "telling its story simply and effectively."[41]

On April 6, 1871, Indiana's *Mitchell Commercial* reviewed the work when it was on exhibition in Cincinnati. This was the first review to mention the absent slave mother. "It represents a planter selling his natural son by a slave mother." The recognition of the slave mother was important because it alluded to the separation of families, not just the father from the son, but the son from the mother and even perhaps other siblings, that would take place following the completion of the transaction. This review also indicated that the son was a man, not merely chattel up for sale. It stated, "At the one end of the table, upon which the price is counted out in

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[39] Jason Freeman Clarke, *Slaver in the United States, Sermon Delivered in Armory Hall, Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1842*, reprinted in Lowance, ed., *A House Divided: The Antebellum Slavery Debates in America, 1776-1865*, 100.

[40] "The Price of Blood."

[41] Ibid.

gold, stands the slave, conscious of his manhood, and probably of this relation to the planter, his resolute features indicating intensity of restrained emotion."[42] The description of the son closely follows the thought-pattern inherent in romantic racialism in which a mulatto man, due to his white blood, would in fact be conscious of his humanity and would have the ability to restrain emotions that he might not have been able to control if he were fully African.

Another article, written on April 28, 1871 by the *Chicago Times* discusses the mulatto son in very romantic racialist terms. It stated, "The chattel, a lithe and shapely young field hand, stands quietly by, his face expressing a mingled contempt for his luxurious father and a determination to run up for Canada at the first convenient opportunity." This statement not only reflects conflicting emotions for the young mulatto but also ascribes to him a temperament that would lead to his running away to freedom if given the opportunity. The critic added that "An air of seedy wealth pervades the apartment and its rather tough conscienced owner, and the frayed edge of the rich table-spread and worn facing of the elegant dressing-gown show that the stacks of gold which the avaricious trader is unconsciously fingering will be very welcome to the old gentleman who is parting with his saddle-hued offspring."[43] This statement alludes to the perception that the owner/father was selling his son to alleviate debts accrued by his aristocratic lifestyle.

[42] "Thomas S. Noble, Artist," *Mitchel Commercial*, 6 April 1871.

[43] "The Price of Blood," *Chicago Times*, Friday, 28 April 1871.

In 1873, the *Cincinnati Courier* published a review of the painting which was on view for the second time in William Wiswell's gallery window in Cincinnati. This particular article gives great notice to the slave trader.

> Back of the table, his gold piled in front of him, stands the slave-trader, a type of his class—dark, decided, and stern. The figure of this man is a truthful representation of the class which followed this unprincipled calling, and although received into the society of Southern planters of affairs of business, they were shown little respect, and never were asked to be seated in their presence. The rough exterior and want of respect exhibited by the negro trader, is a sufficient testimony of his contempt of what courtesy is due to society.

The want of respect the critic is referring to is undoubtedly the fact that the slave trader refused to remove his hat once inside the planter's home.

By placing the transaction in the planter's home, Noble illustrated the old manner by which slave transactions were made in Kentucky before 1849 when slave trading began to be conducted on the open market much in the same way people sold livestock.[44] Prior to that time, slave trades were generally advertised and conducted privately. According to historian Winston Coleman,

> No aspect of slavery was more objectionable to the great majority of the people than that of buying and selling slaves for profit. To be known as a "nigger trader" was about "the last word of opprobrium" that "could be slung at a man." This "state of opinion"… was very general "among the better class of slave-owners in Kentucky."[45]

When the article described the mulatto son, the critic perceived the young man to be a perfect illustration of the romantic racialist view of mulatto manhood. "He is an erect, lithe, graceful mulatto boy of perhaps eighteen years of age, the *beau ideal* of vigorous manhood, for at a glance the startling resemblance to the miserable old

[44] In 1849, the Kentucky Legislature repealed the Non-Importation Act of 1833 allowing slaves from other states to be brought into Kentucky so that they could be sold on the open market.

[45] Coleman, "Lexington's Slave Dealers and Their Southern Trade," 2-3.

man, who sits impatiently in his easy chair waiting the decision of the trader, is very manifest."[46]

In 1875 the painting traveled to Glasgow Scotland where it was exhibited in the gallery of James M'Clure and Son. The painting was accompanied by a gallery guide entitled, "The Price of Blood," that served as an introduction to Noble's life and art, beginning with the fact that he was born in the South and came from a family of slaveholders. The document goes on to consider Noble as a student of Thomas Couture in Paris. It then recounts how Noble returned from Paris just before the outbreak of the Civil War, with no neutral ground upon which to stand, and immediately volunteered for the Confederate army. Following the war, the pamphlet relates Noble's return home to Missouri "where he found his property destroyed and his slaves gone." This statement is incorrect for there is no evidence that Noble ever owned property until later in his life and the 1850 and 1860 slaves schedules reveal that he did not own slaves.

The guide describes how after painting the portraits of many northern and southern men, he was financially in a position to indulge his interest in creating historical paintings of modern American events. "His knowledge of negro character, from being early associated with slaves, and from witnessing both public and private sales of them, afforded him many opportunities of faithfully representing those sad and sorrowful events."[47] The document continues with a discussion of *The American Slave Mart* which the guide stated contained upwards of sixty figures and sold for a large sum.

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[46] "The Price of Blood."

[47] "The Price of Blood," (Glasgow, Scotland: Messrs James M'Clure & Son, 1875).

The exhibition brochure, "The Price of Blood," briefly recounts how of the eponymous painting was awarded the gold medal in the Cincinnati Exposition and first exhibited in New York. The guide described the painting as, "no imaginary subject," and "a valuable page of American History." This analysis alluded to the fact that, unlike the Margaret Garner or the John Brown paintings, none of the characters were supposed to represent real people in history. Still the practice of slave owners having children by slave mothers, keeping their children enslaved, and then selling them away from their home and family was such a common event that the audience viewed this image as a historical painting.

The second page of the guide reprinted four newspaper reviews from the American press. The papers were the *Cincinnati Commercial*, the *Boston Evening Transcript*, the Indiana *Mitchell Commercial*, and the *Cincinnati Courier*, which were all described earlier in this section.

In addition to the guide provided by James M'Clure and Son, the *North British Daily Mail* also reviewed the painting on December 16, 1875. Like the critic from the *Boston Evening Transcript* and the author of the gallery guide, the reviewer from the *North British Daily Mail* perceived *The Price of Blood* to be an historical subject: "The picture represents what was once an all too frequent incident in the southern States previous to the passing of the Emancipation Act." The article then described the painting, concluding that the carefully rendered emotions present on the faces of all three of the figures "are not only evidences of true artistic genius, but that the master whose work we view, has himself lived in the land where once such

hapless scenes occurred only too often."[48] The article ended with an interesting comparison to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. "The Americans may well esteem the artist and prize the painting, because as in literature "Uncle Tom's Cabin" is considered the great exponent of the evils of slavery, so, in art, Mr. Noble's work may well be looked upon as a truthful and powerful delineation of one terrible aspect of a most shameful institution, now happily abolished in the States."

In *The Price of Blood* Thomas Satterwhite Noble was able to confront some of the most degrading aspects of slavery, both to the slave and the slave master. His painting deftly dealt with the issues of miscegenation between masters and slave women on the plantation, the whitening of slavery in America, the separation of families via the internal slave trade, and the enslavement of ones own family. By including the painting depicting the sacrifice of Isaac within his larger painting, Noble alluded to the failure of the southern planter to follow God's wishes and spare his son from the betrayal of being sacrificed for the sole purpose of monetary gain.

However, Noble painted this work after the Civil War, not during the antebellum period where it would have had a stronger impact upon his audience. By doing so, Noble avoided total rejection from his southern and even some northern viewers. In several reviews, critics mentioned that had Noble painted *The Price of Blood* prior to the Civil War, it would have caused quite a negative reaction. In 1871 the *Cincinnati Commercial* stated, "The day was, and that not very far in the past, when the exhibition of this painting would have called down on the head of the artist the most bitter denunciations of the pres and the people, and perhaps eventuated in

[48] "A Famous Picture by an American Artist," *North British Daily Mail*, Thursday, 16 December 1875.

the mobbing of its exhibitors."[49] By waiting until after the North won the Civil War, Noble could safely paint and exhibit his works criticizing the institution of slavery.

Noble's painting encapsulates critical the moral, ethical, and religious problems that were inherent in the owning and selling of slaves as property. Many of Noble's audiences recognized his intentions and applauded him for his creation. *The Price of Blood* made such an impression that it was eventually purchased by a man named A. G. McDonald from Glasgow, Scotland, where it remained until 1987 when it returned to the United States.[50]

[49] "The Price of Blood."

[50] Birchfield, Boime, and Hennessey, *Thomas Satterwhite Noble, 1835-1907*, 70.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Summary of Dissertation Conclusions

This study has set out to reevaluate Thomas Satterwhite Noble's five paintings, *The American Slave Mart* (1865)*, Margaret Garner* (1867)*, John Brown's Blessing* (1867)*, The Price of Blood: A Planter Selling his Son* (1868), and *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis* (1870) within the context of Noble's life, slavery and its abolition. By utilizing social and historical analysis combined with an examination of the critical reception of the works, I was able to reconstruct from the meaning and impact of Noble's paintings upon his primarily northern audience.

Central to this line of inquiry was the reconstruction of the social, political, and economic environment that influenced Noble's development as a painter. By investigating the history of slavery in Kentucky and Noble's family's involvement with the institution in the region, this dissertation has illuminated Noble's experience with slavery during his youth and young adult life. In addition to expounding upon Noble's experience with slavery as it related to the history of slavery in Kentucky, my dissertation also examines Noble's early artistic influences and how they shaped his decision to become an artist.

Following a discussion on Noble's social and cultural background and early artistic influences, this dissertation used research conducted by Albert Boime to embark upon a detailed study relating to the influence of Noble's teacher and mentor Thomas Couture upon his development as an artist and Noble's interest in modeling

himself after the social and political painter. This study centered upon Noble's first monumental painting, *The American Slave Mart*. My discussion of *The American Slave Mart'*s similarities in style and composition to Couture's *The Decadence of the Romans* represents the first time these works have been compared in the literature on Thomas Satterwhite Noble.

The *American Slave Mart* was the first monumental treatment of a slave auction by an American painter and effectively launched Noble's career as an artist of national recognition. This study represents one of the few times that *The American Slave Mart* has been analyzed in current literature. This work was possible by investigating the critical reception of the works—utilizing reviews from the period to reconstruct the meaning of the painting from the point of view of the audience. This type of analysis resulted in a new understanding of the painting's relevance to Noble's mid-nineteenth century audience. Instead of conforming to the prior notion of the painting as an antislavery visual statement, the critical reviews revealed that Noble's painting was truly ambiguous in nature. This very ambiguity of meaning provided his audience enough flexibility to receive *The American Slave Mart* as either pro-slavery or anti-slavery, depending upon the prior political allegiance of the viewers.

The success of *The American Slave Mart* led Noble to create a simplified replica of the work in 1870. My research reveals that the replica, *The Last Sale of Slaves in St. Louis*, was not a replacement for *The American Slave Mart* but rather a reinterpretation of a successful painting by Noble during a time in his career when his popularity as a painter was waning.

After the debut of *The American Slave Mart*, Noble went on to paint two contemporary history paintings, *Margaret Garner* and *John Brown's Blessing*. Both paintings featured individuals who risked themselves and those they loved in the pursuit of freedom and liberty. In this section I explored the possible reasons why Noble may have painted Garner and her children as black instead of mulatto, reaching three possible conclusions: first Noble may have been unaware of the mulatto status of these individuals; second Harlow Roys (who commissioned *Margaret Garner*) may have preferred that the protagonists not be represented as mulatto; third and finally, Noble may have felt social pressure to omit their mulatto status in light of the fact that many of his extended family members still resided in Kentucky and their lives might have been affected by negative reactions to the painting. I also discussed how he altered the actual events relating to the exact location of the children with respect to their mother's location in the house she was discovered.

The chapter's consideration of *John Brown's Blessing* examined the history of John Brown, particularly the events surrounding his death and the baby-kissing myth. The disseration revealed that Noble may have had three literary sources that he could have drawn upon when creating *John Brown's Blessing*, Henry Steel Olcott's article written for the *New York Tribune*, John Greenleaf Whittier's poem *Brown of Osawatomie*, and James Redpath's book *The Public Life of Captain John Brown: With an Autobiography of His Childhood and Youth*. This study also found James Redpath's book to be the most likely source (as it was sold a gallery exhibiting *John Brown*) for Noble's investigation into the life and death of the abolitionist. The dissertation examined the probability that he viewed Louis Ransom's painting or a

lithograph of the painting, *John Brown on His Way to Execution*, 1860 and used it as a source for his composition. The study concluded that Noble did not include John Brown actually kissing the baby in his painting because the image of a white man kissing a black child was too radical a move for Noble to make that that juncture in time.

In this same section my research examined Noble's decision to alter the figurative groupings in *John Brown's Blessing*, by removing the figures of two men and one woman in the painting. This alteration has never been commented upon in the literature surrounding Noble and his work. This study revealed that Noble may have changed the composition of this work to concentrate the focus of the painting on John Brown blessing the African American baby. Also discussed in this chapter was the textual prevalence of John Brown's comparison to a martyr or biblical figure in literature contemporary to the era.

Based upon reviews of *Margaret Garner* and *John Brown's Blessing* it is clear that they were painted and exhibited during a time when his audience was ready to accept such grippingly emotional paintings, one illustrating the moment when a mother kills her child rather than allow it to go back into slavery, and the other of a man who is moments away from the gallows who stops to bless a African American child. These paintings were created during the height of reconstruction and capitalized on the self-righteous attitudes many northerners had with regard to their southern neighbors, thus removing many of the more dangerous aspects of the paintings that would have been present had they been painted prior or during the Civil War. These paintings, which earned Noble the moniker of "reconstructed rebel,"

reflected and responded to Northern American sentiment about slavery and its demise in the South.

The year following the creation of *Margaret Garner* and *John Brown's Blessing*, Noble painted *The Price of Blood, A Planter Selling His Son*. In the chapter on *The Price of Blood*, this dissertation analyzed the meanings behind the phrase as it related to betrayal of innocents for money in sources such as the bible, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and abolitionist literature. These sources strongly related to *The Price of Blood* as the son in the painting who is an innocent who is in the process of being sacrificed (sold) to help support his owner/father's lifestyle.

In addition to discussing the meaning of the title of *The Price of Blood*, this section also explored the relevance of the presence of Brigadier General Albert Pike as the father/owner in the painting. The study surmised that Pike's presence in the image could be explained by his close relationship with Noble's in-laws, the fact that Noble had already painting a portrait of Pike in 1867, and Pike's particular views on the evils of slavery as it related to miscegenation, the separation of families via the internal slave trade.

Following my discussion of Pike, this dissertation explored the issue of miscegenation as it related to the 1863 pamphlet and how Noble may have used *The Price of Blood* to respond to the rampant rumors, spread by the Democratic Party, of widespread miscegenation between working class whites and recently freed slaves following the Emancipation Proclamation. This section also discussed the particular manner in which Noble decided to paint the mulatto son, in the contrapposto pose of Gainsborough's *Blue Boy*, and how the son's gestures and facial

expression reflected the principles of nineteenth-century romantic racialism. In this case, the mulatto son embodied romantic racialist principles by displaying characteristics (an exhibition of arrogance and a desire for freedom) generally thought to belong to the Caucasian race.

Chapter five continues with an exploration of the meaning of the painting within Noble's painting of the sacrifice of Isaac. This section related this painting to common pro- and anti-slavery literature that used Abraham and Isaac to illustrate whether or not God and the Bible supported the institution of slavery. I concluded that Noble included the painting of the sacrifice of Isaac to criticize the practice of slavery as it is connected to the creation of children between master and female slave and the selling of ones own children via the internal slave trade.

Critical response to the painting was quite illuminating and the vast majority of its reviewers found the painting of historical significance with a deep moral underpinning, particularly as it related to the father selling his son and the painting's biblical connotations. Furthermore, most reviewers mentioned that this painting would have cause wide-spread consternation if it had been exhibited twenty years prior to its debut. This statement reinforces my contention that when Noble painted his pictures he was appealing to a northern reconstruction era audience.

By painting for a post-Civil War northern audience, Noble avoided the huge controversy his images would have caused had they been painted during the antebellum era or during the Civil War. Furthermore Noble's first slavery-related images, *The American Slave Mart* was so ambiguous that both northern and southern audiences saw symbols that they felt related to their particular viewpoint with regard

to the positive or negative nature of slavery. Although both historians Albert Boime and James Birchfield claimed that Noble was anti-slavery for the majority of his life, he did not act on his beliefs until after the slavery question had been resolved.

Implications of the Dissertation

This study of Noble's slavery-related paintings has illuminated how these works engaged primarily white northern reconstruction era audiences with regard to their feelings about slavery, miscegenation, and the internal slave trade in the five years immediately following the end of the Civil War. Noble's images also helped to solidify an early post-war northern historical memory that reflected feelings of moral and ethical superiority over the demise of slavery epitomized by both the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment. By critically analyzing Noble's history paintings I was able to establish that Noble did visually manipulate events in his history paintings to best suit his own goals toward creating a historical memory which would be viewed in this vein. This visual manipulation is most apparent in his painting of John Brown where he alters his face to reflect the visual conception of Moses, thus claiming sanctity rather than guilt for John Brown. This approach differs from earlier studies on Noble which tend to evaluate his works as examples of images relating to the inhumanity of the slave system and the question of blacks being intellectually and morally competent enough to assume full citizenship.

Additionally, by incorporating an analysis of the critical reception of the paintings into my inquiry, I was able to reconstruct how Noble's audience perceived the work in the time in which it was created. This methodology has lead to the

discovery that Noble's *The American Slave Mart* was not universally perceived as an anti-slavery painting. It has also led to the discovery that the current version of Noble's *John Brown's Blessing* had been repainted sometime following its debut and tour but prior to its donation by the family to the New York Historical Society in 1939. This detailed analysis of the critical reception of Noble's work between 1865 and 1870 has never been conducted in the history of research on the artist. The conclusions garnered from my analysis constitute an original contribution to the field.

Appendix

Descendants of David Noble

Generation No. 1

1. DAVID2 NOBLE (NOBLE1)1,1,2,3 was born 17504,4, and died 03 May 1797 in Madison, KY, USA4,4,4. He married (1) SUSANNA E. SIMMONS 24 Feb 1784 in Botetourt, WV, USA4. She was born 17604,4, and died 1817 in Madison, KY, USA4,4. He married (2) ANNA POWELL4, daughter of ROBERT POWELL and MARY RHODES.

More About DAVID NOBLE:
Civil: 08 Dec 17865
Residence: Fayette County, KY6

Children of DAVID NOBLE and SUSANNA SIMMONS are:

2. i. ELIJAH3 NOBLE, b. 12 Oct 1785, KY, USA; d. 20 Aug 1870.
3. ii. DAVID NOBLE, b. 1796, Madison, KY, USA; d. IL, USA.
iii. ANNA NOBLE7,7, b. 1790, KY, USA7,7; m. (1) JOHN RANSON7, 17 Jul 1817, Madison, KY, USA7; b. 17807; m. (2) THOMAS WELLS7, 21 Jul 1810, Madison, KY, USA7; b. 1780, Virginia7; d. 18177.
4. iv. ELIZABETH NOBLE, b. 1797, Fayette County, KY; d. 1880.
5. v. WILLIAM NOBLE, b. 1785, KY, USA.
vi. SAMUEL NOBLE7, b. 1786, KY, USA7.
6. vii. ADAM J. NOBLE, b. 23 Jun 1786, Clay, KY, USA; d. 12 Apr 1856, Collin, TX, USA.
viii. BETSEY NOBLE7, m. WILLIAM DEAN.

Children of DAVID NOBLE and ANNA POWELL are:

ix. JANE3 NOBLE7, b. 1773, PA, USA7.
x. JACOB NOBLE7, b. 06 Sep 1775, Whitland, Chester, PA, USA7; d. 07 Mar 1853, Juntwp, Perry, PA, USA7.

Generation No. 2

2. ELIJAH3 NOBLE (DAVID2, NOBLE1)7,8,9,10,11,12,13 was born 12 Oct 1785 in KY, USA14, and died 20 Aug 1870. He married LOUISA PLATT14 30 Mar 1809 in Lexington, Fayette, KY, USA14. She was born 03 Apr 1786 in Kentucky14, and died 11 Nov 1868.

Notes for ELIJAH NOBLE:
Name: Elijah Noble
Spouse: Louisa Smith Platt
Marriage Date: 29 Mar 1809
William Hart, B.; Rebecca Wolff, M.; Nath'l S. Hart, W.

More About ELIJAH NOBLE:
Residence: 1860, Louisville Ward 8, Jefferson, Kentucky15

More About LOUISA PLATT:
Residence: 1850, Louisville District 3, Jefferson, Kentucky16

Children of ELIJAH NOBLE and LOUISA PLATT are:

7. i. THOMAS HART4 NOBLE, b. 01 Oct 1809, Kentucky; d. 06 Mar 1870.

ii. ELLEN NOBLE, b. 1837, Kentucky.

iii. SUSAN NOBLE, b. 1839, Kentucky.

iv. JOHN C. NOBLE, b. 02 Dec 1815, Lexington, Kentucky17; m. SARAH NOBLE.

More About JOHN C. NOBLE:
Publication: 21 Apr 198917
Residence: 1870, Precinct 3, McCracken, Kentucky18

v. EBENEZER NOBLE, b. 17 Mar 1817; d. Nov 1835.

vi. ROBERT NOBLE, b. 24 Apr 1829; d. 17 Sep 1836.

3. DAVID3 NOBLE (DAVID2, NOBLE1)19,20,20,21 was born 1796 in Madison, KY, USA22,22, and died in IL, USA22,22. He married (2) REBECCA PORTWOOD22,22,23 08 Jun 1826 in Madison, KY, USA24, daughter of SAMUEL PORTWOOD and FRANCES EVANS. She was born 1795 in Madison, KY, USA24,24, and died Jul 1862 in Madison, KY, USA24,24.

More About DAVID NOBLE:
Residence: 1860, Western Subdivision, Madison, Kentucky25

More About REBECCA PORTWOOD:
Residence: 1860, Not Stated, Jessamine, Kentucky26

Child of DAVID NOBLE is:

i. THOMAS JEFFERSON4 NOBLE27, b. 04 Jul 1834, Madison, IN, USA27; d. 12 Sep 1903, McLean, IL, USA27.

Children of DAVID NOBLE and REBECCA PORTWOOD are:

8. ii. DAVID4 NOBLE, b. 1836, Madison, KY, USA; d. 15 Sep 1863, Mclean, I L, USA.

iii. SILAS NOBLE27,27,27, b. 1842, Richmond, Madison, KY, USA27,27; d. 12 Sep 1903, McLean, IL, USA27.

iv. GEORGE PEARSON NOBLE27,27,27, b. 18 Jan 1829, Richmond, Madison, KY, USA27,27,27; d. 01 Feb 187327,27,27.

v. DAVID NOBLE27, b. 1836, Madison, KY, USA27; d. 1921, Decatur, Macon, IL, USA27.

vi. PAUL NOBLE27,27, b. 17 May 1830, Redhouse, Madison, KY, USA27,27; d. 31 Jan 190527,27.

vii. SIDNEY NOBLE27,27, b. 19 Mar 1839, Richmond, Madison, KY, USA27,27; d. 06 Apr 191427,27.

viii. SUSAN E NOBLE27,27, b. 1833, Madison, KY, USA27,27; d. 08 Mar 1 85227,27.

ix. SAMUEL NOBLE27,27, b. 25 Feb 1827, Madison, KY, USA27,27; d. 04 Nov 18527.

x. WILLIAM KINNEY NOBLE27,27, b. 1839, TN, USA27,27.

4. ELIZABETH3 NOBLE (DAVID2, NOBLE1)27,27,28 was born 1797 in Fayette County, KY, and died 188029,29. She married WILLIAM DEAN29 May 1820 in Richmond, Madison, KY, USA29. He was born 1788 in Deddington, Oxford, England29, and died 1880 in Deddington, Oxford, England29.

More About ELIZABETH NOBLE:
Residence: 1870, Union, Parke, Indiana30

Children of ELIZABETH NOBLE and WILLIAM DEAN are:

i. SUSANNA E4 DEAN31, b. 1828, Richmond, Madison, KY, USA31; d. 20 Aug 1874, Louisville, Jefferson, KY, USA31.

ii. MARY FRANCES DEAN31, b. 1845, Madison, KY, USA31; d. 188031.

9. iii. WILLIAM A DEAN, b. 1826, VA, USA; d. 1880.

10. iv. ANDREW BARTHA DEAN, b. 1830; d. 1880.

11. v. THOMAS DEAN, b. 1825; d. 1880.

5. WILLIAM3 NOBLE (DAVID2, NOBLE1)31,31 was born 1785 in KY, USA31,31. He married NELLIE RANSON31 28 Dec 181331. She was born 179031.

Child of WILLIAM NOBLE and NELLIE RANSON is:

i. CLEMENTINA4 NOBLE31.

6. ADAM J.3 NOBLE (DAVID2, NOBLE1) was born 23 Jun 1786 in Clay, KY, USA31, and died 12 Apr 1856 in Collin, TX, USA31,31,31,31. He married (1) LUCY A SHACKLEFORD31 20 Aug 1810 in Clay, KY, USA31. She was born in KY, USA31, and died Apr 1850 in Wayne, KY, USA31. He married (2) LUCY A SHACKLEFORD31 20 Aug 1810. She was born 1807 in KY, USA31, and died Apr 1850 in Wayne, KY, USA31. He married (3) LUCY A SHACKLEFORD31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31 20 Aug 1810. She was born 1791 in KY, USA31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31, and died Apr 1850 in Wayne, KY, USA31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31,31.

More About ADAM J. NOBLE:
Residence: 1850, Division 1, Wayne, Kentucky32

Children of ADAM NOBLE and LUCY SHACKLEFORD are:

i. JOHN SHACKLEFORD4 NOBLE33, b. 17 May 1813, Clay, KY, USA33; d. 21 May 1886, Pilot Point, Collin, TX, USA33.

12. ii. STEPHEN COLLIER NOBLE, b. 06 Sep 1827, Montecello, Wayne, KY, USA; d. 14 May 1909, Competition, Laclede, MO, USA.

iii. SUSAN NOBLE33, b. 181733.

iv. MARY ANN NOBLE33,34, b. 181635.

More About MARY ANN NOBLE:
Residence: 1850, Jackson, Porter, Indiana36

Child of ADAM NOBLE and LUCY SHACKLEFORD is:

v. ELIZA J.4 NOBLE, b. 1832.

Generation No. 3

7. THOMAS HART4 NOBLE (ELIJAH3, DAVID2, NOBLE1) was born 01 Oct 1809 in Kentucky37, and died 06 Mar 1870. He married ROSAMOND CLARK JOHNSON 14 Sep 1834, daughter of LEROY JOHNSON and ELIZABETH GRUBBS. She was born 08 May 1808, and died 29 Mar 1847 in Kentucky.

Notes for THOMAS HART NOBLE:
Marriage Records Fayette County, Kentucky 1803-1809 Volume I

Name: Elijah Noble
Spouse: Louisa Smith Platt
Marriage Date: 29 Mar 1809
William Hart, B.; Rebecca Wolff, M.; Nath'l S. Hart, W.

More About THOMAS HART NOBLE:

Residence: 1850, Louisville District 2, Jefferson, Kentucky37

Children of THOMAS NOBLE and ROSAMOND JOHNSON are:

13. i. THOMAS S.5 NOBLE, b. 29 May 1835, Lexington, Kentucky; d. 27 Apr 1907, Bensonhurst, Long Island, New York.

ii. ELEANOR LOUISA NOBLE, b. Abt. 1837, Lexington, Kentucky; d. Abt. 1896.

iii. WILLIAM R. NOBLE, b. 1829, Kentucky; d. Abt. 1900.

More About WILLIAM R. NOBLE:
Residence: 1860, St Louis, St Louis, Missouri38,38,38

iv. FRANCIS E. NOBLE, b. 1843, Kentucky; d. 12 Jan 1888.

More About FRANCIS E. NOBLE:
Residence: 1860, St Louis, St Louis, Missouri38,38,38,38

v. MARY NOBLE.

8. DAVID4 NOBLE (DAVID3, DAVID2, NOBLE1)39,39,40,41,42,43,44 was born 1836 in Madison, KY, USA45,45,45, and died 15 Sep 1863 in Mclean, IL, USA46. He married (1) MARY MOLLY HUNTER47. He married (2) JULIA ANN WEBB47 02 Jul 1862 in Logan, Lincoln, IL, USA47.

More About DAVID NOBLE:
Residence: 1920, Illiopolis, Sangamon, Illinois48

Children of DAVID NOBLE and JULIA WEBB are:

i. FLORA COREL5 NOBLE49, b. Nov 1878, Lincoln, Logan, IL, USA49.

ii. GRACE NOBLE49.

iii. ADLIA NOBLE49.

iv. SAMUEL NOBLE49.

v. CHARLES NOBLE49.

vi. BERNICE NOBLE49.

vii. THOMAS NOBLE49.

viii. RICHARD NOBLE49.

ix. JACOB NOBLE49.

x. ADLIA NOBLE49.

xi. SIDNEY NOBLE49.

xii. GEORGE NOBLE49.

9. WILLIAM A4 DEAN (ELIZABETH3 NOBLE, DAVID2, NOBLE1)49,49 was born 1826 in VA, USA49,49, and died 188049,49. He married (1) MARY

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT49. She was born 1830 in KY, USA49, and died 186649. He married (2) CAROLINE IVER49 1840 in Marion, TN, USA49. She was born 1825 in NC, USA49, and died 187549.

Children of WILLIAM DEAN and MARY ELLIOTT are:

i. FANNY5 DEAN49.
ii. ELIZABETH DEAN49.
iii. FRANK DEAN49.
iv. JOHN DEAN49, b. 1856, KY, USA49.
v. SUSAN DEAN49, b. 1860, KY, USA49.
vi. ADDISON DEAN49.
vii. BETTIE DEAN49.
viii. ADDISON DEAN DEAN49.

Children of WILLIAM DEAN and CAROLINE IVER are:

ix. STEVEN A5 DAME49, b. 09 Feb 1847, Marion, TN, USA49; d. 03 Apr 1927, Center, Pontotoc, OK, USA49.
x. ANDREW WAITE DENHAM49, b. 11 Apr 1841, Marion, TN, USA49; d. 13 Jul 1916, Cleveland, OH, USA49.
xi. SAMUEL DAME49, b. 1854, Marion, TN, USA49.
xii. WILLIAM DAME49, b. 1851, Marion, TN, USA49.
xiii. JOHN DAME49, b. 1842, Marion, TN, USA49.
xiv. MARTHA DAME49, b. 1857, AL, USA49.
xv. NANCY DAME49, b. 1844, Marion, TN, USA49.
xvi. MARY DAME49, b. 1859, AL, USA49.
xvii. SARAH DAME49, b. 1848, Marion, TN, USA49.

10. ANDREW BARTHA4 DEAN (ELIZABETH3 NOBLE, DAVID2, NOBLE1)49,49 was born 183049,49, and died 188049,49. He married MARY BORIE49. She was born 183549.

More About ANDREW BARTHA DEAN:
Residence: 1880, Spring Garden, Jefferson, Kentucky50

Child of ANDREW DEAN and MARY BORIE is:

i. T B5 DEAN51.

11. THOMAS4 DEAN (ELIZABETH3 NOBLE, DAVID2, NOBLE1)51,51 was born 182551,51, and died 188051,51. He married (1) JENNIE W MCDONALD51. She was born 183051, and died 188051. He married (2) MCDONALD51.

Children of THOMAS DEAN and JENNIE MCDONALD are:

i. ANASTELLA5 DEAN51, b. 186051; d. 188051.

ii. RICHMOND DEAN51, b. 186251; d. 188051.

12. STEPHEN COLLIER4 NOBLE (ADAM J.3, DAVID2, NOBLE1)51,51 was born 06 Sep 1827 in Montecello, Wayne, KY, USA51,51, and died 14 May 1909 in Competition, Laclede, MO, USA51,51. He married MALINDA DODSON51,51 22 Oct 1848 in Monticello, Wayne, KY, USA51, daughter of THOMAS DODSON and MARTHA HURT. She was born 25 Sep 1833 in Wayne, KY, USA51,51, and died 14 May 1913 in South Haven, Sumner, KS, USA51,51.

More About MALINDA DODSON:
Residence: 1910, Lincoln Twp, Neosho, Kansas52

Children of STEPHEN NOBLE and MALINDA DODSON are:

i. REUBEN GUY5 NOBLE53, b. 07 Apr 1878, Metcalfe, KY, USA53; d. 07 Aug 1928, Orla, Laclede, MO, USA53.
ii. MARY FRANCIS NOBLE53, b. 13 Apr 1857, Jefferson, KY, USA53; d. 16 Jul 1916, Neosho, KS, USA53.
iii. THOMAS A NOBLE53, b. 11 Mar 1850, Monticello, Wayne, KY, USA53; d. 1884, South Haven, Sumner, KS, USA53.
iv. STEPHEN B NOBLE53, b. 04 Jul 1864, Jefferson, KY, USA53; d. 05 Dec 1908, Wichita, Sedgwick, KS, USA53.
v. ELIZA JANE NOBLE53, b. 14 Sep 1853, Wayne, KY, USA53; d. 08 Dec 1941, South Haven, Sumner, KS, USA53.
vi. JOHN W NOBLE53, b. 31 Dec 1859, Jefferson, KY, USA53; d. 192853.
vii. MARTHA ANN NOBLE53, b. 12 Apr 1851, Wayne, Jefferson, KY, USA53.
viii. ISSAC NEWTON NOBLE53, b. 07 Sep 1866, Wayne, KY, USA53; d. 186653.
ix. EUGENE CLARK NOBLE53, b. 21 Jan 1868, Wayne, KY, USA53; d. 186853.
x. JAMES W NOBLE53, b. 27 Feb 1862, Wayne, KY, USA53.
xi. MARTHA ANN BRADLEY53, b. 12 Apr 185153.
xii. MARY FRANCES WILBORN53, b. 13 Apr 185753; d. 05 Jul 191653.

Generation No. 4

13. THOMAS S.5 NOBLE (THOMAS HART4, ELIJAH3, DAVID2, NOBLE1) was born 29 May 1835 in Lexington, Kentucky54,55,56,57,58,58, and died 27 Apr 1907 in Bensonhurst, Long Island, New York. He married MARY CAROLINE HOGAN58 21 May 1868 in Memphis, Tennessee, daughter of JOHN HOGAN and MARY BORRON. She was born 02 Jan 1849, and died 17 Feb 1936 in New Rochelle, New York.

More About THOMAS S. NOBLE:
Residence: 1870, Cincinnati Ward 5, Hamilton, Ohio59

Children of THOMAS NOBLE and MARY HOGAN are:

i. ARTHUR LEROY6 NOBLE, b. 29 Nov 1879, Cincinnati, Ohio; d. 08 Jun 1880, Cincinnati, Ohio.
ii. MARY ROSAMOND NOBLE, b. 08 Jun 1869.
iii. EDITH AINSLIE NOBLE, b. 29 May 1871; d. Abt. 1957, New York, New York.
iv. THOMAS SATTERWITE NOBLE, JR., b. 21 Nov 1872; d. 1943.
v. GRACE NOBLE, b. 23 Mar 1876; d. Abt. 1950.
vi. MARK AINSLIE NOBLE, b. Feb 1878; d. 02 Nov 1950, New York, New York.
vii. LILLIAN ESTELLE NOBLE, b. 16 Oct 1881; d. 1920.

Endnotes

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