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This dissertation examines this back-and-forth dynamic between nineteenth-century American authors and their editors, showing the ways that a heterogeneous group of non-elite individuals collaborated and competed with editors from the cultured and educated white middle/upper classes to initiate and continue important, often controversial discussions of literature and its role in the projects of national reform and redemption. Each editor and writer pair I examine show a thorough engagement in various facets of these projects, whether focused on gender, class, race, or aesthetics. Clearly such partnerships, in which the editor provided a voice of authority, respectability, and authentication for the writer, were absolutely necessary for initial public acceptance and recognition of the new ideas each writer advances. Nevertheless, I show the ways that these individuals challenged the traditional hierarchies and chains of influence from editor to writer. I point to the (sometimes covert) competition for the reader, as each side claimed the ultimate voice of authority. As my chapters illustrate, writers often wrote back to and resisted the models, conventions, and assumptions their editors imposed on their works. Additionally, influence clearly worked both ways, as the editors responded to the authors' texts in their own writing in a continual tug-of-war over the reader's attention and loyalty. Ultimately, I argue for a new and more fluid definition of editorship in the nineteenth century – one that emphasizes a circular and dialogic model of influence and resistance, as writer and editor continually switch roles as they

respond to each other in order to emerge as the voice of authority and authenticity to readers on the very issues that concerned the country throughout the nineteenth century, most importantly the questions of national reform and redemption.

COMPETING FOR THE READER: THE WRITER/EDITOR RELATIONSHIP IN  
NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

by

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Approved by

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Committee Chair

To my parents, Michael and Ingrid Hanrahan, who taught me the importance of hard  
work and education.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the  
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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

In a January 1860 letter, Lydia Maria Child updates Harriet Jacobs on the status of Jacobs's text, which Child is hard at work editing. Child praises Jacobs's "wonderfully good" and "excellent" manuscript, promising to send the proofs back to Jacobs in a few weeks (Child, *Letters* 357). She then explains her own interest in the book, which she feels is "likely to do much service to the Anti-Slavery cause." She adds, "So you need not feel under great personal obligations. You know I would go through fire and water to give a blow to Slavery" (357). Finally, she ends with a suggestion to Jacobs: "I think the last Chapter, about John Brown, had better be omitted. It does not naturally come into your story, and the M.S. is already too long. Nothing can be so appropriate to end with, as the death of your grandmother" (357). While we do not have Jacobs's exact reply to Child and her suggestions, Jacobs's text itself bears witness to Child's influence: when *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* appeared in 1861, it ended not with the violent and controversial John Brown, but in a thoroughly domestic space, with the death of Linda's grandmother.

What this brief letter shows us is the close interaction between writer and editor in shaping a text for the literary marketplace. Together, Jacobs and Child craft a work that will appeal to readers while advancing a social cause in which they both believe. Along the way, they agree and disagree with each other, make suggestions to each other (some

ignored and some enacted), and, in many cases, advance competing ideas and claims for authority, power, and ownership of the text. Though united in their ultimate goal--national redemption and racial equality through the abolition of slavery--Jacobs's and Child's differing backgrounds and experiences simultaneously draw them together as collaborators (each needing the other to advance the cause) and as competitors (each claiming ultimate authority). As they work together to create a text that speaks against slavery, writer and editor switch roles, each shaping the text to fit her own visions and conceptions of the audience's expectations.

The writer-editor dynamic continues to occupy scholars today, most significantly in modernist studies and the field of scholarly editing.<sup>1</sup> Again and again, writers in these fields ask similar questions about textual authority, authenticity, and shaping: What does it mean to edit a text? Who is in control? Whose version of a text is "the" version? How is a text shaped by its writer, editor, and audience? These same questions, of course, can be applied to nineteenth-century texts. Jerome McGann reminds us, after all, that all editing is "an act of interpretation," as the editor plugs his or her own reading or interpretation into a text before presenting it to the public. We should not underestimate the power of the editor's role in a text. The very framing the editor provides, the "editorial horizon," establishes the "field in which hermeneutical questions are raised and addressed" (39). Indeed, T.H. Howard-Hill considers the editor as a creator of sorts in the text:

The text belongs to the *editor*. As the purger of corruptions and restorer of sense, his function, like the author's, is creative; editorial conventions and the

institutions within which editors are published produce texts that significantly differ overall from any that have existed previously. The editor reaches into the maelstrom of literary production and takes, molds, and (re)produces *his* version of the author, works and all. (49)

The editorial voice, then, is one of power: helping create the text that readers encounter, it demands our critical attention if we are to truly understand the contexts in which a work emerges.

At first glance, these critics seem to suggest that editors strip away of the author's control over a text, calling to mind Barthes' "death of the author." Yet they also point out writers' continued attempts to reach out to readers and shape their texts. Peter Shillingsburg explains:

Just read any preface to any book, any prologue to any collection of poems, any interview with any author about his or her works--and you will see authors trying, after the fact, to control how people react to or understand their works. There are exceptions, of course, but the hand from the grave reaches out in prefaces, interviews, and especially in revised editions and in instructions to literary executors in authors' wills, as authors work to overcome the inevitable loss of control over meaning entailed by publication. (15)

What we see in almost any text, then, is writer and editor both engaged in creating and advancing their own conceptions of what a text should do. The dynamic is both collaborative and competitive, as the two voices struggle with and against each other.

Significantly, though, critics in editorial studies also remind us that the writer and editor are not the only ones shaping a text. Shillingsburg writes of the multiplicity of voices that mold a text and its reception: "the production voice is not *a* voice; its voices

are legion. Furthermore, it is not an originating voice but a layered, or added voice. Production always takes a sentence, as originated by an author, and re-utters it in a new form” (155). The very social dimension of literary production encourages continued discussion of the multiple voices at work in any text. Thus, McGann writes of the “textual condition” as a scene of “complex dialogue and interchange, of testing and texting” (5). He points to the edited text as a clear illustration of the inherently social nature of any textual production: “Texts are produced and reproduced under specific social and institutional conditions, and hence . . . every text, including those that may appear to be purely private, is a social text . . . A ‘text’ is not a ‘material thing’ but a material event or set of events, a point in time (or a moment in space) where certain communicative interchanges are being produced” (21). Thus, writer, editor, and audience come together to shape, re-shape, and interpret a text.

In the following chapters, I use this idea of socially-generated and multiply-edited texts to examine the back-and-forth dynamic between nineteenth-century American authors and their editors. I show the ways that a heterogeneous group of non-elite individuals collaborated and competed with editors from the cultured and educated white middle/upper classes to initiate and continue important, often controversial discussions of literature and its role in the projects of national reform and redemption. Each editor and writer pair I examine shows a thorough engagement with various facets of these projects, whether focused on gender, class, race, or aesthetics. Clearly such partnerships, in which the editor provided a voice of authority, respectability, and authentication for the writer, were absolutely necessary for initial public acceptance and recognition of the new ideas

each writer advances. Nevertheless, I illustrate the ways that these individuals challenged the traditional hierarchies and chains of influence from editor to writer. I point to the (sometimes covert) competition for the reader, as each side claimed the ultimate voice of authority. As my chapters illustrate, writers often wrote back to and resisted the models, conventions, and assumptions their editors imposed on their works. Additionally, influence clearly worked both ways, as the editors responded to the authors' texts in their own writing in a continual tug-of-war over the reader's attention and loyalty. Ultimately, I argue for a new and more fluid definition of editorship in the nineteenth century – one that emphasizes a circular and dialogic model of influence and resistance. I show how writer and editor continually switch roles as they respond to each other in order to emerge as the voice of authority and authenticity to readers on the very issues that concerned the country throughout the nineteenth century, most importantly the questions of national reform and the projects of self-improvements and redemption.

I organize my chapters thematically, reflecting nineteenth-century society's changing concerns over issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and aesthetics--the markers of status the sources of anxiety over the nation's future security. I begin with Lucy Larcom and John Greenleaf Whittier, challenging earlier critical discussions of their relationship which argue solely for Whittier's influence on Larcom. I show how a white female writer successfully resists and responds to her white editor/mentor's ideas about poetry, labor, domesticity and gender, and plays a key role in his later professional endeavors as she works to establish herself as a poet worthy of readers' attention. Next, I move on to mixed race pairings, including Harriet Jacobs and Lydia Maria Child, showing how the

former slave and her white editor work to construct competing depictions of African-Americans and their role in the nation with a constant eye towards winning the attention of their white readers. My discussion of Sarah Winnemucca and Mary Mann continues to investigate issues of appropriation and authority, as I argue for a clear circle of influence between the Piute writer and her white editor concerning questions of womanhood, racial identity, and literary genre. The final chapter, on the collaborative novel *The Whole Family*, shows how the back-and-forth dynamic of collaboration and competition between authors and editors continues into the early twentieth century, this time focused even more clearly on issues of gender, domesticity, aesthetics, and the future of the American family.

Importantly, the nineteenth century saw the explosion of literary production and consumption in the United States. By 1850, ninety percent of adult whites could read and write and “the United States boasted the largest literate public in history” (Gilmore 4). Unlike previous periods in American history, “a mass market existed for books, and aggressive, highly competitive publishing houses emerged to meet the demand” (4). As the literary market continued to expand and the nation wrestled with questions of class, gender, labor, slavery, and race, writers worked to find their places in the cultural conversation, struggling with the demands of commercialization and the proper functions (both social and aesthetic) of their art. In such a social and economic climate, the editor served an important function, especially for female or minority writers, as he or she authorized and introduced works to the public. Nevertheless, the writers I discuss found

ways to challenge and write back to their editors, carving out a space for their own voices and visions. They became editors of their own texts and the texts of others.

Chapter Two focuses on one of the more common editor/mentor relationships, that between a white male editor and a white female writer. For years, critics depicted Lucy Larcom as little more than a lovesick follower of John Greenleaf Whittier and discussed her only in relation to him. Only recently have critics begun to consider Larcom as an artist worthy of attention in her own right. I argue that exploring the interaction between the two poets leads us to a greater understanding of both writers and of the editor/writer dynamic in general. Following the work Shirley Marchalonis has done, I consider Larcom and Whittier not just in strict mentor/protégé roles, but as members of the same group of authors, concerned with similar issues and topics, including the roles of poets and poetry, the function of labor, as well as gender and domesticity.

Although Larcom at first willingly saw herself as the beneficiary of Whittier's guidance and editorship, over the fifty years of their friendship, she outgrew that role and positioned herself more clearly as his peer. Especially after she became an editor in her own right, she took more complete control over her work. Examining their poems, I show the two poets in dialogue with each other as they compete for the same groups of readers. Larcom does more than simply respond to or mimic Whittier. Instead, she repeatedly, if subtly, challenges his views on key poetic topics. Whereas Whittier praises the poet's labor and links his poetic celebrations of both labor and domesticity to national redemption both before and after the disruptions of the Civil War, Larcom shows how a

working woman's responsibilities prevented her from engaging as fully as she might want to in this sort of poetic labor. Additionally, Larcom challenges Whittier's endorsement of traditional domesticity and gender roles, showing how women suffer under such confinements and arguing that any plans for national self-improvement based on such outdated models will continue to confine and oppress women. I also discuss their professional collaborations on collections of verse, for which Larcom often did most of the work while receiving little reward. Texts discussed in this chapter include Whittier's "Proem," "The Tent on the Beach," "Snow-Bound," and "The Barefoot Boy," and Larcom's "Elsie in Illinois," "Sylvia," "A Little Old Girl," "Hannah Binding Shoes," *An Idyll of Work* (1875), and *A New England Girlhood* (1889).

In contrast to Chapter Two, Chapter Three shows how the nature of the editor/writer dynamic changes when the writer is a former slave and her editor is a white woman. Still, though, these next two writers concern themselves with family, domesticity, gender roles and their larger connection to the nation's future. This chapter looks at Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) as a response and challenge to the earlier works by Lydia Maria Child, her editor. Like the previous chapter, it continues the debate about rewriting and re-inscribing personal experience and tropes of popular literature. Critics credit Child, an ardent abolitionist, with initiating the "tragic mulatta" trope in her 1842 short story, "The Quadroons." Furthermore, her novel *Hobomok* (1824) was among the first American texts to address miscegenation. Perhaps most importantly, her *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833) put her at the forefront of the abolition movement, costing her dearly as her

radical ideas alienated more conservative readers. Nevertheless, Child remained a key figure and authority in the abolitionist movement and continued to draw a large reading public.

After discussing Child's own treatment of racial themes through her employment of the tragic mulatta trope, I shift my focus to her interaction with Jacobs. Child, clearly a prominent writer invested in racial debates of the nineteenth century, seems a natural choice to pen the standard authenticating preface to Jacobs's slave narrative. In this instance, because of Jacobs's race and sexual history (she was the mother of two illegitimate children), the character of the author herself comes into question, as Child's key tasks include authenticating the text and testifying to Jacobs's upstanding character. Thus, at least on the surface, Child's textual authority supersedes Jacobs's, making it safe for a white audience to read and accept the narrative. Nevertheless, Jacobs's text advances an alternative narrative for readers, one that seeks to replace Child's weak, passive, and doomed model of the tragic mulatta with a more realistic portrayal based on her own personal experience. In contrast to Child, Jacobs's mulatta is active and powerful, creating for her family an alternative domestic space outside the bounds of traditional oppressive white patriarchy. Depicting what she argues is a more accurate and authentic representation of such a figure, she thus also provides a more realistic plan for repairing national racial divisions, one that works to enlist the audience in aiding the mulatta and helping her attain the benefits of a reconfigured domestic space. Indeed, in *Incidents*, it is Jacobs who responds to and edits Child and her story, along with the entire tragic mulatta genre, resisting, revising, and rewriting the mulatta's tale, inscribing it with

her own experience and circumventing its tragic ending through her exercise of free will and agency. The chapter ends with a discussion of contemporary reviews of *Incidents* and a reading of Child's *Romance of the Republic* (1867) as a work influenced by Jacobs's text, as Child is pushed to imagine possibilities for the mulatta beyond tragedy.

Chapter Four continues to examine the role racial difference plays in the writer/editor dynamic, investigating the relationship between Sarah Winnemucca and her editor Mary Peabody Mann. I argue that their texts clearly demonstrate a circularity of influence as they engage once again with questions of national redemption, domesticity, and textual authority. Specifically, I posit that Winnemucca's *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrong and Claims* (1883) and Mann's *Juanita: A Romance of Real Life in Cuba Fifty Years Ago* (1887) can be read as texts in dialogue with each other on issues of racial oppression and reform. Traditionally, critics have viewed interaction between Native American authors and their white editors as unidirectional, emphasizing the ways authors are molded by and shape themselves according to models established by their editors, often cleverly subverting those expectations. Seldom, though, do critics consider how power and influence flow both ways, and how editors respond to and are affected by their authors in their own writings.

I first consider Winnemucca's *Life Among the Piutes*, showing how she carefully constructs her text to appeal to white women like Mary Mann (whose editorship authenticates and authorizes the text), yet also finds ways to resist and challenge the cultured, white, middle-class expectations placed on both her book and its author. As she recounts her heroic deeds, positioning herself as a feminine yet powerful and courageous

leader, she invites readers to identify with her as they imagine new possibilities for themselves. Demonstrating her power and authority among the Piute people, Winnemucca creates a space for women like herself in the larger project of national redemption and racial reconciliation. Mann, as the authenticating white editor, aids in this endeavor through her preface, footnotes, and the petition she attaches to the end of the text. Both writer and editor invite white readers (especially women) to join them in their efforts. Significantly, though, I extend the lines of influence and emulation between these two women, illustrating how *Life Among the Piutes* and Winnemucca's relationship with Mann shape *Juanita*, ostensibly a semi-fictional tale of enslaved Africans in Cuba. Mann's text, with its ethnographic focus, its portrayal of an oppressed "royal" heroine, and its exploration of the role of the educated, white, female reformer, clearly responds to and is influenced by Winnemucca and her autobiography. The relationship between these two women, more cooperative and mutually constructive than the others discussed in this dissertation, provides us with a clearer understanding of the dynamic, dialogic interactions between Native American authors and the editors who introduced their texts to white readers.

Chapter Five discusses *The Whole Family* (1907/8), a very different kind of book, as a natural extension of the questions discussed above, including the fluid nature of the roles of editor and author in the continuing competition for the reader's attention and favor. Fifty years after Larcom and Whittier began their professional relationship, *The Whole Family* writers show how little the questions have changed: they are still caught up in similar discussions about art, family, domesticity, and the nation's future. *The Whole*

*Family*, a collaborative novel envisioned by William Dean Howells and edited by Elizabeth Jordan, demonstrates the dynamic relationships between writers and editors, as each successive contributor takes on both roles, responding to the previous author's chapter, motivations, and vision for the book. *The Whole Family* illustrates how the internal concept of editorship--the idea of the silent voice that keeps writers within the bounds of what is acceptable--becomes a point of contention when writers refuse to play by the rules the editors and the other writers create.

Beginning innocently enough as the story of one family's reaction to the engagement of Peggy, the young daughter, *The Whole Family* soon erupts into an open debate on gender and family, as well as the role and responsibilities of literature. Mary Wilkins Freeman, who refuses to accept Howells's stereotypical and outdated conception of the maiden aunt, throws Howells's original plan for a pleasant family story into turmoil when she reveals that Peggy's fiancé is, in fact, in love with the aunt. Freeman's innovative conception of the single woman shows how significantly writers can shake up the very foundations of a "story" (in the case the story of the "typical" family Howells is trying to tell) when she snatches the editor's role away. It then falls on the subsequent writers, including Henry James, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, and eight others, each writing from the perspective of a different family member, to assemble the pieces--if they wish to do so--into a cohesive whole.

In total, these chapters interrogate (to use McGann's term) the "editorial horizons" of texts, showing how ongoing conversations between writers, editors, and readers shape literature in the nineteenth century. As each writer and editor pair works to

advance competing visions for the future of the nation, we see how art and social mission come together (sometimes uneasily) in American literature, especially as new voices (female, working class, African-American, Native American) join in the cultural conversation. By examining how editor and writer switch roles, influencing, shaping, and answering each others' texts, we gain a greater understanding of literary production and collaboration in the nineteenth-century and their connection to projects of national interest.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, George Bornstein's *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* or Philip Cohen's *Devils and Angels: Textual Editing and Literary Theory*. Other helpful collections of essays include *The Iconic Page in Manuscripts, Print, and Digital Culture* (edited by Bornstein and Theresa Tinkle) and *Palimpsest: Editorial Theory in the Humanities* (edited by Bornstein and Ralph G. Williams). For the most part, these works discuss scholarly editing, but they offer some useful terminology and insights that can be applied to editing in general.

## CHAPTER II

“WHY SHOULD I WRITE WITH YOU ALWAYS HOLDING MY HAND?”: LUCY  
LARCOM AND JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

In 1877, Lucy Larcom wrote “J.G.W.,” a tribute in honor of poet John Greenleaf Whittier’s seventieth birthday. The poem’s speaker (ostensibly Larcom herself) imagines Whittier as an epic hero, winning battle after battle for freedom:

He sang beside the solemn sea,  
That thrilled through all its vast unrest,  
Until the poet’s land was free,  
To song’s wild war-throb in his breast . . .  
And still he sings, by sea and stream,  
The songs that charm a nation’s heart;  
We dare not guess how earth will seem  
When his loved footsteps hence depart (9-12, 17-20).

Praised here as a reformer first and foremost, Whittier emerges larger than life, and the piece seems a rather conventional public tribute to the beloved poet. If we dig below the surface, though, we can read the poem as more ambivalent. In wondering how the “earth will seem” when Whittier departs, Larcom might be implying it will be diminished but also may be positing that it will seem freer, even better. Additionally, only in its final stanza does Larcom address (and here only rather indirectly) her own close relationship with Whittier, who for over thirty years had been her editor, mentor, and friend. She

writes: “Neither can poet die, nor friend; / To life, forever, both belong: / Before his human heart we bend, / Far nobler than his noblest song” (25-8). Larcom addresses the two sides of Whittier: “poet” and “friend,” clearly valuing the latter (his “noble heart”) over his poetic abilities.

On the surface, there is nothing unusual about this tribute. This poem’s significance becomes apparent only when we realize how Larcom is positioning herself in relation to Whittier. In that crucial last stanza, Larcom reserves her chief praise for Whittier the friend, not the professional mentor or even the talented artist. While it might be tempting to read Larcom’s rhetorical move as rather ordinary (what is so unusual about praising a friend’s character over his work?), Larcom’s words offer just one example of her career-long effort to define her relationship and response to Whittier. This chapter investigates this constantly evolving relationship and response, showing that, in contrast to traditional interpretations, it is more productive to read Whittier and Larcom as peers, members of the same literary circle, competing for the same groups of readers rather than as simply editor and pupil. Indeed, Larcom’s poetic voice often stands in opposition to Whittier’s, offering a distinctly female perspective so often lacking in his poems and engaging in dialogue with him on the important questions including the role of poetry, class, and gender in the projects of reform and national improvement. While Larcom clearly needed Whittier’s mentoring and the authority it provided to gain entrance into the profession, her poems subtly but consistently show her resistance to the confining roles of writer and editor, roles that placed her above him, making him the leader and authority and her the student. Larcom and Whittier’s

complicated interaction therefore reveals much about the politics of editorship, mentoring, and literary collaboration, providing a clear example of how a non-elite individual (here a white working woman) gained access to the tools of literary production and publication yet still voiced her own viewpoints on national debates over the future of family and country.

After first discussing traditional and flawed conceptions of Larcom and Whittier's collaborations and reviewing the history of their friendship, I explore their ongoing poetic conversations on issues including the connections between poetry, labor, gender and domesticity. While Whittier works to ally his poetry with the labor of the working classes, Larcom, for most of her life a working-class woman, argues that for someone like herself, poetry and labor are worlds apart. Moreover, she further complicates Whittier's nostalgic invocation of domesticity as a solution to the nation's problems (chiefly insecurity over the future of the family and the country), showing how such a reliance on traditional gender roles oppresses and stifles women and their creativity. Much as Mary Wilkins Freeman will do in *The Whole Family* (discussed in Chapter Five), Larcom instead argues for greater freedom and agency for women and opens the door for reconceptualizations of domesticity and the family. Perhaps because she played the role of protégée so well, few readers recognized the subversive elements in Larcom's poems. Nevertheless, on each of these subjects, Larcom offers an alternative, competing voice to Whittier and the literary tradition he represented and, ultimately, a different vision for the nation's future.

*Editorship, Influence, and Collaboration*

Until Shirley Marchalonis began her invaluable recovery work on Lucy Larcom, critics were almost entirely dismissive of her poetry, describing her as no more than one of Whittier's many less-than-talented female protégées. Whittier, in fact, had developed quite a reputation as a mentor to female poets, and almost all of the women were, like Larcom, summarily dismissed by later critics as inferior imitations of the poet.

Marchalonis explains, "Although treatments of the protégées vary according to each biographer's thesis or perspective, they reduce all the women to the status of objects existing only in relation to Whittier" ("Model" 94). The hierarchy of influence is clear: Larcom and her fellow protégées are worthy of attention only as Whittier's students and pale imitators of his art.

Joseph M. Ernest's 1956 essay "Whittier and the Feminine Fifties" operates under this assumption of Larcom's inferiority. Ernest credits Whittier with enabling the boom in women writers in the mid-nineteenth century, bemusedly writing that "John Greenleaf Whittier, the saintly bachelor of Quakerdom, is due substantial credit for this phenomenon" (184). Rattling off a list of the poet's female protégées that includes Alice and Phoebe Cary, Julia Ward Howe, Annie Adams Fields, Mary Abigail Dodge, Celia Thaxter, E.D.E.N. Southworth, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, and Sarah Orne Jewett, he argues that these writers "owed a good measure of their literary success to his good will" (196). Introducing them to important authors, writing to publishers on their behalf, editing their manuscripts, and providing any number of other professional favors, Whittier, Ernest asserts, brought these women into the literary world. The women, Ernest claims, paid

Whittier back with eternal devotion and gratitude, often falling in love with the poet.

Sounding just as enchanted with the poet as he claims the women are, he writes:

Biographers have always been impressed by [Whittier's] never-ending appeal to the other sex. First, his lithe, quick body, straight as a pine, his piercing black eyes and astonishing black eyebrows, which made a pleasing contrast in old age with a snow-white beard, and his frosty reserve, which melted into a wonderful smile, attracted all women. Second, these admirable characteristics were capped by the moral rectitude, the very aura of a Hebrew prophet. Third, and very important, Whittier could always 'understand' women, or at least they thought he could. (185)

Women emerge from Ernest's description as lovesick, driven perhaps by their lust for the poet, and (somewhat foolishly) believing he could understand them better than most men.

In creating such images of them, the critic gently mocks, discredits, and dismisses the authors and their writing.

Next, Ernest turns his attention specifically to Lucy Larcom, "a true protégée" who, under Whittier's "encouragement, turned author in the 1840s" (187). After detailing Whittier's efforts to help Larcom publish her poetry (including his letters to James Fields and Thomas Wentworth Higginson on her behalf), he comes close to praising Larcom's abilities outright, adding that it is to her credit that Whittier chose her as his only literary partner (188). Nevertheless, just a few sentences later, he backpedals from his earlier partial endorsement, writing, "Whatever mark she made in the literary world, however, is due to Whittier himself. Today she is known as 'a lesser Whittier'" (189).

Unfortunately, other critics have shared Ernest's dismissive view of Larcom, seemingly unable to discuss her without wondering whether she was in love with Whittier.<sup>1</sup> For instance, in his 1971 book *John Greenleaf Whittier: An Appraisal and Selection*, Robert Penn Warren dispenses with Larcom, whom he calls "a poetess of some small fame," in a single footnote: "Lucy Larcom was, apparently, also one of the ladies who were in love, to no avail, with the poet" (44). Edward Wagenknecht's 1967 *John Greenleaf Whittier: A Portrait in Paradox* is slightly more charitable, yet equally dismissive: "It has been sometimes conjectured that Lucy Larcom loved Whittier. If she did, she kept it strictly to herself" (87). The totalizing effect of such critical assessments is clear: Larcom again emerges as a lovesick devotee and pale imitator of Whittier, owing whatever small degree of success she obtained to his charitable acts on her behalf.<sup>2</sup> None of these critics see Larcom dissenting from or even challenging Whittier's ideas. She is merely a pupil--powerless, inferior, and ultimately forgettable.

Marchalonis's efforts have produced a more balanced and nuanced picture of Larcom and Whittier's interaction, as well as his relationships with other women. She pays more attention the roles that his Quaker faith and humility took in molding these interactions. Whittier, she explains, certainly "liked women, was comfortable in their company, and enjoyed their admiration of him" ("Model" 95). She disagrees with biographers who argue he saw women as equals, claiming instead that while his ideas were more progressive than the prevailing patriarchal attitudes, Whittier nevertheless "treated his protégées as daughters, over whom he had some paternal control that permitted him tell them what to do and how to do it" (95). I want to expand

Marchalonis's arguments even further, demonstrating more clearly how Larcom and Whittier's relationship evolves. I argue that as their relationship grew, Larcom was, however, far more than a fawning disciple. A professional author in her own right, she published nineteen volumes of poetry and prose, edited *Our Young Folks*, a magazine for children, and edited or co-edited nine other volumes. Although he always remained an important influence in her life, over time Larcom simply outgrew the need for a mentor like Whittier.

Larcom and Whittier's correspondence demonstrates the evolution of their relationship as Larcom moves from a humble student to a professional collaborator. Early in her career, Larcom seems to have fit the role of protégé in which her biographers placed her so frequently. The two first met when Larcom was still working in the Lowell Mills and renewed their friendship in 1852 when she returned from her time living out West with her sister's family. Back East and increasingly determined to publish her work, Larcom understandably became more reliant on Whittier's mentoring.

Marchalonis explains that at this time:

His interest in her writing made it more valuable in her eyes, for it never occurred to her to doubt his judgment; she still regarded him with awe. He was as dynamic and compelling as ever, and to have some of that intensity directed on her and her work was flattering; if he chose to set himself up as mentor, she was too dazzled to respond with anything other but happiness and gratitude. He was the Master and she the humble girl--in both their eyes. ("Model" 98)

She adds that during this period Whittier clearly "felt he had every right to tell her what and how to write; there is never a hint of apology as he suggests corrections in words or

lines. Nor in these early days did Larcom mind” (103). In 1853, for instance, Whittier writes Larcom asking for more poems like those she had already sent him so that the book she is working on (with his help) will not be too short (Whittier, *Letters* 2:222). An 1854 letter shows him continuing to advise Larcom on both the form and content of the proposed book: “Can I do anything for thee on thy new Book?--If so, let me know of it. I like thy plan of the book as far as it has developed in thy letter . . . On the whole I think thou hadst better keep to thy original plan, and not try to make the heroine speak in her own person, unless episodically, or by letters to her friends” (2:269).<sup>3</sup> Whittier’s concerns in this letter--the style and format of Larcom’s book and his continued offers to edit her verses--show how seriously he involved himself with her writing.

A series of letters from 1857 illustrates just how much Larcom relied on Whittier’s editorship and guidance during this early period. In August he writes a long letter advising her on several manuscripts. He praises her poem “The Chamber Called Peace” as “really one of the sweetest poems of Christian consolation I ever read,” but is more exacting in his criticism of “Eureka.” Pointing to one line in particular he explains, “I don’t like the sound of ‘laurels and gore’--the thought and general execution of the piece are too good to be spoiled by a poor line or two” (2:339). Next, he moves onto more general advice about a book Larcom is compiling: “I would not publish many of the earlier pieces . . . They have done their work – let them pass. I would not like to see a large volume. I would restrict it to 100 or 125 pages at most” (2:339). Clearly, Whittier is quite comfortable in his role, praising Larcom where he feels she deserves it, editing her poetry on the level of the line, and again advising her on publishing matters like

length and format.

In response, Larcom dutifully plays her role as protégée. She begins with gratitude for his suggested revisions: “I thank thee for thy note, and for the kind criticism of my little poems it contained. And first of all, I want to tell thee what I have done about them” (qtd. in Shepard 507). She also encloses with her letter a reply she received from Ticknor and Fields, asking Whittier if his opinion agrees with theirs, adding that she is willing to wait to reply to the publishers until she hears back from him (508-9). She indicates her willingness to use her friendship with Whittier to gain entry into literary circles explaining, “I used your name, as you gave me leave to do, and perhaps he [Ticknor] thought that the equivalent for their merits” (508). Although she does not respond to Whittier’s specific revision advice, the objectionable lines in “Eureka” are changed by the time the poem is published: “On Error’s dominions I march, an invader; / *Green laurels* the promise of Pride” (Larcom, *Poems* 15-16, emphasis added). Even in this early letter, though, Larcom begins to assert her growing confidence in her work writing: “If I have begun to see my own deficiencies, that ought to be one step forward” (qtd. in Shepard 508). Tentatively, then, even as she relies on him to open doors for her at publishing houses like Ticknor and Fields, and as she continues to send him her work, she also begins to assert her own sense of ownership over that work, gently hinting that soon she might not need him to point out her faults.

Despite Larcom’s growing confidence and desire for autonomy, Whittier remains trapped in the teacher/student model. Over ten years later, another letter shows him still somewhat reluctant to give up his control over Larcom’s latest works. In 1868, he

returned a manuscript of her “On the Beach,” and again mixes criticism and praise. He explains:

“On the Beach” is admirable in conception and so very felicitous in some of its lines and verses that I wanted to have thee work it over until it took a perfect shape. I have ventured to alter the copy sent me, by way of hint of what I think wd. tersely and clearly express thy idea: and I send the marred manuscript back to do with as pleases thee best. Even as it stands now it is one of thy best poems. There are lines in it which will live always . . . But the last verse rises into sublimity: and is worth fifty pages of ordinary verse . . . I don’t quite like the line, “Around us the daylight gently dies.” It seems common-place as compared with the verbal felicities or the poem. The “gently dies” don’t suit me. It wd. be better to say “Around us slow the daylight dies,” perhaps. (2:778)<sup>4</sup>

Certainly Whittier’s tone here is modest and warm, showing genuine admiration for Larcom’s work. Nevertheless, he still freely “mars” her text with his own suggestions, still feeling he has the authority to do so. Marchalonis reminds us that Whittier sends this letter to a woman “who is no longer a novice, but a magazine editor and writer of four books with a reputation of her own” (“Model” 104). For her part, Larcom accepts Whittier’s criticisms without much comment. She does alter the questioned line from “On the Beach,” but not as Whittier suggested. Instead it reads “The twilight flushes, fades, and dies” (Larcom, *Poems* 33), arguably a better line than the original or Whittier’s revision. By this point, she still listens to his criticism but is confident enough to go her own way as she composes and revises. In many ways mirroring the eventual dynamic between Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, she continues to play the role of student, but apparently in name only.<sup>5</sup>

These letters, written over a period of almost twenty years, demonstrate the shifting nature of Larcom and Whittier's collaboration. Clearly, especially early in her career, Larcom knew the value of Whittier's editing and assistance and relied on him to help her gain entry into important literary circles. Whittier was more than happy to play the role of mentor and editor, even when he might not have been needed anymore. His gradual acceptance of Larcom's poetic independence seems to come in fits and starts, as he seems quite reluctant at times to give up control and at other times addresses Larcom as a peer instead of a protégée. Indeed, an 1867 letter illustrates a role reversal for the editor and writer, as Whittier submits "In School-Days" for *Our Young Folks*, the children's periodical that Larcom edited. He writes, "I could not make verses for the pictures, but I send thee herewith a bit which I am sure is *childish*, if not *childlike*. Be honest with it, and if it seems too spooney for a grave Quaker like myself, don't compromise me by printing it" (*Letters* 3:204).

Although Whittier also sent Larcom manuscripts of many of his poems, no evidence exists of her responding with anything other than praise. Certainly she never gave him the sort of revision advice he routinely gave her. It is worth noting, though, that his letters to her reveal his own feelings of inadequacy about his works, if not an openness to criticism. In the 1868 letter discussed above, he adds, "But I must let criticism alone. I'm not able to correct my own verses" (*Letters* 2:778). In 1860, he expresses dissatisfaction with his poem, "The Summons": "I do not quite like the tone . . . myself now that it is published. It was, however, an expression of a state of mind which thee would regard as pardonable if thee knew all the circumstances. It is *too*

*complaining*, and I hope I shall not be left to do such a thing again” (2:473). In 1867 he responds to her praise of “The Tent on the Beach”: “I am glad thee like the extracts from the ‘Tent.’ I have had and still have misgivings about it. It never would have been written but for its premature announcement. . . . I wrote this, or dictated it, under great disadvantages, and shall not blame the critics if they make a note of it” (3:142-3). Even more surprising are his doubts about what turned out to be his most famous poem, “Snow Bound.” In 1866 he tells Larcom, “My winter-piece will get along sometime next month, I hear. I’m not without misgivings about it” (2:117). The next month, responding to Larcom’s favorable estimate of the poem, he seems quite modest: “I am glad thee found ‘Snow-Bound’ as good as thee expected. I see now a great many faults; but I defer after all to the better judgment of my friends. They tell me it is all right, and I shut my eyes and make myself believe it” (qtd. in Pickard 503). How Larcom responded to these self-criticisms is hard to say. Did she believe that Whittier was quite sincere or merely affecting modesty? Possibly, his claims showed her that even a successful and respected poet could doubt his own abilities. Perhaps in this way he built up her confidence, albeit indirectly.

When it came to their formal professional collaborations, though, Whittier was much less willing to yield ground to Larcom, treating her as a student and an assistant and depriving her of the credit she deserved. Their collaboration on three volumes, *Child Life* (1871), *Child Life in Prose* (1873) and *Songs of Three Centuries* (1875) provides readers with a glimpse of the clearest confrontation over the nature of their professional relationship. For *Child Life*, Larcom did the majority of the work, finding, reading, and

copying the poems, discussing the choices with Whittier, correcting proofs, and dealing with the publisher. Nevertheless, Whittier alone is listed as the volume's editor. Larcom received between three and five hundred dollars for her work, while Whittier received all the royalties for his final approval of the text and writing its preface (Marchalonis, "Model" 109). Whittier's letters to Larcom on the volume are inexplicably insensitive: "I've got the sheets of our *Child-Life* and like it hugely. But I think now I shall take all the credit to myself. If it had not looked nice and good, I should have shirked it, and left it all on thy shoulders" (qtd. in Pickard 2:575). Even if his tone here is playful, his actual failure to acknowledge her contribution publicly is revealing. They might be peers in private, but in public, he is still the editor and mentor and she is still the assistant and student. Although he does thank her in the preface, Whittier's refusal to give Larcom full credit for her work illustrates his failure to see and treat her fully as a professional in very important public sphere.<sup>6</sup>

When *Child Life in Prose* appeared two years later, Larcom is not mentioned in name at all, even in much of the publicity for the book. Whittier's explanation for this omission is hardly defensible: "The *Hearth and Home*'s notice of 'C.L. in Prose' gives me all the credit for this last volume. I deferred to what I thought was thy wish in not directly using thy name in the Preface, but I ought in justice to both of us have given it" (Whittier, *Letters* 3:307-8). His preface is similarly unjust, as he fails to mention Larcom by name. Instead he thanks "the lady whose services are acknowledged in the preface to 'Child Life.' I beg my young readers . . . to understand that I claim little credit for my share in the work, since whatever merit it may have is largely due to her taste and

judgment” (Whittier, *Writers* 198). His words ring hollow given his failure to even call her by name and subsequent notices for the volume which praise Whittier--and Whittier alone--for his skill in compiling the collection. Again, it is Larcom who does almost all of the actual work, while Whittier intentionally and consciously claims credit for editing the volume (Marchalonis, *Worlds* 195).

By the time work was underway for *Songs of Three Centuries*, Larcom can barely conceal her frustration. She writes a friend explaining her Herculean task--selecting and editing over 550 poems covering over three hundred years of English and American poetry: “I have scarcely walked to the beach this summer,--for why? I have been so busy about a book, Mr. Whittier’s book... If I had supposed it would be one third as hard, I would have refused to do it, without a year’s time . . . I have lost the beauty of the summer, poring over books” (qtd. in Marchalonis, “Model” 109). Marchalonis speculates that Larcom and Whittier eventually quarreled openly over the situation, pointing to a September 1875 letter in which Whittier apologizes for his “nervous excitability,” yet adds, “I daresay I was a fool, but that’s no reason thee should make thyself one, by dwelling on it” (“Model” 109-110). However the situation resolved itself, Larcom never quite got over the feeling that she had been taken for granted. When in his will Whittier left her the copyrights to their collaborations, she explains to a friend that it was the only just thing to do: “it was only right, as I worked hard on them. The *Songs of Three Centuries* nearly cost me my health, the publishers rushed it so” (113). Thus, although Larcom saw herself as an author and editor in her own right, deserving of more

public credit than she received, Whittier remained much less willing to relinquish his role.

Indeed, as she grew in confidence and ability, Larcom's resistance to Whittier as an editor and mentor also grew. In an undated letter written sometime after 1868, Larcom responds to a concerned Whittier, who wondered why it had been so long since she had sent him any of her work to read and edit. Her answer is telling: "But you have taught me all that I ought to ask: why should I remain a burden on you? Why should I write with you holding my hand? My conscience and my pride rebel. I will be myself, faults and all" (qtd. in Marchalonis, "Model"107). Clearly rebelling, however politely, against the paternalistic role Whittier continued to try to fill, Larcom asserts her own poetic independence. This confident and proud author contrasts sharply with the lovesick poetess of questionable ability so often depicted in early Whittier scholarship. As the following discussion makes clear, Larcom had long refused to be a mere imitator of her mentor, developing her own distinctive voice on subjects and themes ranging from the role and duties of a poet to controversial matters of labor and domesticity.

*Art, Duty, and Labor: The Role of the Poet*

At more than one point in their careers, both Larcom and Whittier stopped to reflect on the role of the poet in their society. Often taking an autobiographical turn, the works in which they discuss poets' responsibilities and obligations illustrate a marked difference in emphasis. As Nicholas Bromell has shown, such concerns were common among antebellum writers, for whom "politics and aesthetics converged . . . in two

questions: what is the nature of my work as a writer and what should be the relation of that work to the work performed by others? Pursued into the realm of aesthetics, these questions prompted writers to revise accepted notions of creativity and to rethink both the aims and means of their artistic practice” (15). Simply put, these writers struggled to relate their work as authors to the manual labor performed by so many Americans. While in poems like “Proem” and “The Tent on the Beach” Whittier can go on at length about his duties to the causes of freedom and reform and how they conflict with his aesthetic goals, Larcom’s distinctly female authorial voice shows how a working/middle-class poet was by necessity first concerned with finding the time to write anything at all. Similarly, while Whittier aligns his poetical endeavors with the labor of working-class people, Larcom, writing as an economically challenged woman, shows her audience and her editor that her sex and class force her to conceive of labor quite differently from artistic output. For Larcom, labor, though necessary for her survival, is in fact an obstacle to poetic expression.

In “Proem” (1847), Whittier provides readers with perhaps the clearest statement of his self-perceived role as a poet. Whittier clearly felt “Proem” was a signature introductory work and after 1847, he made sure it appeared first in his collections of poetry (Miller 209). A surprisingly humble Whittier begins by expressing his admiration for the old poetic masters like Sidney and Spenser confessing, “Yet, vainly in my quiet hours / To breathe their marvelous notes I try” (6-7). Looking at his own verse, he sees where he falls short, explaining:

The rigor of a frozen clime,  
 The harshness of an untaught ear,  
 The jarring words of one whose rhyme  
 Beat often Labor's hurried time,  
 Or Duty's rugged march through storm and strife, are here.  
 Of mystic beauty, dreamy grace,  
 No rounded art the lack supplies;  
 Unskilled the subtle lines to trace,  
 Or softer shades of Nature's face,  
 I view her common forms with unannointed eyes  
 Nor mine the seer-like power to show  
 The secrets of the heart and mind. (11-22)

Simply put, Whittier admits that his verse does not hold up compared to the great works.

It is not, he points out, that he has nothing worthy of writing about, but rather he has “no rounded art” and “unannointed eyes”--aesthetically, he feels he falls short. Ideally, he seems to argue, politics is an inferior topic for poetry; beauty and aesthetics ought to come first. Nevertheless, he does assert his value as a poet, arguing that his is a distinctly moral (rather than aesthetic) power:

Yet here at least an earnest sense  
 Of human right and weal is shown;  
 A hate of tyranny intense,  
 And hearty in its vehemence,  
 As if my brother's pain and sorrow were my own.  
 O Freedom! if to me belong  
 Nor mighty Milton's gift divine,  
 Nor Marvell's wit and graceful song,  
 Still with a love as deep and strong  
 As theirs, I lay, like them, my best gifts on thy shrine! (26-35)

Referencing his anti-slavery efforts, he assures himself and his audience that his poetry has brought about real-world changes. Furthermore, he emphasizes his ability to feel and empathize with those who suffer and are oppressed. For Whittier then, if a poet cannot attain the timeless aesthetic feats of Spenser or Sidney, he can still serve a crucial role in his society, producing poems just as worthy to rest on freedom's shrine. In this poem laying out his fundamental stance on the role and value of his poetry, Whittier positions himself as a reformer first and foremost and links his poetry to the projects of national reform and redemption.

“The Tent on the Beach,” published twenty years after “Proem,” provides a more detailed reflection from a mature and widely-known poet. Whittier further develops the tension between aesthetic achievement and reform in his work, illustrating how he sacrifices his artistic development for social causes. Describing himself in the third person he writes:

And one there was, a dreamer born,  
 Who with a mission to fulfill,  
 Had left the Muses' haunts to turn  
 The crank of the opinion-mill,  
 Making his rustic reed of song  
 A weapon in the war with wrong,  
 Yoking his fancy to the breaking-plough  
 That beam-deep turned the soil for truth to grow and spring. (83-89)

Here again Whittier links his poetry to both reform and, significantly, to labor.

Distancing his art from “the Muses' haunts,” he instead aligns it with a weapon in a battle and a plough digging into the earth. These lines illustrate a key component of his poetic

theory: although “great poetry was an end in itself . . . minor poetry (like his own) must have an ethical justification” (Wagenknecht 124).<sup>7</sup> In the years following the war and abolition, the poet admits what matters and what will last from his years of effort are not the lines themselves, but the changes they have helped bring about:

He rested now his weary hands,  
 And lightly moralized and laughed,  
 As, tracing on the shifting sands  
 A burlesque of his paper-craft,  
 He saw the careless waves o’errun  
 His words, as time before had done,  
 Each day’s tide-water washing clean away.  
 Like letters from the sand, the work of yesterday. (114-121)

Just as in “Proem,” though he argues his words will be forgotten eventually, Whittier does not deny that they are indeed art--they are poetry, linked to the same aesthetic and divine sources that inspire all true poetry:

For while he wrought with strenuous will  
 The work his hands had found to do,  
 He heard the fitful music still  
 Of winds that out of dream-land blew.  
 The din about him he could not drown  
 What the strange voices whispered down. (98-103)

Ultimately, Whittier argues that his poetry is both art and labor, somehow simultaneously eternal and fleeting, aesthetic and practical. It is a clever rhetorical balancing act, yet Whittier seems confident in his argument.<sup>8</sup>

Ten years later, in 1877, his “Response” echoes his earlier ideas. The poem, written in thanks to those who composed “affectionate messages” in honor of his seventieth birthday (including, of course Larcom’s “J.G.W.”), gives Whittier another opportunity to position his writings, this time through the eyes of his peers. He explains:

...With not unglad surprise  
 I see my life-work through your eyes;  
 Assured, in giving to my home-taught songs  
 A higher value than of right belongs,  
 You do but read between the written lines  
 The finer grace of unfulfilled designs. (9-14)

Other writers, he argues, see the wider aims he had for his poems, including greater aesthetic refinement, and celebrate him for what his poems failed to do as much as for what they did accomplish. Some trace of greatness, he seems to imply, shines through these “home-taught” songs. I do not mean to argue that Whittier is less than sincere in his modesty, but only that he works his whole life to address and reconcile the tension between art and duty in his works, ultimately insisting his poems remain somehow connected to both--they are lasting aesthetic achievements that also help bring about abolition and reform in a troubled nation.

Many of Whittier’s reviewers and readers responded to his argument and praised his poetry (especially his anti-slavery poems) not just or only for its aesthetic achievements, but for what it showed instead: sincerity, truthfulness, simplicity. Writing in 1849 for *The National Era*, J.G. Forman explains, “His is the poetry of human life, of truth and pure sentiment, rather than fiction” (14). Similarly, D. A. Wasson’s 1854

review in the *Atlantic Monthly* calls Whittier “the poet of the moral sentiment and of the heart and faith of the people of America” (331). Thoroughly accessible, he is a poet of the people, not the elite: “He is intelligible and acceptable to those who have little either of poetic culture or of fancy and imagination. Whoever has common sense and a sound heart has the powers by which he may be appreciated” (Wasson 331). W. S. Thayer embraces fully Whittier’s idea that he sacrificed one kind of poetic endeavor for another. In an 1854 *National Review* piece he contends that Whittier could never have written a poem like Keats’s “Ode to a Grecian Urn” because a “mere devotion to the poetical art, mere exercise of the imagination for its own sake, seems inappropriate to him” (43). Instead, “His object was to produce an immediate effect upon the popular mind,--to stimulate his readers to immediate action,--and in consequence his productions have a business-like directness and cogency which do not belong to ordinary poetic effusions” (43). For these critics, Whittier emerges as a distinctly American poet, sacrificing high poetic achievement for the equally noble cause of reform.

Lucy Larcom did not leave behind her own poetic equivalent to “Proem” or “The Tent on the Beach”--an exploration of the poet’s role and duties.<sup>9</sup> Readers must turn to her prose writing, specifically her letters, journals, and autobiographical texts, to find her reflections on the subject. Stretching over thirty years, these writings suggest that Larcom sees the role of poets and poetry quite differently from Whittier. For a woman in Larcom’s social and economic position, simply finding the time to write poetry is a feat. For her, composing and reading poetry is a precious and rare source of solace and pleasure; she understood labor quite differently--as the very real work (in the mills, in

teaching, etc.) she needed to do to survive. Her poetic voice answers back to Whittier's, as she explores what she sees as a clear division between labor and poetry, especially for working-class women like herself, as she gently reminds Whittier (and her readers) of his privileged position.

Larcom's 1889 autobiography, *A New England Girlhood, Outlined from Memory*, gives us her most detailed public reflections on poetry in her life. Explaining that poetry was her "must-have" as a child, she adds, "To different minds, poetry may present different phases. To me, the reverent faith of the people I lived among, and their faithful everyday living, was poetry; blossoms and trees and blue skies were poetry. God himself was poetry" (10). Echoing the Transcendentalists of earlier generations, Larcom finds poetry everywhere and connects it to the Divine. Later in the book, she argues for poetry's restorative power against the troubles and temptations of the world, including worldliness: "Poetry is one of the angels whose presence will drive out this sordid demon, if anything less than the Power of the Highest can. But Poetry *is* of the Highest. It is the Divine Voice, always, that we recognize through the poet's, whenever he most deeply moves our souls" (135). Larcom, therefore, loves poetry for both its aesthetic powers--the way it reveals and celebrates beauty--and for its consequences in the lives of its readers as it provides peace, elevation, and comfort.

Larcom shares Whittier's hopeful belief that poetry, including her own, can effect a real change in the world. In 1855 she writes of winning a prize for her poem "A Call to Kansas" and adds, "I wrote it with the simple wish to write something that would do to be sung in so good a cause . . . . It is reward enough, to feel that words of mine dwell upon

the lips, and strengthen the hearts of westward-bound pilgrims of freedom” (qtd. in Shepard 502). Here, sounding very much like Whittier’s student, she echoes his idea that poetry, in this case a poem celebrating those who tried to settle Kansas as a free state, can advance the cause of freedom. Later she expresses a desire to do even more: “We are indeed living in a revolution. It makes me ache to think I am doing nothing for the right, for the *holy cause*. What can one do? It is not very agreeable to sit still and blush to be called an American woman” (506). Readers can sense Larcom’s frustration, as her status as both working-class and female prevent her from fully engaging in reform. Her letters, though, show her doing much more than sitting still and blushing; in fact an unspoken thread throughout their discourse is the dissatisfaction and exhaustion her life brings her. She wishes she could devote herself full-time to her poetry, engaging in the struggles of reform, but her circumstances--the fact that she has to work to support herself--will not allow her to do so.

Larcom’s writings on her experiences in the Lowell Mills illustrate her perception of the tension between art and labor--a tension quite different from the one described by Whittier. In 1881, with audiences nostalgic for tales of the noble New England Lowell girls, Larcom published “Among Mill Girls: A Reminiscence” in *The Atlantic Monthly*.<sup>10</sup> For the most part, Larcom indulges in a similar nostalgia, painting a fairly rosy picture of life in the mills, “a new industry for American women, offering them an opportunity self-support with self-respect, the guarded freedom of a home, and a social atmosphere wherein heart and soul might healthfully breathe” (595). Turning her attention to the famous *Lowell Offering*, where her early writings appeared, and the other intellectual

pursuits of her workmates, she emphasizes how remarkable such achievements were, given the long days of labor the girls experienced: “It seems a wonder, to look back upon it, how they accomplished so much as they did, in their limited allowance of time” (599). She later adds, “To a girl of active mind and ready expression, writing was almost a necessity; for the hours passed in the midst of monotonous noise, which drowned the sound of human voices, brought with them a sense of isolation such as one feels in the loneliest wilderness” (608). The mill girls write to bring some joy and beauty to their lives. In contrast to Whittier’s poems of social engagement, poetry and writing emerge here as refuges – sources of comfort for poet as much as for her audience, if not more so. Similarly, Ruth from *An Idyll of Work* (1875) sings “herself, with pen and ink. / She soothed her heartaches so, sometimes” (85). Later in the same work, another character wishes that rules against reading in the mills would be lifted as “sometimes / A line of poetry is such a lift / From the monotonous clatter” (128). As it is, the girls rebel against such rules, pasting poems, stories, and sketches on the walls and windowpanes (129).<sup>11</sup> Such descriptions of authors at their craft differ greatly from Whittier’s: instead of the poet laboring to win victories for mankind, Larcom’s mill girl writers, separated from Whittier by gender and class, steal time when they can, reading and writing as much to get themselves through the day as for fame, recognition, or reform.

Indeed, Larcom shows how her gender and class prevented her from ever fully exploring her artistic capabilities. Forced to begin working in the Lowell Mills at the age of eleven and compelled throughout her life to seek employment as a teacher, Larcom can only wonder what she might have achieved otherwise: “Through my life, it has only

been permitted to me as an aside from other more pressing employments. Whether I should have written better verses had circumstances left me free to do what I chose, it is impossible now to know” (“New England” 160). Unlike Whittier, who can proudly call his poetry labor, Larcom shows that for a woman poet like herself, real labor is something quite different. Indeed, Larcom’s attitudes toward her literary ventures are decidedly ambivalent, as she wonders whether more ambition would have been a blessing or a curse: “I do not know whether it was fortunate or unfortunate for me that I had not, by nature, what is called literary ambition. I knew [as a child and young adult] that I had a knack at rhyming, and I knew that I enjoyed nothing better than to try to put thoughts and words together, in any way. But I did it for the pleasure of rhyming and writing, indifferent as to what might come of it” (173). “I seldom thought seriously,” she writes, “of becoming an author, although it seemed to me that anybody who had written a book would have a right to feel very proud” (159).

Would it have been better to have bigger dreams of literary success, yet be unable to realize them because of her economic needs and her gender? Larcom, at least in *A New England Girlhood*, decides that she simply does not know. Simply by raising the question, however, she draws readers’ attention to what poets like Whittier never seem to consider--the role of class and gender in literary production. As she concludes her narrative, she again shies away from giving herself too much credit: “In the words of one of our elder writers, given in reply to a youthful aspirant who had asked for some points of her ‘literary career,’--‘I never had a career’” (274). Undoubtedly, Larcom is practicing the self-effacing apologetic strategy so often employed by women writers. We should,

however, detect another clear point: Larcom did not have the literary career she might have had because she simply could not. She had to work to support herself. Writing only when she could find the time, she would not and could not call her poetry labor.

*A New England Girlhood* gives readers more insight into Larcom's views on labor, including the limited choices open to a woman like her. Although she never has a great desire to teach, she realizes it is one of her only options: "I could earn my living that way,--an all-important consideration. I liked the thought of self-support, but I would have chosen some beautiful or artistic work if I could. I had no especial aptitude for teaching and no absorbing wish to be a teacher" (160-1). Like Whittier, she too feels pulled by two opposite forces, but Larcom must choose between economic survival and her art. Really, of course, there is no choice at all, and Larcom convinces herself to do her best as a teacher, writing only when she can. When we acknowledge this sense of missed opportunity, her observation that "fifteen or twenty of my best years were given to teaching" takes on a new poignancy (161).

Larcom's journals and letters--writing clearly more personal than her published prose--further reveal the clear split she saw between labor and poetry. Most telling is a journal she kept while teaching literature and composition at Wheaton Female Seminary in Norton, Massachusetts from 1854 to 1867.<sup>12</sup> In these entries, Larcom describes her conflicted loyalties to her writing and her responsibilities to her students. In September 1861, depressed at the prospect of another year at the school, she writes, "If we could only understand why we are led as we are! And what is the meaning of this suffocating sadness and loneliness that will settle upon a soul meant to be cheerful, as I know mine

was? It is always selfish to yield to depression? Can one help it if the perspective of a coming year of lonely labor seems very long?" (115). Her regular bouts of depression complicated matters even further (Marchalonis, "Model" 102). Larcom's misery is obvious as she faces another year of work that prevents her from doing what she really wants to do. Her labor, necessary for her survival, is nevertheless stifling, confining, and isolating. Furthermore, the duty she feels toward her students--the duty to be the kind of teacher they deserve--pushes her to devote all her time to them. A series of entries in January 1862 explores this dilemma: "Girls will be ill-educated," she writes, "until their teachers are allowed the time and thought which teachers of *men* are expected to receive" (117). Sensing her own inadequacies for meeting these challenges, she adds, "I find that young girls are more interested in ideas than in mere facts, they follow me well; but then it makes me feel my own ignorance so much! I wish the days were longer, and the nights shorter, and my head a great deal stronger, so that I might teach and study to some purpose..." (117).

These obligations and the intense labor they require leave, of course, little time for Larcom's own composition, a fact she questions in yet another entry. "I am much too occupied with study," she explains, "and have just begun to question myself as to whether it is right to give *all* my time to my classes. It is my own improvement, as well as theirs, that I seek and gain; and yet I hardly think it right, certainly not in a material way, for the remuneration I receive" (117).<sup>13</sup> Still, though, she cannot silence the debate within her: "The longer I teach, the more need I see of study, and the less time I find for my own thoughts and occupations" (119). Larcom reveals a keen awareness of the

importance of time passing, time that she would have rather spent becoming a better poet and contributing more to the cultural debates of her time. While Whittier writes of sacrificing one kind of poetry for another, Larcom shows how she must sacrifice her poetic development (if not the volume of her poetic output, as she still continued to publish regularly) for her labor and her students.

Larcom's correspondence with Whittier during these years illustrates her attempt to express the conflict she felt between her labor and her writing, a struggle that Whittier did not understand or acknowledge. An 1856 letter gently reminds Whittier of the differences in their situations, as she writes, "Are you still unvisited 'of care-charming sleep, the easer of all woes?' How strange! It is one of my woes that I cannot get *unsleepy*, permanently. I would send you some poppies, if I were wakeful enough to gather them" (504). Living in a boarding school with stacks of papers to grade, dozens of students to counsel, and struggles with her own desires to write, Larcom must have found it hard to have much sympathy for Whittier's insomnia.

Whittier, though, seems by and large oblivious to Larcom's fatigue, perhaps because she did manage to keep composing fairly regularly during this period. These years saw the appearance of her best-known work, "Hannah Binding Shoes," and a series of poems for periodicals including *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Congregationalist*, and *The Crayon*. As Marchalonis explains, "The habit of verse-making was so ingrained in her by now that, even with her time not under her control, she wrote a great deal" (*Worlds* 96). Still, a series of letters in 1855 illustrates Whittier's continued fundamental misunderstanding of Larcom's life. Although the two had long discussed the possibility

of Larcom writing a long “American” story,<sup>14</sup> Larcom never expected to see a notice for the work before it had even been written. Nevertheless, a notice for just such a work appeared in print without her consent. Upon seeing it, a horrified Larcom writes to Whittier in a panic:

I wonder if you can guess how frightened I was when I saw the announcement in the *Era*, that a book of mine would be published this season! I had begun to count it among the impossibilities, my time is so completely broken into little bits here. But when I saw that notice, I said, ‘Now it *must* be done.’ Will it be a ‘breach of promise’ if I shouldn’t succeed in finishing it? (qtd. in Shepard 501)<sup>15</sup>

The letter provides another dramatic picture of Whittier’s self-perceived role as Larcom’s editor, mentor, and agent, here seemingly unable to understand her situation. Larcom once again gently tries to remind the poet of her constraints and limitations, explaining, “I doubt my powers as a story-teller, more and more . . . . I can think of things enough to say, if they could only be made to hang together. And then, when I feel most like writing, a grave ‘must not!’ rises before me, in the shape of Moral Science, or a pile of compositions to be corrected, forty or fifty high” (501-2).<sup>16</sup> Her labor--the very real stack of essays in front of her--she explains, prevents her from doing the writing she and Whittier wish she could do. Although Larcom struggles to accept and understand this, Whittier seems completely oblivious and unsympathetic, pushing Larcom further into challenges she cannot meet.<sup>17</sup>

Taken together, Whittier’s and Larcom’s writings about poetic duty and labor provide readers with two sharply different viewpoints. While Whittier’s biggest struggle

was between the voices of reform and aesthetics that clashed in his art, Larcom struggled simply to find the time to write and cultivate her skills. Her economic position and her gender, she reminds her readers and her editor, force her to accept reluctantly an entirely different view of labor. Sometimes subtly and other times quite plainly, her writings demonstrate this tension. It is no wonder, then, that she writes in *A New England Girlhood*, “I should never have been willing to be *only* a writer, without using my hands to some good purpose beside” (174). Larcom is not suggesting that writing has no value in itself, but more likely that the kind of writing she was able to do--often rushed and composed in stolen moments--did not and could not accomplish real work in the world. Forced her whole life to see labor as antithetical to writing, Larcom convinces herself that authorship alone could never be enough for a full life. On the questions of labor, poetry and their connection to reform, Larcom and Whittier, separated by gender and economic status, could not see eye to eye. When the subject shifts, therefore, to the roles that gender and domesticity play in national redemption, the two poets continue to clash, as we shall see in the next section.

*Children, Family, and Home: The Redemptive Project of Domestic Poetry*

In the time leading up to and following the Civil War, poets like Whittier and Larcom continually explored domesticity’s transformative potential for healing the nation. Whittier and his fellow “fireside poets” consistently invoke the symbols of home and its redemptive power for the larger society and the country. James H. Justus explores the fireside, a popular image in these poems:

[It is] both symbolic and generative. It represents the centrality of the domestic affections in the general ethical idealism of the day, an impulse that historically incorporated the home, the church, and the school so effectively that the civic and religious virtues absorbed from the pew and the schoolboy's bench were merely extensions of the homely virtues taught and learned beside the hearth, the mother's knee and the father's chair. (150-1)

Whittier uses the symbols of home, hearth, and family to offer readers a glimpse of what America once was, as well as a (sometimes less hopeful) view of what it could be again. While both he and Larcom could be quite conventional in their celebration of such traditional values, in many key pieces Larcom's poems take a different turn, often invoking these sentimental structures and themes in order to critique them. Almost always written about women or from a female speaker's perspective, these poems answer Whittier's, challenging his idealistic depictions of childhood, marriage, and family life and making quite clear the price women often have to pay to fill their domestic roles.

While both writers explored childhood in their poems, Whittier's works often find him looking back with almost unequivocal nostalgia on the past and simpler times. For Whittier, childhood is a time of innocence and joy, precious and too soon lost. "The Barefoot Boy" (1855) typifies this attitude, as the speaker watches a boy play and remembers his own youth: "Blessings on thee, little man / ... / I was once a barefoot boy! / Prince thou art,--the grown-up man / Only is republican" (1, 10-12). Celebrating the boy's carefree life, he adds, "Let the million-dollared ride! / Barefoot, trudging at his side, / Thou hast more than he can buy / In the reach of ear and eye,-- / Outward sunshine, inward joy" (14-17). Children, free of responsibilities, are truly rich, a truth

that becomes painfully obvious as one grows older. At the poem's closing, he encourages the boy to enjoy childhood while he can, as the cares of maturity shall overtake him before long: "All too soon these feet must hide / Into the prison cells of pride. / Lose the freedom of sod, / Like a colt's for work to be shod" (91-4). Other poems, like "My Playmate" (1860) and "In School Days" (1870), similarly look back on childhood as a sort of lost Eden. Readers embraced these poems with almost unqualified enthusiasm. As late as 1884, Harriet Prescott Spofford writes in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* that "thousands of his countrymen have lived their boyhoods over again with him in 'The Barefoot Boy'; remember with him the warped floor and battered seats and 'jack-knife' carved initial of the district school" (179). Such carefree depictions of childhood innocence clearly appeared to readers anxious about the nation's uncertain future.

In marked contrast, Larcom's childhood poems sometimes provide a counter-narrative to Whittier's seemingly universal portraits, showing that especially for girls, childhood was not always such a carefree time. "A Little Old Girl" (1875) tells of Prudence, who unlike the barefoot boy, experiences "A world for knitting stockings, / Sweeping floors, and baking pies" (3-4). At just ten years old, she has already realized a fundamental truth about the world: "'T is a world that women work in, / Sewing long seams, stitch by stitch; / Barns for hay, and chests for linen; / 'T is a world where men grow rich" (5-8). Refusing to be tempted by nature to neglect her duties, she "runs away from beauty, / Tries its presence to forget" (31-2). Readers (including most of her contemporary audience) misread the poem's ironic ending: "Meanwhile at the romping

children / Their grave heads the gossips shake; / Saying with a smile for Prudence, /  
 ‘What a good wife she will make’” (37-40). What Larcom wants readers to see, though, is the tragedy of Prudence’s situation: a child forced from such a young age to abandon childish ways and take up far too early the work of a woman, including, eventually, the roles of wife and mother.<sup>18</sup> Doors are closed to Prudence, who, if she ever had other dreams for her life, does not have the opportunity to explore them. Of course, “A Little Old Girl” is just one of Larcom’s childhood poems, many of which (“In Time’s Swing,” “Snow-Song,” “Hal’s Birthday”) echo Whittier’s “Barefoot Boy.”<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, poems like “A Little Old Girl” are noteworthy not for their number, but because they show Larcom’s gentle reminder to her audience and Whittier that women’s lot was quite different from men’s.<sup>20</sup> The confines that are already making little Prudence “old” are the same barriers that consistently prevent women from reaching their full potential. Larcom shows that to invoke traditional depictions of childhood as Whittier does in “The Barefoot Boy” is also to argue for the continued creation of little girls like Prudence.

Larcom’s writings on her own childhood offer readers another version of youth to compete with Whittier’s: that of groups of young girls forced to grow up too soon and take up work in the mills. In her “Mill Girls” article she explains, “The children of that generation were brought up to endure hardness. They expected to make something of themselves and of life, but not easily, not without constant exertion” (596). In the difficult position of commenting less-than-glowingly on an experiment so many looked back on fondly, Larcom still refuses to idealize child labor: “That children should be set to toil for their daily bread is always a pity; but in the case of my little work-mates and

myself there were imperative reasons, and we were not too young to understand them” (601). Here, unlike Whittier, Larcom refuses to trade in nostalgia, consciously pointing out the counter-narrative both he and her audience have ignored--the story of girls working in the mills, who, despite whatever measures of economic independence they may have gained were still denied many choices and freedoms. Similarly, in *A New England Girlhood* she writes, “The mill itself had its lessons for us. But it was not, and could not be, the right sort of life for a child” (155). These honest appraisals substitute a more realistic depiction of childhood for Whittier’s idealistic nostalgia. In a move similar to the one Harriet Jacobs makes in her narrative, Larcom returns to her own experience as a source of authority--more reliable and trustworthy than Whittier’s words. Larcom reminds her readers that real life and real people--especially women--are seldom as simple as much literature would have us believe.

When the focus switches from childhood to marriage and family, Whittier is equally nostalgic and idealistic, and Larcom just as skeptical. Nowhere is Whittier’s vision of redemption through domesticity clearer than in “Snow-Bound” (1866), his widely popular celebration of his own family and childhood home. When the poet is nearly sixty, and mourning the death of his beloved sister, Whittier looks back on his boyhood and recreates for his readers a scene of domestic happiness and security. As a fierce snowstorm rages outside, the family, gathered close together, feels no fear: “What mattered how the night behaved? / What matter how the north-wind raved? / Blow high, blow low, not all its snow / Could quench our hearth-fire’s ruddy glow” (175-9). The home here functions as security against outside threats. Fondly recollecting the stories

they told each other, he nevertheless realizes how much time has passed and how different his world is now: “Oh time and change!--With hair as gray / As was my sire’s that winter day, / How strange it seems, with so much gone / Of life and love, to still live on!” (179-182). In the days after the disruption and devastation of the Civil War, and as he struggles with his own personal loss, Whittier mourns the world’s circumstances and remembers better days in the hope that they might inspire some change in the present.

In the days after the Civil War, Whittier’s readers understood and responded to his nostalgia, concern, and muted hope. Indeed, Gay Wilson Allen argues that the poem’s “astounding popularity (on which, it is said, he made a profit of \$10,000) shows how representative of its age Whittier’s poetry was” (72). Whittier’s contemporary critics celebrate the poem’s truthful and appeal to its American (especially New England) audience. In *The North American Review*, James Russell Lowell explains, “It describes scenes and manners which the rapid changes of our national habits will soon have made as remote from us as if they were foreign or ancient . . . Let us be thankful that we can sit in Mr. Whittier’s chimney-corner and believe that the blaze he has kindled for us shall still warm and cheer, when a wood fire is as faint a tradition in New as in Old England” (42). Lowell imagines readers transported to Whittier’s fireside, and argues that such a visit will only improve their own domestic settings. Similarly, Spofford praises the poem’s authenticity and argues that through it, readers can remember similar idyllic moments from their pasts:

We often wonder if anywhere else in our language, or in any other, there is such an autobiographical poem as ‘Snow-bound,’ with such crowded beauty and such

portraiture, so daringly simple, so perfect, so intense, so healthy, and so true, not only to its subject, but to the life of its period in general, that few of New England descent can read it without feeling it a story of their own or of their father's or mother's youth, with just such snow-falls, just such barn-yard life, just such a 'clean-winged heart,' and just such a sweet warm family about it. (180)

The public embraced "Snow-Bound" because it offered them precisely what they were looking for in their lives. James F. Rocks explains that the poem "articulates the domestic and gender ideology of Whittier's time to an audience ready to be healed after the schism of the Civil War and responsive to a philosophy that linked home, heart, and heaven in one vision of a unified past and future" (340). Similarly, Robert Penn Warren writes that "Snow-Bound" appeared "when the country--at least, the North--was poised on the threshold of a new life, the world of technology, big industry, big business, finance capitalism, and urban values; and at that moment, caught up in the promises of the future, the new breed of American could afford to look back on their innocent beginnings" (47). As "Snow-Bound" and Whittier's other domestic poems make clear, the traditional home and family offer a road to redemptive healing for the country. Even a poem like "Maud Muller" (1854), in which the main characters miss out on their chance for domestic happiness, still argues that such contentment can be found if only the judge had been willing to risk a life with a woman of lower social status. In uncertain, changing times, Whittier celebrates the redemptive power of domesticity.

In certain poems, Larcom seems to echo Whittier's enthusiasm and hope for marriage and the family. She celebrates marriage in poems like "The Lady Arabella," "My Mariner," and "The Little Brown Cabin." Especially interesting is "Her Choice," in

which a woman reflects on choosing a farmer for her husband instead of a wealthy gentleman, and which can be read as a response to “Maud Muller.” Looking at her husband, the woman has no regrets: “Woman’s lot at the best is hard; but hardest of all to share / No growth into larger thought, no struggle, burden, or prayer. / And again she caught his smile, and silently, proudly said, / ‘This man, with the love of my heart and the life of my soul, I wed’” (33-36). She, too, could celebrate home, fireside, and family. In *A New England Girlhood*, she writes of the happy times before her father’s death, including those spent around the hearth: “We younger ones reveled in the warm, beautiful glow, that we look back to as a remembered sunset” (23). Significantly, though, she adds, “There is no such sunset now,” reminding readers that after Mr. Larcom’s death, the family’s fortunes were irredeemably altered (23).

In other works, Larcom is much less optimistic about domesticity’s redemptive powers, as her poems show the challenges and sacrifices women face in such an environment. Indeed, Larcom engages in a constant critique of Whittier and the fireside poets on larger themes of domesticity, writing more realistic and less idealistic poems on marriage and family. Even her most famous domestic and sentimental poem, “Hannah Binding Shoes” (1857), can be read as a critique of gender and domestic ideology. “Poor lone Hannah,” who waits twenty years for her husband to return, “presented pathos and virtue. Her fidelity, her refusal to give up hope, her quiet industry, the pride that kept her from complaint and hid her broken heart: all these were the qualities of a noble woman” (*Worlds* 117). Nevertheless, Larcom’s poem still makes readers question the value of

these traits in light of Hannah's wasted life. Karen Kilcup explains Larcom's careful negotiations within the limits of sentimentalism:

From a modern (and contemporary) perspective, the poem participates in a sentimental discourse, engaging the domestic values of love and home in a drama of loss. From another perspective, the poem encodes the suffering of a woman who, in the absence of her husband's economic support, must labor ceaselessly at a poorly paid occupation to support herself . . . Although it follows the rhetorical and substantive conventions of sentimental discourse, Larcom's poem could as readily be construed as a political poem that critiques domestic ideology for its unreality and for the powerlessness and implied poverty that it imposes on the waiting wife. ("Something" 16)

I am arguing that this same critique of domestic ideology appears in many of Larcom's seemingly sentimental and conventional poems, answering back to Whittier's celebratory depictions and offering readers a competing version of domestic life from the point of view of the women who experience and suffer under its confines.

Like "Hannah," "Elsie in Illinois" explores the sacrifices a woman must make in the cause of domesticity. The scene is decidedly sentimental: a hard-working young frontier mother contemplates her infant son's future, assuring her readers that "He will be a wondrous child!" (56). Awakening from her reveries, the speaker's thoughts return to her work and the poem ends with a picture of domestic happiness:

Elsie hums a thoughtful air;  
Spreads the table, sets a chair  
Where her husband first shall see  
Baby laughing on her knee;  
While she watches him afar,  
Coming with the evening star

Through the prairie, through the sky, –  
Each as from eternity. (103-110)

Elsie's husband will return to a seemingly blissful scene--food on the table, a happy (male) child, a loving wife--and indeed readers might leave the poem with the same image in their minds.

The poem, though, is far from that simple, for the substance of Elsie's reverie is her continuing effort to cheer herself up and make the best of life in a strange place she obviously did not choose to come to: "Ah! But Elsie's thoughts will stray / Where, a child, she used to play / In the shadow of the pines" (57-59).<sup>21</sup> Imagining her child thriving on the prairie, she nonetheless grieves for what she left behind and tries (with a questionable degree of success) to convince herself to put up a strong front. Towards the poem's conclusion, the prairie becomes a symbol of Elsie herself, who sacrifices her own happiness for her husband and son:

At her household work she dreams;  
And the endless prairie seems  
Like a broad, unmeaning face  
Read through in a moment's space,  
Where the smile so fixed is grown,  
Better you would like a frown. (77-82)

Sentimental constructions function in this poem just like the smile Elsie and the prairie share: fixed and deceiving, covering up real emotions and conflicts below the surface. Elsie falls into her predetermined domestic role, convincing herself it is for the best.

While many readers might focus on the happy resolution in the last verse, more discerning readers will remember her conflict. Larcom's poem, therefore, gently critiques the idea of redemption through domesticity, especially if it necessitates women denying themselves and sacrificing their own happiness.

Other poems go even further in their skepticism about the comforts of domesticity, presenting pictures of devoted but unhappy wives trapped in loveless marriages. In "Getting Along" (1861), the speaker, like Elsie, tries to convince her audience and herself that she and her husband are doing fine: "We trudge on together, my good man and I, / Our steps growing slow as the years hasten by; / Our children are healthy, our neighbors are kind, / And with the world around us we've no fault to find" (1-4). Her life has the traditional marks of success--material comforts, a family, a good man to take care of her. Yet as the poem progresses, she reveals more and more how unhappy she is with a man who does not understand her and does not make any attempt to do so:

The blackbirds and thrushes come chattering near;  
 I love the thieves' music, but listen with fear:  
 He shoots the gay rogues I would pay for their song;--  
 We're different, sure; still, we're getting along.  
 He seems not to know what I eat, drink or wear;  
 He's trim and he's hearty, so why should I care?  
 No harsh word from him my poor heart ever shocks:  
 I wouldn't mind scolding,--so seldom he talks.  
 Ah, well! 'tis too much that we women expect:  
 He only promised to love and protect.  
 See I lean on my husband, so silent and strong;  
 I'm sure there's no trouble;--we're getting along. (13-24)<sup>22</sup>

Though she tries to convince herself and her audience that there is no trouble really--that she is just making idle complaints--her efforts clearly fail. Despite her unhappiness, she cannot imagine a life separate from her husband, and can only mouth platitudes: "Should he be called first, I must follow him fast, / For all that's worth living for then will be past. / But I'll not think of losing him; fretting is wrong, / While we are so pleasantly getting along" (45-8). Fulfilling her domestic role has left the speaker in a hopeless situation: trapped with a man who does not love her (she suspects he married her for her money), has nothing in common with her, and without whom she cannot imagine life. Even if the speaker is being ironic here, the ultimate point remains the same: she is trapped in an unsatisfying domestic space.

Just as interesting as "Getting Along" are those works in which Larcom is more ambiguous in her critique of domesticity and patriarchy. These poems, cloaked in sentimental tropes and structures, question male attitudes and women's sacrifices. In "Sylvia" (1872), the title character, whose name invokes scenes of wooded nature, begins the poem certain that she faces a happy future: "Sylvia! It was her wedding-day; / Her story seemed complete: / No voice had made her name so sweet / Along the rustic maiden's way, / So rhythmic to repeat" (6-10). As the years go by, though, hard work and strife take their toll:

Sylvia grew  
 Pale at her work, and thin.  
 The pair no green woods wandered in;  
 Cold through the corn the north-wind blew;  
 Their bread was hard to win.  
 Furrowed his brow became, and stern,  
 And his own farm-lands rough.  
 He called her 'Wife!' in accents gruff. (36-43)

Although her husband brags of her domestic skills--her cooking and cleaning--what Sylvia truly yearns for is the way he used to call her name in the early days of their romance and marriage. Only after her death does her husband realize his mistake and speak her name as he used to: “‘Sylvia!’--that pierced death’s gathering gloom. / Her soul smiled back: she heard!” (104-5). The sentimental ending just barely covers a simmering critique of domestic culture.

Marchalonis cautions us not to go too far in our feminist analysis of works like “Sylvia.” She acknowledges the poem attacks male attitudes and that it is hard to believe that “Sylvia hearing her name as she died made up for years without an identity,” yet also reminds us that Larcom’s critique is certainly a gentle one (*Worlds* 181). It is, in fact, “an explanation respectfully submitted to the patriarchy” rather than a radical call for a new order (181). Marchalonis adds that it is hard to say “how consciously” Larcom wrote *Sylvia* and that she never allowed her “to venture outside the patriarchal definitions of poetry” (180, 181). I would argue, though, that Larcom is almost certainly conscious of what she is doing in poems like “Sylvia” and “Elsie in Illinois”: carefully, subtly, yet certainly questioning what domesticity entailed for women. Always aware of her audience’s expectations (the same audience that adored “Snow-Bound”), she skillfully constructs these sometimes buried critiques, ensuring her popularity while advancing her critique of the poets and poetic traditions that fail to represent accurately women’s lot.

Larcom’s critique of domesticity and poetic portrayals of it finds further expression in her poems examining the lives of single women, challenging Whittier’s treatment of women who fall outside the traditional bounds of domesticity. “Snow-

Bound” features two unmarried women, Whittier’s aunt and Harriet Livermore. First, Whittier lovingly describes Aunt Mercy, “The sweetest woman ever Fate / Perverse denied a housemate, / Who lonely, homeless, not the less / Found peace in love’s unselfishness” (353-55). Such a woman, the poet implies, deserves to have found a husband (and therefore deserves our pity), yet makes the best of her unfortunate plight. Because she is inherently domestic--her presence “seemed the sweet income / And womanly atmosphere of home”--the family makes a welcome place for her around the hearth (358-59). Although Whittier chides his readers not to scorn spinsters like his aunt (376-77), he encourages pity on her behalf. Harriet Livermore, the visiting family friend, evokes a much harsher response. Harriet, the “vixen and devotee” both attracts and repels Whittier, as his description of her makes plain: “A nature passionate and bold, / Strong, self-concentrated, spurning guide, / Its milder features dwarfed beside / Her unbent will’s majestic pride” (534, 515-19). Livermore’s “tropical, intense” and un-domestic presence threatens the cozy scene, which has no space for such a woman. Rocks explains, “her delineation works a notable opposition to the values of domestic ideology in the in the poem” (349). Loud, disruptive, and thoroughly outside the bounds of the traditional family sphere, she stands in marked contrast to Whittier’s more domestic aunt. Whittier’s interest in Harriet Livermore “reveals a curious fascination with an unconventional woman who sacrifices her domestic role and becomes by circumstances and choice, a homeless wanderer, the dreaded result of rejecting the charmed circle” (350). In contrast to his aunt, this woman--unmarried, independent, embodying both masculine and feminine traits--jeopardizes the national project of

redemption through domesticity that “Snowbound” works to bring about. It is no wonder, then, that Whittier emphasizes how disruptive Harriet’s presence is, calling her “a not unfeared, half-welcome guest” (520).

In clear contrast to Whittier, Larcom affirms and even celebrates the lives of single women like herself who choose an alternative to marriage and motherhood. In this way, she anticipates Harriet Jacobs, Sarah Winnemucca, and Mary Wilkins Freeman, writers discussed in the later chapters. We can read “Unwedded” (1868) as a response to the two spinster figures in “Snow-Bound,” showing that single women can be just as happy--and even happier--than married women. The poem imagines a speaker responding to the town gossips who wonder about an unwedded woman: “‘Did she choose it, this single life?’--/ Gossip, she saith not, and who can tell? / But many a mother, and many a wife, / Draws a lot more lonely, we all know well” (13-16).

Although she does not have her own family, the poem’s narrator explains that the woman does have dear friends and devotes herself to those in need (including orphaned and needy children). Where Whittier seems certain his aunt would have been happier had she found a mate, the speaker in this poem is more skeptical: “Would she have walked more nobly, think, / With a man beside her, to point the way, / Hand joining hand in the marriage-link? / Possibly, Yes: it is likelier, Nay” (45-8). Significantly, this poem immediately follows “Getting Along” in the 1880 Household Edition of Larcom’s poems, providing a clear and better alternative to that wife’s choice. This single woman, outside the bounds of traditional domesticity, still plays a vital role in society, and most importantly, she finds happiness. Larcom, who refused to marry despite a long and

complicated engagement, again invokes her personal experience for authority in her competing depiction of the single woman. In this way, she anticipates another independent single woman, Mary Wilkins Freeman's "Aunt Elizabeth," discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. Thus in her critique of her editor and mentor, Larcom rejects both pity and scorn, the two responses Whittier has for unmarried women, ending the poem with the calm assurance that "You waste your pity on such as she" (80).

Despite her subversion of Whittier's poems and their traditional assumptions about gender and domesticity, Larcom's readers seem largely unaware of anything unconventional in her poems. Perhaps because she was so clearly aligned with Whittier in readers' minds, they assumed she endorsed and celebrated the same domestic ideals and virtues. Her alliance with Whittier provided her with a cover of sorts, one that worked almost too well. Just as with Whittier, readers praise her for her sincerity, truth, and realism. A short 1869 *New Englander and Yale Review* notice on *Poems* describes the book as a "volume of genuine New England life, in its literal truth, sacrificing benevolence, ardent patriotism, and fervent piety, as such a life is gilded and transformed by genuine poetic feelings, ought to be welcomed in hundreds of New England Homes" (208). A particularly fascinating 1869 review in the *Atlantic Monthly* discusses "Hannah Binding Shoes," "A Little Old Girl" (the reviewer mistakenly calls it "Prudence"), "Getting Along" and "Elsie in Illinois" without noticing anything even remotely progressive about them. "Poor lone Hannah is an immortal pathos," the writer explains, "and haunts whatever shape binds shoes at windows. It is a very touching poem, and wrought with such perfect simplicity and self-control, that we do not see how it could be

better.” “A Little Old Girl” is “also charmingly easy and life-like; the touches are very light, but each tells, and there is none too many.” “In ‘Getting Along,’” he adds, “the art is not so good, or the luck not so great, but the sentiment is genuine, and the poem is history and nature, and is full of a delicately veiled sadness of half-conscious disappointment.” Most surprising is the assessment of “Elsie in Illinois”: “as pretty and dainty a little idyll as we care to read, told in sparing and fortunate words, and with a true sense of East and West in it.” Together, he asserts, these poems evidence “a gift to move and please, which certainly does not come from the poetic culture of our age, and which we do not mind calling genius” (136). The review is quite positive, yet modern readers might wonder if they are reading the same works. Kilcup has noticed this trend as well, noting “the reviewers’ refusal to acknowledge (or their inability to perceive) the political thrust of her work, for they emphasize only its affiliation with the realistic or romantic lyric” (“Something” 17).

Only rarely does a reviewer notice Larcom’s critique of domesticity. An 1881 review for *Wild Roses of Cape Ann and Other Poems* in *Catholic World* describes “Sylvia” as a “pathetic and tender poem, which carries a lesson with it to fathers and husbands” (573), an acknowledgment of the poem’s deeper message. Similarly, an 1869 writer for *The Ladies’ Repository* describes “Getting Along” as “capital, and, alas! only too descriptive” (272). More significantly, a *Scribner’s Monthly* reviewer notes that Larcom’s distinctly female voice provides a perspective that other women have looked for in literature: “Miss Larcom’s poetry will come home to that large class of readers--mainly women--who seek in poetry a sympathetic expression of certain of their own

moods, rather than a satisfaction of their aesthetic instincts, or a stimulus to their imagination” (“Wild” 797). Although undercut by a less than positive assessment of her works, this critic’s acknowledgement that Larcom offers a distinctly female voice often missing from literature constitutes a partial realization of Larcom’s goals in her more subversive poems.

In their totality, then, Larcom and Whittier’s works on domesticity investigate the redemptive and healing power of traditional home and family. Although on the surface the poems look similar--sentimental treatments of children, women, and families--Larcom continually brings the experiences and viewpoints of women and workers into her verse, complicating idealistic depictions of the home that are built upon gender roles that confine women and their labor to the home. Perhaps because her critique is always gentle, carefully crafted so as not to offend, Whittier, her readers, and her critics seldom noticed her dissent. Nevertheless, her alternative voice works to remind them that the type of domesticity they long for is often built upon the sacrifices of women like Elsie, Sylvia, and Prudence.

*‘A Spectral Haunting’: The Inescapability of Influence*

A particularly negative and condescending review of Larcom’s 1868 *Poems* in the *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* hints at the association with Whittier that would mark Larcom’s entire literary career and legacy:

There is a spectral haunting of Whittier throughout these pages--a ghost in drab--which is the more unfortunate as the publishers have been weak enough to

advertise the book by a printed letter from Whittier highly eulogistic of Lucy Larcom. We certainly shall not think any the worse of the poetess' verses for this praise, nor any the better of Whittier's judgment, remembering as we do the numerous *protégés* of Bryant, Longfellow, and Emerson, not to mention Morris and Willis, and the noble liberality and human fallibility of great poets. But with Whittier's influence suggested in the volume, we doubt the efficacy of the advertisement. (584)

This review offers an almost complete reversal of what Larcom (and possibly Whittier) would have hoped might have resulted from their collaboration: Whittier's noted presence in the text overwhelms the poems themselves in readers' minds. The trend this reviewer notes--the constant need to attach Whittier's name to Larcom's endeavors--followed the female poet all her life and continues to dominate critical interest. Whether Larcom would have also felt this continual connection was an "unfortunate" sign of weakness is less certain. She understood, after all, the power of Whittier's reputation to help her gain entry into the publishing world. By dutifully playing the role of student and protégé and letting him be the editor and mentor, she helped secure the means of literary access and success.

As the discussion above has shown, Larcom responded to Whittier's influence with both emulation and resistance, modeling and innovation. Competing with him for the same audience, she eventually positioned herself simultaneously as his peer and his student, a member of the same school of poetry, but also a rival. As such, since her career was so closely aligned with his, a letter she wrote him (shortly before his death in 1892 and her own a year later) seems to make perfect sense. Explaining that she has just finished "another little book," she adds, "I should have liked to talk it over with thee--I

should have made it a better book doubtless” (qtd. in Shepard 517). Since she could not have that discussion, though, she makes another request: “I have wished I might dedicate the little book to thee,--may I? The theme is one we have so often talked over,--it would be a genuine offering, on my part, of the friendship of years, and I should like to have one book of mine indicate something of what your friendship has helped me to see and to be” (517). Here, in one of the final comments she makes on their relationship, Larcom responds with gratitude for a friendship that helped her become an independent writer.

Thus Larcom and Whittier demonstrate the politics of collaboration between a respected male editor and a working-class woman writer. Through a pattern of agreement and sometimes subtle challenge and dissent, Larcom takes on Whittier’s vision for national reform and redemption. As we shall see in the next chapter, when both writers are female, yet of different races, while the general nature of their works’ concerns remain the same (saving the family and nation from corrupting forces), the negotiations between the pair and their audience takes on a different tone.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Early critics often speculated about women writers and their friends/mentors. Even Emily Dickinson was the subject of speculation about her male lovers and mentors.
- <sup>2</sup> Shirley Marchalonis provides a comprehensive reading of traditional assessments of the Larcom/Whittier relationships in her essay “A Model for Mentors?: Lucy Larcom and John Greenleaf Whittier.”
- <sup>3</sup> John B. Pickard explains that the pair are discussing *Lottie’s Thought Book* (1858), in which a precocious child relates her thoughts on passing scenes (2:269).
- <sup>4</sup> Pickard adds an interesting endnote following this letter: “Accompanying the letter was a manuscript with eight stanzas of ‘On the Beach.’ The first stanza was written in Lucy Larcom’s hand, while all the rest were written in Whittier’s hand” (179).
- <sup>5</sup> For more on Dickinson and Higginson, see Raymond A. Mazurek’s “‘I Have no Monarch in My Life’: Feminism, Poetry, and Politics in Dickinson and Higginson” (in Marchalonis’ *Patrons and Protégées*).
- <sup>6</sup> In the preface, Whittier (speaking of himself in the third person) explains his “indebtedness to *Lucy Larcom*, so well known in connexion with “*Our Young Folks*,” who has given him the benefit of her cultivated taste and very thorough acquaintance with whatever is valuable in the poetical literature of Child Life” (Whittier, *Writers* 196).
- <sup>7</sup> Whittier’s belief in the need for an ethical justification for poetry sheds light on his insistence in tacking a moral onto the end of his poems. Several of his early critics (along with today’s readers) acknowledge this fault. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a friend of the poet, makes a bit of a joke over it in *John Greenleaf Whittier* (1926).

Discussing “In School-Days,” Higginson quotes almost all of the poem, but does a bit of editing on his own, explaining, “I withhold the closing verse with its moral; a thing always hard for Whittier to forego” (141).

<sup>8</sup> Bromell discusses at length the uneasy balance many writers struggled with: “On the one hand, while the project of creating a ‘poetry for the people’ and of representing manual labor was frequently celebrated in the antebellum period, it was seldom undertaken systematically and with full appreciation of its difficulties. A pattern of evasions and oversimplifications ensues, suggesting that many writers and artists contributed to the new industrial ideology even when they seemed eager to resist it” (61).

<sup>9</sup> In *The Nightingale’s Burden*, Cheryl Walker reads “Fern-Life” as a poem about the life and struggles of a woman poet (45). I am inclined to agree with Marchalonis, however, who argues it is “about the place of all living things in God’s universe, regardless of who they are or what they look like, and is an extension of Larcom’s belief that all created things have God’s spirit within them” (*Worlds* 292).

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, “The Editor’s Table” section of the December 1889 issue of *New England Magazine*. Indulging in nostalgia about the mills and the *Offering*, the writer expresses a wish “that Miss Larcom or Mrs. [Harriet] Robinson might publish a volume of selections from this famous old *Lowell Offering*, if only to stimulate the young men and women of our own factories to show us that they too read and think and aspire” (“Editor’s” 472). Similarly, an 1875 *Atlantic Monthly* review of “An Idyll of Work” remarks of the *Offering*, “We have never seen any numbers of this periodical, and we suppose perhaps that it was not the highest literature; and no doubt the life of these

ambitious mill-girls had its droll little vulgarities; but after all, what a truly idyllic episode it was, in the hard history of work” (“Idyll” 242).

<sup>11</sup> Among the items the girls paste up are Whittier’s poems: “There’s / The minstrel of the Merrimack, who sings / For freedom and is ever toilers’ friend” (*Idyll* 129).

<sup>12</sup> For more on Wheaton College and Larcom’s time there, see Paul C. Helmreich’s “Lucy Larcom at Wheaton,” which also discusses the Seminary’s other teachers and its curriculum.

<sup>13</sup> Not all of Larcom’s experiences at Wheaton were so negative. In one entry she writes of coming back from a walk and finding “one poor, lonely, sick girl glad of a call from me. It was a great pleasure to feel really able to say a comforting word to somebody” (qtd. in Helmreich 116). In another she explains, “Tonight, for the first time, I met with some of our scholars to talk with them of deep and sacred truths. I hardly know how I did it, it seemed hard at first, and yet it *was* easy, for the words seemed to be spoken through me” (118).

<sup>14</sup> To Whittier’s credit, his pressures on Larcom to write this long book resulted from his admiration from her work compared to that of others. In 1854 he explains, “Whenever I take up ‘Similitudes,’ or read a letter of thine I am impressed with the notion that thou shouldst write a story of sufficient length for a book by itself. It vexes me to see such a work as the *Lamplighter* having such a run, when you cannot remember a single sentence or idea in it after reading it. I am sure thee could do better--give pleasure to old friends, and make a thousand new ones--and ‘put money in thy purse’” (*Letters* 2:257).

<sup>15</sup> Larcom is even more forthright with her friend Harriet Hanson Robinson, explaining “How that book is ever going to get written I don’t know. I could have cried, when I saw that Mr. Whittier had mentioned it, in the paper; for I had given it up in discouragement, myself. And then I didn’t mean to have my name to it. Indeed, I should not have dreamed that I could write a long story, if Mr. Whittier had not told me I could, and advised me to try” (qtd. in Marchalonis, “Model” 103).

<sup>16</sup> Marchalonis explains that after several years of discussion and unsuccessful attempts, Larcom eventually abandoned plans for the book completely (*Worlds* 113).

<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, though, in an 1843 review of her work in *The National Era*, Whittier makes much of Larcom’s labor: “That they [her poems] were written by a young woman whose life has been no long holyday of leisure, but one of toil and privation, does not indeed enhance their intrinsic merit, but it lends them in the interest in the eyes of those who like ourselves, long to see the cords of caste broken . . .” (Whittier, *Writing* 137).

<sup>18</sup> Larcom also addresses the assumptions made about young girls and their labor in *A New England Girlhood*: “Among other domestic traditions of the old times was the saying that every girl must have a pillow-case full of her own stockings before she was married. Here was another mountain before me, for I took it for granted that marrying was inevitable--one of the things that everybody must do, like learning to read or going to meeting” (124). Explaining that she decided from an early age to be an “old maid,” she adds that her own pillowcase was never completed.

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, some of Larcom's childhood poems give a decidedly unorthodox view of childhood and the transition to adulthood. "What the Train Ran Over" stands out as especially strange: the speaker talks of her young friends being run over by the passing train: "When the train came shrieking down, / Did you see what it ran over? / I saw heads of golden brown, / Little plump hands filled with clover" (1-4). It is only at the end of the poem that readers realize the children being run over are not real, but are memories of the speaker's playmates from youth, existing only in her imagination. Marchalonis calls this poem "tasteless," and explains it illustrates "the occasional lapses that occurred in her work, as if she stopped listening to herself" (*Worlds* 251, 198). I wonder, though, if Larcom isn't being purposefully macabre, trying to jolt her readers out of their traditional ideas about maturity and change. If she was, though, they did not notice--"reviews and comments in letters were full of praise" (*Worlds* 198).

<sup>20</sup> Karen Kilcup makes a similar point in her essay, "'Something of a Sentimental Sweet Singer:' Robert Frost, Lucy Larcom, and 'Swinging Birches,'" arguing that "like Emily Dickinson, Larcom appropriates a masculine persona to achieve the freedom, both physical and creative, that 'Swinging on a Birch-Tree' celebrates" (25).

<sup>21</sup> Other nineteenth-century women writers explored this theme of the lonely and displaced frontier woman, including Lydia Sigourney in "The Western Emigrant" (1835), Caroline Kirkland in *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* (1839), and Kate McPhelim Cleary's tales of Nebraska.

<sup>22</sup> Sylvia's husband anticipates Adoniram Penn, the husband/father in Mary Wilkins Freeman's "The Revolt of 'Mother'" (1891), another reticent man whose relationship with his wife suffers because of his refusal to talk to her.

## CHAPTER III

“WITH DELIBERATE CALCULATION”: HARRIET JACOBS AND LYDIA MARIA  
CHILD

Chapter Two illustrated the ways in which Lucy Larcom wrote back to John Greenleaf Whittier, providing an alternative view of gender and domesticity and their roles in the projects of national reform and redemption. Larcom, who needed Whittier's name and reputation to gain initial entry into the literary marketplace, found ways to advance her own criticism of Whittier's nostalgic reverence for domesticity, pointing out where he failed to adequately acknowledge differences in class or gender. Larcom uses her own life experience to point out the limitations of Whittier's model, showing that any movements towards national improvement built on such assumptions about home and family are inextricably bound up with the oppression and confinement of women. This chapter investigates how the writer/editor dynamic changes when the writer is an African-American woman, the editor is a white woman, and the genre switches from poetry to slave narrative. Although the central topics of discussion and debate--domesticity, national reform and redemption--remain at the forefront, the changes in both race and genre necessitate changes in how editor and writer approach these concerns. In this chapter, I argue that, like Larcom, Harriet Jacobs engages in a dialogue on domesticity and national redemption with her editor, Lydia Maria Child, rewriting Child's depiction of the tragic mulatta trope, re-inscribing it with her own life experience

and arguing that she advances a better model for healing the nation's racial divisions through a reconfigured domestic space outside of patriarchy.

In June 1853, Harriet Jacobs sent a letter to the *New York Tribune* expressing her desire to tell her life's story: "'Poor as it may be, I had rather give ...[my story] from my own hand, than have it said that I employed another to do it for me'" (qtd. in Yellin, "Written" 484). In this passage, Jacobs, though quite anxious about revealing the more scandalous parts of her life, somewhat reluctantly resolves to share her autobiography with her reading audience.<sup>1</sup> Jacobs had many reasons for her newfound desire to tell her story, including the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law and her encounters with reformers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and William Lloyd Garrison. Might we, however, find yet another impetus behind Jacobs's emphasis on telling her own narrative based on her personal experience? The 1850s were, after all, a time of rising tension in the United States, as the country found itself increasingly divided over slavery and its destructive effects on the family and the nation. Abolitionists circulated numerous representations of the institution and its miseries, hoping to elicit sympathy from readers. Among the conventions they (and other writers) used was the trope of the tragic mulatta.<sup>2</sup> Lydia Maria Child, who served as editor of Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, worked with this trope, especially in her short story "The Quadroons." Jacobs, herself a woman of mixed blood, and no doubt familiar with both her editor's works and this convention, might have also felt the urge to tell a story about a mulatta--her own story. Just as Lucy Larcom felt compelled to write back to Whittier using her own experience and authority to advance a narrative his work silenced, so too does Jacobs feel the need to

respond to Child as a corrective to Child's unrealistic portrayal of the mixed blood woman and her role in the nation's future.

Indeed, I want to argue that a productive way to read *Incidents* is to understand it as Jacobs's response to Child and her story, along with the entire tragic mulatta genre. Rejecting the benevolent yet inherently hierarchical models of white female abolitionist rhetoric, Jacobs's text resists, revises, and rewrites the mulatta's tale, inscribing it with her own experience and circumventing its tragic ending through her exercise of free will and agency. Jacobs's tragic mulatta demands from readers a different response than the one they were accustomed to, as she demonstrates that any project of national reform and redemption must consider the mulatta not as a passive and tragic figure, but as an active agent in the country's future. In this way, *Incidents* provides us with a clear example of an author writing back to--editing and revising--her own editor, placing that revision alongside her editor's work. In doing so, Jacobs offers her readers a view of the mulatta slave and her plight that competes with and challenges the one constructed by the very editor whose textual presence in *Incidents* authenticates and validates that work--a complex and noteworthy achievement for the author of a female slave narrative.

I begin with a discussion of the tragic mulatta trope, showing how it is built upon readers' fascination with mixed blood characters and their reliance on principles of safe, sympathetic identification with such figures: white female readers, seeing something of themselves in the mulatta's desire to be pure and noble, can respond with pity and outrage at her sufferings and express anxiety over the fate of the nation in the face of such corruption. I show how Child's "The Quadroons," one of the earliest examples of

such a story, creates mulatta figures who, despite their noble intentions, are ultimately weak, passive, and tragic, and who seem unable to live outside the bonds of traditional patriarchy. Jacobs, seeing how problematic such fictional depictions of the mixed-blood women were, uses her book to weave a counter-narrative that competes with her editor's model. Beginning with an analysis of Child's Preface and Jacobs's Introduction, and continuing with a close reading of *Incidents*, I argue that Jacobs consistently presents an alternative view of the mulatta and her experience, emphasizing free will, agency, and a reconfigured domestic model that replaces patriarchal dependence with the figure of a strong and determined mother better suited to the projects of healing the nation. In the final section, I turn to contemporary responses to *Incidents*, including not only critical reviews, but Jacobs's influence on literature, especially Child's late novel, *A Romance of the Republic*.

*Genre and Convention: Lydia Maria Child and the Tragic Mulatta*

To a much greater degree than we saw in the previous chapter, simply because of its genre, Harriet Jacobs's text is, from start to finish, marked by competing claims for authority, ownership, and authenticity. Because they professed to be stories of actual slaves, and because that truthfulness motivated action against slavery, both writers and readers of slave narratives emphasized the reliability of their accounts. Perhaps because they placed such value on truth, slave narratives frequently demonstrate a tension over just who controlled the text and gives it authority. William L. Andrews and Robert B. Stepto have argued that from the standard authenticating prefaces provided by white

abolitionists to the rhetorical moves slave writers made, most successful and accepted narratives followed a strict pattern which consistently, on the surface, ceded power to figures other than the author (Andrews 6, 106; Stepto 8). Indeed, at least three figures shaped most slave narratives, affecting almost every aspect of the text: the author, the editor, and, as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has argued, the imagined reader (74). The result is an apparent diminishment of the author's control over her own story. In her book on personal narratives in the nineteenth century, Ann Fabian explores this dynamic: "Writers who assumed the pose of poor and humble narrators often learned (sometimes to their great distress) that to follow rules for the articulation of experience was to accept humility and therefore to defer to those who claimed a right to exercise social and cultural power over them" (7). Jacobs's preface (discussed in fuller detail below), which carefully explains both her own inadequacy to tell her tale and her desire to do so in spite of her professed limitations, shows the humility and conformity to expectations that readers would have immediately recognized. Some critics have noted that Jacobs played the game almost too well: "She [Jacobs] so doggedly followed the model of sentimental domestic fiction that for a long time it was assumed that her editor, Lydia Maria Child, had written the book" (Fox-Genovese 75). Although we observed this dynamic in the previous chapter (note the *Overland* review that concentrated more on Whittier than Larcum's poems), the stakes are much higher in slave narratives where an entire work could be discounted because of doubts as to its authenticity. This slippage between author and editor--where the editor's voice dominates the narrative--demonstrates quite clearly what slave authors risked in penning their narratives: by adhering to the rules they

had to follow in order to make their voices heard, they faced the very real possibility of virtual erasure and complete loss of authority over their texts. In Jacobs's case, Lydia Maria Child's presence--on the title page, in her introduction, and throughout the book--leaves a powerful mark that threatens to silence the author and foreclose any possibility of her contributing to conversations on the nation's future.

Yet Jacobs's narrative voice refuses to be completely silenced and, in her careful negotiations and manipulations of readers' expectations, she presents a competing counter-text that comments on those very conventions. In order to understand how Jacobs rewrites "The Quadroons," we must first explore the trope of the tragic mulatta and its implications for domesticity, national redemption, and reform. An examination of the tragic mulatta stories reveals consistent conventions and explorations of the ambiguities of racial differences and their implications for the future of American society. In *Women on the Colorline*, Anna Shannon Elfenbein describes the typical tragic mulatta:

In story after story, this near-white ingenue reappears. She is young. She is beautiful. She speaks impeccably and dresses in enviable style. She is raised as a lady in the household of her father, who is, notwithstanding his sexual vagaries, descended from the best blood in the South. Her fortune is often irremediably reversed upon her father's death. (3)

In other representations, the mulatta comes to a tragic end when her white lover abandons her, either because he finds out she is black, or, if he knew she was mixed all along, because he now wants a more respectable white wife. Despite her efforts to be a model

woman, the mulatta is denied acceptance into white society and stands outside the bounds of traditional domesticity. In *Women and Sisters: The Anti-Slavery Feminists in American Culture*, Jean Fagan Yellin explains, “The pathos of the Tragic Mulatto rests in the contradiction between her sincere efforts to adhere to the patriarchal definition of true womanhood and the patriarchy’s insistence that she violate this norm” (72). Desiring to be a pure and moral woman, the mulatta must always eventually realize that her status as a slave, or even as a free black, will prevent her from fulfilling the cultural ideal for nineteenth-century women.

For a large part of the nineteenth century, writers found themselves drawn to the figure of the tragic mulatta, as her life and its circumstances provided an opportunity for the examination and exploration of racial differences and their social implications, giving readers an opportunity to express sympathy and pity for her plight. Additionally, she served as a potent argument against slavery, since she looked (and usually acted) white, but was often a slave. Women writers especially used the mulatta to investigate the relationship between race and gender. In *Mothers and Sisters: The Family Romance of Antislavery Women Writers*, Jennifer Fleischner argues, “As processed through such sentimental forms, as, for example, the ‘tragic romance,’ the slave woman of mixed racial heritage was a symbol enabling negotiations between sameness and difference, an intermediary area of potential intersubjectivity between self and other” (127). The mulatta, then, allows a way for white writers to manage cultural anxieties over two contradicting ideas: “racial difference and universal womanhood” (127). Susan Ryan argues that this “simultaneous erasure and persistence of difference facilitates both the

sentimental bond that creates the desire to give and maintenance of hierarchy that suggests such giving is safe” (19).<sup>3</sup> For white women, the entire effect of such stories is cathartic and ultimately non-threatening, as such stories “transform fearful sympathy (based on symmetry between white women and black women) into tearful pity (based on a reassuring asymmetry between white and black women)” (Fleischner 128). Thus, through representations of her, the tragic mulatta allowed white women to feel benevolent and sympathetic towards their fellow women without this identification threatening to disrupt hierarchies of racial difference.<sup>4</sup>

Although it is difficult to pin down exactly when such representations of the mulatta first appeared in American culture in general, many critics credit Lydia Maria Child with “inventing” the trope in literature. Yellin, for example, claims she was the first to present “a slave woman of mixed race who wants to conform to the patriarchal definition of true womanhood but is prevented from doing so by the white patriarchy” (“Women” 53). Child, she explains, “encoded the oppression of race, gender and condition, and the struggle against this oppression, in a cast of characters and a series of plots centering on the sexual abuse of female slaves” (54). Even those critics who point to earlier manifestations of the character still highlight Child’s achievement. Eve Allegra Raimon, for instance, argues that “no nineteenth-century author was more instrumental in the trope’s proliferation and circulation” (26). Diane Roberts also writes of Child’s seeming fascination with mixed-blood characters and their role in the nation’s future: “[Her] writing . . . insists on the inclusion of blacks in American society. She wants emancipation, then she wants integration. She sees one way to accomplish this through

miscegenation and the creation of a people with both 'white' and slave ancestry. After abolition, mulattoes, emblems of white slaveholders' sexual exploitation of female slaves, will help redraw the racial map of a truly free nation" (128). Child, then, used the mulatta as a symbol of slavery and all its evils, pointing chiefly to its devastating effects on morality and domesticity, and as a symbol of promise and potential racial reconciliation. No doubt influenced by Child, in the years following the initial publication of "The Quadroons," writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and William Wells Brown created similar tales of the mulatta and her misfortunes.<sup>5</sup>

As perhaps the first and certainly one of the best known and widely reprinted tragic mulatta stories, "The Quadroons" embodies many of the characteristics that would become stock conventions other writers use--and Jacobs resists. The story, first published in *The Liberty Bell* in 1842 and later in *Fact and Fiction: A Collection of Stories* (1846), opens with the picturesque view of a "beautiful cottage...far removed from the public roads, and almost hidden amongst the trees" (275). This "perfect model of rural beauty," separated from the outside world, is home to Rosalie, Edward, and their daughter, Xarifa. Rosalie is the model of a perfect woman, except she is a quadroon. Child writes, "Conventional laws could not be reversed in her favor, though she was the daughter of a wealthy merchant, was highly cultivated in mind and manner, graceful as an antelope, and beautiful as the evening star" (275). Edward, "a wealthy young Georgian," finds himself attracted to Rosalie not just because of her beauty, but also because of the "purity and intelligence of her mind," which "inspired him with far deeper interest than is ever excited by mere passion" (275). The couple has "genuine love" for

one another, and, because of her “highly poetic nature” and the “tenderness of her conscience,” Rosalie wants their union sanctified by some form of marriage, even if it cannot be a legal bond (275). Thus, Rosalie does and insists upon everything a good woman should and, for a brief time, she lives happily with Edward and their child.

Child, of course, shows us quite early on that this idyllic arrangement is only temporary. Rosalie, in fact, has promised Edward that if he ever wants to leave her to marry a white woman, she would not stop him: “‘If your affection falls from me, I would not, if I could, hold you by a legal fetter’” (276). Such a promise strikes readers then and now as an ominous distortion of marriage vows--a corruption of the domestic sphere and, by extension, a threat to the nation’s future. Rosalie also worries when she looks at her child: “‘In the deep tenderness of the mother’s eye there was an indwelling sadness, that spoke of anxious thoughts and fearful forebodings’” (276-7). Nevertheless, Rosalie retreats into their isolated domestic setting, placing all her trust in Edward and the bond they share: “‘She had found a sheltered home in Edward’s heart, which the world might ridicule, but had no power to profane’” (276).

The subsequent breakdown of Rosalie and Edward’s relationship symbolizes the clash between white male patriarchy, which views the mulatta woman as inferior and disposable, and nineteenth-century ideas of womanhood, which require her absolute morality and purity. When Edward involves himself in politics and succumbs to his ambitions for power and success, he becomes engaged to the daughter of a wealthy man. Once Rosalie finds out about the engagement, she will not agree to be his mistress, as “‘hers was a passion too absorbing to admit of partnership; and her spirit was too pure and

kind to enter into a selfish league against the happiness of the innocent young bride” (278). Without Edward in her life, Rosalie’s despair almost drives her to suicide. Indeed, her existence is so wrapped up in him that when they part she begins to waste away. Soon after seeing Edward and his new bride, “the conflicts of her spirit proved too strong for the beautiful frame in which it dwelt. About a year after Edward’s marriage, she was found dead in her bed” (281). Fueled by a consciousness of her own perceived inadequacy--her black blood--Rosalie allows herself to die. Ultimately weak and passive, Rosalie (as the text portrays her) has no option but death. Thus, Rosalie remains an upstanding and moral woman--one truly let down by the patriarchal system that demands such virtues from women yet denies black women the right to create a happy, safe, and pure home.

Child takes her indictment of white male patriarchy a step further, showing how the damages inflicted on the mulatta also destroy her children and threaten the entire concept of family. Edward, who has already played the role of the rejecting lover, also serves as the irresponsible father of his innocent mulatta daughter. Driven to an early grave by guilt and drinking, he fails to write a will and consequently leaves Xarifa unprotected. The girl, who does not know she is the daughter of a slave and has fallen in love with her white teacher, is soon sold to a cruel master who tries to rape her. After her lover dies tragically, Xarifa, abandoned and alone, can no longer resist her master and becomes “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” (284). Xarifa, too, soon dies and is buried with no one to weep at the grave of “her who had

been so carefully cherished, and so tenderly beloved” (284). Thus, slavery and the society that allows it have destroyed the little family--including the two innocent (and rather helpless) women, both models of virtue and purity. The threat here is very real: slavery allows for the corruption of society at the family level, destroying the supposed comforts and security of the domestic sphere and making conventional morality impossible.

Although on the surface the construction and employment of the mulatta figure in “The Quadroons” and other stories appears sympathetic towards slaves, such moves are often tinged with problematic undertones as the mulatta herself is rarely granted voice or agency. As Fleischner illustrates, she is “typically object, not subject, of sentimental discourse”--acted upon rather than acting (128). Once the mulatta’s true identity is revealed or her lover leaves her, her options are severely limited and she is left with only drastic choices. Elfenbein explains, “In almost all these stories, the ingenue, upon discovering her ‘taint,’ collapses--never to move under her own volition again” (3). Most often, death (frequently by suicide) is the only escape the text and its author offer. In “White Slaves: The Mulatto Hero in Antebellum Fiction,” Nancy Bentley writes, “By definition, the tragic mulatta is granted her most pronounced symbolic power by virtue of her worldly suffering--her sexual exploitation and the betrayals and abuse she endures usually find expression in suicide or fatal illness” (505). The inherent problem in such representations is that the mulatta exercises power and agency only in her death. Furthermore, both Rosalie and Xarifa allow their own destruction out of a sense of inadequacy or despair over their condition--a condition determined by their race. Few

antebellum examples exist of characters adapting to and surviving in society once they are fully aware of their heritage. Thus one must wonder, as Jean Fagan Yellin has suggested, whether the use of the tragic mulatta is a “critique or endowment of white racism” (“Women” 73).<sup>6</sup>

The answer to this question is, of course, not simple, especially in the case of Child. Indeed, even though her use of the tragic mulatta trope can be problematic, we cannot ignore her boldness in exploring such matters. Yellin defends Child, explaining, “her willingness to address the sexual oppression of black women--the most taboo aspect of her taboo topic--testifies to an intellectual openness” and a brave spirit (“Women” 54). Yellin also reminds us that Child’s works, including her 1833 “An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans,” helped initiate the national debate over the immediate abolition of slavery (54).<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting, as Carolyn L. Karcher does in her biography of Child, that Jacobs and Child, like Larcom and Whittier, developed a close relationship and remained friends long after their initial professional collaboration ended (435-437). Thus, we cannot simply condemn Child for her invention and use of such a problematic figure.<sup>8</sup> Yet, at the same time, we cannot ignore the damaging effects of such a construction, especially the portrayal of the mulatta as ultimately powerless and passive. It is this realization of both the power and limitations of Child’s model that drives Jacobs to resist, revise, and rewrite her editor’s tale, preserving some of its features, while critiquing those that fall short of realistically representing the mulatta’s life and exclude her from the projects of national reform and redemption.

*“Only by experience”: Prefaces, Power, and Textual Authority*

Although we cannot say with certainty that Jacobs read “The Quadroons,” it is highly likely she did so. After all, it was Jacobs who sought Child as an editor, in part because she was impressed with Child’s works. Additionally, we know that, along with her brother, Jacobs ran an antislavery reading room in Rochester (Yellin, “Life” 103). It is very likely that “The Quadroons,” which originally appeared in an abolitionist-themed giftbook, as well as other books by Child, would have been among its titles. Yellin emphasizes the importance of Jacobs’s work in the reading room to her later development as a writer:

With John S. [her brother] often away lecturing, however, it was his sister who unlocked the office door weekday mornings at 9:00 and closed it at 6:00, and it was Harriet Jacobs who was listed in the 1849 *City Directory* as ‘Agent, Anti-Slavery Reading Rooms’ . . . All that spring and summer . . . Jacobs was free to read her way through the abolitionists’ library . . . [and] had the time and the opportunity to undertake a crash course in the theory and practice of organized abolition. (103)

Furthermore, Jacobs, as a nurse to N. P. Willis’ children, would have had access to various books and popular publications. Ultimately, whether Jacobs is responding directly to Child’s creation of the tragic mulatta figure, or simply responding to the larger literary trend Child helped inaugurate, a reading of *Incidents* as a response to “The Quadroons” yields valuable insights into Jacobs’s design and purpose and the dialogue between she and Child.

The narrative's very packaging--the preface by Jacobs and introduction by Child--establishes the ongoing dialogue between author and editor over whose version of the mulatta's story is more authentic, as each writer addresses key issues of truthfulness, character, responsibility, disclosure and propriety, and sympathetic reaction to the slave's plight. An initial, quick reading seems to show the women in perfect agreement, working together to advance their mutual cause of national redemption through righting the wrongs of slavery, including the sexual oppression of women like Linda (and Jacobs). A closer reading, however, reveals points of tension as Jacobs fights against having her tale appropriated by her white editor. P. Gabrielle Foreman explains, "Jacobs struggles against the usurping of agency which Child articulates in her introduction" and uses her preface to maintain control over her text ("Spoken" 317). From its very beginning, then, *Incidents* demonstrates editor and writer competing over who controls the text--whose voice emerges as the ultimate authority for readers.

Child's introduction can be divided into two sections, both of which extend her claims of control over the text. First, she vouches for Jacobs's character and credibility, explaining, "The author of the following autobiography is personally known to me, and her conversation and manners inspire me with confidence" (xix). Jacobs, she adds, has lived with a "distinguished family" and "has so deported herself as to be highly esteemed by them. This fact is sufficient, without further credentials of her character" (xix). Readers should trust Jacobs, Child asserts, because they know they can trust Child and others like her (including the Willis family, although she does not identify them by name). Similarly, she points back to her own credibility as she readily admits that

readers must stretch their imaginations to believe Jacobs's story: "I believe those who know her will not be disposed to doubt her veracity, though some incidents in her story are more romantic than fiction" (xix).<sup>9</sup> Child's point is clear: if you believe her and those who know Jacobs, you will believe this text. Thus, Child's presence in *Incidents* serves a purpose quite different from Whittier's hovering presence in Larcom's poems. While Whittier's name gave Larcom's projects credibility and expanded her potential for publication, Child's attachment of her name to *Incidents* is more about character than aesthetics, as she vouches not for the artistic value of the text, but instead for its very validity and for the character of its writer.

Similarly, the second section of the introduction addresses the propriety of printing a narrative with potentially scandalous sexual content. Child boldly confronts such objections, writing "I am well aware that many will accuse me of indecorum for presenting these pages to the public; for the experiences of this intelligent and much-injured woman belong to a class which some call delicate subjects, and others indelicate" (xx). Nevertheless, she explains the necessity of such disclosure since these aspects of slavery have "generally been kept veiled; but the public ought to be acquainted with its monstrous features, and I willingly take the responsibility of presenting them with the veil withdrawn" (xx). Child's claim of responsibility is crucial: those who object to the text should blame her (and presumably, not Jacobs). Foreman explains that such claims recreate the oppressive structures of slavery: "Child's language is informed by a patron-child hierarchy which mirrors the slave patriarchy, where slave is figured as a child and master as patriarch" (316). As the patron of the text, then, Child wrests control of the

narrative from Jacobs, putting a white face and voice on the project of national reform she hoped to inspire through her abolition work.

Indeed, as the rest of the introduction serves to fully explain Child's motives for her role in the narrative's publication, she continues to assert her control. I quote from it at length to show how completely her voice threatens to take over the text:

I do this for the sake of my sisters in bondage, who are suffering wrongs so foul, that our ears are too delicate to listen to them. I do it with the hope of arousing conscientious and reflecting women at the North to a sense of their duty in the exertion of moral influence on the question of Slavery, on all possible occasions. I do it with the hope that every man who reads this narrative will swear solemnly before God that, so far as he has power to prevent it, no fugitive from Slavery shall every be sent back to suffer in that loathsome den of corruption and cruelty.  
(xx)

Her repetition of "I do" (three times in three sentences) clearly places an unflinching Child at the center of the text's abolitionist mission. It is her voice that readers have in their heads as they begin reading the narrative--someone like them, a non-threatening voice they can relate to and trust, one they are perhaps more willing to join in the abolition movement.

Jacobs, though, who has taken the "highly unusual step of writing a preface herself" (Dean 38), is clearly unwilling to give up the right to authenticate her text and places her preface before Child's introduction, showing readers that this is *her* story. Immediately, like Child, she addresses the sympathetic leap that readers must take while simultaneously working to reassure them of the narrative's veracity: "Reader be assured this narrative is no fiction. I am aware that some of my adventures may seem incredible;

but they are, nevertheless, strictly true” (xvii). In contrast to Child, though, who bases Jacobs’s trustworthiness on the credibility of others, Jacobs relies on her word and experiences to validate themselves. Knowing she will be accused of hyperbole, she explains, “I have not exaggerated the wrongs inflicted by Slavery; on the contrary, my descriptions fall far short of the facts” (xvii). The implication is that readers should believe what she *has written* because she *could have written* much more. Similarly, she adds, “Only by *experience* can any one realize how deep, and dark, and foul is that pit of abominations” (xviii, emphasis added). In this rather remarkable rhetorical move, Jacobs seizes complete control of her text, asserting that only she and others like her have the ability to tell the true tales of slavery, and simultaneously labels those who have not experienced such horrors (including Child and her audience) as unfit to judge the veracity of her story. Furthermore, she directly contradicts Child, who claims to lift the “veil” that has covered slavery’s cruelties, insisting she has withheld even more horrific scenes. Despite her claims of modesty then--she writes, “I wish I was more competent to the task I have undertaken”--Jacobs positions herself as the true authority in the text (xvii). Just as Larcom uses her own experience as a worker as authority for her of critique Whittier, so too does Jacobs use her life experience in slavery as a mark of authority to challenge Child.

The rest of her preface shows Jacobs working to present herself as the one in charge of the text, emphasizing her agency and responsibility. As such, she carefully sketches out key elements of her character. Fully aware that her credibility is in question, Jacobs repeatedly emphasizes her feelings of inadequacy as a writer, but quickly adds,

“Since I have been at the North, it has been necessary for me to work diligently for my own support, and the education of my children. This has not left me much leisure to make up for the loss of early opportunities to improve myself; and it has compelled me to write these pages at irregular intervals, whenever I could snatch an hour from household duties” (xvii). Thus, for readers, Jacobs appears initially as an active and devoted mother, working long days and using what little free time she has to improve her mind and work for the abolitionist cause. While Child attributes some of Jacobs’s proficiency as a writer to the favorable circumstances she encountered in the North, Jacobs illustrates that her writing has progressed *in spite* of her experiences in New York, as she points to having to steal away time when she could to work on her book, much like Lucy Larcom writing her poetry when she was not busy grading essays. Clearly this is the image she wants her readers to walk away with, as her letters to Amy Post illustrate. Advising Post on what to say in her letter to be included in *Incidents*, Jacobs writes:

I think it would be best for you to begin with our acquaintance and the length of time that I was in your family your advice about giving the history of my life in Slavery mention that I lived at service all the while that I was striving to get the Book out but do not say with whom I lived as I would not use the Willis name neither would I like to have people think that I was living an Idle life--and had got this book out merely to make money. (264)<sup>10</sup>

Jacobs wants Post to emphasize her modesty and her work ethic--and (in contrast to Child) *not* her connection to the Willis family. Post respected her friend’s wishes, as her letter does just what Jacobs requested.

Jacobs presents further competing claims of responsibility for her text. While Child asserts, “The names of both persons and places are known to me; but for good reasons I will suppress them” (xix), Jacobs claims she is the one who leaves out these details: “I have concealed the names of places, and given persons fictitious names. I had no motive for secrecy on my own account, but I deemed it kind and considerate towards others to pursue this course” (xvii). Again, Jacobs asserts her control over the details of the text and provides compelling reasons for her decisions. Her reasons--feelings of kindness, concern, and consideration towards those who she refuses to name--add a personal touch to her claim, again connecting her credibility with her experiences and further illustrate her powerful presence in the text.

A final difference between Child’s and Jacobs’s prefaces lies in the explanation of each woman’s motivation in the project. Like Child, Jacobs makes it clear she feels a sense of duty to engage in the anti-slavery movement and hopes her text will move readers to action. Yet she is less bold and outwardly confident in her assertions, explaining the struggle between her reluctance to disclose her painful past and her obligation to other slaves:

. . . I trust that my motives will excuse what might otherwise seem presumptuous. I have not written my experiences in order to attract attention to myself; on the contrary, it would have been more pleasant to have been silent about my own history. Neither do I care to excite sympathy for my own sufferings. But I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I have suffered, and most of them far worse. I want to add my testimony to that of abler pens to convince the people of the Free States what Slavery really is. (xviii)

In contrast to Child, Jacobs's overall tone is more modest, more personal, and more apologetic. This approach should not, though, be read as a ceding of authority or agency. Rather, Jacobs's hesitant, personal tone connects back to her claims of authority--unlike Child, who crafted fictional tales of slavery, she has lived through these experiences, and they are painful for her to relive. Her willingness to do so in order to advance the abolition cause only adds to her credibility.

Like Lucy Larcom, then, Jacobs stresses the value of her experience in her Introduction, highlighting it as a powerful source of her authority--a source of authority neither woman's editor could claim. Also like Larcom, Jacobs emphasizes her status as a working-class woman, one who steals time away to write, yet never neglects her other responsibilities. For Jacobs, though, such a claim serves not so much to defend lapses in her writing (although she does make this argument) or to distance herself from her editor (Child, after all, worked hard to support her family on her writing and struggled financially most of her life). Instead, she points to her status as a working woman to validate her character. She is, she wants her audience to see, not a lazy or loose former slave, but a hard-working mother, someone in whom they could have confidence, and someone eager to participate in the abolition movement.

*"Something akin to freedom": Jacobs's Redefinition of the Tragic Mulatta*

The issues of debate in *Incident's* prefatory materials – responsibility, authenticity, agency--are those upon which Jacobs will continue to ground her critique of Child and her version of the tragic mulatta story in the actual narrative. Initially, though,

we might first see the many ways in which Jacobs adheres to the conventions of the tragic mulatta in the story of Linda Brent. Like Xarifa in “The Quadroons,” Linda Brent also begins her life unaware of her condition; she tells us, “I was so fondly shielded that I never dreamed I was a piece of merchandise” (1). Similarly, after the deaths of her parents, Linda finds herself just as vulnerable as Child’s characters. Her pursuer, Dr. Flint, soon seeks to corrupt the poor girl, “whisper[ing] foul words” in her ears (26). Sympathetic white readers would no doubt recognize this figure of the threatened female slave, so common in abolitionist texts. Linda’s frank depiction, though, takes her condemnation a step further, showing how all forms of white patriarchy work to infect the domestic sphere. Clearly, the domestic space, which is supposed to be a place of security, is instead a nightmare for the young Linda: “I was compelled to live under the same roof with him--where I saw a man forty years my senior daily violate the most sacred commandments of nature” (27). Indeed, the narrative portrays Dr. Flint as a sort of double villain: he is not only the relentless and corrupting suitor, but also the irresponsible and perverted father figure.

Later, while looking at her newborn baby, Linda echoes Rosalie’s concerns for her daughter and female slaves in general. She explains, “When they told me my newborn babe was a girl, my heart was heavier than it had ever been before. Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, *they* have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own” (85). Here we can see Jacobs making a plea similar to the one Child makes in her story: white women readers should put themselves in the mulatta’s position, recognizing their

common bond as women. Only then can they even begin to understand her experiences and work for some solution to the problems that continually plague her efforts to secure a happy life for herself and her children, problems that threaten families at their foundation, and by extension, threaten the future of the nation as a whole.

Like so many tragic mulatta figures, Linda also falls in love--love that is prevented and ended by outside forces, again illustrating the impossibility of traditional domesticity for the mixed blood woman. Linda's love is pure and real, and she explains, "I loved and I indulged the hope that the dark clouds around me would turn out a bright lining. I forgot that in the land of my birth, the shadows were too dense for light to penetrate" (38). Like Rosalie, Linda hopes, somewhat naively, that it will be possible for she and her lover to be together. When Dr. Flint destroys that hope, Jacobs writes, "With me the lamp of hope had gone out. The dream of my girlhood was over" (44). Here again, white female readers are invited to share the mulatta's pain over the loss of her lover, as Jacobs invokes the idea of the universal dream of "girlhood"--finding happiness with one's true love. For the mulatta, she wants us to see, attainment of that dream is not a possibility.<sup>11</sup>

Here, then, seeing Linda denied her lover and painfully aware of her desperate situation, readers familiar with the tragic mulatta conventions might expect her to die, perhaps by suicide or a tragic accident or perhaps by slowly wasting away. Certainly they would not expect a move towards a triumphant ending. Yet, it is at this point where Jacobs clearly begins to resist and rewrite the tragic mulatta conventions. Immediately after realizing her girlhood dream is over, Jacobs asserts, "Still I was not stripped of all. I

still had my good grandmother, and my affectionate brother” (44). Thus, as she clearly positions herself as pragmatic rather than romantic, we begin to see Jacobs challenging and resisting the conventions of the tragic mulatta by refusing to give up all hope and seizing upon what she still has: her family. Death is simply not an option for Linda. Later, when Miss Fanny tells her that “she wished all of [her] grandmother’s family were at rest and in [their] graves, for not until then would she have any peace about [them],” Brent has another idea in mind: “The good soul did not dream that I was planning to bestow peace on her with respect to myself and the children; not by death, but by securing our freedom” (99). Jacobs asserts that death, the preferred resolution to the tragic mulatta’s predicament--at least for benevolent white women readers like Miss Fanny--is not part of her plan. It is as if Jacobs is speaking to the readers and the writer of “The Quadroons,” saying, “Death is not my only choice. I have my will and a desire to be free.”

What Jacobs offers her readers in place of the traditional tragic mulatta ending is a story of personal experience, a success story in which a woman’s strong will and exercise of agency win her freedom and a chance at some domestic peace. Indeed, it is again crucial that Jacobs assert her story’s basis in fact and experience. Ann Gelder explains, “As used in antebellum reformist texts such as *Incidents*, the word *experience* announces the speaker’s moral authority, as developed through a direct physical engagement with the material world” (212). As a “fallen woman,” Jacobs surely needed a strong source of authority, so she draws on her life experience--all she really had--to get her story out to her readers. Thus we begin to understand why, right from the start, she informs her

audience: “Reader, be assured this narrative is no fiction” (xvii). With the added emphasis that this story is true, readers might find it harder to turn away from the mulatta once they were done with her story. She is not merely an imagined creation of a writer’s mind, but a living, breathing individual whose presence demands attention.

Jacobs’s revision of the tragic mulatta story also emphasizes the power of the mulatta’s will and agency and her potential transformative role in domesticity and reform. No longer content to be the passive sufferer, Linda takes control of her own destiny, determined to defeat Dr. Flint. Indeed, from early on in the narrative both Linda and her brother assert, “He that is willing to be a slave, let him be a slave” (26). Thus Jacobs establishes an immediate relationship between passivity and captivity, between will and freedom.<sup>12</sup> Sharon Davie argues, “The female hero’s quest in Jacobs’s narrative is for the freedom to exercise her will” (87). I would reverse Davie’s claim. In *Incidents*, freedom does not lead to the exercise of the will. Rather, exercising one’s will leads to freedom.

This insistence on Linda’s will as its own form of power illustrates a key difference in Jacobs’s reconfiguring of the tragic mulatta trope. Linda herself calls attention to the strength she possesses: “My master had power and law on his side; I had a determined will. There is might in each” (95). Significantly, the first and most important area in which Jacobs exercises this powerful agency is in her choice of lovers. Her resistance to Dr. Flint’s advances can also be read as a resistance to the tragic mulatta conventions. Indeed, Dr. Flint’s offers for a marriage-like relationship between the two

might remind the reader of the tenuous and ultimately weak connection between Rosalie and Edward in “The Quadroons.” As Krista Walter explains:

Like the proslavery writers who defended the role of the master as God’s surrogate on earth and commended the slave-holding system for institutionalizing the ostensibly Christian duties of charity in the master and humility in the slave, Flint suggests that Brent can redeem herself from her state of depravity as a black woman through a pseudo-marriage to him. (24)

Jacobs addresses these proposed distortions of the domestic sphere, the marriage bond, and religious authority outright, as Linda rejects Flint and the corrupt system he offers her. Through her refusal to submit passively to Dr. Flint, Linda both highlights and preserves the power of her will, preventing the commencement of the traditional tragic mulatta story arc.

The attention Jacobs pays to Flint’s plans to build a secluded cottage for Linda calls attention to slavery’s destructive effects on family, the domestic space, and eventually, the nation. Jacobs tells readers of Flint’s sinister new idea: “He told me that he was going to build a small house for me in a secluded place, four miles away from the town. I shuddered; but I was constrained to listen while he talked of his intention to give me a home of my own and to make a lady of me” (57). Again we see Linda resisting this perversion of the domestic space and inversion of what it means to be respectable lady. Readers should also remember another secluded cottage where a white man and his mulatta lover lived: Rosalie and Edward’s home. The plan for the cottage, which resurfaces again later in Jacobs’s book, is dreadful to Linda, and she consciously resists

going there, choosing even the plantation over Flint's corrupt form of domesticity. When Flint explains, "I will procure a cottage where you and the children can live together. Your labor will be light, such as sewing for my family," Linda rejects him again, seeing that what on the surface appears to be a life of ease will ultimately come at too high a cost. Gelder explains, "This scene [of rejection] translates Brent's refusal to enter the cottage into her refusal to let Dr. Flint enter her" (256). Indeed, this resistance is an act of will and autonomy, as Jacobs will not let herself be compromised. On the surface, the life Flint offers appears to be one of relative freedom, yet for Linda such a passive acceptance of his power over her would constitute an even worse form of bondage, because she would sacrifice both her power and agency. Her time in the garret, at first glance a sort of prison, is thus actually akin to freedom: she chooses to be there and, in fact, uses her position to torment Flint.

Linda's choice for the father of her children reveals similar resistance to the model of passivity the traditional tragic mulatta displays. Somewhat surprisingly, as she explains her sexual relationship with Mr. Sands, she tells her readers, "I know what I did and I did it with deliberate calculation" (58). Thus Jacobs transforms the tragic mulatta's passive submission and naïve belief in cross-racial love into a conscious and calculated act of will. This choice, portrayed simultaneously as an act of defiance and reluctant rejection of the cult of true womanhood, is, for Jacobs, still preferable to being raped: "It seems less degrading to give one's self, than to submit to compulsion" (59). Later, she connects this choice with freedom, writing, "There is something akin to freedom in having a lover who has no control over you" (59). Rather than leave herself at the mercy

of her lover, as Rosalie does, Linda seeks out a partner who will have no claims to her. Through Linda, then, Jacobs begins to redefine the domestic sphere, substituting free will and agency for dependence on male authority and highlighting the transformative power of women's will. In this way, Jacobs reminds us of Larcom's speakers in "Her Choice" and "Unwedded"--confident in the rightness of her decision to live a single life in which she is free to control her own destiny.

Certainly Linda is less than idealistic about love and her relationship with Mr. Sands, illustrating that the mulatta must give up on the idea of a happy romance. Significantly, neither she nor Mr. Sands considers the pseudo-marriage of the tragic mulatta trope. Further, when Flint asks her if she loves the father of her child, her answer is revealing: "I am thankful that I do not despise him" (64). This sad admission reinforces Gelder's point that, according to Jacobs, "slavery should be condemned because it makes conventional morality impossible," creating a world in which the most the mulatta can ask for is that she does not hate the father of her children (252). For Jacobs, who will not accept death as an option, such a compromise of her virtue is the only solution. Indeed, any remaining idealism she has towards the possibility of finding love again fades away as she works to make Mr. Sands free the children. When he has taken Ellen first to Washington D.C. and then to New York and no one knows her condition, Brent remarks:

There was one person there, who ought to have had some sympathy with the anxiety of the child's friends at home, but the links of such relations as he had formed with me are easily broken and cast away as rubbish. Yet how protectingly

and persuasively he had once talked to the poor helpless slave girl! And how entirely I trusted him. (259)

Like Rosalie, Linda feels betrayed and abandoned by a man she once trusted. Unlike Rosalie, though, she will not allow such a desertion to defeat her.

Giving up the idea of finding happiness in a marriage or any romantic relationship, Linda turns her attention entirely to herself and her children, rejecting the traditional patriarchal models that deny happiness to mixed-blood women. Throughout the text, the bittersweet joys of motherhood serve as both comfort and incentive to Linda, giving her a reason to go on and a desire to free her loved ones. Indeed, the titles of chapters nine and fourteen affirm that her children are, for Linda, “tie[s]” and “link[s]” to “life.” Jacobs’s solution then, for dealing with a patriarchal system that exalts the purity of the domestic sphere yet prevents black women from attaining it, is to remove patriarchy from the picture. Her daughter Ellen reaffirms this model when Linda tries to explain her relationship with Mr. Sands: “I know all about it, mother...I am nothing to my father, and he is nothing to me. All my love is for you” (212). Thus while for Rosalie and Xarifa mother-daughter ties are not enough to help them go on after Edward abandons them, for Linda and Ellen, family becomes their foremost concern and reason for living. In Jacobs’s text, then, the exercise of agency and free will resists the tragic ending and opens up a world of new opportunities for the mulatta and her children once she has freed herself from the confines of racist patriarchy. Echoing poems like “Sylvia” and “Hannah Binding Shoes,” Jacobs argues that the project of national redemption must begin with a similar movement towards freedom from a repressive patriarchal system.

In fact, Jacobs's emphasis on the power of individual will illustrates her engagement not only with Child, but also with other important contemporary writers and their texts, including Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson's "Self-Reliance" (1841), which Jacobs almost certainly would have been aware of, is an individualist's manifesto:

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place divine Providence has found for you; the society of your contemporaries, the connexion of events. Great men have always done so and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their ages, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. (121)

Linda's words--"Let he who is willing to be a slave, let him be a slave"--seem to echo Emerson's, yet she also illustrates how his model fails to address the concerns and circumstances of African-Americans, especially African-American women like Brent.<sup>13</sup> While Emerson boldly asserts, "I shun mother and father and wife and brother, when my genius calls me" (123), *Incidents* shows again and again the interdependence of the slave family--how the family cannot rest until all its members are free. Family is, in fact, at the center of the text, chiefly in the figure of Linda's grandmother, "Aunt Martha," whose life and death open and close the narrative. Aunt Martha, herself a sort of model for self-reliance, simultaneously demonstrates the bonds of loyalty that keep her family together. Aunt Martha, Linda, and the rest of their family could never have agreed with Emerson's claims that, "A political victory, a rise of rents, the recovery of your sick, or the return of your absent friend, or some other favorable event, raises your spirits, and you think good days are preparing for you. Do not believe it. Nothing can bring you peace but yourself.

Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles” (137). Jacobs critiques Emerson’s model of self-reliant individualism then, advancing a matriarchal social model that values family above all else--that insists, in fact, that individuals cannot be happy without the assurance that their families are also safe.<sup>14</sup> Finding power in these connections to family and maternity, Jacobs is able to invest her female readers with what is surely a subversive project if enacted on a national scale.

Taking on not just Child, Jacobs bravely confronts the conventions and ideas her society upheld, even risking claims of gender impropriety. Indeed, when we examine how *Incidents* resists and rewrites the tragic mulatta conventions, we begin to see the complex negotiations Jacobs undertakes to avoid offending her readers. Recent criticism on women and abolition highlights the creative lengths to which writers must go as they handle such delicate subjects. At times careful and almost reluctant and at other times rather straightforward and blunt, Jacobs constructs what Davie calls “a discourse of shame and a discourse of defiance” as she unfolds her story (88). These discourses serve to open up a dialogue between the narrator and her readers, as Jacobs explains to her audience how she is like them (as a woman) and unlike them (as a black slave) (Davie 98-99). Thus Jacobs brings to the surface a problem the tragic mulatta stories often ignore or try to submerge: white female writers and readers’ simultaneous identification with and rejection of the mulatta (and, to a larger degree, all black women). As Lori Merish argues, Jacobs “represents white women’s sympathy as an ambivalent emotional performance, one delimited by white privilege and promoting forms of race and gender colonization” (192). Consciously resisting this model, Jacobs presents her story with all

its taboo subjects and tries to force her readers out of their comfort zones, pushing them beyond purely sympathetic and hierarchical responses and calling for their active engagement with black women in the project of national reform. Sánchez-Eppler notes that although she repeatedly asks for white female readers' pity and pardons, Jacobs denies "their ability to comprehend her choices . . . [and] suggests that the experiences of slavery remain precisely what cannot be explained" (99). Just as in her preface, Jacobs reaffirms a model of difference, yet takes away from white readers the power to judge and appropriate the mulatta's experience.

Linda's relationship with her first lover provides ample evidence of this call for readers to recognize the complex nuances of the mulatta's life. Linda's beloved--the only man she ever really loves--is, after all, not a white man, but "a young colored man" (28). Upon learning of Linda's feelings for this other man, Dr. Flint is furious, especially because of the black man's lower status. Linda, as a mulatta, is, according to Flint, above such companionship. He exclaims, "I supposed you had thought more of yourself; that you felt above the insults of such puppies" (40). The full-blooded black, is, for Flint and so many others, a degraded creature, comparable to an animal. Surely a white man, Flint implies, would be a better match for Linda.

Nevertheless, Jacobs, through Brent, asserts the suitability of a match with a full-blooded black man, highlighting and privileging her connection to the black race and identifying herself first and foremost as a black woman. Linda rails against Flint's ideas, arguing, "If he is a puppy, I am a puppy, for we are both of the Negro race. It is right and honorable for us to love each other" (40). Here again we might see Jacobs

addressing Child and her audience, for what is often so tragic about the mulatta--for white writers--is her white blood and the thought that such blood must suffer--that someone with white blood must suffer such degradation. This suffering makes it easier for white readers to sympathize with her. Yet in this passage, Jacobs clearly identifies herself (as she does throughout the text) as a member of the African race. Her choice of words--"right" and "honorable"--in describing her desired union with her lover are no accident. As a black woman, the black man seems to Jacobs a more natural and proper match than a white man like Dr. Flint or even Mr. Sands does. Pushing her readers out of their comfort zones, she forces them to acknowledge the presence of black blood in the nation, and illustrates that they must address that presence if they hope to heal the nation's wounds.

Thus, Jacobs and *Incidents* challenge white women readers' easy identification with and subsequent resistance to the mulatta as evidenced by the all-too-frequent tragic ending of her story. Her readers must see Linda as not only part white, but also part black. She, in fact, sees herself as more black than white. Therefore, her audience must feel sympathy not only because she is white, but also because she is a black woman. By extension, then, Jacobs works to elicit sympathy for all slaves, even the often maligned full-blooded blacks. Since, as she argues again and again, white women can never fully understand what it means to be black, she forecloses any possibility of white appropriation of her story. Instead, the connection she wants readers to acknowledge is not one of white blood, but instead of womanhood and, to a larger degree, humanity as a

whole without any confining hierarchical systems. In doing so, she opens the door to sympathy for black males--those least likely to provoke sympathy from Northern readers --and extends the tragic mulatta trope to both mulattoes and full-blooded blacks. Disrupting the problematic chain of benevolence established by female abolitionist rhetoric, Jacobs argues that the mulatta and all blacks need more than just sympathy--they need aid, respect, and recognition of their own agency.

In the end, Jacobs's narrative shows us one final act of resistance to the tragic mulatta conventions as illustrated in "The Quadroons." Jacobs's tale refuses to end tragically – indeed, it refuses any conventional ending or easy resolution. "Reader," she tells us, "My story ends with freedom; not in the conventional way, with marriage" (227).

<sup>15</sup> Jacobs could have just as easily added, "Or not in the other conventional way, with death." Here again Linda rejects white patriarchy, equating it with captivity and setting it in direct opposition to freedom. Because she has refused to be passive and has instead exercised choice and agency, Linda has successfully avoided becoming a tragic mulatta.

Indeed, in contrast to so many tragic mulatta stories, which end at lonely graves, Jacobs's "ending" must be found outside the text. At the closing of her narrative, we are left with a sense of incompleteness, of a life still in progress. Just as she will not write a tragic ending, so too she will not add an idyllic resolution. Her closing lines reveal Linda is not yet content: "The dream of my life is not yet realized. I do not sit with my children in a home of my own, I still long for a hearthstone of my own, however humble. I wish it for my children's sake more than for my own" (227). As Elizabeth C. Becker points out, a woman like Linda who desires a home, "sees that home as a right, not as a gift she will

pray passively for” (414). Knowing Linda as we have come to, readers are left to imagine her fighting on long after the narrative ends, determined to win a better life for her family. Thus, in a final act of resistance and rewriting, Jacobs’s tale will not let itself be contained by the text. Her life--her experience--is vital and active, moving on and challenging readers to see the mulatta and all blacks as more than ciphers on which to work out anxieties over race, gender, and power. Additionally, by placing any resolution outside the text, Jacobs leaves her audience with work to do. The mulatta is not dead, but alive and willing to work. The audience is invited, therefore, to aid her in her efforts as they work together in the projects of abolitionism and national redemption through racial reconciliation.

*Jacobs’s Achievement: Reception and Reinvention*

Like Larcom, then, Harriet Jacobs, through her redefinition of the tragic mulatta, advanced an alternative model of domesticity and national reform to compete with her editor. Just how successful was Jacobs in her “competition” with Child? An examination of contemporary reviews of *Incidents* shows us that many of the writers who penned these commentaries failed to acknowledge the existence of any sort of competition. A February 23, 1861 review from *The National Anti-Slavery*, a newspaper Child once edited, quotes in their entirety Child’s preface, Jacobs’s introduction, Amy Post’s endorsement, and George W. Lowther’s concluding letter--and no other pieces of the text. The writer explains, “We have read this narrative of slave life, and might say much to commend it to our readers; but we choose to let the author and the editor speak

in its behalf.” Relying almost entirely on the narrative’s paratextual apparatus to sell it to the *Standard’s* readers, the review nevertheless seems to set Jacobs on equal footing with Child and portrays them as two women united in the cause of abolition and reform.

William C. Nell, another well-known abolitionist whose letter praising *Incidents* appeared in *The Liberator* on January 24, 1861, places similar emphasis on the text’s role as a valuable tool for the abolitionist cause. He explains that, in contrast to some earlier slave narratives which mingled fiction with fact, “This record of complicated experience in the life of a young woman, a doomed victim to America’s peculiar institution . . . surely need not the charms that any pen of fiction . . . could lend.” Nell also points to the book’s credentials:

LYDIA MARIA CHILD has furnished a graceful introduction, and AMY POST, a well-written letter; and wherever the names of these two devoted friends of humanity are known, no higher credentials can be required or given. My own acquaintance, too, with the author . . . warrants an expression of the hope that it will find its way into every family, where all, especially mothers and daughters, may learn yet more of the barbarism of American slavery and the character of its victims.

In highlighting both the truthfulness of the narrative and the credibility of its endorsers (including himself), Nell makes it clear that he sees no tension between Jacobs’s tale and other abolitionist writings.

More telling perhaps is the April 13, 1861, review from the *Weekly Anglo-African*, in which the writer shows a keen awareness of *Incidents’* revolutionary potential and the importance of the Jacobs’s authorship role. The reviewer carefully positions

Jacobs's text as both conventional and revisionary. First and foremost, readers are assured, it is an American story: "In such volumes as this the true romance of American life and history is to be found. Patient suffering, heroic daring, untiring zeal, perseverance seemingly unparalleled, and growth from surroundings of degradation and ignorance to education, refinement, and power; all find in these modest pages their simple, yet affecting narrative." Next, however, the reviewer explains how this "oft told tale" of slavery is told:

in another and more revolting phase than that which is generally seen. More revolting because it is of the spirit and not the flesh. In this volume a woman tells in words of fire, yet never overstepping the bounds of the truest purity, not, how *she* was scourged and maimed, but that far more terrible sufferings endured by and inflicted upon woman, by a system which legalizes concubinage, and offers a premium to licentiousness.

*Incidents*, the reviewer wants us to see, is no ordinary slave narrative. The distinctive features the writer points to--not just the horror and sexual degradation Linda experiences but also her triumphal escape--are just those aspects of Jacobs's narrative that stand out in contrast to Child's tragic mulatta tale. Significantly, the reviewer adds, "The name of the editor of the volume, Mrs. Child, is a sufficient endorsement of its literary merit. It is due however to the author to state that but little change has been made." The reviewer's point is clear: Jacobs, not Child, is in charge of this text.

In fact, not all readers ignored or failed to see Jacobs's radical revision work. In sharing her story of the mulatta who refuses to be tragic, Jacobs initiated a new chapter in literature for the mixed-blood female, as writers after her, especially other African-

American women, created similar strong mulatta characters who will not passively submit to the traditional story arc. Frances E.W. Harper's 1893 *Iola Leroy: Or Shadows Uplifted*, for example, tells the story of a mulatta who refuses to marry a white suitor who will have her only if she conceals her black blood, choosing instead a black man she truly loves.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Pauline Hopkins's short story "Talma Gordon," published in 1900, involves the revelation of the title character's mixed blood, yet resists a tragic ending as the tale's closing lines reveal the mulatta is both alive and happily married. Both women refuse to be excluded from the national scene and emerge as key players in post-bellum American society. These characters (and others like them) might find their origins in "The Quadroons," but it is Jacobs's contribution to the genre that opened the door to their strength, agency, and ultimate triumph.

Lydia Maria Child also almost surely recognized Jacobs's revision of the tragic mulatta trope and "The Quadroons." Her last novel, *A Romance of the Republic*, published in 1867, clearly shows Child responding to and editing her work with insights gained from Jacobs's text. Taking up again the subject of young mixed-blood women left vulnerable after their white father's death, Child's text is nonetheless a reinvention of the trope, supplanting the heroine's death with her emergence as a key figure in a new American society. Rosa (whose name recalls Rosalie's) is a cross between that character and Linda Brent, combining Rosalie's privileged upbringing and reversal of fortune with Linda's strong will and refusal to succumb to a tragic ending. Like her predecessors, Rosa also bears a child out of wedlock with a wealthy white man. Like Linda, and in marked contrast to Rosalie, she will not let that man take away her agency. Confronting

Gerald Fitzgerald after learning he has married (this time legally) and had a child with a white woman, she angrily asks him, “How dare you come here?” and responds to his threats with equal boldness: “If I *dare!* she exclaimed, interrupting him in a tone of proud defiance, that thrilled through all his nerves” (141). Rejecting his proposal that she continue to live as his concubine, she adds, “What have you ever seen in me, Mr. Fitzgerald, that has led you to suppose I would ever consent to sell myself?” (142). A reader can scarcely imagine these words coming from Rosalie, but they certainly echo Linda’s exchanges with Dr. Flint and mark Rosa as a new kind of character for Child, a strong mixed-blood woman who functions as a role model for post-Civil War society.<sup>17</sup> Diane Roberts explains, “Child, learning from Jacobs, and building on her own career’s work, does assert a new dispensation for slave women that gives them a place in the American pantheon of good women, a renewed chastity for a reborn nation” (145). Child’s achievement in *A Romance of the Republic* demonstrates a clear indebtedness to Jacobs, as she too encourages readers to consider the role of the mixed-blood woman and her children in rebuilding the nation.

Indeed, Rosa and her sister Flora emerge as triumphant and admirable women, their mixed families serving as symbols of Child’s vision for a new America. Looking at her children and her niece, Flora proudly remarks to her (white German) husband:

“They are a good-looking set, between you and I, said Flora; “Though they *are* oddly mixed up. See Eulalia, with her great blue eyes, and her dark eyelashes. Rosen Blumen looks just like a handsome Italian girl. No one would think Lila Blumen her sister, with her German blue eyes, and that fine frizzle of curly light hair. Your great-grandmother gave her the flax, and I suppose mine did the frizzling.” (432)

This new family, affectionately called “polyglot” or “*olla podrida*” in the text (32), combines the features of multiple races and cultures, showing how they can live in harmony. Certainly, as critics like Roberts and Karcher have pointed out, Child’s vision is less than perfect, as she still fails, for instance, to create an equal space for all blacks in her model. Similarly, Raimon adds that although *A Romance of the Republic* represents Child’s “imaginative wish fulfillment from a postbellum perspective,” at the same time, “it betrays an anxiety about the social and political precariousness of the newly reconstituted, multiracial union” (55).<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the changes here from “The Quadroons” are quite remarkable, clearly owing a debt to Harriet Jacobs’s refashioning of the tragic mulatta trope.

For many years, critics debated what role Child, as editor, had in the composition of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Was she merely, and only, an editor?<sup>19</sup> Did she cut out, add to, or change large portions of Jacobs’s text? Today scholars have more or less determined that the story we read is in fact Jacobs’s and that most of Child’s changes were minor.<sup>20</sup> As we have seen, though, we ought not to dismiss the idea of these women in a writer/editor relationship. Perhaps all we need to do is switch the players around a bit. In the telling of her life story, it is Jacobs who plays editor and rewriter to Child, resisting Child’s depiction of the tragic mulatta and inscribing upon her story a revision in which agency and free will subvert tragedy and lead to freedom. The next chapter continues to investigate the roles race and genre play in the writer/editor dynamic. As we shall see, just as with Jacobs and Child, issues of character and authenticity continue to

occupy Sarah Winnemucca and her editor, Mary Peabody Mann, as they investigate the place of Native Americans and white reformers in the nation's future.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jacobs certainly had many reasons to feel this anxiety. First, soon after she arrived in Philadelphia, “Mr. Durham,” an abolitionist minister asks Linda about her children and their father. After she explains her story, his response is telling: “Your straightforward answers do you credit; but don’t answer every body so openly. It might give some heartless people a pretext for treating you with contempt” (182). Although she writes that the word “*contempt* burned [her] like fire,” such a warning certainly added to Jacobs’s reluctance to tell her tale. Furthermore, when she finally did decide to have her story told, she first tried to have Harriet Beecher Stowe write it for her. See Jean Fagan Yellin’s *Harriet Jacobs: A Life* for an account of negotiations with Stowe, whose insistence on using only parts of Jacobs’s tale in *A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* infuriated Jacobs (119-121).

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, I will use “mulatta/mulatto” to refer to anyone having both black and white blood. See Joel Williamson’s *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States*, page xii.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the importance of sympathy and identification in nineteenth-century culture, see Elizabeth Barnes’s *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel*. Barnes identifies sympathetic identification as “one of the foremost elements of sentimental literature” (xi).

<sup>4</sup> Others, including Karen Sánchez-Eppler, explore further the complicated relationship and conflict between abolition and feminism. In *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Female Body*, Sánchez-Eppler discusses the

tensions resulting from the appropriation of the slave woman's experience for the women's rights movement: "Though the metaphoric linking of women and slaves uses their shared position as bodies to be bought, owned, and designated as grounds of resistance, it nevertheless obliterates the particularity of black and female experience, making their distinct exploitations appear identical. The difficulty of preventing moments of identification from becoming acts of appropriation constitutes the essential dilemma of feminist-abolitionist rhetoric" (19-20).

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Brown's *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*. Brown, in fact, lifted large portions of "The Quadroons" directly from the text and incorporated them into *Clotel* (originally published in 1853). Robert S. Levine argues that Brown also rewrites and resists parts of Child's tale. He writes, "It is important to note that, in his reworking of 'The Quadroons,' Brown strategically broke the story into three different sections and, through his use of pastiche and bricolage, put Child's sentimental discourse, plotting and motifs into dialogue with discourses, plottings and motifs that granted greater agency to rebellious blacks" (274). R. J. Ellis also discusses Brown's revisions to "The Quadroons," arguing that the text's "generic crisscrossing" exhibits a transgressive strategy and "a repeated departure from and return to the sentimental genre that the novel's multiple plots, overall, inhabit most readily. The effect is to draw, cumulatively, the maximum of emotional power from the established authority invested in a range of popular narrative genres possessing widespread familiarity, recognition, and hence cultural effectiveness" (102).

<sup>6</sup> For another take on this debate, see Jules Zanger's dated but still fascinating "The 'Tragic Octoroon' in Pre-Civil War Fiction." Zanger argues against critics who have "dismissed" the mixed-blood heroine "and have accused her creators of being racist snobs" (65). Such dismissals, he claims, ignore the "propagandist intention" of the tragic octoroon plot and "the point at which the imagination and sympathy of the pre-Civil War Northern public could be won over for the anti-slavery cause; this is precisely what has been obscured by the oversimplified and unfair view that the octoroon's appeal was based purely upon racial hypocrisy in author and audience" (65).

<sup>7</sup> Child was also one of the first American writers to fictionalize miscegenation – in her 1824 novel *Hobomok: A Tale of Early Times*, in which a white woman briefly takes a Native American husband.

<sup>8</sup> Karcher further defends Child: "It has become fashionable to portray white abolitionists...as self-interested zealots who used African Americans for their own ends...as unwitting racists, hardly less censurable than the slaveholders and southern apologists they excoriated. Child's life and writings surely call for a reassessment of this view. She forfeited a flourishing literary career and braved mob violence, social ostracism, economic boycott, and real poverty for the sake of her abolitionist principles; centered much of her corpus on combating racial discrimination and promoting respect for people of color; condemned sanctuaries of white privilege in abolitionist circles; maintained warm and unpatronizing relationships with African American abolitionists; and sought to treat writers like Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Charlotte Forten as professional colleagues rather than satellites" (614).

<sup>9</sup> In invoking the word “romantic,” Child, perhaps unintentionally, actually subtly *discredits* the narrative’s authenticity, as later readers (especially in the early twentieth century) tended to dismiss the book a romance written by Child (Yellin, *Life* xvi).

<sup>10</sup> Jacobs was careful to keep her abolitionist activities from N. P. Willis (“Mr. Bruce” in the text), as she knew him to be sympathetic to slaveholders (Yellin, *Life* 109, 140).

<sup>11</sup> Clearly, it is technically Linda’s slave status, and not her race, or even mixed blood, that prevents this union. Nevertheless, her slave status is, of course, the result of her race.

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, here Jacobs echoes David Walker’s 1829 *Appeal*, which urges blacks to take control of their own lives and remedy the “wretchedness” of their people. Walker, too, draws an explicit connection between will and freedom, writing, “How could Mr. Jefferson but have given the world those remarks [referring to Jefferson’s *Notes on Virginia*] respecting us, when we are so submissive to them...when we so *meanly* submit to their murderous lashes” (197).

<sup>13</sup> For more on Emerson and race, see Cornel West’s “The Emersonian Prehistory of American Pragmatism.” West writes that “Emerson’s conception of the worth and dignity of human personality is racially circumscribed; that race is essential to his understanding of the historical circumstances which shape human personality; and that this understanding can easily serve as a defense of Anglo-Saxon imperialist domination of non-European lands and peoples” (752).

<sup>14</sup> Anita Goldman connects Jacobs to another famous transcendentalist. See “Harriet Jacobs, Henry David Thoreau, and the Character of Disobedience,” in which she argues that Jacobs, like Thoreau, “imagines a political community or ‘nation’ of disobedients bound together both by obligations that arise out of voluntary acts of consent and by obligations that are involuntarily assumed.” Jacobs, though, “adds a crucial dimension to the character of disobedience that Thoreau cannot explicitly discuss” (247).

<sup>15</sup> Readers no doubt recognize the allusion to the famous, “Reader, I married him,” from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), which Yellin lists as one of the titles in the Willis library (145).

<sup>16</sup> P. Gabrielle Foreman connects *Iola Leroy* to *Incidents*, explaining “Harper uses the seeming dissonance between her text’s sentimental affiliations and its dialogic complexity to articulate its message in various social registers” (329).

<sup>17</sup> I realize I am simplifying my characterization of Rosa here a bit. In “Lydia Maria Child’s *A Romance of the Republic: An Abolitionist View of America’s Racial Destiny*,” Karcher points out that by the novel’s end, Rosa has moved “inexplicably” into the traditional position of a somewhat passive matriarch, allowing Alfred King to dominate the rest of the story (96). However, Rosa’s early actions--those which recall Linda Brent --are still noteworthy as a clear revision of Rosalie’s in “The Quadroons.”

<sup>18</sup> See also Debra J. Rosenthal’s “Floral Counterdiscourse: Miscegenation, Ecofeminism, and Hybridity in Lydia Maria Child’s *A Romance of the Republic*.” Rosenthal examines Child’s use of floral language to describe the novel’s female mixed-

blood characters. She notes that in her discussion of full-blooded blacks, Child “abandon[s] the botanical vocabulary she had carefully cultivated with other [mixed blood] characters” and “marks dark black woman as undeserving of purity and innocence” (240).

<sup>19</sup> In her discussion of Child’s status among critics today, Karcher notes the ironic significance of Child’s editorship: “she is most often reintroduced to the public these days not as an author in her own right, but as the editor of a slave narrative which had originally required her endorsement and authentication before a publisher would print it . . . Child herself might have relished this status reversal as the consummation of her life’s work” (xii).

<sup>20</sup> For a fuller discussion of this controversy and its resolution, see Jean Fagan Yellin’s “Written by Herself: Harriet Jacobs’s Slave Narrative.”

CHAPTER IV  
“WORTHY THE IMITATION OF THE WHITES”: SARAH WINNEMUCCA AND  
MARY MANN

As the previous chapters illustrated, authors like Larcom and Jacobs simultaneously collaborated and disagreed with their editors, as they advanced sometimes competing visions for the nation's future. Larcom, separated from her editor by gender and class, but not race, consistently points out those important differences to Whittier and their readers, reminding them of the pitfalls of any national projects based on confining gender roles. Like Larcom, Jacobs relies on her editor's name for initial entrance into the discourse community, yet finds ways to resist Child's reductive depiction of black women, arguing instead for their greater role in the nation's future. Both relationships illustrate a mixture of cooperation and competition, of unity and division. Readers might expect a similar dynamic between Sarah Winnemucca and Mary Mann, the focus of this chapter. In fact, though, more than any other relationship discussed in this dissertation, Winnemucca and Mann appear united in their common cause--the future of the Piute people, and more generally, a greater role for female reformers in saving and preserving the nation. Whereas racial, gender, and/or class differences furthered the separation between Larcom and Whittier and Jacobs and Child, for Winnemucca and Mann, separated not just by race, but also by background, education, and even geography, such differences in fact encourage unity. Because the chasm between the two

women (and between Winnemucca and her readers) is so great, what matters most to writer and editor is bridging that gap and creating a space where women can work together to advance the cause of reform.

At first glance, Mary Mann's 1887 *Juanita: A Romance of Real Life in Cuba Fifty Years Ago* shares little in common with Sarah Winnemucca's 1883 *Life Among the Piutes, Their Wrongs and Claims*. The first work is a novel set in Cuba, featuring a New England heroine who keenly observes both the horrors of slavery and a doomed romance between the beautiful title character and a wealthy planter's son. In many ways, it is a sort of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, relocated to a more tropical environment and published about thirty years too late to make much of a splash.<sup>1</sup> The second work is, of course, the increasingly well-known autobiography of the so-called Piute "Princess" Sarah, who served as interpreter between her people and the encroaching and duplicitous government. Hailed by critics today as the remarkable achievement of a female cultural broker, Winnemucca's text is finding a place of prominence in the growing Native American canon.

There is, though, a clear connection between these two very different books--their authors. After all, Mary Mann served as editor of Winnemucca's text, writing a preface, providing footnotes where she sees relevant, assembling an enormous appendix of testimonials, and attaching a petition to the end. In this chapter, I examine Mann's role in advancing and framing Winnemucca's text, but also take that analysis a crucial step further. I begin by showing how Winnemucca and Mann consciously shape *Life Among the Piutes* to make the work, its author, and the Piute cause acceptable and important to

white readers. Unlike other studies which read such relationships in only one direction, focusing on how whites affect native writing and how successfully natives resist such pressure, I extend the lines of influence and emulation, illustrating how Winnemucca and *Life Among the Piutes* in turn shape *Juanita*, ostensibly a semi-fictional tale of enslaved Africans in Cuba. Mann's text, with its ethnographic focus and its exploration of the role of the educated, white, female reformer, clearly responds to and is influenced by Winnemucca and her autobiography. The relationship between these two women, therefore, provides us with a more complicated understanding of the dynamic, dialogic interactions between Native American authors and the editors who introduced their texts to white readers.

I begin with an historical/cultural framework for both Winnemucca and Mann's texts, illustrating society's preconceived notions of Native Americans as an essentially doomed or dying race of savages, needing either to be saved by civilized whites or face extinction in the face of white settlers' push westward. With this cultural context in mind, I next examine traditional depictions of Winnemucca and her relationship with Mann, explaining why the white woman's validating presence in *Life Among the Piutes* is so important. Indeed, I show that both women work together to create a frontier text with a new kind of frontier heroine who could be accepted and even emulated by white women readers who are invited to join the cause. In the final section of this chapter, I trace Winnemucca's influence on *Juanita*, a text that bears the marks of *Life Among the Piutes*, especially in its call for white females to lead reform movements and reawaken the nation to its sense of duty. Both texts--not just Winnemucca's--are bicultural

compositions (Krupat xi). Ultimately, I read Winnemucca and Mann's relationship as one of mutual influence, construction, and cooperation, and their works as constantly referential to each other. The two women, separated by race, education, and background, nevertheless find in each other the perfect partner to advance their cause.

*"Educating and Civilizing": White Conceptions of Native Americans*

In order to understand Winnemucca and Mann's collaboration, we must first appreciate the cultural contexts in which they wrote, which included concerns over the looming presence of the "Indian question" in the minds of white readers and the emergence of local color and regionalist writing. The confluence of literary movement and the political concern created cultural models of the west, Native Americans, and white society that writers would have to address in *Life Among the Piutes* as they voiced their own visions for the nation's future.

As many critics have noted, the late nineteenth century saw the continued flourishing of regionalist writing. Richard Brodhead explains the commercial underpinning of this movement, connecting it with an expanding class of readers able to travel for leisure (125). He notes, "Its place of cultural production would clearly seem to link regionalism with an elite need for the primitive made available as leisure outlet" (126). Although Brodhead restricts regionalism's appeal too much (after all, it was not only elites who engaged in the imagined exploits offered by regionalist writing), he highlights its frequent reliance on the primitive as a way of self-knowledge. Audiences eagerly read tales of New England, the south, and, of course, the American west in order

to gain a better sense of who they were, often in contrast to those figures who appeared in the stories. Writers like Bret Harte (who served as editor of the influential Western periodical, *The Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*), recognized the marketability of tales of western adventurers. In 1867, a publisher even offered Harte \$10,000 for all the writings he would complete that year, illustrating the popularity and profitability of such efforts (Brodhead 119). Here, too, though, the primitive, or more specifically, the “savage,” continued to loom in the minds of writers and readers as the Native American remained inescapably connected to discussions of the west.

An 1883 *Overland Monthly* article by Sherman Day articulates this national concern over the Native Americans: “The Indian problem is so prolific of questions, moral, educational, antiquarian, linguistic, legal, military, financial, and sentimental, that one could write a large volume in discussing either of them” (575). The writer’s observation shows white society’s preoccupation with Native Americans’ role in the nation’s future. Just as antebellum and Reconstruction authors and readers explored the roles mixed and full-blooded blacks would play in the nation’s future, contemporary periodicals illustrate how in the mid to late nineteenth century, the figure of the Native American continued to haunt the minds of white Americans. In an 1888 *Atlantic Monthly* article, for example, James Thayer voices his support for the Dawes Act (also known as the General Allotment Act, which split up and allotted tribal lands to individual Indians in an effort to integrate them into white society), arguing: “It is of the utmost importance than the general government should not lose its control over the Indian question until it really means to part with it” (322). As the nation pushed farther west, whites viewed

natives with a mixture of urgent concern, curious admiration, and benevolent pity. If the nation's future did indeed lie in the west, as so many believed, whites were forced to confront the Indian question--what to do with the tribes living in that space and how best to educate and "civilize" them.

During this period in which the Indian Wars continued to rage (culminating in the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890), concerned (and guilt-ridden) whites looked for reassuring depictions of Native American and found comfort in romantic portrayals of the once-great but now declining Indians. As Roy Harvey Pearce and Patricia Nelson Limerick have persuasively argued, a majority of white Americans imagined natives as a doomed and dying race, already a part of history, yet no longer vital players in the nation's future (Pearce 135, Limerick 186). Unable to resist civilization and progress, they simply could not survive, a view George Wilson confirms in an 1882 *Atlantic Monthly* article, "How Shall the American Savage Be Civilized?" Writing of the inevitable decline of the tribal system in the face of encroaching white settlement, he explains, "Every spike driven in a railroad tie west of Kansas is a nail in the tribal coffin" (596). With Indian power safely relegated to the past, whites could afford to pity, admire, and express benevolence towards those few Indians who remained. As Limerick notes, "admiration and concern came mixed with plans for remodeling" (186). Once reassured of white civilization's imminent triumph over Indian savagery, white readers could turn towards Indians and their role in the nation's future with curiosity, admiration, and strategies for reform.

Indeed, the pages of magazines like *The Overland Monthly* (explicitly western in its focus) and the eastern-focused *Atlantic Monthly* are filled with schemes and debates over how best to aid those “few” natives who remained.<sup>2</sup> Leaving them to their own devices was impossible, since, “the Indian, in his savage nature, stood everywhere as a challenge to order and reason and civilization” (Pearce 6). For these writers and their audience, white attempts to civilize and reform the Indians, then, “were in the Indian’s best interests. The instincts of humanity required that Indians be liberated from savagery and advanced to civilization. It was the only way to save them from their fatal decline” (Limerick 191). Here, of course, as Limerick shows, “benevolence and acquisitiveness merged,” as whites found justification for their encroachment on native lands (191).

In article after article, two words sum up whites’ self-perceived duty towards the Indians: civilization and education. “Let us hurry up our educating and civilizing forces,” one writer urges (Day 577). In 1882, another warns that inevitably, Americans must be prepared to deal with the question of “educating and civilizing” the Indians (Wilson 607). And again in 1888, Thayer reminds his audience of the importance of their “educating and civilizing” missions (318). Surely, these writers explain, the Indians needed saving. In 1875, Stephen Powers notes the inherent laziness of Indian life--“drowse, drowse, mope, is the order of the hour”--and adds, “Of all the vacuous, droning, dreary lives that ever the mind of man conceived, this is the chief. To spend days, weeks, and months in doing nothing, absolutely nothing!” (299, 309). He chronicles a list of Indian deficiencies, including “mental weakness,” “filthy” personal habits, “a lack of poetry,” and great thievery (300, 303-304). Even more disturbing, they are a “grossly licentious

race . . . among the married of both sexes there is very little or no restraint” (305). Most damning, though, is the effect on future generations: “The Indian child, born in a wretched wigwam, amid vermin and squalor of all sorts, is trained to familiarity with the loose, lazy, and vicious habits and superstitions of savagery practiced by adult Indians” (580). Faced with such depravity, which might even threaten to spread out and contaminate civilized society, whites could not ignore their Christian duty to the natives. Wilson explains that the only solution lay in accepting Indians as dependents of the government, “justly entitled to its care and protection. This . . . is the only course our sense of duty and humanity could for a moment entertain” (597). Thus, the Indians, doomed and helpless on their own, need white intervention and reform if they are to survive, and key to that survival is their assimilation to white ways.

Interestingly, meshed with this concern for the projects of civilization and education was a curious and often admiring fascination with Indian culture. This period also saw the emergence of ethnographers and ethnologists interested in preserving these purportedly disappearing races. Those articles that are not outwardly hostile towards natives present them as noble and intriguing, but ultimately doomed figures. Limerick explains that audiences preferred tales of “noble, pristine, and uncontaminated” Indians who posed little long-term threat but were nonetheless anthropologically interesting (185). Thus, in an 1875 *Overland Monthly* article on “Californian Indian Characteristics,” the author describes in intricate detail the natives’ physical bodies, houses, customs, and governing system (299-302). *The Overland* continued to capitalize on readers’ interest in various tribes, and featured regular profiles of them, including

“The Pueblo Indians” (March 1871), “The Oregon Indians” (November 1871), and a six-part series on “Northern Californian Indians” (December-August 1872). Often these pieces combined tales of the white adventurer with stories of the noble savage, as in George Gwyther’s “A Frontier Post and Country” (December 1870), which includes a retelling of a Ute legend about a young maiden who runs off with her lover, but also chronicles the adventures of Kit Carson (520, 524-6). When native warriors do appear in these articles, they are past their prime, dead, or soon defeated. An 1870 piece, also by Gwyther, tells of the great Colorado warrior Mangas: “A wonderful man was Mangas: a mind of steel in a body of iron; a giant, mentally and physically, with all the devilish propensities that giants in all ages have been accredited with” (223). Yet by the time Gwyther tells the tale of this impressive warrior, the Indian is long dead. Only his legend and his skeleton (an object of wonder among its viewers) remain. For these readers, Indian culture can be safely discussed and appreciated only once it is relegated, like the warrior Mangas, to the past and the Indians themselves are on the road to either extinction or civilization.

Mrs. F. F. Victor’s 1870 *Overland Monthly* article, “Old Seattle, and His Tribe,” clearly demonstrates how anxiety about natives merged with admiration and benevolence towards them. Victor opens with an idealistic depiction of Indians in canoes, drawing readers in with images already familiar to them: “Far and near their canoes might have been seen, gliding over the whirling eddies from point to point, urged on by the steady strokes of paddles, that were often quickened with the chanted boat-song; or they drifted lazily hither and thither, while their savage crews were engaged” (297). Next she moves

to Old Seattle himself, telling us that he was “the last great chief--a descendent of noble blood,” always “a friend to the whites” with “a dignity and decision of character far above the appreciation of his blood-thirsty advisors” (298). Ultimately, Seattle’s tribe converts to civilized ways, and his son praises the white man for what he has brought them: ““Before he [the white man] came, the Seattles were the first in the chase, and the first to draw the bow and knife in the time of war: but the godly man learned us how to build good houses; how to cultivate the soil, and how to get money, like the White Men”” (299). Clearly, Victor argues, civilization has triumphed over savagery among those members of Seattle’s tribe who followed his example. “The progress towards civilization,” she adds, “is far in advance of others of their race” (300).

So complete is the tribe’s transformation that the writer can proudly relate a visit to one member’s “cozy little dwelling,” complete with a “tidy mistress,” and signs of “cleanliness and thrift” (509). She adds, “A patch-work quilt, of gaudy colors, was in the frames, and reminded the visitor of by-gone New England days, when housewives had their gatherings, to ply the needle, gossip, and drink tea” (301). Victor’s language is quite revealing: the Indian wigwam is here transformed into the New England cottage, the very symbol of civilized domesticity. Even here, though, Victor resists taking her assimilationist view too far, for as much as Seattle’s people are bowing to the pressures of civilization, they are also disappearing from that society – are “passing away to utter extinction” (302). She concludes, “The few who remain of this once populous and powerful tribe are dropping off from year to year; and doubtless, ere long, the Seattles

will have all passed away, giving place to a superior class, who will occupy and improve their lands” (302).

Despite these alternatively wholly negative or patronizingly dismissive views of Native American, white readers’ fascination with Indians opened doors through which that very culture could push back against white culture--could force the “civilized” to question themselves through their interaction with the “savagery.” Limerick notes a series of questions such encounters inspired: “Did Indians live better than whites? Were they more honorable? Did they treat nature with more wisdom? Were Indians more at one with themselves than were their driven, fragmented, mercenary conquerors?” (186). Even Powers, whose *Overland Monthly* article practically drips with contempt for Indian ways, wonders if there is not something to be gained through such contact: “It is a humble and lowly race which we approach, one of the lowest on earth; but I am greatly mistaken if the history of their lives does not teach a more wholesome and salutary lesson--a lesson of ways of barbaric plenty and providence, of simple pleasures, and of the capacities of unprogressive savagery to fill out the measure of human happiness” (297). Thus, while in many ways, as Pearce argues, the American Indians were “forced out of American life and into American history” (58), they remained a subject of tantalizing fascination and concern for white readers.

United in their dedication to the Piute cause, Winnemucca and Mann step into this ongoing cultural conversation about the future of Native Americans in the nation and the role of white benevolence in the projects of civilization and education. Working together, they dismantle the predominant conceptions of Indians and endorse alternative

models, most specifically of the Indian woman, as active and powerful agents in the nation's future. Simultaneously, they invite white readers (especially women) to take more active roles in the missions of reform. Just as with Harriet Jacobs and Lydia Maria Child, though, before they could achieve their goals, though, they first had to address specific questions over Winnemucca's character.

*"My reputation has been assailed": Sarah Winnemucca's Need for Mary Mann*

Until recently, critics paid little attention to the Winnemucca/Mann relationship. Most early discussions deny any true collaboration between the two. Louisa Hall Tharp, whose *The Peabody Sisters of Salem* (1950) and *Until Victory: Horace Mann and Mary Peabody* (1953) are among the only substantial biographical works on Mann, is dismissive of the entire relationship, seeing "the Princess" (Tharp almost always puts the title in quotations marks and uses it sarcastically) as something of a con artist taking advantage of Mann and her sister, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody. Soon after meeting Winnemucca and hearing about her plight, the "susceptible Elizabeth," Tharp writes, "who thought every heart was true" was won over to the "Princess's" cause. Describing Winnemucca's appeal to the usually more cautious Mary, she explains:

The 'Princess' was an Indian woman with a true tale of grievances against the white race. The dramatic story of the Piutes, defeated, betrayed, and driven into exile, appealed strongly to Mary Mann, and as the 'Princess' talked, Mary seemed to see with her own eyes those tragic Indian women struggling down a long trail into a far country, their children dropping exhausted by the way, dying of hunger or disease. (327)

Tharp argues that the sisters' good hearts make them targets and get them into trouble. In this way, she invokes the warnings about misappropriated sympathy and benevolence Susan Ryan discusses (5).<sup>3</sup> Mirroring the claims that surrounded *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* for so many years, she adds that Mann, convinced of the worth of Sarah's cause, wrote *Life Among the Piutes*, but "gave the Princess Winnemucca all the credit as the author," thus undermining Mann's claim that *Life* was the first significant literary output by a Native American writer. Tharp continues: "Her reputation greatly enhanced by the success of the book, the 'Princess' set about raising money for schools for Indian children--or at least that was what she said she would do with the funds when she saw how tremendously the idea appealed to Mrs. Mann and Miss Peabody" (327). When the money the sisters helped raise disappears, Tharp points the finger squarely at Winnemucca: "When the task of raising money became too much for even the indefatigable Elizabeth, the 'Princess' complained bitterly. And then it was discovered that the schools she was supposed to be establishing had hardly been started. The money came too easily. The 'Princess' could not tell exactly where it went" (328). In the end, Tharp explains, "people laughed at Lizzie [and presumably, Mann] over the affair of the 'Princess'" (328). For Tharp, the entire affair is something of an unfortunate joke--well-intentioned old women taken advantage of by a clever Indian trickster. *Life Among the Piutes* is not a landmark text, but simply the product of a white woman's misguided benevolence.

Writing almost forty years later, David Brumble takes the opposite approach, considering *Life Among the Piutes* as Winnemucca's alone--a work virtually free of white

influence. Brumble reads *Life* in the context of native coup tales, calling it “essentially an oral performance set down in writing” (71). Referring to Mann only once in passing (as “Mrs. Horace Mann”), he seems unwilling to consider the influence she or her culture might have had on Winnemucca and her text. He argues that “it is unlikely that Winnemucca was much aware of literary influences at all” and that “*Life Among the Piutes* was probably not influenced by written captivity or slave narratives” (63). While Brumble’s early work makes important connections between Winnemucca’s text and native culture, neither he nor Tharp provides an adequate depiction of the dynamic collaborative relationship between Winnemucca and Mann, the relationship out of which *Life Among the Piutes* arose.

Just as we saw with Harriet Jacobs, for a writer of color like Winnemucca to enter the cultural conversation of white society and advance a social agenda, she had to engage with the white audience on their terms. In an article exploring the reconceptualization of the American canon in light of feminist criticism’s recovery work, Maggie Montesinos Sale argues just this point: “The very process of entry into public discourse required [writers like Winnemucca] to create and assert their affiliation with groups that were recognizable to the broader society” (31). She adds, “the desire to communicate through writing required them to become literate not only in English, but also in the codes, assumptions, and expectations of the broader society in which they worked, and to which they often wrote” (30). In other words Winnemucca had to learn about white conventions and techniques if she wanted white society to listen to her. Even so, these texts often challenged the very codes and expectations they embodied and mimicked,

since writers often created “hybrid forms that resonated with multiple voices and multiple modes of address” (30). Sale encourages critics, therefore, to look at the ways in which writers like Winnemucca entered into, adapted to, and changed the dominant cultural conversations and literary forms of their time. Winnemucca’s text--a Native American autobiography--especially demands such attention as a hybrid and multi-voiced text. As Arnold Krupat explains, the Euro-American concept of autobiography did not exist for natives: “Constituted as a genre of writing by the principle of original, bicultural, composite composition, Indian autobiographies are . . . the consequence of contact with the white invader-settlers, and the product of a limited collaboration with them” (xi). Krupat’s important observation invites us to see *Life Among the Piutes* as just such a collaborative text, with Mann and Winnemucca working together within the boundaries of acceptable discourse to reform society and advance the Piute cause.<sup>4</sup>

The facts of Winnemucca’s life--her writings in newspapers, her stage shows, her trips to the East to lecture and fundraise, and her collaborations with the Peabody sisters--indicate how engaged she was with white society.<sup>5</sup> The stage shows, which Winnemucca and her family performed in Nevada in the 1860s, especially show her adapting the circumstances of her life to fit white expectations. Gae Whitney Canfield discusses the shows in great detail, including the costumes Sarah, her sister, brother, and father wore and the outline of their performances, touted in a program as “Tableaux Variants Illustrative of Indian Life” (34). Canfield explains that the show, with skits including “The War Dance,” “Scalping of an Emigrant Girl by a Bannock Scout,” and “Pocahontas Saving the life of Captain John Smith,” bore little relationship to the true life of the

Piutes, but did “fulfill the public’s notion of a good stage show, such as they might expect from an Indian troupe” (39, 40). Richard White’s discussion of Buffalo Bill’s more famous Wild West Show, begun in 1883, could also apply to these performances. Featuring accounts “of Indian aggression and white defense; of Indian killers and white victims,” Buffalo Bill’s show offered sketches like “The Capture of the Deadwood Mail Coach by the Indians” and, the most famous of all, “The Battle of the Little Big Horn, Showing with Historical Accuracy the Scene of Custer’s Last Charge” (White 27). Like the performers in Buffalo Bill’s show, Sarah and her family knew what the white audience expected and fulfilled those expectations.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, though, they used the stage as a venue to speak about and raise money for their cause:

Sarah interpreted for Old Winnemucca [her father] in very good English, saying that her father and his tribe were friends of the white man. Winnemucca told how overtures had been made to him by the tribes on the plains to join them in their war against the whites. He had refused to do so. Though he and his people were poor, they would not fight against the palefaces. After his talk, hats were passed through the crowd, and a sum of money collected and given to him. (Canfield 37)

Public reaction to the performances was mixed; although people bought tickets and gave donations, reporters covered the events with a mix of amusement, scorn, and condescension (Canfield 39-41).

Importantly, though, Canfield cites an anonymous letter to the editor of the *San Francisco Daily Alta California* written by a white woman who had known the family in the 1850s and was shocked by their apparent degradation on stage. “I did wonder,” she writes, “if it could be the veritable Old Chief who was stooping from his dignity to

become a common actor . . . I asked the chief why he had taken the white man's ways to show himself. Then came the story of his people's poverty, their suffering for food, and the cause of the distress now upon them" (41-2). The letter writer goes on to exhort her audience to realize their responsibility to the natives, adding "I have been acquainted with this aged chief and his family for more than 10 years, and I do not doubt in the least but in every respect his report is true" (42). Like Amy Post's letter of support attached to Jacobs's text, this white woman's testimonial gives added credence to Winnemucca's actions. Prefiguring the role Mann would take in Winnemucca's text, the letter writer, significantly a female, explains the reason for the natives' entrance into the white discourse community, vouches for their credibility, and echoes their requests for support.

Indeed, just as Jacobs's work needed Child's endorsement to bring about her entrance into the cultural conversation, so too did Winnemucca need a figure to validate her text and her cause. Winnemucca's earlier written works, including "The Pah-Utes," an article that appeared in *The Californian* in 1882, lack this presence. In many ways, "The Pah-Utes" reads like a shorter version of *Life Among the Piute's* earlier chapters and so many articles in *The Overland Monthly*. Initially concentrating more on general information about her people than her own deeds, she describes their hunting, language, religion, and customs. Painting a picture of the pre-contact Piutes and the devastation that followed the arrival of the whites, she writes, "Once the Indians possessed all this beautiful country; now they have none. Then they lived happily, and prayed to the Great Spirit. But the white man came, with his cursed whisky and selfishness and greed, and drove out the poor Indian, because he was more numerous and better armed and knew

more knowledge. I see very well that my race will die out” (256). Showing her familiarity with white expectations, she anticipates and responds to the likely assumptions about natives. For instance, she writes, “Now you must not suppose that my people are weak or uncourageous.” In response, she explains their previous bravery in battles (252). After detailing how whites have deprived her people of their food sources, she asks, “Are we to be blamed for thinking that you care for us like the snake in the grass?” (256). Later in the article, she begins to recount her personal experiences as further proof of white duplicity: “When I carried the dispatches for the soldiers, they promised Sarah money. Did she ever get it? Or did she get any thanks for doing this? None: nobody said ‘thank you’ to poor Sarah” (256).

Winnemucca shows her awareness of white stereotypes about Indians, but cleverly argues against them. Interestingly, in another section of the article, Winnemucca echoes Jacobs’s claims about white superiority: “I dare say that the white man is better in some respects; but he is a bigger rascal, too. He steals and lies more than an Indian does. I hope some other race will come and drive him out, and kill him, like he has done to us. Then I will say that the Great Spirit is just, and that it is all right” (256). Compare this passage to Jacobs’s words in *Incidents*: “I admit that the black man *is* inferior, but what is it that makes him so? It is the ignorance in which white men compel him to live; it is in the torturing whip that lashes manhood out of him; it is the fierce bloodhounds of the South, and the scarcely less cruel human bloodhounds of the north, who enforce the Fugitive Slave Law. *They* do the work” (46). In a clever rhetorical strategy, both women accede to white claims of superiority but reveal the emptiness of such claims. Also, both

women use Christianity as a touchstone for this condemnation of whites, using the discourses their readers were familiar with to show where whites fall short.

Although Winnemucca's voice in this article is similar to the voice she will develop in *Life Among the Piutes*--informative, defensive, and dialogic--it lacks the necessary authenticating stamp of approval that a white editor provided. Readers might have been interested in her words, but without a white voice authorizing and crediting what she has to say, they could also safely ignore them. Her contributions to the project of national reform will go largely unnoticed without such an endorsement. In this way, "The Pah-Utes" differs even from Winnemucca's short letter that appears in Helen Hunt Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor* (1881). The letter, originally written to a Major H. Douglas, also outlines the wrongs the Piutes have suffered and explains why they resist going to the reservation. Winnemucca writes, "If this is the kind of civilization awaiting us on the reserves, God grant that we may never be compelled to go on one, as it is much preferable to live in the mountains and drag out an existence in our native manner" (396). In the context of Jackson's work, which uncovers the "repeated broken faith of the United States towards the Indians," and works to stir readers to action on the Indians' behalf, Winnemucca's text takes on added meaning and credibility (Jackson 7, 29). While the substance of her words is similar to those in "The Pah-Utes," Jackson's editorship of the consciously political book provides an endorsement of Winnemucca's work that is lacking in the earlier article and gives her a voice on the question of national reform.

Because she was so far removed from her readers (racially, geographically, culturally), more so than Harriet Jacobs or Lucy Larcom, Winnemucca needed the credibility Mann and Peabody could provide. In the end of *Life Among the Piutes*, she iterates a charge she would make again and again--that she had been unfairly maligned by her enemies: "Every one knows what a woman must suffer who undertakes to act against bad men. My reputation has been assailed, and it is done so cunningly that I cannot prove it to be unjust. I can only protest that it is unjust, and say that wherever I have been known, I have been believed and trusted" (258). In fact, even before her book appeared, Winnemucca was already something of a celebrity, and not always for the best reasons. Canfield details Winnemucca's fights and scrapes with the law, including brawls with jealous women and hotel waiters, all eagerly covered by local (and sometimes larger) newspapers. An 1872 article in the *Humboldt Register* tells of just such a fight: "The trouble occurred in the dining room of the hotel, with no one but the combatants themselves to witness the affair . . . The young man got off with a black eye, and Salley [sic] with a severe jolt in the mouth, which split her lip badly, and caused the claret to flow most profusely" (qtd. in Canfield 77). Clearly such accounts present Winnemucca as less than a proper woman--someone outside the bounds of respectability. Sally Zanjani offers some insight into Winnemucca's actions, finding an explanation in her native culture: "The Paiute world compelled no pretenses to ladylike deportment. It was that same Sarah whose tasteful garb and modest demeanor so impressed reporters who drank and brawled with the Modoc woman known as Snake River Sal and attempted to burn down her enemies *kahnee* in the Indian encampment in the sagebrush behind the

courthouse” (125). The public, though, did not care for rational explanations for Winnemucca’s actions. Already fascinated by stories of the Indians, they were even more intrigued by these tales of the reportedly intoxicated, violent, and passionate Princess. In fact, Zanjani points out that one of the knives she used in a fight “was regarded as an object of such great public interest that it was presented for exhibition at the American centennial” (127).<sup>7</sup> Portrayed as an out-of-control, decidedly unfeminine woman, without a white defender, Winnemucca could hardly hope to have her voice heard on a large scale.

Even those articles that are on the surface more sympathetic still leave Winnemucca open to criticism. A reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, for instance, praises her for both her daring leadership and her way with children: “Sarah has undergone hardships and dared dangers that few men would be willing to face. But she has not lost her womanly qualities, and succeeded during her visit in coaxing into her lap two little timid ‘pale-faced’ children, usually shy of strangers, who soon lost their fear of her dark skin, won by her warm and genial ways” (163). For this writer, Winnemucca is both brave and feminine, strong and tender. A few lines later, though, the writer places her squarely outside the bounds of respectable womanhood, mentioning her “extensive and diversified matrimonial experience, the number of her white husbands being variously estimated at from three to seven” (163).<sup>8</sup> Such an allusion to Winnemucca’s complicated sexual history surely raised readers’ eyebrows and seemed to confirm white stereotypes about licentious Native American women. Similarly, a *New York Times* story

(reprinted from the *Nevada Appeal*) praises Winnemucca but also questions the authenticity of her identity as a Piute Princess and daughter of the chief:

Still the fact remains that she is enough versed in the Piute tongue to be able to talk fluently with the people of the tribe for whom she has frequently acted as an interpreter . . . She is *popularly regarded* as the Virgin Queen of the Piutes; is a plain little woman, pretty dark; dresses like an American female of rustic habits and modest pretensions; and talks English without any perceptible accent. She is quite a capable person and reads our language and expresses herself in writing quite correctly, and with considerable force of expression. We have also heard of her writing poetry. As a *reputed* princess of Piute blood royal she is a famous character. (“Miss” 2, emphasis added)

Even when praising Winnemucca, these writers leave an air of uncertainty about her true nature and character. Thus, in addition to the general assumptions about Native American she would have to work against, the Sarah Winnemucca who wrote *Life Among the Piutes* already had a reputation of her own that she needed to counter if she were to gain support for her cause.

Additionally, Sarah also most likely felt defensive regarding the well-publicized death of her father and the violence surrounding it. Upon Old Winnemucca’s death, about sixty braves held a council and decided to kill his young wife of less than a year whom they suspected of having murdered the old man. The *Nevada Silver State* records the 1882 incident: “They took the woman and her year-old child--by a husband who died some months before she married Old Winnemucca--to a rocky bluff and stoned her to death. Naches [Sarah’s brother] says that it has been customary with the tribe to sacrifice squaws who are suspected of bewitching men and making them sick by stoning them to

death” (“Reported” 13). Similarly, Sherman Day’s *Overland Monthly* article (discussed above) points to this incident as proof of enduring native savagery: “That their heathenism and savagery exists among us in a practical form is proved by the barbarous butchery of the widow and child of the deceased chief, Winnemucca, last year by a band of Piutes, in conformity with a superstitious custom of that tribe” (575-6). Zanjani explains Winnemucca’s reluctance to discuss the matter as it might have “seriously hamper[ed] Sarah’s efforts to win sympathy for the Paiutes and convince the public that they were not savages but a virtuous people well along the road to civilization” (234).

Mary Mann, a symbol of white middle-class respectability and culture emerges as an almost perfect choice to reintroduce Winnemucca to the public. Wife of the famous educator Horace Mann, mother of three sons, sister of publisher and author Elizabeth Peabody, sister-in-law of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and a published author in her own right, Mann represented a successful fusion of the traditional and modern, more reform-minded woman. Born in 1806 in Salem, Massachusetts, Mann became an “important figure on the nineteenth-century American political, educational, and cultural scene” (Ard xiii). The great-granddaughter of one of the “Mohawk Indians” who dumped British tea in to Boston Harbor, Mann “passionately believed she could effect change and she spent much of her life attempting to do so” (xiii). Her published works speak to her broad interests. *The Flower People* (1838), a children’s botany book, and *Christianity in the Kitchen: A Physiological Cookbook* (1857), are more traditionally domestic texts. She also co-authored books on education with Elizabeth, including *The Moral Culture of Infancy, and Kindergarten Guide* (1864) and translated several works of German educators (xiv).

Particularly fascinating is her long professional relationship with the Argentinean writer, politician, and educator Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, with whom she corresponded for decades and whose works she translated into English.<sup>9</sup> Patrician M. Ard notes that the essay Mann wrote introducing Sarmiento's *Facundo* to North American readers is still reprinted today in Spanish-language editions of that work. Thus, even today, Mann remains a cultural broker and interpreter for readers.

Mann's chief contributions to questions of reform and domesticity come through her advice writing, where she finds a place to advance the causes she believes in while remaining within the bounds of respectability. Kilcup has argued that critics need to pay more attention to advice writing, which "could embody subtle or not-so-subtle critiques of American culture" and "could articulate the writer's perception of 'America' just as strongly as Emerson's 'The American Scholar' or Margaret Fuller's 'American Literature'" ("Essays" 185). Ard explains that Mann's writings "reveal the centrality for her of the domestic--always combined with the moral, reformist impulse that characterized her life and the century" (xiv). Her *Christianity in the Kitchen*, for instance, links the very domestic practice of cooking with larger questions of morality. In her preface she writes:

The pleasures of the appetite are legitimate pleasures. God did not implant the sense of Taste in man to ruin the beautiful structure of his body, or to impair the noble faculties of his soul. But, like all other appetites, the appetite for food may be abused. If its proper conditions be violated, the loss of power, premature decay, and untimely death, are inevitable. The life of the offender is deprived of its own enjoyment, and its power of being useful to others. (1)

Mann, therefore, finds power in the domestic space to advance a cause (the morality of citizens) that goes beyond purely domestic concerns.

Able to pursue her public career within the bounds of propriety, Mann's voice commanded respect. Furthermore and just as importantly, since she was so much like the text's audience, her voice makes possible both sentimental identification and white benevolence (Barnes 16, Ryan 19). White readers could admire and see themselves in Mann, and through her reassuring invitation, feel comfortable in coming to Winnemucca's aid. For a woman like Winnemucca, then--one whose character and credibility were questionable--Mann's presence in her text provides the assurance of reliability and virtue. Additionally, because of her close connection to an authentic Indian voice, Mann gained credibility as a spokesperson for Native rights. Together, then, the two women can argue for new models of Indian and white womanhood, foregrounding their roles in the projects of national reform.

*"The women know as much as the men do": Winnemucca's Text and a New Model of Femininity*

The chief project that Winnemucca and Mann take on in *Life Among the Piutes* is making the Piute cause important to white readers--to legitimize Sarah and her cause, a project similar in many ways to the one Jacobs and Child take on in *Incidents*. Like Jacobs and Child, Winnemucca and Mann need to show that Sarah's voice is worth listening to. To do so, they work together to present Sarah as a respectable woman, but significantly, as a frontier woman, one who transcends the bounds of traditional gender

roles but still maintains her virtue. Christine T. Jespersen has written that Winnemucca invents a new kind of hero who “mediates conflicts on a frontier re-imagined as a site of cross-cultural exchange”--a frontier “that is accommodating of more than one culture and one which is negotiated by all parties involved” (185). In fact, we can read the frontier as Winnemucca presents it and the text itself as spaces that allow a dynamic interchange of cultures and ideas. As a frontier work on the border of two cultures, marked by the influences of both a native and a white woman, *Life Among the Piutes* makes plain the differences between East and West, revealing and potentially destabilizing societal notions once thought to be natural or unquestionable. As Dawn E. Keetley has written, because the frontier brings together “diverse and contradictory ideas of selfhood, the subject is produced in conflicting ways; thus it discloses those identities which otherwise seem ‘timeless’ or ‘obvious’ to be constructed, provisional, and contingent” (18). Similarly, Janet Floyd argues that women writers on the frontier represent and manipulate the conventions of domesticity and traditional female forms. She explains that women writers of the frontier embrace the tropes of nineteenth-century writing, but in “placing them in unfamiliar contexts, they . . . destabilize their meaning” (7). Winnemucca’s text, with Mann’s endorsement, works to reveal these gaps in meaning and substitute in their place an alternative model of womanhood embodied in Sarah herself: one who is traditional in many ways, but in others quite extraordinary. By inviting readers to share and sympathize with Winnemucca’s experience, and by encouraging them to take up her cause, Winnemucca and Mann also, by extension, invite white (especially women) reader to become more like Sarah – leaders and reformers in their own society.

Significantly, like Jacobs, Winnemucca does show her regard for more traditional markers of feminine identity as her text clearly engages with the discourses of Victorian womanhood and domesticity. Many critics have argued for the influence of the language of sentiment in her text. Cheryl Walker and A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, for instance, write that through her interaction with women like Mann and Elizabeth Peabody, Winnemucca became aware of the force of the culture of sentiment (Walker, *Indian* 152; Ruoff, “Early” 88). Beyond her engagement with sentimental writing, though, Winnemucca is also responding to and employing the conventions of advice writing--the very genre that helped make Mary Mann so well-known and respected. The early section on “Domestic and Social Moralities” works to depict the Piute social structure as similar to, and in many cases, superior to white society. Focusing on the concerns of white, middle-class society (child-rearing, morality, domesticity), she calls upon readers to connect and compare their own families to Piute society. She writes, “Our children are taught to be very good . . . We are taught to love everybody. We don’t need to be taught to love our fathers and mothers. We love them without being told so” (45). Similarly, she explains the moral lessons her people are taught:

My people teach their children never to make fun of anyone, no matter how they look. If you see your brother or sister doing something wrong, look away, or go away from them. If you make fun of bad persons, you make yourself beneath them. Be kind to all, both poor and rich, and feed all that come to your wigwam, and you name can be spoken by everyone far and near . . . Be kind to both good and bad, for you don’t know your own heart. This is the way my people teach their children. It was handed down from father and son for many generations. I never in my life saw our children rude as I have seen white children and grown people in the streets. (51)

Winnemucca thus simultaneously explains her people's morality in language that her audience can understand (even distantly echoing the Gospels) and argues for the Piutes' superiority.

The text abounds with examples of the "civilized" whites' savage actions, making readers question the values of such terms. In one memorable passage she addresses her audience in this fashion: "You who are educated by a Christian government in the art of war; the practice of whose profession makes you natural enemies of the savages, so called by you. Yes, you, who call yourselves the great civilization; you who have knelt upon Plymouth Rock, covenanting with God to make this land the home of the free and the brave" (207). In passages like these, as Noreen Grover Lape argues, the terms "savage" and "civilized" are "emptied" of their standard meanings and, instead, signify their antithesis (55). Further, she explains, "in dismantling the opposition between 'savage' and 'civilized,' [Winnemucca] opens the frontier by carving out a safe haven for her people; if her white audience can cease viewing her people as savage, they can empathize with the abuses they suffer" (55). There are many examples of this sort of redefinition of words like "savage," "civilized," and "Christian." In another memorable passage, Winnemucca pleads:

Dear readers, I must tell a little more about my poor people, and what we suffer at the hands of our white brothers. Since the war of 1860 there have been one hundred and three of my people murdered and our reservations taken from us; and yet we, who are called blood-seeking savages, are keeping our promises to the government. Oh my dear good Christian people, how long are you going to stand by and see us suffer at your hands? (89)

Winnemucca again uses her familiarity with the white Christian discourse to challenge and redefine key concepts and encourage her readers to be more sympathetic to her plight.

Winnemucca also positions herself within traditional Victorian gender roles in two crucial scenes which imagine her as a potential wife and mother. In the first, Mr. Morton, a widower Sarah met and guided to Silver City, proposes to Sarah and asks her to be a mother to his young daughter. As Sarah prepares to leave, the child begins to cry and Morton asks: “Sarah, don’t leave Rosey, for she has come to love you” (151). Winnemucca explains her work for her people necessitates her leaving, but he is determined: “Now Sarah, as I have never talked to you before, will you be my wife? We will go to Silver City and get married right away” (151). Although she is flattered, Winnemucca turns Morton down: “I said to him, ‘You honor me too much by offering marriage to me, Mr. Morton. I thank you very much for your kind offer, but I cannot marry a man that I don’t love’” (151). In this brief passage, then, Winnemucca shows she is attractive as a wife and mother, yet refuses to enter a loveless marriage, something her female audience could certainly admire. Similarly, during the Bannock War, General Howard entrusts Sarah with the care of an abandoned baby girl. Here again Winnemucca shows how others imagine her in the traditional role of mother: “All my people and the officers called this little baby my baby, and they named it Sarah” (200). Sarah does not seem to imagine herself in these roles, but only reports that others do so. She thus allows others to shape her character in positive ways--to assign traditionally feminine virtues to her--without explicitly claiming them for herself. It is Mr. Morton who proposes to her

and asks her to help raise his daughter. It is the soldiers who call the baby Sarah's, not Sarah herself. Sarah even hands the baby off to another woman for its primary care (180). Moreover, one of the only mentions of her marriage to Lewis Hopkins, her husband when *Life Among the Piutes* was written and published, appears in the Appendix in a letter of congratulations from General Oliver O. Howard (266). Nevertheless, Winnemucca, just like Jacobs in her text, relates these scenes to illustrate her connection to her white readers, many of whom were, of course, wives and mothers. Bridgitte Georgi-Findlay explains that such inclusions demonstrate "that her narrative is located, either by herself or by her editor, within a feminine discourse of respectable womanhood, with a stress on morality is a key term" (236). Indeed, while Winnemucca and Mann work to position Sarah in this discourse, Winnemucca also works to redefine what women can and should do. Both inside and outside of the traditional markers of gender and domestic roles, she offers a unique critique of those structures.

Importantly though, in another pivotal scene, where she fights off a potential rapist, Winnemucca both identifies herself with respectable women and distinguishes herself from them as she demonstrates her power and bravery in defending herself. When, in the middle of the night, she feels a hand on her body and hears a voice call her name, Winnemucca responds immediately: "I jumped up with fright and gave him such a blow right in the face. I said, 'Go away, or I will cut you to pieces, you mean man!'" (231). Cari M. Carpenter reads this episode as a powerful demonstration of Winnemucca's redefining of femininity. In fighting off her attacker, "She challenges the assumption that women are too weak to defend themselves: indeed, it is unwomanly (and

un-Indian) *not* to do so” (76).<sup>10</sup> Like Linda Brent fighting off Dr. Flint, Winnemucca asserts her independence through her resistance to oppressive male power. Similarly, Ruoff argues, “Unlike the heroines of sentimental literature . . . Winnemucca is not a victim, but rather an independent woman determined to fight off her attackers. Her strength of character . . . enables her to achieve victory denied to her literary sisters” (264). Here, in this space where Winnemucca is both a traditional and an extraordinary woman, readers can begin to see the alternative model of womanhood the text advances: a woman who is respectable and virtuous, but also strong, independent, and, in Winnemucca’s case, a leader for her people.

*Life Among the Piutes* is full of examples of Winnemucca’s courage and leadership, oftentimes based on her abilities with language. In one early instance, using her powers of persuasion, she talks an angry crowd of warriors out of seeking revenge on white men who murdered a young Piute boy (104). Later she threatens to use her language as a weapon, telling one of the agents on the reservation, ““You will not get off as easily as you think you will. I will go to Yakima City and lecture. I will tell them how you are selling my people the clothes which were sent here for them”” (240). Clearly, Winnemucca’s words were powerful in the public space, a fact confirmed by an 1881 *San Francisco Examiner* article. The writer explains Sarah’s planned trip the East: “One of the granddaughters of Truckee, the celebrated Piute scout who lead Fremont over the Sierra Nevada Mountains, is to deliver a series of lectures upon ‘The Indian Agencies’ and the ‘Indian Question as Viewed from an Indian Stand-point’ . . . She will

undoubtedly create a sensation in Washington, Boston, and New York” (5). This reporter and Sarah both understand that her voice--especially her public voice--has power.

Winnemucca’s powers extended beyond her use of language. She was most famous, after all, for her rescue of her people from the Bannocks during that tribe’s war with the U.S. Army, a story she retells in great detail in *Life Among the Piutes*. Readers would certainly have been impressed by what she accomplished, covering over 220 miles in two and a half days. Winnemucca herself emphasizes the significance of her achievement: “Yes, I went for the government when the officers could not get an Indian man or a white man to go for love or money. I, only an Indian woman, went and saved my father and his people” (164). Her claim of modesty (“only an Indian woman”) makes her achievement seem more significant. Even before this feat, though, small passages throughout the text reveal her physical power and bravery. For instance, she relates riding out to meet a messenger: “I jumped on a horse, *barebacked*, to go and meet him, and *my men* did likewise” (81, emphasis added). This image of a woman riding out bareback to confront a possibly dangerous situation is certainly powerful, especially when she appears to be the leader of the warriors who accompany her.

Rather than boldly assert her power, though, Winnemucca often presents it just as she did her traditional feminine attributes: as something others bestow on her that she herself is too humble to accept. For example, when her people ask her to write to Washington for help, she hesitates and cites her powerlessness as a woman: ““If it was in my power I would be too happy to do so for you, but I am powerless, being a poor woman, and yet you come to me for help. You have your interpreter; why does he not

talk for you?’” (139-40). The people, though, are insistent, “[W]e came to you, for you are the only one that is always ready to talk for us. We know our sister can write on paper to the good father in Washington if she will’” (140). Again, the Piute people, not Sarah, put her in a leadership role. Similarly, in one of the most memorable scenes in the book, Sarah’s father bestows the title of chief on her. Chiding the Piute men, he argues that his daughter is a more capable leader than any of them could be:

‘Oh, yes! My child’s name is so far above beyond yours; none of you can ever come up to hers. Her name is everywhere and everyone praises her. Oh! How thankful I am that it is my own child who has saved so many lives, not only mine, but a great many, both whites and her own people. Now hereafter we will look on her as our chieftain, for none of us are worthy of being chief but her, and all I can say to you is to send her to the wars and you stay and do the women’s work, and talk as women do.’ (193)

So complete is Old Winnemucca’s redefinition of gender roles that he orders one man to wear women’s clothes – which he does and, as Sarah explains, he will “continue to do so all his life” (194). Jespersen argues for the importance of this scene: “Crowned by her elevation to chief, Hopkins is able to offer her readers an example of an adventurous female subjectivity that encourages mobility, bravery, leadership, and honor, a version that differs markedly from those that prescribe women’s subordination to male authority and the home as women’s primary sphere of influence” (187). Again, in these cases she merely relates the events – tells what others have said or done regarding her – but in doing so she advances an alternative model of what a woman could be.

Lee Schwenger reads Winnemucca's comments on gender quite differently, arguing that contact with whites disrupted traditional Piute gender roles. "Because of this disruption," he adds, "Sarah Winnemucca must play the part of a man, while knowing all along that the man's part should (in some traditional sense) be taken by a man. She repeatedly refers to herself as a woman, 'only an Indian woman' and yet just as often assumes the traditionally male role" (157-8). While I agree with Schwenger's observations about contact with whites bringing about changes, I disagree with his assessment of Winnemucca's response to such developments. As the text shows, Winnemucca maintains that women, in contrast to white society, always had a voice in Piute culture and tells the story of a woman who rode into battle to avenge her uncle's death (*Life* 52). Winnemucca does not go quite as far as her father in redefining gender roles. She does not argue for a complete reversal, but instead presents a woman who is both traditionally feminine but also capable of extraordinary acts of courage and leadership, a model she encourages her audience to adapt to their own society most memorably when she explains that the Piutes have women in their congress: "If women could go into your Congress I think justice would soon be done to the Indians" (53). Her claim here is significant--it is women (those who are willing to stand up and be heard), she feels, who are most capable of bringing justice to her people.

Overall, Winnemucca argues here that Piute culture offers a better model for the nation's future than white society. Far from the loose, lazy, and lascivious women of so many contemporary depictions of Indian women, Winnemucca presents herself as powerful, active, compassionate, and, most significantly, a leader of her people. It is this

kind of woman, she tells her readers, who would bring about changes in Congress--who can truly bring about the reforms needed to ensure the nation's successful future. In this sense, Winnemucca is bolder than both Larcom and Jacobs. The reforms she imagines stretch beyond theirs, as she imagines women in the halls of government.

*"To tell the truth": Mann's Role in Winnemucca's Text*

As Winnemucca advances this alternative model of femininity, Mann's voice continually emerges alongside hers, serving as a character witness for Winnemucca, as well a translator or interpreter for her, constantly working to explain, connect, or contrast Winnemucca and her culture with her audience's experience. Mann's preface to *Life Among the Piutes*, her first visible entry into the text, is in a sense quite conventional, echoing the prefaces of so many slave narratives, including, of course, Child's preface to *Incidents*. Like Child, Mann explains her minimal role in writing the book, giving Winnemucca almost all the credit for its composition: "My editing has consisted in copying the original manuscript in correct orthography and punctuation with occasional emendations by the author, of a book which is an heroic act on the part of the writer" (ii). She also anticipates charges that the text fails aesthetically, yet argues for the importance of preserving the writer's own words: "In fighting with her literary deficiencies she loses some of the fervid eloquence which her extraordinary colloquial command of the English language enables her to utter, but I am confident that no one would desire that her own original words should be altered" (ii). Mann makes a clever move here, arguing that the text's literary weaknesses are actually further proof of its authenticity as Winnemucca's

own words set down in print, adding further credibility to the work. Here, Mann sounds more like Jacobs than Child, for it was Jacobs who apologized for her aesthetic failures yet used those apparent deficiencies as further validation of her textual and experiential authenticity. For all three women (Winnemucca, Mann, and Jacobs), what matters most is not so much the beauty of the text, but rather its truthfulness and efficacy--that truthfulness that will drive audiences to take up the cause of reform they advance.

After making the case that Winnemucca is the author of *Life Among the Piutes*, Mann next praises Winnemucca's character and virtue, stressing the significance of her text, and explaining why she felt compelled to write a book at all. "Mrs. Hopkins," she writes, "came to the East from the Pacific coast with the courageous purpose of telling in detail to the mass of our people 'extenuating nothing and setting down naught in malice,' the story of her people's trials" (ii). Mann adds that, motivated by her compassion for her people, Winnemucca began a series of lectures, but found she never had the time to get out more than a few of the points she was determined to share, and thus decided to put them down in writing. Like Child in her preface to *Incidents*, Mann emphasizes what an achievement the book is:

It is the first outbreak of the American Indian in human literature, and has a single aim – *to tell the truth* as it lies in the heart and mind of a true patriot, and one whose knowledge of the two races gives her an opportunity of comparing them justly. At this moment, when the United States seems waking up to their duty to the original possessors of our immense territory, it is of the first importance to hear what only an Indian and an Indian woman can tell. To tell it was her own deep impulse, and the dying charge given by her father, the truly parental chief of his beloved tribe. (ii)

Note what Mann does here, calling Winnemucca a brave patriot working to reform America, invoking her father's memory, stressing how her tale is completely true. Thus, Mann accomplishes four important tasks in just a few lines. First, she vouches that the text is Winnemucca's and is thus authentic. Second, in answer to those who might object to an Indian woman writing at all, she explains Winnemucca's reasons for writing the book--to aid her people and help fulfill her father's last wishes. In fact, by stressing that the tale is one that "only . . . an Indian woman" could tell, she again turns a potential liability (a woman writing) into a strength (telling a story only she can tell). Third, she attaches Winnemucca's name explicitly to the goals of national reform--the "duty" that the nation is now working towards. Finally, and most importantly, by positioning Winnemucca (at least initially) in the bounds of proper Victorian womanhood, portraying her as a virtuous and honest daughter, Mann makes it acceptable for a white audience--especially women--to read her book. Additionally, she creates a space for Winnemucca's voice to contribute to discussion the Indian question.

This project of recuperation and validation, standard in many Native American autobiographies of the period, continues in the text, both in Winnemucca's words and the commentary Mann adds through her footnotes.<sup>11</sup> Much later in the text, for instance, she adds two notes on Winnemucca's need to escape the "iniquity" of Agent Reinhard, whose friends spread false stories about Sarah and are "active to discredit her" (217, 248). Mann assures her readers that he is "a thoroughly wicked and unscrupulous man," and his endorsement of their words (in obvious contrast to her own) carries little weight (248). Calling Reinhard by name, Mann issues a direct challenge to his authority--something

she has the power to do as a learned, middle-class, respectable, white woman. Her words lend credence to Winnemucca's indictment of the agent. Her notes serve not to advance an alternative mission or even to modify Winnemucca's plan, but instead work solely to support Winnemucca's book. Mann's presence, therefore, supports and legitimizes Sarah's text and its project, allowing white readers to feel sympathy for the Piutes and possibly join in efforts to assist them.

Mann serves as more than just a character witness, though, as the text's footnotes clearly show her engaging in the role of interpreter and translator for her audience. In one, after Winnemucca describes Chief Truckee's encounter with white men who looked "more like owls than anything else" with "hair on their faces" and "white eyes," Mann assumes (correctly) that her readers will be confused with this odd description and adds, "When asked to explain this, she said, 'Oh, their eyes were blue and they had long beards'" (20). The footnote, which quotes an apparent conversation between author and editor, demonstrates a key aspect of the bicultural composition process in action. The note allows readers to imagine the two women working and talking together to create a text for white readers. Winnemucca provides the words, and Mann steps in to translate or interpret where she sees fit. Similarly, in another instance, after Winnemucca writes of girls named after flowers, Mann's note informs readers of the common Indian custom of naming children for "some passing occasion" and relates the tale of how Sarah's brother, Black-eye, earned his name (46). Here the editor steps in to provide *more* information than the author at first supplied, showing perhaps her own interest or her imagined audience's interest in a subject of apparently less importance to or taken for granted by

Winnemucca. Such an interjection does not work to correct or explain away Winnemucca's words but simply, at least temporarily, invites readers even further into Piute culture. In this instance, clearly both women shape the text's contents. Mann as editor, then, anticipates her readers' reactions, and steps in to translate or interpret ideas or concepts foreign to them, serving as a sort of bridge between Winnemucca and her white audience.

Indeed, the text's long Appendix strives to bring writer and audience together through the editor, beginning with the petition Mann attaches and culminating with a collection of letters, newspaper clippings, and government documents all attesting to Winnemucca's character.<sup>12</sup> The idea for the petition, Mann writes, came not from herself or Sarah, but from those who had heard her story and encouraged her to petition Congress on behalf of the Piutes. The document itself is short and simple, asking that the Piutes be allowed to return to the Malheur Reservation and that those families that the government separated be reunited. Nevertheless, it is clearly designed to appeal to readers' sympathies, echoing earlier abolitionist rhetoric as it highlights families "ruthlessly separated" that "have never ceased to pine for husbands, wives, and children" (247). Mann works to become an actual physical link between the audience and Winnemucca, encouraging readers to copy and circulate the petition, before "sending the lists before the first of December to [her] care, 54 Bowdoin Street, Boston" (247).

Just as Jacobs's text ends with a call for readers to aid the writer, through the petition, Mann invites readers to join writer and editor in the work the text sets out to do--to play a role in righting the wrongs done to the Piutes. Since the actual petition appears

as part of the text, readers are invited, in fact, to inscribe themselves (their names and their allegiances) into the book, and can be reassured that there is little risk in doing so since, in addition to Mary Mann's stamp of credibility, "several hundred names have already been sent in" (247). Jespersen emphasizes the power of the invitation here and argues that the petition provides white female readers a chance to become vicariously more like Winnemucca herself: "Petitioning and legislation in the east is made to glow with borrowed romance. And as Hopkins offers up models of adventurous subjectivities, she entices Euro-American women out of the private realm and into the public sphere" (187). As the local color movement in literature boomed, allowing audiences to "travel" to different locations through their reading, Mann's invitation is even more enticing. She gives them the opportunity to take part in the still-unraveling story of the Piutes--this is their chance to step into and affect the kind of tale they were so captivated by in magazine like *The Overland Monthly*. Thus the petition not only adds to the polyphonous nature of the text, uniting the white audience with the native writer, but also promises that the audiences' own words and identities (here their signatures) can have real-world consequences. Explicitly here, and implicitly throughout the entire text, Mary Mann's editorship unites these disparate women and makes possible a new definition of womanhood. As the text calls not just for appreciation, but also action, it calls upon white female readers to realize their own potential transformative power. They can be like Winnemucca, or more realistically, perhaps, like Mann: respectable yet powerful, feminine yet socially active and significant.

*“It may prove a fair exchange”: Winnemucca’s Influence on Mann*

Mary Mann’s role in *Life Among the Piutes* goes beyond that of simply editor, interpreter, or character witness for Winnemucca, just as Winnemucca, an interpreter in her own right, is much more than a passive storyteller whose tale is co-opted by her white editor. Siobhan Senier encourages us to see *Life Among the Piutes* as a “text created by two cultures and two people--if not by Mann and Winnemucca equally, then certainly by Winnemucca with Mann’s help and by Winnemucca with an acute consciousness of what women like Mann would have expected” (95-6). As we have seen already, the two writers--an Indian woman who capitalized on widespread fascination with vanishing races and a white woman who, despite certain investments in her culture, was also willing to question those values--both influence what the work will eventually become. I agree with Senier’s argument and feel that it is here--in this textual space where Mann seems willing to question her own privileged position and values--that influence can work in two directions; Winnemucca can have just as much of an effect on her white editor as Mann has on her.

One of Mann’s longest footnotes makes this point clear: reflecting on Winnemucca’s description of “domestic and social moralities,” Mann interjects with a pointed message to her white readers: “In one of her lectures, Mrs. Hopkins spoke of other refinements and manners that the Indian mother teaches her children; and it is worthy the imitation of the whites” (51). What Mann wants her audience to see here is that they can (and should) learn from Winnemucca and her people--that they should “imitate” them. Repeating what Winnemucca has explained about the way Indians raise

their children, she adds, “Such manners in the children account for their behavior to each other in manhood, their self-respect, and respect for each other” (51). In that same footnote, Mann, who wrote about and worked in education for most of her adult life, argues that the Natives might have just as much to teach whites about educating children as whites do them: “The Indian children really get an education in heart and mind, such as we are beginning now to give to ours for the first time. They are taught a great deal about nature; how to observe the habits of plants and animals” (52). Here Mann echoes her own ideas about education reform, specifically the kindergarten system she worked to establish in the United States.

Her plans are most clearly outlined in *The Moral Culture of Infancy, and Kindergarten Guide* (1870), co-authored with Elizabeth Peabody. Throughout this text, the writers emphasize the concept of whole education in language strikingly similar to that Mann uses above to praise Piute education: “There is not, however, any need to sacrifice the culture of either mind or body, but to harmonize them. They can and ought to grow together. They mutually help each other” (“Moral” 34). Moreover, such a system of education, emphasizing nature and individual growth and expression, will lead to children with better manners and morals: “We are quite sure that children begin with loving others quite as intensely as they love themselves,--forgetting themselves in their love for others,--if they only have as fair a chance of being benevolent and self-effacing as of being selfish” (“Moral” 13).

Finding validation for her kindergarten plans, then, in Piute culture, in *Life Among the Piutes*, Mann calls for white society to follow the Indian example: “It is not unlikely

that when something like a human connection is established between the Indians and the whites, it may prove a fair exchange, and the knowledge of nature which is accumulated...may enrich our early education as much as reading and writing will enrich theirs” (52). Significantly, the two areas Mann seizes on--child-rearing and education--are the important markers of civilization whites claimed to bring to the natives. Mann argues here for what Lape calls “constructive intercultural contact” from the “position of mutual empathy” (55) and suggests that both cultures can learn from each other. Her argument here--that whites could learn about such important subjects from the Indians--is quite extraordinary and goes beyond simple translation or interpretation. It is a call for emulation, for modeling the native example, for learning to be more civilized from the savages, and it is a clear indication that Winnemucca and her culture might influence white culture and play a vital role in the nation’s future.

It is with this call for imitation in mind that we can turn to Mann’s novel, *Juanita*, and see in it the clear influence of Winnemucca’s text. Inspired chiefly by her visit to Cuba in the 1830s, Mann’s semi-fictional account of the brutal slave system there was not published until 1887.<sup>13</sup> Since the book went almost totally unnoticed after its publication, a brief plot summary is necessary. The main character, Helen Wentworth, travels from New England to Cuba to visit Isabella Rodriguez, whom she met when both were in school in the United States. Isabella, now married to a wealthy slaveholder, lives with her large family on a plantation in Cuba. As Helen is exposed to the horrors of slavery, her friend slowly wastes away and her friend’s oldest son Ludovico falls in love, first with the heartless Carolina (a figure remarkably similar to Stowe’s Marie St. Clare)

and then with Juanita, the beautiful Moorish-mulatto. After Isabella's death (like Stowe's Little Eva, she seems to be killed by slavery), Helen takes her friend's younger children, Ludovico's infant daughter, and Juanita to the United States. Eventually, the family returns to Cuba, where Juanita (who has accepted Ludovico's proposal) is murdered in a riotous assault against thousands of slaves and free blacks. Ludovico and Helen, chastened by Juanita's death, vow to improve the world, and especially to tear down a "caste system" that judges according to color (205).

After reading this quick summary, one might wonder how this novel has anything in common with a text like *Life Among the Piutes*. In fact, Patricia M. Ard, who edited the 2000 re-publication of *Juanita*, reads the work in the context of Stowe and Hawthorne--as a sentimental mix of romance and realism.<sup>14</sup> Readers familiar with abolitionist texts will recognize many of the same tropes in *Juanita*, including the threat to and exploitation of slave women. Mann's description of a slave auction, for instance, could have come from any number of anti-slavery texts:

Tearful mothers clasped their little ones to their bosoms as if for the last time; husbands and wives exchanged words which might be their last; youthful sons and daughters clung lovingly to the sides of their mothers, from whom they for the first time feared separation. The more attractive were the daughters, the more intense were the fears of the mothers, who scanned with agonizing penetration the countenances of those who passed by. (18)

In other sections, she discusses slave women "forced" into motherhood (87). Reading *Juanita* in such contexts is, of course, enlightening, especially given Mann's familial and literary connections. I want to argue, however, for another context for *Juanita*, reading it

through Winnemucca's text, showing how Mann's interaction with Winnemucca and their mutual invocation of the white, female reformer in *Life Among the Piutes* finds expression and development in Mann's text.<sup>15</sup>

Although she almost certainly had some version of the text completed over fifty years earlier, Mann continued to revise *Juanita* throughout her life, only completing the novel just before her death. Ard writes that the earliest sources of what would become *Juanita* actually appeared in the letters Mary Mann wrote home from Cuba. Upon her return to the United States, Mann began to work on the text, blending her actual experiences with fiction. In an 1887 letter, Elizabeth Peabody wrote about her sister's composition:

But when it was done, there were so many *portraits* of real people & so many *real incidents* that she felt it would be a violation of social honor for her to print it – & so it has only been read privately. But *now all these persons are dead*, . . . & everybody who has read it urges her to print it – for it is a tale of moral beauty as well of moral evil & showing how God makes even Satan do his will in the long run. (448)<sup>16</sup>

Ard adds that Mann undoubtedly wrote large portions of the text by 1858, but also “substantially revised” it in the last years of her life, as the subtitle and various historical references suggest (xvi). In an “Explanatory Note” at the end of the text, Peabody explains that publishing the book was “one of the last acts of Mrs. Mann's mortal life” (223).

As she reflected on the plight of the Piutes and revisited her own tale of another group of oppressed and exotic people, Mann no doubt drew connections between the two

--connections we can trace in her text. In fact, in her last years, Mann, a lifelong reformer, worked on two projects: supporting Winnemucca's Piute people and finishing the final revisions of *Juanita*. Danielle Tisinger and others have argued that many middle class readers familiar with the abolitionist movement and its literary conventions, would have similarly connected the Indian cause to the earlier reform movement (187). Writers like Lydia Maria Child and Lydia Howard Huntley Sigourney explored and connected the movements. Indeed, Peabody makes the same connection in her writings. For instance, in the letter cited above, she estimates her sister's literary contribution in comparison to Helen Hunt Jackson and Stowe, thereby linking the writers' causes: "M[ary] has not as much genius as H.H. & Mrs. Stowe--But she has a great deal" (448).<sup>17</sup> As she tells her tale of the Cuban slaves, Mann also joins the two causes as she calls on the same kind of reader--white, female, middle-class--to aid oppressed people. She is undoubtedly reminded of how Winnemucca tells the tale of her people, and such reminders work their way into her novel.

*Juanita* bears the stamp of *Life Among the Piutes* from its opening pages, which take on an ethnographic focus unseen in other sentimental treatments of slavery, but which are a crucial aspect of *Life Among the Piutes*. *Juanita* opens in the jungles of Africa, at a wedding ceremony for the tribe's young chief:

In a beautiful valley on the border of a river, a party of natives had assembled under the shade of a copse of trees to celebrate a rustic wedding . . . The feathery, acacia-like foliage of a clump of tamarind-trees shaded the group of figures as they reclined on the bank of the stream, waiting for the decline of the burning tropical sun before they consummated their simple ceremony, which was to be followed by a festive dance. (3)

This tribe, whom she calls the Ayetans, have long lived in happiness and have yet to encounter white men. “War and rapine,” the narrator notes, “had never invaded this little valley of peace” (2). This peace is irreparably shattered as slave-hunters (both white and black) arrive with guns blazing: “A distant shout and the noise of fire-arms suddenly startled them . . . in a few moments, as they stood huddled together, the dreaded white men, of whom they had heard, followed” (4). Mann’s description of the white men’s violent arrival recalls Winnemucca’s opening lines: “They [white men] came like a lion, yes, like a roaring lion, and have continued so ever since” (5). In both cases, the writers work to redefine savagery as the whites are seen as violent, out-of-control predators and their victims are aligned in their innocent vulnerability.

As Mann sketches the details of the peoples’ lives--their homes, their dances, their environment--readers should recall Winnemucca’s opening chapters on Piute life and culture before the white man’s arrival, set up so idealistically to highlight the changes since that time. Throughout the novel, after the scene (and the Ayetans) have been moved to Cuba, Mann keeps coming back to the language, customs, and traditions of the different populations there, providing readers with the rich descriptions of exotic cultures they were looking for in *Life Among the Piutes* and local color writing and that she hoped they would respond to in her own novel. In one scene, she describes a slave festival, showing how their customs reflect both their heritage and their present sorrows: “From early in the morning till six o’clock in the evening, one unremitting sound was kept up, and the various negroes fell into the dance at pleasure. When many were engaged together, the wild scream sometimes rose to a fevered pitch . . . The guests looked on

with wondering, and even with terror. The dance left no impression of joy, but only mad excitement, and the party in the salon sat down in silence at its close” (98-9). Again, readers might recall Winnemucca’s depiction of Piute songs and dances (*Life* 16, 45-57). Both writers record the cultures of these oppressed groups, arguing that there *is* indeed a culture to be recovered. By extension, they argue for the humanity of Piutes and slaves – there is, they show, something of value here.

Nothing connects *Life Among the Piutes* and *Juanita* more, though, than the figure who appears in both--that of the white female reformer. In Winnemucca’s text, she appears as Mary Mann herself, the editor who works tirelessly to advance the Piute cause. Furthermore, she appears as the imagined audience--Christian white women, wives and mothers who will be outraged by the wrongs the Piutes suffer and will work to correct them. In *Juanita*, Helen Wentworth, the heroine through whose point of view we see most of the novel’s events, embodies the role of reformer. Just as Mann and her readers play the role of witnesses and potential actors for social change in Winnemucca’s tale, Helen sees what the slaves experience and is awakened to a new sense of duty. Helen’s evolution from an uninformed and passive observer to a fully engaged and active laborer for change serves as a model for the readers both Winnemucca and Mann hoped to reach. In many ways, their imagined reader, a woman eager to aid others, mirrors the reader Jacobs and Child imagine.

Helen enters the text like many educated middle-class white women – satisfied with her own virtue, but largely unaware of social injustices outside her own immediate experience. Immediately, readers might be reminded of Stowe’s Miss Ophelia. Like

Miss Ophelia, until she sees the horrors of slavery up close, she comforts herself with the idea that she is already doing her part: “She thought she had sympathized with the oppressed of all climes and all times . . . Her forefathers had been prominent in service and suffering for the cause of human rights, and she had been nursed upon the stories of these sacrifices and these sufferings” (14). Her arrival in Cuba shocks her out of this comfort zone, and she now feels “as if oppression and slavery had been mere words to her” (14). After witnessing a brutal slave beating, her first impulse is to go back to the United States. Shocked out of her complacency, though, “A second thought suggested that she had no right to lose this opportunity of observation, for was there not the same plague-spot festering in the heart of her own country?” (14). After seeing yet another act of brutality, she again thinks, “Should not these things be known? Perhaps I may be a humble instrument for enlightening society upon this fearful topic” (36). The narrator adds, “A new aspect of human duty had presented itself to her. She determined to hush every selfish feeling, and look with a keen eye--a calm one, if possible--into this monster iniquity” (37). Helen feels the need--the moral imperative--to observe more, to play the role of recorder and later, interpreter for the people back home--to continue reading slave culture and use her observations to improve their lives. Thus, although she is rebuked for doing so, like a dutiful reporter, Helen visits the slave sick-house and the “chicken-house” (a make-shift nursery for the slave children), both powerful symbols of the violence of slavery (39, 86-93). Helen, in fact, plays the role Mann takes on in *Life Among the Piutes*. Like Mann, she records outrages against an oppressed people because she feels it is her Christian duty to awaken others to *their* own sense of duty.

Eventually, Helen does more than just observe, working actively to aid both the slaves in Cuba and blacks (both free and slave) in the United States. With what she has learned, she begins to debate those who support slavery, including her dear friend, Isabella. Although Isabella protests that she is powerless, telling Helen, “We women cannot help this thing,” Helen continues to encourage her to take action, even if only to confront her husband (34). Even more, after her Isabella’s death, Helen raises her friend’s children in the United States, opens a school whose students include black children, and even encourages Ludovico’s proposed marriage to Juanita. She is determined to continue breaking down “the giant form of caste” that had not yet been “exorcised” from her country (205). Here Helen (and Mann) sounds like Child’s characters in *The Romance of the Republic*, envisioning interracial marriage as possible solution to racial divisions. Thus Helen, fully awakened to her new sense of duty, has evolved from passive observer to a worker for reform. She is, in fact, the white reader imagined by Winnemucca and Mann in the end of *Life Among the Piutes*, one who sees a wrong and, aware of her own agency, works to correct it. Again, while *Juanita* certainly bears the influence of Stowe and other abolitionist writers, this explicit directive to record, motivate, and awaken others is most clearly articulated in *Life Among the Piutes*. The reformer figure, then, imported into *Juanita* from the pages of Winnemucca’s text, illustrates how a white woman’s text is significantly affected by exposure to a Native American writer and her text.

Significantly, Mann refuses to let her story have a happy ending, even though she explicitly acknowledges that is what her audience wants and expects--“that poetic justice

should be done to all the characters who play their part in it, because God is just, and in the great whole of existence virtue brings happiness and vice misery” (222). However, since the society she depicts and the society her readers live in is not one “in which all the actors enjoy the inalienable right of ownership in themselves . . . the expectation that all things shall be adjusted in this life must give way to the sad earthly fact that justice is not always meted out here” (222). Like Jacobs’s closing words in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and the petition in *Life Among the Piutes*, this ending leaves readers with work to do--with the charge to make it so such justice can be achieved on earth. *Juanita*’s narrator (clearly here, Mann herself), encourage her readers: “Let us keep our faith unsullied, that God teaches man by his failures as well as by success and happiness, and that, with his due endeavors, he can effect that better adjustment of the spirit to the event which secures the best ends of existence here and hereafter” (222). Like *Life Among the Piutes*, then, *Juanita* stresses the importance of women like Helen, Mary Mann, and their imagined readers--women who, thorough their observations of other cultures, can be awakened to their own sense of duty and work to aid oppressed people, taking an active role in the nation’s future. Just as Jacobs’s text influenced Child’s vision for the nation’s future in *A Romance of the Republic*, so too does Winnemucca’s text influence Mann in *Juanita*.

In *For Those Who Come After*, Arnold Krupat reminds us that Native American autobiographies are always collaborative efforts, jointly produced by a white person who “translates, transcribes, compiles, edits, interprets and polishes” the text and by an Indian who “determines its subject and whose life becomes the content of the ‘autobiography’

whose title may bear his name” (30). Such works are always, as we have seen, bicultural composite compositions. *Life Among the Piutes* is just such a text, a work in which Mary Mann’s voice is often heard alongside Winnemucca’s as the two collaborate to present a tale that will move white readers to action. What I have been stressing here, though, is that such collaboration and influence can and does extend both ways--that Winnemucca’s voice can be heard in *Juanita*. In *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, Craig S. Womack makes a similar argument, reminding readers that Native Americans “are not mere victims but active agents in history, innovators of new ways, of Indian ways, of thinking and being and speaking and authoring in this world created by colonial contact” (6). He adds:

When cultural contact between Native Americans and Europeans has occurred throughout history, I am assuming that it is just as likely that things European are Indianized rather than the anthropological assumption that things Indian are always swallowed up by European culture. I reject, in other words, the supremacist notion that assimilation can only go in one direction, that white culture always overpowers Indian culture. (12)

What Womack is saying here, that a native writer and her text can shape white culture, is precisely the argument I have been making about the interaction between editor and writer. Winnemucca and *Life Among the Piutes* clearly influence the way Mary Mann shapes her novel. Just as Larcom responds to Whittier and pushes back against his influence, and just as Jacobs resists and revises Child, so too do Winnemucca and Mann write back to each other. Although less contentious in their collaboration than the pairs discussed in earlier chapters, the two women still write in a circle of influence, both

working to shape their readers' responses to their texts. Separated by class, race, and background, this pair manages the most cooperative interaction discussed in this project. Perhaps because the gulf between them was so wide and their desire to fill it--to connect Winnemucca to a white audience--was so great, cooperation came more naturally.

As we turn to Chapter Five, a serially-edited text by all white authors, competition and cooperation return again. As we shall see, each writer in *The Whole Family* debates questions of family, domesticity, gender, and, by extension, the future of the nation at the opening of the twentieth century.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Patricia M. Ard discusses *Juanita's* reception in her introduction to her 2000 reprint. She explains that publication and sales information has been lost, but remarks that Mann's delay in publishing the book (which she had begun over forty years earlier when the abolition movement was at its height) no doubt impaired its reception (xxxv).

<sup>2</sup> For more on *The Overland Monthly*, see Ernest R. May's "Bret Harte and *The Overland Monthly*." May notes the magazine's explicitly western focus, including its cover design which featured a bear and two parallel lines--"the ancient symbol of California savagery' astride the tracks of the approaching Overland railway" (261). "Every issue," May notes, "attempted to picture some aspects of Western life and to mirror some phases of the Western mind, but enough foreign matter was included to keep prevent the journal from becoming purely local in scope" (263).

<sup>3</sup> I realize that Ryan's book specifically addresses antebellum discourses of benevolence, yet her ideas are still applicable to Winnemucca's situation. Ryan herself writes, "Clearly the discourse of benevolence transcends conventional periodization . . . Postbellum phenomena, from the efforts of the Freedman's Bureau to the writings of reformers like Frances E.W. Harper, Jane Addams, and Jacob Riis, relied on the intersecting rhetorics of benevolence and race or ethnicity" (15-16).

<sup>4</sup> I am mindful here of Craig Womack's argument that exposure to and engagement with white society and literature does not make a writer like Winnemucca any less an Indian. Such familiarity, he insists, does not "constitute a loss of identity. This is an

argument that is only applied to Indians who, once they defy the stereotypes prevalent in popular imaginings, become suddenly less Indian” (141).

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Winnemucca, through Mann and Peabody, moved in select circles when she visited the East. Gae Whitney Canfield explains that Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Ralph Waldo Emerson were among those who supported her cause--many through financial contributions (201, 206).

<sup>6</sup> Canfield also writes of the costume Winnemucca wore when she lectured in the East--another imaginative interpretation of native realities and white expectations: “She enjoyed creating a dramatic impression, dressed in fringed buckskin and beads, with armlets and bracelets adorning her arms and wrists. She even included the affectation of a gold crown on her head and a wampum bag of velvet, decorated with an embroidered cupid, hanging from her waist” (201). Sale argues that her dress “met her audience’s expectations that Indians satisfied their desires for adornment by bringing together materials from their subsistence-based economies (deerskin) with decorations little valued and cheaply produced by industrial societies (beads)” (31).

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the public seemed fascinated by even the smallest snippets about Sarah and her family. In 1883, the *New York Times* reprinted a short article from the *Nevada Silver State*: “Naches [Sarah’s brother], the Piute Chief, yesterday received by express a fine overcoat from his sister, Princess Sallie, who is now in Boston. It was a little too large for him, but, with that generosity for which he is noted, he presented it to Lee Winnemucca, who is almost blind and cannot work” (“Generous” 6).

<sup>8</sup> Other (shorter) articles mention Sarah as a figure of importance in Indian affairs. A *New York Times* front page story entitled “Brave Indian Squaw” discusses her role in rescuing her people from the Bannocks (1). Yet another cites Sarah as an authority on the continuing conflict between the Indians and the government (“Massacre” 1). Clearly, these writers saw Sarah as a voice of authority on the Indian wars.

<sup>9</sup> For more on Mann’s relationship with Sarmiento, see Ard xiv-xv.

<sup>10</sup> Carpenter adds, “In appropriating ‘outrage’ for her own purposes, Winnemucca aligns white and Paiute women against the depraved, dangerous white man” (75).

<sup>11</sup> For discussions of other early Native American autobiographies, see two important essays by Ruoff. The first, “Three Nineteenth-Century American Indian Autobiographies,” includes discussions of William Appess, Black Hawk, and George Copway. The second, “Early Native American Women Authors: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, Sarah Winnemucca, S. Alice Callahan, E. Pauline Johnson, and Zitkala Sa,” focuses solely on women writers.

<sup>12</sup> Technically, the petition, which appears at the end of the book’s final chapter, is not a part of the original appendix. However, since it is not a part of the text proper, I consider it part of the book’s closing materials.

<sup>13</sup> For more on Mann’s trip, see Ard’s introductory essay to *Juanita*.

<sup>14</sup> In truth, *Juanita* has received little critical treatment. Ard’s essay is one of the only modern discussions of the novel.

<sup>15</sup> Significantly, Winnemucca addresses the vulnerability of young Indian women among white settlers. She relates her mother’s fears over leaving her older sister with the

white men since she was “young and very good looking.” The mother later adds, “You know if we stay here sister will be taken from us by the white man. I would rather see her die than see her heart full of fear every night” (34, 37).

<sup>16</sup> Peabody makes the same claim in her note at the end of *Juanita*: “The death of the last member of the family of her host, a few years since, left her free to publish what she had seen and known of real life in Cuba, woven into a work of art of her own imagining. She thought it would be felt to be a timely publication, coming out so hard upon the time of emancipation of the slaves of Cuba, in 1888” (223).

<sup>17</sup> Peabody again links abolitionism with the movement for Indian rights in her 1886 pamphlet *Sarah Winnemucca's Practical Solution to the Indian Problem*, and again in the context of Jackson's text, which she argues is “gradually doing for the Indian what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did for the negro” (24).

## CHAPTER V

“I CANNOT TELL HOW IT WILL END”: *THE WHOLE FAMILY'S* FAMILY

Each previous chapter has illustrated writers and editors working together to advance their texts and, often, the social causes attached to them. In the cases of Larcom and Whittier and Jacobs and Child, writers strived to make their own individual voices heard while still maintaining a connection to their editors who provide an entrance to the literary marketplace and a voice on the social issues affecting the nation. For Winnemucca and Mann, the struggle to find unity in the face of disunity actually fosters more cooperation than division. *The Whole Family* (1907/8), the novel at the center of this final chapter, began with the plan for twelve authors to unite in a common purpose--to discuss the future of the American family. Despite the authors' apparent similarity (all relatively well-known white writers), from start to finish, the novel is marked by dissent and division.

In a 1906 letter to Elizabeth Jordan, editor of *Harper's Bazar*, the author Margaret Deland responded to Jordan's invitation to take part in *Harper's* latest project: *The Whole Family*, a composite novel by twelve authors. Deland, who had been offered the role of the mother, began by explaining her "inefficiency," saying she could not "reel off stories and papers every few minutes" (Jordan 261). Later in the letter, though, she provides more insight into her ultimate decision not to join the family:

I really can't write 'The Mother'; but I wonder if you would be very much disgusted with me if I say that if I could, the project does not appeal to me? I am dazzled at the distinguished names that have entered your domestic circle; but it doesn't seem to me that you are, any of you, taking the rank that belongs to you in literature when you make yourselves into this pleasant sandwich. (Jordan 261-2)

Deland's letter indicates her unwillingness to enter into a project where her work and her name might be compromised or cheapened through what she sees as essentially a literary stunt.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Deland's response clearly illustrates what is at stake in the composite novel: writers with different agendas, philosophies, styles, and talents come together to create (in theory) a coherent whole. For a writer who wanted to establish his or her own voice, authority, and reputation, a project like *The Whole Family* presented both benefits and risks. Certainly, one might gain visibility and reputation through an association with other respected writers. However, there was also the potential for one's own work and vision to be swallowed up in another's or into the project as a whole. For a woman writer, who already had to work to make her independent voice heard, the stakes were even higher. In this light, Deland's reluctance makes perfect sense.

Essentially, the composite novel raises the same questions of authority, ownership, self-determination, and competition discussed in each of the previous chapters. Just as Larcom, Jacobs, and Winnemucca carefully consider and negotiate with more powerful editors like Whittier, Child, and Mann in their public literary performances, so too must the writers in *The Whole Family* work together, often in opposition to each other, to create and promote their project. However, because *The Whole Family* takes as its central subject the future of the family itself--the nation's

foundation and an essential concern for the future--from start to finish, the novel engages more explicitly in these heated debates than any of the works discussed so far.

In this chapter, I discuss *The Whole Family* as a natural extension of the questions discussed in previous chapters, including the fluid nature of the roles of editor and author in the continuing competition for the reader's attention and favor. I begin with a discussion of composite novels in general, focusing on several novels contemporary with *The Whole Family*. Next, I move to *The Whole Family* itself, showing how the work, envisioned by William Dean Howells, edited by Howells and Jordan, and shaped by its presence in *Harper's Bazar* and its team of authors, demonstrates the dynamic relationships between writers and editors, as each successive contributor takes on both roles, responding to the previous author's chapter, motivation, and vision for the book. *The Whole Family* illustrates how the internal concept of editorship--the idea of the silent voice that keeps writers within the bounds of what is acceptable--becomes a point of contention when writers refuse to play by the rules. Mary Wilkins Freeman, whose chapter on "The Maiden Aunt" throws Howells's original plan into turmoil, shows how significantly writers can shake up the very foundations of a "story" (in the case the story of the "typical" family Howells is trying to tell) when she snatches the editor role away. It then falls on the subsequent writers, including Henry James, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, and eight others, to assemble the pieces--if they wish to do so--into a cohesive whole.<sup>2</sup> The contentious story of *The Whole Family's* family of writers provides the most vivid depiction of literary collaboration, editorship, and competition in action.

*“Wonderfully assorted and combined”: The Collaborative Novel in the Early Twentieth Century*

The composite (or collaborative) novel, in which different authors contributed sections of a larger work, provides a clear representation of what happens with almost all literature: writers respond to the literary and cultural community around them, including their readers and other authors. In *Publishing the Family*, June Howard explains that such works dramatize “the powerful notion of the ‘social text’ as a site of struggle over meaning” (21). Simply put, in a composite novel, Writer B is forced to respond to Writer A, and even anticipate Writers C and D, all the while keeping in mind and responding to demands and expectations from editors and the reading public. Readers and writers of turn-of-the-century composite novels revel in this awareness, often seeing these ventures as games to figure out how it all came together. Who wrote which section and why? How did Writer A feel about what Writer B did? Thus, readers are explicitly encouraged to explore the relationships between writers and their peers in relation to the overall scheme. They are invited to witness the conversation that usually goes on behind the scenes in any literary production. Both writers and readers come to see most clearly the collaborative, competitive spirit that drove nineteenth-century literary production and continued into the early twentieth century.

Sometimes composite works embraced their inherent sense of cacophony, as is certainly true with *A House Party* (1901), edited by Paul Leicester Ford. Ford constructs an overarching narrative framework (bad weather forces guests gathered at a house party to stay inside and tell stories to entertain each other) to unite twelve different short stories

by writers including Sarah Orne Jewett, George Washington Cable, and John Kendrick Bangs (who would later write “The Son-in-Law” chapter of *The Whole Family*). From the start, Ford’s narrative emphasizes the great diversity among his fictional storytellers and audience:

Eligible youths had been invited for the benefit of desirable girls; middle-aged bachelors had been bidden to brighten the hours of doubtful-aged maidens; and grey-haired men in their ‘anecdotalage’ had been included to add spice to the gossip of the dowagers. There were multi-brain people for conversation and uni-brain people for golf. There were sedentary people for cards and restless people for picnics. There were strenuous people for croquet and peace-loving people for umpires. It was, in fact, a wonderfully assorted and combined house party. (1)

Ford’s fictional audience mimics his collective imagined audience, as he gathers a diverse group of readers/listeners with an equally eclectic group of tales. From the humorous tale of a man who teams up with his own reflection to win his lover’s heart (and his lover’s reflection), to a fascinating tale of a family of runaway slaves, to episodes set during the American Revolution and in Mexico, the collection’s impressive scope defies easy categorization. On the whole, *A House Party* makes little claims for coherence beyond the simple framework Ford provides. Certainly, no one vision or agenda drives the collection forward. The stories do not seek to compete with or answer back to each other. Moreover, the collection sometimes consciously draws attention to itself as a construction. The storytellers comment on the tales they have just told, and, for the reader, it is hard to tell if the actual writers or the personas of their storytellers are speaking. For instance, at the end of “The Green Bowl,” Jewett’s contribution, her

narrator explains and almost apologizes for her tale's unusual structure: "You see that there isn't any story at all. I only promised to give you a plain account of our travels" (232).<sup>3</sup> This sort of self-conscious commentary on the sections of the book adds to the overall impression of a game or performance, inviting readers to see the authors as players and themselves as active, knowledgeable audience members.

Moreover, Ford constantly allows the audience to interrupt or comment on the tales. At one especially dramatic point in an early tale, "listeners" intrude into the story to voice their approval: "'Oh, ho!' exclaimed one of the masculine listeners. 'That's what I've been hoping he'd do,' eagerly cried a feminine one" (15). Similarly, at a key moment of revelation in "The Fairy Godmother's Story," (a woman is confronted by the lover she thought was dead), Ford provides another response from an audience member: "'Good gracious!' exclaimed a girl, hysterically, and then, a little ashamed of her emotion, tried to sit back, so that the firelight should not play upon her face" (319). Thus he brings imagined readers into the text--giving voice to their anticipated responses and in fact making their responses part of the text itself.

*The Sturdy Oak* (1917), also edited by *The Whole Family's* Elizabeth Jordan, has more narrative coherence than *A House Party*, perhaps not just because it is a novel, but also because its writers are united in the project by a specific political purpose. Written to advance the cause of the New York campaign for suffrage, *A Sturdy Oak* brings together fourteen writers, including Dorothy Canfield, Mary Austin, Fannie Hurst, and Mary Heaton Vorse (another contributor to *The Whole Family*). The book tells of George Remington, a candidate for office, and his newlywed wife, Genevieve, who, through a

series of often-hilarious events, become converts to the suffrage cause. Careful readers could certainly pick up on certain writers' individual styles, yet, the book works as a unified story, and is, as a 1917 *New York Times Book Review* explains, "immensely readable" (42). In her preface, Jordan acknowledges the unity the writers showed, explaining, "Splendid team work . . . has made success possible," and ending with an appeal for "every one to buy this book!" (xvii). No doubt the writers' unity of purpose adds to its coherence, as in this case, collaboration itself exists more to point out the writers' mutual support of a cause than to demonstrate individual styles or competing visions. Like the collaboration between Winnemucca and Mann, *The Sturdy Oak's* writers find a basis for unity in their devotion to a common cause.

*Bobbed Hair* (1925), whose twenty contributors included Dorothy Parker and George Palmer Putnam, engages in similar questions about the modern woman's role in society, but with a decidedly more light-hearted attitude. Connemara, the main character, forced by her spinster aunt to choose between two suitors, explains that she will indicate her preference for one or the other by her new hairstyle: if she keeps it long, she will choose the more traditional man; if she bobs it, she will choose the modern lover. Before she can reveal her choice, she finds herself involved in a fight between competing opium smugglers and falling in love with a third man. Here again, the contributors appear to have real fun with their sections, and while parts of their interaction seems competitive, on the whole, they seem more concerned with telling an entertaining story than creating a work of lasting aesthetic value. In her closing note on the challenges of the composite novel, Marguerite Apsinwall, the editor, writes not of competing egos and agendas, but

instead the little slip-ups contributors made in their contributions (in terms of narrative continuity, for example): “Still, with twenty people handling the plot and the characters it meant exacting vigilance if we were to keep silly errors, and miscalculations of time and place from creeping in” (352). Even these mistakes, though, are presented as humorous rather than serious challenges. Although the book, at least in the beginning, addresses the question of the “modern woman,” it elides any real discussion of changing gender roles.

Other composite novels are equally harmonious. Kate Douglass Wiggin, who turned down a role in *The Whole Family*, also wrote two collaborative novels, both with Mary and Jane Findlater and Allan McAulay. Both books involve young American women who find romance with British gentleman while vacationing in England. Structurally, *The Affair at the Inn* (1904) comes closest to capturing what Howells and Jordan will later attempt in *The Whole Family*. Each of the four writers relates the novel’s events from the perspective of a different character, leading in many cases to four different accounts of a single incident. Audiences responded well to this structure, although one reviewer cannot decide if the book works because of how different the perspectives are or how much they sound alike:<sup>4</sup>

By this clever scheme the reader is constantly supplied with four more or less distinct versions of everything that happens. The divergent points of view thus revealed are as interesting as it always is to see ourselves as others see us, when the infrequent opportunity is presented . . . One laughs, or at least smiles, at almost every sentence, and wonders consistently at the skill with which the authors have harmonized their material and their style of writing. There is little to suggest that all four characters are not the creatures of one brain. (“Literary” 622)

Like many critics of composite novels, the reviewer seems, above all, intrigued by the nuts and bolts of such a composition, in finding out how the authors and their work came together. Interestingly, in *Robinetta* (1910), the group's second collaborative effort, the writers abandon this structure, using third person narration throughout a series of unattributed chapters. Perhaps as a result, reviews were less positive. The *Nation*, for instance, calls it "too conventional, predictable" and wonders "whether too many cooks have spoiled the broth, or the hand of the chief cook has lost its cunning, this is but a pale and savorless infusion . . . It is as though Mrs. Wiggin and her friends had united in a desperate attempt to imitate Mrs. Wiggin" ("Robinetta" 244). Simply put, when a reviewer cannot detect individual styles and the authors offer no clues--when the work reads like any ordinary novel--the entire concept of a composite work fails.

Despite their differences, each of these composite efforts shows a fascination with readers' knowledge of author's styles and an engagement with those readers. Again and again, both readers and writers discuss the works in terms of a game. In fact, the publishers of *A House Party* created a contest around the book, offering a thousand dollar prize to the reader who could correctly attribute all twelve tales to their authors. The publishers explain their motivation for such a contest: "The idea was suggested by a casual discussion of the earmarks of authorship. What is it that distinguishes the work of one writer from that of another? Could you tell who wrote a story if the author's name was not given?" (i). The book even included an entry form that could be removed and sent in. For readers, the game lies in trying to figure out wrote what and, in many cases, how it would all turn out. For writers, there is a certain inherent playfulness to their

work as well: the challenge lies in following up those who went before and keeping the story going while remaining true to their art.

If the writers and editors presented such endeavors as games, they nevertheless took them quite seriously. Each participant in the work--from the publisher to the writer--had a stake in its reputation and reception. The heated dispute between Small, Maynard and Company (publishers of *A House Party*) and the *New York Times Book Review* shows just how much the integrity of such works mattered. The controversy erupted when the *Times* ran a review of *A House Party* that seemed to question whether it was truly a composite work:

In truth, there is so much sameness about the tales that were it not for the publishers' plain assertion that they are the work of twelve hands one would be tempted to believe that Mr. Ford wrote all of them, imitating certain well-known peculiarities of each author. If twelve writers there be, each has evidently tried to imitate one of the others, the better to bewilder the reader. ("Notes" 43)

Less than ten days later, the *Times* prints an angry letter from the publishers questioning the wording of the review. "Why the word 'assertion'?" they write, "That leaves it to the reader to infer that there may be a doubt whether the stories are really written by the authors in the list given. That impugns our integrity and discredits the announcement which appeared in your own advertising columns. It is a serious matter for you to use such language" ("House" 9). They also resent the use of the phrase "if twelve writers there be" adding, "There again our integrity is questioned, and questioned before the

public. We must require suitable reparations” (9). The point, they insist, is that such claims challenge “the integrity of the house,” and:

The seriousness of it all is that the language used in that notice . . . lays us open to the charge on the part of the public of playing a trick upon them. Not a single one of the authors has tried to imitate the style of any other author. Each one has told his story in his own natural way, being in fact expressly requested to do so. There would be nothing in the proposition of interest to any serious-minded person if it were a mere trick. It is a straight guessing proposition, and appeals only to people who think they know one author’s style from another. (9)

As a result, they demand an apology and retraction from the *Times*. The two parties continue their battle back and forth on the pages of the paper, with the *Times* accusing the publishers of trying to buy positive reviews (and withdrawing advertising because of negative ones) and Small, Maynard claiming only a desire to defend the integrity of their work and their contest (“House” 9, “Ethics” 8).<sup>5</sup>

This conflict illustrates the stake all parties had in the composite narrative--how important it was that readers could trust and appreciate them, not just as novelties and games, but also as reputable and sincere artistic outputs from the writers. Just as the authors and editors in earlier chapters placed so much emphasis on trust and integrity, so too do the writers and editors of composite novels value their readers’ respect and trust. Similarly, if the entire concept of the composite novel is to work at all, such faith in the words of writers and editors is essential. For Jacobs and Child and Winnemucca and Mann, such claims of validity underpinned their entire literary endeavors. Even Lucy Larcom needed her audience to believe in the authenticity of her experience if they were

to appreciate her depictions of labor and gender. The composite novel, like all the works discussed in previous chapters, still need its audience to believe in its seriousness as a work of literature.

*Howells, Jordan, Harper's, and the Business of Writing*

Despite the rift between Small, Maynard and Company and the *Times*, none of the collaborative efforts discussed above were as adversarial and heated as that between the writers of *The Whole Family*. As Alfred Bendixen explains in his introduction to the 1986 republication of the novel, what began as an “editor’s dream” turned out to be an “editor’s nightmare” (xi). Out of this nightmare, though, readers can find remarkable insights on authorship and literary production, as well as the continuing debate over the family and the nation’s future. Karen Kilcup argues, “Perhaps no text better emblemizes the relationship between male and female writers” and that it “illuminates the complex relationship between aesthetics and politics, and highlights the alienation between feminine and masculine literary traditions, that would come to dominate criticism in the next sixty-odd years” (“Conversation” 6-7). Each *Whole Family* writer was thoroughly engaged in the business of writing and keenly aware of their audience’s tastes and expectations. Because from its very inception *The Whole Family* invited differing perspectives on the most heated social issues of the day--gender and family roles, women’s education--and because it brought into question what a novel should look like and what it should do, more than any other composite work, it provides a vivid

depiction of the usually hidden negotiations and competition between writers and editors that goes on behind the scenes in any literary production.

From its very start, *The Whole Family* had two very different editor figures in William Dean Howells and Elizabeth Jordan. As Bendixen explains, although Jordan served as primary editor, Howells served as an advisor throughout and developed the initial plans (xiv). Like Whittier for Larcom, Child for Jacobs, and Mann for Winnemucca, Howells gave the project immediate credibility. By 1906, when initial planning for the novel began, his reputation was well-established, as were his views on what a novel should do. His 1899 lecture, “Novel-Writing and Novel-Reading: An Impersonal Explanation,” lays out quite clearly his vision of the realistic novel. Above all, it should tell the truth: “The truth which I mean, the truth which is the only beauty, is truth to the human experience, and human experience is so manifold and so recondite, that no scheme can be too remote, too airy for the test” (9). By truth, Howells seems to mean a realistic portrayal of the lives of ordinary people. Rejecting what he saw as the romantic tradition that preceded realism, he argues for a new kind of moralism in fiction: “[The novel] shall do no good directly. It shall not be the bread, but the grain of wheat which must sprout and grow in the reader’s soul and be harvested in his experience, and in the mills of the gods ground slowly perhaps many years before it shall duly nourish him” (14). Later he adds, “Let us know with its help what we are, and where we are. Let all the hidden things be brought into the sun, and let every day be the day of judgment. If the sermon cannot any longer serve this end, let the novel do it” (20). Thus for Howells,

the novel, which can and should be about everyday people and events, serves as a potentially powerful tool for social commentary and change.

Howells brings this vision of the novel as a truthful account of real people to his conception of *The Whole Family* as he imagines a middle-class family dealing with the repercussions of the young daughter's engagement. His initial letters to Jordan regarding the plan for the book show his orderly vision: twelve writers, each taking on the role of a family member, responding to "some such moment of vital agitation" (Howells, "Letters" 180). His choice of subject matter, family and marriage, fits his conception of the proper subject for fiction. As he explains to Jordan, "What I wish to imply is that an engagement or a marriage is much more a family affair, and much less personal affair than Americans usually suppose . . . . A marriage cannot possibly concern the married pair alone; but it is in the notion that it can that most marriages are made. It is also in this notion that most of them are unmade" (180). He sees, therefore, a practical and important purpose in the subject matter beyond the simple potential for drama. Marriage, home, family--these are the real business of the novel, what writers ought to be exploring if they want their works to matter.

Significantly, Howells offers to take on the role of the father himself ("Letters" 179), although he wrote as if Jordan had final say. This same vacillation between asserting and deferring control continues in the correspondence as he explains that he wants the project to be taken seriously, but then apologizes for interfering too much: "There could be fun enough, but each should try seriously to put himself or herself really into the personage's place. I think that the more seriously the business was treated, the

better . . . Excuse the meddling” (180). Similarly, after laying out his scheme for the characters, including the order in which they should appear, he adds:

If you care to submit it as a general plan to the other contributors, each ought to be told that it is not expected that he or she shall conform rigidly or at all to my conceptions of the several characters. If these should fall in with the fancies of the other writers, all well and good, but if they like to portray the characters differently, I will conform my ideas to theirs. (Howells, “Life” 223)

Like so many instances of Whittier advising Larcom, Howells seems reluctant to assert control over the work, although he cannot resist giving advice and direction. Apparently aware of how off-course matters might get, and openly acknowledging that “possibly one hand could do it better than sundry,” he tells Jordan that if she finds the scheme “does not commend itself to the more judicious and able among the writers to whom you propose it, you had better drop it” (“Letters” 180, “Life” 224). Here he seems quite willing to defer to Jordan’s judgment.

Jordan, after all, had proven herself to be an able editor. Bendixen explains that her editorship at *Harper’s Bazar* (1900-1913) “was marked by a number of clever schemes involving some of the finest writers in America” (326), including a series of articles by authors including Howells and *Whole Family* contributors Elizabeth Stuart Phelps and Henry van Dyke on life after death.<sup>6</sup> In her autobiography, *Three Rousing Cheers*, Jordan emerges as a unique voice in the literary world. Early on she provides a resume of sorts, impressing readers with her wide range of experiences:

I have been pianiste, reporter, newspaper editor, magazine editor, public speaker, playwright, dramatic critic, and novelist, which helps to explain why I have never done any one thing superlatively well. I even took a hand in the moving-picture game. But these different activities have given me an interesting life and a lot of these 'vital human experiences' clubwomen love to discuss. (11)

Thus, with a touch of humor, she paints herself as a person with authority. She also cites her father's advice, which she says has guided her whole life and made her independent: "Don't lean on *any one*. Stand on your own feet" (28). As she relates her early days in the newspaper office at the *New York World*, she emphasizes her ability to transcend traditional gender boundaries, as she enters some of the roughest places in the city: "I became a daily frequenter of the Tombs, of Bellevue Hospital and Charity Hospital on Blackwells Island, of the Police Courts and the city prisons" (49).<sup>7</sup> Similarly, she relates her initiation into the "men's club" at the paper, telling of a male co-worker's plea: "For God's sake and the love of Mike, drop the damned formality and the convent polish and be a regular fellow like the rest of them" (39). Like Larcom and Jacobs, Jordan uses her personal experience to build her authority with readers--the work she has done and the stories she tells all add to her credibility as an editor figure. She is feminine yet independent--a new model of modern womanhood.

Jordan's versatility of experience and her self-assuredness make her the ideal person to bring together and supervise the diverse collection of *Whole Family* writers. As Howard explains, she "epitomizes the early twentieth-century blending of old and new, without visible strain combining loyalty to tradition and enthusiasm for innovation" (97). For instance, to Jordan, Howells is a venerable figure who had a "fatherly feeling for the

*Bazar*,” and whose ideas she respects (Jordan 258). At the same time, though, she sees him as a symbol of the past. She tells of his visit to the *Bazar*’s office, writing that he “mentioned that in English offices tea was served every afternoon between four and five. On that hint we also served tea, and I adapted myself to another sharp contrast between the present and the past” (Jordan 179). Similarly, she dealt with Henry James, already a literary giant of sorts by the time they worked together, in frank, practical terms, much to the chagrin of later James scholars who resent her casual editing of his works and apparent failure to recognize his genius. In their introduction to James’s letters to Harper’s, Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers explain, “She did not give the impression of ever having been aware that she was in relation with a literary master; even at a quarter century’s remove, she seemed to hold a blue-pencil over Henry James” (James 29).<sup>8</sup> It is this Elizabeth Jordan, confident, powerful, and diplomatic, who teams up with Howells to put together *The Whole Family*, the portrait of an American family at the turn of the century.

Beyond Howells and Jordan, though, one additional presence served as an “editor” of sorts before *The Whole Family* even got started: specifically *Harper’s Bazar*, but to a larger degree, the entire Harper and Brothers publishing company. As Bendixen points out, from the beginning, *The Whole Family* was “designed to be a showplace for the Harper’s family of authors” (xiii)--a sort of all-star extravaganza guaranteed to attract readers loyal to both Harper’s and its writers.<sup>9</sup> In fact, in this novel, unlike any works discussed in previous chapters, the publisher itself emerges as a figure of almost as much importance as the writers and editors. Howard explains that Harper’s was both literally

and figuratively a family business, its owners related by blood, its writers united under the seal of the company, and its products pitched to family circles all over the country (20). Thus, simply because it bore the Harper's seal, *The Whole Family* was from its inception part of a "powerful, extended cultural apparatus" (Howard 58)--already endlessly caught up in other Harper's efforts and endeavors, many of which contradicted and even competed with each other.

Indeed, *Harper's Bazar*, the periodical in which *The Whole Family* appeared in installments from December 1907 to November 1908, carried its own distinct reputation in the Harper's family. As critics such as John Crowley and Monika Elbert have noted, the *Bazar*, unlike the other Harper's magazines, was aimed most specifically at women readers (Crowley 108, Elbert 3). A glance through the issues in which *The Whole Family* appeared shows how fully the magazine immersed itself in women's concerns. In addition to covering the latest fashions, the magazine frequently printed articles on marriage, child-rearing, and social concerns (women's education, women's professions). The December 1907 issue, for instance, offers "Joe's Side of It: An Answer to Confessions of a Young Wife," while the January 1908 issue initiates a symposium that will last for several months on "The Girl Who Comes to the City." Other article titles that appear with installments of *The Whole Family* include "Madam Curie and her Work" (March 1908), "Mind Cure for Women's Ills" (March 1908), "Higher Education for Women," written by the president of Harvard (June 1908), and "When the College Girl Comes Home" (August 1908). Thus Howells's choice for *The Whole Family's* plot--a family's response to the college-educated daughter's engagement--seems entirely

appropriate for the *Bazar's* audience. What might also be clear, though, is how tricky such a subject could be for the *Bazar*, its writers, and its audience, especially as society debated the future of the modern family in America. How, in a magazine that could include articles on everything from baby clothes to higher education for women, could twelve writers, all caught up in competing ideas, agree on a single version of the American family?

*The Whole Family* writers, after all, were thoroughly engaged in the business and culture of Harper's. One final significant fact emerges from reading through these issues of the *Bazar*--the visibility of not only the topics *The Whole Family* would touch on, but the very real presence of the authors themselves. Jordan, of course, appears monthly in her "With the Editor" columns. Additionally, over the twelve months during which the novel appeared, installments of two separate novels by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps also ran in the magazine (*Walled In* and *The World Invisible*), as did humorous poetry by John Kendrick Bangs and selections from Mary Heaton Vorse's *Some Experiences of a Mother*. Henry James, too, contributed a series of articles on "The Speech of American Women" (November 1906 to February 1907) and "The Manners of American Women" (April to June 1907). What becomes clear, then, is each writer's engagement with the business of Harper's and their knowledge of its readers--their tastes and expectations. Just as Larcom, Jacobs, and Winnemucca worked with their editors to meet audience expectation, so too are these writers aware of their place in the literary world, especially at Harper's. They know their audiences' key debates and concerns and know how to address them in their writing.

Indeed, as member of the Harper's family of writers, the contributors to *The Whole Family* show their thorough involvement in the business of writing and the commercialization of authorship. Many contributors even wrote about their commercial successes, illustrating their keen awareness of the economic aspect of authorship, and a sometimes marked discomfort at earning money for their work. In 1921's *My Maiden Effort: Being the Personal Confessions of Well-Known American Authors as to Their Literary Beginnings*, several *Whole Family* authors contributed tales of their early publishing feats. Mary Stewart Cutting tells of her joy after receiving a three dollar check from *Lippincott's Magazine*: "I can't begin to tell you how wonderful and unbelievable and delicious this seemed to me . . . I threw myself down on my bed and laughed and laughed and laughed, uncontrollably--and read the letter and the check over and over again with increasing joy" (44-5). Years later, a commercial success with her stories of married life, Cutting reveals an ever-present anxiety about each new work: "But I am free to confess that some measure of success scares me a little. Can I do as well on this story as they seem to think I did in the one before?" (46). Elizabeth Jordan, Mary Wilkins Freeman, and Edith Wyatt also submit their stories to the collection, impressing on readers the impact of financial gain through writing and the anxiety that accompanies such rewards. Freeman, for instance, comments on a fifty dollar check she received that "still looms as larger than all the billions of debt consequent upon the World War" and has "the market value of the solar system" to her (266).

Freeman's 1913 essay, "The Girl Who Wants to Write: Things to Do and Avoid," published in *Harper's Bazar*, deals with the commercial side of writing with marked

ambivalence. Discussing the theory that some people “must write” because of some divine sort of inspiration, she explains, “In reality, a man may write something which will live for the sake of something rather ignoble, and a woman may write something for money for which to buy a French hat. I personally do not believe it matters why he must, as long as it is a must” (272). Demystifying the writing process, she plainly acknowledges that some people write (and do so quite well) for material gain. At the same time, she tells the young female writer that she “must not write to please an editor or a public incapable of being pleased with the best, because in that very long run of the world she will by doing so defeat her own ends. She will lead by not pleasing, although she be hailed with acclamation at first” (272). Instead, “you must be your own mentor,” she explains, and stand by your work with confidence after you have looked at it “unsparingly” (272). Like Howells, Freeman argues that the work’s integrity matters most--not what others will think about it.

Freeman’s letters also indicate her occasional discomfort at writing just for money or just to please readers. In 1886, for instance, she writes to Mary Louise Booth, at that time the editor of the *Bazar*, explaining that she has just finished a piece for *The Congregationalist*. She confesses, “I wouldn’t write these if I did not like the money. However it only takes a very little while. But it does not seem to me just right, to write things of that sort on purpose to get money, and please an editor” (“Infant” 66). Nevertheless, as critics such as Charles Johanningsmeier have demonstrated, Freeman was a shrewd businesswoman, “not at all shy” about forwarding her “interests in the world of print” (58). Several letters make this point clear. In an 1891 note to the editor

of *Wide Awake*, she negotiates for more pay, explaining, “I don’t think I ought to write these stories under \$30, \$15 per thousand. I get \$20 per thousand from ‘The Youth’s Companion’, for a similar length, and these very short stories are in reality much more trouble to write than the longer ones. What do you think of that price?” (132). Similarly, in a later letter to Jordan, she pushed for more money for a Christmas story, asking, “Can you pay me \$300, instead of the \$200 as usual? It is just as easy for me to write a \$300 as a \$200 story, and I have just refused to write a Christmas story which would have brought me as much or more” (295). Both an idealist and a realist, then, Freeman realizes the commercial aspects of her work even as she expresses some ambivalence over them.

Similarly, Henry van Dyke, at the time a well-respected figure in literature, religion, and politics, wrote with a degree of unease about the increasing commercialization of writing, worrying that literature done for financial gain will ignore its more noble duties, specifically, its concern with where the country should be heading at such a time of change and uncertainty. In his introduction to *Comments on the Reading of Books* (another composite work of sorts--different writers discuss the practice of reading), van Dyke acknowledges the transaction between writers and their audiences: “When he puts these rewards, these verses, these inventions into a book . . . and sends it out into the world, his mind’s eye is fixed on readers, real or imaginary. He is working for them; and from them he gets his pay,--money, fame, influence,--imaginary or real” (“Introduction” 10). In a later essay, he expresses some anxiety over writers who make a comfortable living from their work. “Nowadays,” he writes, “people who certainly do

not write better than Lowell and Hawthorne, find life very much easier . . . they live in a comfortable house--some of them have two--with plenty of books and pictures” (129). He worries about writers trying too hard to please their audiences, often at the expense of their art: “. . . a commercial view of authorship, to write always with an eye on the market to turn out copious or indifferent stuff because there is a ready sale for it, to be guided in production by the fashion of the day rather than by the impulse of the mind,--that is the sure way to lose the power of doing good work” (136-7). Echoing Howells’s ideas, he argues that literature exists not for commercial purposes, but to improve the world in some way: “The people do not exist for the sake of literature, to give the author fame, the publisher wealth, and books a market. On the contrary, literature should exist for the sake of the people: to refresh the weary, to console the sad; to hearten up the downcast, to increase man’s interest in the world, his joy of living, and his sympathy with all sorts and conditions of man” (141). Clearly uncomfortable with the increasing commercialization of literature, van Dyke tries to imagine alternative models, but can only fall back on abstract notions.

*The Whole Family* was, for all intents and purposes, a commercial enterprise, designed to attract the largest possible number of readers and made no secret of its appeal as a novelty. Given their various points of view, experiences, interests and anxieties, that so varied a cast of players--writers, publishers, and editors--went into such a project at all seems rather remarkable. Indeed, in *The Whole Family*, all of these competing interests--those of Howells, Jordan, and the *Bazar*, and those of the ten other writers

concerned with their reputation and the integrity of their art, came together in what was perhaps bound to be a contentious effort.

*“A bomb-shell on the hearthstone”: Mary Wilkins Freeman as Editor*

Although he certainly did not realize it, Howells laid the ground work for narrative disruption and disagreement in his opening chapter, “The Father.” The issues he chooses to focus on, specifically marriage and gender roles (including the question of coeducation), reveal an anxiety over the future of the family itself, as June Howard has persuasively demonstrated. In her analysis of Howells’s chapter, she argues that “the father’s perspective is deeply informed by early twentieth-century alarm over the family, mingling perceived problems and proposed solutions in its apparently celebratory portrait of middle-class domestic life” (106-7). This anxiety, first invoked by Howells’s chapter, will reemerge after Freeman writes “The Old-Maid Aunt” and remain at the forefront of *The Whole Family* as each successive author works to advance his or her own vision for the novel, taking on the roles of both writer and editor.

Howells’s Cyrus Talbert, owner of a silverplate factory and patriarch of a large family, strikes readers as another Silas Lapham of sorts--hardworking, earnest, with a curious mix of progressive and old-fashioned ideas. Although we should be careful not to conflate Howells with the father (after all, his is the only chapter narrated not by the family member himself, but by a neighbor, the journalist Ned Temple), Cyrus does voice many of the same ideas Howells expresses in his letters to Jordan proposing the project. Additionally, his description of Talbert as a “good despot” might also remind readers of

his letters, in which he seems to waver between asserting control and leaving writers to their own devices (“Whole” 12). Talbert explains to Temple that the family anticipated Peggy might return from college engaged, yet refuses to admit it was a mistake to allow her to go: ““We might have known when we let her go to a co-educational college that we were risking losing her; but we lost our other daughter that way, and *she* never went to *any* kind of college”” (6). He continues to defend his decision, adding, ““I didn’t see how, if a girl was going to get married, she could have a better basis than knowing the fellow through three or four years’ hard work together . . . When you think of the sort of hit-or-miss affairs most marriages are that young people make after a few parties and picnics, coeducation as a preliminary to domestic education doesn’t seem a bad notion”” (6).

Talbert’s ideas here seem relatively progressive, yet also hint at the anxiety over giving girls too much freedom--anxieties shared by many of his readers (Howard 117). Later writers found additional openings for criticism of Howells’s chapter in his early depiction of Mrs. Talbert, who appears as an idealized (and out-dated) nineteenth-century wife. Temple explains, “every word she said was full of sense, with a little gust of humor in the sense which was perfectly charming. Absolutely unworldly as she was, she had very good manners . . . the ideal mother of a family, and just what the wife of a man such as Cyrus Talbert ought to be” (18). Most contentious, of course, are those few lines he dedicates to the old maid aunt: “She had long been a lady of that age when ladies begin to be spoken of as maiden . . . Miss Talbert was not without the disappointment which endears maiden ladies to the imagination, but the disappointment was of a date so

remote that it was only a matter of pathetic hearsay, now” (19). Similarly, Talbert himself adds, ““It don’t so much matter how an old maid is brought up, but you can’t have her destiny in view”” (23). As Howard explains, Howells’s words here and throughout the chapter add up to “something very different from advocating choice or self-development for women” (166). For Talbert, it seems that women need to be better educated not to develop as intellectuals or independent adults, but to find better husbands and create better families--hardly a progressive ideal.

It fell to Mary Wilkins Freeman, who, as Bendixen explains, was the only author available immediately, to begin work on the next chapter, to follow “The Father,” and to pick up where Howells left off, and it was Freeman who pounced on the openings Howells left her. Certainly, Freeman must have thought twice before tearing up Howells’s vision for the novel and replacing it with her own. Howells, after all, was an early public fan of Freeman’s stories. In an 1887 “Editor’s Study” column, he praises her work’s “genuine pathos, and just and true respect for the virtues of the life with which it deals” (639). He also appreciates and defends the relatively small scope of her regionalist work, writing, “Breadth is in the treatment of material, not in the amount of it. The great picture is from the great painter, not from the extensive canvas” (639). Furthermore, as her letters to Hamlin Garland indicate, Freeman placed herself firmly in the school of realism alongside Howells.<sup>10</sup> Yet, perhaps because of this devotion to a realistic representation of the character she had been assigned, Freeman simply could not abide Howells’s model of the aunt, whom she named Elizabeth or Lily. Just as Harriet Jacobs steps in to redefine Child’s tragic mulatta and Lucy Larcom corrects Whittier’s attitudes

about labor, so too does Freeman reimagine the maiden aunt as a vibrant, powerful, outspoken, and sexual woman. Simply put, Freeman takes over the novel, stepping into the editor role and advancing a very different plot about a suddenly very different family. Freeman sets the standard the other writers will follow; both editors and writer, in a true bidirectionality of influence, her presence is both creative and destructive, tearing down Howells's version of the Talbert family and replacing it with her own.

Freeman's letters to Jordan, reprinted in *Three Rousing Cheers*, provide insight into her motivations for editing Howells and recreating the maiden aunt. First she explains the need to get the plot moving, and argues that she saw no way to do so without redefining Aunt Elizabeth. "I began to realize," she writes:

that I must start some action or plot, or rather indicate a plot, and at the same time not diverge from Mr. Howells's character description. It was quite a task. . . To tell the truth such an innovation in the shape of a maiden aunt rather frightened me, but the old conception of her was so hackneyed . . . I do think the plot ought to be started--and I could see no other way. (Jordan 265)

Freeman's argument here--that she could not write a text with such a model of the maiden aunt--speaks to her earlier concerns about the credibility of her work. To have carried on with Howells's conception just to keep him and her readers satisfied would have damaged her integrity as an author. She feels compelled to edit the aunt or abandon the project. After all, she adds in a later note, Howells's conception was hopelessly outdated:

You and I know that in these days of voluntary celibacy on the part of women an old maid only fifteen years older than a young girl is a sheer impossibility, if she is an educated woman with a far amount of brains. Moreover, a young man is really more apt to fall in love with her . . . At this moment I can think of a score of women who fifty years ago would have carried out Mr. Howells's idea of the old maid aunt. To-day they look as pretty and as up-to-date as their young nieces--and no pretence about it, either. They really *are*. Their single state is deliberate choice on their part, and men are at their feet. Single women have caught up with, and passed, old bachelors in the last half of this century. (266)

If Howells wanted realism, Freeman seems to argue, in her portrayal of the aunt, she was giving him just that--a more accurate and truthful representation of the single woman. Like Jacobs stepping in to show Child what a mixed blood woman was really like or like Larcom writing to Whittier about labor, Freeman, drawing from her own personal experience (and invoking Jordan's), corrects Howells and argues for her own, more accurate representation.

In fact, in creating her version of the up-to-date maiden aunt, Freeman seized upon another aspect of the changing family culture that so concerned Howells and many *Bazar* readers: the evolution of the single woman in American society. In their impressively researched essay, "Blessed or Not?: The New Spinster in England and the United States in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," Ruth Freeman and Patricia Klaus document a societal shift in perceptions of the unmarried woman from 1870-1920. This change, which "coincided with a growing criticism of married life," saw the "new spinster" emerge as a woman who was "no longer reclusive, useless, and embittered," but instead "led an outgoing, productive life" (396). Her implicit rejection of marriage and motherhood marked the new spinster as a potentially transgressive

figure, a threat to men and the family. Given the cultural fascination with this new woman, not surprisingly, periodicals like *Harper's Bazar* featured almost regular articles and stories on the new spinster. Most notable is Anne O'Hagan's 1907 (roughly the same period as *The Whole Family*) seven-part series which examined the spinster from multiple perspectives, including a dialogue with her married sister and a critique of her appearance in popular literature.<sup>11</sup> As the nation entered the twentieth century, readers and writers remained fascinated by the single woman's place in society--her proper role, duty, and function. Freeman's engagement in this debate shows her awareness of both its complexity and commercial appeal.

From the first lines of her chapter, Freeman's Aunt Elizabeth reveals herself to be just such a reinvention of the maiden aunt--the sort of new spinster Ruth Freeman and Klaus write about--bold, outgoing, and even dangerous. She begins by rejecting the label of old-maid aunt altogether, arguing it is imposed on her only by her family and only in Eastridge, the fictional New York town where the Talberts live: "Here I am the old-maid aunt . . . But I think I am honest--I really mean to be, and I think I am--when I say that outside Eastridge the role of an old-maid aunt is the very last one which I can take to any advantage. Here I am estimated according to what people think I am, rather than what I actually am" ("Whole" 30, 31). In refusing to define herself through her marital status, "Lily" (the name she uses for herself, and what others call her outside of Eastridge) knows she is unusual:

I know it is the popular opinion that old maids are exceedingly prone to deceive themselves concerning the endurance of their youth and charms, and the views of

other people with regard to them. But I am willing, even anxious to be quite frank with myself. Since--well, never mind since what time--I have not cared an iota whether I was considered an old maid or not" (30).

Freeman's aunt encourages readers to rethink the roles they assign to women based simply on age or marital status. Clearly, in Lily's mind, Cyrus and his family (like Howells) are living with old-fashioned notions: "They do not know that today an old-maid aunt is as much of an anomaly as a spinning-wheel, that she has ceased to exist, that she is prehistoric" (33). Again, if Howells (and his readers) wanted an accurate modern depiction of the single woman, it is Freeman, she argues, who is giving it to them. In *In a Closet Hidden: The Life and Work of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman*, Leah Blatt Glasser recognizes the extent of Freeman's innovation, arguing that she thus "creates a spinster whose life is enviable rather than pitiful and who mocks the dull stability of her brother's world" (89). In the course of a few pages, Freeman continues to reinvent not only the aunt, but also the novel itself, revealing that Lily remains vibrant and attractive enough to attract Harry Goward, Peggy's fiance, who might very well still be in love with Lily.

Many other critics have written extensively on Freeman's spinster figures, including, most famously, her Louisa Ellis in "A New England Nun" (1891). Marjorie Pryse, for instance, argues that Freeman saw Louisa as a positive example and potential role model for readers who "discovers that within the world Louisa inhabits, she becomes heroic, active, wise, ambitious, and even transcendent, hardly the woman Freeman's critics and biographers have depicted. In choosing solitude, Louisa creates an alternative pattern of living for a woman who possesses, like her, 'the enthusiasm of an

artist” (139-140). Indeed, Freeman’s marginalized yet powerful women continue to attract critical attention. Melissa McFarland Pennell writes of the power of the will in Freeman’s female characters: “Those women in her fiction who exert their wills are often placed at the margins of communities, but this marginality gives them a degree of freedom to reject social codes and expectations. Through this process of revaluation and rejection, these characters come to new definitions of self, definitions with which they can live” (208). In these terms, then, Lily Talbert fits in quite well with Freeman’s other fictional creations. Yet, as Glasser illustrates, there is something more exceptional about Lily, whose “voice combines the full range of emotions Freeman associated with the experience of spinsterhood” and whose voice “speaks from the start with the self-awareness and authority that few of Freeman’s other spinsters demonstrated” (89). Neither a reluctant nor an apologetic rebel, Lily seems to take real pleasure in her defiance of stereotypes, as when, for instance, she parades downstairs in her pink gown, wondering “How they [the rest of the family] will stare when I go down!” (“Whole” 45).

Lily’s attraction to her own appearance and her obvious pleasure in having people look at her demonstrates another key aspect of Freeman’s revision of the maiden aunt: she is a fully sexualized person. Glasser writes that many of Freeman’s portrayals of spinsters suggest “a powerful sexuality exists beneath the surface mask of delicate gentility, of lilacs and gardens and orderly bureau drawers” (90). In contrast, “Lily releases her sexuality fully, enjoying her rebellion against social expectations and her pleasure in self-love” (90). Indeed, Elizabeth’s chapter explains that not only had she attracted young Goward, but that Ned Temple, Howells’s narrator in Chapter One, once

fell “madly in love with me, and threatened to shoot himself if I would not marry him” (34). Thus, the cool and rational newspaperman Howells created is here turned into a passionate and irrational creature around Lily. Moreover, Lily continually sets herself up in opposition to Peggy, arguing that she is in many ways just as (if not more than) desirable as her niece whom, she points out, is only fifteen years younger. Gazing at herself in the mirror, she makes this point even clearer: “I wonder what Ned himself will think. I wonder if he will see that my hair is as red-gold as Peggy’s, that I am quite as slim, that there is not a line on my face, that I still keep my girl color with no aid, that I wear frills of the latest fashion, and look no older than when he first saw me” (33). Furthermore, Peggy lacks Elizabeth’s intelligence and culture. She is not, in her aunt’s eye, “exactly remarkable” for her brain, “but she is charmingly pretty, and has a wonderful knack at putting on clothes, which might be esteemed a purely feminine brain, in her fingers” (32). The novel’s married women do not fare much better in Lily’s eyes. She describes Ada, her sister-in-law, darning socks “in very much the same way that a cow chews her cud” (39) and adds that she was not Cyrus’s first or most passionate love (40-41). Thus, in Freeman’s chapter, Lily--intelligent, independent, beautiful and sensual--emerges as the strongest and most enviable woman. Moreover, her presence became the focal point of the novel, as Freeman’s “editing” and rewriting of Howells’s chapter moves a figure from the margins to the center of the story.

Importantly, though, Freeman allows a hint of ambiguity around Lily Talbert, implying that she is not entirely content with her life. Lily confesses to having suffered the early disappointment in love that Temple mentions in the first chapter (a typical

stereotype applied to the maiden aunt): “But all the time I know that it does not matter, that nothing has really mattered since I was about Peggy’s age and Lyman Wilde quarreled with me over nothing and vanished into thin air” (47). On the surface, she is happy, yet admits some lingering degree of discontent: “I have friends. I have everything except--well, except everything. That I must do without. But I will do without it gracefully, with never a whimper, or I don’t know myself” (47). Glasser explains that “this expression of loss suggests that Freeman’s spinster, even at her most rebellious, had missed the imagined ‘everything’ that marriage would have offered” (91). This revelation makes her figure more complex: she is not simply opposed to romantic love or a desperately lonely woman.

Despite Elizabeth’s ambivalence, though, Freeman’s chapter is noteworthy not just for its re-imagining of the unmarried woman, but also for its editing of Howells’s original plan and creation of an entirely different story. Kilcup calls its “nothing less than a wake-up call and a battle cry,” problematizing the “history of men’s representation of women” by moving a marginalized character to the center and “exposing the ways in which gender authorized a buried story.” In short, she notes, “Freeman exposed the political foundations of ostensibly aesthetic matters” (“Conversation” 9). In shaking things up so much--in Jordan’s words “throwing a bomb-shell on the literary hearthstone” (264)--Freeman must have known that she was taking a risk. She also must have anticipated a heated response to her words. Thus Lily’s closing line--“I cannot tell how it will end” (59)--takes on new meaning. Freeman had stepped in as editor to Howells,

substituting an alternative model in place of his. It then falls to the other writers to step to edit Freeman and keep the story moving. At this point, she can only sit back and watch.

*“A wave disturbs the whole surface”*: *Editing Aunt Elizabeth and Controlling the Family*

Mary Heaton Vorse’s grandmother, whose chapter immediately followed Freeman’s, comments on the Talbert family’s crisis, argues that what affects one family member affects every other member. “No one suffers alone in a family like ours,” she writes, “An event like this is like a wave that disturbs the whole surface of the water. Every one of us feels anything that happens, each in his separate way” (77). We can, of course, also read these words as a comment on *The Whole Family* itself--a reminder that what one writer does ripples outward and forces the hands of all the other writers. Freeman’s chapter, a brick hurled into the pond, forces *The Whole Family* writers to see their unavoidable interconnectedness as she forces them to address Lily’s disruptive presence. As disruptive as her presence is for the other writers, though, it is also empowering. Like Freeman, they too can be both writers and editors, changing the story as they see fit and advancing their own views for the future of *The Whole Family* and the American family in general.

Significantly, had Howells alone been serving as editor of the novel, Freeman’s chapter might have meant the end of *The Whole Family*. As Jordan recalls, upon reading it, the normally “gentle and lovable” Howells sent her a letter that “almost scorched the paper it was written on” (Jordan 264). “He told me,” she writes, “what he thought of Miss Wilkins’s chapter, and he implored me not to publish it. He ends with the prayer,

‘Don’t, *don’t* let her ruin our beautiful story!’” (264).<sup>12</sup> Howells’s response is telling, revealing an investment in his own conception of the novel that obviously went beyond the simple scheme and chapter structure he laid out. Freeman’s chapter, which upset the very foundations of Howells’s plan, changed all of that, and his inclination is to drop the novel altogether.

Here then, Jordan’s role as editor becomes paramount, for her influence and power ensure that Freeman’s chapter appears and that the project continues. For reasons both professional and personal, Jordan is much more accommodating to Freeman’s work. Her explanation of her reaction to the controversial chapter deftly sways between asserting and deferring power. Howells’s letter placed her in a dilemma. At the same time, she notes, “I had to take full responsibility for all *Bazar* matters” and recalls her employer’s instructions to “Run it to suit yourself. You won’t be interfered with” (Jordan 264). Furthermore, she reasons, “I had to remember that Miss Wilkins, like Mr. Howells, was one of Harper’s most valued and successful authors. To reject her chapter was impossible” (264). Jordan’s passive language here is telling: control and power are forced on her. On a practical level, she argues that she and the other family members felt some sort of plot must be started, and Freeman’s chapter certainly accomplished that. Significantly, though, Jordan provides another reason for her sympathy towards Freeman’s aunt: “I also agreed that an up-to-date woman of thirty-four is still in the ring. (I myself was in my thirties and still going strong)” (267). Jordan finds value in Freeman’s new spinster, especially since she sees herself in Aunt Elizabeth.

Many of the other writers, though, did not know what to do with Freeman's aunt as her image--her unavoidable presence--looms over the rest of *The Whole Family*. Van Dyke's letter to Jordan indicates just how disruptive Lily was:

“Heavens! What a catastrophe! Who would have thought that the old maiden aunt would go mad in the second chapter? Poor lady. Red hair and a pink hat and boys in beau knots all over the costume. What *will* Mr. Howells say? For my part I think it distinctly crewel work to put a respectable spinster into such a hattitude before the world.” (267)

Equally important, because Jordan sent the other writers copies of the proofs she received (a practice Bendixen notes she soon regretted), the other family members felt compelled to “offer their own views, comments, and criticisms” (xxv). In many ways following Freeman's example even as they tried to contain her creation, the authors continued to edit and revise each other, hoping with each chapter that their successors would follow their leads and vision for the novel. Dale Bauer has argued that subsequent chapters illustrate the whole family “enlisted to protect” the patriarchal domestic ideology “against the danger Aunt Elizabeth represents” (111). As we shall see, this is certainly true with many of the writers. However, others treat Elizabeth with more ambivalence and even some admiration. Moreover, the authors continue to respond not only to Freeman, but also to Howells. As Howard explains, “the other contributors take the task of following the Dean of American letters very seriously. They base their characters directly on the sketches Howells provides in the first chapter, incorporating virtually every detail” (129).

Even more so, they continually respond to and anticipate each other in a truly fluid model of editorship.

While each author must deal with what Freeman's aunt has started (the uncertainty about Goward and Peggy's engagement), some spend less time on Elizabeth herself. Vorse's "grandmother," for instance, calls Elizabeth "a case of arrested development" and criticizes her for being the "kind of woman who is a changed being at the approach of a man," even Cyrus or Billy, the school-boy ("Whole" 68, 69). She explains her need to defend Ada from Elizabeth, but does not say or do much more. Similarly, Lorraine, Cutting's "daughter-in-law," describes Elizabeth almost sympathetically, calling her a "howling swell," who "only just endures it here," yet undercuts this by implying a certain superficiality about her: "She thinks she's fond of Art, but she really doesn't know the first thing about it--she doesn't like anything that isn't expensive and elegant and *a la mode*" (93). Billy, Andrews' "school-boy," only mentions Elizabeth as a possible (and superior) romantic rival to his sister, whom he attempts to comfort by explaining, "'He [Goward] probably likes Aunt Elizabeth better than you, don't you see? I think she's prettier, myself. And, of course, she's a lot cleverer. She tells funny stories and makes people laugh; you never do that--You're a good sort, but quiet and not much fun, don't you see?'" (250). Beyond that, though, he has little to say about his aunt. For these characters, Elizabeth is a real presence in the text, but not the chief focus of their concerns. This is not to say that the authors of these chapters are not influenced by Freeman or Elizabeth. Ignoring her is, of course, a strategy of containment--a way of silencing her disruption. For these authors, other

matters are more important, and Elizabeth must be sent back to the margins for their own visions to emerge.

Alice, Jordan's "school-girl," comes closest to expressing a fully positive view of Elizabeth. Only Elizabeth and Billy understand her, she notes ("Whole" 101). Indeed, Alice, more than any other character, realizes there is something very appealing about her unusual aunt:

Aunt Elizabeth is different from the others, and she and I have inspiring conversations sometimes--serious ones, you know, about life and responsibility and careers; and then, at other times, just when I'm revealing my young heart to her the way girls do in books, she gets absent-minded or laughs at me, or stares and says, 'You extraordinary infant,' and changes the subject. (102-3)

As the family member perhaps most at risk from Elizabeth's nonconformity (the impressionable young girl), Alice's admiration for her aunt is notable. Elizabeth is clearly a role model of sorts for her niece, and as such, her disruptive presence threatens to extend to the next generation. As Jordan allows her character to admire her aunt, she voices her own admiration for Freeman's innovation. Jordan, in this case, the formal editor of the novel as a whole, has had her character "edited" by Freeman's influence. Significantly, Jordan continues to emphasize how alike Peggy and Elizabeth are. In her chapter, an envelope from Goward with a letter for one of the two ladies arrives smudged so, "All I could read was a capital 'M' and a small 's' at the beginning and an 'ert' at the end; the name between was hidden" (116). Jordan's point is subtle but powerful: all that separates Peggy and Elizabeth are a few letters.

The other authors are clearly less sympathetic. John Kendrick Bangs's "son-in-law," Tom Price, responds to Elizabeth with a kind of subdued panic at her blatant sexuality. To Tom, Elizabeth is attractive but dangerous: "She has a bright way of saying things, and has an unhappy knack for making herself appear ten or fifteen years younger than she is if she needs to. She is chameleonic as to age, and takes on always something of the years of the particular man she is talking to" (138). He argues that she has played with Goward's emotions, confusing the boy with a mixture of maternal and erotic affection. Here he remembers his own experience with a Miss Mehitable Flanders, who "invited confidence and managed in many ways to make a strong appeal to youthful affections, but I don't think she was always careful to draw the line between maternal love and the other which is neither maternal, fraternal, paternal, nor even filial" (133). Elizabeth, he adds, has even flirted with him (137). He explains he gave her a friendly kiss at his wedding and called her "Aunty," and that "she pouted and said she didn't like the title 'a little bit'" (138). In Bangs's chapter, then, Elizabeth becomes not just a sexual woman, but an immoral predator--making passes at married men and young vulnerable boys. In his roles as writer and editor, Bangs recreates Elizabeth as a far more dangerous and less appealing character. Price describes a growing "feeling of wrath" toward Elizabeth after he speaks to Goward and jokes about running for Congress if only to sponsor "a Bill for the Protection of Boys, and the Suppression of Old Maids Who Don't Mean Anything By It" (132, 135). His humor, though, cannot mask the fact that for Tom, and perhaps Bangs as well, a woman like Elizabeth represents a threat and disruption to be contained, a theme Henry James will pick up on in the next chapter.

Similarly, for Bangs and the other writers who respond unfavorably to Elizabeth, Freeman herself represents a threat to what a novel and its characters should do. She, as much as her character, needs to be edited and contained by the rest of the “family.”

In his treatment of Charles Edward, “the married son,” and in his correspondence with Jordan, Henry James reveals his concern with the overall structure of the book and his (largely unrealized) desire to have more editorial control over it. From the start, he writes Jordan regularly requesting the proofs of the other chapters as soon as they are written so that he can prepare his own (James 41, 42). Just as with Bangs, Aunt Elizabeth looms over his chapter (and his letters to Jordan). James even sets up a possible solution to the problems represented by “deadly Eliza,” as he calls her, introducing Mrs. Chataway, a rather dubious New York businesswoman to whom he hopes the other characters will send Elizabeth (93). Nevertheless, he regrets not dealing with “the frolic aunt” more directly: “I confess I do myself rather break my heart at not having been able to work in (as C.E.) a direct chance at her” (46).<sup>13</sup> Again, like Bangs, he imagines Elizabeth as obstacles that must be overcome:

But they [the other writers] must get at her, & keep at her (through whatever other spectacles,) as I hope they feel; otherwise I fear she will, as *interest*, shipwreck; at the dock, as it were; for I didn't feel that up to Part VIII she had been sufficiently *launched*. What I had hoped for myself was to give a good blow of wind into her sail; but there was so much else, in the space, 1<sup>st</sup> to do. (49)

For James, until Elizabeth and Freeman are dealt with, the novel simply cannot move on. His Charles Edward puts it more plainly (and with a degree of threatening absent from

the other writers' treatments): "Eliza, meanwhile, is spoiling for a dose--if ever a woman required one" ("Whole" 167). Significantly, the thought of handling Elizabeth allows Charles Edward to imagine himself as a sort of hero for his family. His plan, which includes sending Elizabeth away and taking Peggy to Europe, offers him the chance to earn the respect his family has never given him. "I take command," he writes, "The others are flat on their backs. I save little pathetic Peg, even in spite of herself . . . I save poor Mother--that is, I rid her of the deadly Eliza--forever and a day! Despised, rejected, misunderstood, I nevertheless intervene, in its hour of dire need, as the good genius of the family" (176).<sup>14</sup> Similarly, James clearly felt that he had created a scheme to save *The Whole Family* itself, if only the other members would follow his lead as he takes on the editor's role. After reading subsequent chapters, though, and seeing his suggestions largely ignored, he confesses his deep disappointment to Jordan: "I can't help saying now that I wish I might have been suffered to take upon myself to *save* the stuff--which would have interested & amused me, & which I would have done ingeniously &--well, *cheap!*" (James 52-3).

Indeed, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, the next writer/editor to take up the novel, replaces James's plan with her own, as her "married daughter," Maria, decides what Elizabeth really needs is romantic love in her life. Her aunt, she explains, "has reached the point where she is ready for a new man . . . I have reasoned Aunt Elizabeth out to this conclusion: She always has had, she always must have, she always will have, the admiration of some man or men to engross her attention" (194). Maria's answer is quite different from Charles Edward's and, as Crowley argues, "just as Freeman had foiled

Howells, so Phelps foiled James by dismissing his chapter as ‘long and heavy’ and by pointedly deadending his initiative” (113). Elizabeth, Phelps asserts, is not “a heartless person; not an irresponsible one, only an idle and unhappy one” (“Whole” 195).<sup>15</sup> Phelps, then, substitutes a domestic and romantic solution to the Elizabeth problem, although later writers disregard her plans just as she disregarded James’s.

Alice Brown’s Peggy provides a final degree of closure in her handling of Elizabeth. Drawing upon the suggestions of some of the writers before her, she cuts Goward loose, his character by this point revealed to be rather harmless, but clearly an unsuitable match for Peggy. She also introduces Stillman Dane, a college professor, as a more appropriate match and even takes up some of James’s hints in setting the stage for the eventual trip to Europe and sending Elizabeth off to Mrs. Chataway’s. As a result, Bendixen feels that Brown “deserves most of the credit for finally resolving the plot complications. She recognized that the story was still working out the complexities introduced by Freeman and that the main problem was the old-maid aunt” (xxxiv). Brown’s correspondence with Jordan supports this notion, as she writes of Elizabeth as an “impressionist purple shadow” hanging over the entire novel, and indeed, over all her thoughts: “She, to paraphrase, ‘lies in my bed, walks up and down with me’” (Jordan 275, 277). Nevertheless if Brown does save the novel, she does so at the expense of Freeman and Elizabeth. Deciding that Freeman surely “didn’t mean Aunt Elizabeth to be taken seriously at all, but as a delicate and too-convincing satire on the present woman who ‘getting on in years’” (275), she recreates Elizabeth as a weak, vulnerable, and rather helpless woman. In one scene, she begs Peggy not to tell Ada what she has done, as she

fears, ““I might lose my home here, my only home!”” (273). In her final scene, Brown presents a thoroughly changed and chastened Elizabeth, now wearing a black gown and looking “almost like some sort of sister of charity” (291). Beth Wynne Fisker’s analysis of Brown’s other fiction may help explain her solution for Elizabeth: “The New Woman, whether in the guise of a seductive vampire, ambitious socialite, career-minded manipulator, social reformer, or neurotic flapper, was excoriated in Brown’s novels for her indifference to personal ties and neglect of family” (53). Whether or not Brown had such notions in mind when she disposed of Elizabeth, she does shut down whatever progressive model of female development Freeman had initiated, except perhaps for a brief moment when Peggy assures her aunt, ““I am going to have a profession, too . . . I am going to devote my life to it”” (292). Edited out of the text by the other authors, Elizabeth exits, pulled back to the margins and out of the family.

Consequently, by the time van Dyke writes his closing chapter, he can dispense with Elizabeth in one line, calling her the “preposterous old-maid sister Elizabeth (the biggest child of the lot)” (296). Thus a cycle of editors has continually revised *The Whole Family* and its characters. The novel ends with some rather tidy summing up and a marriage for Peggy. Van Dyke’s character essentially calls for an end to all the conflict between family members, claiming, “My mind was fixed, positively and finally, that the habit of interference in the Talbert family must be broken up” (307). What began as a story with the potential for a reinvention of the family ends in a most traditional way, with a wedding and the apparent removal of any disruptive characters and ideas. Nevertheless, despite efforts to completely control Aunt Elizabeth and Freeman, their

presence still hovers at the edge of the novel. Through her reinvention of the maiden aunt, Freeman is both the creative and destructive genius at the heart of the novel. Her actions drive it forward even as they tear it apart. The ultimate outcome--a book quite different from what Howells or any of the other writers might have imagined--captures the competition, tension, and endless debate that almost always accompanies a literary collaboration that takes on important societal concerns.

*“Good fun for everyone involved”: The Whole Family and the Reader*

Because *The Whole Family* was, as we have seen, a commercial endeavor for its writers and publishers, we ought to consider how readers and reviewers responded to the text. When we do, we see them thoroughly engaged with the game of the text, but largely ambivalent about any greater comments it makes about the family or literature. Since installments of *The Whole Family* appeared over twelve months, *Bazar* readers could react to individual chapters before seeing how the novel would ultimately end. Jordan reprints readers’ letters in the pages of the *Bazar*, including attempts to guess the authorship of the initially anonymous chapters. By February 1908, the guesses begin (with a fair degree of accuracy). These readers, it appears, know the Harper’s writers and their individual styles. For instance, in May 1908, one insists, “Howells wrote the father’s chapter. He hasn’t attempted to disguise his style in any way.”<sup>16</sup> Even in their mistakes, the readers reveal a deep knowledge of individual writers. In April, one suggests that Freeman must have written the grandmother’s chapter since that character’s “little touch about the bacon jars being saved” reminds her of Freeman’s “New England

economics.” By and large, most guesses address Aunt Elizabeth, with quite a few asserting the author must be Freeman, but just as many offering alternatives. In the May 1908 issue, one guesses it must be Phelps, while another, in a claim that might have pained the author, suggests it was James. In many ways, readers’ reactions to Elizabeth affected their conjectures. One, ostensibly a fan of Freeman’s innovation, suggests that the “delightfully new conception of ‘The Old Maid’ is not a man’s line of thought,” and therefore must be the work of a woman, while another less-sympathetic reader argues that Bangs must be the writer, since the “absurdity of such an usual style of ‘old maid’ is just like his funny point of view.” These letters also reveal a sort of playful impatience with the editor’s withholding of the authors’ names. In April 1908, a reader asks, “Are you going to tell us who wrote *The Whole Family*? How long must we remain in this state of mental excitement and uncertainty? . . . There are enough problems in this weary world without burdening us with such a peculiarly meddling one as this.” Clearly, these readers enjoy playing *The Whole Family*’s game, testing their knowledge of their favorite writers and eagerly awaiting final word on who wrote which chapters. In a way, their speculations and wishes reveal their own, hypothetical editing of the text--how they want it to appear, how it meets their expectations.

Along with their guesses, some readers send along suggestions for activities to go with reading the book. One recommends that readers start a class in which students read not only the novel, but the authors’ other works to see how individual styles and patterns emerge. Another claims that the book is a “boon to women’s clubs--or ought to be.” On the whole, of course, since the *Bazar* chose which letters to print, readers love the book.

In the April issue, one writes, “I want to put a few adjectives between Whole and Family --delicious, delightful.” Similarly, once the project is completed, readers send in their praises. A January 1909 letter explains, “It has been many years since I have taken the deep interest in a serial which I have experienced with *The Whole Family*. May the book have the splendid success it deserves.” Another asks, “Won’t you have the authors of *The Whole Family* write another composite novel?” (We can only imagine Jordan’s response to this request). Certainly we should not carry our analysis of these letters too far, since, as Howard reminds us, “the editor’s selection and presentation of such material was completely continuous with the promotional process” (55). Still, though, these letters demonstrate readers’ investment and engagement in the game of *The Whole Family* and in literary production at Harper’s.

Professional external reviews of *The Whole Family* demonstrate a similar fascination with the unusual book. Like the reviews of other composite novels discussed earlier, these critics wonder how the book came together. Indeed, Howard notes that all these reviews emphasize the “strangeness” (53). The critic for the *Nation*, for instance, writes, “This must have been good fun for everybody involved, though how it all came about is a question for the curious” (“Current” 552). He goes on to ask a series of questions about the organizing principles behind the book, including how the writers were chosen: “It is not easy to see how; if so-and-so is included, he or she is not. Did all the participants come willingly into the game, or were certain of them under some strange compulsion?” (552). He wonders if Howells “simply set the ball rolling” or if there was “some sort of understanding as to what the general situation should be?” (552).

Similarly, the reviewer at the *New York Times* claims the interest in the book lies not only in its plot, but also “in the differing styles of these very well-known authors. The novel is a unique literary event” (“Whole Family Review” 627).

Each review is fairly positive, although none seems to take the work all that seriously. Above all, the critics enjoy the “game” the novel plays. “The result,” one notes, “is sufficiently amusing, as occasional in its nature as a parlor charade” and later calls the novel “pure vaudeville” (“Current” 553). The critic at *The Bookman* describes *The Whole Family* as a literary version of the party game we now call “telephone,” in which a whisper is sent down a chain of speakers:

Number two weaves a chapter of variations, and the poor innocent plot-- innocent to the point of vacuity--is handed over to the tender mercies of number three . . . And so the tale is bandied about until twelve good men and women have laid their hands on it, and it emerges at *finis* with a word and there to show its remote descent from that harmless first chapter. (“Chronicle” 423)

His implicit point--that the fun lies in seeing how garbled the message gets by the end--reveals how little attention these critics paid to the substance of the book and to the questions it raises about family, gender, and the nation.

In perhaps the most positive review, Clarence H. Gaines, writing for the *North American Review*, admits that his first emotion was one of:

. . . strong curiosity as to whether in this case the artistic end has justified the rather daring means. Upon examination, one is relieved to find that diversity of authorship, while it has certainly promoted mordancy of character-drawing and

unexpectedness of plot, has in no way spoiled the reasonableness and balanced power of the story as a whole. (928)

Gaines and other critics overlook any question of tension among writers and chapters, emphasizing what they see as the work's remarkable unity:

Just as a game of chess, if perfectly played, proves in the end to be a complete, organic structure, despite the fact that it is born anew with every move of the players, so this story, which is created afresh by each author in turn, develops into a consistent and artistic form, because it obeys throughout the basic laws of fiction and of life. (Gaines 928)

Somewhat remarkably, Gaines see *The Whole Family* as a balanced and even work, almost devoid of tension. Indeed, Gaines explains away the story's conflicts as the comical "complexities of modern life" (929), ignoring Freeman's disruption much like some of the later contributors tried to ignore Aunt Elizabeth.

The *Nation's* critic comes close to acknowledging some disagreements among writers, writing "And so out passes Mr. Howells in the middle of a sentence, with a mild glance of wonder at the gas figure which brushes by him and gains the middle of the stage. This is Miss Wilkins, who has conceived the old-maid aunt as a belated siren, and so plays her" ("Current" 553). Even still, he emphasizes Brown's tidy solution at the end. The one critic who does address the novel's tensions does so rather indirectly. Speaking hypothetically about future composite novels, he writes suggests a set of rules to ensure harmonious collaboration:

When the author of chapter seven, let us say, take a sly fling at the one who wrote chapter three, or lays a trap for the one who has to write chapter eight, then it is time for a referee to act . . . . And all true sportsman will refuse to compete with the vicious author who deliberately snarls the plot in a tangle which cannot be unraveled without resort to some lame expedient, galling to him on whom the necessity rests. (“Chronicles” 424)

Again, the critic’s tone is light and humorous, avoiding any direct engagement with the conflicts evident in the individual chapters of *The Whole Family*.

Given the ultimate state of the novel and these reviews, in the end, most of *The Whole Family* writers must have seen the novel in terms of what could have been rather than what it was. In one of his last comments on the book, James explains, “Still, I had engaged to play the game & take over the elements as they were & hated to see them so helplessly muddled away when, oh, one could one’s self (according to one’s fatuous thought!) have made them *mean* something, given them sense, direction, and form” (53). Similarly, although she acknowledges that the book was a commercial success, in her final comments on the endeavor, Jordan admits her own dissatisfaction with it: “*The Whole Family* was a mess!” (280). Each writer must have imagined the work as a venue to comment on and debate the futures of the foundation of the nation--the family itself. However, they must not have counted on each others’ unwillingness to follow direction, fall into line, or cede textual authority to another writer.

What so frustrated Jordan, James, Howells, and the others was undoubtedly the lack of control any one writer had over the novel and the failure of all their efforts to create something more substantial than what was essentially viewed as a parlor game. As each writer stepped into the editor role, he or she had the power to recreate *The Whole*

*Family*, only to be overruled by the next writer. In his chapter, Bangs's son-in-law comments on just this tendency for family members to meddle in each other's affairs: "On the whole I am glad our family is no larger than it is. It is a very excellent family as families go, but the infinite capacity of each individual in it for making trouble, and adding to complications already sufficiently complex, surpasses anything that has ever before come into my personal or professional experience" (124). We can, of course, read this as a commentary on the novel itself, but, beyond that, as a comment on the politics of literary collaboration and social debate in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We recall Larcom's gentle correcting of Whittier, Jacobs's substitution of her own experience for Child's romantic imagining of the tragic mulatta, and Winnemucca's indirect shaping of Mann's *Juanita*. In *The Whole Family* the always present complexities of collaboration are brought to the surface as twelve competing agendas fight for control of a text, leaving readers with perhaps the inevitable result of a rather muddled mass of unrealized potential.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The most famous refusal came from Mark Twain, who turned down the role of the young boy explaining, “I was hoping, and indeed expecting, that that boy would look in and report for duty. But it has not happened. After this long waiting he has never once rung the bell. This can only mean one thing--that he is not coming; that even if he has a story to tell he is not moved to tell it through me. I could compel him, but the children of fancy are sensitive, and I do not offend them with compulsion. So I have given him up, and dismissed the thought of him from my mind--permanently” (Jordan 259). Twain, then, refuses to write without any personal inspiration--his work cannot be forced. Alfred Bendixen notes that Frances Hodgson Burnett “also declined to contribute, praising the project but explaining that she could not write about characters and situations created by others” and that Kate Douglass Wiggin (who wrote two composite novels discussed in more detail below) initially agreed, but then backed out for reasons of time and (possibly) money (Bendixen xvii).

<sup>2</sup> The final *Whole Family* authors were, in order, William Dean Howells (“The Father”), Mary Wilkins Freeman (“The Old-Maid Aunt”), Mary Heaton Vorse (“The Grandmother”), Mary Stewart Cutting (“The Daughter-in-Law”), Elizabeth Jordan (“The School-Girl”), John Kendrick Bangs (“The Son-in-Law”), Henry James (“The Married Son”), Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (“The Married Daughter”), Edith Wyatt (“The Mother”), Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews (“The School-Boy”), Alice Brown (“Peggy”--the engaged daughter), and Henry van Dyke (“The Friend of the Family”).

<sup>3</sup> If we can assume we are hearing Jewett's voice here, she makes an intriguing comment on the criticism many critics make of her work's unusual structure. Clearly, Jewett is aware that she tells different kinds of stories.

<sup>4</sup> *The Affair at the Inn* enjoyed commercial success as well, and in 1905 the *New York Times Book Review* lists it as a book "that sells well" ("Books" 57).

<sup>5</sup> A July 26, 1902 *New York Times* article includes an announcement from Small, Maynard and Company listing the correct identity of each story writer. It also explains that "no correct guess was received, the nearest correct guess being that of Mrs. Horace Silsbee of Seneca Falls, NY, who guessed correctly the authorship of eleven out of twelve stories" (12). It adds, "In the second contest, in which the names of the authors were given and the question was which author wrote each story, twenty-four correct guesses were received" (12).

<sup>6</sup> For more on this series, see Howells's *Letters* 262.

<sup>7</sup> In one memorable section, she tells of an interview with a mental patient that went frighteningly awry. The woman, whose family had committed her against her will, physically attacks Jordan: "She was in bed when I saw her, and as I bent to shake hands in farewell she suddenly caught me by the throat. She had an unpleasant face with huge black eyes and a wide red mouth that leered up at me. 'Aren't you glad I'm sane *now*?' she whispered, and tightened the grip of those clutching hands. The nurse rushed forward from the shadows of the room . . . For years afterward that episode was a feature of my most unpleasant dreams" (51).

<sup>8</sup> Edel and Powers also resent (with some good reason) Jordan's loose editing of James's letters in *Three Rousing Cheers*. They explain that she "tried to flatten out James's style into pedestrian statements to suit her own understanding of the English idiom, sawed off or mangled some of the sentences, amputated salutations, perhaps to relieve the letters of some of their formality and make them seem more intimate" (James 28).

<sup>9</sup> Jordan puts the scope of her task in similar terms: "My ambition was to bring together what P.T. Barnum would have called the greatest, grandest, most gorgeous group of authors ever collaborating on a literary production" (258).

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, *The Infant Sphinx: Collected Letters of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman*, pages 83 and 93. In one particularly interesting letter, she tells Garland, "I think you are right in assuming that realism is not a fashion. I do not think I could be realistic because it is fashionable. I do not think I knew it was fashionable when I began. I have sometimes wondered what I should have done had I lived a while ago in the romantic age of literature. I wonder if I would have written like the rest" (93).

<sup>11</sup> For more on O'Hagan's series, see Howard, 199-202.

<sup>12</sup> Jordan does not reprint this letter, explaining that even thirty years later, "he [Howells--now long dead] wouldn't like that" (264)

<sup>13</sup> In a later letter James once again tells Jordan that he is "duly inconsolable at not having been able to get straight at her [Elizabeth] myself" (49).

<sup>14</sup> Kilcup writes that James's text departs "not only from America and its strong women," but also "concludes, ironically and rather schizophrenically, with a gesture

towards marriage more typical of the traditional nineteenth-century domestic novel than of the 'modern' novel" ("Conversation" 12).

<sup>15</sup> Phelps also allows Elizabeth to voice once again her relatively young age in a conversation with Maria: "'Aunt Elizabeth,' I said, sadly, 'I am younger than you--' 'Not so very much!' retorted Aunt Elizabeth" (202).

<sup>16</sup> With the exception of the June 1908 issue, each of the sections of the *Bazar* that contained these letters is not paginated.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

This project on writers and editors grew out a pair of images I discovered while writing a seminar paper several semesters ago. While re-reading *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, I found myself fascinated by Dr. Flint's offer of a cottage outside of town, a place where Linda and her children could go, where he could "make a lady" of her (57). As we have seen, Linda's refusal to go the cottage--her resistance against a life of sexual oppression and vulnerability--forms a key element of her of ultimate path to victory. Upon this re-reading, though, what struck me about the image was the thought that I had seen it before, in Lydia Maria Child's "The Quadroons." Rosalie and Edward's home, a "perfect model of rural beauty" (275) on the outskirts of the city, is the scene of the mulatta's tragic downfall and serves as a powerful symbol of Rosalie's unachievable dream of a normal life.

The cottage's reappearance in Jacobs's tale raised a number of questions in my mind. What does it mean that Jacobs calls up and revisits the earlier works of her editor? What does it mean to resist those works and the editor's vision? The specific focus of Jacobs's attention here--a symbol of perverse and corrupted domesticity--raises a whole new set of implications. Why does Jacobs focus on such an image and how does it connect to her larger concerns about the future of family and domesticity in America? We can trace similar questions about writers resisting editors through each of my

chapters. Ultimately, two central questions emerge: First, how do editors and writers, often from very different backgrounds, work together to produce texts for their audiences? Second, what happens when a writer steps into the role of editor, asserting control not only of her own text, but also questioning and challenging her mentor on matters of national concern?

As we have seen, each writer/editor pair examined in previous chapters illustrates a fluidity of roles and a resistance to traditional hierarchical models of the editing process. As they discuss the most pressing social issues of the day--family, race, class, gender, the future of the nation--writer and editor, both with a focus keenly on the reader, advance sometimes competing visions. Larcom and Whittier debate the effect of class and gender on poetic production and, to a larger degree, the role these forces would continue to play in the society as a whole. Jacobs and Child wrestle with the place of the mixed blood woman in America's future, exploring her power and agency. Winnemucca and Mann work together to carve out a space for both the Native American and the white female reformer in their model of a renewed nation. And finally, in a de-racialized, middle-class version of America, *The Whole Family's* writers clash over the future of the family itself, each writer editing those who came before and anticipating those who would follow. In every case, writers refuse to sit by and let others take control of their works while editors do their best to shape those texts in their own ways.

Investigating the writer/editor dynamic leads to surprising discoveries, especially when we consider the unexpected spaces where tensions run highest. Competition between writer and editor often seems fiercest in those relationships where readers might

not expect to find such dissension. Why, for instance, do the *Whole Family* writers (alike in so many ways) get along so poorly? On the other hand, how is it that Winnemucca and Mann find so much to agree on in their work? To find the answers, readers must consider everything from economics and politics to genre and gender. What we see is that similarities in terms of race, class, or even gender do not necessarily ensure agreement on important social issues and, just as significantly, certain differences do not always ensure disagreement.

My concern in this project has been writers and editors with an eye, of course, towards to their sometimes competing appeals to readers. Certainly, there are other intriguing writer/editor pairs whose relationships could give us even more insight into literary production in the nineteenth century. What do we make, for instance, of Emily Dickinson's relationship with Thomas Wentworth Higginson? Why does she seek out his editing, only to reject his many suggestions, especially when she seems never to have intended to publish her works? Additionally, Shillingsburg and McGann remind us that writers and editors are not the only forces at work in a text. Clearly, there is more work to be done, then, in order to gain an even better understanding of the cultural context that shapes any nineteenth-century text, but especially those discussed in these chapters. What role, for instance, does the publisher play in a literary production? There are several critical works that examine nineteenth-century American publishers and publishing houses, including June Howard's *Publishing the Family*, discussed in Chapter Four. Additional works of note include Susan Coultrap-McQuin's *Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century*, which discusses the

evolving relationships between “gentlemen publishers” and female writers, and Ezra Greenspan’s *George Palmer Putnam: Representative American Publisher*, a biography of the famous publisher. Still, there is much more to say about this intriguing aspect of literary production. Similarly, there is more work to be done on the reader’s role in shaping texts. How do publishers and readers also serve as editors, molding texts to fit their conceptions of what literature can and should do?

Given all the potential “editors” exerting influence on a text, Henry James’s frustrated pleas to Elizabeth Jordan over the state of *The Whole Family* stand out to a careful reader even more. Explaining how he can only imagine the text through his own vision of it, he writes of his supreme disappointment in the book’s final state:

I saw . . . the ensuing shape of the little action so fully, vividly and logically, that I must have been thinking of them since very much as if I had really ‘written them out,’ and that turning to them in fact, as to find them so written, I feel them, all ruefully, anything *but* Yours most truly, Henry James. (James 52)

Although his tone is somewhat playful here, James’s main point is quite serious. He cannot reconcile his own plans for the novel with its ultimate form--he cannot come to terms with his lack of control over the text, with the editing his work has taken at the hands of the other writers and with their failure to follow his lead. The other editors and writers I have been discussing must have felt some form of what James is describing here, too. Literary production and publication means entering the cultural conversation, and that means opening oneself up to editors of all sorts--it means giving up some control over one’s text. At the same time, writers savvy enough to do so could find ways to

become editors in their own right, answering back to cultural models and the creative works of their editors, and taking part in a continuing dialogue on the issues that occupied the nation.

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