

■ Resisting Sympathy, Reclaiming Authority: The Politics of Representation in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl**

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the politics of Harriet Jacobs's representation in her slave narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. While Jacobs adopts the rhetoric of sympathy, popular in early nineteenth-century American sentimental and domestic novels, it is important to note that there is a tendency in Jacobs's narrative to resist sympathy, which tends to obliterate the difference of the suffering other, to expose the suffering other under the public gaze, and to deprive the other of privacy and agency. In a word, in the operation of sympathy, the suffering other has neither authority nor subjectivity to determine his/her life. My analysis of Jacobs's representation of her experience of being abused under slavery seeks to demonstrate how Jacobs reclaims her difference, puts emphasis on the authority of her experience, and proposes a different view on sympathy that would allow the suffering other a certain degree of privacy and agency. More specifically, rather than constructing imaginary identification between the sympathizer and the suffering other, Jacobs highlights the difference of her experience, so as to claim her authority; also, by delineating the moments of silence, adopting the language

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of motherhood, and deploying the trope of veiling, Jacobs shows a strong desire not to be present, heard, and seen, which revolts against the logic of sympathy, that is, to have the suffering other displayed in the scene of sufferings.

Keywords: sympathy, authority, the politics of representation, slave narratives, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

In “The Site of Memory,” Toni Morrison traces her literary heritage back to nineteenth-century slave narratives and notices that in relating their experience, those narrators were “silent about many things” and “there was no mention of their interior life” (110). Being a novelist, Morrison takes up the job to “rip that veil drawn over ‘proceedings too terrible to relate’” (110). Morrison is aware that slave narratives have much to do with its political aim, the abolition of slavery, and that the abolitionism not only promotes the popularity but also regulates the representation of slave narratives. Besides the political missions of slave narratives, what and how to represent in slave narratives is clearly specified. As Morrison notes, facts are what slave narratives are aimed at representing, but interior life of those narrators or whatever unpalatable is inappropriate for the reader of slave narratives. Morrison’s remarks point out two significant aspects about slave narratives: first, slave narratives have a strong desire to move the reader, to change the reader’s mind from advocating slavery to abolishing slavery, or in a word, to arouse the reader’s sympathy toward the sufferings under slavery; second, the politics of representation, i.e., how to represent their experience in order to achieve their mission, is the primary concern for those narrators.

As Morrison is concerned about what facts fail to convey and how the reader’s sympathy gains control over the representation of slave narratives, the literary critic, William L. Andrews, points out that as a sort of African-American autobiography, slave narratives should be reconsidered in terms of their rhetorical and aesthetic strategies, other than the question of veracity that nineteenth-century abolitionism highly valued. Instead of appealing to the reader’s sympathy, he argues, slave narratives tend to construct a self outside the margin of the normal and, as a result, alienate the reader (1-3). Indeed, both the representation of slave narratives and its relation to sympathy are central to critical attention. This paper aims to discuss Harriet Jacobs’s slave narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*,¹ written from 1853 to 1858 and published in 1861, with a focus on the rhetoric of sympathy, which is simultaneously adopted and brought into question. My discussion seeks to demonstrate that implicit in her attempt to arouse the reader’s sympathy is a tendency to resist what accompanies sympathy, that is, the exposure of her self and the scrutinizing gaze of the reader. Further, the politics of Jacobs’s representation will be discussed to show her desire “not to be present” in

¹ Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Contexts and Criticism*, edited by Nellie Y. McKay and Frances Smith Foster, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001. All reference to this edition is put in parentheses. It must be noted that the author, Harriet Jacobs, uses the pseudonym, Linda Brent, in the narrative, but I will use Jacobs when discussing the author’s writing and Linda when referring to the events narrated in the text.

the scene of sufferings. From the rhetoric of sympathy, intending to expose the horrors of slavery and the sufferings of slaves, to the politics of representation, desiring to disappear, the contradiction in the trajectory of Jacobs's slave narrative obliges us to reconsider the ethics of sympathy.

Since its publication, Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* has caused considerable controversy. The identity of its author was not verified until 1981 when Jean Fagan Yellin confirmed, through Jacobs's letters and Lydia Maria Child's correspondence, that Jacobs was the author.² For one thing, the use of the pseudonym, Linda Brent, increases the difficulty of verifying the identity of the author; for another thing, the fact that Child edited and introduced Jacobs's slave narrative also induces commentators to suspect that Child was the real author. In 1992, Bruce Mills clarified the relationship between Jacobs, the author, and Child, the editor, as well as the extent to which Child revised, for instance, the arrangements of the chapters and the endings of Jacobs's narrative.³ Thus, skepticism concerning Harriet Jacobs's authorship has been resolved.

With regard to the authenticity of what Jacobs relates in her slave narrative, however, critics seem to have more questions than answers. For example, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese claims that her story is at best "a crafted presentation—as a fiction or as a cautionary tale—not a factual account" (392) and argues that Jacobs does not tell the truth, since she is unlikely to escape from her master's sexual violation. Jacobs's narrative is not so much straightforward as selective. P. Gabrielle Foreman notices that Jacobs's narrative is characterized more by "coded silences" and indeterminacy than by "transparency" ("Manifest in Signs" 77). In particular, Jacobs's reluctance to reveal more about her intimate, sexual relationship with the white man, Mr. Sands, as well as her silence about part of her familial genealogy, lead critics and the reader to question the authenticity of Jacobs's narrative.

Even though Frances Smith Foster is right in suggesting that the unreliability of Jacobs's narrative results from the resistance of the reader to accept "her authority and the authenticity of her statements" ("Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents*" 97), more and more critics discuss the politics of representation in Jacobs's slave narrative, which negotiates with the most significant requirement of slave narratives as a genre, that is, its authenticity. Donald Gibson points out Jacobs's desire to stretch

² Jean Fagan Yellin, "Written By Herself: Harriet Jacobs' Slave Narrative," *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Contexts and Criticism*, ed. Nellie Y. McKay and Frances Smith Foster (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001) 203-09.

³ See Bruce Mills, "Lydia Maria Child and the Endings to Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*," *American Literature* 64.2 (1992): 255-72.

the boundary of the genre of slave narratives to accommodate her experience of sexual abuse under slavery (170). However, while Jacobs's slave narrative uncovers the sexual violation of enslaved women, the emphasis on the authenticity of slave narratives would again expose the victims to the trauma. To avoid such exposure, Jacobs has to negotiate with the generic demand of slave narratives in representing the horrors of slavery. In this sense, silence becomes an important strategy in Jacobs's representation of the unspeakable and unspoken subject. As Joanne M. Braxton and Sharon Zuber claims, Jacobs "appropriates silence to empower both her text and the character of 'Linda Brent'" (146). On the other hand, what critics fails to note is that silence functions as a trope of veiling, which is a significant aspect of Jacobs's representation and which contradicts sympathetic discourses to display or represent the sufferings.

Apart from the strategy of silence, the politics of representation in Jacobs's narrative which critics have explored includes the appropriation of the genre of sentimental or domestic fiction and the metaphors of "disguise," "concealment," and "loophole." Sandra Gunning has pointed out that Jacobs falls into line behind sentimental and domestic novelists as her narrative focuses on women's virtues and maternity in order to preclude "discussions of sexual exploitation and miscegenation as subjects unmentionable in a white familial setting" (333). The appropriation of sentimental or domestic fiction aims not just to represent the unrepresented but to avoid unveiling the unrepresentable. Jacqueline Goldsby suggests that not only does Jacobs write in disguise by using the pseudonym, but writing for her is a form of disguise (16). Indeed, representation may not be the only object of Jacobs's narrative; instead, what is at stake is the way of representation that empowers the other rather than renders the other vulnerable. Similarly, Michelle Burnham argues that the interplay of confession and concealment enables a black feminist agency in Jacobs's narrative (281). Likewise, the trope of "loophole" is interpreted as the site for fighting against slavery, "a venue of escape" (Smith 29) and a space for "at once evasive and direct action" (Gibson 170).

Despite the fact that scholars have noted that Jacobs's narrative is characterized by silence, concealment and disguise, seldom do they connect these strategies of her representation to her appropriation of and resistance against the rhetoric of sympathy. Indeed, the rhetoric of sympathy was widely used in early American politics and culture to ensure social order and stability and to bridge the gap between self and other; America's founders read the works of moral philosophers, which were concerned about natural human affective responses to others' sufferings, and sentimental fiction participated in the efforts of educating American readers through the use of sympathy (Boudreau

5-7).⁴ For instance, in such novels about Native Americans as *Hobomok* and *Hope Leslie*, the sentimental plots focus on the sympathetic relation between the white characters and the racial other, which promotes a sense of identification, rather than difference, between the colonizer and the racial other. By the same token, in the abolitionist novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the readers are encouraged to imagine themselves in the position of the slaves. Jacobs's adoption of sentimental, domestic fiction is recognized as a way of appealing to the reader's sympathetic identification, but her claim of difference is not generally acknowledged. This essay seeks to explore the relationship between Jacobs's view on sympathy and the politics of representation in her slave narrative. More specifically, my discussion focuses on Jacobs's ambivalence about the reader's (mostly white, middle-class women) sympathetic identification, which obliterates the difference of her experience. Further, in this essay, the politics of Jacobs's representation is reconsidered and shown as a way that Jacobs revises the work of sympathy.

The term of sympathy demands clarification. To some extent, sympathy is interchangeable with such terms as "pity," "compassion," "empathy" and "sensibility." While there is an overlap among these terms, sympathy is used to denote a sense of correspondence and identification, but the other terms are not.⁵ In Jacobs's slave narrative, as well as other sentimental novels, sympathy implies that one imagines being situated in the other's circumstances and feels the other's feelings, and it involves the correspondence in feeling between one and the other or the capacity of entering into the other's feeling.⁶ In a word, a sense of identification is achieved through sympathy. The work of the eighteenth-century British philosopher, Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, published in 1759 and influential in understanding the affective tie that holds a human society, explains clearly how sympathy functions to create a sense of shared feelings between one and the other:

⁴ For more discussions on the rhetoric of sympathy used in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century American sentimental fiction, see Julia Stern, *The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel* (Chicago and London: The U of Chicago P, 1997); Elizabeth Barnes, *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (New York: Columbia UP, 1997).

⁵ For more discussions on the relation of sympathy to romanticism and on the difference between sympathy and empathy, see Thomas J. McCarthy, *Relationships of Sympathy* (England: Scolar Press, 1997); on the relation of sympathy to drama, see David Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy* (Chicago and London: The U of Chicago P, 1997); on the relation of sympathy to sensibility and literature in general, see Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London and New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1986).

⁶ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, sympathy can refer to, among other things, "the quality or state of being affected by the condition of another with a feeling similar or corresponding to that of the other; the fact or capacity of entering into or sharing the feelings of another or others; fellow-feeling" ("Sympathy." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. Online. SUNY University at Buffalo. <http://dictionary.oed.com.gate.lib.buffalo.edu>).

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is *by the imagination* only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. Neither can that faculty help us to this any other way, than *by representing* to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imagination copy. By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, *we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him*, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them." (11-12; emphasis mine)

According to Smith, what is involved in the operation of sympathy are imagination and representation, and the desired outcome is a certain degree of identification between self and other. In other words, the work of sympathy is to construct sympathetic identification, an imaginary relation between self and other (Barnes 2-4). What is overlooked in Smith's theory of sympathy, however, is the risk that sympathy, with its dependence on imagination and representation, might render the other subjected to the sympathetic gaze and the violence of the representation and deprived of any protection, right and agency to resist against exposure and voyeurism.

Relevant to our reading of Jacobs's slave narrative, Smith's idea of sympathy makes it clear that sympathy is predicated on one's imagination of the other's suffering and representation of one's own feelings. Indeed, sympathetic identification, which involves imagination and representation, is precisely what Jacobs's slave narrative brings into question. Granted that Jacobs recognizes the importance of sympathy and resorts to the rhetoric of sympathy, there are more concerns about the effect of sympathetic identification. In the following, the essay will focus on Jacobs's skepticism about sympathetic identification, her claim on the difference and the authority of her experience, her question about the requirement for sympathy, that is, the exposure of the object, as well as the politics of Jacobs's representation which offers a revision of sympathy.

Resisting Sympathy, Reclaiming Difference

Before she set out to write her own story, Jacobs hoped that the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe, could write the story of her experience. Jacobs's friend Amy Post gave an account of Jacobs's past experience in a letter to Stowe and asked Stowe to write down Jacobs's story. The outcome almost

completely destroyed Jacobs's confidence and the problem of distrust emerged. Rather than replying to Post or writing to Jacobs for more information, Stowe wrote a letter, with Post's letter enclosed, to Mrs. Willis, Jacobs's employer at that time, to request confirmation of Jacobs's experience, and Stowe suggested that if Jacobs's story could be verified, it be incorporated into Stowe's *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This move of Stowe's deeply hurt Jacobs.⁷ Jacobs had been hesitant about letting her employers know about her status as a fugitive. That Stowe wrote to her employer was tantamount to betrayal, and also, for Stowe, Jacobs was not endowed with any capacity to authorize her own story, but the white employer was. By implication, the worth of Jacobs's experience is merely its documentable facts, supporting the authenticity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Jacobs turned down Stowe's request, and in her letter to Post, Jacobs expressed the desire to authorize and write her own story (172). As Foster notes, Jacobs "soon learned that she had to fight to protect her story and to establish her right to determine what should be told and how to tell it" ("Resisting Incidents" 318). Indeed, the problem of authority remained when Jacobs's narrative came into publication. The firm Thayer and Eldridge agreed to publish Jacobs's work on condition that Lydia Maria Child was willing to preface the text⁸ and besides, Amy Post and George Lowther were solicited for the "Appendix" (Garfield, "Vexed Alliances" 285). That is to say, Lydia Maria Child, Amy Post, and George Lowther are sanctioned to function as the authority to support the authenticity of Jacobs's experience, despite the fact that it is Jacobs who experiences the sufferings. As a victim, Jacobs's authority is not acknowledged. Even though sympathetic discourses demand the representation of the suffering other, the suffering other is not necessarily endowed with power to speak for him/herself. Indeed, there exists an imbalanced power structure between the sympathetic subject and the suffering other.

Besides the problem of authority, the interaction between Stowe, the abolitionist, white woman, and Jacobs, the ex-slave woman, reveals their different views on sympathy. Undoubtedly, Stowe is sympathetic toward slaves, but in her view, all the facts about the object of sympathy should be presented, verified, documentable, and thus usable for the purpose of abolitionism. However, for

⁷ For the discussion of the Stowe event in Jacobs's life, see Deborah M. Garfield, "Vexed Alliances: Race and Female Collaborations in the Life of Harriet Jacobs" in *Harriet Jacobs and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: New Critical Essays* (275-91).

⁸ Indeed, Child's introduction also draws critical attention as far as the power dynamic between the white abolitionist feminist/the editor and the ex-slave woman/the author is concerned. For example, Deborah M. Garfield points out the underlying assumption in Child's introduction that "the white mentor remains veiled while her black sister lifts the curtain both from slavery's monstrosity and from her own body" ("Speech, Listening, and Female Sexuality in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*" 31).

Jacobs, what is at stake in the examination of the object is whether the object could have right to privacy and whether everything about the object should be exposed, even including the body of the object. Despite her need of sympathy, such exposure in the operation of sympathy disconcerts Jacobs.

The narrative anxiety about sympathy is manifest from the beginning of Jacobs's *Incidents*. For one thing, the content of the narrative, the subject of sexual violation, makes Jacobs concerned about the reader's disgust or contempt. Even in her introduction, Child is aware that what is stated in the narrative might be deemed as polluting the reader's ear, and Child claims, "I do this for the sake of my sisters in bondage, who are suffering wrongs so *foul*, that our ears are too delicate to listen to them" (6; emphasis mine). In other words, Child encourages the reader to subdue the sense of disgust, "in the hope of arousing conscientious and reflecting women at the North to a sense of their duty in the exertion of moral influence on the question of Slavery" (6). However, in Child's sympathetic appeal, there is a difference between the reader, Northern white women, distinguished as the moral subject, and slave women as powerless victims. Implicit in Child's support of Jacobs's act of uttering the unutterable is the differentiation of the abject—or the unclean, i.e., Jacobs and other slave women, who suffer foul wrongs and therefore are contaminated—from the subject, pure and conscientious Northern women, who have the capacity for asserting moral influence. Though Child intends to rescue "my sisters in bondage" from the wrongs, to nullify the difference between wronged sisters and Northern white women, the ability to rescue is definitely predicated on their difference.

Disgust and contempt, the possible readerly responses, are related to the fact that sexual exploitation which slave women suffer tends to be viewed as sexual complicity. Again, this marks the difference between slave women and white women and leads to Jacobs's skepticism about sympathetic identification. Writing about her experience of sexual abuse, physically or verbally, will subject her body to the reader's examination of whether she is complicit or not. Declining sympathy, Jacobs states in her preface,

I have not written my experiences in order to attract attention to myself; on the contrary, it would have been more pleasant to me to have been silent about my own history. Neither do I care to excite sympathy for my own sufferings. But I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse. (5)

Jacobs's hesitation to incite sympathy is recurrent throughout the narrative, especially when the narrator, Linda, comes to describing how her master's foul talks have been haunting her. Obviously, Jacobs intends to direct the reader's atten-

tion to the collective sufferings of slaves rather than her individual experience.

An anecdote about Sojourner Truth, an ex-slave and ardent abolitionist, illuminates how the audience's imagination or gaze focuses upon the black body rather than on inhumanities and injustice under slavery. In an antislavery meeting, Truth was confronted by the audience's challenge about her femininity. One of the ladies present, that the doubt should be removed by their testimony."⁹ This request challenged both Truth's sexuality and her authority as a witness to the injustice of slavery. For one thing, Truth had to uncover her body to prove herself; for another thing, it was white people who owned the authority to support Truth's testimony. Truth was reported to reply,

her breasts had suckled many a white babe, to the exclusion of her own offspring; that some of those white babies had grown to man's estate; that although they had sucked her colored breasts, they were . . . far more manly than they (her persecutors) appeared to be; and she quietly asked them, as *she disrobed her bosom*, if they too, wished to suck! (qtd. in Gunning 330; emphasis mine)

Though Truth's act of disrobing her bosom counteracts the audience's intention to humiliate her, this anecdote demonstrates that no matter how powerful the voice of the ex-slave woman is, her narrative is discredited and her sexuality is brought under scrutiny; it follows that she would be required to uncover her body so as to authenticate and authorize her narrative. As Saidiya Hartman suggests, "[s]ince the veracity of black testimony is in doubt, the crimes of slavery must not only be confirmed by unquestionable authorities and other white observers but also must be made visible [. . .] by revealing the scarred back of the slave—in short, making the body speak" (22). The body of the suffering slave made visible to the public is an essential prerequisite for sympathy, demonstrating that the discourse of sympathy treats the suffering body as the objective testimony to injustice without taking into account how the suffering body feels and whether the body could easily be appropriated for the pleasure of voyeurism.

Despite the difference between Truth, who is illiterate and presents her story through public speech, and Jacobs, who does not need to encounter her readers face to face, Truth's experience still points to the fact that the representation of the ex-slave woman's sufferings, resorting to the reader's sympathy, might result in the display of the sufferer's body, subjected to the gaze of sympathy. Courageous as Truth is to confront those who challenge her, to reveal the fact that a black woman's body is literally exploited as a tool to reproduce labor, the black

⁹ This anecdote is included in Olive Gilbert's *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, and I quote it from Sandra Gunning's "Reading and Redemption" (330).

body is still the object of the public's imagination, though imagination purports to result in sympathy toward the body in pain. In submitting deliberately to the audience's request to examine her body so as to expose the hypocrisy of gentility and to subvert the code of decorum, Truth nevertheless replays the scenario of a black woman's body being exploited and renders her body at risk. Similarly, Jacobs is aware that the writing of her past experience cannot avoid the exposure of her body, since her experience of slavery is literally embodied, and Jacobs exclaims, "the curse of slavery [is] stamped upon [myself] and children" (qtd. in Yellin, "Written" 203). As Sandra Gunning points out, Northern white readers of the narrative tend to fix upon her "immoral" black body and view her "as the contaminated product of slavery's moral decadence" (332). If Jacobs refuses to display her body as "the object of white scrutiny" (Gunning 332), it is not only because such display and scrutiny resemble so much the auction block on which slaves are positioned in waiting for the potential buyer's examination, but also because Jacobs claims her right to remain unseen, i.e., her privacy. The desire for privacy, however, is almost contradictory to the operation of sympathy, which requires the object to be displayed bearing testimony to the curse of slavery. While abolitionist discourses appeal to sympathy in order to undo the wrongs done to slaves, the operation of sympathy, hinging on the exposure of the victim in the scene of sufferings for the subject of sympathy, by imagination, to "*enter as it were into [the] body, and become in some measure the same person with him*" in Smith's words, could deprive the victim, the object of sympathy, of any agency.

Indeed, Smith's view on sympathy theoretically depends on the reliability of the observer's response to the sufferings of the others, and thus, as a sort of moral sentiment, sympathy is assumed to forge human communities and eliminate difference or distance between the subject of sympathy and the sufferer. However, contrary to Smith's theoretical assumption, in Jacobs's narrative, it is the unreliability of the reader's response that is revealed in the encounter between the narrator, Linda, and her mistress, Dr. Flint's wife. Overwhelmed by Dr. Flint's verbal abuses, Linda plucks up the courage to tell Mrs. Flint in the hope that her mistress can help put an end to her ordeal. Rather than sympathizing with the victim, Mrs. Flint is occupied with pitying herself:

As I went on with my account her color changed frequently, she wept, and sometimes groaned. She spoke in tones so sad, that I was touched by her grief. The tears came to my eyes; but I was soon convinced that her emotions arose from anger and wounded pride. She felt that her marriage vows were desecrated, her dignity insulted; but she had no compassion for the poor victim of her husband's perfidy. She pitied herself as a martyr; but she was incapable of feeling for the condition of shame and misery in which her unfortunate, helpless slave was placed. (30)

While Linda hopes to arouse Mrs. Flint's sympathy, the exchange between Linda and Mrs. Flint is totally contrary to the operation of sympathy.¹⁰ Tears are supposed to connect Linda with Mrs. Flint, and Linda originally believes that tears mean sympathy. But Linda finds that Mrs. Flint could not put herself in the other's place, which is crucial to the operation of sympathy. According to Smith, the sympathizer imagines him/herself in the position of the victim and realizes how the victim feels by representing his/her own senses; as a result, sympathetic identification is constructed. But in the exchange between the slave girl and the mistress, Mrs. Flint does not imagine herself in the position of Linda and the expected identification is replaced by hostility toward the black female body, stereotyped as transgressing the code of chastity (Gunning 332).

Although Mrs. Flint is another victim under slavery, in her reaction to Linda's representation of sexual abuse, Mrs. Flint demonstrates how the reader might respond to Linda's account. Instead of being rescued, Linda becomes the object of Mrs. Flint's jealousy and surveillance, which implies Linda is the guilty party. If we view Mrs. Flint as the first reader of Linda's story of sexual abuse by her master, this reader does not respond sympathetically but rather keeps the sufferer under vigilant surveillance, desiring to penetrate her mind to disclose what is unsaid. Linda describes how Mrs. Flint watches over her in sleep,

There I was an object of her especial care, though not of her especial comfort, for she spent many a sleepless night to watch over me. Sometimes, I woke up, and found her bending over me. At other times she whispered in my ear, as though it was her husband who was speaking to me, and listened to hear what I would answer. If she startled me, on such occasions, she would glide stealthily away; and the next morning she would tell me I had been talking in my sleep, and ask who I was talking to. At last, I began to be fearful for my life. (31)

Mrs. Flint's reaction sabotages any possible confidence between the mistress and the slave girl, but more importantly, it also negates the right of privacy to which Linda, a slave, can hold claim. It implies that once Linda is willing to tell her story, she has to expose herself without reservation to the reader's examination.

In the exchange between Linda and Mrs. Flint, identification between the reader and the characters, constructed through sympathy, is problematic. Before

¹⁰ Critics have different views on the dynamics between Linda/the narrator and the white mistress/the listener/the reader. Deborah M. Garfield argues that, to some extent, Mrs. Flint is maneuvered into a "tortured, if unconscious and unilluminated, identification with the slave's role as hounded object" ("Speech, Listening, and Female Sexuality in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*" 35) and Linda "replays the moments of Flint's violations," although the momentary identification and the reversal of roles fail to "seal an empathetic pact" between Linda and Mrs. Flint. However, I would argue that if identification cannot lead to sympathy, identification is no more than the obliteration of the object.

the narrative begins, Jacobs has expected that sympathetic identification can never be easily achieved. In her authorial preface, Jacobs exclaims, "Reader, be assured this narrative is no fiction. I am aware that some of my adventures may seem incredible; but they are, nevertheless, strictly true" (5). The sense of distrust permeates through the narrative. It must be noted that distrust is antithetical to the operation of sympathy, since, with distrust, one cannot share the feelings of another person. Nevertheless, Jacobs does not attempt to solve the problem of the reader's distrust by further proving the truthfulness of her story or conforming to the request of showing her scarred, abused body. Instead, she reiterates the fact that it is almost impossible to convince the reader, or to dispel the reader's distrust, in that "[o]nly by *experience* can any one realize how deep, and dark, and foul is that pit of abominations" (5; emphasis mine). In this way, Jacobs reinforces the distance between her and the reader rather than constructing the reader's identification with her. Put simply, Jacobs does not resort to identification in facilitating sympathy, but Jacobs underlines her difference from the reader in terms of experience and compels the reader to recognize the difference. As the narrator repeats, "Reader, if you have never been a slave, you cannot imagine the acute sensation of suffering at my heart" (152). Also, experience becomes the index of authority in determining the credibility or truthfulness of her story. By underscoring the significance of experience, Jacobs implies that an alternative mode of sympathy is demanded, which does not submit the victim to the examination of the sympathizer, and which does not depend on white authority.

It is by reclaiming the difference of her experience and reinforcing the impossibility of uttering the unspoken and the unspeakable that Jacobs intends to win the Northern, female reader's trust. From time to time, Jacobs claims the impossibility of translating her sufferings fully into language and thus poses question to Adam Smith's idea that by representation, we conceive ourselves in the other's situation, form some idea of his sensations and have similar feelings. Jacobs's representation makes it clear that it is almost impossible to translate bodily feelings into verbal expressions, not to mention that through representation we could feel the other's sensations. For instance, in narrating how Dr. Flint's sexual abuse drives her into a desperate "plunge into the abyss" (46), Linda speaks to the reader about the pain beyond words and the unutterable degradation, which can only be described in terms opposite to her reality. Linda exclaims,

O, ye, happy women, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, who have been free to choose the objects of your affection, whose homes are protected by law, do not judge the poor desolate slave girl too severely! If slavery had been abolished, I, also, could have married the man of my choice; I could have had a home shielded by the

laws; and I should have been spared the painful task of confessing what I am now about to relate. (46)

It is impossible for Linda, a slave girl, to be sheltered by her family and protected by law; it is impossible for her to be free to choose her lover; it is impossible for her to remain pure. Linda cannot express the pain that these impossibilities inflict upon her.

After mentioning her plunge, out of desperation and “calculations of interest” (47), into an extramarital relationship with Mr. Sands, Linda, again, laments that the reader cannot possibly understand, and the gap between the reader and the author/narrator/sufferer cannot be bridged. Linda exclaims,

O virtuous reader! You never knew what it is to be a slave; to be entirely unprotected by law or custom; to have the laws reduce you to the condition of a chattel, entirely subject to the will of another. You never exhausted your ingenuity in avoiding the snares, and eluding the power of a hated tyrant; you never shuddered at the sound of his footsteps, and trembled within hearing of his voice. I know I did wrong. No one can feel it more sensibly than I do. The painful and humiliating memory will haunt me to my dying day. (47-48)

The condition of a chattel might be translated into words, but how one feels in such an inhuman condition could not be dissociated from the body. The way Linda describes the condition of a chattel aptly points to the fact that being subjected to another person’s will is not simply losing one’s freedom, but it involves the loss of control over one’s own body, like shuddering at the sound of the master’s footsteps, trembling within hearing of the master’s voice. The embodiment of the chattel’s condition, on which Linda puts emphasis, reinforces the impossibility of the reader’s imaginary identification.

The difference between readers, mostly middle-class, white, Northern women, and the narrator/Linda, or slave women, is crucial in the rhetoric of Jacobs’s narrative. By reclaiming difference, Jacobs is able to assert her authority of her own story. Against the discourse of sympathy that “we feel the same for you,” Jacobs argues that the white, middle-class reader cannot feel the same pain with her and therefore cannot speak for her. Indeed, although sympathy aims to construct the sense of sharing or identification, the prospect of sympathy in Jacobs’s text is by no means stabilized. Rather than proposing that white women can share the feelings of pain and shame and imagine slave women’s sufferings, Jacobs revolts against sympathetic identification by highlighting difference. As Franny Nudelman points out, “Jacobs employs suffering to assert the irreducible distance between white women and slave women. The narrative is not a bridge between enslavement and freedom, but is itself a sign of the difference between the white woman’s circumstances and her own” (957). This irreducible

difference brings Jacobs to question the legitimacy of sentimental identification. In this sense, Jacobs alters the logic of sympathy, which is predicated on imaginary identification, and builds up an alternative mode of sympathy on the basis of difference. Rejecting simplified, sentimental identification, Jacobs's text is inscribed by "opacity" (Nudelman 957) and refuses to make slave women's experience transparent for the reader to understand or relate to with ease.

The Politics of Jacobs's Representation

Questioning the operation of sympathy, which requires the exposure of the suffering body and obliterates the difference of the suffering other, Jacobs's representation calls attention to the authority and privacy of the suffering other. Indeed, the politics of Jacobs's representation, including her emphasis on the inaccessibility of slaves' experience and her strategy of silence, revises the ethics of sympathy by underscoring the authority of the suffering other and allowing the suffering other to remain silent.

As mentioned above, Jacobs highlights the difference of the suffering other. It should be further noted that difference exists not merely between the reader and the suffering other, but also between representation and experience. While Jacobs has Linda bear witness to the brutalities under slavery, Jacobs makes witnessing almost impossible by reinforcing the fact that the embodiment of slaves' experience can hardly be translated into language and thus cannot easily be read. Even though slave narratives, motivated by abolitionist discourses, make efforts to represent facts objectively through writing, it is impossible for the reader to experience what is represented. In emphasizing the bodily experience of slavery, Jacobs establishes the authority of experience. Dwight A. McBride has discussed the politics of experience in Mary Prince's slave narrative, suggesting that "the experience of slavery represents a different kind of epistemology" (85). McBride further argues that the inaccessibility of slaves' experience contributes to the authority of the slave narrative subject:

Prince's narrative also begs the question of the inaccessibility of the "real" slave experience. The best the reader can hope for is a mediated narrative, with which Prince provides the reader. The politics of experience thus functions in the narrative in multiple ways. First, it positions Prince as the authority; it legitimates her position as witness, since the reader can know slavery only through her. Second, it makes Prince's actual (or unmediated) experience into a kind of fetish object that produces and reproduces the reader's desire to know it through its ultimate unknowability. Third, it mystifies slave experience and by so doing makes Prince into a kind of channel for the reader. (90)

In a similar way, Linda is aware of her role as a witness, or a medium for the reader to know slaves' experience; however, Linda makes it clear that experience itself cannot be fully known. Indeed, there is always something missing in Linda's representation. Even though Linda gives several "sketches of neighboring slaveholders," the reader cannot have access to slaves' "real," unmediated experience, which is possessed only by those who have experienced. For this reason, despite her ability to write down the cruelties, Linda emphasizes that "[n]o pen can give an adequate description of the all-pervading corruption produced by slavery" (44). By the same token, Linda keeps her tone neutral in describing that "a fire was kindled over [a slave's body], from which was suspended a piece of fat pork. As this cooked, the scalding drops of fat continually fell on the bare flesh" (40), for she knows that the bodily pain and the spiritual infliction cannot be accessed through verbal representation.

As experience is inaccessible through representation, the moments of silence are used in Jacobs's narrative to approach the inaccessible. Indeed, there are two kinds of silence in Jacobs's narrative; one is the enforced silence that suppresses the abused, suffering slave women, and the other is the calculated silence that approaches the unspeakable and the unspoken and revolts against the sympathetic order to speak up. In other words, silence renders the inaccessible in a way that does not violate its inaccessibility. If Jacobs's text and Linda Brent are empowered by silence as suggested by Braxton and Zuber (146), it is because silence is a gesture of authority for Jacobs to decide what to represent and therefore functions as a shield against the exposure required by sympathy.

At the beginning of Jacobs's narrative, silence is the way that the master disciplines slaves, the injunction that female slaves receive in order to prevent the scandalous, sexual relationship between the master and female slaves from being known. Silence is imposed not only to conceal the master's sexual corruption and miscegenation but also to keep the enslaved under control. But such injunction is counteracted by the whispering, or "runaway tongue," in Harryette Mullen's phrase. In this sense, speaking up to break the injunction of silence is a gesture of resistance against the master. As Mullen argues, there exists a tradition of "resistant orality or verbal self-defense, which included speech acts variously labeled sassy or saucy, impudent, impertinent, or insolent" (255). Several times, Linda does not obey Dr. Flint's order, and talking back to him, Linda's "sassy" speech acts cannot be easily silenced. In this regard, being sassy is an act of disobedience, an act of rejecting the master's authority.¹¹ On the other hand,

¹¹ Joanne M. Braxton notes that "Sass" is a word of West African derivation associated with the female

silence can also be employed by slaves to turn against the master. The most significant example is Linda's refusal to reveal the identity of her children's father. No matter how Dr. Flint threatens her, Linda remains silent. Put simply, Linda deploys the order of silence as a way of protecting herself.

The calculated silence, on the other hand, should be connected to Jacobs's strategy of representation that revises the logic of sympathy. Silence overturns the requirement for the operation of sympathy, that is, to have it said, known, and heard. Most importantly, silence in Jacobs's narrative offers a different view on sympathy, showing that sympathy can be aroused because of speechlessness and thus pays respect to the victim's right of privacy. Further, in Jacobs's refusal to represent every detail of her life as a slave girl, silence is the strategy that Jacobs reclaims the ownership of her body and the authorship of her story, both of which are at stake in the operation of sympathy. For instance, whether Dr. Flint really rapes Linda remains a question unanswered, but silence about Dr. Flint's sexual abuse is the only language that Jacobs could use in order to obtain what she desires but is deprived of, that is, the privacy and ownership of her body. In silence, Jacobs refuses to expose herself; with silence, Jacobs counteracts the audience's desire for the gothic pleasure of fugitives' tales. Though slave narratives are viewed as a voice for the public to hear a suppressed story and as a venue for the subaltern to write themselves into a subject of their own narrative, Jacobs's narrative, defying the calling to speak, makes silence even louder than spoken words, for fear that the representation of her experience, for the purpose of facilitating sympathy, might become another form of subjection, rendering her the object of the reader's voyeuristic, though sympathetic, gaze.

Similarly, to avoid vicarious pleasure, Linda's account of her liaison with Mr. Sands is complicated and punctuated by silence, elusiveness, and contradictions. Linda does not mention where she gets to know Mr. Sands and how their relationship develops, and her account completely eludes the sensationalism of interracial romance. Linda describes it as a voluntary act, "with deliberate calculation," and in vague terms, Linda says, "I became desperate, and made a plunge into the abyss" (46). Although Jacobs hopes to emphasize that the circumstances under slavery drive Linda into the "immoral" act and that Linda's immoral act should be justified by taking into account Linda's desperation resulting from her sufferings, "deliberate calculation" signifies a certain degree of agency. The message conveyed by Linda's act is that while slave women are subjected to sexual exploitation by their masters, Linda submits herself to a sexual relationship with a

aspect of the trickster figure," and that Linda uses "sass" as a means of expressing her resistance ("Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*: The Re-Definition of the Slave Narrative Genre" 386).

white man, which can transform her subjection as a chattel into her subjectivity endowed with agency to choose and act. This agency is by all means circumscribed; as Hartman argues, the “deliberate calculation enables the experience of a limited freedom; however, it requires that she take possession and offer herself to another. This act also intensifies the constraints of slavery and reinscribes her status as property” (112).

What’s more, Jacobs’s representation of Linda’s sexual relationship with Mr. Sands shows her power of interpretation which guides the reader to read her act and diverts the reader’s attention from her sexuality. As Carolyn Sorisio notes, “although her deed [i.e., her liaison with Mr. Sands] is the most corporeal act imaginable to her readers, Jacobs does not represent it as physical, but rather as intellectual” (212). Linda puts it in this way:

So much attention from a superior person was, of course, flattering; for human nature is the same in all. I also felt grateful for his sympathy, and encouraged by his kind words. It seemed to me a great thing to have such a friend. By degrees, a more tender feeling crept into my heart. He was an educated and eloquent gentleman; too eloquent, alas, for the poor slave girl who trusted in him. Of course I saw whither all this was tending. I knew the impassable gulf between us; but to be an object of interest to a man who is not married, and who is not her master, is agreeable to the pride and feelings of a slave, if her miserable situation has left her any pride or sentiment. It seems less degrading to give one’s self, than to submit to compulsion. There is something akin to freedom in having a lover who has no control over you, except that which he gains by kindness and attachment. (47)

Mr. Sands is presented as a “friend,” a gentleman, far different from the class of Linda’s master. Their relationship is interpreted almost as a romantic story, based on Mr. Sands’s tenderness and kindness and their mutual interest. As Linda says, their relationship is not out of coercion but freedom. Despite the fact that Linda’s relationship with Mr. Sands is inevitably embedded in the structure of domination and subordination between the white and the enslaved, Linda’s narrative is silent about this power dynamic. Mr. Sands, who is qualified to purchase Linda’s freedom, is a potential master. Viewed under these circumstances, Jacobs’s representation is painted with rosy colors. But it is not that Jacobs’s slave narrative fails to be factual; rather, silence about the structure of domination and subordination reveals Jacobs’s/Linda’s desire to be a sentimental heroine who falls for a desirable gentleman. The power structure in which Linda and Mr. Sands are enmeshed is veiled in silence and transformed into “the impassable gulf between us.” Saying that “I saw whither all this was tending,” Linda implies her awareness of the impossibility of any happy ending, either romantic love or legitimate marriage. Still, the desire to be a desiring subject is unspeakable for Jacobs/Linda, since sexuality for slave women is always already problematic, since

either slave women are exploited sexually for pleasure and reproduction of slave labor, or sexuality is an act of moral transgression. Although Foreman argues that Linda's sexual agency in choosing knowingly Mr. Sands as a sexual actor generates much of the narrative energy (81), it cannot be overlooked that silence is manifest in her account of the impossible, forbidden "romance" and enables Linda to evade the sensational issue of sexuality. As Linda chooses to submit herself to Mr. Sands to assert her agency and keep control of her body, silence in the account of her sexual liaison with Mr. Sands is her way of reclaiming the authority of representation and interpretation.

In the relationship between Linda, a slave mother, and her children, silence is also the best language for communication and connection. The wish to conceal their mother's secret is the ultimate reason that slave children keep silent. This kind of silence signifies mutual understanding and a wish to protect the mother. In her narrative, affective and familial connections between Linda and her children are expressed and maintained in silence. Before Linda escapes to the North, she is incarcerated in the garret of her grandmother's house. On the night before her daughter Ellen is sent away to Mr. Sands's relatives, Linda decides to have a meeting with her daughter. In this interview, Linda, as a mother does, exhorts Ellen to be a good child, but what is touching is the moment of silence. After their conversation ends, silence surrounds the mother, with the daughter nestling in the mother's arms and feigning sleep. Linda narrates, "The moments were too precious to lose any of them. Once, when I thought she was asleep, I kissed her forehead softly, and she said, 'I am not asleep, dear mother'" (111). In these moments, silence connects mother and daughter even closer than words. Moreover, silence also means the daughter's sharing of the mother's secret. As Ellen is reminded by Uncle Philip, "Ellen, this is the secret you have promised grandmother never to tell" (110); "never to tell" is the way that Ellen can protect her mother, the way that she shares the mother's sufferings. At the moment of departing, Ellen whispers in Linda's ear, "Mother, I will never tell" (111).

Later, Linda finds that her son, Benny, partakes in the secret of her concealment too. As Linda is going to escape, she comes to spend some time with Benny. It appears that Benny has known about Linda's concealment; Benny tells his mother, "I was standing under the eaves, one day, before Ellen went away, and I heard somebody cough up over the wood shed. I don't know what made me think it was you, but I did think so" (122). Benny never lets out this secret, and in silence, he guards his mother's safety by keeping an eye on Dr. Flint's move. Even though Linda's incarceration in the garret does not allow her to be in touch with her children, there is a sense of connection constructed in silence, in knowing with-

out telling. Toward the end of the narrative, Linda decides to tell Ellen about her past and about Ellen's father. However, Ellen has already known but remains silent about the identity of her father. The mother's fear eventually melts in the daughter's understanding, which does not require words. Ellen's experience of knowing the secret about her father, which is accompanied by shame and the sense of abandonment, leads her to sharing her mother's feelings. As Deborah M. Garfield argues, Ellen demonstrates a mode of sympathy for the reader to imitate, that is, "her 'delicate' reticence to scan the sexual history of a mother/narrator" (40). In large measure, Jacobs's narrative is not only driven by the need to tell but also interrupted by the desire for silence. While the imperative to tell the truth to the public is the impetus behind the narrative, we should not overlook the desire not to tell but to remain silent.

Conclusion

As silence denotes the narrative desire to conceal what the victim hesitates to tell, the trope of veiling is deployed throughout Jacobs's narrative as the recurrent motif and an alternative mode of representation that revolts against the logic of sympathy. Indeed, Jacobs metaphorically draws a veil over her body and diverts the reader's attention from her sexuality through her narrative. Throughout Jacobs's narrative, the significance of the "veil," metaphorically and literally, is remarkable, since the veil denotes two opposite actions, "veiling" and "unveiling." Like many slave narratives, Jacobs's *Incidents* was written to disclose the atrocities under slavery and to champion the cause of abolition. Therefore, in her introduction, Child, the editor of Jacobs's narrative, claims to present Jacobs's narrative to the public in the hope of uncovering "monstrous features" of the peculiar institute, "with the veil withdrawn" (6). Jacobs's narrative is an act of unveiling, not only because her text aims to reveal the truth of slavery, but also because the central issue presented in Jacobs's narrative has been kept "veiled." On the other hand, Jacobs's narrative also shows that literary representation is an act of veiling. Indeed, Jacobs's unwillingness to expose herself under the public gaze is manifest. Jacobs's narrative oscillates between veiling and unveiling. By drawing a veil, Jacobs expresses her desire for personal space and privacy. Since slaves are deprived of freedom and denied personal space and privacy,¹² Jacobs seeks to claim what she has been deprived of. While Jacobs takes

¹² Personal space, along with privacy, is the symbol of one's freedom and autonomy, indexing one's ability to choose where to retreat and what to hide, especially as far as one's sexuality is concerned. As

the responsibility of telling the truth about the peculiar institution by unveiling what has been kept unseen, the act of unveiling apparently contradicts her desire for concealment.

An episode in Jacobs's narrative clearly demonstrates her desire to veil her presence. After her incarceration in the garret of her grandmother's house for almost seven years, Linda Brent finally seizes the opportunity to escape to the North. Upon arriving in Philadelphia, Linda asks for directions to some shops where she could buy "gloves and veils" (125). Linda has eventually reached the land of freedom; however, her first action is to buy "double veils" (125). Gloves and veils might be common dressing accessories for nineteenth-century women, but other than fashion and decorum, veils function differently in Linda's situation. Veils conceal her strangeness in the city, shield her from the curious gaze, and, more importantly, cover up the traces of the journey from slavery to freedom; as Linda narrates, "[i]t seemed as if those who passed looked at us with an expression of curiosity. My face was so blistered and peeled, by sitting on deck, in wind and sunshine" (126). Even though she thinks people "could not easily decide to what nation I belonged" (126), Linda prefers to wear veils. As a fugitive, Linda must feel shocked and unnerved, being exposed to the strangeness of the city and the gazes of the passersby, and veils could offer Linda psychological as well as physical concealment. Indeed, "too much exposure" must be Linda's concern and her main reason for buying gloves and veils.

As the political purpose of slave narratives is to unveil the brutalities and slaves' sufferings under slavery, the popularity of slave narratives more often than not depends on the exposure of the victims in the representation of violence, presented to satisfy the public appetite for sensationalism (Foster, *Witnessing Slavery*, 20). Those sensational descriptions of sufferings and slaves' bodies in pain turn out to be what entertains the reader. For example, the abolitionist, Angelina Grimké, points out that slave narratives are demanded to arouse the interest of the audience and the reader:

We rejoiced to hear of the fugitives' escape from bondage, tho' some of the pleasure was abridged by the caution to keep these things close. [. . .] Yes—publish his tale of woe, such narratives are greatly needed, let it come burning from his own lips [. . .]. Many and many a tale of *romantic horror* can the slaves tell. (qtd. in Goldsby 30, emphasis mine)

Nell Irvin Painter points out, "most respectable nineteenth-century people retreated—or attempted to retreat—behind the veil of privacy, rather than reveal their actual patterns of sexuality, whether in their homes, in their letters, or in their journals. The very ability to conceal the rawer aspects of the human condition, an ability that we sum up in the term privacy, served as a crucial symbol of respectability when the poor had no good place to hide" ("Three Southern Women and Freud" 303). Obviously, the lack of privacy is a feature not only attributed to the poor but also to the enslaved.

Despite the reader's demand for romantic horrors, Jacobs deliberately avoids sensationalism by oscillating between veiling and unveiling. While slave narratives are to unveil the truth of slavery, Jacobs's narrative is concerned not only about unveiling the truth but also about veiling part of her experience that she does not desire to reveal.

In fact, it is by adopting the language of domesticity that Jacobs finds a proper forum to present her experience of sexual abuse. In other words, the conventions of domestic fiction function as a shield, another form of veil, for Jacobs to guard against the public voyeuristic gaze which tends to fix upon the enslaved, sexualized body. Since domestic fiction focuses on the issues of womanhood, maternity, and familial connections and precludes the subject of sexuality, Jacobs can shift the focus of her narrative from sexual abuse to motherhood. Jacobs describes how several maternal figures protect her from the cruelties of slavery and how the loss of mothers exposes her to the danger as a slave girl. In fact, not only do the maternal figures protect Linda from being violated, but the rhetoric of motherhood, in addition to triggering the reader's sentimental, sympathetic tears, also works to preclude the gaze on the slave girl's body as a potential object of sexual exploitation or as a transgressor of the moral code, especially when Linda becomes another maternal figure, who struggles for her children's freedom. Stephanie Li suggests that the rhetoric of motherhood allows Jacobs to "appeal to the sensibilities of a largely white, female, middle-class audience" (17) and to eschew the "stereotypes of black women as licentious and morally suspect" (21). For this reason, Jacobs ends her narrative with a mother's pursuit of a home, rather than romantic love or marriage as sentimental novels often do. Linda addresses the reader, "my story ends with freedom; not in the usual way, with marriage. I and my children are now free! . . . The dream of my life is not yet realized. I do not sit with my children in a home of my own. I still long for a hearthstone of my own, however humble. I wish it for my children's sake far more than for my own" (156). Jacobs's narrative begins with a slave girl's chastity in danger and ends with a mother seeking a home for her children. In addition to a form of "agency, resistance, and power" (Li 14), maternity functions as a shield for Jacobs to retreat from being sexualized.

Jacobs refuses to play the role of the pathetic supplicant, stereotyped as passive and victimized in abolitionist discourses, resorting to the sympathy of the public.¹³ Rather than the object of sympathy, Jacobs's politics of representation

¹³ As Jean Fagan Yellin points out in her discussion of the abolitionist emblem, the black woman is portrayed as passive, soliciting assistance from the white female emancipator. See Yellin, *Women and Sisters*.

is to construct herself as the subject of sympathy, no matter how limited such subjectivity is. Significantly, through such strategies of representation as silence, veiling and maternity, Jacobs intends to represent her absence, instead of her presence, in the scene of sufferings. In other words, Jacobs does not desire to be heard, seen, nor sexualized as a victim of sexual violation. Mark Edelman Boren argues that in some sense, Jacobs renders the narrator dissociated “from the object of abuse in this tale as the abuse is related” (38). Responding to the question whether Jacobs’s subjectivity is constructed through her narrative, as some critics suggest,¹⁴ Boren claims that Jacobs’s subjectivity retreats and is “dissociated” from her narrative. Boren argues that “the main action occurring within this text on a rhetorical level is neither the struggle for freedom nor the struggle to be heard, but a struggle for dissociation—dissociation from the voice speaking, from the incidents related, from the subject posed, and, yes, from Jacobs herself” (34). If there is a subject constructed in the narrative, this subject does not want to be herself, or to be seen as herself. For this reason, Jacobs’s subjectivity is asserted precisely by channeling the reader’s sympathy toward the collective sufferings of slave women, with Jacobs herself serving as a detour or a medium, so that Jacobs can remain unseen while exercising her function. Put differently, by dissociating herself from the scene of violation, Jacobs constructs herself as a subject of sympathy, rather than remaining a passive object of sympathy. If Jacobs’s subjectivity seems to be “dissociated” from her narrative, it is because Jacobs refuses to be present in the scene of the sufferings or sexual violation. In this sense, her intended absence constitutes her subjectivity.

Given that Jacobs’s *Incidents* aims to awaken sympathy toward those in bondage, her narrative goes against the logic of sympathy, especially where the body and sexuality are concerned. Jacobs refuses to expose her body and resists sexualizing the victim of sexual exploitation. To do so, Jacobs adopts the tropes of veil and silence and the language of motherhood as her strategies of representation. Also, Jacobs reclaims the authority of experience by making language an inadequate medium for the reader to access the experience of slavery. Thus, silence in Jacobs’s narrative serves as a language to forge sharing bonds. While the rhetoric of sympathy is aimed to unveil the sufferings of slaves, it is so

¹⁴ For example, Jean Fagan Yellin points out that Harriet Jacobs inscribes herself as the subject of her own discourse (*Women & Sisters* 53). Moreover, some critics do not use the term of subjectivity, or subject, but rather the term “agency,” to describe Jacobs’s self-determination, though limited, especially in discussing Jacobs’s active role in her liaison with Mr. Sands. For instance, P. Gabrielle Foreman views Jacobs’s voluntary liaison as “Linda’s assertion of agency” (“The Spoken and the Silenced in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and *Our Nig*” 322). As I hope to demonstrate, underlying Jacobs’s struggle to be a subject and to assert her agency is her refusal to be confined within the sympathetic gaze.

often overlooked that those in suffering do not desire to be seen as objects of sympathy. Speaking as the victim, Jacobs provides an alternative view on sympathy, which incorporates an understanding of the victim's desire to abstain from sympathy, which is so often accompanied by the exposure of the wounded other, the voyeuristic gaze of the sympathetic subject, and the loss of the other's privacy and agency.

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抗拒同情，重申權威： 哈麗葉·傑克普斯《一個奴隸女孩的 經歷》中的再現策略

摘要

本文旨在分析哈麗葉·傑克普斯所撰寫之奴隸自述《一個奴隸女孩的經歷》，其書寫的再現策略。雖然傑克普斯採用十九世紀情感小說與居家小說常用的同情修辭，卻不能忽略傑克普斯的書寫中一股抗拒同情的傾向，主因在於：同情受難他者之時，他者的差異往往被消弭，而在同情的公眾目光之中，受難的他者毫無保留地遭到暴露，以致於毫無隱私與自主性可言。換句話說，同情的運作中，受難的他者既沒有權威也沒有主體性來決定自身的生活。本文分析傑克普斯如何呈現自身於奴隸制度底下遭受侵害的經驗，傑克普斯的書寫呈現他者如何重申差異、強調「經驗」作為一種權威來源、主張另一種同情的觀點，容許受難的他者一點隱私與自主性。更明確地說，傑克普斯強調自身「經驗」的差異性，而非建構同情者與受難者之間一種想像的認同關係，藉由強調差異，傑克普斯才能主張自身書寫的權威。同時，本文也將分析藉由刻畫沈默的片刻與母親的角色，並挪用面紗的比喻，傑克普斯透露出強烈的慾望，希望能夠不出現、不被聽見、不被看見，而這慾望恰恰違背了同情的邏輯，亦即將受難者展示於苦難的情境之中。

關鍵字：同情，權威，再現策略，奴隸書寫，《一個奴隸女孩的經歷》。