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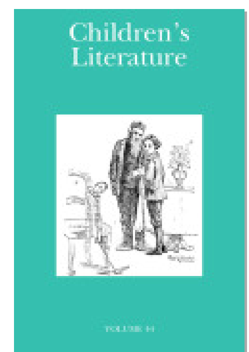

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Filling in Gaps in the Historical Record: Accuracy, Authenticity, and Closure in Ann Rinaldi's Wolf by the Ears

Brian Dillon

In *Wolf by the Ears,* Ann Rinaldi creates a voice for the only daughter (who survived) of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, Harriet Hemings, an intriguing figure who has no voice in the historical record. Rinaldi depicts Harriet on the cusp of maturity in her final years at Monticello, from December 1819 to August 1822. More than half a century after the events covered in this novel, her younger brother Madison mentions her in an Ohio newspaper article, and various notations about her are marked in Jefferson's *Farm Book.* But no journal entries, memoir, or piece of correspondence written by Harriet have emerged. Faced with an absent voice—as well as any visual representation of Harriet—Rinaldi needed to situate a believable character within the context of a Monticello community, about which an abundance of evidence exists, and in relation to the third president, about whom competing claims have been fiercely argued. The opening paragraph of Rinaldi's "Author's Note" identifies the key source for her 1991 publication: Fawn Brodie's *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History,* first published in 1974 and responded to with dismay by numerous established Jefferson scholars.[1] Brodie constructed a provocative circumstantial case about the intimate relationship between Jefferson and his slave—and deceased wife's half-sister—Sally Hemings, as well as their offspring. Decades later, in 1998, DNA evidence corroborated Brodie's investigative work and effectively silenced historians who had doubted that Jefferson could lead such a double life.[2] Rinaldi's gamble in relying upon Brodie proved prescient. Though our understanding of Jefferson's personal actions has advanced considerably since 1991, *Wolf by the Ears* continues to function as a complex, meaningful novel in itself and as a springboard to classroom examinations of the role of slavery.[3]

Yet, without blaming Brodie, there are passages in Rinaldi's novel that prove to be problematic when the historical evidence is examined. With the hindsight of over twenty years since *Wolf by the Ears* was published, readers may judge how faithful Rinaldi's novel is to the historic record. Carrie Hintz and Eric Tribunella define terms key for such a judgment:

> Accuracy depends upon the correspondence between recorded history and fictional representation, whereas authenticity indicates how a literary work fills in the gaps of the historical record and whether the imaginative components of the work are plausible. While accuracy is a matter of how faithful the work is to what is thought to be true, authenticity is a matter of whether the fictional additions or imaginings are within the realm of likelihood or possibility. (251)

This definition sounds circular: the reader affirms that characters and situations are authentic if the reader finds them plausible, and in a work of historical fiction, the reader will find plausible those characters and situations that adhere to the reader's knowledge of the history of the same or similar people and situations as presented in the fictional work. Such circular logic may be unavoidable. Catherine Butler and Hallie O'Donovan acknowledge the difficulty in determining whether a fictional work achieves authenticity:

> Historical fiction is haunted by the demand for, and the impossibility of, authenticity in its representations of the past. The concept of authenticity covers a lot of semantic territory, encompassing not only the criterion of factual accuracy—that is, of telling it like it is (or was)—but also the questions of *who* is doing the telling, and *how* and *why*. Any modern representation of the experiences of those who lived in the past must necessarily be a ventriloquistic performance, given in terms designed to be understood by a modern audience. (73)

Determining authenticity requires a more subjective interpretive response than the effort to determine accuracy.

This essay examines the novel's authenticity: the difficulty in judging the authenticity of *Wolf by the Ears* is compounded by the presentation of historic individuals. Harriet, narrating between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, is circumspect, reflective, intent on processing the abundance of advice thrust on her. For the novel to seem authentic, from the very first scene the reader must accept as plausible that Harriet has been tutored sufficiently to compose such a narrative and that Jefferson would encourage such private reflections. The historical record remains silent about such crucial possibilities. Butler and O'Donovan stress "the questions of *who* is doing the telling, and *how* and *why*." Rinaldi chose to depict Jefferson and the Monticello community through the eyes of a house slave who enjoys privileges alien

to the slaves who work in the fields, for example, under the sway of a brutal overseer. Harriet admits she has never been away from Monticello except for brief visits "to a neighboring plantation" (164). The lengthy entries in her private journal highlight the comparative luxury of a slave who seems unaware that other slaves are victims of rapes and beatings and forcibly separated from their own families, while she is granted many months to contemplate the choice—over which she has much control—to leave her family. Rinaldi remains true to the testimony provided decades later by Madison Hemings: "My brothers, sister Harriet and myself, were used alike. We were permitted to stay about the 'great house,' and only required to do such light work as going on errands. Harriet learned to spin and to weave in a little factory on the home plantation. We were free from the dread of having to be slaves all our lives long, and were measurably happy. We were always permitted to be with our mother, who was well used" (qtd. in Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 248). Presumably, Rinaldi considered the soft focus on slavery that Harriet provides a legitimate trade-off for the insights Harriet has access to about Jefferson and other historically prominent members of Jefferson's extended white family. Ideally, when examined in a classroom setting, Rinaldi's novel would be considered in the context of other documents, including Madison's concise recollections in his memoir.[4]

Evaluating authenticity relies upon gap-filling strategies that a reader must devise. Because no written testimony by Harriet is extant, because Jefferson chose silence rather than any acknowledgement of his Hemings children, Rinaldi's reader must explain why his speech and her response to him seem plausible, why her personal and moral confusion strikes an authentic note. *Wolf by the Ears* achieves a convincing degree of cultural authenticity: Harriet's life at Monticello falls within the boundaries of the historical record. Furthermore, her internal life, her identity formation, achieves a convincing degree of psychological authenticity. This point is especially crucial as the novel engages with this personal dimension of authenticity: whether Harriet can remain authentic to herself if she leaves Monticello and passes as white.

This essay also examines the accuracy of Rinaldi's novel based upon historical documents available to her, as well as evidence from the past two decades since *Wolf by the Ears* was published. Four historical inaccuracies are identified that bolster Harriet's view of Jefferson as a morally centered man whose current political powerlessness provokes her pity: references to her older brother Tom, to Jefferson's mentor

George Wythe, to the composition of the Declaration of Independence, and to the Missouri Compromise. It would be unrealistic to expect that most readers, especially YA readers, would be capable of identifying the inaccuracies or why they matter. Consequently, the novel needs to be approached with guarded skepticism. A reader informed with more historical evidence than the novel provides may question whether Jefferson deserves Harriet's pity-provoking depiction of him: this essay provides such evidence and expands the ability of Rinaldi's readers to evaluate Jefferson's conduct and its consequences.

It is insufficient, though, to assess accuracy simply by noting parallels or deviations from the historical record in the novel. The issue of accuracy must be linked to "*who* is doing the telling, and *how* and *why*." Harriet perceives Jefferson with a mixture of awe, the godlike former president whose knowledge of the world exceeds that of anyone she knows; pity, over his inability to change cultural norms regarding the treatment of slaves; and exasperation, in regard to his silence on the issue most crucial to her personally—her own paternity. Of these three, the affective response that most risks distorting what is known about Jefferson is pity. The closure to the novel confirms a sense of Jefferson as pitiful and pushes the injustice of slavery out of sight. This essay will consider an alternative ending that Rinaldi chose not to construct, one that challenges the implicit emphasis on pity and sentimentality and that is historically based. Rinaldi succeeds in avoiding historical anachronism: she does not impose contemporary cultural norms on a society roughly 200 years in the past. She leaves much interpretive room for the reader to determine whether Jefferson deserves to be judged harshly.

Jefferson effectively succeeded in controlling the narrative of his private life until the end of the twentieth century. *Wolf by the Ears* disrupts the narrative Jefferson wanted told. "Historical novels," Kim Wilson states, "holding the peculiar position of being both fiction and fact simultaneously, are effective vehicles to promote values and attitudes pertinent to the formation and perpetuation of a national identity" (130). Despite the four historical inaccuracies that this essay will examine later, and despite Harriet's relatively privileged slave status, the novel's authenticity implicitly challenges the white supremacist political power structure of the early nineteenth century. Despite Harriet's pitying perspective, the novel subverts efforts to engage in hero worship of the complex former president and slave owner.

Rinaldi's Reliance upon a Young Adult Narrator and Some Initial Historical Points

Before discussing these four historical inaccuracies and why they matter, this section examines Rinaldi's choice of Harriet rather than Sally as narrator and indicates that Harriet operates as a pawn or by-product within the larger plot of the Jefferson-Sally Hemings relationship. Also, certain episodes in the novel that prove to be partially accurate must be analyzed to provide a context for understanding the four inaccuracies.

Without using the terminology of this essay—accuracy and authenticity—Rinaldi's preliminary note to her novel positions herself on the defensive, offers disclaimers: she did not intend to "put down" Jefferson, but to depict him as accurately as she could based upon his own writing (x–xi). Yet the novel's display of Jefferson's passivity and duplicity challenges the heroic-ideal conception of him. Rinaldi's preliminary note to her novel also self-consciously explains why she composed her narrative by relying upon Harriet's point of view. Of course, as a twentieth-century white woman she does not claim to "know what it felt like to be a slave," but she understands the concept of alienation based upon her lack of knowledge of her own mother who died when she was born (xi). The author's response to the historical fact of Harriet's departure from Monticello on her own, leaving her family behind, perhaps forever, is "How terrible!" (x), and her novel then justifies why Harriet's decision to leave Monticello does not fit the stereotypical flight from slavery to freedom that would be celebrated. But the preliminary note does not explain why Rinaldi chose an unusually privileged slave to tell her story, a choice which may upset readers expecting a narrative of the dehumanizing realities of slavery. Nor does it reflect on her depiction of Sally Hemings, whose decision to stay with Jefferson and whose motivations for urging Harriet to leave Monticello perplex Harriet. While some readers may consider this relationship romanticized by Rinaldi, historical evidence published after *Wolf by the Ears* implicitly supports Rinaldi's view.

With all the available written documents by—and about—Jefferson and absolutely none by Sally Hemings, not even one letter from her hand, it was inevitable that following the DNA studies new evaluations of Jefferson's character would circulate, while Sally Hemings would remain a mystery to be speculated about. Her son Madison in his memoirs explains the situation Sally dealt with while in France as the servant to Jefferson's daughter Maria:

> [D]uring that time my mother became Mr. Jefferson's concubine, and when he was called back home she was *enceinte* [pregnant] by him. He desired to bring my mother back to Virginia with him but she demurred. She was just beginning to understand the French language well, and in France she was free, while if she returned to Virginia she would be re-enslaved. So she refused to return with him. To induce her to do so he promised her extraordinary privileges, and made a solemn pledge that her children should be freed at the age of twenty-one years. In consequence of his promise, on which she implicitly relied, she returned with him to Virginia. (qtd. in Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 246)

Annette Gordon-Reed, who of all historians has been most successful in reconstructing the lives of Sally, her siblings, and her children, evaluates Sally's decision, which she made while in her mid-teens and presumably with the guidance of her older brother James who was living in Paris at the same time, in training as a chef. (The father of Sally and her five siblings, John Wayles, was also the father of Jefferson's wife Martha, who died prior to Jefferson's sojourn in Paris.) Having spent her previous years at Monticello, Sally would have noted the favoritism accorded to Hemings females: she "watched every female go to the fields at harvest time, except her sisters, mother, and whatever white females were at the plantation. She learned from all this that, in Jefferson's eyes, she was a female to be protected from certain things, when most women of her same legal status received no protection at all" (*The Hemingses of Monticello* 329). Gordon-Reed also speculates on what James and another older brother Robert may have thought of her arrangement with Jefferson. As the adult children of the same white father, they may have "simply viewed their sister's connection to Jefferson as a predicatable [sic] event in life as they knew it. . . . And if they had any degree of trust in his [Jefferson's] word—that he was going to stick by his bargain with their sister—she was already better off than their mother who had not obtained freedom for any of her children" (*The Hemingses of Monticello* 447). Gordon-Reed speculates further that the Jefferson-Hemings relationship was monogamous, lasted nearly four decades, and was mutually satisfying.[5] Salamishah Tillet notes the uniqueness of this interpretation: "Ironically, Gordon-Reed's historical romance not only challenges those Jefferson scholars who have vigorously denied the possibility that Jefferson might have coerced Hemings, but it is also a radical departure from canonical black feminist scholarship on

enslaved women, consent, and rape" (40). Such scholarship "suggests that enslaved African American women could not willingly engage in sexual encounters with white men without coercion" (40).

In one extended discussion of Rinaldi's novel, Emily Honey acknowledges the constraints placed upon a Young Adult author in treating this historic topic:

> [B]ecause she was writing for a younger audience, [Rinaldi] could not be nearly as explicit about sexual matters, or about the power dynamic that would have been involved in any relationship they might have had, topics that might have been too weighty for adolescent readers. It might have seemed better to create a narrative from Harriet's perspective, one that would still deal with the conflicts of her race, parentage, and position as a slave, but would be removed enough from Sally and Jefferson to avoid confronting the issues head on. Therefore, Harriet becomes the narrator and the focus, and her relationship with Jefferson of primary importance—once again leaving Sally rather in the background, overshadowed by the white man who controlled her world. (Honey 75)

In Rinaldi's novel, Sally does tell Harriet that she negotiated with Jefferson while she was a teen in France: she acquired her children's freedom before they were born, presumably a pre-intimacy promise extracted from Jefferson (191, 226). In a passage that dovetails with the romantic speculations Gordon-Reed promotes, Rinaldi's version of Sally even asserts, on the day before Harriet is to leave Monticello forever, that she loved Jefferson: "'That's why I came back from Paris too. No sense lying. Didn't say it was right. Just saying I loved him.' It was the first time she had ever spoken of herself and the master to me" (227). This is all Harriet learns from her mother about the degree and duration of her mother's intimacy with Jefferson. As Honey claims, for Harriet—and many YA readers—to be more specific would be too "weighty."

Yet Harriet inquires in her own way on the topic of intimacy between Sally Hemings and Jefferson: Harriet's dialogues with Jefferson frame the novel—the first in December 1819 and the last in August 1822 when she departs from Monticello—and thus have prominence of place. Rinaldi lowers Jefferson's pedestal by highlighting his indirect manner when speaking to Harriet, which veers into dishonesty by his omissions. In the first dialogue, in which Harriet carries in a tray of tea while

Jefferson sits writing his autobiography in his "sanctum sanctorum," the private rooms where he works and sleeps, previously a forbidden zone to Harriet, Sally is present when Harriet asks: "Will you put my mama in" your autobiography (5, 8)? Jefferson deflects her questions; he concentrates instead on praising her accomplishments, gifting her with a leather journal (in which she writes the narrative that is this novel), and offering advice about writing. This brief exchange highlights one of Harriet's primary concerns: will her mother acknowledge the relationship directly, and will Jefferson acknowledge it even indirectly?

What Harriet does not learn is that the 77-year-old Jefferson ceased composing his autobiography after "sixty-odd pages": he only included his experiences up until 1789, when he was about to leave Paris. Brodie proposes one reason why he abandoned his autobiography at this early point in his complex political and personal life: to shield "the most pressing secret of his life" (601), the beginning of his relationship with Sally Hemings. Jefferson gently instructs Harriet: "Write down what you see, what is important to you, whether it be the sound of a bird, the snow on the Blue Ridge, or the taste of your mama's salmagundi. . . . Write down what you feel, Harriet. It eases the heart. You will discover that in your own good time" (9). He could not anticipate either the depth of insight evident in her narratives or her interrogation of his personal choices. Jefferson apparently presumed that Harriet inherited his own aversion to private revelations. But Rinaldi demonstrates a range of influences upon this 18-year-old woman that trumps the "master's" habitual denial of self-disclosure. Members of both her immediate and extended family instruct her regarding her present identity and whether she should alter that identity by departing from Monticello and passing for white. Other slaves and a white architect who visits Jefferson's estate to use his library also contribute direct advice to Harriet. The interest others take in Harriet's future suggests she is a most fortunate young adult. She's no Holden Caulfield, crudely dismissing the guidance well-intentioned adults offer; instead, Harriet weighs the merits of what she is told, however emotionally unsettling the advice may be. Writing in this journal allows Harriet her first sustained attempt at self-reflection, a task both assisted and thwarted by the variety of advice from others she must process. The novel's central plot, in general terms, is one of self-realization, but it unfolds in a hyper-specific, extraordinary historical circumstance.

With rare exceptions, the individuals in this novel who move through the main house and over the grounds of Monticello are known to

history, though what we know (or think we know) remains in dispute nearly 200 years later. Rinaldi shapes her story with a crowded cast, by necessity: Harriet and her three brothers—Beverly, Madison, and Eston; Martha Randolph, Jefferson's only living child from his marriage, her husband Thomas Mann Randolph, and their sprawling family (eleven children who lived to adulthood, three born after Harriet's birth); other house slaves (such as Jefferson's "body man," Burwell Colbert); as well as, of course, Harriet's mother and Jefferson; and a variety of visitors, including dignitaries and extended family members. Rinaldi does err in claiming that Harriet lives on the third floor of the main building (27, 205–06, 214). Jefferson's daughter Martha and her children, as well as guests, resided under the same roof as Jefferson. For the Hemings children to do so would have been an announcement to visitors of Sally's children's privileged status. In the year that Harriet was born, 1801, construction began on the "dependencies connecting the south pavilion with the mansion, . . . joined rooms, which included the kitchen, smokehouse, dairy, and slave quarters" for house slaves (McLaughlin 29), and this would be where Harriet and her brothers resided. Rinaldi's error does not detract from the overall quality of her novel, as Harriet's movements through the more public rooms of the house tend to be precisely circumscribed.[6] The opening scene does emphasize, appropriately enough, Harriet's trepidation in entering Jefferson's private quarters, at his invitation and accompanied by her mother.

Further selective attention to Rinaldi's treatment of the historical record must be noted here, if only to test the novel's accuracy. For example, Harriet presents her ancestry, tracing her roots back to her maternal great-grandmother, and she notes that Jefferson's father-in-law (and Sally's father) bequeathed him slaves, including Sally and her mother Elizabeth (33–34). She recounts the anecdote from 1781 of Jefferson watching through a telescope as British troops approached Monticello, and then escaping on horseback, calm when others may have panicked (30–31). With the first example, which sweeps over many decades, and the second, which provides a close-up of one man's conduct at one particular moment, Rinaldi moves her narrative forward on firm ground.[7] Also, in regard to accuracy, mention of the scornful press reports of the Jefferson-Sally Hemings relationship, which emerged even after Harriet's birth, occurs three times.

The novel's authenticity, Rinaldi's craftsmanship in filling in gaps plausibly, requires more interpretive labor. The reporter responsible

(or the irresponsible reporter, depending upon one's view of presidential privacy), James Callender, is not named by Harriet. She focuses on Jefferson's silence in response to the published reports. When Harriet enters his "sanctum sanctorum" without his permission in order to examine her "passing" wardrobe, she is discovered by Jefferson, who urges her to ignore the evidence:

> He was asking me not to leave. He was asking me to forget that my mama was sewing a wardrobe for my departure. . . . And he was asking me to bide by his rule, which dismissed, by silence, anything unpleasant in the household. He wanted me to pretend my mother's efforts never took place. The way he responded over the years, with silence and pretense, to the savage rumors in the press about himself and Sally Hemings. (68)

One month following this unplanned meeting, Harriet approaches Jefferson as he gazes out from the portico of the Entrance Hall of the main house. Since they last spoke, Harriet was assaulted by Charles Bankhead, husband of Jefferson's granddaughter, Anne Randolph, and took to her sickbed for a number of days. In this encounter, Jefferson shows some concern for Harriet but feigns ignorance of the drunken attack that occurred under his roof: "he cannot bring himself to speak of it, I thought, so he is acting like he acted years ago when they accused him, in the press, of taking my mother for a mistress. He never spoke of it. And his accusers went away" (117). Again, Rinaldi is appropriately accurate: Jefferson made no public comment in response to Callender; evidence exists of Bankhead's brutality.[8] Furthermore, Harriet's awareness of the pretense that Jefferson maintains and that her mother colludes with creates additional internal tension in an authentic way as she moves towards her decision to start a new life away from the only home she has ever known.

Bankhead's assault on Harriet should be labeled partially accurate: no historical evidence corroborates the specific episode in Rinaldi's novel. But historical evidence supports the possibility that such an event may have occurred. Rinaldi adapts the historical evidence provided by Brodie: one night Burwell prevented the drunken Bankhead from obtaining more brandy, shouting erupted, and Thomas Mann Randolph arrived and knocked Bankhead to the floor (Brodie 620). No historian identifies Harriet as the object of an attack. The novel situates Harriet alone initially when confronting Bankhead, and his violent actions against her thwarted first by Thruston (a gardener, a

character not in the historical record), followed by the arrival of Burwell and Randolph. Perhaps Rinaldi also relied upon the scholar Dumas Malone who claimed that Jefferson freed Harriet to protect her virtue at Monticello. Gordon-Reed, who never comments on Rinaldi's work, dismisses Malone's claim: "There is no record of a precipitating event—a rape or attempted rape of Harriet Hemings, for example—that might have increased the sense of urgency to have her leave Monticello. There is no indication that there was a persistent but unwanted suitor with whom Harriet had to contend" (*Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 31).

Rinaldi authentically depicts Harriet awakening to a profound comprehension of her vulnerability. The belatedness of her comprehension—Harriet is nineteen at this point—reminds readers of her sheltered status. This scene certainly increases "the sense of urgency" that compels Harriet to accept the advice to leave, and thus propels the plot. Rinaldi also strikes a culturally authentic note, however unintentional this may be: if Harriet risks a sexual assault within the main house, how much more vulnerable must be the slave women at Monticello—or on other plantations—who are never privileged enough to enter the master's house? Harriet does not ponder whether other female slaves at Monticello or neighboring plantations would consider her assault an exceptional occurrence or a regular threat they are forced to live with, and it would be inauthentic for her to inquire about such acts typically conducted in secret, considering how sheltered she has been. Rinaldi deserves some credit for providing at least a partial view of this serious issue.[9]

Conflicting Influences: Thomas Mann Randolph and Martha Randolph

Again, before examining the four historical inaccuracies, the accuracy and authenticity in the characterizations of Jefferson's daughter Martha Randolph and her husband Thomas Mann Randolph must be considered, especially in regard to what their characterizations reveal about Harriet and Jefferson. The depiction of this married couple, who never appear together in the novel, adheres to the historical records known about them. While Thomas Mann Randolph's generosity and Martha Randolph's bitterness may both be exaggerated to serve Rinaldi's plot strategy, their depictions do not violate the criteria for accuracy. Rinaldi sets up Harriet to transform over the two and a half year period her narrative covers, to develop a complex, thoughtful recognition of her immediate life choices. Both Randolphs provoke her transformation.

In particular, Thomas Mann Randolph is presented as a countervoice to Jefferson in his empathetic encouragement of Harriet. Jefferson's son-in-law makes a number of crucial appearances in Harriet's final years at Monticello. Rinaldi depicts Martha and their children residing at Monticello (having moved there years before the narrative begins), while he visits occasionally, and in the years during which Harriet keeps her journal he serves as governor of Virginia. Rinaldi's favorable depiction of him is the most radical departure from the conventional views of any particular historical individual featured in this novel.

The first time Harriet mentions him, she attributes his alleged loneliness to being married to Martha, and she asserts that "everybody" knows "he's crazier than a loon" (17). Gossip about Randolph referred, to some degree, to his mental instability.[10] (Rinaldi even depicts Randolph declaring, "I feel like the proverbial silly bird who cannot feel at ease among the swans," a self-conscious assessment Randolph did utter, in a different context, of course [30; Ellis 136].) Sally Hemings springs to his defense: folks may label him "crazy," but at the time of this mother-daughter dialogue in 1820, Jefferson's son-in-law is "about to propose to the legislature that all Virginia's slaves be freed and deported," a much bolder effort on behalf of slaves than anything Jefferson attempted, Sally says (18). "Thomas Mann Randolph, the person they all say is crazy. Well, if he's crazy, that man, then I'm the Queen of France" (19). In their first dialogue, Randolph dismisses Harriet's restatement of her mother's claim about the state's emancipation legislation. It will not pass, he accurately affirms (29).[11] Though blocked in his efforts to reduce the number of slaves in the state, to distinguish his political record from Jefferson's passive acquiescence to the status quo, he focuses on Harriet's potential freedom.

The issue of determining authenticity necessarily becomes more elaborate when the reader must disentangle various historically based characters' motives. Sally seems intent on counteracting what she perceives to be her daughter's inflated view of Jefferson. Sally had prepped Randolph to speak to Harriet about her choice to leave Monticello. This implies not only Sally's elevated view of Randolph, but also a concern that her own persuasive powers may be inadequate. Furthermore, Sally does not request that Jefferson or Martha Randolph propose to Harriet that she make plans to leave, and perhaps she has not even discussed Harriet's leaving with Martha Randolph.

Randolph speaks to Harriet of Jefferson creating a "velvet trap" for himself at Monticello, a metaphor suggesting current comforts are a

temporary illusion and will be paid for eventually with painful consequences. He questions whether Harriet would be willing to escape the trap by leaving Monticello. He tells Harriet that if she stays, marries, and bears children they will be slaves: "'Worse than you. By then your master will be dead. And who's to care about whether your children are slaves or not. Or if they're sold or not.' Well, the man had me there, just like a fox caught in a leg trap" (29). Harriet reveals that previously she never considered the potential status of her children. That's a remarkable admission for a 19-year-old who has lived her entire life on a slave plantation. It suggests that her mother and older brother neglected to alert her to, arguably, her most pressing personal responsibility. Her lack of foresight emphasizes how contentedly she has dwelt in the present, as well as how unwilling her mother has been to discuss the choices she made when she was younger than Harriet. Is it authentic, "within the realm of likelihood or possibility," to use Hintz and Tribunella's criteria, that Sally would not have discussed with Harriet the consequences of her sexual choices or that Harriet would not have imagined them on her own? That seems doubtful. But in terms of narrative strategy, a degree of authenticity may be sacrificed in order for Harriet to achieve meaningful insights that readers may presume a 19-year-old living as a (relatively privileged) slave would have acquired at a younger age.

The next time Harriet and the governor talk, one month later, a sense of urgency compels Randolph to insist that Harriet prepare to leave. He knows that Harriet has been assaulted by his son-in-law and, unlike Jefferson, openly acknowledges and even condemns Bankhead's conduct. Randolph's attitude strikes an authentic note, even if no documentation exists about his direct influence on Harriet. He regrets not killing Bankhead after he stabbed his son, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, and then delivers the fiercest, most graphic condemnation of slavery in the entire narrative:

> Bankhead represents everything that is so despicable about this system we live under. And I see you as a victim, along with my Anne. For the same system that nurtures slavery, nurtures and tolerates all the evil impulses in men. It tolerates their laziness. And violence. It looks the other way when they turn from their wives to the women in the quarters and produce children like you and your brothers, who are left to find their way in such confusion, belonging neither to the nigra nor the white community, yet being part of both. (101–02)

This is a cry of helplessness, by both a governor and a father, when confronting a cultural norm, and his empathy for Harriet is evident as he creates a parallel between his own daughter and Harriet. The reader must presume that Harriet does not personally know any slave who could articulate such antagonism, a circumstance that contributes to the soft focus in which her narrative views slavery. Randolph's speech counteracts Jefferson's silence: it would be hypocritical, certainly not authentic to what is known of Jefferson, for him to state such a condemnation. Randolph acts upon his moral concern: he will advise Jefferson about Harriet's decision, negotiate for his wife, Martha, to tutor Harriet, and reveal in private to a white bachelor who has visited Monticello and voiced his admiration to him of Harriet that a betrothal to Harriet would provide cover for her, and perhaps the good deed could lead to marriage, which would require that Harriet pass. Effectively, Randolph becomes Harriet's plot director and the behind-the-scenes hero of the novel, while Jefferson remains an observer.

Thomas Mann Randolph addresses Harriet like a young adult who will be capable of adapting to her move away from Monticello. Martha Randolph attempts to belittle Harriet. Rinaldi's unflattering depiction of Martha may prompt readers to wonder whether Martha was so sour on the Hemingses and so duplicitous in her treatment of Harriet. She senses that her husband plotted to allow Harriet to leave, and she describes his legislative proposal:

> All this nonsense about introducing legislation to give Virginia's slaves their freedom. Freedom to do what, I ask? And how? Why, all the nigra servants on this place, with the exception of your mother, have to be led by the hand to eat, or they'd starve. That's how much sense they have. You think it's easy out in the world? You think all you have to do is smile and curtsy and you'll have your supper? (128)

Her racist-coated assessment is challenged by the evidence of the network of slave laborers who maintained the property and produced revenue from the nailery and elsewhere (Stanton 41–89). Her intensely pessimistic outlook plays off against the realistic, even existential, outlook her husband expresses to Harriet. When Thomas Mann Randolph develops his "velvet trap" metaphor, Harriet notes that Jefferson is kind to her. He responds, "Kind, eh? Well, kindness is not freedom. And security is not freedom. Freedom is often lonely. Nobody takes care of you. You take care of yourself. You think for yourself. You do

dim-witted things, and you are sorry for them. You pay for them. But there is no feeling in the world like freedom" (28).

Madison does not indicate in his memoirs how Martha interacted with him or Sally and Harriet. Cynthia Kierner's recent biography of Martha implicitly challenges the harsh depiction that Rinaldi offers. While Kierner's conclusions deserve to be weighed against Rinaldi's depiction, her biographical study will not lead a reader to conclude that Martha's role in *Wolf by the Ears* is historically inaccurate. At the time in which Harriet writes her narrative, Martha's mother and all her siblings from her parents' marriage have been deceased for over 15 years. (Her mother died when she was just ten.) Such a circumstance allows us to understand why the father-daughter bond would be so tight. Her life story, Kierner asserts, "counters the rhetoric of southern patriarchy to the extent that she herself had significant authority and influence—along with myriad responsibilities and obligations—throughout her adult life," and it can be interpreted "as a case study of what could happen when patriarchy malfunctioned because men [both her father and husband] were unable or unwilling to fulfill their prescribed domestic roles," especially in fending off debt (8).

In Rinaldi's novel, Martha complains to Harriet, "There are altogether too many Hemings on this place to suit me." She refers to herself as Jefferson's "only surviving child" (131). Nearly two years later and just a few months prior to Harriet's departure, Martha tells Harriet that her father is Peter Carr, Jefferson's nephew, a man, she claims, her father indulged: "It was no way to repay my father for his kindnesses, mixing with the servant women and producing children in so irresponsible a fashion. But then, Peter Carr never was responsible. I suppose that's why my father feels obligated to help Sally Hemings' children" (183). The oral tradition supports not the claim itself, of course, but the accuracy of Martha promoting such a claim: her eldest son, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, told a nineteenth-century biographer of Carr's role and attributed his information to his own mother.[12] Martha defended her father's reputation with the ugly tactic of smearing Sally (as well as her cousin Carr). Even prior to the scientific findings of the DNA research, Martha's claim was demolished as a convenient fiction.[13] It seems preposterous that Martha would not know of her father's long-term intimacy with Sally Hemings: that would require an excessive amount of willful ignorance. She also presumes that her allegations will not be challenged: "I know your mama hasn't told you. And she never will" (182–83).

When Thomas Mann Randolph talks to Harriet, he presumes she has been coddled at Monticello, allowed to live in a safe, cocooned world where few demands are made upon her. Martha Randolph adopts a similar stance. But note the differences: he wants her to perceive herself as an agent of her adult years, to make choices that assert her own independence. He pushes her out for her own good. He wants Harriet to recognize how confined she is at Monticello; Martha, in her complaining mode, wants her to see that she is privileged. Martha scorns her half-sister and essentially demands she express thanks for all she has been given. And she lies to her about her parentage: can we be sure she does not believe her own lie? Thomas Mann Randolph presumes Harriet is capable of imminent maturation; Martha does not. He presses Harriet to change her status; she urges Harriet to accept her status as a powerless individual who should be grateful for her comfortable existence. He wants Harriet to adopt a new identity who wields as much freedom of choice as her gender allows in the 1820s; she seeks to impress upon Harriet her sense of alienation from both the white Randolphs and the Mulberry Row slaves.

Harriet responds to the contradictory concerns this couple raises with an authentic intent to figure out who deserves her trust. Based upon her own instinctual feelings and later by the corroboration her brother Beverly provides from the *Farm Book* regarding the absence from Monticello of Peter Carr at the time of the Hemings children's conception, Harriet clings to her belief that Jefferson is her father. She also will not relinquish her view of Jefferson as a man deserving pity. Why she does not will be examined in conjunction with Rinaldi's four historical inaccuracies.

Harriet's In-Between Status and Her Absent Brother Tom

Harriet's reflections on the frequent references to her absent oldest brother, Tom, the first of the four historical inaccuracies, highlight the unique in-between status she occupies at Monticello. This first inaccuracy deserves to be considered in light of this context. Harriet moves between the Mulberry Row values expressed by Thruston (the gardener) and Mammy Ursula (who tells folktales and dispenses advice regarding potions and superstitions), and the white culture's values, expressed by Jefferson, Martha and Thomas Mann Randolph, and Thad Sandridge. This in-between status complicates in interesting ways both Harriet's efforts to assert her own identity and a reader's efforts to prove

her character achieves authenticity. Weimin Mo and Wenju Shen begin with the distinction between facts and values when discussing accuracy and authenticity yet acknowledge the conceptual vagueness with these terms. More specifically, they note that cultures "affect each other. They constantly absorb each other's values, attitudes, and beliefs; sometimes they actively clash. Therefore, cultural values are not stagnant. When an author's version of a culture can be accommodated inside the range of values acceptable within that social group, a measure of authenticity has been achieved" (201). Harriet receives conflicting advice from members of both Monticello communities and must determine which values to accept and which to reject.

In one dialogue, Jefferson, a master of indirection, suggests to Harriet that she may be romantically interested in Thruston. Rinaldi constructs this dialogue that accurately depicts Jefferson's attitude towards slaves intermarrying but within the conflicted context of obligations made to Sally to free her children. Operating with much cunning, Jefferson attempts to plant a seed that would serve his current and long-term purposes: marriage with Thruston would keep Harriet on his premises until he dies.[14] Their offspring would add to Jefferson's capital and help offset his debt. He would be appalled if Harriet had thought he wanted her to stay due to her monetary value as a breeder of slaves (overseen, perhaps, by his daughter Martha). In fact, Harriet does not indicate that such a thought enters her mind, though she should be labeled realistic rather than cynical if it did. Lucia Stanton notes, "Like other slave owners, Jefferson recognized the value of family stability in the slave quarters and tried to discourage abroad [off-plantation] marriages" (137). As he wrote in 1815 to one of his property's overseers, "There is nothing I desire so much as that all the young people in the estate should intermarry with one another and stay at home. They are worth a great deal more in that case than when they have husbands and wives abroad" (qtd. in Stanton 137). Also, potential offspring from a Harriet-Thruston marriage would divert attention, Jefferson may be thinking, from his genetic responsibility. When Harriet introduced Thruston in her narrative she noted, "He is light skinned, but darker than I am. I'm practically white. And I'm tall. And I have reddish hair. And some freckles. Which ought to give a body an idea of the trouble I'm in right off" (21).

Thruston's role highlights Harriet's in-between status. She scolds him for speaking "like a field darkie who didn't know any better" (20), a remark that acknowledges her awareness of most slaves' illiteracy

and limitations and Thruston's choice to align himself with those at Monticello incapable of advancement as long as slavery persists. At this early point in her narrative, Harriet still seems content with her current status. Thruston, angry because of his recognition of the limitations on his potential choices, pushes back against "Miss High and Mighty," as he labels Harriet in this scene: "Why should I talk like white peoples? . . . Ain't never gonna get me anything. Doan wanna talk like white folk, anyway. Ain't nuthin' 'bout them I admire" (21). She offers no response. This exchange segues into her encounter with Thomas Mann Randolph as she serves him breakfast. He scolds her in a manner that echoes Harriet's confrontation with Thruston: "Talk to me. . . . Don't give me that stupid darkie routine" (24). Randolph's effort to draw Harriet out provokes her identity confusion, disrupts her contentment. And who is to blame for her extraordinary reticence with Monticello's white residents? Who has sheltered her? Though tutored academically (8), Harriet moves in a twilight world, immersed neither in the slave community nor the white world of Jefferson's extended family. Later, Thruston concedes that he wants to marry Harriet but that she should seek her freedom. Harriet fears the unpredictability of her life if she leaves Monticello and enters a white community yet knows that she does not want to marry Thruston.

The perspective that Harriet takes of the Mulberry Row slaves is distorted by her lack of regular contact with those who live there as well as her love for Jefferson and pitying attitude towards him. While this perspective fails to conform to the historical record, to achieve accuracy, it does achieve authenticity considering the limitations that stem from Harriet's in-between status and defines her identity. In a later episode, Harriet silently criticizes the limited goals of two girls from Mulberry Row who are nearly her age—her peers and yet not her peers—who flirt with the well-muscled field hand Jupiter: "How stupid! Where would it all lead? Where would it get them? One of them will marry Jupiter and have baby after baby down in the slave cabins" (139). One of Harriet's internal conflicts centers on her recognition that her opportunities far exceed the Mulberry Row residents': neither these two young women nor Jupiter would be keeping a journal or tutored in French. Harriet is tutored by Mr. Oglesby, and once her plans for leaving begin to form, by Martha, with a curriculum that Jefferson oversees (which includes limits on reading fiction [119]). Again, though, as Sally's child, Harriet proves to be an exception: "Unlike many slaveholders, Jefferson did not try to prevent his slaves from learning to read (although there

is evidence he frowned on the second stage of the learning process, writing), but he apparently took no active part in providing them with an education" (Stanton 68). Yet the white community's values have up until recently been considered out of her reach.

In their dialogue that takes place days after Harriet has been assaulted by Bankhead, after Jefferson succeeds in proving to himself that Harriet is discreet (she does not burst out crying or accuse Jefferson of failing to control his own in-law and guest), he raises the issue of her leaving Monticello. As evident in all five of his dialogues with Harriet, as well as the one heated exchange she overhears between Jefferson and Beverly regarding her older brother's desire to attend the newly formed University of Virginia, Jefferson exhibits contrary sensibilities: self-absorbed and emotionally guarded, yet intent on establishing a meaningful personal link. He admits that the influence of Sally and Thomas Mann Randolph prompted his willingness to allow Harriet to leave:

> So, then, it is best that you go. I realize I was unfair to you at our last meeting, Harriet. I tried to impose my will upon you for my own selfish reasons. Yes, of course, I want you to stay, as I want Beverly to stay and as I wanted Tom to stay. But I must be a realist. There is nothing for you here. You are young and of a fine countenance and well bred. You must take your place in the world. (118)

Presumably, Jefferson trusts that she will understand that his "own selfish reasons" refers to a degree of emotional neediness, however incapable he may be of overtly expressing such needs to her.

The reference to Tom challenges the historical record. Rinaldi tries to have it both ways: in the family tree listed at the front of the book under the name Thomas Hemings it says, "(possibly)." Rinaldi seems to fashion "Tom Hemings" out of speculations in Brodie's biography, which acknowledged that references in Jefferson's *Farm Book* to various individuals named Tom proved confusing rather than conclusive (730–31n20). Yet as the absent oldest sibling of Harriet who left Monticello when Harriet was ten and passed as white, he is referred to in *Wolf by the Ears* as a real individual, not only by Jefferson and Harriet, but also Mammy Ursula and other slaves quartered on Mulberry Row, Sally, and Thomas Mann Randolph. Madison's memoir names only Beverly, Harriet, and Eston as his siblings. Callender reports gossip about a son named Tom, but no credible historian confirms his existence.[15] The

novel's references to absent Tom do not undermine in any genuine way the authenticity of Harriet's internal conflict.[16] They are gratuitous. The manner of his leaving serves as a counterexample to Jefferson's wishes for Harriet's departure: "When you go, Harriet, I would like it to be done right. No running off into the night like Tom. Promise me you will not run off" (120). Harriet will dutifully accept this advice. Alert readers should recognize that such an example is unnecessary for Rinaldi's narrative purpose: Harriet's efforts to please Jefferson are on display in every one of their scenes together. Jefferson's wistful recollections about Tom do conjure a sentimental view of the slave-holding ex-president, though, that the historical record fails to support, and thus this first of the novel's four inaccuracies deserves our attention.

Negative stereotypes of slaves are promoted by characters whom the reader is discouraged from agreeing with (such as Martha Randolph), and Harriet confronts in a meaningful way her in-between status as neither wholly slave nor wholly free. Yet at times the sidelong view of slavery that Harriet provides from her comparatively privileged position as a house slave veils the documented evidence of the daily working conditions and inferior accommodations for the slaves of Monticello, thereby sentimentalizing their existence. In an early entry in her journal, she gushes: "I love him, I know I do. And to show how much, I write down here and now another truth. The nigra servants on this place are well treated. And well clothed and fed. Mama says the master, like his father, Peter Jefferson, has never used a whip on one of his servants. And no one goes cold or hungry" (36–37). Though Harriet does work occasionally in the weaver's cottage on Mulberry Row, she avoids the nailery or the fields where many of the Monticello slaves were employed and subject to punishments. Stanton asserts that whipping of slaves at Monticello occurred at "levels well below those of many of his neighbors. The whip was, however, by no means eliminated. From the 1780s Jefferson employed on the Monticello plantation over twenty overseers with diverse temperaments and management styles. Some were cruel, even by the standards of the day" (15). Such cruelties are removed from Harriet's line of vision. Rinaldi's choice of narrator—a domestic servant granted privileges unavailable to the other slaves Jefferson owns—significantly softens what may very well be the high school reader's first literary introduction to slavery in the South in the early 1800s.

The division in Jefferson's mind between the Hemings children and the Mulberry Row slaves lurks behind his admission that "There

is nothing for you here." No one disputes that Sally's children were relatively privileged, never sent to work in the fields or in the nailery, for example. His praise of her "fine countenance" and breeding, weirdly ironic because he does not acknowledge his role in her breeding, conflicts with his previously published arguments of African Americans' racial inferiority. Query XIV from *Notes on the State of Virginia* is often cited as an early expression (written in 1781–82). In a question and answer format, Jefferson ponders why emancipation of the slaves within the state will not occur:

> Why not retain and incorporate the blacks into the state, and thus save the expence of supplying, by importation of white settlers, the vacancies they will leave? Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the exterminations of the one or the other race. (118–19)

Jefferson then labels skin color in the category of "physical and moral" objections: "Is it not the foundation of a greater or less share of beauty in the two races? . . . They are more ardent after their female: but love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation. Their griefs are transient" (119). He compares African Americans unfavorably with Native Americans: "never yet could I find that a black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration" (120). Such remarks, though written decades before Harriet's birth, provide some context for understanding his praise of her. Rinaldi's novel implies, at least, he was capable of making an exception to his theory in regard to both his sentimental worries about absent Tom and his view of Harriet: this may be pure fantasy on the novelist's part.

Rinaldi's depiction defies what we do know of Jefferson's attitude toward slavery in his post-presidential years. To note one example, in a letter from 1814, Jefferson tried to discourage a wealthy neighbor, Edward Coles, from carrying out his plan to move his slaves to Illinois, where Coles intended to free them and give them land: while Jefferson recognizes that "the hour of emancipation is advancing," he advocates that slave owners like Coles "reconcile yourself to your country and its unfortunate condition," and that while such proposals are worthy of

discussion, the time is not right to enact them. In this same letter he also asserts a point that directly echoes his sentiments regarding the inferiority of African Americans from his *Notes:* "Their amalgamation with the other color produces a degradation to which no lover of his country, no lover of excellence in the human character can innocently consent" (Letter to Edward Coles 350). Andrew Burstein comments, "Jefferson's pseudoscience rightly diminishes him in the eyes of history for one inescapable reason: He did not grow over time" (125). Rinaldi's depiction of Jefferson in this scene with Harriet conflicts with the language of this letter. She also ignored Brodie's analysis of this letter, in particular the quoted sentence regarding "amalgamation" (miscegenation). Brodie states that Jefferson's "octoroon children had been subjected by Virginia society to the same degradation as the blackest African, and he had been pilloried for siring them. Amalgamation for Jefferson truly did not raise the black; it only degraded the white" (585).

Of course, it is highly unlikely that YA readers would find any inconsistency here: Harriet indicates no awareness of Jefferson's *Notes.* Presumably, she would not intend to please him if she was aware of his pseudoscientific racial theory, and knowledge of his theory would undermine her sentimental response to slavery. Therefore, while it is plausible that Harriet knows nothing of this publication from nearly 40 years earlier or his current thoughts as expressed in his correspondence, this literary criteria of authenticity is earned at the sacrifice of exposing Jefferson's hypocrisy. His command that Harriet must take her "place in the world" sounds sententious, even paternalistic, and the irony, of course, is that taking her place requires disguising her identity. He wields language with impressive authority, yet so many of his statements open up rabbit holes down which he refuses to go. Harriet's intense admiration for Jefferson blocks her from challenging as suspect any of his stated intentions for her. This contributes to her portrait of Jefferson as a figure deserving pity.[17]

Jefferson's Confusing Claims about George Wythe and His Self-Promoting Recollections about the Declaration

Harriet's inability at crucial points in her narrative to decipher when Jefferson speaks in deceptive ways to manipulate her and others may very well be authentic: she does admit how sheltered her life has been. This inability is most evident in the extended scene that highlights Beverly's creative intellect and his frustration with Jefferson, a scene

in which the novel's second and third historical inaccuracies emerge. Working from written accounts of the previous generation's fascination with the pioneering work of hot air balloons, Beverly has constructed one of his own, fueled not by straw or sticks but a burning claret-soaked sponge.[18] He intends to impress Jefferson in an effort to convince him that he should be allowed to enroll at the newly established University of Virginia. Beverly and Jefferson confer about this on a hilltop near Mulberry Row. Hiding behind a washhouse, Harriet listens in to their exchange. Though this narrative strategy of overhearing crucial information may be somewhat clumsy, the scene effectively pits a defensive Jefferson against a frustrated Beverly.

Jefferson acknowledges that Beverly's intellect warrants his admission to a university program, but he lacks the power to institute such race mixing even on a campus he founded. Jefferson argues by analogy: he summarizes the 1806 case of the white man who murdered George Wythe and a young man living with Wythe, Michael Brown. In addition to being Jefferson's most influential teacher at the College of William and Mary, Wythe also served in the Continental Congress, and remained a lifelong friend. Jefferson explains to Beverly that Wythe, twice widowed, developed a relationship with his mulatto housekeeper, Lydia Broadnax, and that she bore him a son (Michael Brown), whom Wythe educated. In his will, Wythe left the housekeeper his home and other property, and for Brown half of his bank account. The other half was left to his white grandnephew who poisoned Wythe, Broadnax, and Brown in an effort to inherit it all. The will (written while Jefferson was president) entrusted Jefferson to be in charge of Brown.

Rinaldi apparently relies upon Brodie to create this scene. The historical evidence does not support the claim that Wythe and Broadnax produced a son, nor that Wythe was intimate with Broadnax, whom Wythe had freed and who continued to care for him as a paid servant. Brodie states, "Jefferson must have surmised, with many others in Virginia once the details of the will were circulated, that Lydia Broadnax was almost certainly Wythe's concubine and Michael Brown his son. That the President believed that Wythe had waited in writing his will till he was certain he could count on Jefferson's support for his son seems likely" (524). In Rinaldi's scene, Jefferson speaks in a lawyerly manner to Beverly regarding the exact nature of the relationship: "it was common knowledge that the boy was Wythe's illegitimate son" by his mulatto housekeeper, Lydia Broadnax (42). Bruce Chadwick challenges this claim: the "copious population records . . . kept at the

time" never listed Broadnax as a mother; "Wythe had a long history of tutoring both black and white teenagers, and Michael was just one more" (254n3). Philip Morgan notes: "Of the fourteen witnesses who testified to Wythe's poisoning, not one mentioned that Lydia Broadnax was his mistress or that Michael Brown was his son. No newspaper reported any such gossip" (58).

Rinaldi blends some historically accurate claims with Brodie's speculations in this scene. Broadnax, Jefferson explains to Beverly, survived:

> But because, under Virginia law, no nigra can testify against a white, [this grandnephew] was acquitted. Leading men in Richmond rushed to defend him. The indictment against him was quashed without a trial. And a murderer was allowed to go free because my dear friend and mentor, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, did not try to hide the fact that he had a mulatto mistress and could not disown his son. Now do you understand? (44)[19]

The implication is that fourteen years later, the political culture in Virginia has not progressed, and Jefferson is powerless to provoke change. Jefferson's support for Beverly will not extend beyond Monticello: he will neither help nor hinder him in the outside world.[20] Jefferson may fear that Beverly's presence at the university will expose Beverly's ancestry and provoke newspaper writers to resurrect stories of his intimacy with Sally Hemings.[21] He will not allow any attention to be drawn to his role as the father of a mixed-race child, as he may have felt such attention affected Wythe's posthumous reputation. While Rinaldi is correct in depicting Jefferson as asserting that state laws prohibited testimony from a black person against a white person, it bears noting that Wythe and Jefferson had formally approved this law when they reviewed the state statutes decades earlier (Chadwick 228–29). Jefferson's pleading insistence that he cannot push against the weight of Virginia's white supremacist conventions contributes to the novel's pattern of viewing him with pity, as a man with a steady moral compass whose willingness to guide others in the right direction is ignored. When Rinaldi's dramatic dialogue—which embeds both this second inaccuracy regarding Wythe and the third, to be considered below—is set against the historical record, the reader's pity may dissolve.

Jefferson's effort to convince Beverly of his powerlessness leads him to refer to his early draft of the Declaration, the novel's third historical inaccuracy, which he claimed called for the abolition of slavery: "But

there were those who would have seceded from the yet unformed union if my phrases about doing away with slavery were not struck from the document" (44). Jefferson's claim accurately reflects his excised portions of his draft of the historic document, in which he blamed "the *Christian* King of Great Britain" for the "horrors of the slave trade."[22] But Jefferson only favored banning the importation of more slaves from Africa, not the ownership of slaves, and in 1776, he owned about 200 slaves (McCullough 131). He did write the astonishing phrase "all men are created equal," but his own life proved he did not accept this either literally or legally. Seeking from Beverly understanding and forgiveness for his passivity, Jefferson disingenuously simplifies the argument he crafted 44 years earlier, and thus his remarks constitute a historical inaccuracy. Yet his posture as a morally astute statesman powerless to affect change is authentic regarding the consistency in Jefferson's thinking about slavery from his early years in politics to his retirement at Monticello. It is impossible to determine whether Rinaldi knows that Jefferson veers sideways from honesty here or that she presumes her reader will view Jefferson with suspicion. Ellis peels away Jefferson's layers of obfuscation to uncover his support of the South's status quo:

> Jefferson knew . . . that many established slaveowners in the Tidewater region favored an end of imports because their own plantations were already well stocked and new arrivals only reduced the value of their own slave populations. Ending the trade in Virginia, in short, was not at all synonymous with ending slavery. With regard to slavery itself, Jefferson's formulation made great polemic sense but historical and intellectual nonsense. It absolved slaveowners like himself from any responsibility of complicity in the establishment of an institution that was clearly at odds with the values on which the newly independent America was based. (52)

In Rinaldi's account, Jefferson trusts that Beverly lacks the knowledge to challenge him. In reporting this dialogue, Harriet lacks the knowledge to treat Jefferson's claim with any skepticism. But a reader informed about the composition of the Declaration and alert to Jefferson's intentions should challenge his self-serving and dishonest appeals in this exchange with Beverly.

Near the end of his second term as president (in 1808), a ban was issued against the further importation of Africans to serve as slaves. As historian Alan Taylor writes, "But the new law manifested no

commitment to antislavery within the nation and no bar to the booming interstate trade in slaves. Indeed, by eliminating foreign competition, Virginians could sell more slaves to the lower South. The sellers also expected to sleep more securely as the domestic slave trade diffused their surplus slaves at higher prices to the south and west. By banning the import slave trade while expanding the interstate slave trade, the Virginians hoped to render slavery safer and more profitable" (104). From his composition of the *Notes* to the end of his second presidential term and all the way to his retirement at Monticello, Jefferson remained consistent in regard to slavery.

Open-Ended Closure in the Novel and the Historical Record

Rinaldi's choice of closure must be set against the historical record before proceeding to the novel's fourth historical inaccuracy regarding the Missouri Compromise. Beverly is not won over by Jefferson; he refuses to commiserate with Jefferson's excuse-making. In his final dialogue with Harriet, late at night, with Beverly on horseback set to run away from Monticello, he claims he does not know where he will go. (Gordon-Reed notes, "There is no record of an event that led to [Beverly's] departure" [*Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 26].) He shares his breakthrough insight gleaned from the pages of Jefferson's *Farm Book*: "I check it every chance I get. . . . To see. How he marks us down. . . . On bread lists. On blanket lists. We're on those lists, you and me. And Mad and Eston. With all his other slaves" (211–12). While Harriet will soon leave in a state of sentimental ambivalence, Beverly leaves full of righteous anger. "When he dies, people will see those lists. They'll see we were slaves. A hundred years from now that's all people will see of us, all they'll know" (212). Rinaldi's novel responds to Beverly's despair by animating the lives of what could have remained only names in the *Farm Book*.[23] The novel comes full circle, from Harriet's concern regarding whether Jefferson will discuss her mother in his autobiography to Beverly's evidence that their mother and her children exist on paper only as budget items.

The *Farm Book* establishes that Beverly left Monticello either in 1821 or 1822 and Harriet in 1822 (Brodie 589–90). Rinaldi closes her story after Harriet details her first night away from Monticello. Gordon-Reed speculates that Beverly may have eased Harriet's transition to Washington's white culture (*Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 33). Rinaldi presents Harriet's departure as the ultimate leave-taking of her family:

both she and Beverly presumed their parting was final, and there is no suggestion of a reunion at some unspecified time. The reader travels with Harriet only 18 miles from Monticello to the first stop on her way to Washington. This is the only break in the narrative from the spatial limitations of Monticello. A white chambermaid and her daughter tend to her in her room above a tavern. Though on this first night there is no challenge to her passing, her inadequate preparation for entering the world outside Monticello, her lifetime of being sheltered, is evident in her response to the chambermaid: "It came to me, watching the woman, that she was of a poorer class than I had known any white woman to be. . . . I never considered that there were white folk in the world worse off than I" (234–35). Working from Madison's memoir and the profundity of silence required by Beverly and Harriet who chose to abandon their black past and their bond with the third president, Gordon-Reed asserts that Beverly and Harriet "left Monticello as white people, with no learning curve for how to present themselves as Caucasians. They married white people who may not have known they were of African origin or had ever been enslaved" (*The Hemingses of Monticello* 285). Of course, if Gordon-Reed's speculation were true, then Harriet did not marry someone like Thad Sandridge, and her life did not follow the direction in which her narrative seemed to be headed. Yet Rinaldi's open-ended conclusion certainly sounds authentic.

Lacking historical evidence that Harriet's older brother facilitated her move, Rinaldi creates this scenario: Thomas Mann Randolph plots a meeting between Harriet and Thad Sandridge, a Harvard-educated northerner, an architect appalled by slavery and physically attracted to Harriet. Somewhat late in her narrative, Harriet reminds her reader that though she fended off Thruston's appeals and suffered from a thwarted violent attack by a sexual predator, her romantic experiences are limited and make her vulnerable. Upon first meeting Thad she decides she's in love with him (169). He demonstrates restraint and indicates his awareness of their power differential: "I'll force you into no decision concerning me. I have the advantage of having known you for some time now. You do not know me. I would have you taste freedom first. With no conditions attached to it. I do not wish to be a new master. I wish to be your friend" (161). The romance plot is implied yet deferred. Thad, calmer in his ardors, indicates he favors a leisurely pace to whatever mutual feelings may develop. Harriet's admission that she thinks she has fallen in love at first sight indicates she could benefit by restraining her emotions. He asks Harriet to call him by his first name

and just once to call her master "Mister Jefferson." Harriet acts upon this advice. The novel closes with Harriet's description of Jefferson's response to the only time she referred to him this way: "His gaze held mine for a moment and there, in those blue depths, I saw the shock and confusion, yes, even the hurt. His head went back a little, with my words, as if I had struck him" (247), and then he shed tears.

Success for Harriet is achieved by evoking from Jefferson a genuine emotional response to her departure, though readers should question how long she will feel satisfaction over such a slight victory. Rinaldi gives this scene prominence of place. But alert readers may presume that while such an ending makes sense structurally, Harriet's overbearing emphasis on a tear ("Tears! For me!" [248]) may indicate only that her movement into adulthood has barely begun. Harriet's parting words to Jefferson indicate her eagerness to take directions from Thad. Dropping the title "Master" in favor of "Mister Jefferson" seems to serve as a transgression that only Thad, Harriet, and Jefferson will know. It marks a shift away from subservience, but Harriet's intentions are not thought through. Does she imply that if he must persist in remaining silent about her paternity she will address him as no more than her landlord? If so, his tear signifies his emotional pain. Or is it her way of indicating she will play along with his desire for history to be uninformed of his double life, that she implies she will maintain *their* secret? If so, then his tear signifies his satisfaction that Harriet has acquired, in his misted eyes, an adult-like acceptance of southern social conventions.

Werner Sollors' *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both* identifies concerns specific to the issue of closure in fiction like *Wolf by the Ears*: "it is not surprising that interracial literature has displayed a good amount of self-consciousness and some ambivalence about where and how the plot lines could be brought to a conclusion" (337). Sollors distinguishes "two recurring patterns of closure": the one that Rinaldi's novel follows is "the wish for 'A World Elsewhere,' whether or not it is realized," with Harriet changing her name, securing a place to live and employment, with Thad's help, and the likelihood of "a happy interracial marriage" (Sollors 337). (Sollors does not discuss *Wolf by the Ears.*) Rinaldi deserves credit for undermining the potential for readers to view the ending as absolutely optimistic. Both Thomas Mann Randolph and Martha Randolph attempt to check her glowing assumption of what "freedom" might consist of. She is reminded (accurately, by Sally) of the cautionary tale of her mother's brother James: trained as a chef in France while living there with Jefferson, he was given his freedom by Jefferson, and

within a few years took his own life (Rinaldi 191; Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello* 551–54). Harriet moves from a protected estate where she was familiar with everyone she encountered to an urban area where she knows only one man (and with a knowledge colored by unfamiliar intense emotions). She moves from a site where her identity both protected her and provoked uncertainty for her to a site where she will assume a false identity. In her Introduction to *Paradoxes of Authenticity*, Julia Straub defines the term in a way that applies especially to Rinaldi's chosen closure, as well as the alternative closure this essay proposes: "Authenticity is not a key to happiness, a state of mind powerful enough to iron out the ruptures in identity and life experience that afflict modern individuals. It can also denote conflict and needs to be seen as a term of crisis" (15). The anxiety Harriet expresses over leaving her family and the only home she has ever known for good certainly constitutes a "rupture" and a "crisis."

Beverly rebukes her for choosing to pass: "What's festering inside me is that my only sister is passing into the white world and turning her back on her people" (141). Harriet's response reveals how genuinely guilt ridden her decision makes her: "There's days I know I'm nigra, and what's mine is in those cabins down there. Days when I know it so much that I hate myself for wanting to leave, let alone pass!" (142) Families divided between those who did and did not pass: Harriet's anxieties anticipate this new reality.[24] Whites who abide by the legal and ethical code that stipulates that Harriet's one-eighth bloodline defines her and denies her the freedom entitled to whites would perceive Harriet's action as a form of deception. Beverly's argument is that she is being dishonest towards the one-eighth blackness that should define her identity. Implicitly, Beverly argues that the Martha Randolphs of the culture should determine how and where Harriet should live. He presumes that Harriet will enter a privileged status and that by doing so she somehow harms those (such as the Mulberry Row residents) whose status is oppressed. But as this essay has demonstrated, Harriet has never been totally absorbed by either the black or white culture at Monticello. She is uncomfortable in the presence of whites, as her early remarks about serving Thomas Mann Randolph indicate. She is perturbed that Thruston insists on "talking like a field darkie who didn't know any better" (20), and she both respects and remains skeptical about the folk stories and spells that Mammy Ursula taught her.[25] She moves uneasily between two worlds, belonging in neither. If we understand the ambivalence involved in Harriet's choice, her decision to pass

highlights a dimension that Kathleen Pfeiffer finds in other works of interracial literature: it “offers a problematic but potentially legitimate expression of American individualism, one that resists segregation’s one-drop logic and thereby undermines American’s consciously constructed ideology of racial difference” (2).

In her final conversation with her mother, Harriet is told that Beverly passed. This complicates the reader’s efforts to understand Harriet’s often angry older brother. The historical record about Beverly is as insubstantial as it is about Harriet. Consequently, the reader is on unstable ground when judging the accuracy of Rinaldi’s closure. Rinaldi’s decision to depict Beverly as critical of Harriet’s decision to pass serves a meaningful purpose in her psychological development: she reaches her decision through intense internal struggle, without her older brother’s full support. Readers who move from Rinaldi’s conclusion to Madison’s memoir learn that Beverly and Harriet did pass, though Madison provides no indication that his two older siblings ever contacted one another again or if he ever saw them again after they left Monticello when he was a teenager.

Madison’s statements about Harriet create a lacuna that Rinaldi fleshes out in an authentic way with Thad Sandridge’s role: “Harriet married a white man in good standing in Washington City, whose name I could give, but will not, for prudential reasons” (qtd. in Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 246). Madison’s 1873 reminiscences indicate his knowledge of Harriet’s life post-Monticello is limited, that the color barrier he chose not to cross separated him from Harriet (and Beverly) for over half a century.[26]

> She raised a family of children, and so far as I know they were never suspected of being tainted with African blood in the community where she lived or lives. I have not heard from her for ten years, and do not know whether she is dead or alive. She thought it to her interest, on going to Washington, to assume the role of a white woman, and by her dress and conduct as such I am not aware that her identity as Harriet Hemings of Monticello has ever been discovered. (qtd. in Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 246)

Gordon-Reed parses the tone of this account, detecting Madison’s anger towards Harriet, his assumption that she was selfish, either in passing or in failing to maintain communication with her siblings, or both. The reference to Harriet’s children not being “tainted with African

blood" may be Madison's sarcasm and resentment toward her decision to pass (*Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 45). Rinaldi again remains true to the testimony Madison provides in the one scene Harriet shares with her younger brothers as they discuss her leaving. Harriet's statements express a sweetness that she knows to be superficial: "'Because of who we are, no matter where we go, we'll always be together in our hearts.' . . . They agreed with me, but I knew in my bones they were saying it just to make me happy. And I became more desolate than ever" (136–37). Madison then forecasts—accurately, according to the historical Madison's memoir—that he will stay with their mother after they leave Monticello. The "World Elsewhere" that Harriet chooses to enter provokes nightmares for her as she anticipates her new life (178); readers may admire her bold spirit in making her move and passing despite her legitimate fears.

Thruston's role typifies Rinaldi's ability to dramatize crucial features the historical record substantiates. He refers accurately to Jefferson's debts that may be relieved to some degree by selling his slaves.[27] In a dialogue with Harriet, Thruston accurately forecasts that Jefferson's slaves risk being sold off and separated upon his death: he is alert to Jefferson's significant financial debts and his old age, which compounds the urgency of his cautionary advice. Jefferson already sold Sally's sister Thenia to James Monroe decades earlier and, Thruston asserts, all of the rest of his slaves are at risk: "Mister Bacon [Edmund Bacon, Jefferson's overseer] says the place'd be sold to pay the master's debts. A bidder will come. . . . Put us on the block. For sale. 'What'll I get for this fine nigra gal? She has quality.' They'll sell us all. And a white man would pay a good price for a piece of property like you" (77, 82). While Thruston intended his speculative scene to terrify Harriet into fleeing Monticello, to step into her freedom as soon as possible, he exaggerated the threat to her personally. Harriet and her older brother Beverly were allowed to leave when they were twenty-one. Five of Jefferson's slaves, including Harriet's two younger brothers, were not sold: his will stipulated they be granted their freedom (Stanton 335n). Jon Kukla's *Mr. Jefferson's Women* contrasts the treatment following upon Jefferson's death accorded to some members of the Hemings family with the more than 100 other slaves who called Monticello home: "With his daughter's help, Jefferson finally rescued Sally Hemings and all their surviving children from slavery. Against some formidable obstacles—through thoughtful actions that implied respect, gratitude, and some measure of affection—their story ended in a way that suggests that promises had been made and were kept" (141).

The residents of Mulberry Row, like Thruston, that is, the field hands, the nailmakers, the "superannuated" women (to use Jefferson's term from his *Farm Book*, which he applied to those slaves who could mind the children; Harriet puzzles over this term that implies Jefferson's view of the material value of certain slaves [197]), and others whom we may presume never entered the main house where the Hemings children were welcomed, were sold in January 1827. Families were divided. Thomas Jefferson Randolph, the President's grandson, served as executor: he "compared the wretched scene of the dispersal sale at Monticello to 'a captured village in ancient times when all were sold as slaves'" (Kukla 141). Though Harriet's narrative—Rinaldi's novel—ends with her departure from Monticello in 1822, the reader may imagine the sale four and a half years later of Thruston, Jupiter, both girls whom Harriet observed flirting with Jupiter, and any of their offspring. But a reader must be aware of the historical record, must have knowledge that exceeds what Harriet comprehends, in order to claim her sentimental view of slavery is counteracted by the grim reality of Monticello slaves on the auction block that the novel merely anticipates but does not depict.

Sollors acknowledges "the structural ambivalence in plot lines that are brought to forced closure at a price: each resolution rests on the denial of another possibility that is being eliminated by the choice made" (358). Rinaldi chose not to close with a more definitive tragic ending: for example, she could have added an epilogue in which Harriet returns, perhaps under some form of disguise, on the January day in 1827 when the slaves at Monticello were put on the auction block. She could observe the "superannuated" Mammy Ursula, Thruston, and others purchased by new owners: their lack of choice over their futures combined with Harriet's impotence at the sale would close the story on a deeply tragic—and authentic—note. Harriet's qualified achievement of independence would be viewed in its rightful context against the lack of any choice for her former fellow slaves. Such an ending would be accurate to the historical circumstances and reinforce the rupture in Harriet's choice to leave.

Rinaldi's Allusion to the Missouri Compromise and the Personal Consequences of Jefferson's Grim Foresight

In one exchange between Harriet and her mother, Sally discusses Jefferson's despair following upon the debates in Congress over the

Missouri Compromise in 1819: this sets up the novel's fourth historical inaccuracy. Jefferson senses that the national union achieved by allowing slavery to be maintained (as discussed above on his writing of the Declaration) will eventually collapse. Sally explains: "He fears for the Union. . . . He talks about an imaginary line they are drawing across the country, with certain states slave and others free. He says a hideous evil is dividing America. He says the line will never be erased. Some Southern states threatened to leave the Union if Missouri wasn't admitted as a slave state. He says it fills him with terror" (98). Rinaldi allows Sally to speak lines that echo Jefferson's 1820 letter to Senator-elect (of the new state of Maine) John Holmes: "this momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union" (Letter 362).[28] Terror is the appropriate anticipatory emotion for the Civil War, "which destroyed slavery, the political primacy of the South and the doctrine that the states were sovereign agents in the federal compact" (Ellis 293). But what Sally does not explain, and what Harriet does not know, is that Jefferson feared restrictions imposed by northerners on southerners' expansion of slavery. He favored the interstate sale of slaves, without any restrictions from the North, and he feared the potential for a slave revolt in Virginia (Taylor 408). "The diffusion over a greater surface would make [slaves] individually happier, and proportionally facilitate the accomplishment of their emancipation, by dividing the burthen on a greater number of coadjutors," his letter to Holmes stated (362). Sally's account, as in the three previous examples of historic inaccuracies in this novel (in regard to Tom Hemings, George Wythe, and the composition of the Declaration), allows the reader to pity Jefferson for his moral stand while powerless to affect change.

On a more personal level, the Civil War prompted Jefferson's grandsons to fight against one another. Martha's son George Wythe Randolph, who plays a silent, cameo role as a three-year-old sitting on his mother's lap while she interrogates Harriet (125), served in the military for the Confederacy, including a stint as Jefferson Davis' secretary of war (Crawford 262). Two of Eston Hemings' sons served in the Union Army, Beverly Jefferson and John Wayles Jefferson, who rose to the rank of Colonel in the Wisconsin Infantry (Stanton 274–80). Two of Madison Hemings' sons crossed the color line and served in white units in Ohio regiments. "They would have known that had they joined one of the available Ohio black regiments, they would have been denied equal pay and equal access to advancement. . . . The Hemings brothers

had identified themselves as 'colored' in their prewar lives. Thus every day spent with a thousand white soldiers must have been full of tension as well as the dread of discovery and its disagreeable consequences" (Stanton 273). In his memoirs, Madison reports that his son Thomas Eston Hemings died in the notorious Andersonville prison.

We do not know what any of the Hemings grandchildren thought of Jefferson. However arrogant it may seem to assess moral responsibility from a position of roughly two hundred years, an examination of Jefferson's role in the maintenance of slavery and the personal and national consequences of his actions—and inactions—undermines any naive sense of patriotic pride in the decisions of the Declaration author and third president. While Harriet's view of Jefferson as deserving pity is authentic, considering her lack of knowledge of his various writings and his proximity to her, it is not a response that Jefferson deserves. By exploring the Hemings family's life while at Monticello, with Rinaldi's novel as a springboard, as well as the years after Jefferson's death, a more richly informed response to the consequences of slavery, historically and for one young woman, will result.

Notes

I thank Amanda Cockrell and the *Children's Literature* anonymous readers for their patience and meaningful insights on drafts of this essay.

[1]Newell Bringhurst's "A Popular but Controversial Biography" provides a useful overview of the response to Brodie's book. See <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jefferson/cron/1974brodie.html>. Six years before Brodie's biography, Winthrop Jordan noted that Jefferson's *Farm Book* indicated he was present at Monticello nine months prior to the birth of each of Sally Hemings's children, though overall he was absent from Monticello for nearly two-thirds of the period when Sally Hemings conceived. Jordan acknowledges that the evidence available to him prevents any claims of certainty regarding the extent of Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemings. "The question of Jefferson's miscegenation," Jordan asserts, "is of limited interest and usefulness even if it could be satisfactorily answered" (467). Though Brodie refers respectfully to Jordan in the opening paragraph of her acknowledgements, she strongly disagrees with his view of "Jefferson's miscegenation."

[2]Jon Meacham provides thorough documentation on this matter (522–24). Joseph Ellis, a skeptic as late as 1998 regarding the relationship (see *American Sphinx* 303–07), asserted in 2000, "If history is an argument without end, skeptics and agnostics will still have a role to play in the debate. But the new scholarly consensus is that Jefferson and Hemings were sexual partners" (2).

[3]The 2014 publication of Paula Byrne's *Belle* and the release in the same year of the same-titled movie emphasizes the current interest in a true story of a light-skinned daughter of an African slave woman raised in the household of her politically powerful guardian. Dido Belle, whose father is a British naval captain, is raised by her great-uncle, the Earl of Mansfield, and comes of age at the same time that the Earl, who serves as England's Lord Chief Justice, must render a verdict in the *Zong* appeal, the case in which a British slave-trading firm sought insurance company compensation for the human

"cargo" who had been tossed overboard on the Middle Passage in 1781. Granted, notable differences between the circumstances of Belle and Harriet Hemings exist: to note one crucial fact, Belle's guardian wielded substantial political power, whereas Jefferson's authority to continue or correct America's treatment of slaves effectively ended a full decade prior to the events Rinaldi—through Harriet—narrates. Byrne frequently does remind her readers, though, that reasonable speculations must be relied upon when historical evidence is thin or nonexistent, as in this admission: "We simply don't know whether Dido Belle was conceived by force, by mutual consensual passion, or as a 'duty' that might bring material benefits to her powerless mother" (86). Rinaldi might admit the same regarding Sally's children. Byrne acknowledges that the "only way of glimpsing [Dido Belle's] life is through the lives of others" (11). This parallels Rinaldi's task in creating an authentic version of Harriet Hemings, who engages in many dialogues with others who attempt to influence her. The movie *Belle* takes considerable liberties with the available historical evidence and may be played off against Byrne's book: time sequences are compressed, and Belle's romantic life unfolds along with the debate about the *Zong* decision. This essay examines Harriet's in-between status. Curiously, the movie indicates that Belle fluctuated in an uncomfortable in-between status in the Mansfield household, allowed neither to dine with the family nor eat in the kitchen with the servants, for example. Yet as a further reminder of the instability of all "texts," whether a novel, a movie, or a historical document, Byrne asserts that proof is lacking that Belle "was normally excluded from family meals" (176).

[4]Madison's memoirs, which were first published in an Ohio newspaper in 1873, run for just four pages and are included as an appendix in Brodie's biography, *The Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, and Gordon-Reed's *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*. Some caution should be used, though, if his brief text were brought into a classroom: Madison refers to Harriet's life post-Monticello, and many readers would prefer not to know what he says until after finishing the novel.

[5]In 1804, Jefferson returned to Monticello from Washington in order to be with his fatally ill daughter Maria, the daughter Sally Hemings had escorted to France to visit Jefferson in 1787. "It is quite telling that he turned to Hemings during one of the most heartbreaking periods of his life, when he was a veritable portrait of emotional devastation. Madison Hemings's conception in the harrowing six weeks Jefferson was at home to attend to his daughter shows that this extremely sensitive man sought the comfort of the familiar with the person who understood better than anyone besides his daughter Martha what Maria had meant to him" (Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello* 591).

[6]For example, in an early scene Harriet intends to exit the house by walking past the underground kitchen, which would seem to place her as emerging from the servants' rooms under the south terrace, in contradiction to the later references to her third floor room (15). Sally, in the kitchen, sees Harriet and tells her to serve a tray of food to Thomas Mann Randolph in the dining room. Together, mother and daughter move "through the underground corridor" and then Harriet alone ascends "the stairway to the hall outside the dining room" (17, 19). (The website *www.Monticello.org* provides a virtual tour of the house and enables viewers to track many of Harriet's movements.) Harriet conducts five dialogues with Jefferson, and for four of these the location is specified: two in his sanctum sanctorum, one overlooking the east balcony, and one by the carriage as she leaves Monticello. (Another exchange is brief, with the location of their meeting not specified.) Rinaldi's depiction of people's circulation in and around the great house may seem contrived at times. Typically, though, the author stipulates why Harriet enters a specific location, such as when Sally directs her to move from the kitchen up to the entrance hall overlooking the east balcony to speak with Jefferson (111) or to serve food to Thomas Mann Randolph, or when Randolph directs her to serve tea to Thad Sandridge (151–53): these set-up meetings are presented as highly unusual, as are Harriet's exchanges with Jefferson in his sanctum sanctorum.

[7]On Harriet's ancestry, see Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello* and Stanton, *"Those Who Labor for My Happiness."* On slaves bequeathed to Jefferson upon his marriage, see Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello* 109 and Ellis 151. The telescope incident is recalled in Meacham 139–40. Rinaldi relied, of course, on Brodie and earlier authors.

[8]On Callender, see Ellis 218–20, Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, and Meacham 378–80. On Bankhead, see Stanton 182, Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello* 418–19, and Kierner 168–69.

[9]Though pursuing this topic may be too "weighty" (to again use Honey's term) for YA readers, the following information certainly is useful. According to Lucia Stanton, "The extreme imbalance of power in a slave society made the whole idea of consent, when it concerned a female slave and a free white man, especially if he owned her, an absurdity. Nevertheless, it is apparent that interracial sex in Virginia and elsewhere in the South took every form from the most cruel exploitation to the most enduring affection" (177). Alan Taylor notes, "No law punished masters who raped slave women or kept them as concubines. Neighbors did little more than gossip so long as a master kept a low profile and did not marry a slave partner: a model of discretion set by Jefferson" (77).

[10]See Brodie 368 and Ellis 135–36. Though acknowledging the "anxiety and rage that afflicted him in middle age," Cynthia Kierner adopts a more empathetic view: she notes his debts, both inherited and created during his marriage to Martha; his lack of a dowry for some of his younger daughters, which inhibited their marriage prospects; the viciousness of his son-in-law Bankhead; and the difficult position he maintained as the son-in-law of Jefferson while residing at Monticello (77). Barbara Chase-Riboud's 1979 best-selling novel *Sally Hemings* piles up the references to Thomas Mann Randolph as a drunken fool accruing severe financial debts. Curiously, Rinaldi does not refer to this novel in her bibliography.

[11]As Randolph should have been aware before he began the first of his three one-year terms of office, the authority of Virginia's governor "had been clearly and deliberately limited by the framers of the Constitution of 1776" (Gaines 116). Thus his proposal may have been evident even to Randolph as more provocative than practical. By modern standards, it certainly could not be labeled progressive: fearing violent slave rebellions, "he suggested that 'a fair proportion' of slave youths in the different parts of Virginia be manumitted every year. To accelerate the process, he recommended further that 'a double proportion of females' over males be released annually." He wanted "those manumitted under his program [to] be sent to the island of Santo Domingo, which was 'sufficiently near to admit of emigration at little cost,' and where a self-governing community of liberated Negroes was already in existence" (Gaines 125).

[12]See Brodie, 389–90 and Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 80.

[13]See Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 101–02.

[14]Gordon-Reed offers these valuable insights that apply not only to Harriet but to her mother, her aunts, her grandmother, and her great-grandmother: "Throughout their time at Monticello, none of the Hemings women married men from 'down the mountain' who worked in the fields. They were either in long-term liaisons with high-status white males or white workers at the plantation, or they married household servants from other plantations who were also mixed race or, in the case of Critta Hemings [Sally's older sister], a free black man. One could say that these women had no choice regarding the white men, even the men who did not own them. It is also possible, of course, that given a choice they would have preferred white mates. That might be a disturbing thought from a modern perspective, with our knowledge of slavery and views about the value of solidarity in the face of oppression. This possibility, however, must not be discounted outright, especially in light of the behavior of some of the Hemings children and grandchildren" (Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello* 121).

[15]Madison's memoirs assert that Sally was impregnated by Jefferson while in France, that she delivered the child after they returned to Virginia, and that the child died soon

thereafter. Also, Gordon-Reed asserts that her analysis "tended to support Madison Hemings's version of his family story: SH had a child in 1790, but that child did not live. There are no records of a child named Thomas linked to SH in TJ's Farm Book, even in the years before SH and TJ's relationship was exposed to the public." She also examined the records of vaccinations against small pox that Jefferson maintained: "Jefferson vaccinated his children Beverley and Harriet in 1802, and Madison and Eston in 1816. All four are listed as children of Sally Hemings. There is no Hemings child named Tom on the list, as he certainly would have been had he existed. Again, these vaccinations began well before Callender ever wrote about a child named Tom at Monticello." See Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello* 718–19n.

[16]Tom is referred to on pp. 13–14, 42, 71, 112–15, 118, 120, 123, and 157.

[17]An instructor intent on challenging Rinaldi's depiction of Jefferson in this exchange that refers to Tom, or other scenes, could turn to any of the Jefferson documents already noted (from his Letters and *Notes*) in order to position Jefferson's own writing against this fictional version. This would allow young readers, especially, to assess Rinaldi's accuracy and to begin to recognize the slipperiness of historical "truth."

[18]See Meacham 166–67, 587n. Gordon-Reed refers to a balloon flight in Petersburg, Virginia, in perhaps 1834 that might be attributed to Beverly. Jefferson's own interest in balloon flights extends over decades and is well documented. "By today's standards ballooning may seem a trivial activity, a thing of sport. During Jefferson's era it was considered a scientific venture with travel and even military implications. It would be intriguing if he passed his interest in aerial transportation on to Beverly and Madison Hemings, all the more so if Beverly undertook to become a balloonist" (*Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 152).

[19]The circumstances of the trial of Wythe's grandnephew are more complicated than Jefferson's "lesson" to Beverly indicates. The forensic reports by three of Richmond's leading doctors who performed an autopsy of Wythe proved to be incompetent: they did not establish that he had been poisoned (Chadwick 195–215). "They did not perform any of the standard tests to discover arsenic and even ignored the simple 240-year-old taste test that would have at least alerted them to a poison of some kind. The autopsies that should have conclusively proved that arsenic was responsible for the deaths of Michael Brown and George Wythe were, in short, colossal forensics failures" (Chadwick 205). Also, Virginia's governor at the time shared privileged information with the defense counsel, which also weakened the prosecution's case (Chadwick 214).

[20]When Beverly left in 1822, there is no evidence "that Jefferson tried to bring him back" (Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 26).

[21]Had Wythe died and Michael Brown lived, Jefferson would have faced a circumstance that may have contrasted with how he treated his four Hemings's children: "How would Jefferson have carried out Wythe's final request about his involvement with Michael Brown? Would he really have brought the African American boy to Monticello or to the President's House to continue his studies, or would he have used the money from Wythe's estate to hire tutors for him? Brown at Monticello would indeed have been an interesting and problematic sight" (Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses at Monticello* 594).

[22]Delegates to the Continental Congress "eliminated entirely Jefferson's long passage on the slave trade. In the notes he kept of Congress's proceedings, Jefferson said that change was made 'in complaisance to South Carolina & Georgia,' which had never tried to restrain the slave trade and, indeed, wanted it to continue, with the consent of 'Northern brethren' who had few slaves but were sensitive on the issue because they had been 'pretty considerable carriers of them to others.' Maybe so, but the very acknowledgment that colonists had been in the past or were at present willing participants in the slave trade undermined the assertion that 'the *Christian* king of Great Britain' was alone responsible for that outrage on humanity" (Maier 146).

[23]The *Farm Book* has been examined in ways that Jefferson could not possibly have anticipated: "It is, in fact, highly unlikely that it ever occurred to Jefferson that his record of the lives of his slaves would become the subject of scholarly interest, even a passion among some—that his slaves' lives would be chronicled and followed in minute detail, the interest in them often unmoored from any interest in him. . . . In Jefferson's monumentally patriarchal and self-absorbed view, one shared by his fellow slave-owning planters, this was *Oh, the responsibilities I have! Here is what I have done and have yet to do for all 'my family'*" (Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello* 16).

[24]Among a variety of outcomes that resulted when some member(s) of a family chose to pass, Stanton identifies the following: "Important life passages like births, marriages, and deaths became painful reminders of family division, and only those remaining in the black community came to family reunions" (238).

[25]Though she appears in only three brief episodes when Harriet seeks her at her Mulberry Row cabin, Mammy Ursula's role deserves attention. This "superannuated" woman avoids the race-segregated Sunday Baptist services where the white minister tells the slaves to obey their masters: this hints at her positive mentoring role (53). She lived at Monticello even before Jefferson and his wife first moved there (229). She not only validates Harriet's decision to leave but seems to support her decision to pass, as though she may live vicariously through Harriet: "I'se part of this place. But you ain't. You, chile, is part of somethin' else. Somethin' new. Out there. Go. *However you wants.* For all of us" (emphasis added, 229).

[26]Eston lived as a black man near Madison in Ohio until he moved his family to Wisconsin, passed for white, and changed his name to E.H. Jefferson. In his memoirs, Madison said, "Eston married a colored woman in Virginia, and moved from there to Ohio, and lived in Chillicothe [Ohio] several years. In the fall of 1852 he removed to Wisconsin, where he died a year or two afterwards. He left three children" (qtd. in Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 246). Note all the information that is missing, including the vagueness—and inaccuracy—of the death date: Eston died in 1856. There is no follow-up regarding what Eston and his family did after they left Ohio, no awareness that Eston's sons ran Madison, Wisconsin's oldest hotel or that they served in the military during the Civil War (Stanton 274–79). The implication seems to be that communication between Madison and his brother and his brother's children ceased after Eston left Ohio and passed.

[27]Many biographers address the linked issue of Jefferson's expensive tastes and substantial debts. Jack McLaughlin comments, "In spite of his exacting eye for the details of income and expenditure, he seldom stepped back to observe his economic landscape. Because he notched each financial tree, he thought he knew the forest; until it was too late, he had little idea of his net worth." Though he received an annual salary of $25,000 while serving as president, it apparently was not evident to him "that he was living well beyond his income during his eight years in the presidency, and that a day of reckoning must come" (378). Gordon-Reed offers this practical opinion that applies to the consequences experienced by both Martha Randolph and her children and Sally's children: "Parents are expected to attend to the well-being of their children; it is, in fact, seen as their highest duty. Jefferson's handling, or, more accurately, not handling, of his finances in the final two decades of his life conflicted with that duty. Why wouldn't Jefferson's actions on this score count as examples of insufficient regard for his family?" (*Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* 132).

[28]Curiously, the title of John Chester Miller's book, which Rinaldi "borrows," is a metaphor derived from this same letter Jefferson wrote in 1820 in regard to the Missouri controversy (and both Miller and Rinaldi include a brief passage from the letter in their epigraphs). He believed slavery would only end if the slaves were expatriated. "But as it is, we have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other." He closes his letter with a

remarkable emotional mixture of self-congratulation, sorrow, and blame: "I regret that I am now to die in the belief, that the useless sacrifice of themselves by the generation of 1776, to acquire self-government and happiness to their country, is to be thrown away by the unwise and unworthy passions of their sons, and that my only consolation is to be, that I live not to weep over it. If they would but dispassionately weigh the blessings they will throw away, against an abstract principle more likely to be effected by union than by scission, they would pause before they would perpetuate this act of suicide on themselves, and of treason against the hopes of the world" (Letter to John Holmes 362). Is it too extravagant a point to claim he foresees the violent division within his own country and among his own descendants?

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