

Enslaved in the City on a Hill: The Archive of Moravian Slavery and the Practical Past

Seth Moglen

Storytelling and the Politics of the Archive

Historians have long recognized the central political conundrum of the archive: the powerful leave behind the fullest records. They leave behind, too, the most detailed narratives about the past, narratives that justify their power. The exploited and oppressed usually leave behind more meager traces. Their narratives are often difficult or impossible to retrieve. They have less access to literacy and to the means of preserving or transmitting their stories. Their masters often employ violence to impose silence and have the power to shape and censor the archive. The historians of the peasant, the prostitute, and the proletarian have always faced distinctive methodological difficulties.

Chattel slavery has long stood as one kind of limit case for this problem. Although millions of Africans endured the Middle Passage, few survivors managed to leave behind a record of their experience. Tens of millions were enslaved in the Americas, but before the flowering of the abolitionist movement, few succeeded in transmitting to posterity written descriptions of their lives, of the violence done to them, of their strategies for survival and resistance. Scholars of African American history have, as a result, always required a special resourcefulness. They turned early to the exploration of oral tradition, folklore, material culture and, above all, music. They have also employed a range of literary strategies in their efforts to address the silence of the archives. At the turn of the twentieth century, the polymath W. E. B. Du Bois decided that, in order to describe the “souls of black folk” in slavery and its aftermath, he would supplement the disciplinary practices of academic history and sociology with the literary techniques of the memoirist, the fiction writer, the poet, and the critic.¹ In the 1930s, C. L. R. James deployed exceptional narrative strategies to produce *The Black Jacobins*, a work of history on a topic that he first explored (and later re-adapted) as a stage-play.² In

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the 1970s, the intellectual historian David Brion Davis ended *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* with an imaginary dialogue between Toussaint and Napoleon.³ In the 1990s, Nell Irvin Painter discovered that the limits of the written record made impossible a conventional biography of the illiterate political visionary Sojourner Truth. Painter supplemented her account of the fragmentary archive with a study of the symbols into which Truth's literate contemporaries and successors transformed her.⁴ In the last decade, Tiya Miles sought to recover the history of those enslaved by Cherokee masters—and when she could glean no more from the archive about the enslaved woman named Doll, she sought in Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved*, intuitions that might address the intractable silence that remained.⁵

The literary critic and historian Saidiya Hartman has recently offered new formulations of the challenge faced by the scholar of slavery—and new proposals about method. In "Venus in Two Acts," Hartman focuses on the ethical, political and methodological problem of writing about enslaved people—especially enslaved women—who appear in the historical record only in the demeaning language of those who held power over them and who often justified their brutalization, rape, and murder.⁶ Hartman is concerned not only with the silence of the archive—the frequent absence of enslaved people's voices—but also with its violence. As she has throughout her career, Hartman asks here: "How does one revisit the scene of subjection without replicating the grammar of violence"? How does the historian "tell a story" about "dishonored life that doesn't delight or titillate"? How are we to think and write "historically" about an enslaved woman when the archive merely "catalogues the statements that licensed her death"? How, indeed, are we to practice the discipline of history itself, which "pledges to be faithful to the limits of fact, evidence, and archive" when each of these has been "produced by terror"?⁷

In response to these challenges, Hartman proposes a method of "critical fabulation" and specifies some of its possible features. She notes, first, the importance of presenting "divergent stories" and "incommensurate accounts" from the historical record, in order to "displace the received or authorized account." She emphasizes the value of writing in the subjunctive mood, imagining "what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done." But she also insists upon the importance of "narrative restraint," of refusing to "fill in the gaps and provide closure" for which there is inadequate archival evidence and which would constitute one more

species of narrative violence to silenced subjects of the past. So she proposes a writerly “double-gesture”: creating narratives that “embody” dishonored lives, while also acknowledging “what we cannot know.” In pursuing this double aim, Hartman proposes that the strategy of narrative restraint can be complemented by listening with the most careful possible attention and respect to “black noise,” to “the mutters and oaths and cries of the commodity” that hint at “utopian” “aspirations.” Hartman emphasizes that “counter-histories of slavery” of this kind can contribute to a “history of the present” and, in particular, to “the incomplete project of freedom.” Toward this end, she encourages narratives that explicitly link past and present, that “illuminate the intimacy of our experience with the lives of the dead, to write our now as it is interrupted by the past.” She writes eloquently of the personal and the political aims of this kind of narration. It can express the writer’s desire to mourn for victims of the past, endowing the dishonored with both “love” and “beauty.” She argues, too, that through such writing one can attempt to imagine “a *free state*” — not through projected fantasies of “the time before captivity or slavery, but rather as the anticipated future” of one’s own writing.⁸ Hartman has herself practiced many of these narrative techniques in *Lose Your Mother*, an ambitious meditation on the African slave trade that interweaves archival history with memoir, travel writing and reportage about encounters between expatriate African Americans and West Africans.⁹

Hartman’s narrative practice and meditations on method contribute, then, to a robust tradition among African Americanists — and historians of other subaltern groups — who have pursued literary strategies to address the political (and practical) constraints of the archive. As the emancipatory social movements of the last century have exerted an increasing influence on the humanities and humanistic social sciences, a growing cohort of scholars has engaged in related representational experiments. One aim of these experiments, it seems to me, is to produce compelling new versions of what Hayden White has recently called (following Michael Oakeshott) the “practical past.”¹⁰ White reminds us that the discipline of history remains strongly marked by a nineteenth-century ambition to produce narratives that appear scientific and objective. That ambition led, he explains, to a disciplinary repudiation of narrative modes that explicitly link past to present (risking the historiographic sin of anachronism) and that engage directly in contemporary debates about ethical or political values (risking the related sin of partisanship or non-objectivity). White notes that the same ambition

led to the disciplinary rejection of narrative modes that employ types of literary language associated with figuration and emotional expressivity. He contends that, as a result of these prohibitions, academic history divorced itself in the nineteenth century from the “practical past”—from those forms of historical narrative that most people *use* when making sense of the societies in which they live and that assist them in making political or moral decisions. White proposes that the evolving literary form of the novel, in its nineteenth-century realist and twentieth-century modernist variants, took on the main task of providing narratives of the “practical past.”¹¹ I would like to propose that a growing number of scholars in the humanities today are drawing on the representational strategies of modern fiction and poetry in order to create new nonfiction idioms that deploy the scholar’s expertise to enhance available versions of the practical past. Indeed, I believe that such practices constitute one of the most fruitful new directions for the growing public humanities movement.

In light of these observations, I have two aims in the pages that follow. I will describe, first, a particular, unfamiliar corner of the archive of American slavery: a body of memoirs in which enslaved survivors of the Middle Passage speak. I will suggest some of the distinctive methodological challenges that these memoirs present. In that context, I will then offer a sample of my own recent efforts to produce a counter-history of slavery as it was lived in one idiosyncratic eighteenth-century Pennsylvania community. By fusing archival research with modernist narrative form, I seek to honor these voices from the archive of Moravian slavery and to make them central to a history of the present that pursues the unfinished project of equality.

Expanding the Archive: Enslaved Afro-Moravians and their Memoirs

The expansion of the archive remains a top priority for historians of slavery. Millions survived the Middle Passage and the experience of bondage without leaving written records behind. But a small minority, exceptionally placed, were able to write about their lives, even before the burgeoning of the abolitionist movement. One important body of eighteenth-century slave memoirs can be found in the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania—and in other archives of the Moravian church in the United States, the Caribbean, Germany and, indeed, throughout the Atlantic world. The small, vibrant community of scholars focused on Moravian history have

long known of these documents, and Jon Sensbach's path-breaking work has brought aspects of the Afro-Moravian experience to a broader readership.¹² But these memoirs remain unknown to most scholars of American history—and even to literary critics and historians of slavery.

In these memoirs, enslaved Africans—including male and female survivors of the Middle Passage—tell stories of their enslavement. But these memoirs are also enigmatic. As we struggle to interpret them, seeking to understand what they reveal and what they gesture toward but do not name, we must try to grasp the contradictory conditions from which they emerged. The men and women held as chattel in Moravian Bethlehem were privileged in comparison to most enslaved people—and it was one sign of that privilege that they were taught to read and encouraged to tell their life stories. But they had been enslaved nonetheless and, in their memoirs, they described and reflected upon aspects of their bondage.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, Bethlehem was one of the most egalitarian places in colonial America. The town was founded on the Pennsylvania frontier in 1741 by members of a central European Protestant sect, the Renewed *Unitas Fratrum* (Unity of the Brethren), who were known in German lands as the *Brüdergemeine* and, in English-speaking places, simply as the Moravians. During the 1740s and 1750s, the people of Bethlehem built a thriving communal economic system, which they called the General Economy. Everyone worked for the community and received, in return, not wages but the necessities of life (food, clothing and shelter) as well as free and equal access to a fully socialized system of education, health care, child care, and care for the elderly. Although the Moravians encouraged marriage and procreation, they organized their community not around families, but into what they called “choirs,” same-sex cohorts of people at the same stage of life. There were separate choirs for girls and boys, for Single Sisters and Single Brothers, for Married Sisters and Married Brothers, for Widows and Widowers. The choir system and the General Economy guaranteed a high degree of material equality. People lived together in dormitories in communal choir houses; they ate the same communally prepared food; and they wore the same clothing, patterned on the dress of central European peasants. Everyone in the community was cared for, on terms of material equality, from birth until death. The Moravians eliminated poverty in their founding generation: no one in Bethlehem feared destitution in illness or old age. They taught everyone to read, women and men of all races alike, achieving nearly

universal literacy in a community populated by people from five continents. Women were emancipated from privatized domestic labor in order to pursue leadership roles in the community. They were responsible for raising and educating girls, for teaching one another trades, for overseeing economic activity in their choirs, for representing their choirs in the governing councils of the city—and for attending to the spiritual needs of girls and women as spiritual guides (choir laboresses), deaconesses, missionaries, and priests. The town of Bethlehem was also characterized by an exceptional degree of racial integration. In their grand stone choir houses, Africans, Native Americans, Asians and Europeans ate, slept, worked and worshipped together under conditions of material equality and spiritual intimacy. During religious services, they washed one another's feet and exchanged the kiss of peace.¹³

In contrast to the familiar tale of impractical utopias, Bethlehem's General Economy was technologically sophisticated and economically successful. Between 1741 and 1762, a population that grew from seventeen to seven hundred supported more than sixty different trades (many of them water-powered), constructed the first system of municipal running water in North America, and created a prosperous, economically vibrant and self-sustaining city that was regarded with admiration (and amazement) by visitors to the Pennsylvania frontier. But this remarkable founding period came to an abrupt end after the death in 1760 of the Moravians' charismatic spiritual leader, Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf. The new church leadership in Germany abolished Bethlehem's General Economy against the wishes of its residents—and, within less than a decade, gender symmetry, economic equality and racial integration dissolved.¹⁴

Even during its most egalitarian period, though—indeed, from its very inception—Bethlehem rested on a brutal racial contradiction. Like their Puritan predecessors in Massachusetts, the Moravians conceived of their Pennsylvania town as a utopian “city upon a hill” that would “shed its light far and wide,” embodying their highest spiritual and social ideals and inspiring by example.¹⁵ They also intended for Bethlehem to serve as a hub for an expanding missionary empire. They believed themselves to have a special spiritual calling to evangelize among the native people of the Americas and among enslaved Africans. The Moravians believed that all human souls (and not merely a spiritual “elect”) could be redeemed by Christ's suffering on the cross, and they insisted that all human beings, of every race and nation, were

spiritually equal before God. The intensity of this commitment led them to welcome African, Asian, and Native American converts to live as brothers and sisters in racially integrated choir houses in Bethlehem on terms of material equality and spiritual intimacy. But like other Christian missionaries, the Moravians were walking in the footsteps of empire, targeting for their evangelical efforts populations that were being violently exploited, enslaved, and dispossessed by the colonial profit-making ventures of Europeans. In relation to Native Americans, this contradiction took one form. Although the Moravians integrated native people into their community as brothers and sisters, they built their town on land that had been stolen from these people in an especially cynical manner just a few years earlier.¹⁶ They calculated that the conversion of native people to Christianity would only succeed once “the Indians are Cooped up into a narrow Compass and Subdued.”¹⁷ Even as they exploited the vulnerability of Native Americans driven from their land, they did not acknowledge their own complicity in the violence of colonization.

In relation to Africans, the racial contradiction of Moravian Bethlehem took a different but related form. The Moravians eagerly embraced African and African American converts and integrated them into their choirs, worship services and schools. Those admitted to the congregation also became full members of the General Economy, entitled to the same lifelong care as other brothers and sisters. A few of these Afro-Moravians were free. But most of these literate Africans, living in conditions of material equality in Bethlehem’s choir houses, were enslaved. Since there was hardly any private property in Bethlehem, most of these enslaved people were owned by the church. By the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, they were chattel in perpetuity (unless manumitted by their masters)—and the children of enslaved women followed the condition of the mother, as elsewhere in the American colonies.¹⁸ Enslaved people arrived in Bethlehem in more than one way, as we will see, but most were purchased outright by the congregation to perform necessary labor in the frontier town. In the challenging early months of the settlement, the Moravians experimented with hiring white workers to meet their labor shortage. But in less than a year, they decided “to get rid of our *white hired hands*, because [. . .] they have behaved so arrogantly and insolently” and the Brethren felt it would be “preferable to buy *Negroes* from St. Thomas.”¹⁹ Bethlehem was a closed religious community, open only to members of the Moravian church who were committed to living communally within the General Economy—and white hired hands

were, evidently, inadequately obedient to the religious and social strictures of the community. During the next twenty years, the Bethlehem congregation purchased approximately three dozen enslaved men and women. Most of them eventually converted to the religion of their masters, and many were admitted as full members both of the church and the General Economy.²⁰

The Moravians thus practiced an eccentric type of slavery. Like other European colonists, they bought and sold human beings. They did so in order to command their labor, without demurrer, for their own ends. They viewed these human beings not only as a pool of exploitable labor, but also as chattel, property in which they had invested capital and from which they expected a return. But the Moravians practiced in Bethlehem a kind of slavery from which they had purged many of the outward forms of violence widely inflicted on enslaved people throughout the Americas. They did not punish enslaved men and women by burning them alive or severing limbs. They did not rely on the lash to enforce work-discipline. In this religious community, in which sexuality was highly controlled (and sanctified as a liturgical practice), they neither sanctioned nor appear to have tolerated sexual violence against enslaved people.²¹ The Moravians regarded marriage as a sacrament for people of all races, enslaved and free alike. Indeed, as I have indicated, they integrated enslaved African converts into their community on terms of spiritual and material equality. As August Spangenberg, the head of the General Economy in Bethlehem explained, "They dress as we do, they eat what we eat, they work when we work, they rest when we rest, and they enjoy quite naturally what other Brothers and Sisters enjoy."²² The Moravians practiced, in short, a form of slavery that was so mild on its surface that it reveals with a peculiar clarity the ineradicable, structural violence at the core of the institution itself.

Moravian Bethlehem embodies the foundational American paradox of the slave-holding society committed to revolutionary forms of equality. But it embodies that paradox in an uncanny way that is both familiar and strange. For the Moravians were not people of the Enlightenment. Although they were the direct contemporaries of America's slaveholding founding fathers, the European founders of Bethlehem were not struggling to reconcile slavery with the emergent discourse of natural rights. Their commitment to equality was rooted, instead, in a far older tradition. They were the descendants and spiritual heirs of fifteenth-century Hussite peasant revolutionaries, including Petr Chelčický, who insisted that all hierarchy was sinful and that Christ



Johann Valentin Haidt's portrait of the Protten Family (c.1751) provides a vivid representation of Afro-Moravians in the middle of the eighteenth century. None of the Prottenes lived in Bethlehem or were enslaved at the time they sat for this portrait, but Rebecca (far right) had been born into slavery in Antigua in 1718, was later emancipated and, according to the historian Jon F. Sensbach, may have been one of the first black women ordained in Western Christianity. Courtesy of Unity Archives, Herrnhut, Germany.

commanded his followers to share wealth equally and repudiate violence.²³ The most radical aspects of Bethlehem's social organization—its communal economy, material equality, gender symmetry and racial integration—flowed from this late medieval liberation theology. But this radical reading of the gospel collided, in Bethlehem and elsewhere in the Moravian world, with more conservative Christian impulses, including Count Zinzendorf's insistence that spiritual equality did not require social equality and his missionary zeal for converting exotic racial others (what he called plucking "first fruit" for the Savior).²⁴ In Bethlehem, a mystical strand of evangelical Protestantism simultaneously inspired revolutionary forms of egalitarianism and justified domination.²⁵

All eighteenth-century Moravians had a spiritual responsibility to write a memoir—a *Lebenslauf* [life course]—that would tell the story of their Christian

redemption. Like other spiritual autobiographies, they are formulaic. They must recount the sinfulness of the author, her resistance to salvation, and her ultimate embrace of the Savior. All Moravians were expected to write such narratives as they approached death (or in potentially life-threatening circumstances including times of war or, in the case of women, childbirth). These memoirs affirmed the idiosyncratic Christian vision and social norms of the Moravian community. They were read aloud to the congregation and were copied and circulated to Moravian settlements across five continents.²⁶ The *Lebensläufe* of African, Native American, and Asian converts played a special role, affirming the universality of the Moravians' particular practice of Christian salvation. The memoirs of enslaved people in Bethlehem rehearsed, later in life, the spiritual narrative that each had to develop in order to be admitted to the congregation and, in turn, to membership in the General Economy. It is important to remember that Bethlehem was a closed religious community. Only those who had embraced their particular spiritual vision could join the congregation. Any enslaved person who wished to become a full congregant—and to live as brother or sister within the General Economy—had to be capable of speaking in that idiom, of reproducing that narrative, and of organizing the facts of his or her life within its structure. Because intimate spiritual conversation within the choir was the heart of religious practice, enslaved Moravians had to perform that narrative, week after week, throughout their lives. The *Lebenslauf* was the lasting record of that performance. Those who challenged the terms of the community's spiritual narrative were not permitted to remain in Bethlehem, and most dissident voices were excluded from the archive.

It will, perhaps, be clear already that the Moravian slave memoir differs in dramatic ways from the later abolitionist slave narrative that has become so familiar to literary critics and historians of slavery. The abolitionist narrative denounces the institution of slavery itself from the perspective of formerly enslaved people who had joined a revolutionary movement to overthrow the slave system. The Moravian slave memoir, in contrast, does not recount the tale of successful escape. On the contrary, it retraces the path of entry into a privileged domain within the slave regime. It enacts the narrative that enabled a small number of African women and men to enter and remain within a community that provided relative safety, material security, cross-racial community, and spiritual fellowship but that nevertheless insisted on the Christian legitimacy of their enslavement.

Moravian slave narratives do not, then, float free from the challenges that Saidiya Hartman has described. Indeed, they reveal another aspect of the power dynamics that shape the archive of the slave regime. In these memoirs, one encounters not the violence that silences an enslaved person or that merely projects the master's fantasy upon her, but the power that commands her to speak and structures the story that she can tell.

From Venus to Magdalena

In "Venus in Two Acts," Saidiya Hartman laments, as other African American historians have done, that "there is not one extant autobiographical narrative of a female captive who survived the Middle Passage."²⁷ I would like to quote below such a memoir, from the archive of Moravian slavery.

This *Lebenslauf* can be found, in the original German manuscript, in the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem. It has been translated into English by the scholar Katherine M. Faull, who has published it in a collection of memoirs by eighteenth-century Moravian women.²⁸ It has been available to scholars and students in English for twenty years, but it has not, as far as I know, been discussed outside the context of Moravian history.

This lack of attention is striking because this memoir, probably written in the mid-1750s, appears to be the first piece of writing by an African woman in North America, or at least the earliest thus far discovered.²⁹ It is, in this sense, a foundational work of African American literature. I suspect that the memoir has not attracted more attention because of its enigmatic quality—and because of the paradoxical condition to which it testifies.

Here, in its entirety, is the memoir of the West African woman who had endured the Middle Passage in childhood and who was known in Bethlehem as Magdalena Beulah Brockden:

I was, as is known, a slave or the property of the late Mr. Brockden who bought me from another master, when I was ten years old and from then on I served his family until I was grown. Because my master was much concerned about the salvation of my soul and he saw that it was high time that I was protected from the temptations of the world and brought to a religious society, so he suggested to me that I should go to Bethlehem.

Because I had no desire to do so, I asked him rather to sell me to someone else, for at that time I still loved the world and desired to enjoy it fully. However, my master said to me lovingly that I should go to Bethlehem and at least try it. He knew that I would be well treated there. And if it did not suit me there so he would take me back at any time. When I arrived here I was received with such love and friendship by the official

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workers and all the Brethren that I was much ashamed. [She arrived on November 23, 1743 in Bethlehem.] I soon received permission to remain here. My behavior at the beginning was so bad; I really tried to be sent away again, which did not happen. The love of the Brethren, however, and in particular the great mercy of the Saviour that I came to feel at this time moved me to stay here. Some time after, my master came here and gave me his permission and blessing, and I became content and happy.

The Saviour showed great mercy to my poor soul, which was so deeply sunk in the slavery of sin that I never thought that I would be freed from these chains and could receive grace. How happy I was for the words, "Also for you did Jesus die on the stem of the cross so that you may be redeemed and eternally blessed." I understood this in faith and received forgiveness for my sins.³⁰

In these three paragraphs, Magdalena followed the required formula of the Moravian spiritual autobiography, recounting her sinfulness, resistance to salvation, and ultimate redemption. She also deployed some tropes common to Moravian memoirs of the period, including her spiritual obligation to overcome her initial "love" of "the world" in order to enter this religious community and her overcoming, too, of the "slavery of sin." In these ways, her memoir offered a conventional affirmation of Moravian piety. At the same time, Magdalena also employed these conventions in order to narrate some aspects of her enslavement—including the power-struggle with her apparently benevolent master and the involuntary character of her initial sojourn in Bethlehem.

But Magdalena has also left so much unsaid. She writes nothing whatever about her early childhood in West Africa, her experience of slave ship or subsequent sale. She succeeds in recording for posterity her resistance to her master and to the Bethlehem community, but her account of that struggle is muted and constrained. She records only those aspects of that experience that might be safely narrated within the idiom and contours of achieved Moravian piety. The rest remains unspoken.

In the pages below, I explore some of the meanings of Magdalena's enigmatic memoir. I do so, in part, as any literary critic would, by interpreting the implications and resonances of her words. My account draws, too, on other information about Magdalena and her contemporaries derived from the archive—and on legal documents left behind by Magdalena's master, the Philadelphia attorney, Charles Brockden. I also place Magdalena's narrative into dialogue with the memoir of her husband, Andrew, another enslaved West African whose *Lebenslauf* is four times as long and offers remarkable

details about the African slave trade and the violence of conversion. (Because of its length, I do not quote Andrew's memoir here in its entirety, but it is also readily available in an English translation by the Moravian scholar, Daniel E. Thorp.)³¹ Read alongside one another, Andrew and Magdalena's memoirs reveal a shared pattern of experience, a shared structure of feeling and of underlying power relations in Moravian Bethlehem. The memoirs complement one another, each addressing silences left by the other. Read in dialogue, they also reveal suggestive gendered differences. Andrew's narrative seeks to explain and manage the trauma of enslavement in Africa and the terror of conversion after arrival in North America. Magdalena focuses her memoir not on the original violent rupture from African homeland, but on a subsequent crisis produced by her pious Pennsylvania master's determination to control her body and police her desires. While Andrew was able to write at length about the violent entry into slavery, Magdalena was determined to testify to a later crisis that was, evidently, more difficult to express and more incompatible with the official Moravian narrative. She treated it more briefly and indirectly.

All of this might be presented in conventional academic prose, but I offer below a more literary account in an effort to address the silence and underlying violence that haunt this archive, even as I try to do justice to the words of these two enslaved Africans. In the account below, I have been faithful to the archive, presenting facts from the record and quoting from the documented statements of these two enslaved people and their masters. But my narration does not pretend to objectivity or completeness. The modernist form of the narration seeks, among other things, to mark the limits of what I know and of what the archive can disclose. Like Saidiya Hartman, I have found it useful to emphasize "incommensurate accounts" in order to displace the authorized and compulsory Moravian narrative that has thus far constrained readings of these slave memoirs. I have also tried to exercise narrative restraint, refraining from filling in archival gaps and marking subjunctively the places where I have been tempted to do so. With this series of vignettes, I seek to contribute to the collective effort to construct "counter-histories" of slavery. In these archival prose-poems, I employ one strategy for interpreting and knitting together the fragmentary record of enslaved people's experience. Each vignette explores one gesture or idea from these slave memoirs or a particular aspect of their historical context. But the form itself calls attention

to the truth—hidden by some conventional modes of academic history—that every use of the archive is also an interpretation, indelibly infused by the investments of the historian. While the prose-poem thus reminds the reader of the historian's interpretive presence, it also attempts to honor, with a particular intensity of focus, these rare memoirs composed by people still living within the slave regime. Here, in the archival prose-poem, each quotation and fact is also granted the status of metaphor, a local instance of something larger.

Andrew and Magdalena

NOT ALL ENSLAVED PEOPLE in Bethlehem had been purchased by the community. Some had been given, philanthropically, to the congregation by pious masters who were trying to ease their conscience.

Andrew the Moor and Magdalena Beulah Brockden each arrived in this way during Bethlehem's early years. They met and married there, and spent their entire adult lives in the Pennsylvania frontier town.

Like other Moravians, they recorded their memoirs, according to the conventions of the church. But as they told their stories—among the first slave narratives composed by Africans in North America—they found ways to describe their paradoxical condition as enslaved founders of the egalitarian city on a hill.³²

ANDREW began his story boldly by reminding his Moravian brothers and sisters that he came from a place about which they knew nothing, a place with its own names, culture and spiritual practice: "I, Andrew the Moor, was born in Ibo land, in the unknown part of Africa and was circumcised when I was 8 days old, according to the custom of my nation. My name was Ofodobendo Wooma."

Ofodobendo means, in the language of the Igbo people, "may righteousness guide my life."³³

ANDREW then explained how, in the brave new world of the 1730s, a little boy became a commodity.

His father died when he was eight years old and he went to live with an older brother, who "was poor and had five children of his own."

When the brother borrowed two goats from a man, following the custom of his village, he “gave me to him as security.” The boy would live with the neighbor and when the goats were returned within two years, the man would “give me back.”

But a new way of understanding the world had already reached the land of the Igbo.³⁴ This man had learned that there were other people who would buy a child outright and would pay more than the value of two goats. This neighbor apparently felt he had to have an excuse for departing from custom—so he gave the little boy “a pipe of tobacco” and when Ofodobendo “trampled” it “underfoot,” the man took this as “cause” for selling him to another.

It was then that Ofodobendo entered the modern world. He was now a commodity in a sophisticated economic system that moved goods efficiently across oceans and over continents to reach those who would pay the highest price and bring the largest profit to stock-holders with money to invest. In only “a short time,” he was “often bought and sold again” by people who wanted to have no relationship to him at all—not even to exploit his labor—but merely wished to skim the profit, as he was passed “from one nation to another,” in transit to the Atlantic coast.

At the moment he became an article of exchange, the child was torn away from family, village, homeland, language, culture, and the spirits of his ancestors. He was surrounded by people who spoke languages “I did not understand.” At the brink of starvation, he was forced to eat food “which in my country it is forbidden to eat.”

The little boy found himself locked in a room in which “the heads of at least 50 dead men hung” and he “trembled with fear.” He knew that he was in a nation that “generally does not eat men” but in which “some still eat human flesh to make themselves appear barbaric and important.” But this particular man, who wanted to gain power by posturing as a “cannibal,” could not afford the price now asked for Ofodobendo. So the boy was carried further, on a “vessel” with other captives, to “the coast of Guinea.”

There at ocean’s edge, he was still more terrified by the ghastly specter of “2 white people.” “We thought sure they were devils who wanted to take us, because we had never before seen a white man and never in our lives heard that such men existed.” While the pretentious cannibal had been unable to buy Ofodobendo, one of these white men—“the captain of a ship”—had money as well as appetite to consume him, and the boy was swallowed up into the belly of the slave-ship.

Decades later, he still remembered his grief—and the one who enabled him to survive. As he was being transported to the coast, he was “very sad,” he recalled, “until I came across a girl from my region who comforted me very much.” Through it all, “the girl and I kept together.”

As they embarked on the horror of the Middle Passage, these two children claimed kinship. Through a common language, they expressed the solidarity—let us call it love—which the slave trade could regard only as a flaw in the commodity, an impediment to the free circulation of goods in the market.

But the market prevailed and they were torn asunder on their arrival in the new world. “We were brought to Antigua,” where the girl appears to have suffered her fate in the sugar colonies, while Ofodobendo “was sold with some 30 others to a captain” who then transported and “sold me in N[ew] York to a Jew who named me York.”

The boy who had survived the Middle Passage was now twelve years old and the year was 1741. It was an extraordinary year to have arrived in (and been named for) New York, a city that contained more enslaved people than any in the thirteen colonies except Charleston, South Carolina. Fires had been set in the city, and the owning class was terrified that enslaved people, free black folk and poor whites (of both sexes) were fraternizing and, perhaps, plotting. Half of all enslaved men in the city were imprisoned; over a hundred black people were hanged, burned alive, gibbeted or banished. Of all this, Andrew recorded only, with a dry irony that may have been lost on his Moravian brethren, that during the year of his arrival: “I had nothing to do but run in the streets with other youths, where I learned many ungodly things.” He noted, too, that his master “planned to sell me in Madeira,” where many banished slaves were sold after the year of bloodshed—and York was “very worried” about this prospect.³⁵

AT JUST THIS MOMENT, York discovered Christianity.

The frightened African boy asked his neighbors how he might avoid being sold in Madeira, and they advised him to “ask God to help” and they taught him the Lord’s Prayer. He tried to imagine what he might request from the god of a slave-holding nation and decided to ask only for “a good master in this city.”

The slaveholders' god responded promptly: "The next day my master offered me to Mr. Noble, to whom he was in debt" and who was reputed to be "a very good master."

Thomas Noble was a merchant who had prospered in New York's slave economy. He behaved like other masters, with a cool head for profit, twice rejecting York as "too young and weak to do his work." He finally agreed, though, to a competition. York was brought "with another Negro youth to Mr. Noble's house for a 4 week trial" and York's fear of slave ship and auction block motivated him to prevail over his rival. Thus seasoned as a laborer, he entered the canny master's household.

Thomas Noble was also a devout Christian and his house was a gathering place for Moravian Brethren living in the city. From them, York heard the surprising claim that their god "had shed his blood for me and all black men" and "had as much love for me," moreover, "as for white people, which I did not believe." His experience in the belly of the slave ship, on the docks of Antigua, and in the streets of New York in 1741 had evidently convinced him that whatever god had power here "only loved people who were important in the world" and "possessed riches."

BUT THEN York's spiritual struggle began, as he tried to make sense of these slave-holding Christians and his place among them.

The longer he lived with them, the more they seemed to promise. They spoke often of the equality of the Savior's love. They sent him to school so he could learn to read and encouraged him to develop his own relationship to the word of God. The master's wife repeatedly invited him to pray with the family. And he began to hear of the city on a hill, where people of all races lived as brothers and sisters.

But in order to pursue these promises of dignity, community, and spiritual fellowship, the enslaved boy needed to overcome his distrust of those who claimed the right to own him. And he needed to profess a faith in their peculiar religion.

He would have to accept their obsession with sin and their spiritual paranoia. He became "very anxious about my salvation" and worried that he was sinning without intending to. He vowed each morning, as instructed, "to do my work for the day joyfully, to deal in love with every man, and to pray

continually.” But as an enslaved boy with no control over his labor, living in a city in which most regarded him as less than human, he found it difficult to fulfill his “resolution” and then he “dared not pray again until the next day.” He tried to accept the view that his own life was “sinful” and “to recognize my unworthiness and powerlessness daily.”

Alone in his room, as he struggled to embrace Christianity, he “often” felt—as he had when he first saw the white men who forced him into the slave ship—that “the devil was standing behind me.” At these moments, he felt “such fear” that he wanted to kill himself.

But he persisted, and he discovered that there was yet one more demand. If he wanted to become a brother in this community, he would need to accept a vision of himself not merely as a Christian, but as “first fruit,” as a representative early convert of his race. In his memoir, he assured his Moravian brothers and sisters that, at this time in his life, he had embraced that role: “I wished nothing so much as to become a genuine black offering to Jesus and a member of the congregation.”

Having done so, he believed himself ready for baptism, “but Mr. Noble refused.” York managed to recruit the sympathy of the celebrated evangelist, George Whitefield, who offered to baptize York himself. This offer seems to have placed Thomas Noble in an uncomfortable position, appearing to stand in the way of his own slave’s conversion. And so, in a gesture that affirmed his piety, “Mr. Noble permitted me to go to Bethlehem.”

York arrived at the city on a hill in January 1746 and was promptly baptized and renamed Andrew the Moor. A still earlier African convert had already carried this name but that man, a favorite of Count Zinzendorf’s and one of the first pilgrims at Menagachsink, had recently died. Some imagined it to be an honor for this seventeen-year-old boy—who had once been named Ofodobendo and then been baptized into slavery as York—to assume the role of Andrew the Moor.³⁶

Only a week later, he took communion, the most sacred rite of the Brethren, and became a full member of the church. Andrew felt “the bliss” of “enjoying the body and blood of the beloved savior.” It was his turn now to taste the flesh of the innocent—of the one who had been bound, tormented, and torn from those he loved but whose suffering could redeem humanity.

He had become a spiritual cannibal.

And by doing so, he acquired a new family, community, language, and god.

ONE OF THOSE who welcomed Andrew to the city on a hill was an enslaved fifteen-year-old West African girl, who had already been living in Bethlehem for two years.

That girl had been born in Little Popo on the Guinea coast of Africa in 1731, two years after Andrew's birth among the Igbo people.³⁷

She had been drawn into the nightmare of the slave-trade as a small child and was bought and sold repeatedly by the age of ten, when she was purchased by a wealthy white man named Charles Brockden—who called the enslaved girl, apparently without irony, Beulah, the promised land.

Brockden was a prominent Philadelphia attorney, Recorder of the Deeds and Master of the Rolls, and he purchased the African girl to serve as maid to his wife at their remote but “palatial residence” situated on 1,200 acres, twenty miles south of the city.³⁸ Purchasing an African child was costly, but a permanent investment: one could train the girl to meet one's needs, and masters had more power to punish insolence or misbehavior.

In her memoir, she said nothing about her African childhood or the Middle Passage, about the loss of family and homeland, about her grief or fear or rage. She may have been too young or too traumatized by these experiences to recall them. Or she may have had a keener sense than Andrew about what her Moravian sisters and brothers would approve of her narrating.

When she picked up her pen to write her story—perhaps the first African woman in North America to do so—she began, instead, with the brute fact of enslavement: “I was, as is known, a slave or the property of the late Mr. Brockden who bought me from another master, when I was ten years old.”³⁹

By the mere act of writing, in confident German (her third language), she repudiated the violent conceit of a society that made white men think they could reduce her to a piece of “property.”⁴⁰

IN THE REMAINDER of her narrative, she told the story that had to appear in every Moravian memoir: she was a sinner; she doubted her salvation; and then she was redeemed.

But through this idiom, she also told the tale of her involuntary servitude in Bethlehem.

The whole thing was her master's idea. When Beulah passed through puberty, and was developing the mind and body of a woman, Mr. Brockden became so agitated that he decided he had better forego the use of his enslaved young servant: "my master was much concerned about the salvation of my soul and he saw that it was high time that I was protected from the temptations of the world and brought to a religious society, so he suggested to me that I should go to Bethlehem."

It is not entirely clear whose "temptation" Mr. Brockden was most concerned about: whether it was Beulah's desire and action that might imperil her salvation, or his own, or others' toward her. But she made clear that her own wishes seemed wayward to the pious Mr. Brockden—and that she had no choice but to comply with his "suggest[ion]."

"I had no desire" to go to Bethlehem, she explained, and so strong were her feelings that "I asked him rather to sell me to someone else, for at that time I still loved the world and desired to enjoy it fully." But Brockden insisted. And he assured her that "if it did not suit me there so he would take me back at any time." She might, in short, live with Charles Brockden or go to Bethlehem, but he refused to allow her to go elsewhere, fearing that she might enjoy the wicked world in her own way.

In response, Beulah left his household but resorted repeatedly to "bad" behavior among the Brethren: "I really tried to be sent away again" but this "did not happen."

THE LEGAL RECORDS reveal a different aspect of this drama.

Charles Brockden was a Christian master disturbed and conflicted about his own slaveholding.

He acknowledged that he had purchased the child "for the service of my dear wife," but he insisted that he had done so without "any intention of worldly gain by continuing her in Slavery all the days of her life." Indeed, he had purchased her for her own good, "to prevent other persons from buying her for filthy lucre's sake." He sent Beulah to Bethlehem, he said, so that the Brethren could save her soul by converting her to Christianity.

But Brockden could not bear to relinquish his control over her. He refused to sell her to the Moravians or to renounce "my Right & Property to her

personal services." He claimed that he would not transfer his property to the Brethren because they "frequently travel abroad" and she might be endangered since "the poor Negroes or Africans are generally made Slaves of by every Nation & Religion of the Europeans." Brockden was equally concerned that Beulah might fall into the hands of his own "Heirs," who might "infringe the liberty of my [...] Negroe Woman Beulah." So Brockden insisted that he must remain her master for her own protection.

For nine years, Beulah lived in Bethlehem but remained Brockden's property.

When she was twenty-one, the attorney then "devised" an ingenious new arrangement. He drafted and signed a document manumitting her "absolutely," so that she could be claimed by no other master. But he also retained the legal power to "revoke" the manumission, rendering it "null & void," at any time "that I myself shall think fit."

For six more years, she lived in Bethlehem, a nominally free woman, but subject to re-enslavement by her devout master, for any reason—or none at all.

In 1758, Brockden finally relinquished his power to reclaim her as his property and she became, after fifteen years, a free black sister in the city of Bethlehem. She was twenty-seven years old.⁴¹

IT TOOK BEULAH longer than Andrew to be admitted as a full member of the congregation, presumably because her "behavior" in the early years had been "so bad."

But when she was baptized, she was (like several other African women) renamed Magdalena. The girl whom Charles Brockden viewed as a "promised land" reminded the Brethren, rather, of the harlot-apostle who first saw the Savior rise from the dead.

Having assumed the role of Magdalena, the West African girl became a Moravian sister.

In summarizing her spiritual journey at the end of her memoir, Magdalena drew on a familiar Moravian comparison between slavery and sin to describe the long, disturbing sojourn of her enslaved girlhood and young womanhood: "The Saviour showed great mercy to my poor soul, which was so deeply sunk in the slavery of sin that I never thought that I would be freed from these chains." But by acknowledging the sinfulness of her

soul, Magdalena had discovered, at last, a way to break free from slavery itself.

MAGDALENA AND ANDREW were among the most fortunate slaves in America.

In their memoirs, Andrew referred to “my dear Bethlehem” and Magdalena affirmed that, from her first arrival in the city on a hill, she was “received” with “love and friendship” by “all the Brethren”—and that, over time, their love, as well as the “mercy of the Saviour,” ultimately “moved me to stay here” and to be “content and happy.”

What they had seen on slave ships and in the streets of Antigua, New York, and Philadelphia threw into stark relief the privileges they enjoyed in Bethlehem.

In their early years, Andrew lived in the Single Brothers House and Magdalena among the Single Sisters. They ate, slept, worked and worshipped with their choir mates from many nations, on terms of material equality and interracial intimacy. Andrew had “blessed conversations” with brother Nathanael Seidel, his choir laborer, and “opened my whole heart to him.” Magdalena was similarly mentored by Anna Rosina Anders, the charismatic young leader of the Single Sisters, who had also experienced much vulnerability in her youth. Andrew and Magdalena helped to build a community in which wealth was shared equally and everyone received an education. Like everyone else in Bethlehem, Magdalena contributed to building the majestic Single Brothers House and, through her labor at the communal laundry, she earned a full and equal place in the General Economy. With his brothers, including the Dane, Hans Christensen, and the African, Christian Anton, Andrew helped to construct the multi-purpose oil mill and the first system of municipal running water in America.⁴²

Andrew and Magdalena helped to welcome other Africans, and the Lenape, Mahicans, Wampanoags, Arawaks and Inuits to Bethlehem, where they sang in many languages about the blood and wounds.

And in Bethlehem, Magdalena and Andrew found one another. Two West African orphans, survivors of the Middle Passage, they claimed kinship. In the shadow of the choir houses—as Andrew and another girl had done in the shadow of the slave ship—they comforted one another.

They waited to marry until Magdalena was a free woman.

They had their own hour for sexual communion, during which they were free to caress one another and to affirm that, through the pleasure of their own bodies, they could experience together the grace of God.

Magdalena bore three children, all of whom died in infancy. Only one survived long enough to be baptized, and he assumed, in his turn, the name of Andrew.

When she died in the Widows House at the age of 89, Magdalena was one of the last surviving members of Bethlehem's founding generation.

Andrew died in 1779 in the city on a hill, where he had been, for three decades, enslaved.⁴³

History of the Present, Practical Past

In one sense, this act of storytelling is doomed to failure. Even with the aid of their memoirs, we cannot today tell a story that will enable Magdalena and Andrew to emerge fully from the archive of Moravian slavery. As we read their narratives, we can hear their voices. But the constraints of the *Lebenslauf* prevented them from describing fully what they had endured and resisted. Here, as elsewhere, the archive withholds too much.

This does not mean, however, that Moravian slave memoirs reveal nothing or that efforts to narrate their experience of bondage must fail completely. Their brief autobiographies enable us to know more about Magdalena and Andrew than about most survivors of the Middle Passage. They provide a glimpse into an idiosyncratic corner of American slavery and a fuller understanding of the larger slave regime. They reveal the ineradicable structural violence of the slave system, even when it had been purged of rape and lash. They also reveal new depths of America's foundational paradox. These Africans were enslaved in a community that, in the middle of the eighteenth century, abolished poverty, shared wealth equally, educated women and men of all races, and emancipated women to serve as leaders. They were enslaved in a community that practiced startling and radical forms of equality. Their memoirs challenge us to recognize these egalitarian practices, even as they testify to forms of domination that vitiated them. To do justice to the enslaved Africans who lived in Moravian choir houses requires that we acknowledge this egalitarian promise, as well as its betrayal.

I am writing a book that places Magdalena and Andrew within a broader history of the present, narrating their story as one episode among many within the unfinished project of freedom. The book acknowledges them as two of the founders of the city of Bethlehem—and it traces the forms of domination and the aspirations to equality that link them to the present life of this post-industrial city. The economic forces that turned African children like Magdalena and Andrew into commodities to be bought and sold on the market in the middle of the eighteenth century created, a hundred years later, steel mills that reorganized every aspect of life in the city of Bethlehem. In those mills, other workers from across the Atlantic (voluntary immigrants, not enslaved captives) were routinely maimed and killed on the job and when they tried to organize a union in the early twentieth century, they were shot and clubbed in the street. That evolving economic system brought steel production to an end in Bethlehem at the close of the twentieth century, replacing the steel plant with a casino—and it has consigned to poverty today ninety percent of the children in South Bethlehem, where I live. The racial dynamics of Moravian Bethlehem, where Andrew and Magdalena were embraced as choir mates but also owned as chattel, later evolved into a system of *de facto* segregation that excluded African Americans from jobs at the steel plant—and from the research university that was built with steel company profits. The history of gendered coercion and control to which Magdalena testified, enigmatically and courageously, has shaped every institution in the city of Bethlehem, from the 1740s to the present. But this history of the present recognizes, too, that the half-buried aspirations of Magdalena and Andrew—and the betrayed promise of equality in Moravian Bethlehem—have also resonated over two and a half centuries. The immigrant steelworkers built a union that eventually secured pensions, health plans, and safer working conditions, transforming the city once again into a model of working-class prosperity. Civil rights activists desegregated the university and the steel plant alike, providing access to union jobs and college educations for women and people of color. Others continue to pursue the unfinished feminist transformation of our city and to work for racial equality and economic security.

One might write such a history of the present in many different ways. In the book from which I have excerpted the vignettes about Magdalena and Andrew, I have employed one modernist narrative strategy for mapping deep structures of domination and evolving traditions of emancipatory aspiration over three centuries in one iconic American city. The experimental form of

the book unfolds this story through a series of archival vignettes. Because of its emphasis on compression and concreteness, the text invites the reader to make comparisons across time, to hold past and present in the mind at once. It is an open form that asks the reader to consider how the experience of Bethlehem's enslaved founders does and does not resemble the experience of those who came later. Its fragmentary quality reminds the reader, on every page, that writing history is not a science, but always an act of storytelling, partial and interpretive. Each story is broken and incomplete, doomed to one kind of failure. This must be the case, not least because all the subalterns—not only the enslaved Africans, but also the exploited steelworkers, those excluded from the university, the victims of sexual violence—have all left more fragmentary records than those who held more power in this city, as in others. But a broken story may still be powerful: a mosaic may still provide a map. In this narrative endeavor, I join many humanists, past and present, who have reached for literary responses to the political constraints of the archive, composing nonfiction stories to chart the workings of power and to extend our visions of what might yet be possible.

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Seth Moglen is associate professor of English at Lehigh University. He is the author of *Mourning Modernity: Literary Modernism and the Injuries of American Capitalism* and he has published an edition of T. Thomas Fortune's *Black and White: Land, Labor and Politics in the South*.

Notes

1. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).
2. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938).
3. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (1975), 557–64.

4. Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (1996).
5. Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (2005), 60–63.
6. Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (June 2008): 1–14.
7. *Ibid.*, 4, 7, 10, 9.
8. *Ibid.*, 3–4, 11–13.
9. Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (2007), 9.
10. Hayden White, *The Practical Past* (2014).
11. White, *Practical Past*: Preface and Chapter 1, ix–24.
12. Jon F. Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763–1840* (1998) and Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (2005).
13. On Moravian Bethlehem’s founding generation, see, Craig D. Atwood, *Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem* (2004); Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (2009); Beverly Prior Smaby, *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem: From Communal Mission to Family Economy* (1988); and Joseph Mortimer Levering, *A History of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1741–1892* (1903). On egalitarianism of Bethlehem’s early years, see also Hellmuth Erbe, *Bethlehem, Pa. Eine Kommunistische Herrnhuter Kolonie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (1929) and Seth Moglen, “Excess and Utopia: Meditations on Moravian Bethlehem,” *History of the Present* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 122–147.
14. On abolition of General Economy and its effects, see Smaby, *Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem*, 32–36, 57–8, 119–20, 230–43 and Engel, *Religion and Profit*, 161–81.
15. For Moravian use of the “city upon a hill” image, see, for example, the letter (Feb. 27, 1756) from August Spangenberg, leader of Bethlehem’s General Economy, addressed to fellow Moravians in North Carolina: in Moravian Archives, Southern Province, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, vault 3, box 1, nos. 6, 20 (trans. Elizabeth Marx), quoted in Sensbach, *Separate Canaan*, 76.
16. Steven Craig Harper, *Promised Land: Penn’s Holy Experiment, the Walking Purchase, and the Dispossession of Delawares, 1600–1763* (2006), 46–85.
17. Letter from August Spangenberg to Charles Brockden, May 1746, quoted in Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on the Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700–1763* (2003): 96. On Moravian–Native American relations, in addition to Merritt, Engel and Harper, see Amy C. Shutt, *Peoples of the River Valleys: The Odyssey of the Delaware Indians* (2007); William A. Pencak and Daniel K Richter, eds., *Friends and Enemies in Penn’s Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania* (2004); and Gunlög Fur, *A Nation of Women: Gender and Colonial Encounters Among the Delaware Indians* (2009).
18. On the underlying contradictions of Moravian slavery, see especially Jon Sensbach, *Separate Canaan* and *Rebecca’s Revival*. On slavery in Bethlehem specifically, see *Separate Canaan*, 48–55; John Catron, “Early Black-Atlantic Christianity in the Middle Colonies: Social Mobility and Race in Moravian Bethlehem,” *Pennsylvania History* 7, no. 3 (2009): 301–345; Katherine Faull Eze, “Self-Encounters: Two Eighteenth-

Century African Memoirs from Moravian Bethlehem," in *Crosscurrents: African Americans, Africa, and Germany in the Modern World*, ed. David McBride, Leroy Hopkins, and Carol Blackshire-Belay (1998): 29–52; and Daniel B. Thorp, "Chattel with a Soul: the Autobiography of a Moravian Slave," in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 112, no. 3 (July 1988): 433–51.

19. *Bethlehem Diary*, trans. and ed. Kenneth G. Hamilton (1971), 1:105–6 (entry for Oct 31, 1742); italics in original.

20. Sensbach, *Separate Canaan*, 53; on enslaved people becoming communicants, see Catron, 318.

21. On the Moravians' mystical marriage theology and conception of marital sex as liturgical practice, see Atwood, *Community of the Cross*, 91–95; Paul Peucker, "In the Blue Cabinet: Moravians, Marriage, and Sex," *Journal of Moravian History* 10 (2011): 7–37 and Paul Peucker, *A Time of Sifting: Mystical Marriage and the Crisis of Moravian Piety in the Eighteenth Century* (2015).

22. Spangenberg's memorandum of Jan. 8, 1760, in the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, PA, box marked "West Indies, Miscellaneous Letters, 1739–1769" (trans. Lothar Madeheim); quoted in Susan M. Lenius, "Slavery and the Moravian Church in North Carolina" (honors thesis, Moravian College, 1974), 108.

23. On late medieval origins of the Unity of the Brethren, see Craig D. Atwood, *The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius* (2009), 1–189.

24. On "first fruits," see Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*, 189–93 and Atwood, *Community of the Cross*, 49.

25. See Moglen, "Excess and Utopia."

26. See Katherine M. Faull, trans. and ed., *Moravian Women's Memoirs: Their Related Lives* (1997), xxxi–xl; Smaby, *Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem*, 126–143 and Atwood, *Community of the Cross*, 198. For details about the process of soliciting and composing memoirs—and a mid 18th-century template of questions to be answered—see Thomas J. McCullough, "The Most Memorable Circumstances: Instructions for the Collection of Personal Data from Church Members, circa 1752," *Journal of Moravian History* 15, no. 2 (2015): 158–76.

27. Hartman, "Venus," 3.

28. Memoir of "Magdalena Beulah Brockden" (1731–1820), in memoirs, MSS, in Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, PA. (All subsequent references to Moravian Archives in Bethlehem cited as MAB.) The original German manuscript has been translated and published by Faull, in *Moravian Women's Memoirs*, 77–78. (There is also an eighteenth-century English manuscript variant of Magdalena's memoir in MAB, which appears to contain errors, including the mis-spelling or misnaming of her master.) The translator has also provided the most detailed analysis of Magdalena's memoir thus far: see Faull Eze, "Self-Encounters."

29. Faull, 77.

30. This version, and all subsequent quotations below, are from Faull's translation—which includes the parenthetical addition of the date of Magdalena's arrival in Bethlehem.

31. For German manuscript original, see “Andrew the Moor” (?–1779) in memoirs, MSS, MAB. For English translation, and discussion of the memoir, see Thorp, “Chattel with a Soul,” 433–451. For comparison of Andrew and Magdalena’s memoirs, see also Faull Eze, “Self-Encounters.”

32. If composed in the 1750s as scholars have thus far proposed, Magdalena and Andrew’s memoirs would predate all extant slave narratives included in William L. Andrews’ comprehensive online database, *North American Slave Narratives*: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/chronautobio.html>. (Andrews refers to one “Declaration and Confession of Jeffrey, a Negro, Was Executed at Worcester, Oct. 17, 1745” that predates the memoirs of Magdalena and Andrew, but the website indicates that “no copy of this text can be located.”)

33. All quotations are from Thorp’s translation of Andrew’s memoir in “Chattel with a Soul,” 447–451. On meaning of Ofodobendo, see Faull Eze, “Self-Encounters”: 48.

34. The Igbo people—long referred to by Europeans as the “Ibo”—are an ethnic group living today mainly in southern Nigeria, but also found in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. Their descendants, victims of the slave trade, can also be found throughout the former slave societies of North and South America and the Caribbean.

35. On the events in New York during 1741, see Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan* (2005).

36. Menagachsink was the Lenape name for the place on which the first Moravian pioneers (including the first “Andrew the Moor”) built the town of Bethlehem. On that earlier African “Andrew,” see Thorp, 443.

37. Although her master speculated that she had been born in the “Kingdom or Country of Angola,” Faull identifies her birthplace as the coastal town known to Europeans as Little Popo—located on what slave-traders called the “Slave Coast” in present day Togo. Catron contends that Magdalena “always thought of herself as a Pawpaw from the Gold Coast” (336). See Faull, *Memoirs*, 77 and “The Manumission of the Negro Beulah, otherwise Magdalena,” March 3, 1753, in MAB, Box: Slaves; original document scanned and accessible at *Bethlehem Digital History Project*: http://bdhp.moravian.edu/community_records/bills_manumissions/manumission/manumitmag.html.

38. Hon. John F. Bodine’s history of Squankum, quoted (without citation) in John Clement, “Charles Brockden” in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 12:2 (1888): 185.

39. All quotations from Magdalena’s memoir from translation in Faull, *Moravian Women’s Memoirs*, 77–78.

40. In addition to her African mother tongue, Beulah would have spoken English in Brockden’s household, before learning German in Bethlehem.

41. See “Manumission of the Negro Beulah.”

42. For Andrew’s “blessed conversation,” see Andrew’s memoir in Thorp, 450. On Anna Rosina Anders’ childhood and leadership of Single Sisters choir, see her *Lebenslauf* in Faull, *Moravian Women’s Memoirs*, 5–9. On the participation of everyone

in the community in building the Single Brothers' House, see *Chor-Diarium der Ledigen Brüder* for Aug. 2, 1748 in MAB, trans and quoted in William J. Murtagh, *Moravian Architecture and Town Planning*, 56 (footnote 74). On role of Andrew and Christian Anton in oil mill and waterworks, see "Oil Mill Account Book" and other documents in MAB, file box "Oil Mill, Building of the Oil Mill, 1764–1784," trans and ed. Carter Litchfield, Hans-Joachim Finke, Stephen G. Young and Karen Zerbe Huetter, *The Bethlehem Oil Mill 1745–1934: German Technology in Early Pennsylvania* (1984), 25, 29, 79–82, 91–92, 97.

43. It is not clear whether or not Andrew was still enslaved at the time of his death in 1779. Thorp (434) claims he was enslaved until the end of his life. Catron (321–22) describes an ambiguous dispute between Magdalena and city officials in 1784, in which she argued that Andrew should have been exempted from paying rent before his death because he was enslaved—whereas church authorities asserted that he had been freed at the end of his life and was thus required to pay rent.