

Dearly Departed, Yet, Returned: Traversing the Nautical Gothic in *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore* (1853)

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Abstract: Scholars have explored the genres of Shipwreck narratives, women's writings about life at sea, and the nautical Gothic. Bringing these fields together in conversation with Marian Moore's *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore, the Shipwrecked Female Sailor* (1853) reveals tensions between horrifying experiences with shipwreck and subsequent cannibalism at sea and life on land for women in the mid-nineteenth century. Moore details her encounters with death throughout, which ultimately prepare her for the prolonged social death she endures once back on land ensnared in class and gender conventions. The irony of Moore's narrative is that the threat of the sea proves to be far less harrowing than the entrapment of static domesticity. Instead of being the place of danger and death, the sea becomes a source of knowledge and a sanctuary from the true horror of the social conditions Moore contends with back on land.

Nautical fiction and narratives of sea travel resonated with nineteenth-century American audiences because they carried with them the fulfillment of flights of fantasy and the romance of exploration that could be read from the safety of one's home. Indeed, "a desire for the physical and mental freedom of open ocean experience" permeates many sea narratives, fulfilling "the blue-water fantasies of men and women who ride ferries or sail yachts alongshore."¹ Yet, even beyond escapism and the promise of experiencing a different lifestyle or landscape amongst the waves and ocean swells, audiences sought much more than just knowledge of a mariner's or seafarer's firsthand account of maritime life. Instead, Margaret Cohen's *The Novel and the Sea* articulates that the common audience of these works "enjoys a suspenseful introduction" into the world of maritime life through them,² but also, by looking at the history of maritime narratives, she notes how this audience also read these texts to see "the nature of danger and how to contend with it."³ Often, masculine heroes in the works of James Fenimore Cooper and Richard Henry Dana Jr. depict mariners who come face-to-face with the rugged, abominable sea, allowing audiences to see encounters with danger at the hands of strong, iron-willed men. The strong rugged sailor grappling with the perils at sea and who survives to tell the tale spoke to these readers, fulfilling their imagination's desire for triumph over nature.

Women, however, were not excluded from these narratives of the sea, especially from 1825 to 1855 where a large proliferation of sensational novels centered on the accounts of women at sea. Grace Moore notes that this time period featured "numerous narratives...of women working as soldiers or sailors," including women who would cross-dress in order to board vessels or join crews, as well as stories of women experiencing hardships as passengers, forced into the role of a "daring heroine" to survive what seems inevitable harm.⁴ As narratives about the sea proliferated, a focus on the experiences of shipwrecks came to the fore within the

genre. Like other sensationalized fiction of the time, these shipwreck narratives “blended reality with fiction to produce a harrowing and affordable form of amusement.”⁵ Their popularity was quite widespread, as Robin Miskolcze notes that “hundreds of shipwreck accounts were published by the mid-nineteenth century.”⁶ And while the wide circulation and sheer number of these works indicates a public desire for consuming harrowing tales, the popularity of shipwreck narratives also reveals larger anxieties regarding nationhood and gender roles. Miskolcze views these narratives as addressing concerns regarding the survival of the United States as a democratic republic, presenting the choices made during a shipwreck as reflective of whether “American men could maintain control of the self-interested passions.”⁷ Modeling the space of the ship as a stand in for the nation, shipwreck narratives provided the viewers with not only a story of moral convictions of the protagonist and who they saved, but of the country’s own moral fortitude and its futurity. As she argues: “The salvation of women at sea symbolized America’s apparent devotion to preserving women’s role as cultural icons. In saving women, Americans were preserving the nation’s covenant with God.”⁸ Thus, these stories—marketed as written by the survivors of these events themselves—became metaphors for saving the nation and reified the public’s faith in the republic’s commitment to democratic principles in the face of a tumultuous sea of political and foreign threats.

Rather than merely titillating the audiences with harrowing details of disaster, or stories to reinstitute faith in the nation’s survival, these narratives and their popularity also served to reinforce gendered expectations of men and women, as these texts were framed as didactic tools as well. Amy Mitchell-Cook notes in *A Sea of Misadventures: Shipwreck and Survival in Early America* that the women in shipwreck narratives provided female readers with “idealized feminine behavior, whereby submissiveness, restraint, and piety came to represent a women’s inherent strength and superior morality.”⁹ These women’s examples either led to their perseverance and survival through maintaining the gendered codes of conduct regarding femininity, or the women died in sacrifice to uphold these values. The nineteenth-century saw a saturated market of these sensational sea survival stories as advances in printing allowed for the general public to have access to books and a desire on the part of the publishers to increase profit. Therefore, these examples of sea-faring women permeated the cultural imaginary. As a result, it was not uncommon for narratives to be changed, altering particular details to take advantage of potential audiences’ particular interests in these harrowing sea tales.¹⁰ Following that “shipwreck narratives involving Anglo-American women were widely read in the first half of the century and often reflected and prescribed national ideals,”¹¹ shipwreck narratives, especially those authored by women, brought to the fore the question of women’s position within the burgeoning nation. Amy Mitchell-Cook contends that early nineteenth-century narratives about shipwrecked women at sea functioned as figures of reform, moralizing pillars of strength, which helped to establish the ship as a masculine controlled sphere as a means to maintain social order. Rejecting a distinction between land and sea as separate spheres, Mitchell-Cook argues that life for women aboard ships operated in many ways as a microcosm for American society of the time. For Mitchell-Cook, women were not evading socially prescribed expectations at sea but

reifying them. Yet, I contend that *choice* for seafaring women was situational and dependent upon varying personal circumstances. A woman may have fled to sea not out of a longing for adventure, but out of financial necessity or a range of other motivating factors. For some women, the sea was the only means through which they could continue to survive when they lacked any support network or class status on land.

Motivated by various reasons for leaving home for the ocean, the genre of narratives about women shipwrecked at sea was diverse and circulated throughout America and Britain with wide publication of *true* narratives. They were often marketed as exoticized tales promising episodes of cannibalism, hardships, melancholia, and brushes with catastrophic danger. The lurid, terrifying situations that these women enter ties together these women's shipwreck narratives with elements of the Gothic literary tradition. In fact, Coral Ann Howells has discussed a "maritime Gothic" focusing on the Gothic qualities of canonical sea literature like *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* or the significance of sea 'monster' texts like *Jaws* and *Moby-Dick*; but Emily Adler adds that the body of nautical gothic scholarship remains small, however.¹² (3) In addition, Fred Botting's description of Gothic settings describes sites of "ambivalence in spatial terms as movements between inside and out" highlighting the significance of confined spaces which embody both "incarceration and power."¹³ Adler invites us to consider how we might extend Botting's construction of Gothic expectations to nautical fiction, for a ship might also conjoin ideas of home and prison and be encased in shadows. Adler also notes that, "wrecks themselves have distinct carceral qualities (especially when living bodies are fatally trapped)."¹⁴ In this article, I will focus more closely on the ways in which Marian Moore's shipwreck narrative describes experiences of Gothic terror while at sea and how these forces reveal the extent to which these terrors are also, and have always been, present back on land. Her class status determines the rhetorical strategies she must use in order to be reincorporated into normative society, relying on didacticism. And while she is markedly changed in the wake of her horrifying experience with cannibalism at sea, class-status and gender constraints also entrap Moore. I argue that once home, Moore encounters a truly inescapable terror that is far worse than what she faces at sea. Once reinscribed back into the domestic sphere on land, Moore's narrative reveals that her voyage at sea was preparing her for death, a lived social deadening, which far outweighs the threats she faced on the open sea. In her quest to avoid being designated as a monstrous, cross-dressing cannibal, Moore discovers the limitations of protection on land, the sanctuary of the dangerous sea, and that the true horror is the social conditioning people must contend with back on land.

Marian Moore's *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore, the Shipwrecked Female Sailor* (1853) presents readers with an upper-class woman who is forced to partake in cannibalism at sea in order to survive, while she also has to present as a man named John Little to survive socially in the company of an all-man crew. The impact of Moore's class status and her transgressing gender boundaries result in the necessity for this seemingly fallen woman to narrate a didactic story in order to be redeemed by her family and community once back on land. Moore flees from her home after being thrown out for consorting with Alfred, a man of lower-class status of whom her parents deeply disapprove. In her quest to escape her

parents' severe rules, Moore endures great tragedy: her family conspires to inform Alfred that Moore has wed another, and he has then become betrothed to someone else. Being disowned by her family and left by Alfred, Moore must escape to the sea in order to earn a living after being banished from her home and family. While at sea, she and the crew resort to cannibalism to subsist and survive after a storm wrecks their vessel, destroying their provisions. Yet, Moore is reunited once again with both her parents and her first forbidden love, Alfred, at the close of her narrative. Moore is markedly changed in the wake of her traumatic experiences with cannibalism at sea, and while the novel closes with her returning back into the realm of domesticity, she has also confronted experiences with death, psychologically and physically. Through this death confrontation and preparation, she is able to transgress the binary bounds of gender, allowing her to gain a sense of awareness of and freedom from class and gender prescriptions, albeit

temporarily. Even though she is reincorporated back into normative society at the close of her narrative, Moore's gender and class boundary-crossing remains equated with the horror of cannibalism.

Robin Miskolcze situates Marian Moore's narrative within a group of texts whose primary concerns are "whether women at sea could retain their femininity and whether men had the ability or desire to save them from that fate."¹⁵ Miskolcze furthers that Moore's text is one of several early nineteenth-century "narratives [that] tend to present either women in search of men who abandoned them, or women who are in trouble and in need of rescuing."¹⁶ While Miskolcze argues that "the image of the cross-dressed female evokes expectations and fears surrounding national expansion and the move west,"¹⁷ I am interested in how those fears can be more fully understood through the lens of the nautical Gothic. The series of events which occur in Moore's narrative lead her to being in need of such rescue, but the nautical Gothic offers other ways in which we might interpret

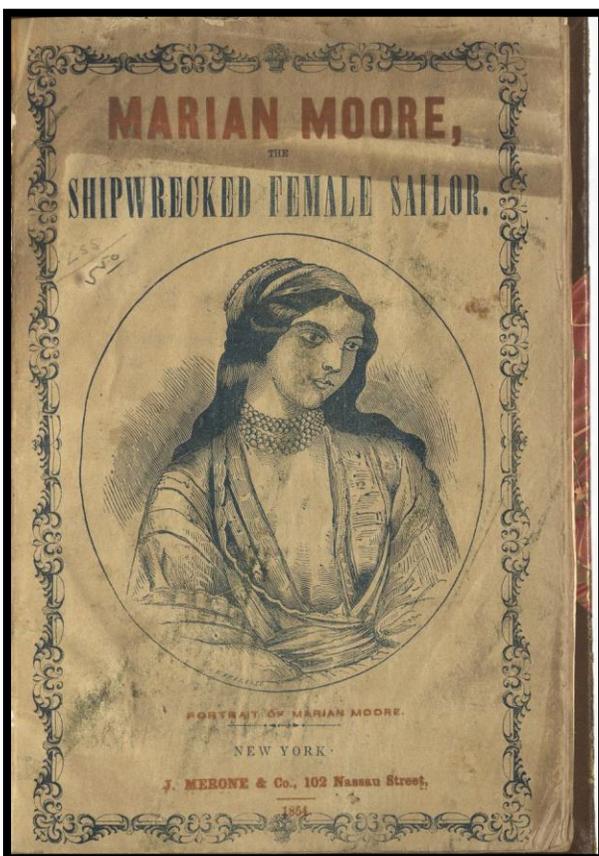


Figure 1. Title page of Marian Moore's *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, 1853.

Moore's precarious and harrowing circumstances throughout the narrative as preparatory and even emancipatory, revealing social mores as the real threat, not the tumultuous ocean. In the very first line of her narrative, Moore positions herself as "the eldest daughter of a rich farmer, living in the town of Sagg Harbor, Long Island."¹⁸ We are given a complex portrait of Moore as a "bewitchingly enchanting" 16-year-old who runs in the "gay circles of the rich and arrogant"

yet who distributes shillings among her father's "aged and infirm" tenants.¹⁹ Moore comes to know Alfred, a radiant young man of about twenty, whose "hair hung in ambrosial curls" and whose "lips were of a crimson tint."²⁰ She is overpowered by his presence and distinctly notes, "from this hour, might be dated the sorrows of my life."²¹ Moore falls helplessly in love with Alfred, even as she pleads with him to leave and find another woman: "some of your own rank, and learn never again to dare openly avow your love to a lady of birth and fortune."²² Moore's use of "learn" indicates a healthy fear, an upper-class haughtiness, where she has positioned herself in the role of a superior who must educate lower-class Alfred on proper class-positionality and etiquette. Yet, Moore and Alfred succumb to the whims of their forbidden passion and although Moore has been an agent of her own desire, she still contemplates the likely, negative outcome of this course of action. Moore imagines her parents' likely response and her mind is "filled with these corroding reflections."²³ After much contemplation, Moore decides that "Through the whole course of man's existence, this time arrives but once. Happy is he who sighs for its arrival; happy is he, who, when it arrives, has a soul worthy of its enjoyment; and happy is even he from whom that moment has long passed, if it passed not unenjoyed, for the recollection of it is still precious."²⁴ This secondary reflection strongly contradicts Moore's initial observation that the arrival of Alfred into her life ushers in the beginning of the "sorrows of her life", and such stirring contradictions indicative of passion and conflict are all narrated from the perspective of a returned and reflective Moore, revealing that in spite of the horrors she has endured, perhaps it was worth it all the while for Moore to "quit her parental roof"²⁵ in the name of passion.

In April of 1850, Alfred leaves for one year with the promise that he will come back to Sagg Harbor to marry Moore after establishing himself as a man. Upon discovering their marriage plans via their letters, Moore's father tosses her out of the house, exclaiming, "your crime is too great to be excused" to which Moore retorts, "it is not a crime to love Alfred, since nature formed him so worthy of my affections; and if it is a crime, Heaven will absolve it, since it made me to love him."²⁶ In her defense against claims of criminality, Moore conflates higher powers, the forces of "nature" and "Heaven" to position herself as a mere mortal responding to call for love, a call she cannot ignore in spite of the classist dictates of her father and society. Moore's mother is described earlier in the narrative as a "cold, unfeeling misanthrope" who is also "illiterate, and totally unacquainted with all the subjects of religion",²⁷ indicating that while she has access to her husband's wealth and as a result, power, Moore's mother is also incapable of engaging in particular discourses. Therefore, the figure of Moore's mother in her narrative functions as a sort of empty, literary ghost, incapable of engaging with the rich rhetorical strategy Moore deploys as she counteracts her father's invocation of justice, criminality, as a means to position the upper-class as righteous and the lower-class and those who consort with the lower-class as debase criminals. As an illiterate woman, Moore's mother is incapable of discovering her daughter's affair, (she literally cannot read the information on the page) and as such she serves as a villainous stand-in character with little to no power, which stands in contradiction to the text's overall argument at the end of the narrative that women ought to

always stay within the home, their class position, and their proper place to ensure the safety and well-being of all.

Moore sets off to find Alfred so that they can be married and return to Sagg Harbor, but in order to arrive safely at her destination, Moore determines she must dress as a man to protect herself from the “insults” of the public for her class transgression. On her journey, Moore travels an “unfrequented road” alone and turns to an unfamiliar log house for shelter. Much like the frozen, uncharted lands with “limited familiar landmarks for travelers” (7) that Katherine Bowers sees as part of the Gothic maritime mode²⁸, Moore too travels a desolate road, one that features only a small, unknown dwelling. She must navigate this road alone, being isolated from the gaze of others, leaving her vulnerable. Upon begrudgingly taking her to her lodgings, her landlord remarks: “There, you will sleep alone, and you must make the best of such poor lodgings; most likely, you gentleman fare better when at home, stretching your idle limbs on downy beds and soft pillows perfumed with roses; but we, poor folks, have to make the best of what Heaven sends us.”²⁹ The landlord then continues: “But I, sir, —I have seen better days, and I will see them again, at the risk of soul and body”.³⁰

The landlord’s comments seem both aspirational and of lament for a bygone time, as if he is mourning his decline into the lower class. The landlord’s position on class position and mortality takes on a new valence when considered alongside the proliferation of mourning how-to manuals which sought to prepare individuals for death generally during the early to mid-nineteenth century. Historians have probed these practices and written texts, showing that they reveal the act of mourning the dead became an intensely self-conscious experience, “to be probed and examined in the Puritan tradition of spiritual self-examination.”³¹ Moreover, through mourning, a middle-class person was able to establish the legitimacy of their claims to genteel social status.³² Reflecting on his fall down the class hierarchy, prompts the landlord to turn to mourning practices as a means to establish his previous access to middle-class culture. In his slide to a lower-class, he still wants to convey to Moore that he belongs to a higher-class; proper mourning, even enacted in the past, comes to give the landlord a semblance of hope that he might once again move back up and have his class position restored. Similarly, Mary Louise Kete argues that much of these mourning rituals and what she calls engagement with “sentimental collaborations” through mourning texts and practices were “conservative in that [they] aim at restoring something that has been lost, generative in that it must create something new in order to achieve this.”³³ As she notes: “This circulation of selves engages those who participate in a joint effort—a collaboration of sentiment—to convert something established under temporary conditions and through a voluntary action of will (the individual self in this case) into something permanent and eternal.”³⁴ Here, the landlord, too, is trying to resurrect his class positionality, and in mourning in front of Moore, in this collaboration of sentiment, to relegate his lower social position from temporary (like the period of mourning) into something permanent: back into the graces of the genteel class.

Moore goes on to say, “he concluded with a terrible oath which made me tremble.”³⁵ This oath, which Moore acknowledges but does not document in her account, becomes one which

challenges her class sensibilities, and this man's commitment, willingness, and intimate understanding of his own preparedness, to "risk soul and body," to risk the threat of death to supersede his own current financial and class status restrictions, arises from Moore's presence. Reading this moment in the text, we see here how the man has mourned the loss of his class, one where he feels it may be the "temporary conditions" that will return to what is "permanent and eternal" as Kete argues. It is his attempt to tie himself back to a class that he sees Moore holding. The man's proclamation gains more salience and gravity when he and several accomplices plot to murder Moore while she pretends to sleep in the barn. They plot to steal Moore's money, at the risk that this pursuit to find "better days" means risking one's own mortal soul, or even possibly physical death should a physical altercation with their intended victim ensue. Moore, however, is able to escape after hearing her assailants' plan, giving her "time to reflect" and evade the men, seeing the "fatal instruments of death" in their hands.³⁶ Moore's privileged upbringing has not prepared her for such situations; she wanted not under her father and mother's roof, while the poor man has had to reflect on his position, has had to prepare for some fashion of death as a necessary risk in his attempt to improve his lot. Elisabeth Garrett points out "there were few families that did not frequently renew acquaintance with the grim reaper[...]. The pall of death was omnipresent" in the early nineteenth-century,³⁷ revealing an intimacy and familiarity with death reflective of the period. Lacking any exposure to death or any preparation—unlike the landlord—this pivotal situation forces Moore to begin the psychological work of recognizing death itself as a possibility and inevitability, and as such she must prepare for it.

Additionally, before the attack is about to ensue, Moore hears one of the would-be attackers state, "then do your business well, give the fellow no chance to kick or scream, for fear it should wake my wife or her little ones."³⁸ Child-rearing is presumably the woman of the house's responsibility, as they are "*her* little ones" [emphasis added] but we can also read this comment as a form of protection, the attacker's wife is being kept in the dark about her husband's murderous plans but he is also keeping her shielded from death preparation. Much like the figure of Moore's mother, this invoked mother figure is a sort of apparition in the narrative that has a presence but is not imbued with any power or action. This class contact and her gender play place Moore in a situation where she is educated about the necessity for preparing for danger, and inevitable death. This threat of violence equips Moore for the terror that faces her at sea.

Following this close encounter with the landlord, Moore finds Alfred in Brooklyn and must endure the death of their relationship when she finds he is engaged to another woman named Emma. Moore travels around aimlessly, miserable, and lamenting that she is now lost: she cannot go home, but she cannot remain as her capital is dwindling. Here, she begins to feel that her "heart was dead to pleasure."³⁹ Her heart's death simulates for Moore her own death, as she retires away from society, choosing instead to be alone in her chamber. Moreover, she begins to lament her condition:

A young girl of eighteen years, used to no uncommon labor unacquainted with the vicissitudes of the world, still more unacquainted with mankind and their various passions; unhackneyed in vice far from him, and among inhospitable strangers deserted by protecting parents; forsaken by the man for whom I had quit my fond home for ever, cast abandoned on the wide theatre of the world without a friend to pity, and almost without money, was the awful situation to which I was reduced.⁴⁰

Moore outlines her current situation, which reads much like her own auto-obituary of a life, of a class affiliation, of a heteronormative interpellation as future wife, to which she could never return. She “did not dare” to return home to Sagg Harbor, nor does she imagine seeing Alfred again; while she escaped a physical death at the hands of the men at the log house, her own life, the “heart” of what defined Marian Moore has also died—she cannot survive in New York as Marian Moore. Yet, her adopted life as John Little, her reincarnation as a man, offers the only conceivable opportunity for a rebirth, a new life post Marian Moore’s death. As Moore stumbles upon a “rough looking sailor” who, holding a handful of money, states: “There now, sir, I can live again,” Moore inquires how he became so fortunate.⁴¹ Here again, capital, the opportunity to gain some modicum of status, even if it may be as a sailor, as Moore reveals later, offers up the potential for another life.

However, Moore’s success at finding employment and means of subsistence is not without its dangers, and she begins to meditate on the choice she has made as she signs “the ship’s papers, while the tears mingled with the ink.”⁴² As she is able to pay her bills and purchase provisions, she envisions the fate that could befall her, lest her secret womanhood be revealed. She fears that the crew may “discover of [her] sex, producing intricate difficulties, and perhaps, eventual ruin [...] surrounded by the blood hounds of Neptune.”⁴³ These visions of an imagined death at first frighten Moore: the position she finds herself in ironically necessitates that she risk her life in order to “live again” on the space of the ship. These visions of her possible death cause her to burst into tears. Yet, immediately following this ebullition of fear and pain, her tone quickly shifts. She notes that this voyage amongst sailors allows for death, but within this preparation for death psychologically, she believes “there may be hope...while a smile of joy lit up [her] countenance.”⁴⁴ Her emotional shifting, while seeming to reflect how she has become masculinized by her incognito travels as John Little, and thus, also adopts the trope of masculine sea-adventurer, is instead a response to her potential encounters with death preparation at sea. Imagining her discovery as Marian Moore—and not John Little—at sea lets her imagine her own death, as she already has in her elegy for her previous life. She becomes able to hope and gain control and agency over the debilitating power that death tries to impose against proper, protected women shielded from such experiences such as her ghostly mother and the woman at the log house. She recapitulates this as she states, on board the ship, sailing away from her homeland, “We are delighted with the images which fancy forms, and pursue them with alacrity until the mask is thrown off, and then the illusion no longer charms us.”⁴⁵ This statement is interesting in its contrast of her previous reflections, showing Moore’s understanding of how

imagination and preparedness functions dually: to deceive one from the fact of mortality, and to then demystify the illusion, to no longer be charmed, and instead to find the power in exposure and education which equips her to pull back the mask.

Through the initial portions of Moore's travels aboard the ship, she is further primed for death. The ship's crew travels to New Orleans on the first leg of their journey, where they see the site of the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. Here, Moore and her cohorts "beheld the bleached bones of unfortunate soldiers, which the waters washed out, the scene was dismal, and offers one of those impressive lessons which humbles man, and acquaints man with himself."⁴⁶ Writing on the subject of the Battle of New Orleans, Tom Kanon presents one witness' testimony of the macabre scene at the battle: "These poor fellows presented a strange appearance; their hair, eye brows, and lashes, were thickly covered with hoar-frost, or rime, their bloodless cheeks vying with its whiteness." He also noticed that very few of the bodies were clad in military uniforms; indeed, Hill thought most of them "bore the appearance of farmers or husbandmen."⁴⁷ Coming face-to-face with the wages of war leads Moore to face death, not only in her imagination, but in its actual materiality, its corporeal manifestation. Even though Moore only witnesses the dead through the bleached bones, and does not confront the frost encrusted corpses rotting on the battlefield, and while there is a historical distance, Moore is significantly impacted by the number of the dead on that battlefield, of the fact that they were not just soldiers, but also citizens, much like herself. Thus, she is brought closer to her own mortality, through a physical monument revealed to her through the corroding work of the sea which has exposed and bleached the bones. In her work on nautical Gothic, Adler dispels the myth that "when perceived as a trackless void, the sea possesses no meaning of its own but receives the projections of land-based concerns."⁴⁸ Adler further elucidates that such divides between land-based and sea-based concerns are a myth, drawing on the work of Helen Rozwadowski, who argues that "while the sea is still often perceived as timeless, inhuman, impervious, trackless, and empty of history, it is really full of it."⁴⁹ While the bones of the fallen soldiers are land-based, the collision of the waves against the skeletons produces this unique landscape Moore is able to observe. Moore's narrative demonstrates that being within a disorienting and disrupted environment influenced by the force of the sea as well as land-based violence positions one to confront binaries of life and death more fully.

Furthermore, following their viewing of the fallen soldiers' remains, the crew continues to travel, reaching Europe, where Moore disembarks from the vessel and marvels at the art and fine luxuries that the continent has to offer back on land, demonstrating a contradictory thrust back and forth from the illuminating confrontations Moore experiences on shore and the vapid materialism on land. The proximity to death increases as Moore and the crew begin their return to New York, closer to Sag Harbor, closer to the life Moore left behind and had as much considered dead and gone. On the third day, a strong gale hits the ship, leading to three of the crew's demise in "a watery grave."⁵⁰ Moreover, the surviving sailors are left without any food or water as they drift upon the sea. While Moore has prepared for death, she is drawn closer through a first-hand experience this time, as, with no rations to maintain the survival of the crew

members, the crew descends into cannibalism. While Moore has been able to prepare for the death of her previous life, she must now contend with witnessing actual death and incorporating that death literally into her own body to stay alive. After drawing lots, “the lot fell upon the youngest on board, a poor, friendless youth, apparently not more than twelve years old.”⁵¹ Moore speculates that there could have been collusion amongst some of the other sailors on board which led to the most vulnerable person on board the vessel, a weak 12-year-old boy, to be the first to die, but rather than interrogating the circumstances, Moore instead turns her attention to the cabin boy’s response to his fate. “He first burst into a flood of tears, and entreated that his life might be spared for a few days, which not being allowed him, he reduced the time to a single day, and when he found that there was even an objection to this, he became frantic, declaring it was his intention to defend himself to the last.”⁵² The young boy is overtaken by several members of the crew, and Moore notes that, when the crew begins to eat the cabin boy, “I had heard and read that famine had led men to commission of such horrible excesses[...]but foreign was it from my mind, that I myself should [...] become one of its melancholy subjects.”⁵³ Moore watches the youth whom she supposes has the longest life ahead of him attempt to negotiate the terms of his own death through a rhetoric of temporal increments: a few days, a day, and whatever last minutes he can retain. For all his bargaining, the youth still violently meets his death, and Moore ingests that experience visually even as she refuses to partake of the experience orally, rejecting the act of cannibalism for a few more days after the death of the youth. Here, Moore’s narrative draws on the trope of child abuse, in this case the murder of the most innocent and defenseless. Jen Baker’s work on ghost-child narratives, an example of “maritime mythology and the Gothic”, elucidates the figure of the abused child at sea as the catalyst for necessary societal change.⁵⁴ This harrowing encounter with a youth targeted precisely because of his defenselessness, strikingly counterposes horror at sea within the otherwise calm, peaceful voyage. The cannibalism and mob mentality harkens back to the scene at the lodge with the man and his conspirators plotting to kill Moore. Yet, the horror here is also one that the crew need enact in order to survive the wreck. Moore’s refusal seems to play into the tropes of the cannibalism as the effects of leaving home, of challenging class, and of dressing as a man. Yet, this eruption and climax of the narrative occludes the empowerment Moore has felt at sea until this moment.

Through death comes life, literally, as Moore had imagined, but it takes on a graver valence when it comes to the growing possibility that she herself may be the next to be sacrificed so that others may live. Beginning to fathom her possible fate, Moore is exposed to how others prepare for death, looking at the various modes and models of having to face mortality. She documents how one man “requested only a few moments to prepare for death, which he employed in fervent prayer for himself and for our speedy deliverance, and then delivered up his life without a struggle,”⁵⁵ while another let out “piteous moans and lamentations[...]of leaving behind him a beloved wife and several small children.”⁵⁶ This critical juncture in the narrative moves to the final step of death preparation for Moore: rather than just imagined deaths, whether of her previous life or of her actual perishing, she must witness firsthand death repeatedly and

the ways one can confront the inevitable through the victims of her and the crew's cannibalism. There is no more critical distance, thinking of how her parents must assume she is dead, nor of seeing other deaths as the "bleached bones" on the former battlefields of New Orleans. Rather, part of Moore's narrative of survival entails that she "witness how different were the effects produced by their sufferings" of the men chosen to be eaten as they learned the nature of their fate. These encounters lead to Moore succumbing to a state of delirium, where she begins to imagine what might be the fate of her beloved Alfred, as well as how his fate affects her own. During this episode, she quotes in its entirety, the poem "The Fatal Lovers" which is referred to as "An Original Pathetic Recitation, written by Mr. Isaac Bass" in *Sam Weller's Budget of Recitations* (1838), a collection of popular short dramatic scenes, parodies and poems. Considering the source of Moore's allusion to this particular piece in this particular popular volume, the question becomes if Moore's narrative becomes a parody of the shipwreck tale popular amongst the American public during the mid-nineteenth-century.

The short poem itself describes a storm, much like the gale that left the crew in ruin; yet, this poem inverts the tragedy to fit the more gender normative expectations of men and women's roles. Marian—the name of the woman in the poem, conveniently matching Moore's first name—is at home and hears the cries of Alfred (the change of the man's name to Alfred is the only change made to the original text) as he "lay on the jetty, absorbed in a trance" in a stream.⁵⁷ While she is surrounded by death at sea, Moore remains the adventurer, while Alfred remains back on land. In her state of despair, Moore finds herself turning back to imagine her reinscription back into the established gender order, longing for the protection which she has left behind through her becoming John Little. Furthermore, she imagines a second scenario in her fettered state, one where she has returned home to her parents and friends, only to find them torturing her with "apparent indifference [...] refusing to indulge [her] with a little water with which to cool [her] parched throat."⁵⁸ Julia Stern has argued "that sentiment and mourning are interrelated because they draw the individual away from the domestic sphere into culturally accepted methods of public emotive expression."⁵⁹ This moment where Moore is in a troubled state shows this shift from sentimentality, which is often feminized,⁶⁰ where Moore identifies with the female mourner, going back to a feminized position rather than the inversion she is in through her being a sailor on a shipwreck. Yet, she is cognizant that inverting her position with Alfred as dictated in "The Fatal Lovers", while seeming to offer solace and life in a return to the domestic sphere, would also entail her being on a "sickbed" at home, confined, with indifference from her family, unable to quench her throat which has now tasted freedom from gendered constrictions, as the water here is also the taste of the liberation she has experienced at sea. Instead, she moves to the public sphere through her imagined mourning of Alfred and of her own social death at home. She has seen both possibilities she could have been caught in: the proper feminine mourner and the transgressive women returned home and not accepted back into society for her cannibalizing both the flesh of men and cannibalizing a man's identity and becoming John Little, tasting the freedoms offered by masculinity which is verboten to women.

Moore snaps out of this dark reverie upon her realizing the stifling reality and limitations she would face at her parents' home. This is followed by the appearance of "three or four showers" supplying the dehydrated crew with "a quantity of water, and which [they] caught by spreading and wringing [their] cloths."⁶¹ Hereafter, a few days later, the crew is saved by the brig Amazon and Captain Stevens. The imbibing of the water dripping from clothes provided by the lifesaving showers quenches the parched throat Moore would have had if she simply remained at home, leaving behind Alfred and her adventures pursuing and losing him. Yet, the most "melancholy and touching" tragedy lies in Moore's eventual return home. She "had now been two years and eight months from home" and the ultimate gift she receives from her sea voyage is "religion, and that religion which is not to be attained by church formalities or a show of grace, but by fervent and unceasing prayer."⁶² Yet, on the actual voyage there is little indication of Moore's spiritual awakening or "fervent prayer". Upon arriving back on land, Moore goes on to eventually contact Alfred, who comes and pledges his allegiance to her, and for the first time in over two years she puts back on her women's clothes and returns to being Marian Moore. They eventually return to Sagg Harbor where she is reincorporated into her family and back into domesticity as Alfred's wife. She closes her portion of the narrative warning against those young men and women who would dare to go adventuring or challenging their social and gendered position, since the journey which allowed her to experience life outside codified domesticity and patriarchal rule left her health "impaired" and her "constitution, which was previously good, so much broken, as to render it very probably that until [her] death, [she] shall remain a living monument of [her] past folly."⁶³ Yet, she still dreams of hearing the call "all hands on deck" and the visions of her journey where she once stated: "I really believe, had it not been for that internal sorrow that continually haunted me, that I should be pleased with the adventure."⁶⁴ For Moore, the sea was liberating, it allowed her to be pleased with her life, one removed from Alfred's fickle and easily lost love, as well as the cruelty of her parents' designs against her happiness. On the ship, looking at New York receding in the distance, she proclaimed: "I could not help smiling at the simplicity of the sailor, it was the first smile that sat on my lips since I left New York."⁶⁵ This happiness at sea, of course tainted by the horrific cannibalistic actions she had to partake in to survive, also gives her a new perspective, one where she felt happiness outside of gender constrictions, as John Little. Moore's use of irony reveals the extent of just how monstrous domestic life on land truly is when held up in comparison to cannibalism and shipwreck at sea.

Moore's return to traditional feminine space in the arms of her lover Alfred as a wife and to her parent's home as the prodigal daughter returned fixes her back into dominant gender roles. She continues to claim how lucky she was to be able to return home and how foolish she was to ever venture out and question her place. Yet, her previous adventures haunt her, but not as cruel reminders of her transgressions and near death at sea, but as calls to adventure, calls to designate her own fate, and to not succumb to the oppressive regime on domesticity that which captains her life. She is now home, now crippled and in poor health, but on the ship she had "become thoroughly acquainted with mankind and their various passions", broadening her perspective,

testing the limits of her own physical form.⁶⁶ As John Little, she gained experience and ascertained knowledge of a life beyond gendered confines, and she attempts to seek solace in being back in the home, yet she still has “visions of the past”⁶⁷ and wonders aloud: “But what was this, to what I was afterward doomed to suffer?”⁶⁸ Here, she is doomed to suffer a death to which she thought she had already endured in her adoption of her John Little persona, which is the life of the landlocked woman, who cannot escape to the sea except again in her dreams. Even while emaciated and delirious at sea, she was still able to have control over her body, her space, her position. Back home and married, she is “a monument of [her] past folly” physically, but recalling her smiling at the sailor, of her experience and acclimation to the ship and the sea, it is clear that her illness and her suffering to which she is doomed is to always be haunted by her two years and eight months of independence, agency, and having to reembody the figurative corpse of Marian Moore. She is entombed back within the confines of the domestic, of her class, and of her gender. She did not prepare for what would happen when John Little would have to be the one to die, and Moore to resurrect, a shell of what she could have been.

Endnotes:

¹ Robert Foulke, *The Sea Voyage*, (New York, Prentice Hall, 1997), p 114-115.

² Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*, (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2012), p 160.

³ Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*, p. 67

⁴ Grace Moore, *Pirates and Mutineers of the Nineteenth Century: Swashbucklers and Swindlers*, (London, Routledge, 2016), p 95.

⁵ Amy Mitchell-Cook, *A Sea of Misadventures: Shipwreck and Survival in Early America*, (Columbia, South Carolina, University of South Carolina Press, 2013), p 9.

⁶ Robin Miskolcze, *Women & Children First: Nineteenth-Century Sea Narratives and American Identity*, (Omaha, University of Nebraska Press, 2007) p 25.

⁷ Miskolcze, *Women & Children First*, p 26.

⁸ Miskolcze, *Women & Children First*, p 29.

⁹ Mitchell-Cook, *A Sea of Misadventures*, p 6.

¹⁰ Mitchell-Cook, *A Sea of Misadventures*, p 16-17.

¹¹ Miskolcze, *Women & Children First*, p 100.

¹² Emily Adler, “Through Oceans Darkly: Sea Literature and the Nautical Gothic,” *Gothic Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2018), p 3.

¹³ Fred Botting, *Gothic*, 2nd Edition (London, Routledge, 2014), p 4.

¹⁴ Adler, “Through Oceans Darkly,” p 3.

¹⁵ Miskolcze, *Women & Children First*, p 132, 154.

¹⁶ Miskolcze, *Women & Children First*, p 154. Through my research into Marian Moore’s narrative, Robin Miskolcze’s text *Women and Children First: Nineteenth-Century Sea Narratives and American Identity* (2007) is the only text to present any sort of analysis of Moore’s work, though it is quite limited in scope. Other texts that address the narrative simply

mark its existence, such as *A Selected List of Works in the Library Relating to Nautical and Naval Art and Science, Navigation, and Seamanship, Shipbuilding, Etc.* (1907)

¹⁷ Miskolcze, *Women & Children First*, p 154.

¹⁸ Marian Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore, the Shipwrecked Female Sailor, Whose Lamentable Sufferings with the Crew of the Ship Jenny Lind, Which Foundered in the Atlantic Ocean, on Her Passage Homewards from Southampton to New York, is Unparalleled in the Annals of Shipwreck*, (New York, J. Merone & Co., 1853), p 15.

¹⁹ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 15.

²⁰ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 16.

²¹ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 16.

²² Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 16.

²³ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 18.

²⁴ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 18.

²⁵ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 18.

²⁶ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 20.

²⁷ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 18.

²⁸ Katherine Bowers, “Haunted Ice, Fearful Sounds, and the Arctic Sublime: Exploring Nineteenth-Century Polar Gothic Space,” *Gothic Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2018), p 72-73.

²⁹ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 22.

³⁰ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 22.

³¹ Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982) p 128.

³² Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*, p 124.

³³ Mary Louise Kete, *Sentimental Collaborations: Mourning and Middle-Class Identity in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Durham, Duke University Press, 2000), p 53.

³⁴ Kete, *Sentimental Collaborations*, p 53.

³⁵ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 22.

³⁶ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 23.

³⁷ Elisabeth Garrett, *At Home: The American Family, 1750-1870*, (New York, H.N. Abrams, 1990), p 240.

³⁸ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 22.

³⁹ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 27.

⁴⁰ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 28.

⁴¹ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 28.

⁴² Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 29.

⁴³ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 29.

⁴⁴ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 29.

⁴⁵ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 29.

⁴⁶ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 30.

⁴⁷ Tom Kanon, *Tennesseans at War, 1812–1815: Andrew Jackson, the Creek War, and the Battle of New Orleans*, (Tuscaloosa, The University of Alabama Press, 2014), p 156.

⁴⁸ Adler, “Through Oceans Darkly,” p 5.

⁴⁹ Helen Rozwadowski, “Ocean’s Depths,” *Environmental History*, 15 (2010), p 520-525.

⁵⁰ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 33.

⁵¹ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 34.

⁵² Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 34.

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- ⁵³ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 34.
- ⁵⁴ Jen Baker, "Spectral Stowaways: Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's 'Kentucky's Ghost' (1868)," *Gothic Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2018), p 56.
- ⁵⁵ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 34-35.
- ⁵⁶ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 35.
- ⁵⁷ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 36.
- ⁵⁸ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 36.
- ⁵⁹ George Gordon-Smith, "Psychological Sentimentalism: Consciousness, Affect, and the Sentimental Henry James," in *Sentimentalism in Nineteenth-Century America : Literary and Cultural Practices*, ed. Mary De Jong, (Fairleigh, Dickinson University Press, 2013), p 184.
- ⁶⁰ Gordon-Smith, "Psychological Sentimentalism," p 184.
- ⁶¹ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 36-37.
- ⁶² Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 39.
- ⁶³ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 41.
- ⁶⁴ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 30.
- ⁶⁵ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 30.
- ⁶⁶ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 41.
- ⁶⁷ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 40.
- ⁶⁸ Moore, *The Touching and Melancholy Narrative of Marian Moore*, p 41.