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Tales from the magazine prison house: Democracy and authorship in American periodical fiction, 1825–1850

Peeples, Laurence Scott, Ph.D.
The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1994

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TALES FROM THE MAGAZINE PRISON HOUSE:
DEMOCRACY AND AUTHORSHIP
IN AMERICAN PERIODICAL FICTION, 1825-1850

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in
The Department of English

by
Laurence Scott Peeples
B.A., Georgetown University, 1985
M.A., College of William and Mary, 1989
May, 1994
In memory of my father, 
Ralph Peeples (1923-1992)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project originated in 1990 in a short story seminar taught by my director, Dr. J. Gerald Kennedy, and developed mainly through discussions with Drs. Kennedy and Dana Nelson. Their specific suggestions and the examples they've set as scholars have guided me through this dissertation. I would also like to acknowledge the support I have received from the other members of my examination and dissertation committees: Drs. Bainard Cowan, Anne Loveland, Richard Moreland, Josephine Roberts, Lee Shiflett, and Greg Stone. In addition, several professors—Drs. Jim Borck, Bill Demastes, Susan Donaldson, and Sarah Liggett—and colleagues—Dr. Kirk Curnutt, Michael Dennison, and Michael Griffith—provided encouragement and advice throughout this process. I owe special thanks in this regard to Tim Caron, who read and offered helpful comments on each chapter.

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ABSTRACT

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, weekly and monthly periodicals emerged as the primary forum for new American literature. In several respects periodicals reflected the multiplicity of rapidly growing Eastern cities: they assembled a variety of "voices" in single texts and maintained a dialogue between editors and readers. At the same time, the magazines sought to create a more homogenous middle-class audience that would equate the capitalist transformation of American society with the "natural" progress of democracy. This dissertation examines that process by analyzing the writing and careers of four "magazines": Nathaniel Parker Willis, Caroline Kirkland, Lydia Maria Child, and Edgar Allan Poe. All four edited periodicals, all were a part of the New York literary scene of the 1840s, and all wrote numerous prose pieces that would be classified today as short stories. However, their careers took very different directions as each writer focused much of his or her writing on a distinct segment of American society: Willis on "aristocratic" New Yorkers, Kirkland on Western settlers, Child on oppressed minorities, and Poe on "modern" businessmen and the members of his own profession. I argue that as these four writers exploited the desire of their audience to know about and categorize these American subcultures, they both embraced and challenged—to various
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE AGE OF MAGAZINES

AND MIRACLE-WORKING PILLS

Decidedly this is the age of magazines, as well as of rail-roads, Ericson-propellers, miracle-working pills, and medicated candy. All literature approximates to the magazine, either in form or character; books are so printed and bound as to resemble monthly periodicals; and newspapers, unable to emulate them in appearance, strive to do so in the variety and nature of their contents.—The Columbian Magazine, 1844.1

Self-promoting commentary such as this appeared frequently in magazines of the 1830s and '40s, but statistics bear out their claims: fewer than one hundred periodicals other than newspapers circulated in the United States in 1825, but by 1850 there were approximately 600, and more than 4000 others started and folded during the same period.2 The Columbian editorial hints at why the first periodical "boom" occurred when it did: the second quarter of the nineteenth century was also the dawn of modern transportation, mass production, and consumer capitalism in the United States. Railroads, "miracle-working" products, and name-brand advertising characterized the age along with magazines seeking to "democratize" literature by appealing to as wide an audience as possible. While the "market revolution" of the early nineteenth century set the publishing revolution in motion, print, in turn, became one of the most effective tools of modern capitalism.

Technological advances such as stereotyping, machine-made
paper, and (in the late 1830s) the steam press made printing cheaper and faster, providing the means for transferring information, promoting products, and—most important to this study—disseminating the myths that would solidify a national "middle class" culture. The ways in which four "magazinists"—Nathaniel Parker Willis, Caroline Kirkland, Lydia Maria Child, and Edgar Allan Poe—shaped, promoted, and challenged those myths is the subject of this dissertation.

Of course, periodicals were only one of many print media involved in the transformation of American life in the first half of the nineteenth century; reform tracts, school books, advice manuals, travelogues, and histories from this period all deserve closer attention than they have received. But I have chosen to focus on periodicals for several reasons, the most basic of which is that they were the primary vehicle for American literature during these years—and yet they remain largely unexamined, "buried" in rare book rooms and microfilm collections. To be studied or even read by more than a few researchers, their contents would have to be reprinted in books; fittingly, it was their authors' inability to publish book-length manuscripts that brought most of the stories and essays I will study here into being. Because of the lack of effective international copyright, American publishers could print popular British novels without having to pay
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In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, weekly and monthly periodicals emerged as the primary forum for new American literature. In several respects periodicals reflected the multiplicity of rapidly growing Eastern cities: they assembled a variety of "voices" in single texts and maintained a dialogue between editors and readers. At the same time, the magazines sought to create a more homogenous middle-class audience that would equate the capitalist transformation of American society with the "natural" progress of democracy. This dissertation examines that process by analyzing the writing and careers of four "magazinists": Nathaniel Parker Willis, Caroline Kirkland, Lydia Maria Child, and Edgar Allan Poe. All four edited periodicals, all were a part of the New York literary scene of the 1840s, and all wrote numerous prose pieces that would be classified today as short stories. However, their careers took very different directions as each writer focused much of his or her writing on a distinct segment of American society: Willis on "aristocratic" New Yorkers, Kirkland on Western settlers, Child on oppressed minorities, and Poe on "modern" businessmen and the members of his own profession. I argue that as these four writers exploited the desire of their audience to know about and categorize these American subcultures, they both embraced and challenged--to various
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CHAPTER ONE

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Decidedly this is the age of magazines, as well as of rail-roads, Ericson-propellers, miracle-working pills, and medicated candy. All literature approximates to the magazine, either in form or character; books are so printed and bound as to resemble monthly periodicals; and newspapers, unable to emulate them in appearance, strive to do so in the variety and nature of their contents.—The Columbian Magazine, 1844.¹

Self-promoting commentary such as this appeared frequently in magazines of the 1830s and '40s, but statistics bear out their claims: fewer than one hundred periodicals other than newspapers circulated in the United States in 1825, but by 1850 there were approximately 600, and more than 4000 others started and folded during the same period.² The Columbian editorial hints at why the first periodical "boom" occurred when it did: the second quarter of the nineteenth century was also the dawn of modern transportation, mass production, and consumer capitalism in the United States. Railroads, "miracle-working" products, and name-brand advertising characterized the age along with magazines seeking to "democratize" literature by appealing to as wide an audience as possible. While the "market revolution" of the early nineteenth century set the publishing revolution in motion, print, in turn, became one of the most effective tools of modern capitalism. Technological advances such as stereotyping, machine-made 1
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Of course, periodicals were only one of many print media involved in the transformation of American life in the first half of the nineteenth century; reform tracts, school books, advice manuals, travelogues, and histories from this period all deserve closer attention than they have received. But I have chosen to focus on periodicals for several reasons, the most basic of which is that they were the primary vehicle for American literature during these years -- and yet they remain largely unexamined, "buried" in rare book rooms and microfilm collections. To be studied or even read by more than a few researchers, their contents would have to be reprinted in books; fittingly, it was their authors' inability to publish book-length manuscripts that brought most of the stories and essays I will study here into being. Because of the lack of effective international copyright, American publishers could print popular British novels without having to pay
royalties. Since the latest Scott or Dickens novel could be had for nothing, American authors could rarely interest a publisher in paying much or anything for an unproven commodity. Thus both aspiring and established writers, even those who did publish books, turned to the magazines as a primary source of income. One could hardly get rich writing for magazines, most of which operated on scant funds and, like book publishers, pirated much of their material; but, as Poe observed, magazine publishers "pay something--other publishers nothing at all." Thus, according to Poe, American writers were trapped in a "magazine prison-house," where they worked for small pay at the mercy of heartless businessmen.

The publications that made up this "prison house" varied in scope, format, content, and periodicity. Daily newspapers enjoyed an expansion equal to or greater than that of the magazines, and though they often published essays and stories similar (in many cases identical) to those found in magazines, they constituted a separate genre of periodicals. Quarterly and monthly "reviews," which featured political and philosophical writing, commanded respect from educated persons but attracted relatively few readers; meanwhile, professional journals devoted to science, medicine, law, agriculture, economics, religion, and other fields abounded. Willis, Kirkland, Child, and Poe wrote primarily for more mainstream publications, which
constitute my field of study: monthly magazines, weekly papers, and annual "gift books" directed at a middle-class audience.

Describing these "general" magazines in 1845, the Broadway Journal distinguished between "browns," which contained one hundred leaves, came out of New York on the first of the month, appealed primarily to males, and cost five dollars per year; and "pinks," which contained fifty leaves, came out of Philadelphia in the middle of the month, appealed to both genders, and cost three dollars per year. Though oversimplified, that description provides a useful distinction. The "pinks" included Godey's Lady's Book and the Ladies' Companion as well as Graham's Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine and the Columbian Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine: regardless of the gender(s) indicated in their titles, these publications all resembled each other more than they differed. The Knickerbocker epitomized the "browns," with smaller, unillustrated, uncOLUMNED pages of text. Its prominent relatives included the United States Magazine and Democratic Review and two separate American Monthly Magazines. All of these monthlies, "brown" and "pink," contained miscellaneous fiction, memoirs, poetry, reviews, biographies, historical nonfiction, anecdotes, and travel essays. A randomly chosen 1836 issue of the Casket (which later evolved into Graham's) includes, in no particular order, an engraving of
a shipwreck, several poems and song lyrics, a few aphorisms, a musical score, and over a dozen fictional and non-fictional prose pieces such as "Letters from the South," "A Persian Story," "The French Ladies: Art of Never Growing Old," "Scenes in a Madhouse," and "Mr. Tyrone Power's Work on America." Weekly papers such as the New York Mirror, the Broadway Journal, and the Saturday Evening Post presented material similar to that of the monthlies in a different format: usually four to sixteen tabloid-sized pages of very small type. Finally, annual gift books, which were attractively printed, illustrated, and bound, provided another important outlet for fiction and poetry, featuring mostly the same writers who contributed regularly to the magazines.

As Frank Luther Mott points out, however, such categories as "paper," "magazine," "journal," and "review" are never absolute, and indeed many editors of this period sought to create new types of periodicals by combining elements from existing formats (8-9). Professional journals might occasionally include fiction and poetry, while monthly magazines regularly featured articles on scientific and medical topics. Following Mott, though, I use the term "periodical" to refer to any publication that appeared more or less regularly with different contents in each issue. In some cases I refer to them collectively as "magazines" since the monthlies were the most popular and
pervasive format and because the terms "magazine" and "magazinist" were used generically to refer, respectively, to popular periodicals and those who wrote for and edited them.

A second reason I chose to focus on literature in periodicals is the opportunity it presents for studying early- and mid-nineteenth-century fiction in the context of popular culture--indeed, studying it as popular culture. As David Reynolds and others have shown, the work of a canonical figure such as Poe reads differently when one considers it in light of contemporary texts that have not been anthologized and reprinted. However, my project here has not been to shed light on "classic" American literature so much as to consider popular writing (whether "classic" or forgotten) in its own right, as a reflection of the tastes of a rather large portion of the population and as an agent in forming that very audience. Like a number of literary historians of the past decade, I am interested in the "cultural work" performed by nineteenth-century literature, and since periodicals were the most vital medium for new writers in the decades before the Civil War, they constitute an important area of literary/cultural study.

Unlike the novel, which it grew up alongside, the magazine as a unique type of literary text has received relatively little analysis. As a collection of individual
pieces by individual authors, the magazine is not exactly a literary genre. And yet it is more than a collection or an anthology: the magazine aimed at a "general" audience—a form that developed during the first half of the nineteenth century—puts forth both a consistent "personality" and a variety of authorial voices; in Bakhtinian terms, it is both monoglossic and heteroglossic. Jon Klancher has shown that the British monthlies and quarterlies of the early nineteenth century "had begun to absorb their writers into the discursive mode of each journal, after merging writer, editor, and publisher into a corporate, collective 'author' institutionally set apart from its readers."

Since American magazines, particularly the reviews, modelled themselves on their British forebears, it is not surprising that they too tried to establish a corporate authority; as John Paul Pritchard reports, "each [New York] magazine spoke with one voice." This stylistic unity could be achieved in much the same way it is achieved today by a magazine like the New Yorker or Esquire, by careful selection and solicitation of articles and by a distinctive editorial persona. Not only reviews but monthly magazines such as Lewis Gaylord Clark's Knickerbocker and Willis's American Monthly made the character of their editorial "we" a primary feature, devoting ten to twenty-five pages per issue (often as much as a third of the magazine) to editorial matter.
Yet at the same time, magazines by their very nature present readers with a variety of perspectives under one cover; this diversity of social speech types, the "distinguishing feature of the novel" according to Bakhtin, is, I would argue, more obviously characteristic of magazines. Not only does the format of the magazine require as many "voices" as there are authors, but most provide room for readers to be heard as well; for example, today's Harper's regularly presents "forums" on controversial topics and continues the discussion on subsequent letters pages. Magazines a century and a half ago, while less likely to accommodate a heated debate, were on the whole more directly in touch with their readers, who often submitted manuscripts that editors— notably Poe and Sarah Josepha Hale of Godey's— would then critique in print. Even as editors like Clark and Willis established the "personality" of their publications, they provided a forum for dozens of other voices. That conversational element, which characterized the earliest (mid-eighteenth-century) English magazines, continues, on the letters page, at least, to this day.¹³

Periodicals, then, are not only multivocal but reader-interactive; and because of their periodicity, magazines can respond to readers' requests and demands, whether they publish them or not. Periodicity also allows magazines to maintain relationships with readers over time in a way that
books cannot. Jacksonian-era magazines offer countless examples, several of which involve the writers I study here: Poe challenging readers of Alexander's Weekly Messenger to concoct a cryptogram he could not decipher; Willis and Kirkland sending back "letters" from Europe to their readers in the New York Mirror and the Union, respectively; Child, similarly, achieving perhaps her greatest popularity with her "Letters from New York" in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, in which she discussed holidays, reform activities, personal philosophical concerns, and daily life in the city. The letters format makes full use of the immediacy and periodicity of the magazine; indeed, magazines were, and still are, much like letters by virtue of those two characteristics, not to mention their arrival by mail. Ultimately, subscribing to a magazine can be said to confer a sort of club membership: one assumes a common set of interests, possibly a common background--generational, socioeconomic, gendered, racial, educational--with the publisher and other subscribers. In fact, today such basic demographic information is presumed by advertisers who buy magazines' mailing lists (often to sell other magazines). Yet even as purchasing a subscription identifies one as a member of a group, the reading remains private, so that the magazine becomes a shared experience that requires no direct personal contact: an ideal form for shaping the modern consciousness.14
Of course, magazines have lost much of their cultural power in this century to film, sound recordings, and television, but their impact on life in the last century was profound, warranting the sort of theoretical attention I have hinted at in the last few paragraphs. I chose to limit my study to the years between 1825 and 1850 because during this time individual periodicals attained long enough lives and wide enough distribution to have an influence on American culture that at least approaches that of television today. Mott uses these same dates to mark "The Period of Expansion" in his history of magazines, pointing out that almost no literary magazines of the early twenties survived into the latter part of the decade, and that the few that did were gone by 1827 (343). In January of 1826 The Casket, the first of the "general" magazines that would dominate the field in the thirties and forties, began publication. Furthermore, by 1825 two of the four writers I study here had begun their careers as professional authors: Lydia Maria Child had just published her first work, the novel Hobomok, the previous year, and she would start a successful children's magazine, The Juvenile Miscellany, the next; meanwhile, fellow-Bostonian Nathaniel Parker Willis was publishing his first poems as a student at Yale. 1825 also serves as a convenient historical marker for broader cultural developments. The Erie Canal, which signalled a new phase of the
"transportation revolution" and helped to ensure New York's position as the country's publishing center, was completed that year. Charles Grandison Finney, who according to one historian forged "a pansectarian national faith that could sustain a Christian/capitalist republic," ignited a new wave of revivalism--emphasizing self-made salvation--with the first of his meetings in New York state. Moreover, 1825 began a quarter-century that historians have traditionally identified with Andrew Jackson and a greater democratization of American politics and social life.

Actually, while democracy in the narrow sense of voting rights expanded between 1825 and 1850, real economic and political power became more concentrated, a fact that serves as an ironic backdrop to much of the period's magazine writing.

The unprecedented expansion of magazines that began in the mid-1820s did not end with 1850, of course, but the business and character of mainstream periodicals underwent significant changes around that time: Harper's began publishing that year, ushering in more modern production methods, bringing serialization of novels to a new level of popularity, and forcing Godey's and Graham's, the two giants of the previous decades, to follow rather than lead. The popularity of serialization was part of the novel's resurgence in the second half of the century: magazines adapted, but they lost the central position the
Columbian editorial described.19 Furthermore, by 1850 each of the four writers I study here had completed a significant body of magazine writing: Poe, of course, died in 1849; Child and Kirkland, having edited periodicals in the forties, focused more on books in the fifties and sixties, writing only occasionally for magazines; Willis continued to edit the Home Journal until his death in 1867, but by the fifties he had stopped writing fiction altogether, and his fame had already begun to fade.

I chose these four authors, though, not only because their careers as magazinists fit well into the period I wanted to explore, but also because I see each of them as both representative and unique among writers of their time. By the same token, despite their having had certain experiences and accomplishments in common, their careers offer a number of interesting contrasts. All four were prominent members of New York literary society in the mid-1840s. Each of them knew the other three, in some cases very well. Poe and Willis sparred throughout their careers, yet Willis seems to have been among Poe's closest male friends and was one of his staunchest supporters during Poe's poverty-stricken last years and after his death. Kirkland's husband William worked with Poe and Willis on the Evening Mirror in 1844, and Caroline Kirkland and Willis were friends from the 1820s until her death in 1864 (he was one of her pall-bearers).20 Willis and Child
knew each other as young lions of the Boston literary world in the late 1820s; they would cross paths again much later, when Child edited *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) by Harriet Jacobs, who worked as the Willises' baby nurse and housekeeper from 1842 to 1861. In addition to maintaining personal ties, these four often crossed paths professionally, soliciting manuscripts for each others' periodicals and reviewing each others' books. Poe was probably the most insightful contemporary commentator on Willis's career; he also praised Kirkland's first book highly and later welcomed her contributions to the *Broadway Journal*. Willis praised Child's *Mother's Book* but ridiculed *The Frugal Housewife* for being "written for the lower classes." Child, like many of her contemporaries, considered Willis a case of wasted talent, though she confined that opinion to private correspondence.

Writing for many of the same magazines, often working in the same city, trying to appeal to roughly the same audience, these writers experienced similar challenges, and each of them complained about having to write for periodicals. Well-served as he was by the medium, Willis griped about having to write quickly and without revision; perhaps remembering Poe's metaphor, he described himself in one letter as a "prisoner" at the *Home Journal* office. Kirkland believed in the magazines' power to improve the taste and morals of their readers, yet she worried that
"these stupid stories [for Godev's], which I write from necessity are ruining my reputation as a writer."24 For Child, too, magazines represented reliable, though modest, income during periods when her husband was out of work, but her preference clearly seems to have been to write and edit books, for she abandoned the magazines for years at a time to work on her Progress of Religious Ideas and A Romance of the Republic. Poe's ambivalence over his career as a magazinist and the publishing business in general provides the subject of my fourth chapter.

Yet the limitations imposed by the "prison house" fostered a new literary genre that, I will argue, suited each of these writers' purposes. "The whole energetic, busy spirit of the age tended toward the curt, the terse, the well-timed, and the readily diffused, in preference to the old forms of the verbose and ponderous & the inaccessible," Poe told Charles Anthon in 1844, explaining why he had been "so far essentially a magazinist" and, implicitly, a writer of tales.25 Throughout this period articles that would today be classified as short stories appeared in magazines alongside essays on travel, short history lessons, memoirs, and editorials. These labels are my own; when tables of contents (which usually appeared only in bound volumes) were categorized at all, they distinguished only between prose and poetry. Some articles' titles or subtitles would provide at least a clue
as to their character ("A Fantasy," "A Tale Containing an Allegory"), but often these different forms blended, particularly in cases such as tales "founded on fact." While the point that short stories were the product of the magazine format is hardly a revelation, the specific ways short fiction developed warrant more consideration. A much fuller study of the early nineteenth-century short story would be necessary to draw definite conclusions, but the evidence I have gathered is suggestive: these four writers, at least, were attuned to the nature of the non-fictional "articles" that competed with their tales and sketches for readers' attention; to the lingering suspicion of fiction, particularly in the form of the novel, as a corrupter of morals; and, most importantly, to their readers' curiosity about American places and segments of the population with which they would normally have little or no contact. Given the brevity that the magazine format necessitated, these writers could provide only "glimpses" of various American subcultures. To a large extent, then, the "fragmentary" nature of short stories, sketches, and letters reflected the fragmentation of American society during this period of expansion and population growth. If white middle-class readers could have a peep at all these "others" who made up American society, they might get a clearer sense of their own position.
That curiosity of middle-class readers and these writers' efforts to satisfy it has shaped my approach to each chapter. In Chapter One I examine Willis's descriptions of wealthy New Yorkers and Saratogans, as well as their European counterparts, in his editorials, travel sketches, and stories. To associate oneself with "old money" was a risky project for a writer seeking mass appeal in a vociferously "republican" society, but Willis negotiated it by presenting himself as a hard-working editor (hence middle-class, like most of his readers) who happened to be an intimate of the American aristocracy. Moreover, as a literary "lion" he made himself an emblem of the very mythology of social mobility he helped to sell.

In the next chapter I focus on the short fiction of Caroline Kirkland, who appealed to an Eastern audience by sketching Western life in somewhat the same manner Willis offered encounters with established wealth. Kirkland dismantled the popular image of a relaxed life and easy money in the West but at the same time affirmed the more deeply-rooted myth that on the frontier the opportunity to achieve middle-class status was still available to all.

Quite differently from Willis and Kirkland, Child—the subject of Chapter Three—attempted to "normalize" minority groups who were usually represented as exotic, essentially different from members of the Anglo, protestant, male-dominated middle-class. Child risked giving her audience
what it did not want; she made Native Americans, African-Americans, Quadroons, immigrants, and fallen women centers of consciousness in her magazine fiction, repeatedly portraying their behavior as admirable by Christian, "republican" standards. In the last chapter I examine Edgar Allan Poe's satires, hoaxes, and reviews that "exposed" the secrets of the publishing business itself—alongside his efforts to succeed on any terms as a writer/editor/proprietor. Poe's predicament crystallized the dilemma faced by thousands of artists and artisans, oscillating between condemnation of the amoral practices he associated with the modern "business" of literature and attempts to promote himself through these very practices. I regard each of these writers as representative to the extent that others were also providing readers with "glimpses" of aristocracy, the Western frontier, slave and Indian life, and the modern business world; but at the same time Willis, Kirkland, Child, and Poe had personal visions of how they wanted their stories to affect readers, and unique strategies for achieving those effects.

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I have undertaken this project with the assumption that literary representations of American social and economic life participate in the historical processes they chronicle; as Fredric Jameson argues, "the literary work or cultural object, as though for the first time, brings into
being that very situation to which it is also, at one and the same time, a reaction." Recent examples abound. Reporter Mort Rosenblum, in his book *Who Stole the News?*, describes how public perceptions of international crises like those in Somalia or Bosnia-Herzegovina are limited by the self-delusion of government officials and network executives, which "runs so deep that even leaders lose sight of what is real. Images on television can reinforce misunderstanding. Satellites transmit messages direct from the middle ages." The same principle can be applied to popular fictional forms: in her recent study of made-for-TV movies, Elayne Rapping makes the point that these films are not merely reflections but "real-life events; they are public happenings around which major controversies are struggled over and negotiated. They participate in processes of social change, in a public sense, even as they affect us as viewers in our understanding and attitude toward issues and in our discussions and actions in other parts of our lives." However independent news divisions and film production companies might be, it is unlikely that the range of opinion and perspective they present will challenge the prevailing attitudes and beliefs of most viewers as determined by the programs' corporate sponsors. The weeklies and monthlies of the 1830s and '40s present a similar, if not perfectly analogous, case. Advertisers were not a major concern yet, but subscriptions--limited,
in the case of monthlies particularly, to those with at least average incomes—were.\textsuperscript{32}

While I have tried to avoid overdetermined analyses whose only purpose is to show the complicity of a given text in the perpetuation of the dominant ideology, my reading of these primary sources has impressed upon me how difficult it was (and still is) for a writer to challenge the "myths" that were forming the national unconscious without ultimately reinforcing them. This conception of myth, which I borrow from Jameson and Roland Barthes as well as cultural historians such as Edmund Morgan and Richard Slotkin, informs each chapter of this dissertation.\textsuperscript{33} "The very principle of myth," according to Barthes, is that "it transforms history into nature": beliefs or ways of seeing that uphold the power of a given group are accepted as "natural" by the population as a whole (129). The market revolution of the early nineteenth century brought about dramatic changes in how and where families lived, in what it meant for most people to "go to work," in how wealth was distributed; in order for those who were living in more crowded quarters and working longer hours for low wages to accept them, these changes needed to appear as a part of the progress of democracy, of the United States' "natural" development. Two myths in particular greatly influenced the writing and careers of the four authors I discuss: the belief in separate but
harmonious male and female "spheres," necessitated by a new social organization of work that took men out of the home during daylight hours; and the belief in what David Leverenz refers to as the "paradoxical possibility of upward mobility for everyone."34

Trying to discover what antebellum women and men really thought about gender remains one of the most complex and intriguing tasks of nineteenth-century historians and cultural critics. Barbara Welter's landmark essay, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," crystallized the concept that trapped nineteenth-century women into passive roles; but Welter's conclusions have been repeatedly challenged, at least as an oversimplification of women's activities during this period.3" Recently Laura McCall has examined the contents of Godey's, generally assumed to be a bastion of "true womanhood," and found that a majority of stories did not address such issues as women's piety and domestic ability, and that Godey's women did not generally fit the stereotype of "unsullied, sexless beings."36 Ronald J. Zboray's research into nineteenth-century reading habits indicates that men and women for the most part read the same books--contrary to the impression that women read fiction while men read treatises on science, politics and history.37 Meanwhile, studies by Nina Baym, Mary Kelley, Jane Tompkins, and others have shown that the most prominent women writers of the period did not regard female
roles as "passive" or secondary: they argued for more, not less, power for women and, in Stowe's case, imagined a matriarchal society. Meanwhile, female reformers had a profound influence on American society as a whole.

But while "domestic feminism" provided the groundwork for the women's movement in America, it posed little immediate threat to the power of commerce and patriarchy. In fact, as Sellers points out, reform movements were to a large extent an outgrowth of industrialization. Temperance, the area where reformers won their greatest victories prior to the civil war, was essential to the discipline employers demanded; crusades for better health and hygiene and against prostitution similarly promoted a class-based norm of self-restraint. Meanwhile the reform movement's noblest effort, the anti-slavery crusade, helped to defeat an institution that impeded capitalist growth.

And though women's literature of this period featured greater variety and more progressive ideas than most twentieth-century critics acknowledge, the conventions—often labelled "sentimental" or "domestic"—that provided most women writers with their power also limited their potential as social critics. Amy Schrager Lang argues that the "naturalizing and fixing of gender distinctions" was analogous to the supposed "harmony of interest [between, for instance, employer and employee] in the marketplace"; literary domesticity provided "an image of social harmony
founded not on political principles or economic behavior but on the 'natural' differentiation of the sexes."  
Women's fiction could argue that the values of women and the home should supplant the values of men and the marketplace, but to do so reinforced the myth of separate spheres that underwrote male power and privilege. Nonetheless, many men railed against the preponderance of women writers, dismissing them on the grounds that their fiction was morally suspect, that it failed by literary standards, or that the writers must have neglected their household duties. Not surprisingly, the debate over "literary women" found its way into the magazines, where male and female writers could be evaluated side by side. For example, in James Kirke Paulding's story "The Judgment of Rhadamanthus," published in the Southern Literary Messenger in 1836, a woman who bore six children and pleased her husband is sent to paradise after her death, while another woman who wrote six folios on politics and society is condemned to return to earth and "write books that nobody will read." Caroline Kirkland answered criticism of this sort in Sartain's several years later, arguing that critics exaggerated the number of "literary ladies" and that, contrary to the stereotype, women writers were in fact good wives and mothers. She went on to point out the contradiction in men's claims that literary women both neglected the running of the household and (along with
"bluestockings") sought to wrest "domestic government" from men: "Either literary women care about domestic matters or they do not. If they do, their employments cannot be objected against as interfering with exclusively feminine duties; if not, surely their husbands need not fear improper interference." Thus Kirkland defends women writers without challenging the myth of true genderhood; that sort of challenge would be put forth, however, by such early feminists as Lucy Stone, Sarah Grimké, and, as we shall see, Lydia Maria Child.

Along with gender ideology, a matrix of myths surrounding the "self-made man" and unlimited opportunity pervaded public discourse of the Jacksonian period and continues to inform American attitudes toward wealth and success to this day. As social and economic historians have shown, the "age of the common man" actually saw an increasingly unequal distribution of wealth and a closing of traditional means for advancement in trades. By the late 1820s, half of New York City's non-corporate wealth belonged to four percent of its population; between 1774 and 1860, the amount of total wealth controlled by the richest tenth of the national population would increase from just under fifty percent to seventy-three percent. In the decades that followed, waves of subsistence farmers and artisans became wage laborers; at jobs requiring fewer skills, their independence and (particularly for artisans)
opportunities for advancement dwindled. The possibility of going from rags to riches did exist, but as Edward Pessen reports, the great fortunes remained mostly in the families who had been wealthy for generations. Rags-to-riches stories, however, abounded in magazines and pamphlets, in some cases inventing humble origins for wealthy men. A "middle class" forged largely around the concept of upward mobility combined entrepreneurs, "white-collar" employees, and professionals; meanwhile manual laborers tried to identify themselves with their more prosperous fellow-citizens, to the point of appearing hypersensitive on matters of class and status to foreign visitors. In an 1844 tract the Reverend Calvin Colton described this "country of self-made men" as one "where men start from an humble origin, and from small beginnings rise gradually in the world, as the reward of merit and industry. . . . One has as good a chance as another, according to his talents, prudence, and personal exertions." As class became a "moral category," the doctrine that economic success was available to anyone who put forth the effort to attain it kept the wheels of commerce and industry turning, and led the majority of working people to identify their interests with those of their employers.

It was this broadly-defined middle class--the term itself came into use during the 1830s--that provided the
audience for Willis, Kirkland, Child, and Poe; yet at the same time, these writers and others were helping to define their audience as middle-class. The stories, sketches, and commentary of antebellum magazines provided readers with ways of seeing "other" Americans while situating themselves as the "true" Americans. And yet, when we examine the work of these individual writers, we see not a steady march toward provincialism and conformity but a complex response to a rapidly changing society. In both their stories and their professional lives, these four writers negotiated the myths and the realities of Jacksonian America. Indeed, their successes and failures are often reflected—or refracted—in their public writing. My title, therefore, refers both to the tales these four authors wrote for the periodicals and to their own stories, the "tales" of their careers in the magazine prison house. I believe that studying these tales—in both senses of the word—can expand our understanding of a turbulent period, its literature, and its legacy in American culture.
Notes to Chapter One


4 Historians and literary critics are beginning to examine these materials seriously. See, for instance, Zboray; also Cathy N. Davidson, ed., Reading in America: Literature and Social History (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); and Shirley Samuels, ed., The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).


6 Mott, 465-66.


13 Klancher points out that eighteenth-century English monthlies such as the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the *Universal Magazine*, the *Monthly Magazine*, and the *Edinburgh Bee* saw themselves as carrying on a democratic exchange of ideas. "Each journal offered itself as a tightly knit community of readers and writers who revolve between reading roles and writing roles . . ." (23).

14 Zboray argues that the railroads encouraged the sort of private reading experience I refer to here: "On board a train, passengers often spent socially empty, largely private time in the company of strangers, a period often filled with reading. The use of imprints to 'kill' time in this manner heralded a comportment of public disengagement that would become characteristic of modern American society" (xviii).

15 Sellers, 226.

16 Jackson received the most votes among four candidates, but did not win a popular or electoral majority, in the election of 1824. He lost the election to John Quincy Adams in the House of Representatives when Henry Clay, who finished third in the election, threw his support to Adams, supposedly in return for the Secretary of State appointment. Resentment over this "corrupt bargain" bolstered Jackson's popularity over the next four years, and he defeated Adams decisively in the 1828 election.


18 On the decline of Graham's and Godey's after 1850, see Mott, 553, 584, 587.

19 Charvat, Profession, 284.


24 Caroline Kirkland to Elizabeth S. Kirkland, 3 Sept. 1846, Letters, 100.


27 See Davidson, Revolution, for an analysis of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century concerns about the corrupting influence of novels; Tebbel and Zuckerman note that some magazines of this period tried to distinguish their fiction from novels because of the stigma novels carried (30).

28 Zboray discusses the importance of personal letters in maintaining community and personal ties during this period (110-21); the preponderance and importance of letters might help explain the popularity of the form in the magazines.


32 Yearly subscriptions for monthly or quarterly magazines generally cost either three or five dollars, which was three to five times the cost of a hardcover book. As Zboray reports, skilled white male workers usually earned about one dollar per day (11), making the cost of a year's subscription the equivalent of half a week's to a week's wages.


37 Zboray, 156-79.


39 Sellers, 126, 245-68.
Amy Schrager Lang, "Class and the Strategies of Sympathy," in *The Culture of Sentiment*, 129. Along the same lines, Ann Douglas argues that "[s]entimentalism provides a way to protest a power to which one has already capitulated" (*The Feminization of American Culture* [New York: Knopf, 1977], 12).


Sellers, 14-26, 237-41; on changes in the printing workplace, see Zboray, 6-9; see also Richard B. Stott, *Workers in the Metropolis: Class, Ethnicity, and Youth in Antebellum New York City* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990).

Pessen, 77-89.


Qtd. in Sellers, 238.
"BUTTERING CURIOSITY WITH THE OOZE OF MY BRAINS":

THE LITERARY LIFE OF NATHANIEL PARKER WILLIS

In January 1849 Holden's Dollar Magazine published A. J. H. Duganne's "A Mirror for Authors," a verse satire of several prominent poets. Having lampooned Bryant, Fitz-Greene Halleck, Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, and Poe, the writer turns his attention to a final target:

I almost passed by Willis--"Ah! mi boy!
Foine mourning! da-da!" Faith, I wish him joy--
He's forty-one years old,--in good condition--
And, positively, he has gained "position."

By mimicking a British accent and using expressions like "mi boy" and "da-da!" Duganne alludes to his subject's continental, aristocratic pretensions before pointing out that, unlike most American writers of his time, Nathaniel Parker Willis had "gained "position."

Duganne proceeds to satirize Willis's ornate language and genteel subjects before concluding that "Fate to his fame a ticklish place has given," that "Nat is a star--his works the milky way!"

Even more telling than the verse on Willis is the silhouette by F. O. C. Darley that accompanies it. There one can discern the identifying characteristics of the stereotypical dandy: tall beaver hat, upturned nose, bow around his collar, monocle on a chain, walking stick. But Darley carefully arranges the silhouette's contours so that at first glance Willis looks like a woman. The hair appears to be arranged in an enormous bun in the back; the
neck is long and slender; the chest puffs out roundly; the waist is impossibly slim; the skirt of his coat juts out in the back to suggest shapely hips; and though the legs are pantalooned, they seem too thin to be a man's. Darley made fairly explicit a conventional connection between "dandyism" and femininity in capturing (and contributing to) Willis's public image: a pretentious, effeminate writer who, because of those very qualities, has attracted enough attention to be considered a "star."

Although he was practically forgotten by the end of the nineteenth century and is known today mainly because of his association with Poe, Willis was probably the most popular magazine writer in antebellum America. As editor or co-editor of the *American Monthly*, the *New York Mirror* and its successors, the *Corsair*, and the enormously successful *Home Journal*, and as a freelance poet and story writer, he kept himself in the public consciousness for over three decades. Indeed, publisher Samuel Goodrich asserted in 1856 that Willis was "more written about than any other literary man in our history." Willis's appeal was based almost entirely on the persona Duganne and Darley satirized, although he also tried to present himself as a more traditionally representative American male, hard-working and self-made. Given his society's strict gender roles and anti-aristocratic sentiment, Willis faced a difficult task in presenting himself as working man who was
welcomed by the leisure class, as an American who seemed suspiciously comfortable in the palaces of Europe, and as a respectable author who also had a reputation as a dandy and a writer of sentimental lady's-book stories. But his strategy reflected shrewd insight for several reasons. In a literary market supposedly divided by gender, a writer who could appeal to both women and men without upsetting their respective codes of behavior would find himself in great demand. Furthermore, Willis appealed to the desire of laborers, managers, and entrepreneurs to experience vicariously the "corrupt" life of leisure that belonged to another class, all the while reassuring them that the social boundaries that separated that "higher" class from working Americans were surmountable. Finally, as a successful editor and writer he became "proof" of the very mythology of social mobility he helped to sell.

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Though Willis's parents were not wealthy or aristocratic, his was hardly a rags-to-riches story. Coming from a family of publishers, he had little trouble getting started in the profession; as a student at Yale in the mid-1820s he saw his first poems into print. In 1827, the year he graduated, he published his first volume of poetry, and in 1828 took his first job as an editor, for Samuel Goodrich's semi-annual The Legendary and his gift book The Token. These short-lived jobs prepared Willis for his
first important venture as a magazinist: editor, principal writer, and ultimately publisher of the *American Monthly Magazine*. In some ways the *American Monthly* resembled the elite English and American quarterlies such as the *North American Review*, given its size (about 22 x 14 cm), its uncolumned pages of unembellished text, and its rather long (usually about 5000-word) articles. But in other respects the magazine anticipated the style that the more popular monthlies like Graham's and Godey's would embrace in the next decade: a conversational approach to articles and editorials, and an emphasis on personal rather than public topics. While the demands on Willis, who wrote about half of the contents, must have been enormous, the pressure to generate copy gave him the opportunity to develop a literary persona that the reading public would recognize as uniquely his.5

Constructing that persona in the *American Monthly* and maintaining it throughout a long career required a careful balancing of apparent opposites. Magazines of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had presented themselves as "conversational" media, "portable coffeehouses";6 and yet Willis sought to identify the *American Monthly* with an individual voice. Of course, Willis did not write all of the material for his publication, but he was probably responsible for more than half—and most importantly, he wrote all of the section
entitled "The Editor's Table," which usually comprised twenty to twenty-five of the magazine's seventy-two pages. The Editor's Table was itself a miscellany of poems, readers' comments, and extracts from books and other magazines tied together by Willis's commentary. Willis perfected this casual, gregarious style, rhetorically gesturing toward readers and individual visitors to the editorial office, but his own voice predominated, making this "conversation" a virtual monologue. For instance, in the October, 1830, Editor's Table one Tom Lascalles visits the American Monthly office; Willis addresses some questions to him but never conveys Tom's responses. Similarly, in a sketch entitled "A Morning in the Library," the narrator introduces and talks to his cousin Florence but never lets her speak. Like the outside texts he included and commented on in the Editor's Table, these characters were foils who allowed Willis to adopt a conversational tone without actually having to engage in colloquy.

The fact that these silent partners included both men and women and that Willis openly courted readers of both sexes provided much of the basis for the popular caricatures of which the Duganne verse is a prime example. While evidence suggests that men's and women's literary tastes were actually quite similar, Jacksonian gender mythology still discouraged men from writing fiction,
despite the success of Irving and Cooper. Hawthorne complained that his countrymen could "anticipate nothing but evil of a young man who neither studies physic, law, nor gospel, nor opens a store, nor takes to farming"; more specifically, the light, conversational style Willis was perfecting in the American Monthly was, according to Fred Lewis Pattee, "considered a thing unworthy of a man's best powers, a feminine diversion to be tolerated like the fashions." Willis not only authored fiction but purposely wrote across gender lines and developed a literary persona whose affectations marked him as a "dandy":

Imagine yourself, dainty Reader, vis-a-vis to us, at this our Table. Place around you, to your own taste, (for we have a nervous habit of changing them constantly as we talk,) the Chinese Cupid, who carries our ink in his quiver—the velvet butterfly, on which we wipe our pen, (sent to us incog. by some satirical rogue,) the vase of Hungary water, in which (that instrument being near a sensitive organ of ours) we ever and anon steep the feather of our quill—the lovely miniature (no smiling Sir, if you please, she is dead—married, I would say) of the brightest creature under heaven, taken by ourself in pencil during church . . .

Willis cagily addresses first a "dainty reader" and then a "Sir," "creating" a mixed audience. More revealing, though, is his willingness to have the reader imagine the writer surrounded by such unmanly paraphernalia as a Chinese Cupid and a velvet butterfly. Ann Douglas has argued that Willis's writing, along with that of "Ik Marvel," Irving, and George William Curtis, "displays everywhere their fear of paternal condemnation," but here
and throughout the American Monthly Willis seems rather comfortable with this effeminate role. In another Editor's Table installment he defends a sentimental poem called "The Wish," sent to him, presumably, by a reader:

It is the fashion to abuse such poetry as that which follows—to call it puerile and girlish. It is not exactly the popular thing, therefore, to publish it. But we confess to a pleasure in such things—sometimes, and in a limited degree. . . . We believe there is refreshment and relief in changing from the grave to the gay—that we are no more effeminate for putting off our armour for the dance—that we may use the gifts of gracefulness and mirth which are given us by Him who does all things with proportion . . . "

The emphasis on the possession of expensive trinkets in the first passage and the reference to putting off armour for the dance in the second suggest the writer's sense of class while allying him with a female readership. Willis's critics—and his defenders—made that connection between upper-class pretense and femininity as well. His sister Fanny Fern (Sara Payson Willis Parton) characterized him as snobbish and effeminate in her autobiographical novel Ruth Hall; she gave her brother's character a flower—Hyacinth—for a first name and had him share his last name with a popular woman writer, Elizabeth F. Ellet. Jedediah Auld described Willis "chassaing or minuetting up Pine Street in a white hat which he shakes as if to the music if the minuet." Willis's defenders also associated his personal and stylistic "effeminacy" with the tastes or activities of a "refined" class and acknowledged these as
objectionable qualities. Rufus Griswold, for instance, admitted that "[a]t first sight he might seem to have written for only polished and fastidious tastes,—for a state of society in which an extreme cultivation borders on effeminacy and affectation; yet the strongest response to his genius is from the strenuous and busy world of excitement and action." Similarly, an anonymous writer in Graham's, who elsewhere proclaims Willis "the most accomplished writer of the age," regards his excessive "fineness of sense and feeling" as "the Dalilah of his taste," but explains that it is due "to the exuberance of youthful faculties, more to circumstances, and a great deal to the natural excesses of human temper, by which a man in pursuit of refinement may verge upon effeminacy." In this era homosexuality was an almost completely taboo subject, but Jacksonian society did not shy away from associating male effeminacy with such "un-American" forces as aristocracy, privilege, idleness, and the corrupt Old World in general.

One can only guess at the extent to which Willis "put on" this public persona; but why, at a time when public discourse was suffused with the egalitarianism and "true manhood," would he promote himself this way? As an editor, he must have been aware that the audience for most of the magazines he wrote stories for--his own periodicals as well as Godey's, Graham's, the Ladies' Companion, and others--
consisted of a mostly urban middle class that included members of the traditional professions (such as law and medicine), "rising" businessman, and an ever-increasing number of former artisans and farmers who were now wage-earners. Though the upper echelons of the new middle class were beginning to challenge the older generation of propertied gentry, in many cases the most successful new entrepreneurs had family ties to "old money." The lower portions of the "middle class," meanwhile, generally faced poorer living standards and longer work days. In fact, as Edward Pessen has shown, the rapid gains and losses of fortunes during the Jacksonian period were for the most part mythical, and the notion that this era brought about economic levelling runs counter to available statistics. "The underlying reality," Pessen concludes, "was strikingly unlike the surface equality so widely claimed. [Available data] establish that increasing inequality rather than equality was a central theme of American life during the 'era of the common man.'" Yet the rhetoric of equal opportunity achieved what Antonio Gramsci terms a hegemonic end: the laboring classes' belief that American capitalism could conceivably allow them to become rich led them to support the system by which wealth actually became more concentrated. Jacksonian political rhetoric denounced great wealth in its association with privilege or aristocracy, but not as a goal for the aspiring capitalist-
-which, in theory, included all participants in the system.\textsuperscript{22}

While one cannot claim to know how most working-class people felt about the rich in the 1830s, studies such as those by Richard Slotkin, Richard Hofstadter, and David G. Pugh suggest that the majority of "common men" accepted this dichotomy;\textsuperscript{23} since the wealth that had previously been restricted to a privileged few had become theoretically more available, the general public's fascination with the rich--old and new--must have grown significantly. Not surprisingly, then, "[Willis's] essays about the haut monde," according to Courtland P. Auser, "had the widest appeal among middle-class American readers."\textsuperscript{24} Willis contributed to their desire to know how members of the upper class lived by providing voyeuristic glimpses into New York mansions and Sarasota resorts--"buttering curiosity with the ooze of my brains," as he is said to have called it.\textsuperscript{25} Accordingly, his sketches for the American Monthly often centered on the lives of wealthy collegians like those he had known at Yale. In "Pencillings by the Way," "Notes upon a Ramble," "Leaves from a Colleger's Album," and "Letters of Horace Fritz, Esq.," Willis provides glimpses of a life that, when not occupied by scribbling, pencilling, or noting, consists of travelling, reading, visiting--in short, idling.\textsuperscript{26}
And yet, though Willis seemed to want readers to know that he associated with upper-class idlers, he was careful to distinguish himself from them. He often called attention to the work he did as a writer and editor, as if to show his own middle-class credentials. "[H]ere we are," he writes in the August 1830 Editor's Table installment, with the "devil" at our elbow, black as Erebus, waiting for the first sheet of this our last article—the beaded drops on our forehead of a month's work done in a week, and a heap of dingy notes addressed "Mr. Editor," from "Your's [sic] to command, the Printer," staining the delicate rose wood of our new pigeon holes, and haunting us like a monument of our three weeks' shortcomings.27

Willis often wrote from the Editor's Table about trying to work while being distracted by life outside the office: "One page more! That solitary cricket is hammering away upon his monotonous tune . . . the noise of closing shutters, and the locking of street doors has ceased, and the watchman drags his unlifted feet slowly and with a dreary listlessness over the pavement."28 Elsewhere he complains of the "dreary task[s] of proofreading, erasing, and correcting," "wearisome and eyeaching hours," and stacks of overlong manuscripts, and likens himself to a prisoner: "The fetter is upon our heel once more, however. Our table is before us."29

The story "P. Calamus, Esq.," which appeared first in the American Monthly in 1830, depicts an overworked, easily distracted editor, an image Willis probably intended as a
kind of self-portrait. Though the action is set some time before 1812, the circumstances and description of P. Calamus correspond to those of the American Monthly editor. He is introduced sitting at his desk, his office a more rustic version of Willis's own as described in the "Editor's Table," with "Some fifty unopened weeklies, dailys [sic], and other ephemera . . . tossed into one of its corners . . . a curtail dog sleeping on the bad poetry under the table." Though older than Willis, Calamus (the P stands for Patience) is also a bachelor, despite "the fact that he did not, like most of that unfortunate class, grow 'melancholy and gentlemanlike'" (120). The plot is set in motion when Calamus receives an anonymous note instructing him to meet a lady at a nearby tavern at noon. His mind races in anticipation, but while trying to dress for the occasion, he is interrupted repeatedly by business:

"Mr. Editor!"
"Sir!" (the editor was not usually so crisp, but he began to be alarmed; long-winded visitors are diseases to which the profession is subject)
"I have called"-----
"Yes, sir, I see you have!" (Mr. P. C. began to strap his razor violently.)
"I have called sir, as I said before, to request you to publish an account of my"-----
"Death?"
"No, sir!"----
"Abduction?"
"S'death! no, sir!"----
"Narrow escape?" (122)

The visitor explains that he has just become the father of four, though Calamus, half-listening, mistakenly notes, "'unfortunate man--four wives--sympathy of the public'"
The next two visitors come to flog him over a published insult and to read original poetry to him (respectively), but Calamus dodges the first with a written retraction of the offending article and the second by bolting from the office after the first canto. In the course of a rapturous meeting with the lady, the editor dies—apparently of excitement—upon learning her name ("A-e R-y-1," probably a reference to the Washington socialite and periodical writer Anne Royal). Despite this bizarre, literally self-effacing conclusion, "P. Calamus, Esq." reads like an "Editor's Table" passage transformed into a story, a satirical sketch of a magazinist at work. But it also casts the Willis persona in a humbler role than most of his editorials do, for here he literally lives at his place of business and is so busy dealing with the public that he can barely find time to shave (an appropriately masculine task to include in a workplace story).

At this early point in his career Willis actually was working hard and depending on his efforts as a writer and editor for his income, but he had already discovered the gambit that would serve him equally well when he had made his fortune: presenting himself as a writer with one foot in the "effeminate" world of aristocratic idlers and the other in the office, working long hours at the editorial desk. As we will see in Willis's later stories, he often placed his narrator on the fringes of high society: a guest
or a friend, someone to whom a story is told rather than an active participant. But with his next career move, Willis—following Irving and anticipating Henry James—took on the ideal role for positioning himself as an outsider who could move comfortably on the inside: the well-connected American in Europe.

Willis folded the American Monthly in July of 1831 to join George P. Morris and Theodore S. Fay as a co-editor of the weekly New York Mirror. Though his monthly had prospered in its first several months, subscriptions had begun to dwindle after its initial success, perhaps because Boston critics repeatedly scorned the editor for his magazine's "lightness."

The Mirror, ironically, had rebuked Willis as recently as March of 1830, accusing him of "conceited egotism, flippant arrogance, [and] mawkish sentimentality," but by September of 1831 reprints of his American Monthly sketches helped fill the Mirror's pages along with the newly added "Editor's Study," modelled after the "Editor's Table."

By reprinting many of Willis's old pieces, the Mirror quickly familiarized its readers with his personable style; meanwhile, a month after his co-editorship was announced, Willis set sail for Europe.

With the United States at peace with England and France, a competitive curiosity about governing systems, social customs, and technological developments escalated in
the 1830s. Francis Trollope, Harriet Martineau, Frederick Marryat, Francis Grund, Alexis de Tocqueville, and others would write books based on their American travels in that decade; Americans, for their part, were eager to see Europe, if only through the medium of print. The Mirror recognized this opportunity and paid its new editor five hundred dollars plus ten dollars per weekly letter. The investment paid off for both parties. The concept became so popular that by the mid-thirties the Mirror was publishing European letters from Fay and a third correspondent, William Cox, as well as Willis. The Mirror ran one hundred thirty-nine letters from Willis over a period of four years; according to Beers they "were read with eagerness in America, and Morris asserted that they were copied into five hundred newspapers" (116). The arrangement benefitted Willis even more than it did Morris: not only did it give him an opportunity to tour Europe, but it expanded his American audience, established an English following, and provided him with material for many short stories. It also enabled Willis to develop his descriptive style, which, along with the persona of the "professional aristocrat," became his trademark.

Writing long before photography could be reproduced in periodicals, and when engravings were popular but rarely well-integrated with magazine copy, Willis made the most of a keen eye for detail in writing his travel articles.
Despite the apparent effortlessness of his letters, his skill in making a scene vivid using well-chosen detail and comparisons to more familiar objects helps to explain the popularity of the series. In a typical letter he describes the Garden of Tuileries ("an idle man's paradise") and the beautiful French children he finds there:

You may stop a minute, perhaps, to look at the thousand gold fishes in the basin under the palace windows, or follow the swans for a single voyage around the fountain in the broad avenue--but you will sit on your hired chair (at this season) under the shelter of the sunny wall, and gaze at the children chasing about, with their attending Swiss maids, till your heart has outwearied your eyes, or the palace clock strikes five.35

Another letter from Paris describes a visit to the Pere la Chaise:

You will scarce get through it without being surprised into a tear; but if affectation and fantasticalness in such a place do not more grieve than amuse you, you will much oftener smile. The whole thing is a melancholy mock of life. Its distinctions are all kept up. There are fashionable avenues, lined with costly chapels and monuments, with the names of the exclusive tenants in golden letters upon the doors, iron railings set forbiddingly around the shrubs, and the blessing-scrap writ ambitiously in Latin.36

In addition to demonstrating Willis's flair for written detail, both descriptions assume familiarity and sympathy between writer and reader. What the reader ("you") might or will do is what Willis actually does. Furthermore, Willis's descriptive ability imitates his subjects in its lavishness, its excessiveness. He has no reason to hurry
through his grand tour or through his descriptions; his style calls attention to itself, often impeding the movement of the narrative. This expansiveness is even more noticeable in stories such as "Unwritten Poetry" and "F. Smith," which contain extended descriptions of natural surroundings that have little or no bearing on their plots. In the latter story, the narrator wonders "whether this description of one of my favorite haunts in America was written most to introduce my story that is to follow, or the story to introduce the description" (85).

Like a Renaissance painter depicting the material possessions that attest to the subject's status, Willis specialized in capturing the gaudy details that defined upper-class life. In the story "Mabel Wynne," for example, he begins by describing his heroine as "the topmost sparkle on the crest of the first wave of luxury that swept over New York" before guiding his readers into her father's home:

.. Miss Wynne was just announced as 'at home,' by the black footman, and two of her admirers made their highly scented entrée. They were led through a suite of superb rooms, lighted with lamps hid in alabaster cases, and ushered in at a mirror-door beyond, where, in a tent of fluted silk, with ottomans and draperies of the same stuff, exquisitely arranged, the imperious Mabel held her court of 'teens."

In this society heiresses such as Mabel--and in some cases bachelors, too--were themselves objects to be attained, a theme on which several of Willis's stories center. Two
paragraphs later Mabel is described in terms of an expensive ornament: "she looked to others like a specimen of such fragile and costly workmanship that nothing beneath a palace would be a becoming home for her" (203). In these stories of high society a beau is likely to be "faultlessly booted, pantalooned, waistcoated, and shirted," able to "trust his coat and scarf to Providence, and his hat to Warnock or Leary"; and the belles are "slight, delicate, fragile-looking creatures, elegant as Retzsch's angels, warm-eyed as Mohammedan houries, yet timid as the antelope whose hazel orbs they eclipse, limbed like nothing earthly except an American woman."39

While allowing him to hone the descriptive style that would distinguish his sketches and short fiction, Willis's European assignment provided him with a way to recast his bifurcated American Monthly persona in new terms: particularly in England, Willis would write as one who "naturally" fit in with the aristocracy yet remained—as he continually reminded his readers—an American and a "republican." In the first installment of "First Impressions of Europe," he describes boarding the ship in New York, where a Mr. Berrien "of the late cabinet" speaks "the last words addressed to me in my native land--'come back American!'"40 The line provides a novelistic foreshadowing, for Willis maintains an American point of view throughout most of the series. In his early letters
especially Willis describes natural scenery, buildings, and
customs in terms of their American counterparts; when no
such counterpart exists, he says so, or, in the case of the
French vingt-cinq-sous shops, wonders "that they are not
bought out, and sent over to America on speculation."41
Willis equates "our national character" with lack of class-
consciousness, in the process "naturalizing" the mythology
of the American middle class:

[D]iffering as the European nations do decidedly
from each other, they differ still more from the
American. Our countrymen, as a class, are
distinguishable wherever they are met; not as
Americans, however, for of the habits and manners
of our country, people know nothing this side of
the water. But there is something in the
American face, of which I was never aware till I
met them in Europe, that is altogether peculiar.
. . . As far as I can analyze it, it is the
independent, self-possessed bearing of a man
unused to look up to any one as his superior in
rank united to the inquisitive, sensitive,
communicative expression which is the index to
our national character. . . . The two are united
in no other nation. Nothing is easier than to
tell the rank of an Englishman, and nothing
puzzles a European more than how to rate the
pretensions of an American. I feel very proud of
my countrymen here.42

As we will see, Willis made more of that puzzlement in
several stories; in this passage and throughout the Mirror
letters he takes pains to position himself as a "true
American" despite his apparent comfort among European
aristocracy, just as he had insisted on his middle-class
credentials in the American Monthly. But despite the
patriotic tone of the above passage, Willis would have
trouble "coming back American" or keeping up appearances as
a typical inquisitive tourist. He travelled through Europe for almost five years, with long stays in Paris, Florence, Rome, Naples, and London. For most of this time he was a guest of European nobility, otherwise living on his pay from the Mirror and money he made writing stories for English publications. In a private letter from Italy he revealed,

I mean to make arrangements with the magazines and then live abroad altogether. It costs so little here and one lives so luxuriously too, and there is so much to fill one's mind and eye, that I think of returning to naked America with daily increasing repugnance. I love my country, but the ornamental is my vocation, and of this she has none.

Meanwhile, Willis became the object of rumors and controversy: one report that made its way to the U. S. had him married to the widow of a British nobleman and living in Rome. And though for the most part he was welcomed into the higher circles of English society, some members of those circles objected to his opportunistic project. Harriet Martineau, for one, complained that Willis pretended to know her much better than he did (having met her only once) and that he insisted on providing her with letters of introduction to prominent Americans he was not entitled to write. When the Mirror published a letter containing Willis's remark that "Captain [Frederick] Marryat's gross trash sells immensely around Wapping and Portsmouth," and that it "can scarcely be called
literature," Marryat retaliated in his own magazine, the Metropolitan:

He [Willis] makes invidious, uncharitable, and ill-natured remarks upon authors and their works; all of which he dispatches for the benefit of the reading public of America, and, at the same time that he has thus stabbed them behind their backs, he is requesting to be introduced to them--bowing, smiling, and simpering.

... Although we are well acquainted with the birth, parentage, and history of Mr. Willis, previous to his making his continental tour, we will pass them over in silence; and we think that Mr. Willis will acknowledge that we are generous in so doing. ... It is evident that Mr. Willis has never, till lately, been in good society, either in England or America."

The dispute escalated into Marryat's challenging Willis to a duel; though the duel never took place, the negotiations were played out conspicuously in various newspapers, Willis at one point sending the entire correspondence to the London Times." J. G. Lockhart likewise attacked Willis for publicizing private conversations, alluding to Americans' thirst for gossipy reporting of English manners:

We can well believe that Mr. Willis has been depicting the sort of society that most interests his countrymen. "Born to be slaves and struggling to be lords," their servile adulation of rank and title, their stupid admiration of processions and levées, and so forth, are leading features in almost all American books of travels that we have met with."

Insulting as it was, Lockhart's indictment of American readers suggests why Willis enjoyed great notoriety and steady work upon his return to the U. S. in 1836; disputes with English authors were more likely to increase his domestic readership than to diminish it. Lockhart's
assessment contained a germ of insight into that popularity, in fact, for "servile adulation" was the flip side of self-righteous disdain for aristocracy, whether American or European. Willis continued to capitalize on those mixed feelings throughout his career, just as he capitalized on the publicity he gained through controversy.

Willis never settled permanently in Europe as he had planned, probably because he was never granted a diplomatic post (he did visit England again in 1839-40 and in 1845). But his popularity at home provided him with a steady supply of projects and a reliable market for his writing. In the late 1830s and early 1840s he contributed the text for an illustrated book on American scenery and wrote two rather unsuccessful plays, but magazine writing and editing were still the mainstays of his career. In 1839 he and T. O. Porter established the Corsair, a weekly paper that, as its title suggests, pirated most of its material, flaunting its ability to do so in the regular editorial comment and in semi-regular columns entitled "The Mast-Head," "Minutes from the Log," "Plunderings by the Way" (an allusion to "Pencillings by the Way," one of Willis's signature titles) and "The Quarter-Deck." The editors' persistent references to the conditions of American publishing indicated that a large part of the Corsair's mission was actually to encourage copyright legislation, which Willis supported.
throughout his career. The Corsair failed after only a year, but Willis still had plenty of work, writing in the early 1840s for Brother Jonathan and its monthly offshoot the Dollar Magazine (which listed him as an editor), and from 1841 to 1845 for the Ladies' Companion, Godev's (which listed him on their volumes' title page as a "regular contributor"), and Graham's (which listed him similarly as a "principal contributor"). Meanwhile the New York Mirror folded in 1842, but Willis helped Morris revamp it as the New Mirror in 1843. Since Morris left most of the original writing in the early numbers to him, the New Mirror presented Willis with the same kind of freedom he had had with the American Monthly and, to a lesser extent, the Corsair: once again, he sought to establish a personal relationship with his readers--whom he proclaimed the "upper ten thousand"--through editorial writing as well as other features and stories.

By this point Willis had written most of his short fiction, almost all of which he would republish in book form in the late forties and fifties using the presses of the New Mirror and, later, the Home Journal. His stories resemble his letters and editorials stylistically and thematically: they bring readers into the world of the rich, whether European or American; their plots usually hinge on some confrontation between the working, "rising" middle class and the leisured upper class; and they feature
characters who embody the same social facility Willis laid claim to in the *American Monthly* and *New-York Mirror*, the ability to fit into the *beau monde* without actually being a member of it. In an early story entitled "An Inkling of Adventure," Willis suggests that his principal limitation as a writer is also his greatest strength. Its title—a typical one for Willis—accurately describes the fragmentary nature of the piece. A beautiful young woman, her father, and her brother take the narrator aboard their "fairy boat" for a day's voyage on Lake George. The woman requires that the narrator agree not to ask any personal questions, including their names, which of course frustrates him as he becomes more and more fascinated with her. Otherwise the sketch consists simply of the narrator's description of the near-perfect afternoon on the lake; no further "adventure" arises. Aside from the unusual premise and the direct quotations from the other characters, "An Inkling of Adventure" could be a passage from Willis's "Editor's Table." For example, he interrupts the narrative to comment on the writing process: "I think I am 'in' for a description. I don't very well see how I can let you off without it" (223). As he watches the woman of his dreams sail off, he concludes by consoling himself:

It is my lot in life—every thing comes to me fragmented and imperfect. I have encountered hundreds of these mere inklings of romance. Every stage-coach, steam-boat, canal—every hotel in a strange city gives me some beginning to an adventure. . . . I am a sort of travelling
Tantalus. I shall die some day of sheer wonder! (225)

Thus, through the narrator's characterization of his own perception Willis describes his craft as a writer. The narrator's regret over not being able to continue the romance can be read as Willis's acknowledgement that material for stories comes to him "fragmented and imperfect" and, implicitly, stays that way. Accordingly, the concluding sentences constitute an advertisement for Willis's editorial/fictional persona and the notion that "tantalizing" adventures result from his personal frustration.

Furthermore, the narrator/writer's personality and ability appear ideally suited for the requirements of the magazines. With fictional sketches like "An Inkling of Adventure," Willis inscribed into his public personality a natural disposition toward writing the short, amusing articles that made up most of the popular periodicals' contents. With the Tantalus image he suggested further a shared experience between reader and writer. Like the reader who receives--from writers such as Willis--only glimpses of the lives of aristocrats, Willis represents himself once again as a guest, someone who examines these fascinating lives from the outside and reports on them to middle-class readers. Similarly, the narrator of a typical Willis story is merely a listener or a companion to another young male protagonist. In "Love and Pistols," "Flirtation
and Fox-Chasing," "Those Ungrateful Blidgimses," "Getting to Windward," and "The Ruse," the narrator merely introduces a second speaker or retells a story told to him. In numerous other stories---"Tom Fane and I," "F. Smith," "The Cherokee's Threat," "The Female Ward," "Baron von Raffleoff, the Peddlar," "The Power of an Injured Look," "Mr. and Mrs. Follett; or, More than I Bargained For"---he is the protagonist's accomplice or friend.\

But whether as listener or sidekick or central figure, some variation of the Willis-like bachelor nearly always comes into play. In his European stories especially, Willis's heroes are likely to fit a pattern appropriate to a writer who proclaims his republicanism despite his fascination with aristocracy: they allow themselves to be taken for less prominent men than they really are, or in some other way they reveal the disparity between the aristocracy of title and the aristocracy of talent or sensibility. In "Miss Jones's Son," the title character, a renowned wit from London referred to as James S----, travels to Warwickshire with two letters of introduction---one to the Marquis of Headfort, whose home is James's real destination, and the other to a Baronet who is also an "ancient lover" of James's mother, the former Miss Jones. When he stops over at the Baronet's estate he is mistakenly referred to as Mr. Jones (since the Baronet knew his mother only by her maiden name) and treated by his host and the
host's daughter as an inferior; but he embraces the role and spends most of his evening entertaining the servants with his agile wit. The Baronet and his daughter have been invited to Lord Headfort's estate for a day-long social gathering, and they condescend to take James along (provided he rides with the servants), not realizing that he is Headfort's most anticipated guest. James makes his presence known to the party late in the day, after the Marquis has almost given up on him—thus embarrassing the social-climbing Baronet and his daughter. The story illustrates the difference between the "natural" aristocracy of wit and talent and the "artificial" aristocracy of title: although "Jones" is English, he represents a principle that lay at the core of Jacksonian ideology.

Other stories use disguise or mistaken identity as a device to make similar points. In "The Ruse," a wealthy college senior withdraws from school and becomes a private tutor to be near the woman he loves; eventually he triumphs over an arrogant suitor and marries her. The title character of "Baron von Raffleoff, the Peddler" also disguises himself in order to get closer to his forbidden lover (their elopement is aided by the narrator); and in "Those Ungrateful Blidgimses" the protagonist dresses as a nun in an effort to fulfill a promise made to a friend. In each case the scenario involves a man with high social
status passing for someone of lower social status in order to establish himself as a natural aristocrat. Elsewhere Willis's heroes prove their worth by choosing love over money. In "Beware of Dogs and Waltzing," Lindsay Maud forgoes an opportunity to court the beautiful and rich Miss Blakeney as he falls in love with the less dazzling and financially "dependent" Mabel Brown. As Henry Beers points out, Maud is one of Willis's most thinly veiled self-portraits. Beers conjectures

that the Surrey manor where the scene is laid is Shirley Park [the Skinner family residence, where Willis spent much time in 1835-36]; that its hospitable occupants, the Becktons, are in truth the Skinner family; that Mabel Brown, the heroine, is identical with Miss Mary Stace [who became Willis's wife]; and lastly, that Miss Blakeney . . . is a certain belle of fortune, who figures in Willis's private correspondence as "trotted out" by Mrs. Skinner for his inspection with a view to making a rich marriage." (278)

Mary Stace was not without means when Willis married her, and neither, as it turns out, is Mabel Brown. Lindsay Maud is rewarded for his integrity with the revelation that "Miss Blakeney had, long before, secretly endowed her adopted sister Mabel with the half of her fortune."56 The fact that Willis would give his fictional proxy a feminine surname is, perhaps, a way of flaunting his own reputation as he did by dressing the part of the dandy. More importantly, though, he identifies himself with someone who "deserves" to be wealthy because of his admirable
character, demonstrated by his ability to choose the "right" woman.

Willis typically portrayed women as "prizes" to be won by deserving males in this way, yet in at least two stories female characters possess the power to choose love over money. Like Lindsay Maud, Mabel Wynne is rewarded financially for choosing the more sincere Mr. Blythe over the more dashing Mr. Bellalure. (Willis conforms to the sentimental convention of allegorizing characters by giving them names and appearances that reveal their "nature": may-belle, win, blithe, belle-allure.) And Julia Hampson in "Born to Love Pigs and Chickens" happily abandons her elegant city life to become the wife of a simple farmer, though no unexpected wealth is revealed for her upon this decision. But regardless of the character's gender, this choosing love over wealth or status as a way of revealing one's natural claim to nobility is a trait usually associated with Americans in Willis's fiction. Both Mabel Wynne and Julia Hampson are Americans, for instance, as are the heroes of two other representative stories: "Brown's Day with the Mimpsons" and "Meena Dimity."

Set in England, "Brown's Day at the Mimpsons" features an American tourist who tells his story to the original narrator over dinner at the Traveller's Club. The first narrator introduces him as "B-----" but indicates that he will refer to him as Mr. Brown, linking him with other
admirable, straightforward characters (Mabel Brown, Brown Crash of "Meena Dimity") who possess that solid, earthy name. When Brown unwittingly passes a halfpenny for a sovereign, he sees in it a metaphor for social relations and proceeds to tell his story. Having made the rounds of the English aristocracy, Brown decides to choose randomly from his many remaining letters of introduction. The letter he picks leads him to a dinner party at the Mimpsons', where he finds himself distinctly unwelcome; Mr. Mimpson has not arrived yet, and his wife, a fourth cousin to a Scotch lord, takes Brown for a mere business acquaintance of her husband. Snubbed by Mrs. Mimpson, Brown spends most of the afternoon with a Miss Bellamy, who explains to him that his rude treatment is a result of his hostess's social ambitions and reveals to him an ambition of her own: to attend a dance at the exclusive Almack's ballroom. She also explains that the ulterior purpose behind this dinner is for Mrs. Mimpson to procure a voucher to Almack's for her daughter from another guest, Lady S----. Brown's cachet provides him with all the vouchers he wants, so he sends a messenger to another unnamed lady friend to bring them for Miss Bellamy and Miss Mimpson, "should she turn out civil and presentable." The latter is not even introduced to Brown, but that night after dinner, as Lady S---- is trying to avoid promising to
provide the cherished vouchers for Mrs. Mimpson, Brown overhears his name mentioned by Miss Bellamy,

who 'knew it was both wrong and silly, but she would give ten years of her life to go to one of Almack's balls, and, in a long conversation she had had with Mr. Brown on the subject that morning—

"'Ah!' interrupted Lady S----, 'if it had been the Mr. Brown, you would have had very little trouble about it.'

"And who is the Mr. Brown?" asked Mrs. Mimpson.

"The pet and protégé of the only lady patroness I do not visit,' said Lady S----, and, unluckily, too, the only one who thinks vouchers great rubbish, and gives them away without thought or scruple.'" (380)

At this point Brown appears and, after seeing the Mimpsons' embarrassment, promises vouchers for them as well as Miss Bellamy and her younger sister. He and Miss Bellamy now "carry on the war, weekly, at Almack's, and nightly at some wax-light paradise or other" (380).

Brown is not offended by Miss S----'s characterization of his patron and himself because he knows it to be true; as a representative American he too thinks vouchers great rubbish. Yet, like Willis, and in turn Willis's readers, he is fascinated by this formally stratified society and especially by life at the top of it. His being taken "for a ha'penny with the Mimpsons" though he is a "sovereign to the Bellamys" (380) is meant to demonstrate the artificiality of English social classes and the natural aristocracy of the American who succeeds on his own merits (which appear to be wit and charm). Furthermore, Brown's
generosity—like the earlier Tantalus image—suggests Willis's project as a sketcher of aristocratic life: just as Brown provides Miss Bellamy with an evening among the most fashionable society in England, Willis gives his magazine readers glimpses of that same society, as well as its American counterpart. As if to sanction these voyeuristic experiences, almost without exception the theme of these stories is the artificiality of social class.59

By contrast, "Meena Dimity" explores a small-town American class skirmish. Brown Crash, the stage agent of a town called Slimford, achieves enough wealth and fame to make himself the ideal match for the Harriet Dyaper, daughter of the town's snobbish leading family. Crash arouses the Dyapers' expectations, leading observers to believe that he and Harriet will be engaged, but instead he chooses the less pretentious but better-natured Meena Dimity. After a public brawl with Harriet's cousin, Crash delivers a speech in which he attributes his actions to republican convictions:

I wished to achieve distinction and return to my birthplace; but for what? Do me justice, gentlemen. Not to lord it in Sassafras street. Not to carry off a Dyaper with triumphant elation! Not to pounce on your aristocratic No. 1, and link my destiny with the disdainful Dyapers! No! But to choose where I liked, and have the credit of liking it! To have Slimford believe that if I preferred their No. 2, it was because I liked it better than No. 1. Gentlemen, I am a republican! ... I want the liberty to choose.60
Though the story is named for her, Meena becomes simply Crash's illustration of his republican "liberty to choose," while Crash is the story's underdog hero who brings down the family that tries to maintain artificial class boundaries in a republican society. And once again, Willis uses obvious names to define character "types," "meaner dimity" being plainer fabric (middle as opposed to upper class), and "diaper" suggesting infantile or self-centered behavior. For the significance of the name "Crash" we may look first to Brown's job as a stagecoach driver; but Willis, with uncharacteristic irony, creates another sort of crash by reporting finally that "Mr. Brown Crash is now a prominent member of the legislature, and an excessive aristocrat" (136). With that one sentence Willis brings down his republican hero and undermines the message of his story. The true ambition of the middle-class natural aristocrat, he implies, is to hold a title and become an artificial and "excessive" aristocrat. There is an element of self-parody, then, in "Meena Dimity," for by embracing the notion of a natural aristocracy—and representing himself as a prime example of it—Willis simply replaces one form of exclusivity with another. Like Poe, Willis ultimately believed in aristocracy but wanted it to include people like himself as well as, if not instead of, those who were born into it.61

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Willis's journalism, his stories, and his career exemplify the contradictions that shaped class consciousness in the Jacksonian era. Just as Brown Crash sought both high moral ground and elevated social standing, Willis promoted himself as both a representative American and a lover of Europe; as a hard-working man on the make and an idler; as a male author who could work in the didactic, "sentimental" mode associated with popular women writers. His wide appeal suggests that the nascent but rapidly growing middle class also felt the pull of these dichotomies and envied Willis's ability to move freely from one side, or one "sphere," to another. Still, many male writers ridiculed him for overindulging his European/upper-class/feminine tendencies, which were reflected, they claimed, in his style. James Russell Lowell's portrayal of Willis in "A Fable for Critics" is, in this respect, even more telling than Duganne's:

There's Willis so natty and jaunty and gay,
Who says his best things in so foppish a way,
With conceits and pet phrases so thickly
o'erlaing 'em,
That one hardly knows whether to thank him for saying 'em;
Over-ornament ruins both poem and prose,
Just conceive of a muse with a ring in her nose!62

The fact that this "over-ornamental" style was perceived to be "feminine" must have stemmed from a belief that "masculine" writing does not call attention to itself as writing; rather, it simply describes action or conveys
opinion. As Lora Romero has shown, for early-nineteenth-century writers the "book of nature" read by Cooperian heroes was equated with masculinity, while "verbal prosthetics," mere representations, were associated with the feminine. Unlike, for example, Cooper, Poe, and Irving, Willis rarely grounded his fiction in legend, history, or science, or supported its veracity with scholarly footnotes; instead, he referred frequently to the "writtenness" of his texts, whether fictional or not.

Willis's failure to conform absolutely to the ideals of Jacksonian masculinity in his appearance and his writing cost him the respect of many of his male peers and helped consign him to footnote status in American literary history—but it did not diminish his popularity as a magazinist. His dandyism, like his disputes with other literary figures, aroused interest in him, which was as important as—if it was even distinguishable from—arouses interest in his articles. As William Charvat makes clear, during this period not only did literary works increasingly become articles of commerce, so did writers: "Authors' names were brand names; to be sold, goods must be promoted." In 1846 Willis capitalized on this popularity by launching yet another periodical, the Home Journal (originally named the National Press), with his longtime partner George Pope Morris. Consistent with Willis's
career-long attempts to bridge contradictions, the **Home Journal** was a "mammoth"-sized weekly, a format generally used by the cheapest distributors of reprinted fiction (a year's subscription was a relatively low two dollars), and yet the editors repeatedly insisted that their intended audience was a class of "refined individuals." The **Home Journal** proved to be Willis's greatest success as a magazinist, lasting 34 years past his death in 1867. His name--and the style and persona it stood for--were saleable enough that Willis could fill the pages of his paper with his thoughts on any subject; he wrote primarily about current events in New York and about life at his estate, Idlewild. According to Beers, "A sympathetic public was interested in Willis's kindly prattle about his landscape gardening, his tree planting, the deluges in his brook, his children, his horses and dogs . . ." (331).

In his "Literati of New York City" essay on Willis, Edgar Allan Poe described his friend and former employer's literary project as accurately as any of Willis's contemporaries:

At a very early age Mr. Willis seems to have arrived at an understanding that, in a republic such as ours, the *mere* man of letters must be ever a cipher, and endeavoured, accordingly, to unite the éclat of the littérature with that of the man of fashion or of society. He "pushed himself," went much into the world, made friends with the gentler sex, "delivered" poetical addresses, wrote "scriptural" poems, traveled, sought the intimacy of noted women, and got into quarrels with notorious men. All these things
served his purpose—if, indeed, I am right in supposing that he had any purpose at all."

As Poe observes, Willis understood the "non-literary" (or "extra-literary") aspects of becoming a literary figure better than any magazinist of his day. That fact earned Poe's admiration but also incurred a resentment that surfaces in some of Poe's fiction. The narrator of "Lionizing," based largely on Willis, becomes a celebrity and a darling of high society because of the size and shape of his nose. I would argue that Willis is also an explicit target of "The Literary Life of Thingum Bob, Esq.," in which the title character becomes a celebrated writer not by writing well but by energetically embracing such extraliterary endeavors as arousing controversy and engaging in intramural literary battles as a magazine editor. Thingum concludes his autobiographical essay by insisting, "Look at me!--how I labored--how I toiled--how I wrote! Ye Gods, did I not write? . . . What I wrote it is unnecessary to say. The style!—that was the thing."

Willis's ability to negotiate the obstacle courses of Jacksonian republicanism and true genderhood may have captured the imagination of his readers; but ultimately, by writing his own success story, he helped to underwrite the myths that supported an increasingly undemocratic class system. His stories revealed the pretensions of aristocracy, but the protagonist who exposed these pretensions was always a "natural aristocrat," a
representative of the new-money bourgeoisie or an artist like Willis himself: the conflict never took place between, for instance, a wage-earner and a financier.  

Furthermore, Willis allied himself with his middle-class readers (with whom his ongoing "conversation" took place) despite his close association with English nobility and American wealth. "You are an invited guest, dear reader! Pray walk in!" he beckons in the story "Beware of Dogs and Waltzing" (385)—but the illusion of accessibility masks the long odds of a real invitation. By presenting himself as a "republican" who had gained the privilege of moving among various segments of society, Willis reinforced a myth that became more vital as the social organization of industrial capitalism made real economic mobility less feasible. Willis struck it rich in the "magazine prison house" through a kind of confidence game: by tirelessly selling the image of himself as a successful writer, he became one. His ingenuity and talent made him a model of mobility, but for the most part it was a model his readers could follow only vicariously.
Notes to Chapter Two


2 Mott concurs that Willis "may be called the first great American magazinist" and attests to his popularity (495-96).


4 For more information on Willis's family background, see Henry A. Beers, Nathaniel Parker Willis (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1885), 1-30; for more on his early career as a poet while at Yale, see Beers, 47-50, and Courtland P. Auser, Nathaniel Parker Willis (New York: Twayne, 1969), 20-21.

5 In his letters Willis often complained of the hard work involved in running the American Monthly. For example, he wrote George Pumpelly (in either 1830 or 1831; the only date given is "Jan"), "We get up slowly, & I think, improve—but it is too hard work, for me, & though I will persevere till I can do better, yet if a money-bag would make love to me, I would burn the Editor's Table & sink the quill incontinently" (Columbia University Library). See Auser, 23-24, on Willis's development of his literary persona in the American Monthly.

6 Klancher, 23.

7 Beers estimates that Willis wrote about half of the material for the American Monthly (83). The "Editor's Table" first appeared in the fourth number of the American Monthly, July 1829; it ranged from 17 to 32 pages in length, with an average of 22. Slight variations of the Editor's Table concept were a prominent feature of general magazines of the period. The Knickerbocker and Godey's also featured "Editor's Tables"; Graham's called its editorial department "Editor's Easy Talk." In the 1850s Harper's multiplied the editorial departments with not only an "Editor's Table" but also an "Editor's Drawer" and an "Editor's Easy Chair."


10 "The Editor's Table," American Monthly Magazine 2 (1830): 270.


15 Rufus W. Griswold, Prose Writers of America (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), 484.

16 "Our Contributors.—No. XI. Nathaniel Parker Willis," Graham's 25 (April 1844): 148, 146. Samuel Goodrich, in Recollections of a Lifetime, "defends" Willis similarly: "His style is certainly peculiar--and is deemed affected, tending to an excess of refinement, and displaying an undue hankering for grace and melody--sometimes sacrificing sense to sound. This might once have been a just criticism, but the candid reader of his works now before the public, will deem it hypercritical" (268).

17 Sellers, 251-52. See also David G. Pugh, Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood, 1983) and Leverenz, Manhood and the American Renaissance.


20 Pessen, Riches 43.


24 Auser, 147.

25 Beers, 305.


30 "P. Calamus, Esq.," *American Monthly Magazine* 2 (1830): 119. Other stories by Willis present more debonair versions of the hapless bachelor, notably "Mrs. Passable
Trott" (New Mirror 1 [1843]: 161-62), and "The Inner Chamber" (Godey's Lady's Book and Ladies' American Magazine 27 [1843]: 118-20).

31 Pattee, 79. Willis wrote to his friend George Pumpelly on March 29, 1829, "My magazine goes on flourishingly and I see no obstacle whatever to my enjoying $3000 a year from this date. Subscribers pour in from a distance every day . . ." On June 15, he wrote to Pumpelly again, "The subscription so far exceeds my warmest anticipations. At the second number we had 500, which is enough to pay all the expenses & give me six or seven hundred dollars even if it stopped there" (Columbia University Library).

32 New York Mirror 7 (1830): 287.

33 Frances Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1832); Harriet Martineau, Society in America (London: Sanders and Otley, 1837); Frederick Marryat, A Diary in America: With Remarks on Its Institutions (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1839); Frances Grund, Aristocracy in America (London: Bentley, 1839); Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (London, 1840).

34 Algernon Tassin reports that the letters were "so popular that they were copied from the Mirror into hundreds of city and country journals" (The Magazine in America [New York: Dodd, Mead, 1916], 132). According to Kenneth L. Daughrity, they won Willis "international fame . . . he achieved, for an American abroad at that time, an unparalleled social and journalistic triumph" ("Poe's 'Quiz on Willis,'" American Literature 5 [1933]: 56). See also Beers, 104.


39 "Count Pott's Strategy," Fun-Jottings; or, Laughs I Have Taken a Pen To, by N. Parker Willis (New York: Scribner, 1853), 305; "Tom Fane and I," Fun-Jottings, 144.

40 New York Mirror 9 (1832): 220.
The Dollar Magazine (January 1841–December 1842) was a monthly spinoff of Brother Jonathan; both were published by Wilson and Company. Mott describes Willis as a "contributing editor" (360n); according to Beers, Willis "had a quasi-editorial connection" with both periodicals (260). Tassin reports that in 1842 Willis was paid $100 for one article per month by four separate magazines, probably Godey's, Graham's, the Ladies' Companion, and the Dollar Magazine.

Auser, 54-55, 58-60.


In his introduction to Inklings of Adventure, Willis suggested that the fragmentary nature of his sketches was linked to their basis in actual experience: "The dramas of real life are seldom well wound up, and the imperfectness of plot which might be objected to them as tales, will prove to the observant reader that they are drawn more from memory than fancy" (viii).


Fun-Jottings, 314-28; "Mr. and Mrs. Follett; or, More than I Bargained For," Godey's 24 (1842): 55-58.

55 "Miss Jones's Son," Ladies' Companion 16 (1842): 260-64.


60 "Meena Dimity, or Why Brown Crash Took His Tour," Graham's 23 (1843): 136.


64 Willis's reputation faded quickly after his death in 1867. Significantly, Fred Lewis Pattee praises Willis but attributes his "failure" to "namby-pamby sentimentalism, and romanticized travelogues, and 'hurry-graphs'" (Development, 88). And in describing his move to New York, Tassin writes that Willis "decided to take his dolls and leave home" (131).

American poets of the time, five hundred dollars for the right to publish her name as associate editor of the Lady's Book, a post that carried with it no real editorial duties (The Sentimental Years: 1836-1860 [New York and London: Appleton-Century, 1934], 136-37). For his part, Willis clearly wanted his name to stay in the public consciousness. For example, once when he was ill he wrote to his partner Morris, "I shall stop my regular letters, but shall send you weekly two or three columns of gossip under the head of Idlewild Every-[-?] or Gossip over books, papers and correspondence. This will keep me sufficiently 'before the people,' while I write my novel--if I can" (undated, Berg Collection, New York Public Library).


67 Edgar Allan Poe, The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 1145. In 1829 Willis not only rejected one of Poe's manuscripts but wrote about burning it in the American Monthly (I [1829]: 586-87). Poe apparently retaliated by lampooning Willis in "Lionizing" and "The Duc de l'Omelette" (Richard P. Benton, "Poe's 'Lionizing': A Quiz on Willis and Lady Blessington," Studies in Short Fiction 5 [1968]: 239-44; Daughtrey, "Poe's 'Quiz on Willis'"), and possibly "The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether" (Richard P. Benton, "Poe's 'The System of Dr. Tarr and Prof. Fether': Dickens or Willis?" Poe Newsletter 1 [1868]: 7-9). Later Poe worked for Willis at the Evening Mirror; he also reviewed Willis's play "Tortesa the Usurer" (praising it but concentrating almost exclusively on its faults) in 1845 and wrote about him in the Marginalia and Literati series. In the Marginalia, Poe referred to Willis as one of the five or six "good conversationists" he knew (Graham's 32 [1848]: 24). Willis solicited aid for Poe in the Home Journal in 1846 and defended him in print after his death in 1849. Mabbott points out that "Thingum Bob's narrative reflects the experiences of many editors and proprietors" (Collected Works, 1124).

68 Thus, as Charvat demonstrates in his discussion of American Renaissance writers, "intramural class warfare" overshadowed the more fundamental conflict between labor and non-labor (Profession, 66).
CHAPTER THREE

THE LESSONS OF THE WEST:

CAROLINE KIRKLAND AND THE MYTH OF THE FRONTIER

The depression brought on by the Panic of 1837 was not widely discussed in the popular magazines of the period. Understandably, monthlies and weeklies devoted to "literature, wit, and sentiment" left the reporting of "hard news" to the daily papers. At the same time, however, publications such as Graham's, Godey's, and the Knickerbocker did reflect and, in turn, help shape their readers' responses to the economic and social changes brought on by the depression. For example, magazines catering to Eastern, urban readers published numerous poems and articles describing life in the Western territories in idyllic terms, presenting a hopeful alternative to unemployment or factory labor in the East. Unfortunately, too much confidence in the value of Western land, along with too easy credit, had been a leading cause of the panic, which eventually devastated the region; in Michigan alone, farmers owed Eastern creditors more than five million dollars. But the new territories and states continued to multiply their populations: Michigan's, for example, increased sevenfold between 1830 and 1840. Though the influence of the periodical press on this migration is impossible to calculate, the popular "middlebrow" magazines did their share to keep the promise
of the West in the public consciousness. In an essay celebrating the publication of a volume of Western poetry, for instance, the United States Magazine and Democratic Review boasted:

That that glorious West of ours, laved by its thousand streams that pour the tribute of their wealth into the bed of their own mighty "Father of Waters," is destined ere long to become the seat of a population and wealth, with their natural accompaniments of literature, art, and science, before which the pride of our past and present superiority must soon be forced to bow, we know full well; and hailing the approach of that day, we would speed the course of time that is to bring it round."

Similarly, writers such as James Hall, Timothy Flint, and William Darby contributed—in both books and magazines—to this glorification of the West as a land of opportunity.

Among the "magazinists" who responded and added to this heightened interest in the West was Caroline Kirkland. Unlike most writers of the 1830s and 1840s, Kirkland had her first success with a book of previously unpublished material rather than in periodicals; A New Home, Who'll Follow? (1839), written under the pseudonym Mary Clavers, combined elements of memoir, fiction, travel narrative, and social commentary in its description of a Michigan community making the transition from frontier to post-frontier settlement. She sought to debunk the misleading, romantic portrayals of the West that had predominated in popular fiction while still encouraging readers to make it their "new home," and contemporary reviewers and book-
buyers appreciated her candor. The success of *A New Home*, which appeared just as the effects of the Panic hit the Great Plains region, allowed Kirkland not only to publish a follow-up, *Forest-Life* (1842), but also to sell sketches and stories to various general magazines and republish them later in book form. In fact, she had little choice if she expected to make much money as a professional writer, since remuneration from book sales was meager and unsteady.

Though her Western sketches and stories resembled *A New Home* and *Forest Life* in subject matter and theme, and probably reached a demographically similar audience, their placement in the *Knickerbocker*, *Graham's*, and the *Gift* required writing strategies different from those of the books. Most obviously, the stories' plots had to be self-contained and condensed. "I think I have discovered that the bent of my genius is altogether towards digression," Kirkland wrote in *A New Home*; but the demands of the magazine format would not allow for quite so rambling a style. And like all short story writers, Kirkland would be forced to deal with the problem of having less space in which to develop a narrative persona. But perhaps the most interesting problem she faced in sketching the West for various magazines stemmed from the fact that in 1843 the Kirklands' economic and social circumstances became discouraging enough that they left Pinckney, where they had lived for six years, and moved to New York City.
Consequently, these stories find Kirkland trying to reconcile her cynical, myth-debunking impulse with an equally strong tendency to depict the West as it was typically portrayed in the mainstream magazines, as the promised land of Jacksonian democracy.

This tension in Kirkland's magazine writing is related to another one: her anti-fictional sentiment coupled with her desire to entertain readers with her storytelling. Kirkland's ambivalence toward fiction was partly cultural, for even as late as the 1840s a longstanding opposition to fiction as a corruptor of (mostly young women's) morals persisted, though such resistance was weakening. In fact, Kirkland occasionally satirized or denounced literature that served no instructive purpose: reading romanticized fiction leads her characters to run away from their parents in *A New Home* and in her story "The Blighted Heart," and in her essay "The Art of Dreaming" it leads to nightmares. Of course, she published at least thirty stories herself--some partly fictional, some entirely so--though hers nearly always illustrate some moral truth (as does most of the mid-nineteenth-century fiction now labelled "sentimental"). Kirkland also had personal reasons for seeing the truth-content of writing as a crucial issue. Explaining to Graham's editor Rufus Griswold why she wanted to publish some of her contributions anonymously, she wrote, "I shall
probably never write any thing as amusing as my first effort, because I accomplished that under the assured belief that the author would never be discovered."  
Kirkland explains in her second book that she felt forced to change her approach, to generalize her characters and subject matter and to present them under the "saving veil of acknowledged fiction" because her neighbors in Pinckney, Michigan had been offended by her portrayal of them in A New Home. But that veil, she admits, is very thin: "That my views are drawn from real life need not be doubted, when it is considered that a very monotonous course of daily cares, such as falls to the lot of most housekeepers in this region, is not likely to brighten the inventive faculties, or to give wings to the fancy." Indeed, Kirkland's inclination to expose false or overly romanticized representations of the West in favor of straightforward, personal accounts persists in Forest Life and in most of her Western sketches for Graham's, the Knickerbocker, and others.

But the actual truthfulness of Kirkland's descriptions of Western life is less crucial to understanding her career than is her insistence on the essentially non-fictional nature of her writing. Even when she admits that her stories are embellished, she makes it clear that they are not merely invented: "Real occurrences are introduced, but fancy and general recollections furnished the warp into
which such scraps of truth are woven--characteristic correctness being the only aim." In "Bitter Fruits from Chance-Sown Seeds," a tale strange enough to cause readers to doubt its veracity, she explains that the facts of the case came to her from a friend but were supported by a newspaper article he sent her. Toward the story's end the narrator intrudes to assure her readers that "We shall not venture to give a fictitious conclusion to this story of real life." Like many other writers of her time, Kirkland occasionally uses authenticating devices such as footnotes and explanatory introductions to first-person narratives. "Ambuscades and Sorties," for example, contains one note explaining that a certain character's improbable yarn "was taken down from his own lips" and another directing the reader to a well near Detroit similar to one described in the story. Kirkland also skillfully blends essays with stories; sometimes she begins with several paragraphs of reflection on the value of work or the changing of the seasons before shifting to the narrative mode, so that the reader is inclined to approach the story as a continuation of the personal essay.

By pointing out Kirkland's various means of emphasizing the truth behind her stories and the accuracy of her representations, I do not mean to suggest that these devices are artificial contrivances. Unlike Poe, who uses similar rhetorical strategies as a trick or a challenge,
Kirkland seems concerned mainly with making her stories more meaningful to her audience than mere fictions would be. According to her own accounts, she began writing *A New Home* because she realized that descriptions of her experiences interested people back East. Her letters to family members and publishers convey the same ingenuousness with regard to her sketches and stories that her literary persona does. In a letter to Carey and Hart she expressed her belief that "Sketches from real life and character always prove taking to the public," adding that the title character of "The Schoolmaster's Progress" is "a real personage, and the main incident is from the life too." Our awareness of the ultimate fictionality of any narrative notwithstanding, we can conclude that Kirkland based her Western writing on her own experiences and that she emphasized the fact because it made her writing more authoritative in a moral/utilitarian sense and more valuable in an economic sense.

Indeed, Kirkland was widely read and fairly well paid in the early 1840s because Eastern urbanites were impressed with her credentials as an actual settler and by her refusal to romanticize her subjects. Kirkland's first forays into magazine writing, in fact, were with the self-consciously metropolitan *Knickerbocker Magazine* in 1840. The *Knickerbocker* was already taking a keen interest in Western history and sketches: alongside articles of local
interest such as "Limnings in the Thoroughfares" and Geoffrey Crayon's sketches, there appeared "Sketches of a Trip to Lake Superior," a series on "The Romance of Western History," Peter Von Geist's "Reminiscences of Life in the West," and Western tales by "Ned Buntline," James Hall and Albert Pike.19 Judging from its contents and contributors, The Knickerbocker was geared primarily toward men;20 it included more nonfiction than Godey's or Graham's, its fiction (of which there was still plenty) was less likely to focus on romantic intrigue, and there were no fashion plates or music. Yet Kirkland was one woman writer the magazine was proud to feature; from the editor's table Willis Gaylord Clark welcomed "Mrs. Mary Clavers' (author of that spirited and original work, 'A New Home, Who'll Follow?') as a regular contributor to the KNICKERBOCKER."21 Since the Knickerbocker began publication before the Kirklands moved West from New York, Caroline probably would have been familiar with it; perhaps because this magazine featured less of the "sentimental" fiction associated with women writers than its competitors, Kirkland's Western writing for it could be best described as essays and brief sketches rather than fully-developed tales.

The Knickerbocker sketches exemplify Kirkland's promotion of Western exceptionalism, a mythology through which life in the West is regarded as fundamentally different from life in the East, Eastern cities having
become the new "Old World." And yet, paradoxically, Western life becomes a synecdoche for the American experience, representative of a larger American exceptionalism. Richard Slotkin describes the nature of this frontier myth: "The completed American was therefore one who made his fortune and his character by an emigration, a setting forth for newer and richer lands; by isolation and regression to a more primitive manner of life; and by establishing his political position in opposition to both the Indian and the European, the New World savage and the Old World aristocracy." The West is thus the source of hope for American society as a whole, just as America, in both Puritan and Jacksonian thought, is the source of hope for Western civilization. Even today the myth of the agricultural Midwest as the "real" America (the "heartland") persists.

In "Harvest Musings," which appeared in the Knickerbocker in November 1842, Kirkland first sets the life of the Western farmer apart from that of the Eastern urbanite and then suggests the continuity between "our forefathers" and the Western settlers. She establishes the foreignness of the West to the East first by explaining that a different vocabulary is used by Michigan harvesters, defining the terms "rifle" (whetstone) and "cradle" (a tool that lays grain in even rows) for the uninitiated. By way of discussing the harvest, she observes that "There is no
part of the year when the difference between city and
country views and habits is more striking."\textsuperscript{23}
Specifically, the obsession of city-dwellers with staying
cool, "killing the sultry hours," contrasts with the
farmer's more vigorous means of adapting to the heat:

The citizen who finds it difficult to sustain life
at this season, even with the aid of baths and
ices, may be curious to know how the wretched
being whom necessity forces to labor under the sun
of August, endures the burden of existence; how
often he seeks the cooling shade; what drinks
moisten his parched throat; by what means he
contrives to fan his burning brow. Fear nothing,
oh! sympathizing reader! Save thy sensibilities
for a more urgent call. This is a world of
compensations. The labourer has neither shade,
nor punkah, nor lemonade, nor even ginger-beer.
He may get a drink of buttermilk occasionally; but
the sparkling, ice-cold spring supplies his best
beverage, and in place of all thy luxuries he
lives in a perpetual vapour-bath, of nature's own
providing . . . He would die on thy sofa. (421)

Thus the implicit moral superiority of the Western
laborer is validated by his better health: he would "die on
thy sofa" because "you" (the city-dweller) are living in an
unhealthy "modern" environment. This passage conveys a
nostalgic image even to readers who have never harvested
crops: thanks largely to writers such as Jefferson and
Crèvecœur, clearing and farming one's own land had become
recognized as the quintessential American occupation, and
the simplicity and naturalness Kirkland associates with
these activities makes that agrarian myth all the more
attractive to Knickerbocker readers. "Are we wiser than
our forefathers?" she asks rhetorically in proposing the
harvest-home (425). The question is addressed directly to fellow-Westerners, who feast but do not observe a holiday after the harvest; but to the New Yorkers who constituted the primary readership of "Harvest Musings," it suggests that those Americans who are engaged in this traditional agrarian activity are the "founding fathers'" true spiritual descendants. The final sentences of "Harvest Musings" take the tone of a jeremiad addressed superficially to her neighbors (guilty only of not taking time out for a holiday) but actually written for an Eastern reading audience: "Has the nature of man so changed that all this has now become unsuitable? Does he really eschew pleasures, or have his pleasures assumed a darker character?" Such questions must have struck a nerve with readers who saw the recent economic downturn as a sign of moral backsliding manifest in a national preference for speculation rather than "real" work. At the same time, the portrayal of the West as a "world apart" obscures the fact that seventeen years after the opening of the Erie Canal, the agricultural economy of Michigan and the commercial economy of New York were inexorably linked, the West providing raw materials for manufacture and export as well as a market for factory-made products. More importantly, the exploitation of Western land by Eastern speculators was making it more and more difficult for the
homesteaders Kirkland writes about to survive as independent farmers.  

The stories Kirkland wrote for publications geared toward both men and women usually involve not only Western exceptionalism but also love's triumph over the "old-world" obstacle of class. "Love vs. Aristocracy," which appeared in *Graham's Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine* in March of 1844, would have had obvious appeal to its readers' nationalism and their interest in courting and romance. The title nearly summarizes an entire subgenre of magazine fiction: Willis, Eliza Leslie, Emma C. Embury, and others routinely constructed plots in which a couple from different social classes overcomes the prejudice of the upper-class family and/or the challenge of an upper-class suitor. Adding the Western setting to this formula, Kirkland broadened the possibilities for satire: the pretensions of aristocracy could be made even more pronounced and absurd in the settlements than in a metropolis, and the peculiarities of Western customs along with the awkwardness of courting rituals suggested other comic possibilities. But most significantly, in stories like "Love vs. Aristocracy" Kirkland was able to tap into the myth of the frontier as a nurturing ground for a truly democratic society, one in which class constraints were mere vestiges of an older culture, doomed to extinction in
a land of equal opportunity. The rhetoric of Jacksonianism permeates the story from its first sentence: "The great ones of the earth might learn many a lesson from the little." Kirkland's narrator first discourses on the absurdity of country people (in this case, Westerners) trying to copy the manners and fashion of the town, then develops at length a metaphor of class privilege as an elixir that is sought and protected in various ways in Russia, England, and France. Meanwhile, in "our own country . . . We have denounced the fascinating gas as poisonous—we have staked our very existence upon excluding it from the land, yet it is the breath of our nostrils—the soul of our being—the one thing needful—for which we are willing to expend mind, body, and estate" (116).

The specific manifestation of frontier classism that Kirkland examines here is the stigma associated with young women working outside their own homes for pay. Persis Allen, "the best and prettiest girl among us," spins thread for Mr. Hicks and therefore is neglected by the local "leaders of the ton" who spin only in their own homes. The community's most eligible bachelor, George Burnet, becomes obsessed with Persis, but his mother, who represents "the very cream of our aristocracy," discourages his pursuit of her on account of Persis's presumed vulgarity. Mother and son clash over whether or not to invite Persis to a party honoring George's completion of his law degree; even though
George has his way, Persis, on the advice of Mr. Hicks, stays home. "If he [George] or his mother should meet you in the street, at B----, they wouldn't know you at all," Mr. Hicks tells her. "Don't go, Persis" (120). Outraged by Persis's absence, George leaves the party and rushes to the Allens' house, where Persis's father sends him away. Upon returning to the party, George drinks, becomes "quite stupid," and then suffers from a violent fever the next day. During his long convalescence he is attended, through his own insistence, by Persis, to whom he professes his eternal devotion, and by his orphaned cousin Cyprian, who lives with the family as a "heavy burden to Mrs. Burnet's pride" (118). Once recovered, George pursues his law practice, intending all the while to wed Persis. But at the same time, Persis and Cyprian establish a friendship: "They often encountered at sunset, when each was returning from the day's task; and it was perhaps from an idea that Persis' own youth had not passed without its trials and struggles, that Cyprian was led at times to be rather confidential on the subject of his condition and its difficulties" (122). Specifically, Cyprian has been mistreated by his aunt and forced to become a schoolmaster; his only chance at "escape" from that position is to clerk for his cousin.

The story rapidly concludes when Mr. Hicks dies, leaving his estate to Persis, who had nurssed him during his
last days. Mrs. Burnet, who had reverted to snubbing Persis upon her son's recovery, promptly visits her and encourages the marriage she had formerly opposed; but Persis declines, realizing "even while Mrs. Burnet was speaking . . . that she was an heiress, and could do as she liked" (123). She marries Cyprian, who finds himself "irresistibly impelled" toward her farm house upon hearing that his aunt had visited her. Persis "felt satisfactorily convinced that Cyprian had long loved her, though pride and poverty would forever have sealed his lips, but for the rumour that she had decidedly refused a rich lover" (123). Like Willis, Kirkland has her heroine demonstrate her nobility by choosing a poor lover over a rich one, and she "rewards" the couple with a fortune, as if to suggest that wealth "naturally" falls to those who deserve it but do not covet it.

For most of "Love vs. Aristocracy," Kirkland's settlement town offers not equality of opportunity or prospects for social mobility but rather a pathetic imitation of Eastern classism. She even uses the word "democracy" ironically, to indicate the general population's support for class distinctions: George Burnet "was considered by the entire democracy about [Persis] to be so much 'above' her" (122). Elsewhere the habit of not responding to invitations is attributed to the "democratic privilege of going or staying away, without rendering
account to anyone" (120). But while the story's conclusion does not reverse Kirkland's criticism of transplanted snobbery, it does suggest that other forces at work in the West are capable of overcoming it. Persis and Cyprian succeed not so much because of their love (which the title would suggest) as because of Persis's inheritance, which comes to her as a result of her hard work and devotion to her employer. Likewise, her advice and support comes from Hicks (a farmer, as his name playfully suggests) and her father (a blacksmith). The story becomes one not so much of love versus aristocracy as of the industrious middle class versus the idle upper class: Persis, her father, and Mr. Hicks, who engage in physical labor, stand opposed to a woman of leisure ("not a wrinkle mars her smooth brow; not a gray hair mingles with the smooth brown tresses . . ."). [117]) and her son, a lawyer with political ambitions. In the middle is Cyprian, who is transformed by Persis into an independent farmer. Though the Burnets still exercise a regrettable influence on their community's social life, in their attempt to transplant old world caste into the territories they reveal themselves as not truly "Western," and implicitly not truly American. Within the framework of Kirkland's story, the future belongs to farmers and laborers like Persis and Cyprian.

Though Kirkland used this basic plot convention in most of her Western stories, she often departed from the formula
of true love overcoming class boundaries or added other plot elements that upstaged the romance. Some of her most interesting variations on the romance-plus-class conflict theme appeared in The Gift, an annual published in Philadelphia by Carey & Hart from 1835 to 1845. One of the most popular annuals (reaching a circulation of 7500 during its peak years30), The Gift contained material as varied as that of the Knickerbocker, though here women writers predominated. Perhaps for that reason, Kirkland sent longer, more fully developed stories to The Gift. In one of these stories, "The Bee Tree," she pits an impoverished, shiftless resident and a wealthy, snobbish newcomer against each other to illustrate two cardinal virtues essential to democracy: industry and humility. Silas Ashburn has stayed poor because instead of applying himself to regular work that will bring in money he spends his time trying to acquire food directly by hunting and fishing. "He cannot be brought to believe that Dean [a neighbor] has made more money by splitting rails in the winter than his more enterprising neighbor [Silas himself] by hunting deer, skillful and successful as he is. He will not notice that Dean often buys his venison for half the money he has earned while Silas was hunting it."31 Kirkland devotes the first eight paragraphs of "The Bee Tree" to describing the flawed economic theory of Ashburn, another feature of which is attributing his poverty to "bad luck." "Silas does not
get rich, nor even comfortably well off, although he works, as he says, 'like a tiger.' This he thinks is because 'rich folks ain't willing poor folks should live,' and because he, in particular, has always had such bad luck" (48). Ashburn's nemesis, the appropriately-named Mr. Keene, is not as fully described, but Kirkland makes clear that as a newcomer to the frontier he has yet to see beyond the stereotypical image of the poor—as a permanent underclass of likely thieves—that does not apply to Western society.

The story's central conflict involves a honey tree on Keene's property. Silas and his son, who find the tree on their way to clear land for Keene, claim it as their own. Silas has no real "right" to the tree, which is not on his property and which he has not truly "discovered." "'The Indians have been here;' said Ashburn; 'you see they've felled this saplin' agin the bee tree, so as they could climb up to the hole; but the red devils have been disturbed afore they had time to dig it out. If they'd had axes to cut down the big tree, they wouldn't have left a smitchin o'honey, they're such tarnal thieves!'" (54). (Kirkland points out the irony of Silas's characterization of the "red devils" in her next sentence.) Silas marks the tree with his initials and returns two nights later with his family, who have spent the interval recovering from ague and preparing troughs to hold the honey. When they
arrive the tree is gone, and they later learn that it was Keene who cut it down. Silas vows revenge in court, but Keene suspects that the bee-hunter is taking his revenge in petty thefts and becomes convinced that his foe intends more sinister action. In his dreams Keene sees Ashburn, "covered from crown to sole with a buzzing shroud of bees, trampling on his flower beds, tearing up his honey-suckles root and branch, and letting his canaries and Java sparrows out of their cages" (67). He wakes up from one such dream to find his kitchen on fire and at the top of the stairs "the dreaded bee-finder armed with a prodigious club" (68). Keene attacks Silas physically and verbally before it becomes clear that Silas, who had seen the fire while he was out coon-hunting, had come to help extinguish it. Not only do the two men put the dispute behind them, but Keene gives Ashburn "constant employment," which allows the former bee-hunter to improve his family's standard of living and even to contemplate a move farther West.

The story also includes a subplot involving Keene's niece Clarissa and her lover, whose name, oddly enough, is Charles Darwin. Though they help move the main plot at two key points--the Ashburns discover who "stole" their bee tree when Clarissa brings them a gift of honey, and the two lovers accidentally set the fire during a late-night meeting in the Keenes' kitchen--their story is nearly detachable from the one involving the landowner and the
bee-hunter. One suspects that Kirkland plotted "The Bee Tree" this way to appeal to both female and male readers, though whether her readers' interests were actually so divergent is doubtful. The union of Clarissa and Charles (after they overcome some unstated objections of Mr. Keene) provides romantic "delight." Meanwhile, the "instruction" results from seeing the formerly poor, irresponsible Silas Ashburn become steadily employed and upwardly mobile, with prospects of becoming a landowner, and from witnessing Keene's overcoming his arrogance, shedding an upper-class prejudice against the poor and participating in a more egalitarian society. The frontier thus provides a model for republican community: distinctions between rich and poor become less pronounced, and, as Crèvecoeur maintained, poverty proves a temporary condition for an industrious yeoman.32

In "Half-Lengths from Life," which appeared in The Gift for 1844, Kirkland again juggles love-interest with class issues, and again class issues predominate. Like "The Bee Tree"--in fact, like most of Kirkland's Western fiction--"Half-Lengths" is told in first-person by a narrator indistinguishable from Mary Clavers of A New Home. She begins by describing, in a chapter (the first of five) entitled "Operative Democracy," her difficulty in trying to procure domestic help for a family whose mother is suffering from ague.
The very small portion of our damsels who will consent to enter anybody's doors for pay, makes the chase after them quite interesting from its uncertainty; and the damsels themselves, subject to a well known foible of their sex, become very coy from being over-courted. Such racing and chasing, and begging and praying, to get a girl for a month! They are often got for life with half the trouble.33

After failing in her first few attempts to acquire a "girl" for the Larkins, the narrator visits the Cliffords, a transplanted English family who have not adapted well to the American frontier. Mrs. Clifford had increased her family fortune through banking ventures in the U. S., but since "the dark days" following the Panic she, her two daughters, and her son have been reduced to poverty. The son, Augustus, is looking for work in New York, but in the meantime the daughters have resorted to selling off silver while the oblivious mother wastes away. Though sympathetic to Mrs. Clifford, the narrator makes clear that "a high aristocratic pride was the soul of her being" (105). Having established the ways that pride keeps necessary work from being done and locks a family into poverty, Kirkland develops a plot in which the heroine, Anna Clifford, volunteers to work for the Larkins without her mother knowing, thus rescuing the Larkins, aiding her own family, and realizing for herself the value of working for pay: "The spending of that dollar [her weekly pay], Anna Clifford declared to me was the greatest pleasure she could remember" (110).
The story ends happily, as Mr. Percival, a businessman with legal training, is introduced in the fifth and final chapter: he helps to stall the Cliffords' creditors, then rescues a sick and destitute Augustus from New York, hires him to look after some western property, and at the story's end is poised to marry Anna. The Cliffords finally realize a long-awaited inheritance, but that windfall turns out to be only enough to provide them with a comfortable country home, so that Mrs. Clifford must adopt habits of "economy and good management" (120). This idealized conclusion takes some of the edge off Kirkland's criticism of idleness and pride; indeed, that seems to be its function. But the short-chapter structure allows for more than one concluding statement, and the end of Chapter Four provides a lasting instructive observation on Anna's behavior, which Kirkland portrays as exemplary. A would-be suitor, repulsed by seeing Anna working as a domestic, has just walked away, but the narrator remarks that "we must not complain, for his mystified look and manner at Mrs. Larkins' affords us a permanent income of laughter, which is something in these dull times; and I have learned, by means of his visit, that there is one really independent woman in the world" (116).

Just as Kirkland provides a model of female independence but then falls back on the convention of a male rescuer, she often both deflates and reinforces the myths of the frontier in the same story. Kirkland's
realism—in her first two books as well as in her magazine stories—cuts through the frontier myth of unlimited opportunity, a relaxed, easy life, and fast money. But even as she exposes these misconceptions, she affirms the more fundamental attractions of the frontier: while opportunity might be limited in terms of how much wealth an individual can attain without setting herself up for a fall, the opportunity that does exist is open to all who are willing to work and sacrifice.

This very message was delivered by Kirkland's husband William in an 1844 article for the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, "The West, the Paradise of the Poor." Invoking a conventional metaphor of masculine sexual conquest, William Kirkland argues that conditions in the West preclude poverty, that "in the new country the earth grants a free supply to all those who have strength and courage to take it from her bosom." Similarly, Caroline Kirkland represents the frontier as the place where the opportunity to achieve middle-class status is still available and where democracy functions in its purest form. This first feature is essential to the idea of the frontier as safety-valve, a rationale for continuing to industrialize back East. While it was true in the 1830s that land was available in Michigan and other territories, the need for a safety-valve was actually intensified by the use of that land: Eastern farmers were increasingly forced
either to move west or to take jobs in factories because of agricultural competition from the Western territories. For example, the New England "sheep craze" of the 1820s and '30s was supplanted by an Ohio "sheep craze" in the 1840s that drove thousands of wool producers in the Northeast out of business. Similarly, wheat and corn could now be transported from the lake plains cheaply enough that Eastern farmers could not compete."

Since Kirkland wanted to instruct through her writing, it seems logical to ask what lessons her readers—mostly New Yorkers and Philadelphians—might have gleaned from it. Obviously these stories convey information about Western society for people who might move there: not only manners and customs but also the larger impression that the only significant obstacles to success are one's own bad habits and inflated expectations of an easy life. But perhaps more importantly, those readers who stayed in the Eastern cities might see that even in the relatively undeveloped West individuals succeed when they display the same kind of work ethic required by the newly emerging factory system. For the most part Kirkland's West is not wild; it rewards not rugged individualists but those who work steadily and regularly, like model employees. As Slotkin points out, in the capitalist ideology of modernization "the styles, interests, and values of the new classes of entrepreneurs were to be defended against those of old aristocracies and
the peasantry" (33). Stories such as "The Bee-Tree" promote these new values, as aristocrat and peasant give up the traits that characterize pre-capitalist social relations and become employer and employee, to their mutual benefit. Silas Ashburn's conversion from an occasional laborer who would rather acquire his food directly than buy it into a steady worker for a single employer—a position that apparently will allow him to become a small landowner himself—exemplifies this process. Thus the myth of the self-made man in capitalist society and the myth of the West as "the paradise of the poor" conveniently merge, easier to demonstrate in the West, perhaps, but also applicable to the East, where factory discipline was changing the way people regarded work.37

As we have seen, stories like "Love vs. Aristocracy" and "The Bee Tree" affirm the image of the West as at least a potentially egalitarian society in which hard work and humility are the keys to success. But in other magazine tales Kirkland is much less optimistic about the West's rejuvenative power. The titles of "The Blighted Heart" and "Bitter Fruits from Chance-Sown Seeds" use farming metaphors to forecast their admonitory themes. In these stories the conflicts between the practical, provincial egalitarianism Kirkland associated with the West and the privileging of self over community through intellectual
development or some other individual pursuit go unresolved as characters who are torn between those opposed forces commit acts of violence. Here Kirkland participates in the tradition of literary warnings against the dangers of democracy, along with Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* and *Ormond* and Cooper's later novels: the "blight" and "bitterness" result as much from Westerners' equating democracy with conformity as it does from the sort of aristocratic pretensions Kirkland criticized in "The Bee Tree" or "Half-Lengths from Life." Furthermore, the sensational plots of "The Blighted Heart" and "Bitter Fruits from Chance-Sown Seeds" suggest that her personal ambivalence toward the West reflected a potentially violent cultural tension.

"The Blighted Heart," which appeared in *Graham's* in July 1843, criticizes Western provincialism and demonizes Native Americans within the parameters of a pious story that warns against leaving the farm. As an authenticating gesture, Kirkland introduces the story with a detailed, realistic sketch of its purported author, a recluse who had lived near the narrator's town. "His humble dwelling, constructed with little skill or care, and scarcely discernible in the tangled thicket, was situated upon a rough hill that rose with picturesque abruptness from the level plain; toward the town rocky and precipitous, but descending on the opposite side with a softer outline."
Having described the hermit's mode of living and the narrator's occasional contact with him, she reveals the existence of a memoir, "the short record of his own disastrous career, written apparently in a different spirit, and after he had ceased to `contend against God'" (2).

Though the basic structure is that of a fable, the hermit's story weaves together elements of realism, romantic adventure, and didacticism. In addition to learning not to trust "Indians" (an unusual sentiment in Kirkland's writing), readers are cautioned against pride, indiscriminate reading, and disrespect for parents. "My father had been a substantial farmer," the narrator begins, but as a young man the hermit becomes disdainful of farm life, largely because he becomes "intoxicated" by reading and learning. He turns to schoolteaching, finds true love with a woman he idolizes, and lives an idyllic life without giving a thought to his abandoned parents. Then the plot takes an unexpected turn when the schoolteacher befriends an "Indian" whom he recruits to work for his father-in-law. Upon discovering that his wife Margaret has had a fear of "Indians" since childhood, he instructs his friend to stay away from their house; after "Indian John" persists in coming to the house when the schoolteacher is away, the schoolteacher confronts and then strikes him. "Indian John" takes his revenge by kidnapping and eventually
killing the schoolteacher's wife; the schoolteacher, in turn, takes John's life. After he is cleared in court, the schoolteacher wanders off into the woods to dream of taking revenge on the entire "race"; he remains a brooding recluse for years before realizing the error of his ways and becoming a gentler, more domesticated hermit. He finishes his story by expressing his regret over offending his parents, suggesting that this sin is the ultimate source of his misery: "I know not when it was that I began to be a new creature; but I know that the first proof of it to my own conviction, was the longing desire to return to my parents--to throw myself at their feet, and ask their forgiveness of my early fault" (7).

As this bare outline indicates, the hermit's story is designed to illustrate the consequences of rejecting family and farm for supposedly higher pursuits, but it turns out to include a jumble of themes and plot elements, possibly reflecting Kirkland's own confusion. Early in the hermit's account, the difficulty of teaching at a rural school and overcoming provincial attitudes toward education becomes the story's focus; he recounts it with the same tone of exasperation Kirkland uses in A New Home and Forest Life. Describing the unwillingness of farmers to let their sons attend school and their unrealistic expectations for what the school should accomplish in return, he writes,

"I expect," said one sturdy father to me, "that now we've got sich a high-larn master, my
boy'll write like a copperplate afore the quarter's out;" and another, whose son spent a full month in committing the multiplication table, told me, he hardly knew how to spare him for three months, but he wanted he should "larn surveying."

(3)

Yet the story also contains a Coopersque adventure sequence (quite uncharacteristic of Kirkland), complete with a stereotypically over-proud and vengeful Native American character as the enemy. Twice the schoolteacher attacks "Indian John" and loses consciousness in the struggle; the second of these attacks, after John drowns Margaret, results in an act of uncontrollable violence:

I overtook him as he gained the opposite bank, grapled [sic] with him, and snatching his own knife, buried it into his heart. He fell dead, but my hatred still survived. I continued to plunge my weapon again and again into his abhorred carcase [sic], until my fiery strength failed, and I sunk exhausted and insensible upon the ground.

(7)

Becoming a man of action does not "regenerate" him (as Slotkin describes the paradigm of Westward movement); after killing "Indian John," he becomes an object of public sympathy and only fantasizes about following the path of such figures as Robert Montgomery Bird's Nathan Slaughter. At several points the hermit's "sentimental" outpourings of emotion are nearly as extreme as his vengeance and fantasies of further violence. "Have I--" writes the hermit, "the outcast of society--the disowned of Heaven--the companion only of the beasts that perish--have I ever been the beloved of Margaret--the pride of our parents--the
approved and applauded all within our little circle?" (4) And later, after describing his parting scene with his wife, he adds, "How often, since that dreadful day, have I stood again amid those fairy scenes, holding that dear hand in mine, and listening, as of yore, to that softest voice; then started from my broken slumber to solitude and wretchedness!" (6)

The hermit's character is thus harder to distill than those of most of Kirkland's Westerners. His willfulness, which in other stories takes the form of vice or snobbery, is associated here with reading and wanting to teach rather than farm. And while he is not an aristocrat in the manner of the Burnets or Mrs. Clifford, like them he rejects his community to pursue a more cultured life (and, ironically, rejects it again to live a less civilized life). The story's structure and the hermit's interpretation of the events would lead readers to see his rejecting the farm as the cause of his downfall; yet while Kirkland implicitly condemns him for that, she also criticizes the community he is at odds with for its narrow-mindedness toward education, a recurring theme in her Western sketches. Kirkland places her sensitive protagonist in a hopeless situation simply by placing him on the frontier: the anti-intellectual community, his own selfish impulses, and the supposed irrational savagery of the Native American overwhelm him.
Perhaps because of the story's lack of focus—curiously, Kirkland referred to it as "a very sentimental lovestory"—she did not include "The Blighted Heart" in her 1845 collection Western Clearings; in fact, it was the only Western sketch or story she left out. On the other hand, Kirkland specifically mentioned "Bitter Fruits from Chance-Sown Seeds" to her publishers Carey & Hart, asking that they include it in the collection because it was "of decidedly Western character, and little known." The story was "little-known" mainly because it had appeared in two installments in the ambitious but short-lived Boston Miscellany. The fact that Kirkland published one of her most unusual stories in an obscure journal outside the New York-Philadelphia publishing center where she was best known suggests a deliberate attempt to bury the piece, at least until the publication of Western Clearings. For once, she might have felt that her story's characterizations would find more sympathy in an older, more class-conscious society such as Boston's.

"Bitter Fruits" contains more than the usual number of assertions of its own truthfulness; the narrator insists on the reality of the events because she believes this is a case of truth being stranger than fiction. The story (which, like "Half-Lengths from Life," is divided into five short chapters) is in fact stranger and more dramatic than most of Kirkland's narratives. Beginning with the title,
Kirkland insists on the story's moral purpose, but the lessons are difficult to extract. As in other stories, she pits a less successful family against a more successful one, but here the villains are clearly the envious members of the former; thus the corrupting force is not wealth or an aristocratic taint but resentment. Julia Brand, the adopted daughter of the successful Coddington family, is led astray (while her foster-parents are out of town) by the daughters of a jealous neighboring family, the Blanchards. The Blanchard daughters poison Julia's mind against the Coddingtons and lure her first with flowers and "passionate and rather exaggerated" poetry, then tempt her with an effete unmarried minister who visits the family. Sophia, the older of the two Blanchard daughters, eventually convinces Julia to burn down the Coddingtons' house in order to free herself and live with the minister, Mr. Milgrove.

Though this story shares some important elements with "The Bee Tree," which also depicts a family consumed by resentment of wealthier neighbors, some important differences make "Bitter Fruits" more of a challenge to Jacksonian optimism. Here character and success seem predetermined: Julia's moral frailty is attributed to some "rough ancestry" embodied by her violent, impulsive grandfather, who is the subject of the story's first chapter. However, her "passionate and poetic energy" is
supposed to originate from some other genetic source. The Blanchard daughters, meanwhile, are "in every way inferior to Julia," implicitly because their father is a "bold, bad man." Rather than being a great leveller of social rank, then, the frontier seems to make clearer the constitutional differences in its citizens. The story encourages readers to identify with Julia, who is both prudent and rash because she grows up under easily distinguishable positive and negative influences. After the fire—which kills the Indian-hating grandfather—she emerges as something of a heroine mainly because of the heartfelt remorse she feels. At the same time, the grandfather's death symbolically frees her from that "rougher" side of her personality. Despite her conflicting impulses, Julia is essentially innocent, for Kirkland lays the blame squarely on the Blanchard daughters and their father. Indeed, when Allen Coddington sues Blanchard for the destruction of his property, the narrator describes his action as impractical but morally correct. Whether Kirkland was actually sticking to the facts of a real case or simply trying to make a point about justice in the territories, the narrator's sympathies are fully on the side of Coddington and the repentant Julia, despite the court's ruling against them.

Like "The Blighted Heart," "Bitter Fruits" has no morally culpable representative of the upper-class, and in
both stories the unique conditions of Western life tend to heighten rather than modify class-related differences. Like the earlier tale, in which the Native American is "naturally" savage, "Bitter Fruits" suggests that character is determined largely by one's "blood." Whereas in "The Bee Tree" the poorer member of the community was responsible for his own "bad luck" but still basically harmless, here the less successful neighbor is malicious by nature. And through her rash act Julia appears to give in to the Blanchards' influence only because she inherited impetuosity from her grandfather. Once again Kirkland invokes the theme of pride, but here she preaches not so much against pride itself as against its false imputation: "Once establish the impression that a man is guilty of this high offence against society, and you have succeeded in ruining his reputation as a good neighbor. . . . The cry of 'Mad dog!' is not more surely destructive" (235). To some extent Kirkland reins in her story's iconoclasm in the concluding paragraph: Coddington legally adopts the repentant Julia and turns defeat into a "complete though silent triumph" over the Blanchards by "let[ting] his reputation clear itself; trusting that the past and the future alike would be his vouchers to all those whose opinion he valued" (247). But even so no real change is required of the morally upright Coddington, while a conversion seems impossible for Blanchard. In this story,
as in "The Blighted Heart," Kirkland rejects the notion of the frontier's redemptive power and instead invokes a variation of the natural aristocracy myth that Willis had embraced, by which the equality of opportunity provided by the frontier validates existing social inequalities, proving them to be inherent."

Kirkland's use of competing myths about the West reveals mixed feelings, as does her tendency to deromanticize and at the same time further mythologize the frontier experience. But whether her sympathies lie with a "natural aristocracy," with young working women, or with reformed bee-hunters, she never questions the notion that hard work and humility are rewarded, and that equality of opportunity is the rule, at least in Michigan. Likewise, her realism deflates grandiose images only to replace them with new promises of success for those who are frugal and industrious, promises made all the more believable by the non-fictional tone of her sketches and stories.

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Kirkland's ambivalence toward life in the West is not surprising: on one hand, her experiences there provided her with a new career, but on the other, her family's prospects in Michigan dwindled soon after her initial success, and they were forced to move back East in 1843. The Panic of 1837 had had its effects; as Kirkland wrote in Forest Life, "Everything but the outpouring abundance of mother Earth
ill has dwindled and looked blighted since the great commercial revulsion which succeeded the land-mania" (30). More specifically, William's endeavors as a teacher, investor, and farmer were unsuccessful; Pinckney's future appeared dim when the nearby town of Dexter became the railroad terminus; and, as Kirkland indicates in her letters and in Forest Life, their neighbors became antagonistic after reading her portrayal of them in A New Home. William had emphasized the West's advantages for the poor in his article for the Democratic Review because "experience has shown us that none others can profit by it. Only to the poor man, who wishes to occupy and improve the land, is it a benefit" (189). Likewise, the region disproportionately rewards those who are uneducated but adept at manual labor:

We see so much that is the fruit of labor--bodily labor--that we are prone to think it can accomplish everything desirable, and, by a natural inference, to conclude that whatever it cannot accomplish is not desirable. . . . The score or two of Town offices fall as often to the man whose two hands are his all, as to him who has a head on his shoulders and knows how to use it. (188)

According to his own theory, Kirkland did not thrive in the West because he was not the kind of person whom "levelling" benefits--he was neither poor nor physically powerful.

Returning East after their Western experiment, the Kirklands opened a school in New York and took in boarders while Caroline continued to write for magazines and weekly papers such as the Broadway Journal and the Evening Mirror. After William drowned in a freak accident in October 1846,
Caroline struggled to support herself and four children, but she obtained steady work first as literary editor of a Unitarian weekly called the Christian Inquirer (a job her husband had just begun at the time of his death), then as editor of the general monthly Union Magazine of Literature and Art. In her introduction to the first number of the Union, Kirkland stated explicitly her belief in literature's social function and in magazines as the best medium for achieving "universal diffusion":

To elevate the intellectual and moral character of the people, is a work no less necessary and commendable, although far less showy; and this is the aim of the author and the artist. Magazines, though undervalued by the unwise, constitute, in a country like ours, a powerful element of civilization. Books are comparatively inert as to operation upon large classes of the community.

She then invokes the same military metaphor Poe had used in a Marginalia article the previous December.

[Books] may be compared with the heavy cannon, which require elaborate fixtures and much expense before they can be made available; while the magazine resembles rather the flying artillery, which follows up the chase, and does execution under the most unfavorable circumstances. Instead of becoming less popular in consequence of abundance, periodical literature is growing every day upon public favor, as the best possible means of disseminating information, and diffusing the principles of a correct taste. A late writer in Chambers' Journal, proposes that instead of leaving books in the store to be sought for, they should be sent from house to house, in order to insure the greatest benefit from them; and this is just what the cheap monthly magazines can accomplish. (2)

The choice of metaphor suggests that both Kirkland and Poe saw their work in the magazines not as catering to popular
taste but as opposing it in an effort to elevate it. But Kirkland, moreso than Poe, seems to have intended "taste" to apply to moral development and ultimately to the national character as well as improved appreciation for literature. Though it is important to keep in mind that Kirkland wrote the introduction in an effort to sell magazines, her proposal to send them from house to house sounds more like a community service project than a marketing strategy. Along with her indictments of frivolous reading in "The Blighted Heart," "Bitter Fruits," and other articles, editorials like this one express a serious concern regarding the cultural function of written texts.

Accordingly, Kirkland used the Union (which became known as Sartain's when it changed owners in late 1848) as a forum for her own commentary on topics ranging from author-worship ("Lion-Hunting") and "Literary Women" to "English and American Manners," "The Household" and "Summer Recreation." In these essays she upheld the same values--hard work, social equality, and personal sincerity--that she had tried to promote in her earlier stories about the West.50 Despite their admonitory tone, Kirkland's essays, like her earlier stories, are essentially optimistic concerning the United States' promotion of human equality. "Far from growing less democratic, we become every year more so," she writes in Sartain's. "For the first time
since the creation, is exhibited the spectacle of an equality almost Christian. The servant is as his master, and in truth is sometimes not a little disposed to change places with him."51

In the same essay Kirkland singles out the West in demonstrating how this levelling tendency makes Americans "a good natured and brotherly people": "At the West, if a man's house burn down, his neighbors immediately join and build him another; and not content with this, scour the country for forty miles round, if necessary, to stock it with comforts" (402). As this passage suggests, Kirkland continued to regard Western life as a purified sample of the American experience. A series of eleven Western sketches she wrote for the Union in 1847 and 1848, four years after moving to New York, similarly reinscribed the themes--and the ambivalence--of her earlier work. In Sketch No. 10 ("Forest Literature") she criticizes Western attitudes toward "book-larnin": Westerners' regard for the utility of a given practice leads them to respect basic skills, "But one step beyond these, opposition begins. That spontaneous Western question--'Where's the use?' always has the very narrowest utilitarian drift, and it is invariably in use when any refinement is proposed."52

Throughout the series, Kirkland attacks the "unopened mind's" proclivity for drinking, gambling, and litigating petty complaints. She expresses her disdain for the codes
of rugged frontiersmen, but once again, she tempers her criticism of Western attitudes by reminding readers of the West's glorious destiny: "To provide instructed teachers of literature and religion for the West, is giving to that land, blessed of Heaven, an opportunity of acquiring what is alone wanting for its perfecting." Furthermore, Kirkland points out that rampant litigation is a habit derived from the "Old World," and that education is not strictly a Western problem: "Let us not flatter ourselves," she concludes, "that the schoolmaster is wanted only at the West."

In this later writing the West retained its power for Kirkland as a microcosm of the United States: its vices--the anti-intellectualism of some settlers, the aristocratic pride and laziness of others--could be traced to the East (which for Kirkland meant the Northeast, though the South shared those traits as well), as could the virtues of generosity and social equality. But the West was a privileged microcosm: since it was just entering the post-frontier phase, its anti-democratic tendencies would be easier to correct. And, if its citizens learned from the mistakes of the Old Worlds of the Eastern United States and Europe, the West could preserve its "almost Christian" social equality. In doing so, of course, the region provided a text with which Kirkland could instruct her Eastern audience.
Though Kirkland had to work tirelessly as a writer and editor just to make ends meet, her craft was well-served by the magazines. Narratives that were neither fictional nor nonfictional, amusing stories based closely on real events, were ideally suited for publications like the *Knickerbocker* and *Graham's*, which wanted to be taken seriously and to attract readers with "sketches" of the exotic West. The article length made necessary by the magazines' format also worked well for Kirkland, whose books on Western life read more like series of stories and personal essays than continuous narratives. Finally, stories that realistically described home and community life in the territories were likely to attract readers of both genders. Kirkland's Eastern readers probably found her descriptions of dirty log houses and bouts of ague both fascinating and disconcerting, but they would have to go beyond her magazine writing to her book *Forest Life* to get much sense of the larger financial obstacles that emigrants to the West would face. Whether they had any personal stake in the West or not, though, Kirkland's readers were likely to have been reassured by the themes, if not the details, of most of her articles. Indeed, her realism deflates grandiose images but in doing so makes the promise of success for the frugal and industrious all the more believable. In a period marked by economic instability and increasing disparities between rich and poor, even as
perceptive a writer as Kirkland, who could reasonably be called the first American realist, ultimately reaffirmed the prevailing myths of equal opportunity and prosperity for all honest, hard-working people who were willing to go west.
Notes to Chapter Three

1 The phrase is from Atkinson's Casket, or Gems of Literature, Wit, and Sentiment, 1826-27 and 1831-39.

2 Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge, Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier, 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1982), 334. According to James Rohrbough, the Michigan of the 1830s was characterized by "motion, prosperity, optimism, easy credit, good markets, and the profound confidence in the future that was associated with Jacksonian democracy" (The Trans-Appalachian Frontier [New York: Oxford University Press, 1978], 233).


4 United States Magazine and Democratic Review 9 (July 1841): 24-25.

5 See William S. Osborne, introduction, A New Home--Who'll Follow?, by Caroline M. Kirkland (1839; Schenectady, NY: New College and University Press, 1965), 22-24, for a summary of the contemporary reaction to A New Home and several quotations from reviewers. [Caroline Kirkland], Forest Life: By the Author of "A New Home" (New York: C. S. Francis; Boston: J. H. Francis, 1842); Mrs. C. M. Kirkland, Western Clearings (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845).


Subsequent references to letters by Kirkland are to this edition.

10 *Forest Life*, 232.

11 *Forest Life*, 233-34.

12 *Western Clearings*, 28. This quotation comes from the introduction Kirkland added to the story "A Forest Fête."


15 Fred Lewis Pattee comments on this characteristic of early nineteenth-century fiction in *The Development of the American Short Story* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923), 42.


17 Kirkland to Carey and Hart, 6 March 1844, letter 31, *Letters*, 70.

18 Kirkland's letters written from Pinckney to Eastern editors and publishers reveal her business savvy at a time when magazine contributors were rarely well-paid (see Mott, 504-12). She turned down Carey & Hart's solicitation of an article for their annual volume *The Gift* in 1840, explaining that "As I am able to do better than this [about $25] with such articles as I find leisure to write, you will of course excuse my declining your offer" (Letter 8, p. 20). Similarly, upon forwarding an article to Rufus Griswold, then editor of *Graham's*, she asked "whether Twenty Five dollars is the highest price you pay for any article--and whether, in case I attempt to write for you, I am at liberty to make use of my contribution afterwards" (Letter 16, p. 35). Though surviving correspondence does not indicate what *Graham's* and *The Gift* eventually paid her, she claimed in a letter to Griswold that one of her articles was "such as I have had $75 for" and instructed him to return it if Mr. Graham would not accept it at that price (Letter 17, p. 36).

19 *Knickerbocker* 15 and 16 (1840). Other Western articles in the *Knickerbocker* from the early 1840s include "Mah-To-Khay To-Pah, 'The Four-Bears': A Tale of the North-
West" (1840), "The Mississippi" (1840), "Emigration" (1840) and "The Pioneers" (1841). The West was also celebrated in poems such as "The Wild West" (1839), "The Prairie Lake" (1841) and H. R. Schoolcraft's "The White Fish" (1840).

As late as 1842 only 10 of the 100 writers the Knickerbocker advertised as contributors were women.


"Harvest Musings," 425. Kirkland's other articles for the Knickerbocker combined essay and story, but their plots were never developed to the extent of her later magazine pieces. "Ball at Thram's Huddle" (15 [1840]: 325-31, her first Knickerbocker article) and "A Forest Fête" (Knickerbocker 17 [1841]: 276-80) are brief narratives whose main purpose is to describe Western social customs, though Kirkland does develop a love-interest between thinly-developed characters in the former. Her other Western sketch for the magazine, "Recollections of the Land Fever" (Knickerbocker 16 [1840]: 205-12), illustrates the animosity local inhabitants felt toward speculators in the mid-1830s. A member of a hunting party who needs a night's lodging is mistaken for a land-hunter by the farmer whose house he happens upon; the farmer and his wife treat him as uncivilly as possible until they discover the misunderstanding the next morning. Like many regionalist stories of the late-nineteenth century, "Recollections of the Land Fever" is a simple, comic sketch whose main effect is its portrayal of some defining local character trait.


See Billington and Ridge, esp. 334-36; and Dunbar, esp. 189-92.

As its title suggests, Graham's Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine attempted to appeal to readers of both genders. Its publisher, George Graham, had combined *The Casket* with *The Gentleman's Magazine* (edited by William Burton and Edgar Allan Poe) in 1841; his "new" publication preserved *The Casket*'s "Sports and Pastimes" series and its predominantly male roster of contributors. These outward signs of masculinity might have helped validate male
interest in the fiction that made up about half the magazine's contents. Graham's ultimately managed to have it both ways: though it was sometimes attacked by male critics for its "namby-pamby character" (Poe's stated reason for resigning as editor in 1842), it was one of the most successful magazines of the decade. See Mott, 544-55.


29 Kirkland's concern with class division being transplanted in Western society was warranted, according to Richard C. Wade in The Urban Frontier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959). See also Edward Pessen, Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics (Homewood, IL: Dorsey, 1969), 37-48.


32 Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur [Michel-Guillaume-Jean de Crèvecoeur], Letters from an American Farmer (London: J. M. Dent; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1912). The "voice of our great parent" tells the immigrant, "Go thou and work and till; thou shalt prosper, provided thou be just, grateful, and industrious" (68).


34 William Kirkland, "The West, the Paradise of the Poor," Democratic Review 15 (1844): 182.


39 Kirkland to Rufus Griswold, 20 February 1843, letter 21, Letters, 53; Audrey Roberts notes that "[t]he sentimental love story may be 'The Blighted Heart.'" Kirkland did include the story in her later collection Autumn Hours (1854).

40 Kirkland to Carey and Hart, 19 May 1844, letter 32, Letters, 71.

41 Edited by Nathan Hale, Jr., the Miscellany also published Willis, Poe, Channing, and Lowell in its fourteen months' existence. And though its writers were predominantly male, Hale dedicated his magazine to "the moments of repose of those whose bodies and minds have been, till then, taxed by labor; the hours of relaxation of the cultivated female mind, always awake to the refinements of literature and art" ("The Miscellany to Its Readers," Boston Miscellany 1 [1842]: 1).

42 See Pessen, Jacksonian America, 53, on class distinctions in Boston during this period.

43 When "Bitter Fruits" appeared in Western Clearings, Kirkland added an introduction that further emphasizes Julia's noble ancestry: "It seems natural," the narrator speculates, "to suppose that a soul which partook of the passionate and poetic energy of a Sappho, must have been moulded by no common lot" (206).


45 The association of a "natural aristocracy" with farming had great currency in the early national period, particularly in the South. During the Jacksonian era it could more easily be associated with "self-made men" whose "natural" talents brought them prosperity. Slotkin discusses the "natural aristoi" of the frontier in his chapter on Cooper in The Fatal Environment; he describes it as a belief that "the existing aristoi would 'breed true': equality in principle reproduces traditional inequalities in fact" (103).


47 William Kirkland apparently fell from a dock while trying to board a steamboat. His obituary in the Christian Inquirer 1 (October 31, 1846) includes the text of the funeral sermon, which describes the circumstances of his death. See also Roberts, xliv-xlv; and William S. Osborne,


52 "Forest Literature," Union 2 (1848): 212.

53 "Forest Literature," 212.
CHAPTER FOUR

"THOU WOULDS'T HAVE BEEN ALTOGETHER ANOTHER":

LYDIA MARIA CHILD AND THE POWER OF EMPATHY

But you will say that a true republic never can exist. In this, I have more faith than you. I believe the world will be brought into a state of order through manifold revolutions. Sometimes we may be tempted to think it would have been better for us not to have been cast on these evil times; but this is a selfish consideration; we ought rather to rejoice that we have much to do as mediums in the regeneration of the world.--Lydia Maria Child, to her brother Convers, 1835."

The March 1847 *Columbian* magazine opens with a brief essay entitled "The Fairy Friend," which personifies imagination in conventional terms--as a fairy who enlivens ordinary experience and makes art and literature possible. Those who know its author, Lydia Maria Child, as an abolitionist and reformer might be surprised by this apparently whimsical essay on the virtues of seeing "invisible agencies" and building castles in the air; but this short piece centers on an important element in Child's philosophy, her belief in a Swedenborgian, metaphysical unity that belies the disunities of the material world. Child writes in first person throughout, and since she had published two popular collections of personal essays in the mid-1840s, readers of the *Columbian* were likely to assume that she was writing about herself here as well. Twice in the two-page article Child describes herself as an outcast for clinging to her belief in the fairy. The first time she puns on her own name, as "those who had wandered away
from the fairy" sneer and say to her, "Fie upon thee! Wilt thou always be a child?" (97) The second time her opponents are more explicit:

Matter-of-fact persons shake their heads, and say, "What on earth does the woman mean? I never see and hear such things." And grave people raise their spectacles and inquire, "Can you point out any moral, or any use, in all this stuff?" "There is no sense in it," says one; "The writer is insane," says another; "She is an enthusiast, but we must pardon that weakness," says a third, more magnanimous than others. (98)

As if to illustrate these remarks, on the page opposite "The Fairy Friend" a fashion-plate depicts four women, elegantly dressed, all with their hair parted down the middle and pulled back, covering their ears. The three whose faces are visible smile slightly but with sad, sober expressions indicating little appreciation for Child's visionary excursions.

Child had reason to believe that such "matter-of-fact persons" found her use of the imagination threatening. In 1824, her first novel, Hobomok, had drawn praise for its emotional power and its depiction of Puritan Massachusetts but scorn for its sympathetic treatment of miscegenation.2 Hobomok proved a succès de scandale, but the more hostile reaction to Child's 1833 history and analysis of slavery, An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans, threatened to end her career as a popular author. By 1847 Northern public opinion regarding slavery had shifted enough that Child was a welcome contributor to
mainstream magazines like the *Columbian*, but as an ardent abolitionist and social reformer she remained controversial. Accordingly, the "magnanimous" critic in the above passage observes that Child's supposed insanity can be ascribed to her "enthusiasm," that is, to her tireless reform activity. As Karen Halttunen demonstrates, the emerging American middle class was nearly obsessed with the correspondence between appearance and reality (or the frightening lack thereof); thus Child's insistence that "there is nothing so real as [the fairy's] unrealities," combined with her readers' knowledge that her notion of "invisible realities" tended to dissolve boundaries of race, class, and gender, might well have disturbed her audience. She asks whether their system of value is the "real" one or not: her fairy twice announces, "I alone am rich, always and everywhere rich," and Child warns that if the fairy "shows you a shining gem, be careful not to inquire what would be its price in the market; otherwise its lustre will fade instantly, and you will have to ask others whether the thing you hold in your hand has any beauty or value" (98). The further one reads into Child's work, the more one realizes that the reality of things other people cannot see is a central metaphor for her: she knew most "rational thinkers" of her day believed that Northerners should not interfere with the institution of slavery, that racial science "proved" the genetic
inferiority of Native Americans, Africans, and Asians, and that the market place alone determined value. In this chapter I will argue that in her magazine writing of the 1840s, Child seeks to "reveal" to her readers this "invisible" realm: the spiritual unity of all people that is masked by visible, but ultimately insignificant, differences.

"The Fairy Friend" also points toward a general problem one faces when trying to analyze the cultural work Child performed in her magazine writing. A writer of children's stories and domestic advice books as well as anti-slavery tracts, Child often cast reform themes in conventional, sentimental narrative forms. Like any writer who wanted to reach a large audience, she had to entertain her readers, to use familiar plots and character types and to reinforce "traditional" values even as she introduced such disturbing ideas as racial equality and women's rights. But in doing so Child risked accommodating her audience too much, possibly even reinforcing rather than challenging their prejudices. The question is not so much whether Child was a sincere opponent of oppression--she practically sacrificed her career for the abolitionist cause--but whether it was even possible for her to challenge the root causes of the social evils she campaigned against, whether the specific publications or the cultural climate in which she wrote would allow her to
question the mythologies that dominated American middle-
class thought in the 1830s and '40s. Noam Chomsky has
suggested that "if you want to learn something about the
propaganda system, have a close look at the critics and
their tacit assumptions. These typically constitute the
doctrines of the state religion." Does Chomsky's rule
apply to Child, or was she one of the few writers who find
ways to tell readers that some of their most fundamental
beliefs are actually myths that perpetuate social and
economic inequalities?

In the late twenties and early thirties, Child was one
of a handful of American authors (along with Irving,
Cooper, and Sedgwick) not dependent on newspapers or
magazines: she produced a second popular novel (The Rebels,
1825), three volumes of the Ladies Family Library (1832-
35), several books for children, and two enormously popular
advice books for women, The Mother's Book (1831) and The
Frugal Housewife (1832). Yet during this same period she
founded the country's first periodical for children, The
Juvenile Miscellany, and wrote more than enough periodical
fiction and poetry to compile yet another book, The Coronal
(1831). After her marriage to David Child in 1828, the
Miscellany, which appeared every other month, became the
family's primary means of support, offsetting the debts of
her husband's weekly paper, the Massachusetts Journal."
After the publication of her controversial *Appeal* in 1833, Child was shunned by the public as well as the New England literary establishment: the *Miscellany* folded in the wake of the uproar, and her continued involvement in the abolitionist movement scared mainstream publishers off for almost a decade. Although Child still published nonfiction books and pamphlets related to the movement, most of her fiction in the 1840s appeared in newspapers and magazines. From April 1841 to April 1843 most of her writing went straight into the weekly *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, which she edited; but throughout the 1840s she wrote for other reform and anti-slavery publications like the *Harbinger* and the *Liberty Bell*, as well as general-interest magazines and the weekly newspaper the *Boston Courier*.

Child abandoned periodical writing in 1848 to write a history of religion; she had put off the project until her husband David found a steady job to support them without her magazine earnings. When *The Progress of Religious Ideas* (1855) sold poorly and David was once again out of work, Child regretted having given up the regular income. Yet while she wrote for periodicals mainly for pecuniary reasons, the weeklies and monthlies actually provided an appropriate medium for her intellectual and social concerns. First, it was easier to experiment in magazines than in books because the cost of publishing a book
mitigated against risky ventures, whereas a few pages out of an eighty-page monthly were less of a gamble. And since Child was immediately recognizable to most readers, a young magazine like the *Columbian* or the *Union* could benefit from that name-recognition. Secondly, writing numerous short pieces rather than a full-length novel gave Child the opportunity to portray sympathetically a variety of "others"—slaves, free blacks, Native Americans, Irish immigrants, orphans, prostitutes—making each the center of consciousness for at least one story rather than trying to pull such a variety of characters into a single plot. Meanwhile, in other stories Child could explore her more "mystical" impulses, Swedenborgian visions of the spiritual world interacting with the physical. Thirdly, in addition to writing short stories, Child was able to experiment with a form that combined Editor's Table commentaries with travel letters, both popular magazine features of the time. Her *Letters from New York* were among her most original writings, and though they were later published in book form, they were written as separate, self-contained letters for the weekly *National Anti-Slavery Standard* and *Boston Courier* in the early 1840s.

Series of informal letters had appeared before in magazines and even as books; as we have seen, both Willis and Kirkland had some success with the form before 1840. In fact, *A New Home* probably influenced the *Letters from*
New York, although Child's are more genuine "letters," having appeared serially in the Standard. Like Kirkland, Child described both public and private events with journalistic detail, commented often on her own writing, and blended philosophical and social commentary into her narratives. She also provided the readers of this national paper with an unglamorized "view" of a rapidly expanding New York City and its surroundings. Since one of her goals in editing the Standard was to expand its readership beyond the converted, Child also provided an insider's look at the anti-slavery movement, and in doing so she revealed a great deal about herself and her philosophical concerns. In a passage echoed by Poe a few years later, she asserts that "if any one had but the courage to write the whole truth of himself, undisguised as it appears before the eye of God and angels, the world would read it, and it would soon be translated into all the dialects of the universe." Here Child suggests her willingness to write about herself in order to draw people into the cause; meanwhile the reference to the universal appeal of honesty and its ability to overcome language barriers (not even languages here but dialects) hints at one of the primary philosophical concerns of the Letters.

Child wrestled with what she regarded as conflicting purposes in this series: on one hand promoting abolitionism and other reforms and on the other describing life in New
York and speculating on metaphysics and the future of humanity. "[B]lame me not, if I turn wearily aside from the dusty road of reforming duty, to gather flowers in sheltered nooks, or play with gems in hidden grottoes. The Practical has striven hard to suffocate the Ideal within me; but it is immortal, and cannot die." Though Child describes these impulses as if they were at odds, she integrates them imaginatively. The letters follow no formula: readers never knew whether Child would describe a walk along the Battery, construct an argument against the death penalty, or venture into a discussion of aesthetics or metaphysics. Though her comments were rarely scandalous, neither were they conventional or predictable. For instance, when considering animal magnetism, which was arousing considerable controversy in the early forties, she declares herself a believer; while admitting that much of what passed for science was humbug or delusion, she insists that attempts to reach beyond the physical world would help people to see past their petty, materialistic preoccupations. Extending her discussion to include other paranormal experiences, she argues that "[m]en would not be afraid to see spirits, if they were better acquainted with their own," then concludes,

For myself, I am deeply thankful for any agency, that even momentarily blows aside the thick veil between the Finite and the Infinite, and gives me never so hurried and imperfect a glimpse of realities which lie beyond this valley of shadows."
Child returns to this idea of seeking after the infinite throughout the series, always suggesting that an awareness of "realities which lie beyond" would lead to the reforms she advocates.

Every thing seems to me to come from the Infinite, to be tending toward the Infinite. Do I see crowds of men hastening to extinguish a fire? I see not merely uncouth garbs, and fantastic, flickering lights, of lurid hue, like a trampling troop of gnomes,—but straightway my mind is filled with thoughts about mutual helpfulness, human sympathy, the common bond of brotherhood, and the mysteriously deep foundations on which society rests; or rather, on which it now reels and totters.12

This passage reflects Child's version of transcendentalism: she believes that unifying forces, associated sometimes with Christianity but always with love, must be recognized in order for humanity to progress. The tension between the "common bond of brotherhood" and the hostilities and oppression associated with difference—racial, religious, gendered—recurs throughout the letters.

According to Child, the "shadow" reality that we live in overemphasizes such differences, which have to do mainly with environment; the spiritual reality is our common humanity. This contention provides the basis for Child's advocacy of and involvement in reforms, particularly abolitionism. But at the same time, she wrestles with difference on the most fundamental level: she can only look at the world from her own perspective, though much of her writing is an effort to see through someone else's eyes.
In that other world, shall we be enabled to know exactly how heaven, and earth, and hell, appear to other persons, nations, and tribes? I would it might be so; for I have an intense desire for such revelations. I do not care to travel to Rome, or St. Petersburg, because I can only look at people; and I want to look into them, and through them; to know how things appear to their spiritual eyes, and sound to their spiritual ears.  

Child was also fascinated by the historical construction of cultural and religious identities. In a January, 1842 letter, for example, she discusses how the actions of Greeks and Hebrews have helped to form modern Christian consciousness. Without them, she asks her readers, "woulds't thou have been what thou art? Nay, thou woulds't have been altogether another; unable even to comprehend thy present self."  

One of Child's purposes in pointing out how easily one could be "altogether another" is to promote tolerance and respect for "foreigners," non-Protestants, Native Americans, convicts, "fallen women," and, of course, African-Americans. By seeing pantheists and Jews as part of "our" heritage, as cultures that contributed to "our" identity, Child's readers would, she hoped, recognize their affinity with these "others" whom they had learned to fear and distrust. Her more usual, less pedantic method is to bring her readers closer to the experience of the other. In a letter from early 1842 she visits a burying-ground of the poor and notices the predominance of foreign epitaphs. The experience, she says, "affected me deeply. Who could
now tell with what high hopes those departed ones had left the heart-homes of Germany, the sunny hills of Spain, the laughing skies of Italy, or the wild beauty of Switzerland?" Many other letters emphasize the humanity of groups who are treated inhumanely. After describing the sight of ships off the Battery on a starry night, she reminds herself and her readers of the "human hearts imprisoned there"—both sailors and fugitive slaves. And in two letters published six months apart, Child mentions watching doves hovering near prisons. In the earlier letter, she sees "hard hands . . . thrust between the iron bars, to sprinkle crumbs for them" and insists that these "erring brothers" must still have kindness in their hearts. In the later, less hopeful installment, she laments that "[s]ociety with its unequal distribution, its perverted education, its manifold injustice, its cold neglect, its biting mockery, has taken from them the gifts of God." Because of their mistreatment, the convicts have lost their capacity for such simple acts of kindness as feeding birds, for "doves do not speak to their souls, as would to mine."  

Child's urge to see through other people's eyes and her willingness to regard personality as a sum of accidents of time and place had another purpose as well: to promote her vision of human progress. Though none of the letters advance a complete theory, Child repeatedly hypothesized a
movement from the primacy of intellect to the primacy of sympathy and the ethnic and religious unity it would bring. She clearly articulates the serious social agenda of nineteenth-century "sentimental" writers explored by such critics as Nina Baym, Mary Kelley, and Jane Tompkins. Although Child portrays this progress as the inevitable course of history, she clearly intends to help it along. In a letter describing a Highland gathering, she uses the clans, "a phantom of the Past," as a symbol of the drive toward unity among nations and religions.

The world, regenerated and made free, will at last bid a glad farewell to clans and sects! Would that their graves were dug and their requiems sung; and nothing but their standards and costumes left, as curious historical records of a benighted Past.

But like any conception of human "progress" toward unity, the future imagined by Child involved the decline of some ethnic groups--or at least, as Child saw it, the decline of practices associated with certain cultures. Even this most tolerant of nineteenth-century public figures made some rather bigoted comments. Describing the New Year's Day rivalry over the "magnificence and variety of the eating tables," Child assures her readers that this competitiveness "is eminently Dutch in its character, and will pass away before a higher civilization." Similarly, she regards Judaism and Catholicism as completed stages in religious evolution, archaic institutions deserving respect for the foundations they lay but too intolerant and
undemocratic to remain viable. In Letter VI she compares Jews to a man who rises before sunrise and reads by lamplight in the chimney-corner, but continues to rely on the lamp even after the sun is shining brightly outside. And although most of her comments on Catholics reflect an appreciation for the depth of their devotion and the beauty of their rituals, she also describes the Catholic church as

... a bad foundation for liberty, civil and religious. I deprecate its obvious and undeniable tendency to enslave the human mind; but I marvel not that the imaginations of men are chained and led captive by this vision of the Past ..."20

Child's notion of progress comes into conflict with her humanitarianism on matters of racial science as well. In Letter LII, by way of advocating humane treatment of Native Americans, she asserts that, because of environment, Caucasians' "moral and intellectual faculties" have progressed further than those of other races.21 In arguing that Africans and "Indians" will progress--when given the chance, they have proven themselves capable of living in the white world--she implies that whites, particularly Anglo-protestants, are at the forefront of human progress, setting the standards for other races to meet. And yet elsewhere Child indicates that the progress of Anglos depends on their ability to adopt some characteristics of Native Americans and Africans. In a letter from 1841 she describes a visit to a black church, recounting first the powerful sermon of Julia Pell and then the beauty of the
congregation's singing, noting that "[t]he gift of song is universal with Africans." This claim, of course, is a stereotype that was already being used to ridicule blacks in minstrel songs like "Jim Crow"—but Child makes it a source of power, a "prophetic" fact:

Sculpture blossomed into its fullest perfection in a Physical Age, on which dawned the intellectual; Painting blossomed in an Intellectual Age, warmed by the rising sun of moral sentiment; and now Music goes forward to its culmination in the coming Spiritual Age. Now is the time that Ethiopia begins to "stretch forth her hands."22

Child repeats this contention in another letter, pointing out that the slave trade has spread Africans throughout the civilized world, ironically facilitating their ascendancy. She goes on to argue that people of color, the Irish, and women are all agents of the same movement by which feeling and sympathy supplant intellect—a movement she clearly supports.23

The Letters from New York lay the thematic groundwork for Child's fiction of the early 1840s: the fascination with the consciousness of others and the longing to experience life through someone else's psyche; an insistence on the power of empathy and love based on the idea that despite the "shadow" reality of difference, all people share a common humanity; and the notion that civilization is progressing toward a recognition of that common humanity. In the Letters, as in her stories, she often expressed doubts about the reality of this progress;
the misery she saw around her in New York often discouraged her. Remarking on the fact that in that city everything, including sentiment and love, is for sale, she wonders "whether the age of Commerce is better than the age of War . . . whether it is better for the many to be prostrated by force, or devoured by cunning." Though her criticism of capitalism is usually couched in terms such as "ambition" and "politics" in her short stories, in Letters from New York she is more aggressive:

Parents shriek with terror to see a beloved child on the steep roof of lofty buildings, lest his body should fall a mutilated heap on the pavement; but they can, without horror, send him to grow rich by trade, in such places as Havana or New Orleans, where his soul is almost sure to fall, battered and crushed, till scarcely one feature of God's image remains to be recognised. If heaven were to them as real as earth, they could not thus make contracts with Satan, to buy the shadow for the substance.

The religious fervor and the reference to Havana and New Orleans suggest that the trade in question is slavery, but this passage appears within the context of a discussion of commerce in general. In another letter she rails against the immorality of modern business: "With regard to dishonesty, too--the maxims of trade, the customs of society, and the general unreflecting tone of public conversation, all tend to promote it." In New York, the center of commerce, "Life is a reckless game, and death is a business transaction. Warehouses of ready-made coffins,
stand beside warehouses of ready-made clothing, and the shroud is sold with spangled opera-dresses."27

In these letters Child openly challenged the myths of social justice and equal opportunity. Combining her criticism with vivid descriptions of New York City and the surrounding area, she drew in thousands of readers to the Standard and later to the Boston Courier; and by collecting them in two books, she would reach thousands more.28 In fact, the success of the Letters helped restore Child's popularity sufficiently to make her a sought-after periodical writer throughout the 1840s. Turning to the magazines and annuals, Child wrote short stories that illustrated the points she had made in the Standard and the Boston Courier. Here too she found ways to engage readers, which often meant balancing concessions to readers' prejudices and demands for entertainment with her radical messages of racial and ethnic unity and a dissolving of traditional gender roles.

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From the beginning of her career, Child's mystical yearning to experience life through the consciousness of racial or ethnic "others" provided her with a strategy for changing white, native-born Americans' ideas about "Indians," Irish immigrants, and African-Americans. Her belief in a universal human nature inspired her to depict other races in terms that middle-class Anglos would
identify with and respect. As she had done in Hobomok, in her shorter fiction Child made Native American characters centers of consciousness, imbuing them with emotional complexity and motives that would seem familiar to middle-class whites. At a time when white fiction writers and supporters of Andrew Jackson's "Indian Removal" policy typically represented Native Americans as forces of nature to be overcome, Child portrayed white encroachment as a domestic tragedy for a Mohawk family.29 "The Lone Indian," which originally appeared in the gift book The Token in 1828, depicts an "Indian" courtship in the same terms that any reader of sentimental love stories would recognize. Powontonamo, the young hero, is "frank, chivalrous, and kind," an aristocrat by birth ("son of a mighty chief") and ability. Old chiefs want him to marry their daughters, whose eyes "sparkled when he looked on them." And yet he remains aloof to women until he sees his true love: "his heart melted beneath the beaming glance of beauty."30 Soonseetah, whose nickname, "Sunny-eye," helps to "translate" her character for Child's white audience, is a stereotypical proud beauty, "the young coquette of the wilderness" (155). Predictably, she falls in love with Powontonamo at first sight as well; they soon marry and have a child. The story continues to follow their domestic life, even when the larger issue of the Mohawks' losing their land is introduced. Powotonamo's realization that
trading with the English could lead to his tribe's

displacement is directly related to his becoming a father:

Yet when he held his son in his arms, as his
father had done before him, he sighed to hear the
strokes of the axe levelling the old trees of his
forests. Sometimes he looked sorrowfully on his
baby boy, and thought he had perchance done him
much wrong, when he smoked a pipe in the wigwam
of the stranger. (156)

In the next scene, Powotonamó voices his regret not to a
gathering of warriors but to his wife:

The Sunny-eye approached fearfully, and laid her
little hand upon his brawny shoulder, as she
asked, "Why is the Eagle's eye on the earth?
What has Soonseetah done, that her child dare not
look in the face of his father?" Slowly the
warrior turned his gaze upon her. The expression
of sadness deepened, as he answered, "The Eagle
has taken a snake to his nest: how can his young
sleep in it?" (156)

Thus Child emphasizes the centrality of the nuclear
family to the Mohawk's worldview, constructing a scene in
which the husband/father's primary concern is for his
family, as opposed to his tribe. Sunny-eye and Powotonamo
behave just as a white family would when the father's
ability to provide for them was in danger. Child makes
this point explicit when the baby and Sunny-eye die of a
fever contracted from the English. In his agony over their
deaths, Powotonamo "tossed his arms wildly above his head,
and threw himself beside the body of her he had loved as
fondly, deeply, and passionately, as ever a white man
loved" (158). The story concludes by describing
Powotonamo's years of sorrow after his tribe has been
forced to move; for thirty autumns he returns to the burial
place of his wife and son, where he has planted an oak tree
as a memorial. In the final scene he visits the spot to
find the oak cut down and observes a loaded boat crossing a
stream. Once again Child invokes the analogy between the
Mohawk's values and those of the English: "The white man
carries food to his wife and children, and he finds them in
his home,' said he. 'Where is the squaw and the papoose of
the red man? They are here!" (160) Though this scene and
the story as a whole evoke what would become the familiar
theme of the "vanishing Indian," Child makes it clear that
Indians are "vanishing" by dying of English diseases and by
forced migrations. But more importantly, she asserts the
humanity of the Mohawk as represented by Powotonamo; she
focuses the story almost completely on him and his family
and continually describes their behavior and emotions in
terms usually reserved for whites. Ironically, Child holds
whites responsible for the destruction of Powotonamo's
family and the displacement of his tribe, and at the same
time evokes sympathy for the Mohawk by giving him "white"
instincts. Thus Child attempts to combat racism by any
means that might work, appealing to her readers' sense of
guilt as well as their Anglo-centrism.

Similarly, Child's portrayals of Irish-Americans
explicitly profess their virtues and urge tolerance while
reaffirming the stereotypes that underlay prejudice against
the Irish and other recent immigrants. Nativist movements were on the rise in the 1830s and 1840s, often taking the form of violence against the Irish, who, because of their Catholicism, their willingness to work for low wages, and their sheer numbers, were attacked more frequently than other ethnic groups. From about 1834, when a mob in Charlestown, Massachusetts, burned down a convent, Irish Catholics became frequent targets of violence. By the 1850s, the Know-Nothing Party would channel working-class discontent and xenophobia into an anti-Irish political movement. While Child was certainly no nativist, she had at least one issue over which to criticize the Irish: the majority were pro-slavery, voting overwhelmingly Democratic. In one of her Letters from New York she reinforces the image of the Irish as superstitious and unenlightened. "I like the Irish," she writes, but her reasons are not altogether flattering: "[W]ith their warm hearts and reverent credulity, [they] are needed in this cold age of intellect and scepticism."

Four years later Child wrote a story for the Columbian in which those very qualities turn an Irish immigrant into an American criminal. James, the protagonist of "The Irish Heart," comes to America to make his fortune and then send for his beloved sister. Soon after finding work in New York, he sells his coat and watch for what turns out to be counterfeit money. Realizing he has been cheated but
too poor to absorb the loss, he tries to pass the money off but is caught and sentenced to five years in Sing Sing prison. His sister Nora journeys on her own to America to find him, and with her encouragement, James serves his sentence and eventually finds employment, thanks to the Prison Association. Child makes several points in this story: that the justice system is too harsh, that reforms such as the Prison Association can nonetheless help make ex-convicts productive citizens, and that the disproportionate number of Irish immigrants in prisons could be explained by causes other than innate villainy.

And yet, though readers are clearly meant to sympathize with James and Nora, their "Irish hearts" are portrayed as somehow different from those of Child's readers; Child, in fact, makes less effort to downplay the "strangeness" of her Irish characters than she does with her Native American characters. She renders their speech in dialect and peppers it with Irish terms of endearment like mavourneen and acushla machree as well as numerous references to the Virgin Mary. And as she had done in Letters from New York, Child associates her Irish characters with faith and emotion as opposed to intellect. James is "as unsuspecting as a child" when he is swindled; his decision to pass off the counterfeit bills results from "a bewilderment of the reasoning powers in the mind of an ignorant man" (19). Child's point is that this "criminal"
is merely unsuspecting and ignorant, but one senses that in this context such qualities are meant to represent Irish immigrants generally, just as at the story's end Child characterizes the brother and sister sympathetically but condescendingly: "They were two of the kindest hearts, and most transparent souls, among that reverent, loving, confiding, but impulsive people, who, above all others, deserve to be called the little children of the nations" (21). Such a portrayal presents an interesting problem, for while in Child's value system James and Nora's innocence rates highly, there was no guarantee that the Columbian's readership would sympathize with that world view. The supposed credulity and impulsiveness of the Irish supported the perception that they were pawns of the Pope and the Democratic Party; aside from being seen as potential criminals, they constituted a threat because of their "childlike" loyalty to those institutions.

Child sought to demonstrate that whatever ignorance African- or Irish-Americans exhibited resulted either from lack of opportunity to learn or other environmental factors that could be overcome; and, as we have seen, she insisted that since the world was entering into the Spiritual Age, the quality of their "hearts" more than compensated for their apparent lack of intelligence. This reasoning was heretical in the 1840s, particularly when applied to blacks. As Carolyn Karcher has demonstrated, anti-slavery
fiction faced the nearly-impossible task of arousing the emotions of its audience against slavery without offending that audience's sensibilities through the description of slavery's grim realities; and given the genteel code enforced on women writers, the problem was even greater for them. Child's abolitionist fiction exemplifies this dilemma but also presents several strategies for overcoming it.

Child had included some anti-slavery fiction in the Juvenile Miscellany before it folded in 1834, and she returned to the short story as an abolitionist vehicle in the early 1840s. In "The Black Saxons," which appeared in the abolitionist annual The Liberty Bell in 1841, Child has a South Carolina slave-owner draw a parallel between the oppression and revolt of his Saxon ancestors and the oppression and threatened revolt of his own slaves. Set during the War of 1812, the story opens with the slaveowner, Mr. Duncan, reading a book on the Norman Conquest and sympathizing with the "brave and free-souled Harolds" and "fair-haired Ediths," who "sank to the condition of slaves." Duncan perceives the parallel between the plight of his ancestors and that of his own slaves, whom he suspects are secretly meeting with a group of runaways in the forest. Despite his sympathy for the slaves, Duncan is too thoroughly controlled by the "phantoms" (a term that suggests the "shadow" reality of
the material world Child refers to in Letters from New York) created by his education and "habits of his whole life" to free them (25). Instead, having given his slaves passes to attend their Methodist service, he follows them, disguised in "negro clothes" and "a black mask well fitted to his face," and finds himself amidst a throng of slaves at an insurrectionist meeting. According to rumor, the British are soon going to land nearby, and the slaves plan to take the opportunity to revolt. The principal dispute among them is whether or not to kill their masters, and Duncan hears several compelling speeches on the subject. After the meeting disbands, Duncan finds himself in an open field, where he once again contemplates the kinship between the rebels he has just listened to and his own Saxon ancestors:

Was the place I saw to-night, in such wild and fearful beauty, like the haunts of the Saxon Robin Hoods? Was not the spirit that gleamed forth as brave as theirs? And who shall calculate what even such hopeless endeavors may do for the future freedom of this down-trodden race? (43)

Child has Duncan enunciate the parallel she hoped Southern slaveowners, proud of their lineage, would draw. Apologists for slavery could refute emotional arguments depicting slavery's cruelty by claiming that those stories were exaggerated and that most slaves were well-treated; perhaps for that reason, Child seeks empathy for slaves rather than mere sympathy, and she literalizes the empathic
gesture by having Duncan make himself "black." Southerners and pro-slavery Northerners had no compunction about denying rights to a supposedly inferior species; but if by drawing parallels to their ancestors' (or, in the case of wage-laborers, their own) oppression Child could induce them to identify with slaves, she might persuade them. As in "The Lone Indian," Child imbues the racial "other" with qualities most middle-class whites valued in themselves. She debunks the image of slaves as impulsive and intellectually inferior by devoting most of the story to their rational, eloquent debate. The first speaker calls for vengeance, the second for Christian forgiveness. The third speaker begins by "throwing off his coarse cotton garment" and revealing a scarred, bloody back before addressing the crowd in a more polished style, said to result from the fact that his father is his owner, who "from some remains of instinctive feeling, had kept his son near his own person, during his lifetime, and thus formed his conversation [sic] on another model than the rude jargon of the slaves" (36). Like Child in this story, the third speaker puts aside arguments based on masters' cruelty and focuses instead on the basic injustice of slavery, casting it in terms that could apply to other forms of oppression under which "white" races had suffered (and were suffering):

Why should they sleep on soft beds, under silken curtains, while we, whose labour bought it all,
lie on the floor at the threshold, or miserably coiled up in the dirt of our own cabins? Why should I clothe my master in broadcloth and fine linen, when he knows, and I know, that he is my own brother? (35)

Having carefully noted that this speaker's access to education—as opposed to his "white blood"—makes him so articulate, Child reinforces her contention that environmental factors, long- and short-term, account for the supposed inferiority of African slaves. The fourth speaker, in fact, makes that very point. He asks why the "[w]hite man always git he foot on de black man," then answers his question by pointing to a piece of printed paper. "Dat's de way dey do it! Dey got de knowledge!" he exclaims (38). Again suggesting that the principal difference between slave and master, even "black" and "white," is education rather than race, Child has the old man advise the crowd that whether or not the British land, "tell you sons to marry de free woman, dat know how to read and write; and tell you gals to marry de free man, dat know how to read and write; and den, by'm bye, you be de British yourselves!" (39). The speaker thus reinforces the identification between the slaves and Duncan's British ancestors, accomplishing with words the race-reversal Duncan effected with clothes and a mask—and which Child accomplishes with her racially mixed title. For Child, "Black Saxons" is not an oxymoron, for the boundary between those racial markers is easily crossed." The fourth
speaker goes on to illustrate this point by explaining that his own ability to read and write has enabled him to convey the news of the possible British landing to a slave on another plantation.

The delegation decides that given the opportunity, they will claim their freedom without killing their masters: Child represents the insurrectionists as neither docile nor bloodthirsty, but rational. The meeting's outcome parallels arguments Child was making at this time in the Standard, that while African-Americans were not prone to violence, no people on earth had more right to use it. "The Black Saxons" also reflects Child's growing belief— one that was undoubtedly painful to her— that emancipation could be achieved only through violence.39 Meanwhile she continued to advocate moral suasion; accordingly she does not allow the planned insurrection in "The Black Saxons" to take place. Having repeatedly defended abolitionists against charges of fomenting slave revolts, and given the fact that she did not want to scare off unconverted readers, Child could not afford to end her story with an uprising. Instead, Duncan thwarts the slaves' plan by "advising the magistrates to forbid all meetings whatsoever among the coloured people until the war was ended" (43-44). Duncan's "conversion" keeps him from revealing the slaves' plot and bringing "hundreds to an immediate and violent death" (43), but it does not move him
to free his slaves. Thus Child's story concludes ambiguously: she takes Duncan, the character her readers would most likely identify with, to the point of realizing that the slaves have as much right to be free as he does, but she stops short of having him take the action that anti-slavery fiction was designed to encourage. Child indicates in the last paragraph that she did not invent the story but heard it "in brief outline" and merely embellished it; perhaps on principle she did not want to change the "true" ending. But the fact that she does not even comment at the end of the story on Duncan's inaction is inconsistent with her philosophy of moral suasion and with her other stories (true and fictional) in which "the law of love" changes people's lives and moves masters to free slaves. In fact, two years earlier she had written two sketches for the Liberty Bell illustrating the effectiveness of moral suasion: "Anecdote of Elias Hicks" and "The Emancipated Slaveholders." Possibly Child was coming to believe that convincing slaveowners to free their slaves was indeed an impossible task (especially when abolitionist writings were banned in the South), so she tried to persuade Northerners that slavery should be abolished and that even the most compassionate slaveowners were unwilling to do it themselves.

In other stories for The Liberty Bell Child used the more conventional approach of depicting the inhumanity of
slavery through the personal tragedies of slaves. "Charity Bowery," which appeared in the 1839 volume, is essentially an interview with an actual former slave the Childs befriended in New York. Charity Bowery describes how one spiteful slaveowner, her former mistress, tormented her by refusing to let Charity buy her own children out of slavery. In "Slavery's Pleasant Homes: A Faithful Sketch," a slaveowner's cruelty leads to three violent deaths.

Frederic Dalcho, the slaveowner, forces his wife's quadroon half-sister (and servant) to become his mistress; upon discovering that she is secretly meeting with his own quadroon half-brother and trusted servant George, he whips her repeatedly until finally she dies in premature child-labor. George kills Dalcho in revenge, then confesses his crime, laying down his life to save a wrongfully-accused fellow-slave.

Here Child sets up "black" and "white" characters as doubles to emphasize the artificiality of "black" inferiority. Dalcho and George are related by a common parent but also by their passion for Rosa: the sight of her "kindles in [Frederic] an unholy fire," and Rosa hesitates in telling George about his brother's early advances because George is "of a proud and fiery nature" (150-51). The half-sisters, for their part, are equally genteel, despite the fact that one is the other's slave: they dress each other, though Marion "decorates" Rosa with jewels
while Rosa performs menial tasks like tying Marion's shoes. Though Marion regards Rosa as a dress-up doll, she is herself described as "a pretty little waxen plaything" (148), and her subjection to Dalcho places her on the level of property, much like a slave. Moreover, the mixed-race couple compares favorably in appearance and character to the "whites": Rosa is more beautiful than her mistress, and, more significantly, George emerges as the story's tragic hero, "a man of nobler soul than any of them all" (159). Indeed, Child casts Rosa and George, rather than their Anglo counterparts, into the star-crossed-lover roles typically reserved for white characters, as if to insist that her readers identify with a racial "other."

Similarly, in "The Quadroons" Child uses racially mixed characters both to problematize the very idea of "race" and to more easily arouse the sympathy of readers who would likely see quadroon or octoroon women as "almost white." Karcher argues that while "Slavery's Pleasant Homes" reveals "the interlocking systems of racial and sexual oppression" and even endorses George's right to revolt, "The Quadroons" represents too great a compromise, evoking sympathy for white characters with a "tragic" drop of "black blood" rather than for dark-skinned slaves. In this story Rosalie and her daughter Xarifa die of grief and madness stemming from their powerlessness as "blacks" and as women. Rosalie is abandoned by her husband, who has no
legal obligations to her because of her race, and her grief leads her to take her own life. As if destined by her mixed race, Xarifa follows a course similar to her mother's. Her repentant father provides for her throughout her youth, and after his death she finds true love with her (white) music teacher; but eventually she is discovered to be the granddaughter of a slave and is sold at auction. The man who buys Xarifa shoots the music teacher when he attempts to rescue her; then, failing to win Xarifa's affection, her master rapes her, and "In a few months more, poor Xarifa was a raving maniac. That pure temple was desecrated; that loving heart was broken; and that beautiful head fractured against the wall in a frenzy of despair" (141). While Child's emphasis is more on the injustices of race ideology, this story examines "the interlocking systems of racial and sexual oppression" much as "Slavery's Pleasant Homes" does. Once Xarifa is sold, her slavery is more like that of a purchased bride than that of a servant. Her master "bought glittering chains of gold, and costly bands of pearl. His victim scarcely glanced at them, and her attendant slave laid them away, unheeded and forgotten" (140). Even in resorting to force, her master is still behaving as much like a villainous husband as an evil slaveowner. One senses throughout the story that Rosalie's and Xarifa's tragedies lie not only in their "mixed blood" but in their dependence on men.
Child provides a useful example of how abolitionism awakened and fed nineteenth-century feminism, though as "The Quadroons" suggests, feminist issues could easily be subsumed by anti-slavery concerns. Early work for women's rights was in many cases hindered by admonitions from male and, in some cases, female abolitionists who believed that "the woman question" diverted activists' attention and energy from the more pressing issue of slavery and that too close association between the two would damage the anti-slavery cause.47 Child, in fact, played a key role in that debate as editor of the Standard; though she repeatedly urged members of the National Anti-Slavery Society not to let these disputes fracture the movement (which they were in fact doing), she clearly favored abolitionists' involvement in other reforms.48 In one Standard editorial, she eloquently used the same logic on behalf of women's liberation that abolitionists invoked in arguing that the rights Americans claimed for all men should be extended to slaves:

In America, women heard it announced, and repeated, that every human soul had a right to full and free opportunities for the development of all their powers; and that any laws or customs, which obstructed this, were odious forms of that open violence, by which the fighting barons of old held men in brutal vassalage. Some asked themselves, "How does this principle apply to my condition? Do laws and customs leave me the free exercise of all my powers?"49

Accordingly, at the same time she was writing her most powerful anti-slavery pieces, Child wrote stories that used
the same tactics to reverse public opinion of "fallen women" and prostitutes.

"Elizabeth Wilson" and "Rosenglory," which Child wrote for the *Columbian* in 1845 and 1846 respectively, parallel each other as tragic stories of young women who are seduced and abandoned. In both stories Child places relatively little blame on the seducers, directing her anger at the social and economic matrix that traps these young women and the patriarchal institutions that fail them. After a headnote affirming the veracity of the tale, she opens "Elizabeth Wilson" by establishing a close relationship between Elizabeth and her brother William; their affectionate mother dies when they are young, and the brother and sister are separated, sent off by their stepmother to work. Several years later Elizabeth falls in love with a young clerk who eventually leaves her for a rich widow. After hinting a few times at Elizabeth's pregnancy, Child states bluntly, "At last she gave birth to a dead infant, and for a while her own life trembled in the balance. She recovered, in a state of confirmed melancholy, and with occasional indications of impaired intellect" (82). Shunned by the community, Elizabeth remains in this state for years before she once again gives birth out of wedlock, this time to twins. When the infants are later found in a grove, strangled, Elizabeth is arrested. William comes to her aid: though she is in a
near-stupor, she assures him of her innocence. She is nonetheless convicted—by "the usual display of legal ingenuity on both sides"—and though William eventually gathers enough signatures to convince the governor to issue a pardon, he arrives minutes too late to save his sister from the gallows. The "happy ending" so often associated with sentimental magazine fiction never comes: when witnesses at the public execution speak to William of God's will, "He answered not; for it was not clear to him that the cruelty of man is the will of God" (85); and with the story's last line, we learn that he is remembered in that region as "William the Hermit" (85).

Although Child handles indelicate subjects and, in certain passages, writes in a style that foreshadows naturalists such as Crane and Dreiser, she makes effective use of sentimental devices throughout the story. For example, a blue bench into which Elizabeth and William carved their initials as youngsters symbolizes their love. During the years between her first and second pregnancies, "She no longer showed much feeling about anything, except the little blue bench marked W. and E." (83); and after William visits her in jail, "She sat on the little blue bench, gazing vacantly on the floor, like one already out of the body" (84). Similarly, Elizabeth has a "soft, golden-brown" curl that her mother used to kiss; when she refuses to let William take it, he kisses it too. Her
The first lover asks for this symbol of her innocent love as well, and he too kisses it when she refuses—but he continues to press her for it. "Trembling and confused, she turned to open the gate, but he held it fast until she promised that the next time he came she would give him one of her curls" (82). The lover's playful (at that point) use of force hints at his lack of regard for Elizabeth; and yet the fact that she never actually gives him the curl suggests that she retains her innocence even though the world finds her guilty, first as a "fallen woman" and then as a murderer. Child fuses these symbols near the story's end: when Elizabeth is taken to the gallows, she takes a last look at the bench and then the curl, then falls sobbing onto the sheriff's shoulder. While this symbolism is undeniably heavy-handed, it nonetheless effectively conveys the story's main theme: the incompatibility between the innocent, loving Elizabeth and the world she inhabits. Thus when William, who shared Elizabeth's pure love, leaves the world behind, he takes these objects with him, even cutting the curl away from her hair.

The injustice of Elizabeth's fate is clear even in legal terms, for regardless of readers' reactions to her giving birth out of wedlock, the fact remains that she was innocent of murder. In "Rosenglory," Child takes on the more difficult task of championing a prostitute. As in "Elizabeth Wilson," the heroine, Susan Grey, and her
brother Jerry lose their affectionate mother (and, in this story, an alcoholic father) and are sent to separate homes to work. The beautiful "Rosenglory," as Susan is called by her family, falls in love with Robert Andrews, the young man of the house where she is sent, but when Robert's mother discovers them alone together one night, she sends Susan away. At her next "home," Susan's employer, Mr. Jenkins, tries to seduce her; she resists, but when she tries to explain to Mrs. Jenkins why she feels she must leave, the wife becomes furious and refuses to pay Susan for three weeks' work. In desperation, Susan steals Mrs. Jenkins' purse; she is caught and sent to Blackwell's Island, where, Child remarks ironically, she "received a new series of lessons in that strange course of education, which a Christian community had from the beginning bestowed upon her" (185). After her release, no one will hire her as a servant because of her criminal record and she is forced to wander the streets; when she happens to meet Robert Andrews again, she consents to become his mistress. The story then jumps ahead ten years, when Susan and Jerry finally find each other: he is now a blind street musician and she a prostitute. But as in "Elizabeth Wilson," here the well-intentioned brother arrives too late, for Susan dies soon afterward of an unnamed condition.

The symbolism in "Rosenglory" is less pervasive and less obvious that of "Elizabeth Wilson," but it underscores
the same theme. Susan gets her nickname as a child because of her attachment to flowers: in her excitement over being given a rose, she confuses "rose" and "morning-glory," and the name she gives to the flower is given to her. Later, Robert Andrews' love "had bloomed in her monotonous life like the Morning-Glory in the dark dismal courts [the slums where Susan grew up]" (183). Child metaphorically links Susan, flowers, and love itself to suggest that like the transplanted or cut flowers in the "dismal courts," she cannot thrive in an unnatural environment, just as love itself cannot thrive in a world dominated by selfishness and cunning. Child reinforces this point with another metaphor from "nature": "As for Susan, the little fish, floated along by the tide, were not more ignorant of hydrostatics, than she was of the hidden dangers and social regulations, in the midst of which she lived" (183). In both "Elizabeth Wilson" and "Rosenglory," knowledge or "worldly wisdom" is opposed to--and destroys--the pure, disinterested love that Child insisted would eventually triumph.

Although Child is careful not to essentialize women and men in these stories--the brothers, though ineffectual, are loyal and loving, while a stepmother and female employers are cruel and jealous--she makes it clear that her heroines are victimized by a male-dominated society. In a telling, understated moment near the end of "Elizabeth
Wilson," Child writes, "Men came and led her to the gallows," a sentence that summarizes Elizabeth's story and conveys a sense of her powerlessness in her search for love among strangers. Since the father of the twins turns out to be their murderer, he more than any man could be said to have led Elizabeth to her unjust punishment. Susan Grey is similarly led by men, beginning with her alcoholic father. As if to foreshadow her fate, she gets the name "Rosenglory" from a man who sees her on the street and, admiring her childhood beauty, gives her a rose. Once she reaches maturity, the men she encounters regard her as something they can buy: her employer Mr. Jenkins, who bribes her with a new dress; Robert Andrews, who makes her his mistress by offering her shelter and then abandons her; and even the magistrate who sentences her to jail. When she encounters this last gentleman on the first night after her release, he gives her a quarter and asks her to visit him that evening. Now that she has "improved her education on the Island," Susan understands his meaning and stays away. At that moment Child's own exasperation comes through as she expresses her heroine's confusion over the double-standard that will lead her to degradation and death:

...it puzzled her poor head, as it does many a wiser one, why men should be magistrates when they practise [sic] the same things for which they send women to Blackwell's Island. She had never read or heard anything about "Woman's Rights;" otherwise, it might have occurred to her
that it was because men made all the laws, and
elected all the magistrates. (185)

This criticism was particularly trenchant considering that
when "Rosenglory" appeared in 1846, the American Female
Moral Society, a group with over 500 auxiliaries, was
trying to shift responsibility for prostitution onto
licentious men; in 1848 the "purity movement" would succeed
in criminalizing male "seduction" in New York. The
extent of a single story's influence is nearly impossible
to determine, but "Rosenglory" contributed, at least, to a
public debate in the same manner Child's anti-slavery
fiction did. Here, too, Child tries to root out the source
of the problem, not only blaming seducers but indicting the
exclusively male legal and political system.

Neither "Elizabeth Wilson" nor "Rosenglory" ends
happily, as many scholars assume nineteenth-century women's
fiction must, but the latter story does hold out some hope:
as Susan's health begins to deteriorate seriously, Jerry
finds a house of refuge for female ex-convicts known as The
Home, where she is humanely cared for in her last days.
Thus Child provides an early example of a device that would
be used extensively in reform literature of the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: advocating a
specific form of social action in response to the problems
that one's story or novel has exposed. Like Kirkland, and
like many women writers of the next two decades, Child's
primary goal is to instruct. But while The Home is
certainly a step in the right direction, Child does not present such relief projects as panaceas. Instead she insists that a fundamental change in the public's attitude toward mistresses and prostitutes is needed. After Susan agrees to let Robert Andrews hire apartments for her, Child chastens her readers: "Those who deem the poor girl unpardonable for consenting to this arrangement, would learn mercy under similar circumstances of poverty, scorn, and utter loneliness" (185). Once again, Child appeals to empathy, asking readers not to objectify her heroine but to pretend to be her. She concludes by illustrating this important distinction:

. . . a visitor came to look at the corpse. She meant to be kind and sympathizing; but she did not understand the workings of the human heart. To the wounded spirit of the mourner, she seemed to speak with too much condescension of the possibility of forgiveness, even to so great a sinner. (186)

Throughout these two stories, Child implicitly asks her readers not to make the same mistake.

In some ways Child's representations of gender in these stories conform to the Victorian standards known as the Cult of Domesticity, a delineation of women's "sphere" that asserted their moral superiority to men but restricted their influence to the home, the implication being that the world of business and politics is too "corrupt" for women. This concept of separate "spheres" for women and men implied a harmonious balance, by which men did the
necessary "dirty work" outside the home and women provided a sanctuary for them inside it, as if to keep men's amoral ambition in check. But as many historians have pointed out, this model underwrote male freedom and privilege while limiting women's autonomy. Child, as we have seen, similarly polarized male and female roles and never depicted women succeeding in "the world" on "male" terms (despite the fact that she had been a successful newspaper editor herself). But neither did she portray masculine and feminine "spheres" as harmonious; the two are usually in conflict, and while the values associated with masculinity might prevail in Child's stories, she encourages her readers to sympathize with the feminine and to imagine, with hope, the possibility of a "feminized" society.

While Child had found it necessary to "whiten" African-American characters to evoke readers' empathy, no such accommodation was necessary when writing about white women's oppression and advocating a shift from traditionally masculine to traditionally feminine values. In "Home and Politics," a story published in the Union in 1848, Child describes a tragedy brought about not by premarital sex or abandonment or poverty but by a husband's neglect of his wife and child. The story opens with a description of an idyllic schoolyard, stumbled upon by a young traveller named George Franklin. Franklin wanders into the schoolroom, where he meets the teacher, Alice
White. Though Alice is not beautiful, her taste and good nature attract George, and after a rather long, careful courtship the two marry. The early days of their marriage are blissful; George proves an attentive husband and doting father, and his modest income, combined with Alice's industry and careful management of the home, provides more material comfort than she had ever hoped for. But when George becomes involved in politics, campaigning for Harrison during the presidential election of 1840, he begins to neglect Alice and the baby. In one of Child's more melodramatic turns, the baby dies on the night of Harrison's election. In his remorse George vows to stay away from politics, but a high-paying patronage job draws him back in. The cycle repeats, and in the 1844 election George not only campaigns for but wagers everything he has on Henry Clay; the defeat ruins him and Alice financially. Alice seemingly accepts her fate, not even scolding her husband, but in a few days she sinks into "melancholy insanity." A postscript explains that George has finally abandoned politics and now "works diligently and lives economically, cheered by the hope that reason will again dawn in the beautiful soul that loved him so truly" (68).

Once again, Child draws the conventional contrasts between her male and female characters but places their differences in the context of political and economic power. Like Susan Grey, Alice is linked through several metaphors
to the natural world: she rejoices in birds and flowers, and in the early days of her marriage she seems "happy as a bird in her cozy nest"; at one point she tells George that because of his love, "My heart is like a garden when the morning sun shines on it, after a long cold storm" (65). Twice Child compares her to a pastoral, as opposed to an epic, poet. The future, in Child's philosophy, may belong to loving, nurturing women like Alice White, but the present is dangerous for them, a point Child illustrates with a single remark made by Alice late in the story. A guest at her house predicts that Clay will be elected, judging from the fact that representatives of seemingly every profession have marched in the Whigs' Election Day parade. "There are no women and children,' replied Alice; and she turned away with a sigh" (68).

George, on the other hand, enters the story as a neutral force: in the second paragraph he watches the children at Alice's school and weighs the effects of the influences they are likely to receive, wondering how "coarse parents, selfish employers, and the hard struggle for daily bread, would overshadow the genial influences of that pleasant school, which for a few months gilded the lives of those little ones" (63). This battle of influences will characterize his own struggle, with the forces of business, politics and ambition overshadowing the "genial influence" of Alice. Even before he meets her,
George is drawn to her because of the book he finds on her desk, *Bettine's Letters to Günderode*, open to a passage on influencing children; he marks another line in the book for her to read: "Let me be thy scholar in simplicity" (64). Child never suggests that his expressions of love or remorse are insincere; rather, other influences come to dominate his life: "He lived in a species of mental intoxication. . . . He was restless for newspapers, and watched the arrival of the mails, as he once would have watched over the life of his child" (66). Child, then, blames George far less than she does politics, insisting in the last sentence that though his case might seem extreme, "in truth he is only one of a thousand similar wrecks continually floating over the turbulent sea of American politics" (68). "Home and Politics" suggests that individual men can overcome the pressures their "sphere" places on them. George fails to do so until it is too late, but it is a socially constructed masculinity, which privileges the "mental intoxication" of politics and gambling over home life, and not George's own "nature" that causes his family's downfall.

In fact, Child often expressed her hope that men would become more like women for the sake of both genders. In one of her "Letters from New York," she describes the activities of a family of birds in her woodshed, and notes that "the father-bird had formed correct opinions on the
woman question;' for during the process of incubation he volunteered to perform his share of the household duty. . . . He certainly performed the office with far less ease and grace than she did . . . but nevertheless it showed that his heart was kind, and his principles correct, concerning division of labor." In a later installment she argues more directly,

The nearer society approaches to divine order, the less separation there will be in the characters, duties, and pursuits of men and women. Women will not become less gentle and graceful, but men will become more so. Women will not neglect the care and education of their children, but men will find themselves ennobled and refined by sharing those duties with them; and will receive, in return, co-operation and sympathy in the discharge of various other duties, now deemed inappropriate to women. Child's interest in breaking down gender roles occasionally found its way into her fiction as well. In "The Prophet of Ionia," a fantasy set in ancient Greece, the wife, Praxinoe, is "much infested with worldly ambition" and "so healthy, she never had but one dream she remembered in her life," while her husband, Hermotimus, spends his time seeing unseen worlds, uninterested in the world his body inhabits. Child does not suggest that Hermotimus is the ideal man, nor does she condemn Praxinoe (even though Praxinoe marries her wealthy neighbor after Hermotimus's death); but she does attribute to each qualities that she, and her contemporaries, normally associated with the opposite sex. For Child, though, the problem lies not in
these characters' failure to conform but in the patriarchal culture that forces them together: Hermotimus' father seeks to "cure" him of his dreaminess with matrimony, and Praxinoe's father does not consult her because "it was the belief then, and it is not altogether obsolete now, that a woman has no right to have an opinion of her own" (94).

To include this sort of commentary in a story primarily concerned with prophecy and extra-sensory perception is typical of Child. She combined mysticism, fantasy, and social commentary in other stories as well, such as "The Beloved Tune," in which the power of music holds a family together, and "Hilda Silfverling," in which an unwed mother wrongfully convicted of infanticide is punished by being "frozen" for one hundred years, then revived in the 1830s (she eventually marries her own great-grandson). Though Child often complained that her mystical, artistic inclinations were stifled by her reform work, her Platonic belief that the material world was merely a shadow of another world less visible but more real underwrote the reform literature I have examined here. It provided her with a wedge to break through conventional wisdom and with a rationale for encouraging her readers to try to see beyond their own identities and superficial differences.

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Child all but stopped writing for magazines when she turned her attention to *The Progress of Religious Ideas* in 1848, though she did contribute several stories to the *Liberty Bell* and the *Atlantic Monthly* in the late 1850s and early '60s.\(^5\) And some of her most important work as a writer and editor was still to come in the form of books, such as her post-war novel *A Romance of the Republic* (1867); Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), which Child edited and introduced; and *The Freedman's Book* (1865), a collection of writings for emancipated slaves.\(^5\) In those books and others Child would continue her efforts to break down barriers of ethnicity, religion, class, and gender and to encourage her readers to embrace her optimistic vision of the future, in which "the walls of cast and sect" would melt in "the golden twilight of universal love."\(^5\)

Because Child based her reform work on the principle that Americans needed to change completely how they thought about themselves and others, her magazine writing often did challenge what Chomsky refers to as the "state religion." To put it another way, she provided not merely "inoculation"—Roland Barthes' term for superficial criticisms of bourgeois ideology that ultimately reinforce its power—but a thoroughgoing critique of her readers' values.\(^6\) While Child often appealed to the very prejudices she was trying to break down--claiming blacks
had "white" hearts or having poor immigrants speak like members of the established middle class--she simultaneously questioned what it means to be "black," "white," "Indian," "prostitute," "criminal," "male," and "female." Her magazine writing provides an example of how a writer could assault the dominant ideology of her time from inside one of its citadels--or, to return to my central metaphor, one of its prison-houses. Her ability to challenge the very epistemology of most of her readers, to tell people what they did not want to hear, will seem even more impressive when compared to the predicament of a magazinist who set out to expose and reform the prison-house itself: Edgar Allan Poe.
Notes to Chapter Four


5 David Child's financial problems proved to be chronic. He was imprisoned for debt in 1830 after losing an appeal in a libel suit. Deborah Pickman Clifford reports, "Many years later a neighbor remembered the sight of the celebrated Mrs. Child hurrying down the street three times each day with David's dinner pail swinging on her arm" (Crusader for Freedom: A Life of Lydia Maria Child [Boston: Beacon, 1992], 81).


7 Clifford, 213.


10 Child commented on the random variety of the "Letters": "I told you they would be of every fashion, according to my changing mood; now a mere panorama of passing scenes, then childlike prattle about birds or mosses; now a serious exposition of facts, for the reformer's use, and then the poet's path, on winged Pegasus, far up into the blue" (*Letters from New York* [New York: C. S. Francis; Boston: James Munroe, 1843], 257).


27 "Letters from New York: Number X," National Anti-Slavery Standard 2 (1841): 79. Two years later, after walking through New York on Christmas Day, Child wrote that her "tour of observation, has suggested to my mind many thoughts concerning the present relations of labour and capital. But I forbear; for I see that this path, like every other, 'if you do but follow it, leads to the end of the world'" (Letters from New York, Second Series [New York: C. S. Francis; Boston: J. H. Francis, 1845], 21).

28 Clifford reports that the circulation of the Standard increased from 2,000 to 4,000 between January 1841, three months before Child became editor, and May 1842 (161); the Letters series began in August 1841. On the popularity of the series in the Standard and the Boston Courier, and in book form, see Clifford (185), and Karcher's introduction to Hobomok (181); according to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the two volumes of Letters from New York went through at least seven printings (Contemporaries [Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1900], 130).

29 See, for instance, James Fenimore Cooper's Last of the Mohicans (1826), Robert Montgomery Bird's Nick of the Woods (1837), and William Gilmore Simms' The Yemassee (1835). Nelson discusses representations of Native Americans in those novels as well as Catherine Maria Sedgwick's Hope Leslie in The Word in Black and White. In her article "Vanishing Americans: Gender, Empire, and New Historicism" (American Literature 63 [1991]: 385-404), Lora Romero examines the depiction of "Indians" as forces of nature in The Last of the Mohicans (1826).


See Paul Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), esp. 4-6, 99-104. Like Harriet Beecher Stowe in Fisher's analysis, Child was attempting to "turn a thing..."
into a man" in the public imagination. Child used similar tactics in tracts such as *The Evils of Slavery, and the Cure for Slavery* (1836) and *The Patriarchal Institution, as Described by Members of its Own Family* (1860).


43 Karcher, "Rape," 327.

44 Karcher, "Rape," 328.


46 Karcher, "Rape" 331. For more on the general problem of white, middle-class women writers using sentimental devices to convey their anti-slavery messages, see Sánchez-Eppler, "Bodily Bonds."

47 Walters, 87-89.

48 On Child's editorial practice in regard to these disputes, see Yellin, 57; Clifford, 159-60, 163-64.


"Home and Politics," The Union Magazine of Literature and Art 3 (1848): 63-68. As Clifford notes, "Home and Politics" might be in some way autobiographical: the Childs never had any children, and David never literally gambled away all they owned, but as an ardent Whig he did become obsessed with politics, and he did lose money (though usually on abolitionist-related ventures) as fast as Maria could earn it. For several years the Childs did not live in the same city, an arrangement prompted mainly by financial necessity but still indicative of a willingness to live separately (190-91).


Child wrote several tracts urging emancipation just before the Civil War. She also wrote a biography of her friend Isaac Hopper in 1853 and edited and contributed to a volume of readings for elderly people, Looking Toward Sunset (1865). For a complete listing of books and tracts edited or written by Child, see Clifford, 345-47.

Letters from New York (New York: Charles S. Francis, 1843), 117.

In looking at the world as it is, we shall find it folly to deny that, to worldly success, a surer path is Villainy than Virtue."--Edgar Allan Poe, Marginalia, 1849

"He affects to despise the world while he writes for it."--a reviewer for The Harbinger describing Poe, quoted by Poe in the Broadway Journal, 1845

In 1842, P. T. Barnum paid a man a dollar and a half per day to place four bricks at specific points on Broadway near Barnum's American Museum, then, carrying a fifth brick, to walk from point to point exchanging the brick he had previously set down for the one in his hand, speaking to no one while he performed his task. "At the end of every hour of this work, he was to present a ticket at the Museum, walk through the building and pass out to continue solemnly his brick work." Hundreds of people gathered to watch, and every time the "brick man" entered the museum, curious paying customers followed. The immediate publicity this spectacle created was then multiplied by newspaper and word-of-mouth reports. Barnum was also notorious for hiring a band to play loudly and badly from the museum balcony in order to drive passersby into the building, "out of earshot of the orchestra," and posting advertisements of a violinist upside down to give the impression that the
musician could play standing on his head—all this to attract customers to his museum.

By 1845, when Barnum was still packing audiences into his American Museum, Edgar Allan Poe was reprinting most of his ten years' work as a "magazinist" a few blocks away in the offices of the Broadway Journal. Among the stories he reprinted in the Journal is one that concerns a man whose "occupations" include promenading on a busy street several hours a day to attract customers to a tailor's shop and grinding a beat-up music-mill until someone pays him to "hush up and go on." The loose similarities between Poe's "The Business Man" and Barnum's business practices suggest a more significant connection between these two enigmatic but oddly representative nineteenth-century Americans. As many commentators have noted, the mythological image of Poe the aloof, isolated genius does not reflect the fact that he was deeply engaged in the business of magazine production, constantly trying to find the right formula for success in the business of periodical literature. Like Barnum, Poe sought to capitalize on changes in the social organization of cities; as Neil Harris points out, with more and more people living on their own in boardinghouses, public forms of entertainment such as those Barnum provided brought otherwise isolated urbanites together and helped establish their cultural vocabulary. Similarly, magazine editors like Poe hoped to create communities of readers for
their weeklies and monthlies, offering a more personal shared experience than daily newspapers could supply. Barnum and Poe, like thousands of other businessmen, based their careers on their ability to capture the collective imagination of the new city-dwellers; although both were known for their hoaxes, both were interested more in arousing than in fooling the public, with the goal of creating a demand for their "product," be it a "Feejee Mermaid" or a lesson on cryptography. Barnum welcomed public doubt, even as he welcomed rivalry, once he realized that controversy sold tickets. He developed what Harris terms the operational aesthetic, "[a]n approach to experience that equated beauty with information and technique, accepting guile because it was more complicated than candor"—a description that might also apply to Poe's theory of magazine literature.7

Just as Willis, Kirkland, and Child provided their readers with access to other "worlds" that middle-class Americans would not otherwise encounter, Poe also "exposed" a segment of U. S. culture he knew firsthand and had reason to believe readers would want to see: the "magazine prison-house" itself. Like his rival and friend Willis, Poe epitomized the "magazinist," publishing all his tales and sketches in periodicals, then reprinting them in other journals while trying to convince publishers to issue them in book form. But more significantly, Poe wrote
obsessively throughout his career about the industry that gave him his professional identity. Having first gained national attention by denouncing the practices of the publishing coterie surrounding the Knickerbocker in his review of T. S. Fay's Norman Leslie, Poe returned again and again to the subject of magazine-manufactured reputations. He also wrote at length about other inner-workings of the publishing business and, in the chapters on autography and the Literati series, the "personalities" known to the public only through the medium of print. Poe recognized the magazine's importance not only as a conveyor of information and amusement but as a cultural institution. As Hervey Allen pointed out, Poe was "the first journalist to conceive of a magazine on a huge modern scale"; he promoted the medium, theorized about it, and adapted his art to it. He recognized early, as he told Charles Anthon, that "the whole energetic, busy spirit of the age tended wholly to the Magazine literature--to the curt, the terse, the well-timed, and the readily diffused, in preference to the old forms of the verbose and ponderous and the inaccessible." That insight inspired his career-long pursuit of his own periodical, a project that--unless one counts his brief, hopeless tenure as "editor and proprietor" of the Broadway Journal--was never to materialize.
As was the case with Willis, Kirkland, and Child, Poe's representation of the sphere of society to which he had special access engaged him in some of the central issues confronting Jacksonian America. In his satires, hoaxes, reviews, editorial miscellanies, and sketches of the literati, Poe repeatedly explored the question, how does one "succeed" in modern America? As a writer whose average annual income placed him well below the poverty line, he could not let the question rest for long.1 And while answers based on the idea of natural aristocracy or humility and hard work had sufficed for Willis and Kirkland, Poe suggested that the true solution to the puzzle of success lay in secrets, shortcuts, and dishonesty. Thus, Poe's twin projects--exposing the secrets of the publishing industry while trying to succeed in that trade as a writer/editor/proprietor--engendered a double-vision that informed most of his writing and fostered persistent self-contradictions. Oscillating between condemnation of the amoral practices he associated with the modern "business" of literature and attempts to promote himself through those very practices, Poe's predicament crystallized the dilemma faced by thousands of artists and artisans as American capitalism took shape in the 1830s and '40s.
While considering Poe in relation to nineteenth-century business practices and capitalism in general, it is important to keep in mind that the publishing industry he worked in was not a marginal one; Poe was not merely drawing analogies between literary matters and some separate commercial realm. Rather, as Terence Whalen has recently pointed out, "printing and publishing were at the heart of antebellum economic development," constituting the "single most important industry" in New York City as of 1840. The 1830s and '40s represented the beginning of a new "information age," and the medium that carried (and created) information was print. The rapid increase in the importance of publishing is reflected in Barnum's statement that "there was only one liquid that a man could use in excessive quantities without being swallowed up by it, and that was printer's ink." Barnum, of course, was not referring to the production of poetry and short fiction, but we should bear in mind that the distinction between literary and nonliterary materials was, if anything, even less clear in the 1830s and 1840s than it is today, the columns of weekly newspapers as well as monthly magazines being filled with tales and anecdotes along with news and commentary on local events and reviews of literature and art. Poe, like the other writers I have studied here, wrote in all the modes described above, producing articles that were becoming increasingly important cultural
products. Moreover, despite his insistence that poets and artists were a special breed, Poe recognized that magazine texts were products, commodities designed to sell in large quantities.

The *Southern Literary Messenger* gave Poe his early training in all facets of periodical publishing. As a satirist and critic he was probably influenced by "Solomon Sobersides" (St. Leger L. Carter) and "Oliver Oldschool" (James M. Garrett), who commented frequently in the *Messenger* on the impersonal nature of modern life; their tales and others published before and during Poe's tenure as editor feature the comic exaggeration and implicit criticism of the "modern" temperament that also characterize Poe's burlesques. Perhaps more importantly, Poe learned a good deal about the business of magazine publishing during his association with T. W. White's journal. In his letter to Charles Anthon in 1844, Poe boasted that he had increased its circulation from 700 to 5,500, only a slight exaggeration. He accomplished this feat partly by using other printers' ink to sell "his" publication. Rival papers helped advertise the *Messenger* as the controversy that had begun with Poe's review of T. S. Fay's novel *Norman Leslie* continued; the *Knickerbocker* and the *New York Mirror*, whose writers and editors were Poe's primary targets, helped raise the *Messenger* to national prominence. Meanwhile, Poe reprinted dozens of
extracts hailing the *Messenger's* importance and his own role in its success. The pattern that would characterize Poe's career-long commentary on the publishing business was already in place: in railing against one trick of the trade--the *Knickerbocker* coterie's "puffing" Fay's mediocre novel--he utilized another trick, that of sparking controversy to sell magazines.  

But Poe's experience with the *Messenger* also taught him how inequitable the business of publishing was. He was frustrated by his own lack of control over the character of the journal and by the fact that he remained a salaried employee even as he multiplied the magazine's circulation. Poe's inability to make a decent living from his writing and editing would, of course, contribute to his posthumous mystique; it also undoubtedly shaped his outlook on the business of literature. Although he does seem to have sabotaged any chance at long-term success or financial stability, that alone cannot explain his failure: he was underpaid when he worked for White, Burton, and Graham, and like most magazinists, he could not make a living freelancing. The market dictated that he concentrate on tales, but his proposed collection of them was rejected by Harper Brothers because readers preferred a "single and connected story" for a book; he was told that "republications of magazine articles, known to be such, are the most unsaleable of all literary performances." The resentment
he built up over his own commercial failure poured out in his public writing as well. "The laudation of the unworthy," he wrote in *Graham's* in 1842, "is to the worthy the most bitter of all wrong." As several commentators have noted, Poe's desire for retribution took a sinister form in his fiction, as such characters as Dupin, Montresor, and Hop Frog seem to act out the revenge fantasies of a frustrated writer; but Poe also used the more direct vehicle of literary criticism to avenge the "wrongs" he had suffered.

At times Poe suggested that the best writers necessarily fail to become popular because they concentrate on writing rather than on currying favor with editors and reviewers:

In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, men of genius, too indolent and careless about worldly concerns to bestir themselves after this fashion, have also that pride of intellect which would prevent them, under any circumstances, from even insinuating, by the presentation of a book to a member of the press, a desire to have that book reviewed. They, consequently, and their works, are utterly overwhelmed and extinguished in the flood of apparent public adulation upon which in gilded barges are borne triumphant the ingenious toady and the diligent quack.

Similarly, while he attributes Hawthorne's failure to reach a large audience partly to the latter's lack of originality, he also asserts that "Beyond doubt, this inappreciation of him on the part of the public arose chiefly from the two causes to which I have referred--from the facts that he is neither a man of wealth nor a
quack." Genius, "as a general rule, is poor in worldly goods and cannot write for nothing," wrote Poe in an 1845 installment of Marginalia. "Our genius being thus repressed, we are written at only by our 'gentlemen of elegant leisure.'" Good writers, then, go unappreciated not because the public is incapable of understanding them but because the editors who control book reviews conspire against true talent; and since only the most popular writers could set their own prices, to be overwhelmed or conspired against in the pursuit of "public adulation" was to be deprived of a decent living.

As the passages above suggest, Poe realized that writers like Hawthorne and himself suffered because professional writers—as opposed to "amateur" gentlemen of letters who did not require payment—were locked into a system that undervalued their work. In the 1830s and '40s, most individual publishers and editors still struggled just to keep their publications alive. Facing an increasingly crowded market, editors found that competition with similar "products" was a bigger obstacle than public indifference or illiteracy. But as the business practices and organization of labor associated with modern capitalism were applied to magazine production, a handful of shrewd publishers such as Godey and Graham began to enjoy huge profits. The expansion of their magazines toward a regional or national market encouraged a less personal
organization of labor, one in which writers' and sub-
editors' pay was determined strictly by the value their
employers placed on it. This arrangement could work to the
advantage of a handful of writers, as it did for Irving and
Cooper. But most magazinists, like most factory
operatives, found that while their employers needed them as
a group, as individuals they had little leverage. In a
sense writers had even less leverage than other employees
or contractors because their work, once published, could be
reproduced endlessly in various magazines and papers
without additional compensation. The fact that the most
successful publishers advertised authors in "cyclopedias"
of American literature and as "primary contributors" on the
title pages of their magazines underscores their
increasingly proprietary relationship toward them.

The lack of an international copyright law made
writers even less independent. Congress did not pursue
legislation that publishers, who paid nothing to British
writers they reprinted and--consequently--very little for
the work of American writers, had no immediate reason to
support. The lack of a copyright agreement might actually
have been more a symptom of American writers' economic
status than its cause, though judging from their own
comments, writers saw it as the sole obstacle to their
prosperity. Many publishers must have found it a
convenient scapegoat, an untouchable enemy on which writers
and hired editors could heap their frustrations, for the
general magazines published numerous editorials promoting
international copyright;28 like Willis, Poe wrote
frequently on the subject, especially in the mid-1840s. He
used analogies to other trades in two 1844 *Weekly Mirror*
articles to illustrate how the lack of copyright forced
"poor devil authors" to sell their goods at artificially
low prices.29 "What a butcher would think of veal, as a
marketable commodity, if everybody had an ambition to raise
calves to give away, is very near to the conclusion that a
merely business man would arrive at, in inquiring into the
saleableness of fugitive literature." Poe classifies
writers as artisans to argue that since "God gave [authors]
the monopoly of the vein from which [their finished
product] is worked . . . thoughtsmiths should be better
paid than blacksmiths and goldsmiths."30 The resemblance
between authors and other "smiths" is more telling than the
discrepancy Poe describes: less independent and less able to
control working conditions and compensation, writers, like
artisans of the same period, were becoming employees. In
an 1844 *Marginalia*, Poe complains that the man of genius
cannot write as he chooses under such conditions. "To be
sure, he can write to suit himself--but in the same manner
his publishers print. From the nature of our Copy-Right
law, he has no individual powers."31 In light of these
comments, Poe's career-long quest to publish his own
magazine can be seen as a wage-earner's longing to run his own business. While he was clearly skeptical of the "system" of literary production, his repeated efforts to launch the **Penn** or the **Stylus** indicate his hope that he might profit from that system just as his employers had. Perhaps that hope explains why he blamed the increasingly inequitable publisher/writer relationship on the lack of copyright rather than the other way around.

In "Some Secrets of the Magazine Prison-House," published in the **Broadway Journal** in 1845, Poe blames publishers more directly, though here too he begins by indicting "the want of International Copy-Right Law" for "forcing many of our very best writers into the service of the Magazines and Reviews." Poe acknowledges the difficulty faced by magazine editors and publishers, and he attributes the survival of periodicals to "an ember not altogether quenched among the fires of good feeling for men of letters and literary men, that once animated the American bosom" (1206-07). But sarcasm begins to creep in with the second paragraph: "It would not do (perhaps this is the idea) to let our poor devil authors absolutely starve, while we grow fat, in a literary sense, on the good things of which we unblushingly pick the pocket of all Europe . . . and hence we have Magazines" (1207). In the same tone, Poe describes magazine publishers, who "under certain conditions of good conduct, occasional puffs, and
decent subserviency at all times, make it a point of conscience to encourage the poor devil author with a dollar or two" (1207). He then insists that he does not mean that magazine publishers do not pay well enough, because unlike book publishers, they "pay something," and besides, the real fault lies in the "demagogue-ridden public," which allows itself to be convinced by legislators of the "beauty and conveniency of robbing the Literary Europe on the highway" (1207).

For the remainder of the essay Poe illustrates his point with the case of a young author who is promised handsome pay for an article. He and his family starve for a month while he writes it, and after another four months, despite his reminders to the editor, the article has not appeared and the writer has not been paid. Six months later he demands the article.

No--he can't have it--(the truth is, it was too good to be given up so easily)--"it is in print," and "contributions of this character are never paid for (it is a rule we have) under six months after the issue of your affair, and your money is ready for you--we are business men, ourselves--prompt." (1208)

The author waits, "but Death in the meantime would not." Like the public, which "grow[s] fat" on the picked pocket of Europe, the businessman on whom the author depends "is fatter henceforward and forever to the amount of five and twenty dollars, very cleverly saved, to be spent generously in canvas-backs and champagne" (1209). Despite the title
metaphor, Poe does not refer to authors as prisoners in the essay; instead he compares them to "silk-worms" or "caterpillars": congressional demagogues argue against the "absurdity . . . that a man has any right and title either to his own brains or the flimsy material that he chooses to spin out of them, like a confounded caterpillar as he is" (1207). Harmless and tiny, in contrast to the fattened publishers and public, the author-as-worm does not own even what is "naturally" his. Poe's metaphors portray writers as helpless victims in the power of publishers, and his paranoid tone conveys a fear of never having control over his own career. Though less than two years later Poe would bristle at Willis's publicizing his poverty in an effort to raise funds for him, here he draws attention to the fact that he has personally suffered the indignities he describes. He concludes with an ironic disclaimer, asking readers not to "believe that we write from any personal experience of our own," nor to "make any personal application of our remarks to any publisher now living, it being well known that they are all as remarkable for their generosity and urbanity, as for their intelligence, and appreciation of genius" (1209). That last sarcastic turn against publishers is doubly ironic since Poe would become "editor and proprietor" of the fast-sinking Journal six months later. Poe's satire, then, is partly self-directed on two fronts: he admits (ironically, by denying
it) to being a pathetic, worm-like magazinist, and at the same time attacks the fat men whose place he covets.35

For all his complaints about greedy publishers, copyright, and "gentlemen of elegant leisure," Poe reserved much of his harshest criticism for professional magazinists who became literary lions. In book reviews and burlesques, Poe offered readers opportunities to examine the methods by which writers "rise" in the profession. The fact that Poe was known to use the same methods himself provided occasional hints of irony or self-parody, but the predominant message of Poe's "tomahawking" criticism as well as stories like "Lionizing" and "The Literary Life of Thingum Bob, Esq." remained clear: that the foundations for literary "success" are much shakier than they seem. The practice of "puffing"—overpraising literary works (usually in a review or an editorial notice) out of some ulterior motive—provided Poe with a legitimate line of attack. The December 1835 review of Norman Leslie, which began his career as a "literary mohawk," opens with this smirking diatribe:

Well!—here we have it! This is The book—the book par excellence—the book bepuffed, beplastered, and be-Mirrored: the book "attributed to" Mr. Blank, and "said to be from the pen" of Mr. Asterisk: the book which has been "about to appear"—"in press"—"in progress"—"in preparation"—and "forthcoming:" the book "graphic" in anticipation—"talented" a priori— and God knows what in prospectu. For the sake of every thing puffed, puffing, and puffable, let us take a peep at its contents!36
Of course Poe reveals the novel to be undeserving of the anticipation manufactured by the *Mirror* (of which Fay was co-editor along with Willis and Morris) and the *Knickerbocker*. Poe also challenged the practice of blindly promoting American authors in his *Messenger* review of poetry by Joseph Rodman Drake and Fitz-Greene Halleck, criticizing the notion that critics could improve the state of American literature "by indiscriminate puffing of good, bad, and indifferent." By doing so critics and other readers "find ourselves involved in the gross paradox of liking a stupid book the better, because, sure enough, its stupidity is American." Later in his career Poe assumed the tone of a crusader against self-aggrandizing literary cliques. In a 1841 review of Lambert A. Wilmer's *The Quacks of Helicon*, he allies himself with Wilmer, whom he claims is courageously risking his livelihood in satirizing the New York coteries: "For this reason, and because it is the truth which he has spoken, do we say to him from the bottom of our hearts, 'God speed!'") Poe's sermonic tone-rhetorical questions, Biblical reference, pronouncement of total depravity--continues into the next paragraph:

We repeat it:--it is the truth which he has spoken, and who shall contradict us? He has said unscrupulously what every reasonable man among us has long known to be "as true as the Pentateuch"--that, as a literary people, we are one vast perambulating humbug. He has asserted that we are clique-ridden, and who does not smile at the obvious truism of that assertion? He maintains that chicanery is, with us, a far surer road than
talent to distinction in letters. Who gainsays this? (1006)

For most of the review Poe neglects Wilmer but continues to testify against literary corruption. He imagines that "some twenty or thirty so-called literary personages . . . will now tremble in thinking of the feebleness of the breath which will be adequate to the blowing of it from beneath their feet" (1011). Poe's imagery recalls the "puffs" that elevated those pretenders to their current status: his God-like task is blow down—or deflate—the reputations that have been inflated.

When Poe returns to Wilmer's satire in the final three paragraphs, he qualifies his endorsement; the language of judgment is now directed toward The Quacks of Helicon itself. Ironically, he charges Wilmer with "the sin of indiscriminate censure," a complaint that was levelled repeatedly against Poe and one that certainly applies to this review. As if to remind his readers of his own arrogance, Poe damns a few writers with faint praise: "Mr. Morris has written good songs. Mr. Willis is not quite an ass. Mr. Longfellow will steal, but perhaps he cannot help it (for we have heard such things,)" (1013). If these comments were not enough to cast some doubt upon the seriousness of Poe's censure of indiscriminate censure, he adds, "neither are we all brainless, nor is the devil himself so black as he is painted" (1013). But Poe doubles back finally to praise Wilmer's satire, proclaiming that it
will survive earthly judgment: "the talent, the fearlessness, and especially the design of this book, will suffice to save it even from that dreadful damnation of 'silent contempt' to which editors throughout the country, if we are not very much mistaken, will endeavor, one and all, to consign it" (1013). Thus, Poe blends criticism and metacriticism, using a review to attack reviewers and to position his own judgment on a level above that of the "puffed up" literati.

The metaphor of one's reputation being "puffed up" (not original with Poe, of course)--and thus easily deflated--figures into a set of concerns that pervaded Jacksonian culture. Public speakers and writers of the time used similar imagery to suggest the instability of what appeared to be a solid foundation beneath America's prosperity, especially after the Panic of 1837; reformers often described American society as a volcano on the verge of eruption, arguing that various sins such as slavery, intemperance, and exploitation of workers, by undermining the fragile foundation of American society, could bring about an even greater cataclysm. The Panic itself revealed that the land speculation boom of the early 1830s had created an economy that was, if not volcanic, then at least hollow. Edwin C. Rozwenc's observation that "the American in the Jacksonian generation had a peculiar problem of self-identification and self-esteem," along with
Karen Halttunen's conclusions regarding the pervasiveness of the middle-class concern with hypocrisy, suggests that individual reputations rested on fragile foundations as well. Poe makes this artificiality the theme of two burlesques, in fact: "Lionizing," which appeared in the Messenger in 1835, and "The Man that Was Used Up," originally published in Burton's in 1839.

In the first story, Poe's satire is directed specifically at Willis and the ease with which he became a "lion" in English literary circles, but more generally at the ridiculous means by which celebrity is achieved. Robert Jones (the name the narrator believes is his) attains his lionship on the basis of his large nose and his ability to promote it. Jones's greatest triumphs come when he turns up his nose, first at an artist and then again when he speaks at a gathering of lions: "I spoke of myself;--of myself, of myself, of myself--of Nosology, of my pamphlet, and of myself. I turned up my nose, and I spoke of myself" (182). On the first occasion the artist agrees to pay him a thousand dollars, and on the second the Duchess of Bless-my-Soul (a caricature of Willis's friend Lady Blessington) invites him to Almack's; thus the quickest way to advance one's reputation, Poe suggests, is through arrogance. Jones's reputation is destroyed as easily as it was made, and under equally absurd circumstances (he shoots off the nose of the Elector of
Bluddenuff). Jones's rise and fall reflect the progress of undeserved reputation among literary coteries; indeed, the gathering of parodically-named scholars representing fields ranging from theology to alcohol consumption at the center of the tale recalls Poe's early satire of literary pretension, "The Folio Club."

Similarly, in "The Man that Was Used Up," Brevet Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith, a man of perfect parts who is universally admired, is revealed to be completely artificial. The narrator eventually discovers that Smith (whose title, appropriately, is twice as long as his name) is not even a man, but rather a reputation, a legend, built into the shape of a man. The narrator, like Poe the critic, insists on getting past the facade of appearances and succeeds in exposing a fraud, if only for his own elucidation. And yet Poe, as he often does, turns the joke against his narrator, who is completely taken in by General Smith. After their first conversation, the narrator believes Smith's interests are philosophical, and he finds their talk "instructive," even though Smith merely praises the "wonderful age" and its "mechanical contrivances" without demonstrating any understanding of them. Though the narrator claims he "never heard a more fluent talker," Smith stammers, relies on glittering generalities, and gets the narrator's name wrong. The narrator cannot see past the General's impressive
appearance and advance publicity; a "kind friend" has told him that Smith "was a remarkable man--a very remarkable man--indeed one of the most remarkable men of his age." Thus the narrator--who represents the "average," imperceptive reader, not only believes the advance publicity but surpasses it in his enthusiasm.

Is Smith "used up" by the Kickapoos and Bugaboos or by the revelation of his artificial construction? The answer is both: Poe's literalized metaphor likens the ferocity of critics to that of "Indians" (a commonplace comparison that was, of course, applied to the "tomahawking" critic Edgar Poe). But the effects of the "using up" are only temporary, for Smith has been rebuilt: if we maintain the analogy, he is a writer whose reputation is manufactured. The fact that General Smith can be "used up" by his enemies and yet come back more impressive than ever is echoed in one of Poe's "Fifty Suggestions" (1849): "Newspaper editors seem to have constitutions closely similar to those of the Deities of 'Walhalla,' who cut each other to pieces every day, and yet got up perfectly sound and fresh every morning." Smith's illusion has the effect of the "real," but only until he is exposed: like the poetasters Poe would threaten in the Quacks of Helicon review, he could be "used up" again very easily, if only the public were to see him "undressed," divested of his manufactured reputation.
Poe, of course, could be "used up" as well for his blatant self-promotion and his own unethical practices—a point I will address later in this chapter—but his own vulnerability to such charges did not prevent him from exposing other writers, particularly in regard to plagiarism. He wanted to make clear that to a writer, plagiarism was even worse than an ordinary theft of property or money:

The ordinary pick-pocket filches a purse, and the matter is at an end. He neither takes honor to himself, openly, on the score of the purloined purse, nor does he subject the individual robbed to the charge of pick-pocketism in his own person; by so much the less odious is he, then, than the filcher of literary property. It is impossible, we should think, to imagine a more sickening spectacle than that of the plagiarist, who walks among mankind with an erecter step, and who feels his heart beat with a prouder impulse, on account of plaudits which he is conscious are the due of another. 50

Elsewhere Poe is even more vitriolic: "Is not sympathy for the plagiarist, then, about as sagacious and about as generous as would be sympathy for the murderer whose exultant escape from the noose of the hangman should be the cause of an innocent man's being hung?"51 He refers in both these statements to scenarios in which a more famous writer plagiarizes a relatively unknown writer; if readers ever see the lesser-known writer's work or have the similarity pointed out, they are more likely the more famous writer to be the originator and the obscure writer to be the imitator. This reversal of the class dynamics that
underlies the act of theft--here the rich rob the poor--infuriates Poe, for whom plagiarism is, almost inevitably, the practice of established authors, such as his most famous target, Longfellow. For this reason, Poe's "Longfellow War" was, as Bruce I. Weiner terms it, a class struggle. Indeed, Poe argues in an anonymous article in the Aristidean (and again in the preface to the Literat series) that Longfellow was overrated because of his position as Professor of Modern Languages and Belles Lettres at Harvard and his wealth through marriage. Longfellow's position and influence assured him of generally favorable critical notice (especially from members of his circle) and the perpetuation of his reputation as a literary genius. Although Poe never proclaimed himself an opponent of unrestrained capitalism, here he points to the same principle that Pessen documents and at least a few commentators and labor leaders of Poe's time attacked: that once a "player" on the field of free enterprise has attained a certain level of power, that power multiplies at the expense of prospective competitors.

The making and keeping of a literary reputation through plagiarism and puffery are the subject of Poe's most direct satire on the business of magazine publishing, "The Literary Life of Thingum Bob, Esq." Thingum's first attempt at composition, a pasting together of Dante,
Shakespeare, Homer, and Milton, is "used up" not because it is detected as plagiarism but because the town's editors don't understand the works he has copied. And although Thingum recognizes at this point that "honesty is the best policy," he needs his father's help to write his two-line ode on the "Oil-of-Bob." Later he finds success playing "Thomas Hawk" as a literary critic with a plagiaristic system of composition:

I bought auction copies (cheap) of "Lord Brougham's Speeches," "Cobbett's Complete Works," the "New Slang-Syllabus," the "Whole Art of Snubbing," "Prentice's Billingsgate," (folio edition,) and "Lewis G. Clarke on Tongue." These works I cut up thoroughly with a curry-comb, and then, throwing the shreds into a sieve, sifted out carefully all that might be thought decent, (a mere trifle); reserving the hard phrases, which I threw into a large tin pepper-castor with longitudinal holes, so that an entire sentence could get through without material injury. The mixture was then ready for use. When called upon to play Thomas Hawk, I anointed a sheet of foolscap with the white of a gander's egg; then, shredding the thing to be reviewed as I had previously shredded the books,—only with more care so as to get every word separate--I threw the latter shreds in with the former, screwed on the lid of the castor, gave it a shake, and so dusted out the mixture upon the egg'd foolscap; where it stuck. (1141)

But Thingum owes his career as much to puffery and choice of allies as to plagiarism. His "Oil-of-Bob" ode is championed by the "Lollipop" and its cohorts because it provides them with a chance to abuse the author of another "Oil-of-Bob," the editor of a rival paper. Thus, Thingum becomes a literary lion by inadvertently playing into a battle he knew nothing about. Having learned that he
cannot make a living writing for the "Lollipop," he buys a sixteenth of the "Snapping Turtle" so that he can call himself editor, and proceeds to use that position to place his articles in other papers, simply by praising those papers in the "Turtle." Through this method Thingum is eventually able to take over and combine publications in the manner of Poe's employers William Burton and George Graham, until he has finally "united all the literature of the country in one magnificent Magazine, known everywhere as the 'Rowdy-Dow, Lollipop, Hum-Drum, and GOOSEHERUMFOODLE'" (1145).57

Perhaps the most ironic touch in this thoroughly ironic story is its title. Thingum's life has nothing to do with literature and everything to do with business. His father tells him that "the trade of editor is best" simply because it pays better than politics and is more genteel than the law; Thingum proves that literature is no loftier a trade than those others when, for the sake of his image, he thrashes the man who gave him that valuable advice. Like the poor-devil author in "Some Secrets of the Magazine Prison House," Thingum learns how little value editors place on the work of contributors when Mr. Crab explains that authors usually pay the "Lollipop" for their first publications, but that otherwise, "In a quarter or two after publication of the article--or in a year or two--we make no objection to giving out our note at nine months:--
provided always that we can so arrange our affairs as to be quite certain of a 'burst-up' in six" (1135). Like the editor in "Some Secrets of the Magazine Prison House," then, Mr. Crab delays paying authors until he is not liable for payment. Meanwhile, literature is devalued further by editors who trash Shakespeare and Milton when they think they are reading the work of an unknown writer. Poe's point is that literature in the 1840s is a business like any other; Thingum simply relies on "systems" to create his product and on trickery to sell it (1141). Accordingly, Poe avoids quoting any of Thingum's literary output (and in doing so bypasses some potential comedy) except for the entirety of the poem that makes him famous: "To pen an Ode upon the 'Oil-of-Bob' / Is all sorts of a job" (1132). When, in the last paragraph, Thingum declares over and over that he wrote ("Ye Gods, did I not write? . . . Through joy and through sorrow, I--wrote."). the irony is clear. Thingum's narrative describes tricks for avoiding writing, yet in the corrupt world he inhabits (and eventually controls) his plagiarisms, puffs, and petty attacks on rivals now constitute "writing." When he insists that his genius is "but diligence after all," though, the intent is not altogether ironic: while Thingum might be exhibiting false modesty, Poe is linking him to author/editors like Willis, who work harder at their reputations than they do at their professed craft.
In two more stories about the magazine business, Poe focuses on other routes to success that have little or nothing to do with one's ability to write. Although "How to Write a Blackwood Article" and its sequel, "A Predicament," lampoon a specific British magazine, the popularity of Blackwood's and the sensation tale as a genre allow us to read the story as a more generally-directed parody. In fact, Poe Americanizes the story by presenting Psyche Zenobia as the representative of a Philadelphia women's club (whose acronym is PRETTYBLUEBATCH). She reports that "we now take it [Blackwood's] for our model upon all themes, and are getting into rapid notice accordingly"; indeed, Miss Zenobia fancies herself a literary lion, beginning her narrative (with self-confidence worthy of Robert Jones or Thingum Bob), "I presume everybody has heard of me." Mr. Blackwood reveals to her some secrets of successful magazine writing: political articles are constructed in the manner of Thingum Bob's literary criticism, while sensation tales are written according to one of several formulas. Instead of developing a personal style, a writer need only plug in a certain set of phrases and allusions to achieve "the tone metaphysical," "the tone transcendental," or "the tone heterogenous" (342). But Mr. Blackwood gives his most practical advice early in their meeting: he tells Miss Zenobia she must have "very black ink, and a very big pen,
with a very blunt nib." He warns her that her pen must never be mended, because "You may take it for granted, that when manuscript can be read it is never worth reading" (339). Here Poe not only comments ironically on the arrogance that constitutes "professionalism" (Poe, by contrast, took pride in his own handwriting) but implies that editors' literary values have been turned upside-down: just as Thingum Bob built a literary career by not writing, Mr. Blackwood welcomes stories that cannot be read (that is, understood). Mystification, whether in the metaphysical, transcendental, or heterogenous tone, characterizes the most popular work in a genre that, according to Poe, demanded clarity and unity.

"X-ing a Paragrab" concerns a specific magazine article that cannot be read, in this case because John Smith, the editor of the Nopolis Gazette, steals the o's from the printer's font to embarrass a rival editor, Touch-and-go Bullet-head. The printer rationalizes replacing Bullet-head's o's with x's by observing that "nobody's going to read the fellow's trash anyhow." Everyone does read the x-ed version, however, because it is mysterious and "unreadable"; Mr. Blackwood's theory is borne out. Faced with an unreadable text, the population of Nopolis places its own meaning on x: they assume that it conceals some "diabolical treason," and consequently they would have ridden Bullet-head on a rail had he not already left town.
In fact, the townspeople are so affected by the mystification that their speech becomes infused with x's. Thus Poe not only satirizes the public's obtuseness and thirst for mere sensation but also demonstrates a unique feature of literary battles: editors use the audience as a weapon against each other. And once again Poe suggests that tricks are the most expedient way to overcome competition and have the literary field to oneself; whether Smith knows how the plot will unfold or not, his treachery pays off. In each of these stories, as in his criticism and editorial writing, Poe "reveals" that success in the business of periodical literature is determined not by how well one can write but by how well one can steal ideas, "manufacture" articles, or simply outwit the competition in a contest of self-promotion.

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Poe's satirical vision of the magazine industry reflects a larger cultural anxiety over the moral implications of modern business practices. As Karen Halttunen and Gary Lindberg have argued, the confidence man came to represent the dangers of an increasingly anonymous, urbanized America. Advice literature and sensation novels such as George Lippard's The Quaker City warned readers to beware attractive appearances and assurances of sincerity. Contemporary commentators recognized the implicit element of confidence game in modern institutions. Child, as we
have seen, insisted that marketplace values were illusory; similarly, the New York Herald in 1849 observed that the stock market was "The Confidence Man on a Large Scale."61 And David Reese, in his book Humbugs of New York (1838), focused not on small-time swindlers but on any system that "is found to "steal away men's brains," in ingenious sophisms and false logic."62 Reese describes New York as "the theatre of humbugs; the chosen area of itinerating mountebanks, whether they figure in philosophy, philanthropy, or religion" (17). At the same time, though, the popularity of folkloric trickster figures such as the "Yankee peddlar" and Davy Crockett, associated not with modern urban life but with an American knack for "getting ahead," suggests that while Americans feared confidence men, they were willing to endorse certain forms of duplicity for financial gain.63

Poe denounced shortcuts to success as "villainy" in his reviews and satires on the literary scene, but when he extended that satire beyond the magazine prison house out into the street, his position was less consistent. In both "The Business Man" and "Diddling," he depicts business as humbug; but in the first story he treats his subject with the same disdain he shows for Thingum Bob, whereas in the latter he reveals some admiration for the diddler's ability to succeed by his own wits. "The Business Man" satirizes the early nineteenth-century worship of "self-made"
millionaires, reducing their achievements to swindles or extortion. Poe carefully distances the self-proclaimed business man Peter Proffit ("Peter Pendulum" in the first published version) from established professions; Proffit distinguishes himself from "geniuses" who embark on "fantastic" or "eccentric" pursuits such as merchandising or manufacturing. Those "out of the usual way" professions involve some risk-taking, whereas the narrator's jobs depend only on method or system for their success; Proffit represents new, innovative ways of making money. His "method" consists of creating problems people will pay him to "solve" rather than offering his services to a market he cannot control. The "Eye-Sore trade," "mud-dabbling," and organ-grinding amount to extortion, as Proffit is paid not to be a nuisance. His other businesses also involve either setting traps for customers or otherwise circumventing the laws of supply and demand; for example, when the legislature, in an effort to reduce the cat-population, offers a premium for cat-tails, Proffit begins breeding cats for the purpose of cutting their tails off.

Poe's business man, in this sense, utilizes the sort of "method" that would come to define consumer capitalism: he creates demand or in some way ensures that his product will be needed, leaving nothing to chance. By the 1830s and '40s name-brand advertising was coming into use to control the price of manufactured goods; rather than
continuing to let the consumer dictate prices by forcing competitors to undersell each other, producers used brand advertising to affix a standard of quality to a product or company name and put a price on the name representing that standard. Like Peter Proffit, sellers of goods and services were able to "create" demand; by 1841 the first advertising agents were facilitating this process. Not surprisingly, the first business Proffit goes into is advertising: he shows off suits tailored by his employers, Messrs. Cut & Comeagain, and brings potential customers to the shop. For all his pride in being a "made man" (an expression that recalls General John A. B. C. Smith), Poe's business man is clearly pathetic, willing to get beaten up or to cut off cats' tales for money. But such is the state of modern business; as in the field of literature, "genius" (here represented by such "out of the usual way" occupations as dry-goods dealing or blacksmithing) is being replaced by "method" or "system." Just as Thingum Bob and Mr. Blackwood systematize reviewing and tale-writing, Proffit systematizes other forms of commerce.

Like "The Business Man," "Diddling Considered as One of the Exact Sciences" (originally "Raising the Wind") suggests that swindles represent normal business practices rather than aberrations. "Man," writes Poe, "is an animal that diddles." In fact, Poe links diddling to standard
business practices even more explicitly here than in "The Business Man":

His [the diddler's] business is retail, for cash, or approved paper at sight. Should he ever be tempted into magnificent speculation, he then, at once, loses his distinctive features, and becomes what we term "financier." This latter word conveys the diddling idea in every respect except that of magnitude. A diddler may thus be regarded as a banker in petto—a "financial operation," as a diddle at Brobdingnag." (870)

Yet despite its similarities to "The Business Man" in purpose and structure, "Diddling" replaces the first-person narrator with a seemingly objective third-person voice. Moreover, the title and structure imitate a conventional form of antebellum magazine writing, the analytical essay. Writing in this third-person analytical mode, Poe slides into the role of exposcer, which he had perfected as literary editor of the Messenger. Thus the satire, for a change, is not focused on the speaker, but neither is it focused on the putative subject; instead, Poe's derision is directed at the gullible "honest citizens" who fall prey to the diddler's tricks.

In "Diddling," Poe seems genuinely to admire the work he describes. He introduces his examples with phrases such as "[a] very good diddle is this" (871) or "quite a respectable diddle is this" (872). Others are "bold," "neat" (874), "very minute" (875), "very clever" (876), "small, but . . . scientific" (875), and "rather elaborate" (877). Indeed, while some of the diddles are barely worthy
of Peter Proffit (such as posing as a bill- or toll-collector), others demonstrate the intellectual sophistication of the diddler who, like Dupin, succeeds by knowing how other people think. For instance, he knows, as most confidence men do, that a shop owner or a landlady will trust a "gentleman" and that most people become vulnerable at the appearance of easy money. Accordingly, Poe's diddlers are introduced, respectively, as "a polite and voluble individual" (871), "a well-dressed individual" (872), "an official looking person" (873), and "a traveller, portmanteau in hand" (873); and nearly all beguile their victims with unusual financial incentives. Furthermore, Poe praises the personal qualities of the diddler—perseverance, ingenuity, nonchalance, originality—even as he exposes him. Under "Perseverance," for example, Poe remarks, "He steadily pursues his end, and Ut canis a corio nunquam absterrebitur uncto ["as a dog is never driven from a greasy hide"], so he never lets go of his game" (870). And under "Nonchalance" he notes approvingly that the diddler "is not at all nervous. He never had any nerves" (870-71). In some respects, the diddler's personality is paradoxical: he is motivated by self interest, scorning "to diddle for the mere sake of the diddle"; but later Poe reveals that the importance the diddler places on originality would force him to "return a purse . . . upon discovering that he had obtained it by an
unoriginal diddle" (871). While the "ingredients" are for the most part admirable, the "compound" is a con man—a realization that sheds light on Poe's contention that "man is an animal that diddles."

Since here the diddler is not merely a representative businessman but a representative "man," Poe's depiction of him is more ambivalent. Once again Poe has played the role of the exposé, but one senses that with "Diddling" he reveals more about himself than about his rivals. The final quality Poe attributes to the diddler suggests the strictly personal satisfaction, not dependent on validation from an audience or peers, that one can imagine Poe knew well:

Grin:—Your true diddler winds all up with a grin. But this nobody sees but himself. He grins when his daily work is done—when his allotted labors are accomplished—at night in his own closet, and altogether for his own entertainment. He goes home. He locks his door. He divests himself of his clothes. He puts out his candle. He gets into bed. He places his head upon the pillow. And all this done, your diddler grins. This is no hypothesis. It is a matter of course. I reason à priori, and a diddle would be no diddle without a grin. (871)

Whether or not we attribute this à priori reasoning to Poe himself, the passage points to an identification between the exposé (Poe's persona) and the perpetrator. Implicit in Poe's ability to reveal the "secrets" of the magazine business is the fact that he is, after all, an insider. This doubling or self-division, so fundamental to such classic tales as "William Wilson," "The Fall of the
House of Usher," and "William Wilson," also pervades nearly all of his writing on the magazine industry and the business world. Poe is divided between, on one hand, regarding the practices that allow "quacks" and "toadies" to succeed while he fails as reprehensible, worthy of destruction; and, on the other, seeing the world of commerce, inside the publishing industry and outside it, as part of an amoral universe, one in which someone with his analytical powers should ultimately triumph.69

As early as 1836, when he had "exposed" Maelzel's automaton chess player in the Messenger, Poe had analyzed the exhibition largely by identifying with Maelzel, by knowing how the con artist thinks; he treated the case not as a fraud or a violation of public trust but as a game in which he was one of the participants, along with Maelzel and the other observers who had sought to expose it. The "Autography" chapters of the same year gave Poe another forum to display his skill as a reader, as if to suggest that he could glean literary merit even from penmanship. His competitors in the literary marketplace are, as a group, "used up"—not just by Poe's critiques of their autographs (which are actually critiques of their work) but by the fact that all of them take the trickster Joseph A.-Z. Miller seriously, even though almost none of them respond favorably to his requests. 70 But, perhaps inadvertently, Poe directs some of the satire at himself.
Within the fiction of the article, he, too, is "taken in" by Miller. The introductory sketch also suggests an absurdity in this kind of explication. Poe was already becoming known for overly meticulous, pedantic criticism: the minute analysis of handwriting, seals, and paper quality comes across as a burlesque of a critic who takes his work too seriously. Especially when one considers that Poe wrote the responses to Miller's letters himself, "Autography" also raises the possibility that Poe's pursuit of the "truth" beneath literary diddling is merely another kind of diddling. Commenting on this inconsistency regarding the status of truth, Lindberg situates Poe in the confidence-man tradition: "It is as if Poe were testing some compact about what is credible, and showing personal credulity to be far more erratic than our social and literary conventions would imply" (52); truth for Poe is "not what can be shown and verified [but] what can be made compelling" (56), and meaning "is simply a device that brings about a desired effect" (57). Poe tries to have it both ways, to crusade against deception but also to experiment with the idea that truth is a rhetorical negotiation rather than an absolute." The conflict between those two impulses helps to explain Poe's undermining his own position as an exposer of truth in such articles as "Autography" and "Some Secrets of the Magazine Prison House."
This questioning of "truth" as a stable entity relates closely to the radical subjectivity of perception that plays such a large role in Poe's fiction. One of the first things most readers notice about "psychological" tales such as "William Wilson" and "The Man of the Crowd" is how difficult it is to tell what is "really" happening, whether or not the "truth" can be ascertained at all. The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym is filled with problems of perception, from Pym's hallucinations in the hold of the Grampus to the crisis of interpretation that confronts the crew of the Jane Guy on the island of Tsalal. In other stories, Poe suggests that belief can give the "artificial" the effect of "reality," a principle we have seen at work in "The Man That Was Used Up." In "Mystification," von Jung uses an "absurd account of a duel between two baboons" as a substitute for an impenetrable dueling text; because Hermann cannot understand it, the absurd account works as well—if not better—than an actual dueling manual. And in "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," Bedloe's belief that he is psychically connected to Oldeb seems to cause that very connection, resulting in his death. Deception is so integral to perception that someone (like von Jung, or the diddler, or Thingum Bob) who can predict how certain people will (mis)read the signs that confront them can easily manipulate those people.
Poe both thematizes this principle of deception and puts it into practice in his hoaxes. Poe the expositor wants to show how easily readers in the information age can be deceived; Poe the amoral "diddler" wants to deceive them to demonstrate his superiority, even if he is only allowed to "grin" privately at his triumph. These dual impulses are clearly at work in Poe's first hoax, "Hans Pfaall," which appeared in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1835. Most of the story consists of Pfaall's description of his voyage to the moon—a mixture of mystification and seemingly plausible explanations of how he overcomes such impossible obstacles as gravity and lack of oxygen. Poe/Pfaall's diction is scientific and serious; footnotes relate his discoveries to other "scientific" texts. Yet Poe "exposes" the hoax by setting it within an obviously fictional frame: the depiction and the names of the Rotterdamians indicate a caricature somewhat like that of "The Devil in the Belfry"; and Pfaall's narrative is delivered by way of a balloon made of dirty newspapers. The balloon's construction is one of several references to papers and printing that underscore the notion that the truth of Hans's unparalleled adventure is strictly textual; that is, the story is true to the extent that a writer can make it function as truth. Like von Jung's mystification, this "fake" text achieves the effect of what it pretends to be. But unlike von Jung's baboon story, Pfaall's text mystifies not only its
fictional audience (the Rotterdamians) but also the readers of Poe's story. Pfaall's narrative is too long and detailed not to be an attempt to draw readers in, to make them forget the fictional frame. The closing remarks for that reason come as a surprise; and Poe emphasizes the surprise by teasing his readers, placing them in the position of the Rotterdamians who disprove Pfaall's narrative:

Some of the observers made themselves ridiculous by decrying the whole business as nothing but a hoax. But hoax, with these sort of people, is, I believe, a general term for all matters above their comprehension.73

And yet we should take seriously Poe's complaint that certain "overwise" citizens dismiss as a mere hoax whatever they do not understand, for within Pfaall's narrative, there is something to be said for believing what one reads. Pfaall's situation mirrors that of the reader as he gleans the real possibility of a lunar voyage from a pamphlet.

The limited nature of my education in general, and more especially my ignorance on subjects connected with natural philosophy, so far from rendering me diffident of my own ability to comprehend what I had read, or inducing me to mistrust the many vague notions which had arisen in consequence, merely served as a farther stimulus to imagination; and I was vain enough, or perhaps reasonable enough, to doubt whether those crude ideas which, arising in well-regulated minds, have all the appearance, may not often in effect possess all the force, the reality, and other inherent properties, of instinct or intuition. (957)

Here again is Poe's version of the "operational aesthetic": especially at a time when Americans were becoming
increasingly dependent on printed information, to win the reader's belief--or confidence--was to manufacture truth.\textsuperscript{74} Poe explicates this principle with a note added to the story in the 1839 \textit{Tales}, in which he compares "Hans Pfaall" to the moon hoaxes of Richard Adams Locke and "one Mr. D'Avisson." Locke's stunt, a newspaper article describing discoveries made with a telescope rather than a journey to the moon, attracted more attention and fooled more people than Poe's, not only because its premise was less far-fetched but because Locke sustained the illusion that his was an actual news article.\textsuperscript{75} But Poe insists that whereas Locke's article was inconsistent with available scientific knowledge, "[i]n `Hans Pfaall' the design is original, inasmuch as regards an attempt at \textit{verisimilitude}, in the application of scientific principles (so far as the whimsical nature of the subject would permit), to the actual passage between the earth and the moon" (1001). While there is certainly a difference between writing about an actual moon voyage and writing about an imaginary one, Poe implicitly asks whether there is any difference between \textit{reading} about an actual moon voyage and reading about an imaginary one, provided the writer has made the details of the trip plausible and consistent with the known laws of science. In the \textit{Messenger} version, Poe ended with this bantering assertion: "I wonder, for my part, you do not perceive at once that the letter--the document--is
Poe remained preoccupied with blurring that distinction throughout his career, but he rarely tried to carry out "pure" hoaxes. "The Balloon Hoax" probably comes closest, but even in that case Poe gave himself away by selling the story to the same paper that had carried Locke's moon hoax nine years earlier, a "coincidence" that several contemporary observers noted. He was even reported to have revealed the hoax himself to a crowd outside the publisher's door on the day of its publication.\textsuperscript{78} If such a story is true, it bears out Poe's assertion that "a certain order of mind" is never satisfied with knowing how to do a thing or even with doing it: "It must both know and show how it was done."\textsuperscript{79} When Poe did not show how a thing was done by explaining it, he sometimes deflated it by referring, for example, to "bugaboo tales--such as this" at the end of "The Premature Burial," or by casting doubt on the authorship of Pym's narrative in the editorial frame and suggesting that Pym died in the last chapter yet still managed to write his book.\textsuperscript{80}
When Poe did sustain the illusion of actual reportage, his hoaxes naturally had greater success; but in these cases he seemed less interested in the hoax than in the philosophical or pseudoscientific content of the articles. "Mesmeric Revelation" and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" provided Poe with a way to discuss the implications of a science in which he took a sincere interest. In those two articles, as in Eureka, Poe does not seem to be trying to fool anyone so much as to get readers' attention. The bantering tone of "Hans Pfaall" and "The Premature Burial" is not apparent in these stories because here, Poe suggests, the usual distinction between truth and falsity does not apply; if his article is believable, it has the effect of truth. Poe later expressed surprise that "Valdemar" was accepted as literal truth, even though he wanted it to be taken seriously; describing that story and "Mesmeric Revelation," Poe told the London Popular Record of Modern Science in 1846, "I thought that by presenting my speculations in the garb of vraisemblance--giving them as revelations--I would secure for them a hearing."  

Poe did expect readers to be taken in by his last hoax, "Von Kempelen and His Discovery," a story aimed at dampening the excitement of the gold rush. Despite some bantering in the form of references to hoaxing (specifically to Locke's "moon Hoax" and Maelzel's chess
player), Poe sustains the illusion of an earnest report. He is aiming in "Von Kempelen" not to draw attention to his own scientific or philosophic speculations but to exert influence on public behavior through his "verisimilar style." The discovery of a process for turning lead into gold was perhaps too much for the public to swallow (especially when it came from so minor a paper as the *Flag of Our Union*, and more particularly from Poe, who even mentions himself in the text). And yet Poe told Evert Duyckinck he believed "nine persons out of ten (even among the best informed) will believe the quiz (provided the design does not leak out before publication) and that thus, acting as a sudden, although of course very temporary, check to the gold-fever, it will create a stir to some purpose." The fact that Poe believed his story could have such an effect indicates his faith in the magazines' ability to "create" truth. Poe's hoaxes vary greatly in conception and purpose, but in one way or another they all suggest that newspapers and magazines have the ability to make truth more a matter of negotiation or persuasion and less a condition of absolute factuality.

Yet Poe's hoaxes not only reveal his conflicted relationship with his audience and his penchant for destabilizing "truth" as an absolute value; they also exemplify his bifurcated view of the pursuit of wealth and
notoriety. He demonstrates the exact science of creating a sensation (or some other desired effect) under false pretenses, but in the process he gives himself away, as if to admit guilt or at least acknowledge that the hoax is a transgression of some moral code he maintains. Just as Poe must reveal the pathetic side of the diddler in "The Business Man," his hoaxes contain their own undermining: wanting to show how a thing is done is, as we learn in "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Cask of Amontillado," next door to confessing your crime. Throughout his career as a magazinist, Poe made use of the very practices he condemned and exposed in print, but he also gave himself away often enough to give credence to the notion that he knew the Imp of the Perverse firsthand.

Indeed, Poe's personal reputation as a diddler reinforces one's suspicion that the relationship between duplicity and success was more than an intellectual problem for him. Margaret Fuller, for one, reportedly remarked that he "always seemed to me shrouded in an assumed character." And this was the actual case at times: as a soldier and as a writer, Poe used several aliases and pen names, including Edgar Perry, "Quarles," William Henry Poe (his brother), Henri Le Rennet, Lyttleton Barry, and E. S. J. Grey. C. F. Briggs complained of his one-time partner at the Broadway Journal, "I have never met a person so utterly deficient of high motive. He cannot conceive of
anybody's doing anything, except for his own personal advantage." At times, this too would seem a reasonable charge. Poe promoted the poetry of Sarah Anna Lewis in what was nearly an open exchange for financial help in the late 1840s; and considering his extreme poverty during this period, one must suspect that his fervent, more-or-less simultaneous pursuits of Elmira Royster and Sarah Helen Richmond were primarily opportunistic (especially the former). Most significantly, perhaps, his dealings with other magazinists—such as Rufus Griswold and Thomas Dunn English—sometimes reflected those of his fictional diddlers.

And like Thingum Bob, Poe promoted himself through a variety of means. The fabricated biography he provided the Philadelphia Saturday Museum in 1843 exaggerated his literary and non-literary achievements as well as the "nobility" of his ancestry. Poe, who in advocating a profession of authorship had attacked the dominance of "men of leisure," here claims to be "descended from one of the most respectable families in Baltimore," and "closely connected with many of the best families in Maryland." The more specific details of this widely-circulated article made their way—as fact—into Poe biographies well into the twentieth century. Rather than relying on the puffing system, Poe wrote favorably of himself in anonymous articles in the Aristidean in 1845: first, in the context
of the "Longfellow war," he not only seconded his own observations of the famous poet's plagiarisms but credited "Mr. Poe" with having been modest in his accusations; and later, in a review of his own Tales, he complained that the collection did not represent Poe's best work but still took the opportunity to point out the subtleties in the stories that other reviewers were missing. Poe even promoted himself as an expert diddler in the wake of the Boston Lyceum incident of 1845, when, unable to compose a new work for a reading, he instead recited his early poem "Al Aaraaf" (retitled "The Messenger Star"); rather than keeping quiet or admitting that he had resorted to that tactic in desperation, he gloated in the Broadway Journal that he had "quizzed" on the Bostonians with a piece of juvenilia, and that they had fallen for it. Poe demonstrated that same audacity and recklessness with facts in the popular Literati of New York City series, particularly when an arguably slanderous sketch of Thomas Dunn English created a war of words that ended in a well-publicized lawsuit (which Poe won) in 1846. Two years later, Poe suggested to George Eveleth that he might prosper through a literary version of Peter Proffit's assault and battery business: "the peevishness [directed toward English] was all 'put on' . . . Were I able to afford so expensive a luxury as personal and especially as
refutable abuse, I would willingly pay any man $2000 per annum to hammer away at me all the year round."8

Furthermore, Poe's attacks on plagiarism were not quite the high-minded crusade he pretended they were. As Robert Jacobs shows, Poe brought most of his accusations "against second-rate poets who were doing no more than writing about conventional subjects in the period style."9

Joel Porte points out that Poe was selective in his choice of targets, praising poets who were at least as imitative as Longfellow if their poetry sounded like his own.9 More importantly, Poe was vulnerable to charges of plagiarism himself, having lent his name to Thomas Wyatt's Conchologist's First Book and having freely appropriated ideas and phrases for his poems and whole portions of published texts for his stories, notably Pym and The Journal of Julius Rodman. Poe's positioning himself above the petty literati wars he satirizes in "Thingum Bob" and "X-ing a Paragrab" is similarly specious: as an ally of "Young America" in his ongoing feud with the Knickerbocker circle, he certainly indulged in the kind of cheap literary warfare he burlesques in "Thingum Bob" and "X-ing a Paragrab."9

But as with the hoaxes and the lyceum incident, Poe seemed determined to call attention to his own plagiaristic tendencies and engagement in literary battles. His debate with "Outis" (Greek for "nobody"), whom he invented to
provide himself with a foil in the "Longfellow War," provides a poignant example: Poe uses one deception--arguing with an opponent of his own creation--to reveal another, his own literary "borrowing." Defending Longfellow on the grounds that similarities between two poems might be inadvertent, Outis describes "The Raven"'s similarities to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and an anonymous poem entitled "The Bird of the Dream" (which, according to Burton R. Pollin, Poe also wrote). Poe could easily refute such charges, but raising the issue at all was foolhardy: his celebrated poem's unusual rhythm and at least one line have their source in Elizabeth Barrett's "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," and in content it resembles a ballad entitled "The Raven; or, The Power of Conscience," which had appeared five years earlier in an English magazine.

In the "postscript" to his multipart reply in the Broadway Journal, Poe reached a sort of compromise with Outis on the issue of plagiarism, claiming that the best argument his opponent could have made was that "no true poet can be guilty of a meanness--that the converse of the proposition is a contradiction in terms." Poets might plagiarize, but they do so unconsciously: "What the poet intensely admires, becomes thus, in very fact, although only partially, a portion of his own intellect." When he "regenerates" it, "it springs up with all the vigor of a
new birth--its absolute originality is not even a matter of suspicion--and when the poet has written it and printed it, and on its account is charged with plagiarism, there will be no one in the world more entirely astounded than himself" (759). As Sidney Moss notes, this shift in Poe's position raises more questions than it answers; mainly it undermines Poe's crusade against literary theft, for while Poe still rules out Outis's argument that no such thing as plagiarism exists, if all true poets are exempt from the accusation except when they copy word-for-word, the term--and the offense--is meaningless. Poe needed to collapse his own argument because he was as vulnerable to charges of plagiarism as Longfellow or virtually any other American writer of his time. Having made his name as an exposer of literary dishonesty, he now argues that a value-neutral situation exists in literary influence and appropriation, a position that excuses his own poetic borrowings.

With "The Philosophy of Composition" Poe further demystifies his own work. Published the year after the "voluminous correspondence" of the Longfellow war, this article offered readers a rare "peep behind the scenes . . . at the wheels and pinions--the tackle for scene-shifting--the step-ladders and demon-traps--the cock's feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary historio."96 "The Raven," while
not so jerry-built as the average composition, was, according to Poe, as mechanically produced. "It is my design to render it manifest that no point in "The Raven"'s composition is referable either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem" (15). Although Poe's authority is somewhat enhanced by the relative ease with which he can seize readers' emotions, the traditional source of the poet's power—inspiration—disappears." So does the distinction between great literature and hack work, and of course between original and unoriginal writing; as Michael Allen describes it, "cool contrivance, deception, and superior condescension are imagined as central to the business of achieving popularity" (165). How, by this theory, can one distinguish between the "true poet" who is incapable of meanness, and the penny-a-liner—or between the writer and the businessman? (Like Peter Proffit, Poe claims to have adhered to a system in composing "The Raven." ) The revealer of tricks argues here that all literature is a trick;\(^9\) if Poe cannot position himself above it, he must try to succeed as a trickster.

But with Poe, no definitive-sounding statement like "The Philosophy of Composition" can actually be definitive. For although at certain times when he was flush with self-confidence he thought he could succeed on the world's
amoral terms, at other times his resentment against the undeserving "lions" took over, and he insisted that standards of honesty in both literary and business matters should be maintained. For that reason, perhaps, he compulsively alluded in print to his own literary offenses. In his 1842 review of Twice-Told Tales in Graham's, for example, Poe claimed that "Howe's Masquerade" imitated "William Wilson"; while that charge was clearly ridiculous, particularly since Hawthorne's story had been published first, Poe quoted passages from "Howe's Masquerade" that bore a more noticeable similarity to a tale he was publishing for the first time in the same issue of Graham's, "The Mask of the Red Death." In some of Poe's later "marginal" writings, he seems to be berating himself: having sneered at nearly every writer the public considered great, he asserts in "A Chapter of Suggestions" (1845) that "of all despicable things, your habitual sneerer at real greatness, is the most despicable. . . . there will always exist a set of homunuculi, eager to grow notorious by the pertinacity of their yelpings at the heels of the distinguished." Pointing out a specific "sneering" technique in "Fifty Suggestions"--"A common trick is that of decrying, impliedly, the higher, by insisting upon the lower, merits of an author"--Poe alludes to a tactic he had used routinely in the Literati series. As Michael Allen has shown, since Poe was heavily influenced by the British
reviews, "How to Write a Blackwood Article" parodies elements of his own fiction as well, particularly the learned tone, use of foreign expressions, and, of course, sensational plots. Likewise, in "Thingum Bob," Poe satirizes the practice he was best known for during most of his career, playing "Thomas Hawk." G. R. Thompson has argued that self-division and self-parody are essential to Poe's "romantic irony," and he points out that Poe's comedies often parody his "serious" tales: "Valdemar" becomes "Some Words with a Mummy," the Dupin tales become "Thou Art the Man," "Usher" and "Berenice" become "The Premature Burial," and "The Cask of Amontillado" becomes "Hop Frog." By parodying his tales of sensation and psychology, Poe implied that even his most effective fiction was, like "The Raven," formulaic or "systematized."

But the best evidence of Poe's self-division over his own tactics in the literary marketplace comes from a manuscript written in 1849 and first published in 1896, "A Reviewer Reviewed, by Walter G. Bowen." Poe had intended it for Graham's, but for some reason--very likely lack of nerve--he never submitted or even completed it. While it is possible that Poe was acting on the principle that there is no such thing as bad publicity (essentially what he told Eveleth after the feud with English), "Bowen"'s observations are too accurate and too incisive not to have damaged (had the piece been published) what was left of
Poe's reputation in 1849. Like Outis, Bowen compliments Poe's writing at the outset and then criticizes Poe for his severity, sarcasm, "sneers," and more specifically his habit of damning with faint praise—conventional criticisms Poe had alluded to elsewhere and probably wouldn't have minded printing. But Poe/Bowen goes further, claiming that Poe is incapable of "honest, heartfelt praise" even when he is trying to compliment "some of his lady friends," and then that Poe is guilty of the very transgressions he relishes pointing out in other writers' work: scientific inaccuracies ("A Descent into the Maelström"), grammatical errors, and plagiarism (several poems, "Hans Pfaall"). "A Reviewer Reviewed" is not the work of a writer who had come to grips with an amoral, business-oriented approach to his craft. Rather, it is an attempted confession in the only meaningful form Poe knew: a publishable review of himself.

Poe's commercial failure might be best understood in light of the work of his rival and friend Nathaniel Parker Willis. As we have seen, Willis was much more commercially and financially successful than Poe partly because he started out with certain advantages: he had sufficient financial backing to launch a magazine only a few years out of college, and editing and publishing were part of his family background. While Poe lashed out against aristocratic "amateur" authors who kept budding
professionals from making a living, Willis affected an aristocratic voice for his American Monthly editorials, capitalizing on rather than challenging a public prejudice. Both Willis and Poe faced the unique demands of an emerging medium that was defining itself as multivoiced and somewhat disordered, like the as-yet-undefined audiences the magazines were trying to reach. Willis's response was to get the "heteroglossia" inherent in the new medium under control by establishing a reliable, identifiable persona for his fiction, his travel sketches, his editorials, and his poetry. He combined contradictions of class and, to some extent, gender to make himself as representative of the "rising middle class" as possible. Willis's pose might be said to contain an element of nostalgia as well: he speaks like a member of an older generation and suggests that there is stability somewhere beneath the social fluidity that serves his protagonists so well.

Poe, on the other hand, reflected the fragmentation and confusion of modern life in his work. He tried to perfect all the individual voices rather than to combine them; as with Willis, his stories nearly always utilize first-person narrators, but unlike Willis, one never knows what kind of person Poe's narrator will turn out to be. For those reasons, Poe's work seems to me more representative of his age than Willis's, but it was not the sort of representation that was likely to appeal to many
Americans at the time. In an era when literary "personalities" were a major factor in publishing and marketing, Poe invented an appropriately named (albeit short-lived) alter-ego in "Outis." He tried to adapt his identity to the heteroglossic magazine format rather than following Willis's lead in adapting the format to a unified identity. Again I should emphasize that Willis had the luxury of editorial control for most of his career, which was particularly important when he was establishing himself (and in doing so, establishing his literary self). Constantly on the move, if not from town to town then from magazine to magazine, Poe tried to perfect various styles for various markets; even his earliest fictions, the Folio Club tales, were attempts to display this versatility. His predilection for hoaxes and parodies, I would argue, stems from these efforts to speak in the many voices of the general-interest magazine; it also helps to explain the difficulty of determining whether Poe is, at any given moment, satirizing other members of his profession or himself.

While Willis staged a single, career-long confidence game, "selling himself" as a representative natural aristocrat, Poe operated more in the manner of Barnum, who evaluated and employed a wide range of promotional strategies and public enticements. Yet Barnum, too, despite some major setbacks, generally succeeded while Poe,
despite a few triumphs, generally failed—perhaps because Barnum could play both roles, hoaxter and exposer of hoaxes, to his greatest advantage, while Poe remained paralyzed by the contradiction, compulsively undermining his own humbugs. Barnum never lost faith in the marketplace, or in democracy, or in the promise of economic mobility for anyone who knew how to sell; but Poe, if he ever had faith in any of those things, always had at least an equal amount of skepticism. Poe was pulled in opposite directions by his disdain for the methods his competitors used to achieve success and a strong desire to succeed by whatever means necessary. As he wrote in one of his Marginalia entries, "Genius of the highest order lives in a state of perpetual vacillation between ambition and the scorn of it." Thus the same writer who theorized that wealth and genius were naturally opposed also made their alliance the theme of "The Domain of Arnheim": Ellison's wealth allows him to pursue his art on his own terms and to adhere to the "most difficult" of his four principles for happiness, the contempt of ambition. Commentators have long seen a wishful self-portrait of Poe in his creation of Monsieur Dupin, and we might expand on that identification by regarding Dupin as a figure who can both expose the humbug of standard operating procedure (for detectives and criminals) and reap the benefits of his insider's knowledge. Dupin, despite his poverty, could have it both
ways, but Poe, who had to "coin his brain into silver" in the real world, was stymied by the opposing impulses of ambition and the scorn of it. 

Poe's commentary on the pursuit of success, examined in light of his own career, suggests that his self-division was not merely personal, that in some sense it emblemizes an important paradox in American culture. Unrestrained, free-market capitalism, which in Poe's time was taking the shape it has held (with some modifications made by progressives and New Dealers) to the present day, depends on the willingness of those who profit least (or not at all) from it to identify their interests with those who profit most. But if this identification breaks down, wage-earners, like poor-devil authors, tend neither to scorn ambition altogether on the grounds that the game is rigged and the means to success are dishonest, nor to embrace ambition and pursue their fortunes any way they can. Instead, they vacillate between those impulses of scorn and pursuit, effectively immobilized by their mixed contempt and admiration for the rich and famous; whatever threat they might pose to established wealth is thus defused. As I have tried to show, the magazine fiction of the 1830s and '40s usually underwrote the identification between wage-earners and their employers through myths of equal opportunity and individual empowerment; if Poe's alternative (double) vision of ambition was more realistic,
it was also—as his own career demonstrates—more debilitating.

Poe's satire and criticism were not out of step with the "spirit of the age," which included considerable anxiety over rapid social and economic changes. Poe expressed more than anxiety, however, in his exploration of the publishing business, for he discovered contradictions there that fed not only his own self-division but the self-division of most participants in the "race to succeed."

Americans of the Jacksonian era were concerned about the confidence man as a new kind of thief, but the implication that he was a representative businessman was more disturbing. The suggestion that "man" is essentially an animal that diddles was (and is) more disturbing still, and even less likely to sell magazines. Poe both exposed and imitated the diddler/business man in his professional life, speaking in many voices, revealing and revelling in humbugs inside and outside the magazine industry, and showing how easily truth can be fabricated out of whole cloth. This representation of Jacksonian America was not reassuring to an audience that was used to hearing that honesty, sobriety, and thrift would lead to prosperity in a country where privilege was being eradicated. Most Americans probably did not want to believe that diddling was the key to success, but that was the secret Poe's experience in the magazine prison house revealed.
Notes to Chapter Five

1 Originally published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, June 1849; Edgar Allan Poe, *Essays and Reviews* (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1457. The documentation for this chapter will refer to standard editions of Poe's writings (the Harvard edition and the Library of America edition), although I will also indicate where and when the quotations originally appeared.

2 Originally published in December 1845; *Essays and Reviews*, 1102.


4 Harris, 54; Werner, 53-54.

5 "The Business Man was first published in *Burton's* in February 1840, before Barnum opened his museum on Broadway. Harris points out a connection between Poe's fiction and Barnum's "operational aesthetic"; see esp. 86-87.


7 Harris, 57. Harris suggests that Barnum discovered the value of controversy with the exhibition of Joice Heth, billed as a 161-year-old slave who claimed to have been George Washington's nurse (20-26). Barnum also arranged juggling contests between his own act and a challenger, eventually managing the challenger as well; he always welcomed direct competition and usually turned it to his advantage (Harris, 24-25).


13 Harris, 195.

14 Poe described literary production as a mechanistic process most explicitly in "The Philosophy of Composition." See Whalen, 392; and Donald E. Pease, Visionary Compacts: American Renaissance Writings in Cultural Context (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 164-65.

15 The following are examples of Messenger articles from the first two volumes. In "American Social Elevation," "H. J. G." declares business to be the driving force of American life, comparing it to the military in Sparta (SLM 2 [1836]: 383). In "Abuses of Literature" (SLM 3 [1837]: 679) Oliver Oldschool describes a corruption of
taste, singling out such revered English writers as Dickens, Swift, and Addison and Steele for criticism, and lodging the familiar complaint as to the quality of American productions. "Modern Travelling" by Solomon Sobersides describes a series of misadventures on a journey taken by steamship, omnibus, and train (SLM 2 [1836]: 735). "A Tale of a Nose" by Percinax Placid (Edward V. Sparhawk) literalizes the expression "to put one's nose to the grindstone (SLM 1 [1835]: 445-48). In "A Prodigious Nose" by Democritus, Jr. (published in the same number as "Lionizing"), a man's nose and face are so fat that the noises he makes inspire terror; staying the night at a tavern, he frightens his roommate, a "little Frenchman," so thoroughly that the latter runs through the building yelling "murder! mon dieu! murder! murder!" (SLM 1 [1835]: 468) One of the most interesting unattributed stories from the early volumes of the Messenger is "The Cousin of the Married and the Cousin of the Dead," which describes the work of two con men who, like Poe's business man, rely on "method" for personal gain (SLM 2 [1836]: 149-50).

16 To Charles Anthon, 2 November 1844, Letters I:269. Poe later wrote to his prospective partner E. H. N. Patterson that he had increased the Messenger's circulation from 1,000 to 5,000 (Letters, 440). Of course, Poe was never officially editor of the Messenger, though in 1836 his duties were comparable to those of an editor. See David K. Jackson, Poe and the Southern Literary Messenger (Richmond, VA: Dietz Printing, 1934).

17 Among the studies of Poe that I have found most useful in regard to this pattern are chapter two of Gary Lindberg, The Confidence Man in American Literature; G. R. Thompson, Poe's Fiction: Romantic Irony in the Gothic Tales (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973); and Michael Allen, Poe and the British Magazine Tradition.

18 For example, Poe's resignation from Graham's in 1842 is hard to understand, despite his being underpaid. Although he did not have editorial control, Poe had been able to reach a large audience through this very popular magazine. See Kenneth Silverman, Edgar Allan Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 174-81. Soon after he left Graham's, Poe sought a Custom House job through President Tyler's son Robert. He travelled to Washington in March 1843 in hopes of both obtaining subscriptions to the Stylus and improving his chances for the government job, but he went on a binge, took sick for several days, and returned to Philadelphia empty-handed. Poe's drinking also dampened what might have been an opportune visit from James Russell Lowell in 1845. Lowell and Poe had expressed their admiration for each
other's work, but on this first meeting Lowell was disappointed to find Poe "a little soggy from drink . . . not tipsy--but as if he had been holding his head under a pump to cool it" (qtd. in Silverman, 258).

19 Qtd. in Arthur Hobson Quinn, Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1941), 251. Poe's chances with the Harpers were probably not helped by the fact that he had blasted two of their recent novels, Norman Leslie and Paul Ulric, in the Messenger, though as Moss points out, in their rejection letter to Poe the Harpers commended his reviews. Earlier in his career, Poe had been led to believe that Carey, Lea, and Blanchard would publish his projected collection, Tales of the Folio Club, but the firm delayed printing it for a year and Poe was forced to begin selling the tales off individually. See Alexander Hammond, "Edgar Allan Poe's Tales of the Folio Club: The Evolution of a Lost Book," Poe at Work: Seven Textual Studies, ed. Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV (Baltimore: Edgar Allan Poe Society, 1978), 13-43.

20 Essays and Reviews, 504.

21 See, for example, Kennedy, 114-44; Silverman, 316, 406-07.

22 Review of the Complete Poetical Works of William Cullen Bryant, originally published in Godey's Lady's Book, 1846; Essays and Reviews, 444.

23 Essays and Reviews, 578. What Poe actually means by "originality" in this review is not completely clear. He suggests that to most critics, originality is whatever appears to be novel, which is generally also popular. Other critics acknowledge only metaphysical originality, which "tasks and startles the intellect [and] cannot fail to prove unpopular with the masses" (Essays and Reviews, 579, 580). Poe places Hawthorne in a category with Addison and Irving, a "lower degree of what I have called the true original," defined earlier as another kind of "apparent novelty" (581).

24 Essays and Reviews, 1374. See Weiner, The Most Noble of Professions.

25 See Michael Allen, 149-50, 197-98.


27 Silverman, 179; Mott, 581-82.

28 Sidney Moss comments on the hypocrisy of publishers in this regard (79).

29 Weiner, 9.

30 "The Pay for Periodical Writing," Weekly Mirror 1 (Oct. 19, 1844): 28; "Authors' Pay in America," Weekly Mirror 1 (Oct. 12, 1844): 15. These articles were first printed on October 10 and 12 in the Evening Mirror, the daily that Willis and Morris founded when postal rates forced them to discontinue the New Mirror. The Weekly Mirror reprinted material from the daily.

31 Essays and Reviews, 1332.


33 In December 1846, Willis wrote an editorial in the Home Journal soliciting funds to aid Poe, who, along with Virginia, was reported to be "dangerously ill and suffering for want of the common necessaries of life." Poe wrote Willis a week later asking him to amend the editorial to make him sound less friendless and pathetic (Dwight Thomas and David K. Jackson, The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe [Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987], 674, 676-77).

34 Weiner points out this irony in "The Most Noble of Professions," 11.

35 In "Anastatic Printing," which appeared in the Journal two months later, Poe promoted a new technology that he hoped would enable writers to skip the middle man, or, as Terence Whalen puts it, transform literary production "from an industry to a craft," giving rise to a "genuinely democratic literature" (397). Poe explains that "authors will perceive the immense advantage of giving their own manuscript to the public without the expensive interference of the type-setter, and the often ruinous intervention of the publisher" (Broadway Journal 1 [April 12, 1845]: 229-31).

36 Essays and Reviews, 540.
See Moss, 38-40, on the puffing of Norman Leslie. Although most of the review consists of a summary of Fay's plot, Poe ridicules Fay's preface and concludes with three long paragraphs criticizing Fay's style and lack of verisimilitude (Essays and Reviews, 547-48).

Essays and Reviews, 506.

Originally published in Graham's, August 1841; Essays and Reviews, 1006.


See Mabbott's introduction in Collected Works (170). In 1835, when Poe wrote the first version of "Lionizing," he and Willis had probably never met, though Willis had insulted Poe in an American Monthly editorial and Poe had already satirized him in "The Duc de l'Omelette."

"Robert Smith" in the 1835 Southern Literary Messenger text. I am following the revised version that appeared in the 1845 Tales. Both texts are given in the Harvard edition.

In "Fifty Suggestions," Poe writes, "Some of our foreign lions resemble the human brain in one very striking particular. They are without any sense themselves and yet are the centres of sensation" (Essays and Reviews, 1298), a remark that echoes the theme of "Lionizing" and "The Man that Was Used Up."

See Jonathan Auerbach, The Romance of Failure: First-Person Fictions of Poe, Hawthorne, and James (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 53-55. In Auerbach's reading, "Poe fiercely turns the self-begotten hero into a grotesque monster living at the mercy of the democratic mob, which creates such creatures to feed its own delusions of self-sufficiency. By literalizing the image of the self-made man, Poe brilliantly gives the lie to the
Jacksonian ideal and shows how the repudiation of traditional authority forces the enterprising Adam to depend on the public at large for his identity" (54-55).

"Collected Works, 380.

Joan Tyler Mead makes a strong case for the narrator's being "used up," arguing that the narrator and Smith have a dopplegänger relationship, that the narrator's quest for information concerning Smith is his own "bugaboo" campaign motivated by his desire to see a correlation between appearances and realities ("Poe's 'The Man that Was Used Up': Another Bugaboo Campaign," Studies in Short Fiction 23 [1986]: 281-86).


Essays and Reviews, 1299.

Originally editorial matter in the Broadway Journal, September 1845; Essays and Reviews, 1068.

Reply to "Outis" in Broadway Journal, March 1845; Essays and Reviews, 717.

See Moss's chapter on the Longfellow War (132-89).


Essays and Reviews, 759-60, 1120. Moss notes the exception of Hyperion: outside of Longfellow's circle, reviews were generally unfavorable; not surprisingly, Poe reviewed it harshly (134-35).

which the writer reminds readers of the American Railroad Journal "that money is power, and that the holder can dictate to a great extent his own terms" (178-79).

56 Originally published in the Southern Literary Messenger, December 1844; Essays and Reviews, 1132.

57 Mabbott notes that "Thingum Bob" probably evolved from a satire directed principally at Graham (1124).

58 See David Reynolds, Beneath the American Renaissance, on the popularity of sensation tales and Poe's criticism of them (169-248).

59 Collected Works, 336, 338.

60 Originally published in The Flag of Our Union, May 1849; Collected Works, 1373.

61 Qtd. in Lindberg, 6. Halttunen focuses more on the confidence man as a sinister figure, a representative of the dangerous modern city, although she also recognizes "the idea that all Americans were liminal men" (30). She summarizes her findings on the creation of codes to indicate sincerity on pp. 196-97. Lindberg's study focuses specifically on American literature but considers texts from the eighteenth century (Franklin) to the late twentieth (Kesey, Barth). Lindberg argues that the confidence man is "a covert cultural hero for Americans."


63 See Lindberg, The Confidence Man in American Literature.


66 Collected Works, 869.

67 Daniel Hoffman observes that "Poe tells his diddling yarns with relish, the joy, in fact, of the diddler himself" (Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe [1972; New York: Paragon House, 1990], 181). But this relish is mixed
with scorn, these mixed emotions "sharpened by his bitter knowledge that this country of money-mad diddlers and their suckers had failed, had repeatedly failed, to provide one thousand persons willing to pledge five dollars per annum to support [the Penn magazine]" (Hoffman, 182).

68 See J. Marshall Trieber, "The Scornful Grin: A Study of Poesque Humor," Poe Studies 5 (1972): 32-34. Trieber quotes the passage on grin and then speculates that the diddler's victims "are people Poe would have liked to overcome in real life" (33).

69 David Long argues that "In one way or another, all of Poe's literary transactions were intended to manipulate an increasingly volatile market economy--an economy that militated against personal 'honesty' and fixed literary standards. . . . His particular form of free enterprise was to escape enslavement within a corrupt American literary system by mastering the system itself" (7). Unlike Long, though, I take Poe's stances against dishonesty in his business as seriously as I take his desire to "master the system itself." See also Larzer Ziff's chapter on Poe, "The Self Divided by Democracy: Edgar Allan Poe and the Already-Answered Question," in Literary Democracy: The Declaration of Cultural Independence in America (New York: Viking, 1981), 67-86.

70 Though Miller's letters are "lost," the content of the letters from the literati indicate that he asked for consideration of manuscripts or some other small favors. Like the later Literati series, "Autography" consists mostly of praise for authors whose favor Poe needed to gain and relatively mild satire against his enemies. Describing the handwriting of each writer, Poe gives his opinion of their work's literary quality, often punning on words like "character" and "tail." Poe revised and extended the autography series for Graham's in 1841. In his introduction to the second series, he explains that one of his purposes is to show that "mental features are indicated (with certain exceptions) by the handwriting." His other purposes are "to indulge in a little literary gossip" and to satisfy the public's interest in the autographs of the literati (The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, Vol. XV [1902; New York: AMS, 1965], 178).

71 Positioning Poe on the side of the diddler, David Ketterer describes this conflict succinctly: "In exposing the 'truth' about the 'chicanery' of the publishing world, he was invalidating his conception of reality, whereas in falsifying or manipulating events, he was acting in accordance with his conception of reality" (The Rationale of Deception in Poe [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State

77 Ketterer mentions the fact that the balloon is made out of newspaper, that it is shaped like a "fool's cap" (a cheap type of paper), as well as these details: Pfaall arrives at the idea of the voyage only after reading a pamphlet on "speculative astronomy"; newspapers destroy Pfaall's trade as a bellows mender (there is obvious double-meaning in Pfaall's observation that fires are now fanned with newspapers); Pfaall compares his water-alarm system to the art of printing ("Poe's Usage of the Hoax and the Unity of `Hans Pfaall,'" The Naiad Voice, 88-96).


74 See Whalen, 384, 389, 393-94.

75 In the first sentence of the note following "Hans Pfaall," Poe remarks that "the one [Poe's] is in a tone of banter, the other [Locke's] of downright earnest" (Poetry and Tales, 996).

76 Southern Literary Messenger 1 (1835): 580.

77 Along these same lines, Ketterer concludes that the frame prevents "Hans Pfaall" from being a hoax "in the straight sense, although "the reader is definitely hoaxed if he believes the story to be about a literal journey to the moon . . . Poe has turned the hoax form upside down, inverted it and expanded it--blown it up" ("Poe's Usage," 95). See also Bruce I. Weiner, "Poe's Subversion of Verisimilitude" (The Naiad Voice, 112-23) for a discussion of Poe's dismantling of the distinction between truth and fiction in "The Premature Burial" and "Von Kempelen and His Discovery."

78 Poe Log, 458-61; Charles F. Heartman and James R. Canny, A Bibliography of First Printings of the Writings of Edgar Allan Poe (Hattiesburg, MS: Brook Farm, 1943), 85. Poe claimed the next month that he had created a greater sensation than Locke had (Poe Log, 458). Assuming an anti-elitist stance, he remarked that "the more intelligent believed, while the rabble, for the most part, rejected the whole with disdain."
Qtd. in Lindberg, 58.

Kennedy, 173-74. G. R. Thompson observes that "Despite the hoaxlike verisimilitude of the details, Poe ironically emphasizes the fictionality of Pym while seeming to claim an 'actuality,' a 'factual' truth for it. Harry Levin notes, for example, that the world of Pym is, in the largest sense, a symbolic projection of the artist's mind subjected to self-scrutiny, a theme signalled by Poe's introduction of his hero as a man from 'Edgar-town'" (177).

Poe Log, 631. He explained to Evert Duyckinck in 1849 that he had "not the slightest idea that any person should credit ["Valdemar"] as any thing more than a 'magazine paper'" (Collected Works, 1356). But when he received a letter from Robert H. Collyer, an English Mesmerist, who took Poe's story seriously and claimed to have brought someone back from a deathlike state himself, Poe responded in the Broadway Journal: "there was a very small modicum of truth in the case of M. Valdemar. . . . If the story was not true, however, it should have been--and perhaps "The Zoist" may discover that it is true, after all" (2 [1845]: 391).

Letters, 433.

Jerome Denuccio, in "Fact, Fiction, Fatality: Poe's 'Thousand-and-second Tale of Scheherazade,'" (Studies in Short Fiction 27 [1990]: 365-70) argues that the opposition "between fiction and truth, story and actuality, is, Poe suggests, a false dichotomy: fact and fiction partake of each other and are mutually indebted" (367).

Qtd. in Jeffrey Meyers, Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Legacy (New York: Scribner's, 1992), 173. Although much of the negative commentary on Poe, coming from bitter enemies such as Lewis Gaylord Clark and Thomas Dunn English, cannot be taken at face value, Poe did have a shifty reputation among the literati in general.

Qtd. in Meyers, 185.

Qtd. in Silverman, 196-97. See also Poe Log, 398-99.

Essays and Reviews, 759-77, esp. 767; 868-73.

Letters, 355. An additional, previously unnoticed, example of Poe's unscrupulous practice deserves mention, although it could have been an honest mistake. As editor of Graham's, Poe advertised a forthcoming poem by Nathaniel Parker Willis before Willis had agreed to submit one—which he could not do because he was under contract to Godey's at the time. In a letter to Godey, Willis tried to convince him that he had no intention of writing for Graham's without Godey's permission, and he suggested that Poe was unaware of the prior commitment and merely assumed that Willis would accept his offer (Willis to Louis A. Godey, Nov. 24 [ND], New York Historical Society).


Porte, 95.


See Burton R. Pollin, "Poe as Author of the 'Otis' [sic] Letter and 'The Bird of the Dream,'" Poe Studies 20 (1987): 10-15; Silverman, 251. Killis Campbell ("Who Was 'Outis'?" University of Texas Studies in English 8 [1928]: 107-09) and Sidney P. Moss are among the noted Poe scholars who doubt that Poe was "Outis."

Meyers, 160-61; Silverman, 241.

Essays and Reviews, 758.

Essays and Reviews, 14.


Porte, 86.


Originally published in The Opal, 1845; Essays and Reviews, 1294.
Originally published in *Graham's*, June 1849; *Essays and Reviews*, 1304.


Collected Works, 1381.

Joel Porte refers to Poe's "compulsion to put his hand on whatever he sees, to speak in every voice; to attempt every genre and subject, to be, in short, the spokesman for his time, to make it, finally, speak in the very accents of Poe" (92). Michael Allen observes that "the main body of Poe's work was very unlikely to be assimilated by the public: its variations in tone, its proliferations of kind and superiority of attitude were completely inconsistent with the growing 'homogenisation' of material, the repetition of a few simple escapist patterns which increasingly characterized American mass-journalism" (184-85).

Originally published in *Graham's*, December 1846; *Essays and Reviews*, 1417.

CONCLUSION

Poe's plan for marketing his proposed magazine was simple: appeal first to wealthy, well-educated men of refined taste and wait for the larger, middle-class audience to emulate them by subscribing also. "[W]hat I most need for my work in its commencement," he told Judge Robert T. Conrad, "is caste. I need the countenance of those who stand well, not less in the social than in the literary world."¹ As Andrew Levy observes, this strategy "preys directly upon the insecurities of a rising middle stratum," who insisted on their republican equality even as they became increasingly aware of class distinctions.² Poe realized that as "self-culture" had become a credential for character and thus for class affiliation, middle- and high-brow periodicals had become status symbols.³ In this regard, magazines provided the ideal compromise between novels and newspapers: unlike novels, publications like the Knickerbocker or the Democratic Review did not signify leisure or idleness, yet they indicated an intellectual curiosity that ventured beyond the daily news. The more popular magazines contained other emblems of culture as well--specifically, the illustrations made from steel and copper engravings, which many subscribers cut out and hung on their walls. Analyzing this phenomenon, Isabelle Lehuu remarks that "[t]he possession of objects, particularly pictures with the power of representing reality and perhaps
sameness, was a means of confirming status in an apparently mobile society. 4 Fashion plates and sentimental tableaux, then, were valued commodities that advertised still more valued commodities, providing a material standard against which viewers could measure themselves. The same could be said of the magazines themselves: they were class markers that sold more class markers, even before they included commercial advertising.

A large part of the magazines' attraction, then, lay in the ability to give their readers a more stable collective identity by conferring a sense of order upon a society in which basic life structures—work habits, male and female roles, community ties—were changing rapidly, in which "other" Americas seemed to be springing up in the West and within the increasingly multi-ethnic and economically stratified cities. As we have seen, Willis, Kirkland, Child, and Poe all found ways to exploit the desire of their white, Eastern, mostly Protestant audience to know about, characterize, and categorize these "other" Americas. In doing so these four authors both reinforced and challenged the myths that imposed imaginative order on the complexities of modern life.

Indeed, their contrasting responses to certain prevalent myths provide ways of pairing and analyzing these writers "against" each other. The pairings that seemed most obvious to me when I organized this project were
Willis and Kirkland, both of whom reinforced notions of natural aristocracy and unlimited upward mobility for the talented and industrious, against Child and Poe, whose social criticism debunked, or at least questioned, those myths. That model oversimplifies matters, since Kirkland did challenge idealized representations of the West, and even Willis, the most conventional writer of the four, called gender stereotypes into question. On the other side, Child was not completely free of the prejudices she fought, and Poe was just as likely to indulge in a humbug as to expose one. Still, Willis and Kirkland serve as more or less representative magazinists, while Child and Poe broke with the stylistic and ideological norms of magazine writing to a greater extent. Kirkland and Child might be paired not only because they had to deal with certain expectations and conventions associated with women's writing but also because they used their editorial posts to encourage social reform and to provide moral instruction. Poe and Willis, on the other hand, devoted their editorial writing—and, in many ways, their fiction—to self-promotion and assertions of their own authority. For the most part, they limited their concern for readers' "improvement" to matters of literary and aesthetic taste.

But perhaps the most instructive pairings match Willis with Child and Kirkland with Poe. The first two wrote for (usually) very different reasons, but both achieved their
professional/literary goals. Despite his repeated calls for international copyright and his complaints about having to compose quickly and publish unrevised "fragments," Willis flourished in the age of magazines. He recognized the path to the top of his profession and followed it, ignoring critics and apparently eluding self-doubt. Child enjoyed the kind of prosperity Willis experienced only in the early part of her career, before she published *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans*; afterward, she succeeded on her own terms. But like Willis, Child remained focused on what she wanted to accomplish--the conversion of her readers to anti-slavery and other reforms--and never wavered.

By contrast, while Kirkland and Poe enjoyed some notoriety in their time and even found themselves in demand for a few years, they continually expressed mixed feelings about their careers and their writing--ambivalences that surfaced, as we have seen, in their essays and stories. Upon moving to New York in 1843 Kirkland had wanted to give up writing altogether, and she often complained about the quality of her work, but she could not afford to quit, especially after her husband died in 1846. From the beginning of her career Kirkland recognized the ruthless business aspect of her profession; when she received the news that John Sartain had bought the *Union* magazine, a transaction that would lead to her demotion from editor to
powerless assistant editor, she quipped, "My little world has been turned upside down, as I hear--the Union is dissolved for Sartain! and I am--nowhere." Poe, whose problems with publishers had cost him three editorial positions, could have commiserated. Perhaps because they worked hard as writers and editors but never achieved financial security through their profession, neither Kirkland nor Poe found it possible to embrace the optimistic ideology of Jacksonian-era capitalism. But neither could they reject it outright: Kirkland continued to promote the West as a haven for democracy and advancement even after her own family's failure; and Poe, despite his efforts to expose the dishonesty at the heart of the publishing trade, tried desperately to establish his own magazine up until his death.

My various, imperfect groupings suggest the complexity of these four writers' responses to their profession and to the predominant myths of their time. I have returned once again to the issue of personal success--measured either by earnings or by the fulfillment of goals--because it resonates throughout the stories, essays, and letters I have examined here, but also because an individual's chances for success remain the ultimate test of democracy. Between 1825 and 1850, those chances were getting slimmer for most Americans, and yet the era's culture industry celebrated democracy's triumph. This mystification was
certainly not the pure product of magazine stories, but neither were the stories mere reflections of Jacksonian self-delusion. Rather, like today's TV docu-dramas, the magazines participated in the cycle by which myth gains momentum and takes on an even more convincing appearance. While the writers I have studied are not perfectly representative of their own age, much less ours, their experiences in the magazine prison-house suggest some possible responses to our own lives in the prison-house of myth. We might embrace or reject our culture's dominant ideology as wholeheartedly as Willis or Child, but the most likely course, I believe, is that of Kirkland and Poe. Unable to tell which myths inspire us and which ones hold us down, caught between materialistic ambition and the scorn of it, we never decide, never fail or succeed completely, and never rest.
Notes to Conclusion


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Date of Examination: March 23, 1994