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Article begins on next page
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ELLEN MALENAS

He said that kindness was the only way to make good negroes, and that, if that failed, flogging would never succeed; and he advised me, when I found my negro worthless, 'to sell him at once, and not stay to flog him, and so, by spoiling his appearance, make him sell for less; for blacks must not be treated now, massa, as they used to be; they can think, and hear, and see, as well as white people: blacks are wiser, massa, than they were, and will soon be wiser.' I thought this fellow himself was a good proof of his assertion.1

The advice transcribed above is from a slave waterman to Matthew Lewis. Its rhetorical virtuosity in blending threat and submission distills in this one small moment the most salient issues, economic and moral survival, explored in the Journal of a West India Proprietor. The text is primarily concerned with consciously promoting a reform agenda that attempts to mitigate suffering and cruelty on plantations while maintaining the institution of slavery. The Journal is a nexus for issues of race, gender and imperialism, but has received surprisingly little critical attention; most existing criticism positions the text in relation to aesthetics, surveillance and punishment, space, and issues of translation.2 My study examines the political implications of the text's generic strategies and explores how these generic strategies catalogue interior struggles between idealism and self-interest.

Lewis's position toward slavery is complex and deeply ambivalent. He inherited two Jamaica plantations, Cornwall and Hordley, and roughly 413 slaves total. He owed his privileged lifestyle, complete with liberal education, to the system of absentee landlordism, yet abhorred the "execrable slave trade" and the abuse of slaves. Like many late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century intellectuals, his public statements reveal a rift between his political, anti-emancipation stance and his philosophical commitment to ideas of liberty.
and individual freedom. Lewis maintained that the slaves’ lives were much better than the ones they would have experienced in Africa, but that the middle passage and the “seasoning” period (the first three years in the colonies) were cruel and inhumane. Lewis’s conflicted position about slavery as an institution, however, was radically different from most of his planter-peers who viewed his attempts to ameliorate slaves’ conditions as subversive and illegal. Lewis believed that by instituting reform and by being an engaged, benevolent master, he could alleviate the slaves’ suffering during their “inevitable” servitude, while at the same time continuing to produce immense profit for himself. Thus, he supported legislation to abolish the slave trade in 1807, but did not support the abolitionists’ drive for emancipation concurrent with the Journal’s drafting. Understanding Lewis’s position is further complicated by the groundswell of anti-slavery sentiment in England between the Journal’s drafting before emancipation and its publication concurrent with emancipation. Lewis offered the first half of the Journal to Murray for publication in 1815. Lewis’s main biographer, Lewis Peck, suggests that the reason it was not published was Lewis’s demand of £2000 for the manuscript. Peck was partly correct, because Murray bought the manuscript from Charles Greville for only 400 guineas in 1834. However, as Peck also notes, Greville comments shrewdly in his diary that “it is the right moment for publishing them now that people are full of interest about the West India question.” Murray’s desire to publish was most likely due to a combination of the right price and renewed interest in the conditions of West Indian slavery pre-emancipation. How emancipation would have affected the contemporary reader’s reaction to the Journal is unclear. Although the legislation was enforced by 1834, emancipated slaves in the West Indies were still required to serve out a forced six-year “apprenticeship” to their former masters; slaves in India, Ceylon, and St. Helena were still legally in bondage; and the British government was ineffectual in quelling the illegal slave trade that continued from West Africa. Given these circumstances, Lewis’s documentation of reforms would have continued to be extremely relevant to the British public even after the 1833 legislation was passed.

From a historical standpoint, Lewis’s anti-emancipation position was both logically suspect and psychologically untenable. The institution of slavery was incompatible with Lewis’s vision of humane stewardship, partly because he lacked control over abusive slave-master relations on other plantations. At the same time, he became frustrated by the slaves’ response of “ingratitude” and their active resistance to his reforms. He faces both stylistic and pragmatic problems in the text: how does an author promote an ideological agenda which
is so quick to provoke criticism; how does the planter navigate the roadblocks to his reforms and then relate those navigations in his account?

I suggest that Lewis promotes his difficult, sometimes logically untenable position and maintains a stable narration by manipulating genre. Some of these generic changes within the text are immediately recognizable, such as Lewis's insertion of poems or song lyrics offset on the page. Other instances in the text that I call shifts in genre require further explanation. Although these moments in the text could be labeled changes in tone, I specifically use the term genre. When we think of a passage as generically specific, it evokes aspects of the passage less apparent than when it is classified under the umbrella term "journal entries." Labeling a passage as a discrete genre highlights the ways in which that passage resonates with other works within that genre, allowing the critic to interpret the passage in innovative ways. Generic classification then functions as an interpretive tool, rather than an elaborate taxonomy, where the most salient aspect of the text is the purpose for which it is being used, rather than its formal similarities to other texts of the same category. Thomas Beebee's suggestion that "generic differences are grounded in the 'use-value' of a discourse rather than in its content, formal features, or its rules of production," is central to this method of interpretation. In a similar vein, my method also draws from Adena Rosmarin's work on the rhetorical and pragmatic theory of genre, where generic classification is used specifically for critical interpretation, argument and analysis.

[Pragmatic theory] places constitutive or constructive power in the genre, and defines the genre neither "historically" nor "theoretically" but in terms of its use in critical explanation. The genre is the critic's heuristic tool, his chosen or defined way of persuading his audience to see the literary text in all of its previously inexplicable and "literary" fullness and then to relate this text to those that are similar or, more precisely, to those that may be similarly explained.  

Alastair Fowler also refutes the idea that genre theory's main purpose is as a system of classification. "When we investigate previous states of the type, it is to clarify meaningful departures that the work itself makes. It follows that genre theory, too, is properly concerned, in the main, with interpretation. It deals with principles of reconstruction and interpretation and (to some extent) the value of meaning. It does not much deal with classification." Classification should widen opportunities for analysis through explicit and implied comparisons among types.

In this essay, I discuss Lewis's use of generic strategy in a song, a recipe, and a long poem. These three examples illustrate how genre allows Lewis to
advocate a fractured position and contain the anxieties concomitant with that position. These chosen genres do not constitute an exhaustive list of Lewis’s variations, yet the insertion of song lyrics or poetry is common and consistent throughout the journal. In terms of Lewis’s reform program, I argue that genre functions in two ways in the Journal. First, Lewis manipulates genre for the purpose of pressing his agenda for humane stewardship. The text repeatedly attempts to rehabilitate the institution of slavery through exploiting the conventions of several genres. Lewis inscribes these generic variations under the auspices of the “private” journal to prove that slavery is neither morally wrong nor dehumanizing when properly managed.

As the narrative progresses, the Journal’s generic strategy is complicated further by the author’s recognition of the possible limitations of an ideological reform agenda predicated upon humanizing a brutal economic and political system. To resolve this dilemma without destroying the integrity of the overall conservative argument of the text, Lewis uses his second generic strategy, where verse functions as a structure of containment for the issues that were most problematic in his amelioration plan: family, authority, sexuality, commerce and ethics.

**Genre and the Case for Humane Stewardship**

First offered for publication in 1817, at a critical period of debate about slave emancipation in the West Indies, the Journal was always intended to be a public document supporting an anti-emancipation view. The choice of the journal as primary genre is significant because it functions as both a personal account and a political tract, making open reference to abolitionist discourse. Lewis’s contemporary reader would have been exposed to frequent parliamentary and public debates led by William Wilberforce over emancipation, as well as abolitionist pamphlets and poetry written by prominent figures such as Hannah More and William Cowper. At the same time, Creole planters and absentee landlords defended their economic rights through the Society of West India Planters and Merchants in an equally public venue. Lewis’s public relationships with both planters and emancipationists were strained by his position of compromise. Privately, Lewis’s anti-emancipation stance was at odds with his social circle, as Lord Holland, who is the “Reporter” of the abolitionist African Institution group Lewis regularly attacks in the Journal, was a close personal friend. The multiple layers of tension Lewis experienced (within his peer group, within himself, and with the reading public) create a specific tone in the Journal. He distances himself from the distasteful realities of Jamaica through irony and humor, while at the same time indulging in highly sentimental discourse to frame his relationships with the slaves. The
jarring juxtaposition of these narrative elements results in an equivocal tone in which it is often unclear what Lewis’s attitude toward any specific event is. This obfuscation of feeling and motivation points to Lewis’s own internal conflict about his position as both reformer and slave owner and his desire to hide his true feelings and motivations in a setting where his ideologies were in conflict with his planter peers.

Lewis had many compelling reasons for choosing an indirect mode to express his viewpoint, and he most successfully argued the complexities of his fragmented position within the inclusive and fluid generic nature of the journal. A public journal is a slippery document; it suggests “private” thoughts exposed for public view. In arguing for stewardship of the slavery institution, Lewis uses the journal format to his advantage by framing his ideological agenda as both personal opinion and feeling. The reader then becomes a privileged viewer of ostensibly private thoughts, making these thoughts more immediate and persuasive than they otherwise would be. Lewis could have easily and quickly written an anti-emancipation pamphlet or published a lecture, as so many others did, but the Journal would have been less rhetorically successful operating under the stylistic constraints of a pamphlet.13

Like the Bakhtinian concept of the novel, the journal is generically imperialistic.14 It can incorporate many other genres and break in and out of short generic digressions. The reader winks at the awkward shifts between genres and the suspect political sentiments in a journal because the journal is a “private” document and therefore not subject to the same literary or political scrutiny as other genres.15 However, Lewis exploited the cover of “privacy” associated with the journal genre to make anti-emancipation arguments safely.16 Within the larger framework of the journal, Lewis’s text uses the strengths of different genres (the emotional evocation of poetry, the everyday concreteness of a recipe) to push his point about humane stewardship. The generic shifts in the journal are abrupt; each anecdote, joke or poem rarely takes more than one page. However, collectively these moments make a powerful case that slave life is not oppressive if properly managed by a benevolent master.

Lewis’s recipe for the cane-piece cat (a euphemism for a dish made of rat) typifies a small generic digression that functions as a strong anti-emancipation argument when viewed collectively with other digressive moments. The recipe passage is also exemplary of Lewis’s peculiar tone in the Journal. It has moments of intense irony and multiple layers of meaning juxtaposed with a straight narration of facts, making it particularly difficult to gauge Lewis’s attitude towards the meal. However, the passage’s main ideological thrust is to show the palatable nature of slave food using a narrative style similar to passages where Lewis earnestly describes Creole cuisine. The recipe is generically important because recipes represent specific and practical details
of everyday life. Detailed descriptions of food preparation are concrete, lending Lewis’s account of the cane-piece cat an air of authenticity where a simple descriptive statement of its flavor would be suspect. The cane-piece cat recipe, its inclusion and Lewis’s diction in reviewing the dish, has a strong ideological purpose in support of slavery. He uses the recipe genre to show, rather than tell, that the slaves’ food was not unhealthy or substandard.

To fill up my list of Jamaica delicacies, I must not forget to mention, that I did my best to procure a Cane-piece cat roasted in the true African fashion. The Creole negroes, however, greatly disapproved of my venturing upon this dish, which they positively denied having tasted themselves; and when, at length, the Cat was procured, last Saturday, instead of plainly boiling it with negro-pepper and salt, they made into a high seasoned stew, which rendered it impossible to judge of its real flavour. However, I tasted it, as did also several other people, and we were unanimous in the opinion, that it might have been mistaken for a very good game-soup, and that, when properly dressed, a Cane-piece cat must be excellent food.

Rats were common pests in the sugar cane fields, and because of their plentitude, the Ibo slaves used them to supplement their diet. Eating rats was perceived as a form of degradation; the higher status Creole or Jamaican-born slaves would not eat them. Although Lewis tries many types of food during his visit, the choice of the cane-piece cat is significant because it was not something that other whites would have eaten.

His reference to the cane-piece cat as a “delicacy” is intentionally ironic. Yet, because Lewis includes the cane-piece cat in his “list of Jamaica delicacies,” he rhetorically groups it with other actual delicacies he has previously described in detail such as black crabs, the ring-tailed dove, and the mountain mullet. To be defined as a delicacy, a dish need not be pleasurable to eat; it need only be choice and expensive. This ironic labeling (the rat is neither choice nor expensive; their infestation of the cane fields made them both free and plentiful) and grouping slave food with the master’s expensive food suggests that both slave and master enjoy luxurious cuisine. In reality, slaves worked all day in the cane fields, but were expected to provide their own food from provision grounds (except for a small allowance of salt-pork or other protein sources which they were given. Most likely, the cane-piece cat was a response to deprivation and a way of utilizing a readily available source of protein.

The Creole’s unwillingness to serve the rat to Lewis “roasted in the true African fashion” proves that the meal was most likely unpalatable. His lack of “authentic” experience is important because of the conflation he makes
between his experience of the cane-piece cat and his slaves' experience of it. Not knowing its true flavor, he persists in his supposition that cane-piece cat is a desirable meal. He goes so far as to personally attest that he and others believed "it might have been mistaken for a very good game-soup" and "must be excellent food." Lewis's description of the cane-cat as "excellent" and a dish similar to one an English country squire might order supports his anti-emancipation agenda. His argument that the conditions of slavery are humane is reinforced through his use of the recipe genre, complete with spices and methods of cooking, which gives the reader a concrete example that slave provisions are wholesome and delicious. Lewis represents eating rats not as a condition of starvation, but yet another example of the Africans' delightful and amusing culinary eccentricities which Lewis, as a moonlighting ethnographer, is happy to document. The text is filled with these insidious small generic digressions, posing as slices of life, which imply through concrete examples that slave life is not unduly harsh.

Small examples such as the recipe reinforce the sustained message of longer entry sequences. Entries from 15 March to 26 March 1816 show how Lewis interweaves small generic digressions and follows generic threads to strengthen his anti-emancipation argument. In these eleven days, he uses song lyrics, court reports, jokes, and anecdotes to argue that humane stewardship can preempt slave uprisings. Some of these generic strategies arise as a response to the complex power struggles between absentee landlords, Creole planters, and slaves occurring at the time.

On 15 March, Lewis relates how a magistrate of the assize court accuses him of "calling the peace of the island into question" by subverting Jamaican slave laws through the reforms he has instituted on his plantation. The Creole planters view the reforms on Lewis's Cornwall estate as "over indulgences," and they resent Lewis's intercession to plead clemency on behalf of their own slaves. The planters see his reforms as encouraging revolt by making planter authority appear weak, while Lewis views the reforms as a guarantee of the slaves' loyalty through good treatment. His conviction is severely shaken during these eleven days, and he manages the expression of his fear by manipulating a series of genres.

On 16 March, Lewis relates the discovery of an alleged plot by the slaves of the neighboring parish of St. Elizabeth's to "murder all the whites on the island." Lewis narrates these entries with characteristic irony and a comic sense of distance (he calls the plotted massacre a "grand fete") and never links the Creole planters' suspicions of his reforms and its relation to the discovered rebellion. Yet, a palpable tension arises in the narrative between both Lewis and his slaves and Lewis and his fellow planters that jeopardizes his reform project during these crucial days.
Although Lewis maintains to his fellow planters that good treatment guarantees loyalty, he begins to fear that his slaves’ overt expression of affection for him is false. He expresses doubts that his reforms have engendered loyalty or gratitude and guaranteed his safety as he had hoped. (Throughout the text, Lewis relates news reports of other plantations where masters had been poisoned or had their throats cut.) He writes that the insurrection was planned on the estate of Lord Balcarras “where the overseer is an old man of the mildest character and the negroes had always been treated with peculiar indulgence.” Rather than address his concerns about reading the slaves’ attitude toward him directly, Lewis uses a combination of genres and an ironic, humorous tone to deflate the sense of mounting threat. He does not respond to the escalating tension with deductive claims in favor of his reforms or against the “crack-down” mentality of his fellow planters; remarkably he never directly addresses the planters’ charges or his fear of rebellion. Instead, he uses a combination of songs, anecdotes, court reports, and jokes to dispel fears of further uprisings and convince the reader that his humane treatment of the slaves has guaranteed his own safety.

This generically fractured response to both his fears and the planters’ charges is much more effective than a logical, direct argument. The reader (and Lewis) know from the experience of Lord Balcarras’s overseer that benign treatment does not guarantee safety. An overt statement that Lewis’s reforms protect him would ring false. Instead, Lewis gives very specific, personal testimony of the slaves’ regard for him through a sequence of song lyrics transcribed in the slaves’ own words as proof of their loyalty, or at least their apathy, which will supposedly guarantee Cornwall’s stability.

Lewis’s transcription of song lyrics is a compelling generic strategy for proving that the slaves have a positive attitude towards him. Songs have been historically linked with emotional authenticity, especially in slave culture. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois argues that slave songs reveal thoughts, emotions, and intentions that have no other socially acceptable outlet:

> What are these songs, and what do they mean? I know little of music and can say nothing in technical phrase, but I know something of men, and knowing them, I know that these songs are the articulate message of the slave to the world. They tell us in these eager days that life was joyous to the black slave, careless and happy. I can easily believe this of some, of many. But not all the past South, though it rose from the dead, can gainsay the heart-touching witness of these songs. They are the music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways.
Du Bois argues that both the negative and positive valences of slave songs were viewed as authentic. This stamp of emotional authority is particularly important for Lewis’s inclusion of song lyrics in the Journal. Rather than merely telling the reader that his slaves view him as liberator and benevolent master, which would seem suspect, he has the slaves report these sentiments directly, using a genre perceived as coming “from the heart.” However, Lewis interprets the songs on the most superficial level, ignoring the inexpressible undercurrent of “unvoiced longing toward a truer world” in which they would have the political power to voice their desires openly. He presents only the literal meaning of the songs as authentic, ignoring any allegorical significance that contains dissent. His relation of the songs illustrates the rising mood of crisis between whites and slaves, while at the same exculpating Lewis from any participation in that crisis, because he presents them as straightforward declarations of intention.

Songs in this context and culture are not only emotionally authentic, but they also function as proof that a condition exists. Lewis introduces this idea when he describes the evidence used to convict the so-called “King of the Eboes” of plotting the massacre.

[The insurgents] had elected a King of the Eboes, who had two Captains under him; and their intention was to effect a complete massacre of all the whites on the island; . . . On their trial they were perfectly cool and unconcerned, and did not even profess to deny the facts with which they were charged. Indeed, proofs were too strong to admit of denial; among others, a copy of the following song was found upon the King, which the overseer had heard him sing at the funeral feast, while the other negroes joined in the chorus:—

SONG OF THE KING OF THE EBOES
Oh me good friend, Mr. Wilberforce, make we free!
God Almighty thank ye! God Almighty thank ye!
   God Almighty, make we free!
Buckra in this country no make we free:
What Negro for to do? What Negro for to do?
   Take by force! Take by force!
CHORUS
   To be sure! To be sure! To be sure!22

The court presented the above song, among others, as evidence of the King of the Eboe’s guilt.23 The songs are such an authentic expression that they
serve as "proofs [which] were too strong to admit of denial." Lewis views the expressed desire for freedom in song as tantamount to the motivation to take that freedom through violence. There is no separation between lyrical expression and action. Lewis's and the court's evidence for this man's guilt is not a smoking gun, but a song.

This powerful perception of song as fact becomes more important to Lewis when his name appears in subsequent versions of this song, along with his emancipationist nemesis Mr. Wilberforce. Lewis believes that his inclusion functions as proof that the slaves view him as a hero and liberator. On the same day that Lewis transcribes the "Song of the King of the Eboes," he mentions the first report of his name being included and celebrated in the song. His position as a planter makes this inclusion embarrassing, even if he is secretly pleased at his notoriety. He dismisses the report suggesting, "if there be any such song (which I do not believe), I certainly never heard it." But the plan for massacre scares him, so his need to believe in his inclusion in the song becomes stronger by the next entry.

Three days later, on 25 March, Lewis expresses anxiety for his own safety in an indirect, sentimental prose lament where he charges the slaves with "selfishness" in securing their own self-interest before serving his.

The negroes certainly are perverse beings. They had been praying for sight of their master year after year; they were in raptures at my arrival; I have suffered no one to be punished, and shown them every possible indulgence during my residence among them; and one and all they declare themselves perfectly happy and well-treated. Yet, previous to my arrival they made thirty-three hogsheads [of sugar] a week... during this last week they have managed to make but thirteen. Still they are not ungrateful; they are only selfish: they love me very well, but they love themselves a great deal better.

The shift from the song lyrics to the prose lament is important, because it marks his move from an ironic tone to an immediate, emotional expression about the slaves whose attitudes most affect him. This prose lament highlights the conflict between Lewis's attempt at benign rule and the slaves' desire for freedom. Lewis has found that his attempts to use incentives and a gratitude-debt model to procure forced labor, instead of the cart-whip, lower productivity and unravel community order.

The reforms' failure to procure the slaves' goodwill, coupled with Lewis's loss of authority, cause him to fear for his safety. Will the slaves "take by force" the freedom the "buckras" refuse them? More important, does his potential inclusion as a liberator in this song of freedom place him outside
the grouping of "buckras" and immunize him from the threat of insurrection? The locus of tension stems from whether the slaves' desire for freedom outweighs any bonds of affection they might feel for Lewis. His plaintive tone in the prose lament implies that he must solicit their labor rather than demand it. The threat of rebellion has tipped master-slave power relations, and Lewis seems both frustrated and emotionally hurt by the slaves' implied threat. This passage shows how closely linked expressions of power and sentimental discourse are in his conception of the master-slave relationship.

Lewis's expression of doubt suggests that his reforms have brought negative economic consequences without security from revolt. In reality, of course, Lewis is the "selfish" one, living off the proceeds of slave labor. However, his charge of selfishness is a tacit acknowledgment of the slaves' very natural self-interest. "They love me very well, but they love themselves a great deal better" means that whenever Lewis's agenda is contrary to the slaves' self-interest, he runs the risk of having his throat cut or dinner poisoned.

A system predicated upon forced labor cannot be humanely managed with success. When a master keeps a slave against his will, it is impossible to expect cheerful acquiescence. Although Lewis never states this fact, he becomes increasingly aware of it, and the fractiousness of his combination of genres increases. Throughout these journal entries the insertion of serious subjects, such as the rebellion and murder trials, are spliced into humorous anecdotes and quotidian details of housekeeping with an unsettling result that mirrors the rising tension of the plantation.

Lewis is losing both economic and physical security, but his journal relates a second song as proof of his invincibility. Just as the "Song of the King of the Eboes" functions as empirical proof of the slave's guilt in plotting a massacre, the songs the slaves sing about Lewis prove his innocence. The day after his prose lament, Lewis returns to the subject of his inclusion in the Eboe King's Song in greater detail.

Young Hill was told at the Bay this morning that I make a part of the Eboe King's song! According to this report, 'good King George and good Mr. Wilberforce' are stated to have 'given me a paper' to set the negroes free (i.e. an order), but that the white people of Jamaica will not suffer me to show the paper, and I am now going home to say so, and 'to resume my chair, which I have left during my absence to be filled by the Regent.' Since I heard the report of a rebellious song issuing from Cornwall, I have listened more attentively to the negro chaunts; but they seem, as far as I can make out, to relate entirely to their own private situation, and to have nothing to do with the negro state in general. Their favorite, 'We vary well off', is still screamed about the estate by the children; but
among the grown people its nose has been put out of joint by the following stanzas, which were explained to me this morning.

Hey-ho-day! Me no care a dammee (i.e. a damn,)
Me acquire a house, (i.e. I have a solid foundation to build on,)
Since massa come see we—oh!
Hey-ho-day! Neger now quite eerie, (i.e. hearty,)
For once me see massa—hey-ho-day!
When massa go, me no care a dammee,
For how them usy we—hey-ho-day!

The alleged content of the lyrics sets up the English-subject Lewis in opposition to the Creole "buckra" planters and aligns him with English abolitionists and the figure of the "good king" George. That he is viewed as an English liberator, and not a Creole planter, implies some measure of safety from an uprising. However, Lewis is still suspicious of the slaves' expression of affection and feels unsure how to read their speech. Instead, he suggests a different song popular at Cornwall as evidence of their complacency with their own situation. Although he reports that the song is disliked by the older, more loyal slaves, these lyrics sidestep the issue of loyalty to Lewis. They suggest that if slave loyalty fails, his safety will still be secured by the apathy induced by his benevolence. Good treatment may not create goodwill, but it certainly will produce complacency. The recognition that the slaves' self-interest, their "private situation," takes precedence over any other concern quells Lewis' fears of revolt. Lewis is clearly invested in the reader understanding this diffusion, because he takes the trouble to translate the Creole dialect so the reader clearly comprehends the song's meaning. (Notice that he does not translate the "King of the Eboes," its menacing content being all too clear.) The song attests that the master's reform has brought "a solid foundation to build on," and that the slaves have become apathetic: "me no care a dammee." Instead of gratitude, it is apathy that comforts and protects. The song as evidence of this fact works beautifully. Rather than arguing his position vis-à-vis the slaves, which can never really be known, he has them testify to it in their own words, which he translates to suit his purpose.

To complement this diffusion strategy, Lewis then quickly shifts to a comic anecdote about the slaves' fear of his stuffed alligator, suggesting life on the plantation is fun. But the laughter subsides when he abruptly concludes the 26 March entry, demarcated from the joke with only a "*", with the following court report: "On the other hand, the King of the Eboes has been hung at Black River, and died, declaring that he left enough of his countrymen to prosecute the design in hand, and revenge his death upon the whites." The songs reinforce
Lewis’s argument for the reform agenda, because he is able to interpret this “emotionally authentic” generic expression to suit his purpose. Yet the end of the entry leaves the reader in doubt. Who will revenge the death of the King of the Eboes and, most important to Lewis, upon whom? This abrupt reversal of genre, from joke to grim news report, shows that even as Lewis pushes his agenda, he grapples to represent expressions of doubt.

**Genre as Containment Strategy**

While the insertion of a joke or the evidence of song lyrics diffused everyday tension within the *Journal*, Lewis’s anxieties about issues of dominance, commerce, sexuality, family, and ethics give rise to more elaborate structures of containment. Chief among these containment strategies is the inclusion of the long poem, “The Isle of Devils.” His reforms, which failed to produce an economic benefit, are geared toward ameliorating his sense of collusion in the crimes of slavery. However, the reforms result in limited or no effect as either a good example (to other planters) or a model for an improved method of humane stewardship (for the slaves). He tries to express these concerns without disrupting the anti-emancipation argument of the *Journal* by encapsulating all of his doubts and fears in the long poem digression.

“The Isle of Devils” previously had a private function, as part of Lewis’s personal papers, but on the return journey, he chose to place it before the public by transcribing it into the 10 May 1816 entry of the *Journal*. One can only speculate why Lewis chose to include this strange, nightmare vision, which threatens to subvert the careful progress narrative he has plotted about the amelioration of plantation life. The untenable nature of his position becomes too unbearable not to be expressed, yet by cordoning off this expression of anxiety from the rest of the text, he is able to contain the subversive power of its message.

Lewis’s choice of a long, narrative poem is particularly suited for the exploration of colonial anxieties. Like his romantic contemporaries, Lewis could use the long poem’s capacity for extended character development, elaborate structures of feeling, and detailed description, to create the kind of nightmare world emblematic of his anxieties. More important, the narrative poem has an advantage over the lyric poem, because its length allows Lewis to explore the complexities and ambiguities of slave-master relationships that cause the most discomfort.

The first poem Lewis writes after leaving Jamaica on 1 April shows the lyric’s limitations for exploring fully his Jamaican experience. The poem
“Yarra” features a female slave speaker giving good wishes to her departing master. As the lyric is generally confined to the single subject, there is no capacity within the structure for Lewis to explore the speaker’s ambivalence about the master’s departure or any other negative articulation. The result is a pap that absolves the absentee landlord/master of moral responsibility in his slave’s suffering.

And sure, the thought will bring relief,
What e’er your fate, wherever rove you,
Your wealth’s not given by pain and grief,
But hands that know, and hearts that love you.\(^12\)

Including the poem in the *Journal* may have served to diffuse some of the immense guilt Lewis experienced about the source of his livelihood. However, Yarra’s absolution contradicts what Lewis’s experience in Jamaica has taught him: that his wealth is created by pain and grief, and the hands that know (and work) are not necessarily connected to devoted hearts. Lewis’s development of the long narrative poem, in contrast to the lyric, will provide the framework for exploring both his and his slaves’ ambivalence towards their positions of power and resistance. Because the long poem can stand alone, it can be hermetically isolated from the rest of the narrative’s progressive argument.

The way Lewis introduces the poem reflects his desire to isolate it from the rest of the text. Like other generic shifts in the *Journal*, most of the lyric poems are transcribed without any type of preamble. (see Fig. 1) Lewis tells a story or defines a sea term, and then follows with a poem. The reader’s only clue of the generic shift is the way that verse lines are offset on the page. However, before transcribing the long poem, “The Isle of Devils,” Lewis makes a disclaimer:

During the early part of my outward-bound voyage I was extremely afflicted with sea-sickness... I actually brought up almost a thousand lines, with rhymes at the end of them. Having nothing better to do at present, I may as well copy them into this book. Composed with such speed, and under such circumstances, I take it for granted that the verses cannot be very good; but let them be ever so bad, I defy anyone to be more sick while reading them than the author himself was while writing them.\(^33\)

Lewis’s assertion of authorial modesty (that the verse is so bad it might make the reader sick) is a common rhetorical disclaimer. Yet, the suggestion that boredom is his motivation for including the poem seems specious, given that he was a prolific writer of lyrics throughout the first three legs of his
seemed to be an insipid kind of melon, with no
other resemblance to marrow than their softness.

APRIL 1. (Monday.)

At eight this morning we weighed anchor on
our return to England.

YARRA.

Poor Yarra comes to bid farewell,
But Yarra's lips can never say it!
Her swimming eyes — her bosom's swell —
The debt she owes you, these must pay it.
She ne'er can speak, though tears can start,
Her grief, that fate so soon removes you;
But One there is, who reads the heart,
And well He knows how Yarra loves you!

See, massa, see this sable boy!
When chill disease had nip'd his flower,
You came and spoke the word of joy,
And pour'd the juice of healing power.
To visit for Jamaica's shore
Had no kind angel deign'd to move you,
These laughing eyes had laug'd no more,
Nor Yarra lived to thank and love you.

Then grieve not, massa, that to view
Our isle you left your British pleasures;
One tear, which falls in grateful deu,
Is worth the best of Britain's treasures.
And sure, the thought will bring relief,
What e'er your fate, wherever rove you,
Your wealth's not given by pain and grief,
But hands that know, and hearts that love you.

Figure 1. *Journal of a West India Proprietor*. PZ2 .L494, Sadleir-Black Collection of Gothic Novels, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library. (London: John Murray, 1834)
journey. He invokes the common Romantic strategy of suggesting that the poem was composed in delirium, yet the meaning of his verse differs from his Romantic contemporaries’ writings about slavery. Of course, there are many abolitionist poems by figures such as More and Cowper that use the emotional capital of poetry and an overtly sentimental tone to evoke compassion for and identification with African slaves. There are also politically oriented lyric poems, like Wordsworth’s “Toussaint L’Ouverture,” which use the trope of slave rebellion to show a common fraternity among men or to draw a parallel between wage labor in England and the slavery of the West Indies. The only contemporary examples of long poems on the subject of slavery with a mythical or magical tone are Blake’s “Daughters of Albion” and “America a Prophecy.” Those poems, which depict master-slave rape and advocate violent slave revolution, do very different ideological work than Lewis’s “Isle of Devils.” Unlike Blake’s poems, “The Isle of Devils” attempts to create a rhetorical safe-space for anxieties to erupt in order to contain them, so that Lewis can continue with his progressive tale of reform.

Rather than a trifle, written in sickness and transcribed in boredom, “The Isle of Devils” encapsulates Lewis’s anxieties about miscegenation and his complicity in slavery and its inherent violence. Throughout the Journal, Lewis includes lyric poems on small quotidian subjects, such as a flying fish. However, the shift here to the long, narrative poem signals a containment strategy, where psychologically unpalatable subjects can be explored through fantasy and under the guise of verse.

The poem tells of a beautiful Portuguese woman, Irza, and her nightmare experience on the Isle of Devils. As Lewis makes clear during the onset of the sea journey to Lisbon, Irza and her cousin-lover, Rosalvo, represent the aristocracy of the imperialist project:

The viceroy’s countless wealth that vessel bore:
In heaps there jewels of various dyes,
Ingots of gold, and pearls of wondrous size;
And there (two gems worth all that Cortez won)
He placed his angel niece and only son.

The precious stones on the ship bound for the imperial center mirror Lewis’s own position at the time the poem is transcribed as he returned to London with his imperial booty intact. When the ship is purposefully wrecked by the “Tempest Fiend” and Irza floats upon the shore of the Isle of Devils, the poem begins its metaphorical exploration of guilt and punishment.

About to be eaten by dwarves, she is saved by a monster “black as the storm.” One would expect that this Caliban-esque “monarch-demon” would represent
the allegorical slave, and that Irza, whose whiteness is metaphorically fetishized throughout the poem, would represent the planter class. However, the poem is particularly striking because the roles of master and slave are constantly re-negotiated.\textsuperscript{37} Irza and the monarch-demon appropriate both roles at different moments in the text. This blurring of racial identities reflects Lewis’s constant renegotiation of power relationships and roles with his own slaves. His ability to command labor is tenuous at best; thus, he and other planters were in the strange position of attempting to exact labor without provoking rebellion.

The roles of master and slave in the long poem depend on personal attributes and loci of power, not upon skin color. When the monarch-demon first appears, Lewis describes him as noble and imposing, an almost a courtly figure who rescues Irza.

On her he gazed, and gazed so fixed, so hard,
Like knights of bronze some hero’s tomb who guard.
Bright wreaths of scarlet plumes his temples crowned,
And round his ankles, arms, and wrists were wound
Unnumbered glassy strings of crystals bright,
Corals, and shells, and berries red and white.\textsuperscript{38}

The demon-monarch offers slavish devotion and protection from the dwarves if she will marry him. But unlike the comely knight, the poem describes the demon-monarch as “all shagged with hair, wild, strange in shape and show,” and Irza shudders in disgust when she looks at him. Her disgust elicits a sullen response from him, as he becomes both obsequious and threatening at the same time. He is willing to lay his power at her feet for her condescension, as if he is complicit in her understanding that he is a lower beast, despite his immense physical power.

Back fled the maid in terror; but her fear
Was needless. Humbly, slowly crept he near,
Then kissed the hearth, his club before her laid,
And of his neck her footstool would have made:
But from his touch she shrank.\textsuperscript{39}

His position, of both subservience and menace, is quite similar to Lewis’s experience of his own slaves. Lewis’s use of the image of the demon-monarch inviting Irza to step on his neck recalls both Friday’s devotion to Crusoe and an earlier moment in the Journal where the slaves kiss Lewis’s feet as he prepares to leave. “[W]hen I came down the steps to depart, they crowded about me, kissing my feet, and clasping my knees, so that it was with difficulty
that I could get into the carriage. And this was done with such marks of truth and feeling, that I cannot believe the whole to be mere acting and mummery. Lewis half-heartedly interprets the slaves’ sign of total submission and devotion as genuine. However, he would hardly need to mention the genuflection’s authenticity after such a demonstration if he did not doubt its veracity. Returning to the poem, the speaker suggests that “her fear/was needless,” but Irza has much to fear from this seemingly submissive demon, just as Lewis does from his seemingly submissive slaves. The demon-monarch is both a knight and a slave, and Irza’s position of safety in relation to him is by no means guaranteed.

Irza sees the demon-monarch’s protection as the lesser of two evils (the dwarves have already scratched and bitten her), so she tacitly agrees to be his “wife” when she accompanies the demon-monarch to his (oddly beautiful) grotto homestead. The marriage is in name only; the demon does not demand conjugal affection, only her companionship. His slavish yet menacing devotion continues as “ne’er had a nymph an humbler slave” and “so she found but pleasure, he was pleased,” but he is in constant physical control. He simultaneously embodies both the slave and the master role at this point. His reactions to Irza’s pleasure or displeasure are like Lewis’s own experience of his slaves; their affection cheers him immensely and their emotional transitions he credits to his own frowns or smiles. “My own heart . . . seems to expand itself again in the sunshine of the kind looks and words that meet me at every turn, and seem to wait for mine as anxiously as if they were so many diamonds.”

Despite this sentimental vulnerability, the demon-monarch occupies the place of master in his constant surveillance designed to keep his prize by force. The couple lives this way for one year, after which time the demon kills Irza’s lover (who miraculously was also shipwrecked) and rapes Irza during her grief-stricken swoon. The result is a monstrous child which resembles its “sable sire” and disgusts Irza. Here, the demon-monarch appropriates the role of the master, destroying the bonds of affection between Irza and Rosalvo, taking her sexually by force, and propagating his offspring by exploiting his physical control over her. The rape of female slaves by masters and overseers was so common Lewis could not have been unaware of it. The product of that sexual violence was in evidence everywhere, as the Creole slave population became increasingly biracial. These children then became the “property” of the slave-master. Rape not only served as a means of dominance and sexual pleasure for masters, but it also benefited them economically by increasing their stock of slaves. These children, just as much the master’s offspring as the whites who resided in his household, were legally and in practice treated as slaves. Lewis’s poem reflects this historical reality. Irza shudders with
horror when she comes in contact with the demon-monarch and when she suckles their child; she has no interest in raising him. Despite the child’s genetic relation to Irza, she disowns him based on his physical similarity to the father.

When Irza disowns the child, the demon-monarch switches power relationships again. He becomes more like the raped slave-woman, who claims her child despite its origin in violence. When he realizes Irza hates the child, he breast feeds it himself. The demon-monarch’s possession of male genitalia and female breasts is another aspect of this poem in which racial, social, and sexual identity is constantly in flux. For the remainder of the poem, “round his neck” this “shaggy offspring” clings, imaginatively creating the demon-monarch as a simian or marsupial-like mother. But the monster literally re-appropriates his masterly phallus. After months pass, he drugs and rapes Irza again. This time the resulting child is so white that “through his fine skin the blood was seen to play,” and Irza is unambivalently delighted with him. The speaker describes the child as “in small the model of her beauteous self” with “that skin than down of swans more smooth and white.” Thus, Irza becomes like the historical slave master, who recognizes only the white offspring who reflects back his own racial image. Imagining that love for the white child will keep her on the island, the monster no longer confines Irza, and she escapes with a passing ship of monks. The monks convince Irza that both children are abominations and should be left behind, because the product of miscegenation can only be evil.

Realizing she is gone, the demon-husband dashes out the brains of the “angel” child as she watches from the ship; she continues her escape, convinced by the monk’s arguments. In desperation, he holds up the demon-child and flings himself off the cliffs into the sea, charging her with ingratitude. His final speech, which is all articulated with his looks and gestures, rather than words, is verbalized by Lewis as follows:

Look, mother, look! This babe is still your child!
With him all social bonds you break,
Scorn’d and detested for his father’s sake:
My love, my service only wrought disdain,
And nature fed his heart from yours in vain!
Then go, Ingrate, far o’er the ocean go,
Consign your friend, your child to endless woe!
Renounce us! Hate us! Pleased, your course pursue,
And break their hearts who lived alone for you!
In his final moments, the demon-monarch eloquently expresses his fraught position as both master and slave. Like Lewis, the demon-monarch sees himself receiving a negative return for all of his careful solicitation of Irza. At the same time, he is like the slave accepting and resenting his position of inferiority and powerlessness to keep what he desires. Outside of his physical control, Irza can only be manipulated by the demon-monarch through the invocation of gratitude, similar to Lewis's attempts to invoke debt and gratitude once the cart-whip is abolished. Here, the roles of master and slave become conflated. As such, this passage, and Lewis's description of the Isle of Devils, articulates his anxiety about his role in the imperial project. These lines, in contrast with the soothing message of the "Yarra" poem, show the ominous side of Lewis's attitude towards slaveholding and his anxiety over the failure of his reforms. Near the poem's conclusion the speaker suggests that Irza's sense of complicity in her rape and abandonment of her children are a "fancied crime" and that she deserves no penance. Yet, as with all containment strategies, a happy ending that embraces the idea of absolution cannot serve as antidote to the troubling issues brought up within the narrative.

On the surface, the poem deals with the racist tropes of the monstrous birth resulting from miscegenation and fears about black masculine rage and sexuality. On a deeper level, this poem is about Lewis. He is the mother who has rejected his creation as an abomination, the colony that permits slavery, and hastens away, knowing that tragedy will ensue. At the same time, he is the demon-monarch who, unable or unwilling to use physical force to compel his will, must resort to the feeble hope of inducing guilt and a sense of gratitude to secure his physical and economic security. The charge of ingratitude is aimed at himself, as Lewis's family has lived off the proceeds of the plantation but cannot bear to be confronted with its realities. It is significant that Lewis transcribes this poem on returning to England, where he rejects his own Isle of Devils but not its capitalistic offspring. Lewis encapsulates these sources of guilt and psychological conflict in a poem which serves as a contained confession and absolution of his sins as slave owner.

Beyond its dramatization and containment of Lewis's guilt, "The Isle of Devils" is prophetic, in that Lewis behaves just as his fictional mother did when he inspects his other plantation, Hordley, on his second visit. When Lewis arrives at Hordley, he does indeed encounter an "Isle of Devils." Unlike Cornwall, Hordley is in a remote part of the island, requiring many river crossings to encounter. Its isolation, like the island, is one of the conditions which has allowed it to be run inhumanely, and Lewis finds a veritable hell when he arrives. Lewis had hoped that, like Cornwall, Hordley could be easily
refomed to his humanistic sentiments with some cosmetic changes. He is soon disabused of this notion:

What with the general clamour, the assertions and denials, the tears and the passion, the odious falsehoods, and the still more odious truths, and (worst of all to me) my own vexation and disappointment at finding things so different from my expectations, at first nearly turned my brain; and I felt strongly tempted to set off as fast as I could, and leave all these black devils and white ones to tear one another to pieces, an amusement in which they appeared to be perfectly ready to indulge themselves.47

Finding his scheme to humanize Hordley impossible, Lewis abandons his abomination/creation, the plantation. In his haste to run away, he finally claims the position of Irza who sees inevitable tragedy for her offspring when she leaves, yet is compelled by psychological survival to abandon them. Finding reform impossible, his only option is to distance himself both rhetorically and generically by containing his anxieties within the poem. Soon after his Hordley experience, Lewis dies of yellow fever on his ship returning to England. Unable to preserve his "babies," the projects of reform on the plantation, his grief and torment may well have contributed to the illness which resulted in his death.

NOTES

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4. Lewis locates the suffering of slavery to these limited time periods, what he calls “unavoidable hardships,” and suggests that those born into slavery suffer less than the English working class. Lewis further argues that “their greatest fear is the not having a master whom they know,” and that should slavery be abolished, the slaves would be incapable of self-governance and self-sustainment. Lewis, Journal, 46, 55, 65–6.


10. Other important generic variations within the text more closely related to the Journal’s alternate function as a travel narrative include the ongoing glossary of sea terms and island dialect. These ethnographic details are so profuse in the Journal that Judith Terry includes a glossary in the Oxford edition for Lewis’s references to plant and animal life. Another ongoing generic variation is Lewis’s insertion of “nancy-stories” or folktales. For an excellent discussion of the ways in which Lewis’s relation of the nancy-story “Goosee Shoo-shoo’s true and marvelous history of a lilly nigger-man born without a 'ed” functions as a moral of plantocracy, teaching slaves to find protection under authority, see Needham, “Goody Two-shoes,” 103–118. In this article, Needham shows another valence of Lewis’s difficult position in the contact zone as he attempts to function as an ethnographer of slave stories. He argues that Lewis’s relation of the tales both represents colonialisit ideology and unwittingly reproduces inherent aspects of the performance which subvert that discourse.


12. Lord Holland, unlike Lewis, was both an abolitionist and an emancipationist. However, despite his political beliefs, Lord Holland owned two Jamaica plantations, Friendship and Greenwich, during his ongoing work as Reporter for the African
Institution. Friends with common interests, Lewis and Holland had made plans for reform on the four plantations together, which Lewis was charged to enact. These contradictions in Holland's behavior indicate how complex the social and political issues surrounding slavery were in Lewis's circle. Terry, Introduction to Journal, xvi.

13. Lewis's Journal is particularly inter-generic in comparison with other famous journals or reflections of the same period, such as Lady Nugent's Jamaica Journal and William Beckford's A Descriptive Account of the Isle of Jamaica. For example, Lady Nugent's Journal was specifically meant as a private document. It is most concerned with the day-to-day activities of a governor's wife and household. Any indication of political, cultural or agricultural conditions appears only in relation to these private concerns. Beckford's case is more complicated in that he is writing from the Fleet prison, attempting to leverage some gain off his knowledge of the island. Some of his generic deviations, like his inclusion of multiple tables, are more formal. In addition, the Description's inclusion of anecdote or picturesque description, comprising long segments of text demarcated by large spaces on the page, is much less fractious than Lewis's.

14. Here I am specifically referring to Bakhtin's argument that the novel uses and dominates other genres: "The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others in its own peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them." Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel," in Modern Genre Theory, ed. David Duff (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 71.

15. Steven Kagle suggests that "there is no such thing as a totally private diary" and that all "diarists envision an audience for their entries" even if that audience is some type of future or idealized self. Steven Kagle, Early Nineteenth Century American Diary Literature (Boston: Twayne, 1986), 5. The dual private/public aspect of diaries is not specific to the Journal. Rather, what I argue is that Lewis exploits this aspect of diaries for his own purposes.

16. The strategy of using the journal format to avoid social censure is also used in a later journal of interest, Frances Anne Kemble's Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation published in 1863. Kemble's journal details horrific instances of abuse on her husband's Georgia plantation under the guise of letters written to a friend in the North. Her utilization of the journal genre in describing slavery turned public opinion against Britain's support of the Confederacy. Interestingly, she used the same format as Lewis for completely opposite ideological ends. Kagle, Diary Literature, 60.

17. The description of the cane-piece cat follows the format of late eighteenth-century cookbooks, where specific measurement amounts are infrequent and the instructions take the form of a prose paragraph. For examples see The Accomplished lady's delight in cookery; or, the complete servant's-maid's [sic] guide, 1780?, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO> (13 January 2005); Martha Bradley, The British housewife: or, the cook, housekeeper's, and gardiner's companion, 1760?, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO> (13 January 2005).


23. The conviction of the King of the Eboes is particularly troubling in relation to the presentation of evidence. Lewis does not question why slaves, who lived in a mostly oral culture, would carry copies of song lyrics on their person. This discrepancy between oral culture and the production of written evidence suggests that the evidence may have been fabricated to prove empirically the existence of a song which was only overheard and not recorded in any way.


25. I specifically use the term “prose lament” to highlight aspects of this passage that treat Lewis’s sense of personal loss and a loss of status (specifically as a master to be obeyed and as a financially solvent plantation owner) that is the definitive feature of a lament. *The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms*, ed. Alex Preminger (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 112. Also, it is worth noting here that a lament need not be in verse; the sentiment of the passage outweighs formal considerations. *Literary Terms, A Dictionary*, eds. Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz, 3rd ed. (New York: Noonday Press, 1989), 139.


30. “The Isle of Devils” has a complex, transatlantic publication history. It was composed on Lewis’s first voyage to Jamaica between 8 November 1815 and 1 January 1816. However, Lewis transcribed it into the *Journal* during his first return voyage to England on 10 May 1816. After his death in 1818, the poem was published independently in Jamaica in 1827. In 1834, the poem was included in the first edition of the *Journal* published in England. See “note on the text” in Lewis, *Journal*, xxxv.


35. For a reading of the allegorical implications of some of these lyrics, see D.L. MacDonald, “The Isle of Devils,” 193–94.
37. MacDonald suggests “the demon-king of the poem is clearly a black slave, as recreated by the guilty and fearful fantasy of a white slave owner.” MacDonald, “Isle of Devils,” 192. Heiland also discusses the ways in which the demon-monarch and Irza can function as both colonizer and colonized, especially the ways in which this duality contributes to the *Journal*’s sense of the uncanny. Heiland, “Unheimlich,” 177. I argue, however, that it is precisely Lewis’s confusion about which subject should appropriate which role, or if those roles can even be separated from one another, which is seminal to the demon-king’s horrible aspect.
42. For a full treatment of the bilateral function of surveillance in the *Journal* see Maureen Harkin, “Surveillance and Space,” 139–150.
45. Donna Heiland suggests that the demon-monarch’s erroneous belief that he can control Irza through the duties of motherhood represents Lewis’s own frustration at his inability to police the slaves’ mothering techniques and raise the birth lists. Heiland, “Unheimlich,” 180. If we take this allegorical representation further, the demon-monarch’s desire to suckle the child himself would replace the slave mother with Lewis as the “father” and primary caregiver to the progeny of his plantation.
47. Lewis, *Journal*, 231.