Literary Retrospectives: The 1890s and the Reconstruction of American Literary History

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation proposes that the 1890s were critical to the formation of American literature because of their focus on identifying, collecting, and preserving an American literary tradition. Since 1930, when Fred Lewis Pattee claimed that the twentieth century began in the 1890s, a continuing strain in literary criticism has investigated the decade as the birthplace of modernism. In recent years, however, scholars have begun troubling these historical assessments of the era in order to recover a more nuanced understanding of the decade. Building on their work, I study how competing narratives of American literature existed in the 1890s alongside the fin de siècle movement toward literary nationalism.

I recover a group of long-lost literary historians who envisioned a more inclusive American literary canon than was eventually adopted in the early years of the twentieth century. I use the term “scenes of negotiation” to refer to discussions of American literature in late nineteenth-century social discourse about the development of a national American literary tradition. More specifically, I argue that these scenes of negotiation can be read as literary history because no fixed narrative of American literature yet existed. These scenes of negotiation make discernible how accounts of literary history emerged at multiple sites, in multiple genres, through multiple agents. The Introduction identifies
some of these scenes of negotiation and explains why they should be read as American literary history, which records the history of literature in America through an examination of texts and/or authors. Organized around specific case studies, the chapters explore how literary historians working singly or in conjunction with others documented the 1890s as a period of literary retrospection and consolidation. Chapter 1 investigates how Edmund Stedman and Ellen Hutchinson’s co-editorship of *A Library of American Literature* resulted in one of the late nineteenth century’s most important and formative constructions of American literature. Chapter 2 explores how *The Critic*’s elections for “The Forty Immortals” and “The Twenty Immortelles” proposed a gendered model of authorship that closely resembles the current state of the field of American literature. Chapter 3 examines how Pauline Hopkins worked as a cultural stenographer, writing an inclusive account of American literary history in her novel *Contending Forces* that included African Americans, a group largely ignored in *A Library of American Literature* and *The Critic*’s elections. Chapter 4 recovers the late nineteenth-century genre of obituary literature as a forum for validating male and female American authorship in order to illustrate how it aided in the development of an American literary tradition.

This dissertation reaches three conclusions that provide a new framework for understanding the types of cultural work being done in the 1890s. First, scenes of negotiation document how the literary historians identified herein understood American literature’s role in recording the nation’s social and political development and in instilling cultural pride and patriotism in its citizenship. Second, scenes of negotiation unsettle traditional notions about who was writing literary history and the venues in which it was
being written. Third, scenes of negotiation offer an alternative to traditional literary histories, revealing that some late nineteenth-century literary historians were determined to include female and minority authors in the American literary tradition. Recovering these scenes of negotiation changes our current understanding of the 1890s as an era lost to literary history by showing it a period alive with literary history and demonstrating that late nineteenth-century literary historians made possible the canon wars of the twentieth century by their recording of the rich and diverse American literary past.
Dedicated to John
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Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ ii

Dedication .................................................................................................................................... iv

Acknowledgments ...................................................................................................................... v

Vita ................................................................................................................................................ vi

List of Tables ............................................................................................................................... viii

Introduction: Mapping American Literature in the 1890s .......................................................... 1

Chapter 1: Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen McKay Hutchinson: Co-Editors of A Library of American Literature .............................................................. 24

Chapter 2: “The Forty Immortals” and “The Twenty Immortelles”: The Critic and Its Readers’ “Newspaper Academy” ................................................................. 68

Chapter 3: Pauline Hopkins: Cultural Stenographer of the 1890s........................................... 128

Chapter 4: The Critic’s Obituary Literature and the Construction of American Literary History ............................................................................................................. 187

Bibliography ................................................................................................................................ 244
List of Tables

Table 1: Working List of Sources Identified in Pauline E. Hopkins’s
Contending Forces.................................................................146
Introduction

Mapping American Literature in the 1890s

In August 1898, *The Bookman: A Review of Books and Life* published “A Literary Map of the United States” that envisioned much of the American literary landscape as still open for settlement.¹ *The Bookman*’s explanation of the map, in its column “Chronicle and Comment,” drew on the language of national conquest, extending the late nineteenth-century concepts of Manifest Destiny and westward expansion into the literary arena. Before identifying Paul Wilstach, the former literary editor of the Washington *Times*, as the “ingenious literary geographer who designed the map,” the *Bookman* says,

The accompanying geographical map of American Literature needs no key for its comprehension by the intelligent reader and student of our literature. It shows the geographical relations of accepted and familiar American authors to each other, delimiting the haunts of their “local colour,” and marking off the territorial rights to which they may be said to lay claim as pioneers and conquerors. It will also serve as a valuable guide to ambitious writers looking for fresh fields and pastures new. Not the

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¹ Founded by Howard Dodd, president of New York publishers Dodd, Mead, and Company and a professor of Latin at Columbia University, *The Bookman* was edited between during this time by Harry Thurston Peck and James MacArthur. See Mott’s *A History of American Magazines*, 4: 432-441.
least interesting feature is the vast extent of lands that are indicated as still “unclaimed.” The names of several American authors will occur to the observer as being omitted on this map, but a moment’s reflection will show that they have failed to identify themselves distinctly with any one State or tract of country. Mr. James and Mr. Crawford could only be exhibited adequately on an international map, while Mr. Howells on the other hand would have to be scattered over various sections of America.

(“Chronicle and Comment” 469)

The map, which has the surnames of thirty-eight American authors scattered across it, labels vast portions of land as “unclaimed”—especially in the areas west of the Mississippi and south of the Mason Dixon line. The Bookman’s call for ambitious American authors to stake out territory adjacent to those already delineated on the map suggests that the mapping of American literature is an on-going process. However, by anticipating and rebuffing readers’ objections about other authors they thought should be inscribed on the map, The Bookman insists that it is, in fact, the “literary geographer” and not the readers or authors who will apportion the literary landscape.

My intention in mentioning “A Literary Map” and the periodical’s discussion of it is not to analyze the list of names on the map or to consider what names might have claimed territory in the years since it was published. Instead, I want to use it as a representative example of what I call late nineteenth-century “scenes of negotiation” regarding American literature. I define this term to mean discussions of American literature located within the late nineteenth-century social discourse about the
development of a national American literary tradition. Because no fixed narrative of American literature existed during this time, I posit that discussions like the one surrounding Wilstach’s map can be read as literary history. In its most rudimentary sense, the term literary history designates a systematic narrative of past events and participants in literature through an examination of selected texts and authors. In this sense, the term is not genre specific but encompasses multiple genres. As Claudia Stokes notes in *Writers in Retrospect* (2006), nineteenth-century literary historians documented the “growth and achievements of American letters” in multiple genres, including “magazine articles, literary biographies, anthologies, textbooks, lectures, and book-length studies” (18). According to Stokes, the late nineteenth-century interest in identifying and recording a narrative of American literature gave rise to the genre of literary history in the closing decades of the century, which in turn provided the organizational underpinnings of the academic discipline of American literary studies in the early twentieth century. Before these developments, however, American literary history was in flux, as members of various groups identified above competed over who was best qualified to judge American literature and authorship. The discussion of the American literary landscape in *The Bookman* marks only one instance of late nineteenth-century discussions about literary merit wherein interested parties vied to authenticate a particular narrative of American literature and authorship as the national narrative, or at least some part of it. Recovering their lists allows us to see how literary history emerged at multiple sites, in multiple genres, through multiple agents.
As I will demonstrate, many people—namely authors, anthologists, editors, critics, readers, and literary historians—were interested in the development of an American literary tradition. Wilstach’s map involves three of these groups in its late nineteenth-century discourse about American literature and American authorship: editors, authors, and readers. And, though not a person, the periodical that published the map in the 1890s marks a fourth player in the conversation. Editors, authors, readers, and periodicals had multiple ideas about what constituted literature and authorship. Like Wilstach, many of them made lists of authors, and, like the readers, they often rejected others’ lists in favor of their own. Each list maker had his or her own criteria for literary inclusion or exclusion. For example, *The Bookman* admits that readers might want to include two authors—Henry James and Francis Marion Crawford—whom Wilstach had excluded because they lived abroad, as well as a third—William Dean Howells—whom Wilstach left out because he had not conquered a geographically definitive literary region. Each list had its own advocates. *The Bookman*’s favorable publication of Wilstach’s map inherently supports both his view of the American literary landscape and his role as mapmaker. Moreover, *The Bookman* reinforces its own cultural authority not only by hosting this assessment of authorial and literary value but also by directing readers to accept Wilstach’s assignment of literary territory even when it conflicted with their own ideas. The pages of *The Bookman* render Wilstach’s view public, with publication ensuring circulation, even if not all readers agreed with it.

Wilstach’s map and *The Bookman*’s discussion of it may seem, to readers today, more like a list of literary favorites than it does literary history. Yet, as Stokes
demonstrates, even nineteenth-century “literary gossip,” or literary history written by American authors about their friends and enemies, still “holds interest and value for scholars today” (1). For instance, as the subtitle of his Literary Friends and Acquaintance (1902) suggests, William Dean Howells historicized his own place in the American literary tradition through his “personal retrospect of American authorship,” working as literary historian, or a writer of American literary history, as he recorded his reminiscences about literary notables such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Sarah Morgan Bryan Piatt, and Constance Woolson. Similarly, the map and its accompanying explanation provide a graphic representation of nineteenth-century American literature as Wilstach charted it and The Bookman reported it. As a scene where the narrative of American literature was negotiated in print, the map and explanation provide us insight into the combative nature of the late nineteenth-century literary discourse, which, in this instance, relied on metaphors of conquest and territorial rights and imagined conflict (through talking about the readers’ wish to substitute other names) even in a forum that offered no immediate avenue for rebuttal.

Even when read as a literary historian, however, Wilstach might be considered an inconsequential participant in late nineteenth-century negotiations to define an American literary tradition, since his map of American authors has been long forgotten. When I label Wilstach as inconsequential in the arena of writing American literary history, I mean he eventually lost any power he might have had to influence the reading public as the narrative displayed on his map was discarded in favor of another. His map was not, in Paul Lauter’s words in Canons and Contexts (1991), the “literary history of the dominant
white and male culture” that gradually became entrenched in academia in early twentieth century (53). Like Wilstach, Lauter imagines a map of American literature, saying that during the early twentieth century its “mountains, bumps and flats were charted; its deserts certified unfit for cultural habitation” (23). Some of the more consequential early twentieth century literary histories promoted a predominantly white male canon that effectively silenced women and minorities. Richard Burton’s *Literary Leaders of America* (1903), for example, included twelve chapters on individual authors and devotes only two chapters to writers from the “early period” and the “present” day. Burton explains this approach in his introduction, saying, that because of the book’s devotion “in the main to the dominant figures of our literature, those of first importance, it will not be necessary to dwell long on those of lesser note” (vi). Similarly, Edwin P. Bowen’s *Makers of American Literature* (1908), and Norman Foerster’s *The Chief American Prose Writers* (1916), focused respectively on fourteen and nine white male authors and argued for an American literary tradition focused on literary greatness. Wilstach’s depiction of American authorship differs from these literary histories by identifying three or four times as many authors and by including women: Stowe, Fuller, “H.H.,” and Wilkins. While Burton, Bowen, and Foerster also lost their literary influence, in the canon wars of the last quarter of the twentieth century, I do not investigate them for two reasons: because they published their literary histories after the 1890s and because literary histories such as theirs overlooked the scenes of negotiation that interest me. Nor do I investigate literary histories such as Horace E. Scudder’s *American Prose* (1885), though it was published in the nineteenth century, because, in essence, Scudder prefigures the
literary historians of the twentieth century by limiting his study to eight white males. As Stokes observes, Scudder “presents Hawthorne, Irving, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, Thoreau, and Emerson as the sole representatives of American prose ‘literature’” (243). Literary historians like Scudder replicate a narrative of American literary privilege that challenge this study by delineating an alternative history. However, I seek out scenes that record late nineteenth-century American literature as a hotly contested battleground in order to trace out the negotiated process by which the interested parties at least acknowledged the unruliness of American literature.

This dissertation recovers four literary enterprises that, like “A Literary Map,” document scenes of negotiation over identifying an American literary tradition. Chapter 1 investigates Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen Mackay Hutchinson’s co-editorship of *A Library of American Literature: From the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time*, published in eleven volumes between 1888 and 1890. Containing more than 1200 authors and 2400 reading selections, the *Library* recorded an impressive “list” of American literature. Little known to scholars of American literature today, the *Library* remained a standard reference work for readers, editors, and historians of American literature for more than forty years, until what Evelyn Rezak Bibb labels the “modern omnibus anthology” superseded it (369). The scene of negotiation regarding the *Library* took place between the two editors, who held many discussions about the narrative of American literature that they wanted the *Library* to tell about American literature’s three-hundred-year history. Modern readers cannot imagine the difficulty involved in locating much of the source materials reprinted in the *Library*, especially in the early volumes. Many of
them were long out of print, with the only available copy held by a private collector or housed in a library archive. During their co-editorship, Stedman—poet, anthologist, literary critic, and Wall Street broker—deferred much of the work of identifying, locating, and transcribing literary extracts to Hutchinson, while he concentrated his efforts on reading proof and corresponding with authors and publishers in order to obtain the necessary permissions and copyrights. Hutchinson, poet and long-time literary editor of the New York Tribune, used Stedman’s name to gain access to rare booksellers and private collectors, and then copied (or, more often, had someone else copy) the desired selections by hand, leaving it to Stedman to have her selections typeset and proofread. Through this laborious process, they made it possible for people to read texts previously unavailable to the general public. According to advertising for the Library, Stedman and Hutchinson offered readers something new—“a complete literary history of America” (“A Library” 480).2

After recovering Stedman and Hutchinson’s negotiations about the Library, I will then highlight the disappearance of Hutchinson as a literary historian by examining the erasure of her voice from their literary history of America and arguing that this move deemphasizes the role women played in the construction of the American literary tradition. Once called the “foremost literary woman of our country,” Hutchinson was largely forgotten after her reputation as Stedman’s coeditor faded in the twentieth century

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2 Printed in the advertising section of Joseph Kirkland’s The Story of Chicago (1892), “A Library of American Literature” speaks in the second person plural about the process of locating sources, positioning William E. Dibble, the first of three publishers associated with the Library, as a collaborator in the process of locating source materials (480-481).
(Egan 143). Evelyn Rezak Bibb misread her to be Stedman’s subordinate; in “Anthologies of American Literature,” (1996), Bibb pictures Hutchinson as a “junior editor” working quietly in the background and deferring all matters of importance to Stedman (247). Robert J. Scholnick perpetuates this image of Hutchinson in *Edmund Clarence Stedman* (1977). Even Stokes, who argues persuasively, in *Writers in Retrospect* (2006), that the *Library* had a significant impact on canon formation, effectively reduces Hutchinson’s impact by omitting her from discussions of its influence and its sales history (7, 27). Yet, Stedman and Hutchinson’s *Library* correspondence reveals that Stedman considered Hutchinson his “brilliant co-editor” (Stedman and Gould II: 112). Housed at Columbia University, this correspondence contains Hutchinson and Stedman’s debates about where the narrative of American literature should start and which authors and texts should be included or excluded from the *Library*. When analyzed in conjunction with the finished *Library*, their letters not only belie the *Library’s* smooth narrative of American literature but also demonstrate that Hutchinson’s impact on the project equaled Stedman’s.

At about the same time that Stedman and Hutchinson were readying their *Library* for publication, in the 1880s and early 1890, *The Critic* was engaged with its readers in identifying a national academy of living American authors. *The Critic’s* efforts to define an academy began after a reader identified only as “H.O.W.” wrote to ask why the United States did not have an institution like the famed French academy, which had grown from an informal coterie in the 1630s to a self-perpetuating government-funded organization in the 1880s. As Allen Walker Read notes in “American Projects for an Academy to
Regulate Speech” (1936), efforts to establish an American academy trace back to the Revolutionary period. Read identifies Hugh Jones, a professor at the College of William and Mary in 1721, as the first to fail in generating interest in an American academy. After the Civil War, several more attempts failed, including George Ripley’s “National Institute of Letters, Arts, and Sciences” (1868) and John William Draper’s “American Union Academy of Literature, Science, and Art” (1869). Responding favorably to H.O.W.’s request, The Critic asked its readers to choose an American academy by popular vote, hosting an election, “Our Forty Immortals” (1884), to identify possible candidates for an American academy.

Like the Bookman, The Critic viewed itself as a cultural authority, imposing its understanding of American authorship on the polling criteria and results. The periodical restricted academic eligibility to “native American authors of the sterner sex,” i.e. male authors born in America (“Our ‘Forty Immortals’” 169). As Nina Baym reminds us in Women’s Fiction (1978), nineteenth-century assessments of American authorship “had a bias in favor of things male” (14). The election for the Forty Immortals evidences this bias overtly. However, as Nancy F. Cott convincingly demonstrates in The Bonds of Womanhood (1997), “[T]wo seemingly contradictory visions of women’s relations to society” coexisted in the nineteenth century: the “ideology of domesticity, which gave women a limited and sex-specific role to play, primarily in the home; and feminism, which attempted to remove sex-specific limits on women’s opportunities and capacities” (5). The election for the Forty Immortals enacted this contradiction: it excluded women, yet readers’ reactions to that exclusion reveal the influence of the late nineteenth-century
feminist movement. Along with the list of the Forty Immortals, The Critic published a list of runners up and a list of those who had been excluded. Readers disagreed with The Critic’s list of forty, especially protesting the exclusion of women from the Immortals. In the months immediately after the election, the periodical printed their letters without reversing its stand against women academicians. Then, after a six-year silence on the topic, the periodical received yet another letter suggesting that women be allowed into The Critic’s academy. This time, the periodical acceded to its readers’ demands. A second election, “The Twenty Immortelles,” was held in 1890. While the election for the Forty Immortals has received some scholarly attention from scholars like Read and Anne E. Boyd, no one to date has investigated the election for the Twenty Immortelles. After recovering the full narrative of the elections from The Critic, I argue that “The Twenty Immortelles” shows not only that many 1890s readers were more ready to accept women academicians in their narratives of American literature than were the editors of the leading belletristic periodicals, but also that The Critic’s election evidences one occasion where the readers’ conception of American authorship won at least a temporary public hearing.

I turn from The Critic’s project involving editors and readers to the work of a single author, Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins. I claim that her first novel, Contending Forces (1900), and her non-fiction in the Colored American Magazine were both versions of American literary history. In Chapter 3, I read Hopkins as a cultural stenographer who recorded late nineteenth-century discourses about social and scientific determinism and located those arguments within the American literary tradition by quoting and borrowing
from a wide array of literary sources. In his discussion of how William Wells Brown acts as a “cultural editor” in his mid-century novel *Clotel* (1853), wherein he sets texts in conversation with each other in order to critique the institution of slavery, John Ernest posits that the same term might also be applied to others whose writings are “rich in historical and literary allusions” (199). While this description applies to Hopkins, I read her not as a cultural editor but as a cultural stenographer because this term best describes how Hopkins’s labor practices as a stenographer informed *Contending Forces*. Before writing the novel or editing the *Colored American Magazine*, Hopkins trained and worked as a stenographer; her novel’s heroine, Sappho Clark, also works as a stenographer. As Margery W. Davies argues in *Women’s Place is at the Typewriter* (1982), stenographers were not merely transcribers. Stenographers recorded dictation using a phonetic note-taking system that they modified to suit their individual tastes. Thus, working from notes that only she could fully understand, a stenographer transformed dictation into the desired form, such as a letter, pamphlet, or report. Many stenographers were cross-trained on the typewriter, the most important technological innovation of the late nineteenth-century business world. As both Hopkins and Sappho, her fictional stenographer, were trained stenographers and typists, they knew how to first encode, then interpret, and then rapidly reproduce the words of others into original printed materials.

By calling Hopkins a cultural stenographer, I mean that Hopkins’s training as a stenographer was central to her method in *Contending Forces* of arranging discourses and texts that were already circulating in the late nineteenth century into a narrative that
condemns widespread white indifference in the 1890s toward racial strife, violence, and discrimination. Using the material writing practices she had been trained in as a stenographer, she recombined words from available cultural sources into her fiction, transcribing and making new meaning from the words of others. She would continue this practice at the Colored American Magazine, replicating black and white voices in her non-fiction. However, as a late nineteenth-century African American woman Hopkins could not employ the same language of literary conquest as The Bookman. Reading Hopkins as an interested participant in the development of an American literary tradition allows us to see the complicated rhetorical strategies she used to imagine black authors interacting with white authors in literary enterprises. Like Stedman and Hutchinson, Hopkins imagines an American literary tradition that stretches back through time, including both dead and living authors. Unlike the Library, however, which only acknowledges the black voice in its “Negro Hymns and Songs” section, or the Critic’s academy, which, as we will see, excluded African Americans, Hopkins includes both black and white authors in her novel’s replication of the late nineteenth-century social discourse. And in contrast to The Critic, which was ambivalent about female authorship, Hopkins argues strongly in Contending Forces for the female author, especially the black female author. Hopkins thus records an alternative narrative to the largely white American literary tradition modeled in lists such as those in the Library and The Critic. While her role as a cultural stenographer ended shortly after Booker T. Washington initiated a hostile takeover of the Colored American Magazine and forced her resignation, Contending Forces records her attempt to stake out some of the “unclaimed” American
literary territory for herself. Ultimately, that attempt failed for exactly the reasons predicted in *Bookman*’s discussion of “A Literary Map”—because the “mapmakers” of the nineteenth century decided to exclude her from participation in the American literary tradition.

After Hopkins’s death in 1930, newspapers published obituaries announcing her death. These obituaries, which memorialized her as an author even though it had been nearly two decades since she had published, became part of the cultural discourse about American authorship. In Chapter 4, I return to *The Critic* to see how death affected its academy of American authors in the 1890s and to examine American authorship through a long-neglected venue of literary history: obituary literature. As scholars like Fredric A. Endres and Janice Hume have demonstrated, obituaries provide insight into societal values and concerns. For instance, in *Obituaries in American Culture* (2000), Hume argues that there is a “symbiotic relationship between the memory of an individual life portrayed in an obituary and the values of the collective” (17). From Hume’s work, we can conclude that obituaries for individual authors might prove valuable in understanding what the public valued when reading American literature. At the close of his study, “Frontier Obituaries as Cultural Reflectors” (1984), Endres suggests that we can learn about nineteenth-century socialization processes through a study of editorial practices for obituaries. I define the genre of “obituary literature,” by way of a survey of nineteenth-century periodicals that use the term. For readers of the time, obituary literature included obituaries, death notices, poems, and reminiscences of literary figures, an active genre at the time with which readers today have mostly lost touch. I look specifically at how
obituary literature impacted the development of a national literary tradition by lionizing some authors and marginalizing others. I then return to the authors discussed in Chapter 2, the Forty Immortals and the Twenty Immortelles, in order to see how *The Critic* remembered the Immortals and Immortelles who died in the 1890s.

Like my earlier discussion of *The Critic*’s elections, my analysis of the obituary literature for the Immortals and Immortelles shows the periodical sometimes at odds with its own definition of authorship. My discussion of the Forty Immortals centers on two collective obituaries that identified the Immortals who had died and rehearsed their contributions to American literature. Women authors are omitted from these collective obituaries in much the same way they were excluded from the Forty Immortals. As a result, these collective obituaries work to conventionalize American authorship as male for *The Critic*’s readers. However, the periodical’s individual obituaries for the six Immortelles who died in the 1890s normalize the category of female authorship by valorizing them as American authors. This chapter recovers the writers of a forgotten genre, obituary literature, as literary historians determined to list female authors in the American literary tradition.

These scenes of negotiation offer a new critical framework for understanding the type of literary and cultural work being done in the 1890s. I posit that the 1890s were critical to the formation of American literature because of their focus on identifying, collecting, and preserving an American literary tradition. A continuing strain in literary criticism investigates the 1890s as the birthplace of modernism. For example, in *The American 1890s* (1966), Larzer Ziff said the period from “1891 to 1900” belonged to the
twentieth century because it witnessed the birth of “modern American literature” (348). This formulation allows Ziff to recover what he calls a “lost” generation of writers, like Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Kate Chopin, and Theodore Dreiser, by arguing that they were ahead of their time in matters of genre and form. Thirty years earlier, in The New American Literature (1930), Fred Lewis Pattee had also claimed that “the vital twentieth century” began in the 1890s (3). As the title of his work suggests, Pattee’s interest lay in defining a “new” American literature. In The Era of Good Intentions (1978), James Addison White uses Pattee’s work to argue for an even earlier beginning point for modernism: the 1880s (4). Until recently, studies such these have served to reinforce our impression of the 1890s as more relevant to scholarly considerations of the twentieth century than to the nineteenth century.

However, current scholarship troubles these historical assessments of the era’s literature. For example, in Would Poetry Disappear? (2004), John Timberman Newcomb investigates poetry written between 1890 and 1910, which he says “generations of American literature scholars have been told possesses neither historical nor aesthetic significance” (xvii). Newcomb identifies Stedman, co-editor of the Library, as one of the most influential spokesmen for this position, saying that Stedman and William Dean Howells considered late nineteenth-century poetry to be at an “impasse between tradition and innovation” (105). He also links Pattee to negative evaluations of the era’s poetry (118, 258-59 n.8). Yet, Newcomb recovers poetry once deemed imitative and conventional by reading it through the interpretive framework of a genre in crisis. Nan Johnson’s Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life (2002) argues that women used
parlor literature, despite its conservative cultural agenda, to participate in late nineteenth-century public discourse. By mapping successful nineteenth-century female orators against the prevailing prescriptive ideologies limiting women to the domestic sphere, Johnson demonstrates the value of reinvestigating historical sources. And Susan Harris Smith and Melanie Dawson’s anthology, *The American 1890s* (2000) highlights texts and authors from an era the editors say has been “cloaked in conservative nostalgia” (1). Dispelling this cloak of conservatism, Smith and Dawson demonstrate that there were many dissenting voices on issues such as race, immigration, women’s rights, and social reform during the late nineteenth century. By analyzing scenes of negotiation, we can uncover these complex and sometimes contradictory discussions, recovering how the interested parties were talking about authorship, authors, and texts at the end of the nineteenth century in order to show that many of them privileged a more complicated narrative of the American literary tradition, one that included women as well as men, popular writers as well as literary greats, and minority as well as mainstream authors.

One compelling reason to reinvestigate 1890s literary historians is to overturn their record of being intrinsically conservative. Like Johnson, I treat the rhetoric of conservatism as a dominant discourse in nineteenth-century society, but as one that others resisted. In this dissertation, I have sought to uncover sites of literary history that resist conservatism. Pattee and Ziff both observe that, because the literary “leaders” of the 1890s had been born before the Civil War, they held more traditional views than the following generation of writers. As a result, “Nothing of the turbulence of the nineteenth century’s closing, nothing of the shift to the city, of the extension of the limits of
sexuality in literature, of the changing social position of women, of a poetry of precision and felt experience, of the fall from the innocence of national isolation, comes forth” in their work (Ziff 346). However, more recent scholarship on the American 1890s reveals much the opposite. For example, in American Thought and Writing: The 1890’s (1972), Donald Pizer highlights some of the major issues and preoccupations of the age, including evolution, the woman question, and the role of literary criticism. In America in the Gilded Age (1984), Sean Dennis Cashman analyzes the continued historical significance of events such as the People’s Alliance, the McKinley Tarriff, the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, the closing of the frontier, the massacre at Wounded Knee, the Homestead Strike, the panic of 1893, and the War of 1898—all topics recorded and debated in literature of the 1890s. Asa Briggs investigates the transnational impact of newsworthy events of the decade in “The 1890s: Past, Present and Future in Headlines” [in Fins de Siècle: How Centuries End (1996)]. At least in part, 1890s literary historians made these studies possible by their careful recording of American authors who wrote about the issues Pizer, Cashman, and Briggs discuss. For instance, Stedman and Hutchinson’s “Topical Analysis of Selections,” in their final volume, indicates a self-reflexive awareness that readers would consult the Library not only for readings by specific authors but also for information about topics such as criticism, science, economics, “Indian Troubles,” and politics (LAL XI: ix).

Other scholarship reminds us that academic literary histories silenced issues of race in the 1890s by privileging whiteness. As Julie Cary Nerad reminds us in “A Darker Woods: African American Writers in the American Renaissance” (2003), we need to
reexamine the academic and societal discourses in order to redefine how we think of American literature. As with the issue of conservatism, scholars have published critical work on nineteenth-century African Americans and the problems they faced living and working in a largely racist society. August Meier has traced the political and economic forces impacting the late nineteenth-century African American community in his *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915* (1963). Meier examines how both white paternalism and white hostility contributed to late nineteenth-century racial tensions. A growing body of recent scholarship addresses how the dominant strain of American literature predominantly excluded African American voices, though African Americans wrote vociferously during the decade. In *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire* (1992), Claudia Tate posits that post-Reconstruction novels by African American women combated racial oppression during what she describes as “an era of intense interracial violence” (6). As Koritha Mitchell argues, in *Living with Lynching: African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890–1930* (2011), African Americans invented the genre of lynching plays as a means of resisting dominant racial narratives. Though far from being an inclusive list, these studies highlight the necessity of including African American literary historians in this study. My aim is to show that, like their white counterparts, 1890s African Americans like Hopkins, W.E. B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, and Anna Julia Cooper inserted their voices into discussions of the American literary tradition.

Hopkins particularly notes fiction’s potential to record African American history in her preface to *Contending Forces*, where she writes: “Fiction is of great value to any
people as a preserver of manners and customs—religious, political and social. It is a
record of growth and development from generation to generation. No one will do this for
us; we must ourselves develop the men and women who will faithfully portray the inmost
thoughts and feelings of the Negro” (13-14, emphasis in original). Contending Forces
illuminates in new ways the late nineteenth-century African American community’s
engagement with both the “traditions of Anglo-European literature,” to use Lauter’s
words, and the Anglo-American tradition (50). In her non-fiction such as her two series,
Famous Men of the Negro Race and Famous Women of the Negro Race, which she
published during her editorship of the Colored American Magazine, Hopkins continued
to write a historical record of African American accomplishments. In these series, she
continued the pattern she had first explored through fiction in Contending Forces,
wherein she included fictionalized characters modeled on African Americans such as
Booker T. Washington, Du Bois, and Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, head of Boston’s
Woman’s Era Club. Fiction allows Hopkins to model how she imagined black authors
interacting with white authors such as those privileged in Stedman and Hutchinson’s
Library, The Critic’s academy, and her chapter epigraphs in Contending Forces. My
focused discussion of Hopkins as a recorder of the black literary tradition helps makes
possible a more nuanced recovery of the African American literary histories of the
decade.

Not surprisingly, some of the most ardent calls for a democratic definition of
American literature and American authorship came from women. While identifying the
extent to which women were involved in writing late nineteenth-century literary histories
does not necessarily change our understanding of the emergent canon of the early twentieth century, it does emphasize how women were doubly excluded from that narrative of American literature—both as authors and historians. In Sensational Designs (1985), Jane Tompkins argues that texts and authors must be understood in their historical contexts because they bear “a set of national, social, economic, institutional, and professional interests” that are essential to the formation and continual reformation of their critical status (xii). Her argument about fictional texts also applies to literary histories, for it is only by understanding their historical circumstances that we can understand why they were or were not privileged in the academy. As Richard Brodhead suggests in Cultures of Letters (1993), historical contexts provide more than just a backdrop for scenes of “literary writing”: “American literary history should be rethought as the history of the relation between literary writing and the changing meanings and places made for such work in American social history—a history not of texts or contexts alone but of the multiform transactions that have taken place between them” (8-9).

By demonstrating that discussions about American literature occurred concomitantly with other societal discourses and that the process of negotiation often reflected disagreement with that discourse, the scenes of negotiation under investigation here provide more than a backdrop for subsequent literary histories and historians. In addition to documenting the existence of an American tradition, these discussions demonstrate that the participants in these case studies believed that the United States had outgrown its colonial past and joined other cultured nations on the world stage. Some of this discussion revolved around ideas about the canon, which meant something entirely
different to the late nineteenth-century discussants under investigation here than it does to us today because, for them, there was no fixed American canon. This is not to say that American editors, periodicals, authors and readers remained unaware of the concept of the canon. Their conversations and debates about American literature and authorship often responded directly to the prevailing cultural discourse that insisted that American authors and texts were inferior to their counterparts in the long-standing European canon. As John Jay Chapman wrote, in his 1897 literary tribute “Walt Whitman,” the “so-called canons” were used to disparage American authors as well as their texts: “The educated gentlemen of Europe have surveyed literature with these time honored instruments and hordes of them long ago rushed to America with their theodolites and their quadrants in their hands. They sized us up and they sized us down, and they never could find greatness in literature among us until Walt Whitman appeared” (156). In terminology reminiscent of The Bookman’s discussion of Wilstach’s map, Chapman imagines Europeans surveying the American literary landscape and determining that, until Whitman arrived on the scene, no American author had conquered any territory. This view, which differs markedly from Wilstach’s, reminds us that one thread of societal discourse that Americans interested in developing a national literary tradition reacted against was the supposed inferiority of American literature. By recreating the cultural conversation of the 1890s, we gain a better appreciation of the era as important not as the birthplace of modernism but as the culmination of the nineteenth century, when those interested in developing an American literary tradition looked back to the beginnings of American
literature and began to develop the necessary frameworks with which to shape and order it.

My study stops at 1900 for two reasons: because 1900 marks the centennial (or final) year of the nineteenth century, according to the Western calendar, thus making a logical chronological ending point, and because I believe that by 1900, the tide was turning away from the democratization of American literature. I base this belief on the works of scholars such as Nancy Glazener, who argues, in *Reading for Realism* (1997), that universities increasingly displaced late nineteenth-century periodicals as the site of cultural authority of American literature in the closing years of the century. Once ensconced within academia, the narrative of American literature became increasingly narrow. As Elizabeth Renker argues in *The Origins of American Literature Studies* (2007), the number of canonical authors shrank dramatically after American literature achieved, in her words, “curricular canonicity” within academia (4). Once curricular canonicity had been achieved, Renker writes, “the new ‘departments’ at American colleges and universities reorganized the curriculum in top-down fashion, around the subjects defined by professors and their new areas of specialized expertise” (142). Yet, in her conclusion, Renker posits that the story of American literature might have turned out differently had it been shaped by a “bottom-up” model rather than this “top-down” model. The following chapters investigate scenes of negotiation where such a bottom-up model remained possible, because it still remained in the more democratic hands of readers, authors, editors, and periodicals. My investigation of these sites allows us to see the late nineteenth-century American literary map as both open and contested ground.
Chapter 1

Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen Mackay Hutchinson:
Co-editors of *A Library of American Literature*

The story behind *A Library of American Literature* opens in 1882 with a scene of negotiation. According to an advertisement for the *Library* in Joseph Kirkland’s *The Story of Chicago* (1892), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Oliver Wendell Holmes both declined when Cincinnati publisher W. E. Dibble approached them about publishing a “complete literary history of America.”1 Dibble then asked “Whittier, Lowell, Emerson and Piatt,” but they all refused, suggesting that Dibble ask Edmund Clarence Stedman (1833-1908) instead. Stedman, literary critic, poet, and Wall Street broker, agreed to undertake the project—as long as Dibble hired Ellen Mackay Hutchinson (1851-1933), long-time literary editor of the New York *Tribune*, as co-editor.2 Hutchinson’s correspondence with Stedman during this time indicates that she wanted to accept the job, but that she first needed to check with Whitelaw Reid, her boss at the *Tribune*, to ensure

1 This advertisement, part of the supplementary advertising material in Joseph Kirkland’s *The Story of Chicago*, is titled “A Library of American Literature” (480-81). The ad presents W.E. Dibble’s narrative of the *Library*’s beginnings, provides testimonials, and gives ordering information. It also provides a rare account of Stedman and Hutchinson’s decision to move the *Library* from the Dibble Publishing Company to Charles L. Webster & Co. For more about 1882 as their starting date, see “To the Subscribers to ’A Library of American Literature,’ undated advertisement, W.E. Benjamin Papers, Box 13. Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York [hereafter WEBP].
2 How Stedman and Hutchinson met remains unknown. The earliest correspondence I have been able to locate from November 16, 1880, wherein “Nelly M. Hutchinson” wrote Mrs. Stedman asking her to join her at the theater on Saturday, thanking her for a delightful dinner, and sending her regards to Mr. Stedman. Edmund Clarence Stedman Papers, Box 65. Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York [hereafter ECSP].
that she could undertake the *Library* work without forfeiting her position at the paper.\(^3\)

Once she obtained his permission, she and Stedman signed the contract. Had Dibble’s earlier negotiations been successful, the *Library* may have presented an entirely different picture of the American literary tradition than the one that Stedman and Hutchinson shaped during their decade-long editorship on the *Library*, which produced one of the late nineteenth century’s most important and formative constructions of American literature.

Long anticipated in the press, the *Library* experienced delay after delay before the first volumes saw publication. As Evelyn Rezek Bibb notes in her early and influential analysis of the *Library* in “Anthologies of American Literature” (1965), “Probably no reference book in American literature ever had a better press” (256). By 1884, periodicals such as *The Critic*, *The Literary World*, and *Zion’s Herald* were announcing the *Library*’s forthcoming publication. A representative example, from *The Literary World*’s May 17, 1884 issue provides an overview of Stedman and Hutchinson’s plan for the *Library*:

> Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman and Miss Ellen M. Hutchinson, who is connected with the literary department of the New York *Tribune*, have compiled *A Library of American Literature*, which will be published in ten octavo volumes by Messrs. N. E. Dibble & Co. of Cincinnati, Ohio. Mr. Stedman and Miss Hutchinson have been at work gathering the material for these volumes several years. It is to consist of specimens of American

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\(^3\)“Nelly M.H.” to “Dear Mr. Stedman” (March 30, 1882). Hutchinson’s letter indicates that Reid had no objections to her working on what he called the “Cincinnati matter.” Dibble’s Publishing Company was located in Cincinnati. ECSP, Box 65.
literature dating from the earliest settlement to the present time. The editors aim to give distinctive readable examples from authoritative texts of the writings and every class and period; “to form a collection, in fact, which will be to our literature,” says the announcement, ‘what a National Gallery is to national art.” The extracts will be longer than those usual in similar compilations. The first two volumes of the series are about ready. The work will be sold by subscription. (169)

This ad, which mentions the publishing company and not the publisher Stedman and Hutchinson dealt with and incorrectly anticipates that the first volumes will shortly appear, echoes the sentiment that Stedman and Hutchinson would express elsewhere: that they aspired to provide readers with a readable library of American literature. “After all,” they write in the “Preface,” “as with the study of Nature, the best way to gain a knowledge of literature is to survey it with our own eyes. Nothing can enable one sooner to test the quality of our native product,—to comprehend its origin and development, and its reflection on the different stages of American history and aspiration,—than such an exhibition as we propose” (LAL I:v). Unlike Wilstach, who negotiated his understanding of the American literary tradition with his readers through a map, Stedman and Hutchinson envisioned their Library as being a gallery where American literature could be displayed. They heavily promoted the Library in the years leading up to their planned “exhibition.” According to Bibb, complimentary notices similar to the one in The Literary World appeared in newspapers in “London, New York, Baltimore, Atlanta, and San Francisco,” as well as in “magazines like the North American Review, the Century,
Like an art gallery, the Library gave readers access to American literary texts that they would never have been able to locate, access, or afford on their own. As the advertisement in Kirkland’s *Story of Chicago* explains, the sources Stedman and Hutchinson needed, especially for the early volumes, were scattered, rare, inaccessible, and out of print. The editors met with a “multiplicity of difficulties,” having to hunt up all the collectors of rare books in order to secure such books as we had to have for copy, oftentimes being almost completely at a standstill for want of some old book out of print, often finding that the book we wanted we could not buy at any price but were compelled to send a copyist to transcribe the desired matter with the book in the possession of its owner.

(481)
The ad goes on to explain that, while late nineteenth-century copyright laws enabled Stedman and Hutchinson to locate much of the later material in the Congressional Library, this meant that contracts had to be signed “with each author and publisher setting forth the conditions under which the right to publish the articles desired were granted; all of which consumed many years of tedious labor and large sums of money” (481). The sheer amount of work involved in compiling the Library staggers the imagination. Had they realized the extent of time and labor the project would involve, the editors wrote in their “Preface to the Final Volume,” “neither our ambition nor our sense of duty could have induced us to assume its editorial conduct” (LAL XI: v).
Published in eleven volumes between 1888 and 1890, the *Library* quickly became a favorite resource for readers, writers, editors, anthologists and teachers. Bibb notes that for the next forty years scholars used the *Library* as a resource that informed their own literary histories, textbooks, and anthologies (237). Because Stedman and Hutchinson both kept their day jobs, many of their negotiations about what authors and texts should be included in the *Library* occurred via correspondence. Now housed at Columbia University, this correspondence traces their day-to-day conversations about the *Library*. The advertisement mentioned above gives some indication of the scope of the project, saying that they gleaned “the richest and rarest gems from over 500,000 volumes [of American literature] already published” (480). While no records suggest that they actually read half a million volumes, they certainly read—or at least read from—a considerable number. Upon completion, the *Library* contained 2671 selections by 1207 authors, with the editors estimating that they had read at least five times that many authors and most likely more than five times as many books. “For every author quoted at least five others have been under consideration,” they write in the “Preface to the Final Volume,” “and probably a larger average number of books has been examined for each selection made” (v). Comparing their estimate regarding the extant volumes of American literature to the number of selections in included in the *Library* reveals the extent to which Stedman and Hutchinson limited the scope of American literature to fit into the confines of the *Library*. Speaking merely in terms of volumes published versus selections (and ignoring relative page counts), we see that they republished far less than one percent of the available texts (roughly, .005%). We must realize, then, that despite its claims to be
inclusive, the Library reflects Stedman and Hutchinson’s highly selective view of American literature.

In Writers in Retrospect (2006), Claudia Stokes effectively argues that the Library’s breadth marks its unique contribution to American literary history. Moreover, she says the Library included one of the earliest self-referential acknowledgments of the genre of literary history with its inclusion of an extract from Charles F. Richardson’s volume of literary history, American Literature (1891). Richardson’s “Nathaniel Hawthorne” addresses Hawthorne’s genius, art and ethics, realism and idealism, background and characteristics (LAL: XI, 54-60). This inclusion, Stokes writes, “suggests the perception of literary history itself as a literary historical event” (19). Yet, after initially noting Hutchinson as Stedman’s co-editor, Stokes largely omits Hutchinson’s name from her subsequent discussion of the Library. As Stokes provides the most insightful analysis to date of the Library as literary history—saying that the Library’s inclusion of the Richardson extract marks an early acknowledgement of the late nineteenth century’s concentration on the production of literary histories—her omission diminishes Hutchinson’s impact on the Library. My point here is not that Stokes entirely overlooks Hutchinson’s connections to the Library—she does not. She twice mentions Hutchinson as Stedman’s co-editor and then identifies her as a literary historian (Stokes 19, 83, 183). However, portions of her discussion follow what I see as a pattern in scholarly attention to the Library: more frequent attribution to Stedman alone than to Stedman and Hutchinson. According to Stokes, “Edmund Stedman” included the chapter from Richardson in the Library (19). Elsewhere, she talks about “Stedman’s” Library
sales figures and attributes the “first anthology of American literature” solely to him (31, 116). I do not mean to single out Stokes. Another, more recent instance can be found in the “Chronology” that precedes The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century Poetry (2011), where the sole entry for 1889 reads, “Edmund Clarence Stedman begins publication of ten-volume Library of American Literature” (xvii). In addition to misstating the Library’s initial year of publication (1888) and the number of volumes in the completed Library (eleven), the entry fails to acknowledge Hutchinson. Because it is best-known today by Stedman’s name, nobody recognizes how Hutchinson informed the American literary tradition on display within the pages of the Library.

This chapter corrects the historical record concerning Hutchinson’s contributions to the Library by recovering her as an equal partner on the project. A savvy negotiator, Hutchinson more than held her own with her more famous co-editor. As Elizabeth Renker has convincingly argued in “The ‘Twilight of the Poets’ in the Era of American Realism, 1875-1900,” Stedman was an important late nineteenth-century poet, anthologist, and critic. Renker calls attention to Stedman as “one of the most distinguished men of letters of the era,” positing that his 1885 critical assessment of nineteenth-century poetry as being in its “twilight” era had both instant and lasting impact on American literary criticism (“The ‘Twilight of the Poets’” 137). Some of Stedman’s works published before the Library include Poems, Lyrical and Idyllic (1860), The Battle of Bull Run (1861), Alice of Monmouth (1863), The Blameless Prince and Other Poems (1869), Victorian Poets (1875), and Hawthorne and Other Poets (1877). His later publications include The Works of Edgar Allan Poe (with George Woodbury,
1894-95), *A Victorian Anthology* (1895), and *An American Anthology* (1900). Though far from complete, this list suggests Stedman’s influence in the publishing world, as he not only published his own poetry but also the work of many other poets. In *Edmund Clarence Stedman* (1977), Robert J. Scholnick posits that, with his anthologies and in his poetics, Stedman anticipated the rebirth of poetry in twentieth-century America (163). He calls Stedman the “Friend and Helper of Young Aspirants,” noting that he used his influence to encourage many younger poets. With his chapter title, Scholnick alludes to Harriet Monroe’s description in her autobiography of Stedman as “the dean of American poets, the friend and helper of young aspirants” (Monroe 82). According to Scholnick, in his efforts to assist other poets Stedman “read and criticized their work, helped them find publishers, ‘loaned’ money, wrote letters of recommendation, reserved a large section of the *Anthology* for a generous selection from their work—he did whatever he could to further their careers, to make life possible for them as poets” (149). In April 1881, Stedman arranged for James R. Osgood to read Hutchinson’s poems in manuscript. The resulting volume, *Songs and Lyrics*, appeared the same year. A powerful influence in the literary world, Stedman’s assessments and recommendations mattered. Yet, Stedman consistently promoted Hutchinson as his co-editor in his *Library* correspondence. Two representative letters, reprinted in Laura Stedman and George M. Gould’s *The Life and Letters of Edmund Clarence Stedman* (1910), illustrate his high regard for Hutchinson. The first, dated December 13, 1888 and addressed to “Mrs. —,” describes Hutchinson as his “amiable and brilliant co-editor” (Stedman and Gould 112). The second, his September 2, 1899 letter to Constance Fenimore Woolson, discusses their equitable
editorial power: “Mistress E. Hutchinson and I each have the veto-power as editors. That is the way we get along” (Stedman and Gould 140).

Hutchinson’s career at the Tribune provides some insight into how she earned the co-editorial equality that made her such an influential force on the Library. Harry W. Baehr, Jr. provides an early review of her career in The New York Tribune Since the Civil War (1936). Baehr documents that Hutchinson began as a reporter at the Tribune, reporting on “women’s activities” and conventions; by virtue of her “real flair for literary criticism,” he writes, she soon held a permanent staff position (142). Following the death of George Ripley in 1880, Hutchinson became literary editor of the paper. Under her leadership, the Sunday paper became “the metropolitan counterpart of the weekly editions, a journal of discussion and critical review” (Baehr 142). The Sunday edition averaged between 50,000 and 70,000 copies during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, which Baehr calls a “relatively stable and prosperous figure” that contributed heavily to the financial prosperity of the paper (143). Hutchinson worked at the Tribune for more than a decade before she began co-editing the Library, and she continued working there until her resignation in 1897. According to Baehr, she “was one of the first real newspaper women; she was highly respected by the staff in a day when women in professions were regarded with considerable skepticism. Whitelaw Reid deferred to her opinion, and men who worked with her have retained her in memory as an able, helpful, and efficient colleague” (142). Documenting Hutchinson’s twenty-five-year career at the Tribune, Baehr not only records Hutchinson’s rise from reporter to editor of the Sunday edition to literary editor of the paper, but he credits her with contributing substantially to
its financial success. Hutchinson’s background as a pioneering woman journalist and literary editor supplied her credentials to co-edit the *Library* as well as the negotiating skills she would need in her partnership with Stedman.

Once volumes of the *Library* began appearing, Stedman and Hutchinson received recognition for their definition of an American literary tradition. For instance, after the publication of the first two volumes, John Greenleaf Whittier wrote Stedman, saying, “I think thee and Miss Hutchinson are deserving of national thanks for demonstrating that America has a Literature distinctly her own” (Stedman and Gould 142). Similarly, writing to thank Stedman for “the fine presentation of my homely home-spun verses in your recently completed compilation with Miss Hutchinson,” James Whitcomb Riley said, “To Miss Hutchinson, as well, my praise and thanks. Your mutual effort seems to me the best grounded, the most carefully and perfected work of the character in my knowledge” (Stedman and Gould 144). In the pages that follow, I reevaluate the *Library* and its place in American literary history in order to understand its intervention in the late nineteenth-century discourse about the need for an American literary tradition. I then trace the narrative of Stedman and Hutchinson’s discussions about American literature in order to demonstrate how their negotiating process belies the *Library’s* smooth narrative of American literature.

I. Reevaluating the *Library* and Its Place in American Literary History

*You would not describe an elephant in the same language you would a mouse! You would not describe Niagara in the same common-place manner you described the little water-fall in the tiny brook! How should you describe this gigantic work (so immense that it makes our best
Writing to Horace Scudder about the *Library* in November 1887, Stedman commented that it was “a most pretentious title,” especially “in view of the relatively small alcoves into which we have to pack seven or eight generations of authors” (Stedman and Gould 129). Employing the metaphor of a crowded physical structure, Stedman worries that their *Library* will be too small for the job at hand—to represent, as the *Library*’s subtitle indicates, American literature “from the earliest settlement to the present time.” In contrast, the epigraph above, from the *Library*’s promotional material, suggests that the “gigantic” *Library* defied description. Like an elephant or the Niagara, its size simply overwhelmed everything else by comparison. The last question in the epigraph suggests one reason for this grandiose description—subscribers would be asked to pay substantially more for the *Library* than for other books. Stedman’s comparative price of three or four dollars for other works must be put in context of the total cost of the *Library*. As Bibb documents, subscription sets sold for $33, or three dollars per volume; volumes bound in leather or morocco were even higher, at $4 and $5 respectively (243). To justify the price, Stedman and Hutchinson stressed that the *Library* was not an encyclopedia, an anthology of verse, or a thesaurus but “as its name implies, will be a library in itself, whose contents are most attractive, offering precisely that of which the home-reader wishes to be informed” (“Preface” v).

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Scholars still struggle to define the Library, most of them labeling it anachronistically. While Bibb calls it the “last of the great national anthologies” (169), Stokes refers to it as “the first anthology of American literature” (118), a contradiction we can resolve by noting the changing meaning of the word “anthology.” Anne Ferry points out in Tradition and the Individual Poem (2001), for nineteenth-century readers, the term anthology referred primarily to collections of verse, such as Stedman’s A Victorian Anthology (1895) and his An American Anthology (1900). Because the Library contained both prose and verse, it was not, strictly speaking, an anthology. The Library’s inclusiveness—its incorporation of both poetry and prose—differentiated it from other anthologies of the era, marking a new approach to American literature. Because very little of the literature they included, especially in the early volumes, had previously been available to the general reader, Stedman and Hutchinson filled a vacant niche with their Library, first assuring the readers that, as their editors, they knew “precisely” what the readers wanted—and then giving it to them.

Working from the ground up, Stedman and Hutchinson “constructed” an American literature. As Bibb observes, “[B]efore anthologies could be produced, both publisher and anthologist had to be convinced that there was a body of American writings which could be viewed with pride and ought to be preserved for posterity” (33, emphasis in original). As Lauter writes in Canons and Contexts (1991), in the mid 1980s scholars would feel the need to “reconstruct” American literature to meet the growing demand for a more inclusive canon. But before American literature could be reconstructed, it must first be constructed. In his discussions of the new Heath Anthology of American
Literature (1990), Lauter reminds us that anthologies today still act as important sites for the “republication of lost or abandoned works” (162). More importantly, however, he points out the importance of locating the theoretical conceptions, critical practices, and historical designs that inform the recovery of lost and abandoned texts. Identifying what Stedman and Hutchinson recovered for inclusion in the Library allows us insight into their conceptions of American literary and cultural history.

Stedman and Hutchinson claimed a broad view of American literature, including in their Library state papers, speeches, poems, tales, sketches, and selected extracts from longer prose texts. In the “Preface to the Final Volume,” Stedman and Hutchinson call upon their title to defend the breadth of their inclusionary approach, saying that the term “library” “denotes a compilation varied in subject, treatment and merit, and above all—inclusive, often waiving a severe adherence to perfection in style or thought” (LAL XI, vi). But lest they become too inclusive, they narrow the scope for “American” literature by limiting the list of authors. In the “Preface,” they write that since the Library was neither a historical or encyclopedic work, they were “not forced to place all American writers, colonial and national, upon the list of those represented” (LAL I, v). They specifically limit their selections to “writings of the English tongue,” saying that they would not offer translations of “the French and Spanish explorers of the Canadian and Southern coasts and the Dutch settlers of New Netherlands” (LAL I, vii).

Bibb notes that late nineteenth-century literary historians often acted as “apologist[s] for an immature American literature” (434). By this she means that they found it necessary to defend the idea that America had a literature. Bibb argues that some
scholars, like Robert Walsh, a “journalist and litterateur,” deemed American literature so inferior to British literature that he did not think it even merited collection (21). Writing about the supposed barrenness of American literature, Scholnick posits that “Stedman [and Hutchinson] exploded the myth of the poverty of American literature in the best possible way, by discovering and presenting representative samples that could speak for themselves and define their own tradition” (139). Stedman and Hutchinson argued that the Library was different from its predecessors. Their insistence on what the Library was not references these predecessors and reasons that these former works—mainly encyclopedias, poetry anthologies, biographies, and histories—had evidently not functioned to persuade American readers of the existence of a national literature, let alone to familiarize them with that literature. Bibb helpfully identifies some of the Library’s most important predecessors: Samuel Lorenzo Knapp’s American Cultural History 1607-1829 (1829); Samuel Kettell’s Specimens of American Poetry (1829); Robert Chambers and Reverend Royal Robbins’s Historical Sketches of English and American Literature (1841); Rufus Griswold’s three volumes of American and “female” prose and poetry: The Poets and Poetry of America (1842), The Prose Writers of America (1847), and The Female Poets of America (1849); and Evert A. and George L. Duyckinck’s Cyclopaedia of American Literature (1855, enlarged 1865 and 1875) (22-23).5 Of these, she classifies the Duyckincks’ Cyclopaedia as the Library’s closest and most influential forbearer, but

5 See Casper, “Defining the National Pantheon,” (Reading Books: Essays on the Material Text and Literature in America, eds. Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles, 1996) for a discussion of the shift from focusing on biography to marketing authors’ works and how this shift impacted remarketing strategies for “two series of biographies, the American Statesmen and the American Men of Letters” (originally published in the 1880s and 1890s) after the turn of the century (180). Casper notes that only seven American authors were included in Houghton Mifflin’s two-hundred-volume set of Standard Library Editions (179).
she says that the Library’s emphasis on literature and its call for “literary re-evaluations” distinguished it from the Cyclopaedia (Bibb 251). The most important point of distinction between the Library and its predecessors was the Library’s presentation of thousands of selected readings.

Because the Library, like libraries more generally, housed a diverse collection of literature, Stedman and Hutchinson had to define “American literature.” Writing about “Early Colonial Literature,” for example, Stedman and Hutchinson say that they “term all literature American that was produced by the heroic pioneers, whose thought, learning and resolution shaped the colonial mind” (“Preface” vii). Here they define American literature not by where it was published or even by the citizenship of the author, but rather they look to the soil on which the texts were written (but not to those native to it) and for frontier themes, such as independence, freedom, and rights, to define literature as characteristically “American.” In choosing the “earliest settlement” as a beginning point for an American literary tradition, as the subtitle of the Library reflects, Stedman and Hutchinson situate not American independence or American unification as the beginning point of American literature but rather the founding of English-speaking colonies on American soil. Reaching back beyond the Revolutionary and Civil wars to colonial times allowed them to present en masse three hundred years’ worth of American texts in order to argue convincingly for America’s long and rich literary history.

The Library’s innovative approach to American literature allowed readers to read the literature of the nation instead of merely reading about it. “After all,” they write in the “Preface,” “as with the study of Nature, the best way to gain a knowledge of literature is
to survey it with our own eyes. Nothing can enable one sooner to test the quality of our
native product,—to comprehend its origin and its development, and its reflection on the
different stages of American history and aspiration,—than such an exhibition as we
propose” (LAL I, v). In words that echo Emersonian ideals, Stedman and Hutchinson call
for the reading of American literature, anticipating that their reader will include both “the
scholar and the layman” (“Preface to the Final Volume” vi). During the mid-nineteenth
century Emerson had declared that Americans had “listened too long to the courtly muses
of Europe” in anticipation of American scholars (68). Similarly, Stedman and Hutchinson
want Americans to focus on their “native product,” to look inward rather than outward
for literary inspiration. Readers at home and abroad recognized the Library’s purpose,
read its contents, and comprehended that America had a literature. One of the many
reviewers of the Library wrote, in the London Times, that the Library’ “panorama of
print” was “a revelation to many Americans and to more Englishmen” (Stedman and
Gould 143-44). Aiming to convince readers that the nation had a literature, Stedman and
Hutchinson succeeded both at home and abroad. Indeed, reading the Library’s prefaces,
one gets the sense that the finished project exceeded even Stedman and Hutchinson’s
expectations. They write, “Let us confess for our own part, that in progressing with the
‘Library,’ we realized, after a while, that we had builded better than we knew” (LAL XI,
vii). Not only were they pleased with the final product, but also they were satisfied that
they had accomplished what they set out to do, saying, “We have respected our title”
(LAL XI, vi).
In their prefaces, Stedman and Hutchinson claim that they will “place before the reader select and characteristic examples of the literature of this country, and to do so, as far as possible, without note or comment, leaving to others the field of critical review” (LAL I, v). Speaking generally about Stedman’s literary histories, Stokes records that William Dean Howells complained about the absence of such critical commentary. Stokes recalls the disastrous reception of Edmund Gosse’s *From Shakespeare to Pope* (1885), a literary history which John Churton Collins had decried in an 1886 review as being riddled with factual inaccuracies; the resulting uproar ultimately led to the professionalization of literary history (110-111). While Stedman and Hutchinson began compiling their *Library* before the Gosse-Collins affair, their prefaces—with their forthright and repeated objective of assembling comprehensive selections of American literature without critical commentary—were published afterward. I want to turn my attention to these prefaces, for they function as the *Library*’s critical underpinning, supplying us with a democratic, or broadly inclusive, definition of American literature and with some of their suggestions for the most productive reading of the works assembled with the *Library*’s pages. To date, little critical attention has been paid to the prefaces, probably because of Stedman and Hutchinson’s forthright and repeated assertions that the *Library* allows the reader to engage with the literature apart from critical intrusions. For instance, near the conclusion of the “Preface to the Final Volume,” Stedman and Hutchinson tell their readers, “It is not our province to comment upon writings displayed in this compilation” (LAL XI, x). However, as Lauter suggested above, the very process of selection necessitates a critical approach. Closely reading the
prefaces allows us to better understand Stedman and Hutchinson’s intervention in the late nineteenth-century critical conversation by highlighting how the prefaces work to justify and frame the works the editors introduce. For, as we read Stedman and Hutchinson’s pledge to keep their editorial intrusions to a minimum, we should note their caveat that they will withhold notes, comments, and critical review only “as far as possible” (emphasis mine). The implication underlying their caveat suggests that there will be at least some critical apparatus to guide readers in their perusals of the texts contained in the Library.

As already indicated, Stedman and Hutchinson wrote two prefaces: the “Preface” (1887), in the first volume, and the “Preface to the Final Volume” (1890).6 In Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation (1997), Gérard Genette identifies two purposes to what he calls the “original assumptive authorial preface”: “to get the book read and to get the book read properly” (197, emphases in original). In his chapter on prefaces, Genette identifies several important functions of the preface, such as claiming novelty (to emphasize a text’s importance), promoting unity (especially important in collections), discussing genesis (the origin, circumstances, and stages of the text), choosing a public (guiding the reader by telling them what they want), and commenting on the title (often, a defense against criticism of said title). Stedman and Hutchinson’s prefaces mirror the purposes and functions outlined by Genette. In the “Preface,” the editors provide an

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6 The prefaces each end with Stedman and Hutchinson’s names. Also, though Stedman elsewhere privately mentions his authorship of the final “Preface,” (such as his letter of February 18, 1883 to Dibble), the public presentation of their Library reinforces their sharing of this editorial duty. Two undated letters from Hutchinson to Stedman indicate that she certainly had a hand in revising the prefaces for the “revised” Benjamin edition in 1894 (both on stationary imprinted “Teaneck near Englewood, New Jersey”: one dated “Tuesday Morn.” and another dated “Sunday Eve.”).
overview of the project’s plan, scope, and novelty; argue the necessity of the project; and
discuss, in fairly general terms, a variety of topics foundational to studying American
literature. These topics include genre, literary merit, authoritative editions, and the
difficulties of defining America, American authors, and/or a national literature. The
“Preface” anticipates that the “Tenth volume of this series will contain a careful Index to
the whole work, and a brief Supplementary Preface,” though, eventually, both the second
preface and the index were shifted to the eleventh and final volume (ix). The longer
“Preface to the Final Volume” continues and extends the conversation initiated in the
“Preface,” recording setbacks and successes encountered in the editing and publication
processes and providing a self-scrutinizing topical analysis of the Library’s contents. In
other words, Stedman and Hutchinson’s prefaces promote reader engagement—they are
designed to get the readers to read the volumes, and they tell them how to read properly.

In fact, the Library employs a number of strategies to arrange texts and guide
readers. Texts are grouped systematically (within literary periods and in chronological
order by authors’ birthdates). When known, the dates of the author’s birth and death
appear immediately above each selection, as does publication information for each text.
Arthur Stedman’s “Short Biographies”7 in the eleventh volume provide more detailed
information about the authors’ lives and publications. In addition to the “Topical Index”
in the “Preface to the Final Volume,” Volume XI also includes an exhaustive general
index. The “Topical Index” lists categories (anecdote, biography, character sketches,

7 These biographies, written by Arthur Stedman, were included in response to requests from readers of the
eyear volumes (“Preface to the Final Volume” vi). In “To the Subscribers to ‘A Library of American
Literature,’” (undated advertisement, WEBP, Box 13), the editors say that, in response to repeated requests
by readers to give more biographical details, they will publish an eleventh volume that will devote roughly
one-third of its space to biographical notices.
correspondence, etc.) that appear both in the general index and in advertising for the
Library. In some cases, the advertisements include portions of the topical index listing
the number of entries for each “class” of literature. Thus, not only does the topical index
guide the readers through the Library, but it also works as an inducement to get them to
buy the Library. So informative are the prefaces that many reviews and even some
studies simply include substantial portions of them in lieu of other commentary. For
instance, Stedman and Gould include the majority of the “Preface to the Final Volume”
in their Life and Letters of Edmund Clarence Stedman, framing it simply as the “history”
of the Library. Similarly, Bibb reprints the “Topical Analysis of Selections” to support
her observations that “more prose than poetry was anthologized,” that “modern readers”
demand more emphasis on fiction, and that the Library exhibited “much more variety in
‘classes’ or genres than there is in modern American literature collections” (Bibb 254). In
other words, the prefaces have subsequently been used apart from the Library as
historical commentary about its purpose and design.

The “Preface” begins by presenting the Library’s design to “afford the reader a
general view of the course of American Literature from the outset to the present time”
(LAL I, v). In “Defining the National Pantheon,” Scott E. Casper explores the usage of
the phrase “our literature” in marketing the American Men of Letters series, arguing that
the phrase “asserted that such a thing existed—that a nation with a relatively short
political history and an even shorter literary one had nonetheless acquired a storiad past
by the 1880s” (180). Stedman and Hutchinson make a similar tactical argument, saying
that American literature dated back to “Shakespeare’s time” (LAL 1:v). To establish this
time frame, they include, as poetic epigraph to the first volume, “To The Virginian Voyage” by Michael Drayton (1563-1631). Drayton’s “Ode. To the Virginian Voyage” was published in 1606 before the expedition set sail in December (Norton Anthology of English Literature, p. 968, n. 1). A contemporary of Shakespeare, Drayton has his speaker encourage “Britons” to make the voyage to Virginia. Notably, the editors redact the poem, so that rather than ending with mention of possible fame for the hardy explorers, the last (quoted) stanza imagines the abundant nature of America’s poetic muse:

And as there plenty grows
Of laurel everywhere,
Apollo’s sacred tree,
You it may see
A poet’s brows
To crown, that may sing there. (61-66)

The epigraph from Drayton’s poem imagines America as a land where laurel, a plant used to make wreaths to reward poetic endeavors, is plentiful. The poem follows the table of contents and precedes the first reading selection, Captain John Smith’s “An Adventure on the Chickahominy” (1608).

Thus, the editors substantiate their vision of American literature by introducing their Library with a poem written by a well-respected (British) poet from the time of Shakespeare who anticipates that literature (specifically, poetry) will be written in America. Then, for their first selection (that is, the first one actually listed in the table of
contents), they present an “American” text: a type of travel narrative that could have only been written in the Americas—Smith’s record of his journey up the Checka Hamania River, his encounter with hostile “Indians,” and his meeting with the king of Pamaunck, who was called Opeckankenough (LAL 1:3-5). The narrative opens with a brief account of the hanging of a rebellious “smith” and the execution of the man he named as his conspirator, one “Captaine Kendall,” who was shot. Stedman and Hutchinson situate this narrative in the “period” of “Early Colonial Literature.”

The category of “Early Colonial Literature” provides an effective example for illustrating Stedman and Hutchinson’s framing of texts. First, they introduce colonial writings as literature in the “Preface,” saying that Early Colonial Literature “starts with the tales of the Voyagers who first gained a permanent foothold on these shores” (vii). In their “Preface,” Stedman and Hutchinson note that their locating their beginning point with the successful (i.e. permanent) colonists excludes earlier ventures (such as those by Raleigh, Gosnold, and Waymouth), promising “striking accounts of voyaging, shipwreck, [and] discovery” (vii). Then they provide nine such accounts, beginning with John Smith, who played a crucial but not untroubled role in the establishment of Jamestown. In the index, where the topic of “Early Colonial Literature” does not appear, these accounts are variously listed. Some, like Smith’s, appear under “History” while others, such as John Rolfe’s account of “Why He Married Pocahontas” and William Strachey’s “A Storm off the Bermudas,” are listed under “Narratives.” So, after introducing early explorers’ and colonists’ texts as American literature in the preface, they then build their index on the
premise that not all early American literature fits the same category, cross listing
selections to ease their readers’ process of locating them.

Stedman and Hutchinson’s “Topical Analysis,” included as a table in the “Preface
to the Final Volume,” illustrates that the editors found it useful to cross-list some
selections, as can be seen by looking specifically at the contents of Volume I. First,
however, I want to note that the eleven volumes are divided into four main periods:

Early Colonial Literature (1607-1675), in Volume I;
Later Colonial Literature (1676-1764), in Volume II;
Literature of the Revolutionary Period (1765-1787), in Volume III;
Literature of the Republic:
   Part One: 1788-1820 (Volume IV),
   Part Two: 1821-1834 (Volume V),
   Part Three: 1835-1860 (Volumes VI-VIII),
   Part Four: 1861-1888 (Volumes X-XI).

These periods do not appear in the index; rather, they are simply listed on the “Contents”
page of their respective volumes. According to the editors, the first volume contains 166
selections by 60 authors (52 named, 8 anonymous), and these selections are distributed
across sixteen topical categories; four—“History” (74), “Theology” (45), “Poetry” (25),
and “Correspondence” (14)—are well-represented, while the twelve other topics have
“Oratory” (1), “Philosophy” (2), and “War” (10) (this last category is subdivided, with
“Bacon’s Rebellion and “Indian Troubles having, respectively, 4 and 6 entries).

However, the table also reveals that a considerable number of entries (28) are cross-listed in the first volume (roughly 17%). While most of the selections are assigned to only one “class” (Stedman and Hutchinson’s term for what we now call genre), the number of cross-listed entries reflects that in this period of defining an American literary tradition even definitions of “class” (i.e. genre) remained fluid.

As the “Topical Analysis” indicates, more than half of the selections in Volume I can be considered historical, though subsequent volumes had different topical balances. “History” would never again comprise over fifty percent of a volume’s pages, for instance, while never again would “Poetry” contain so few. The number of historical entries slowly dropped (from 74 in the first volume to 6 in the last), while the number of poems slowly increased (from 25 in Volume 1 to 186 in Volume XI, a substantial figure, especially if we take into consideration that one-third of the final volume’s pages was devoted to indexes and biographical entries). “Theology” saw a fifty percent decrease between Volumes 1 and 2 (dropping from 45 selections to 23), and the final volume had only one theological selection. “Witchcraft,” on the other hand, a topic with no entries in the first volume, was well represented, with 17 entries, in Volume 2 (“Later Colonial Literature”). The selections reflect “subjects of interest to the public mind, in their several periods,” according to the editors, and the “Topical Analysis” reflects “not only the

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8 Subtracting the “Actual No. of Selections” from the “Total No. Entries and Cross-Entries” in the “Topical Analysis,” determines that 338 items are cross-listed in the Library’s eleven volumes, or more than 12% (“Preface to the Final Volume,” ix).
variety of topics presented, but the changing character of those predominant at different stages” \((LAL\ 11:x)\).

Dividing the literary selections by “class” in the “Topical Analysis” table and in the index allows the editors to systematize the large body of works assembled in their \textit{Library} in different ways than the “period” categories allowed. Periodization provided a familiar framework for many readers. As Bibb notes, Stedman and Hutchinson’s literary periods closely match those in the Duyckinck \textit{Cyclopaedia} (253). Because they regard all of the selections as “literature,” that topic does not appear as such in the table.\(^9\) Instead, the editors show, with their “Topical Analysis” and index, the range of topics they identified in American literature. It was not sufficient merely to locate and present the samples, however. They must be organized systematically in order for readers of the \textit{Library} to read efficiently, and the “Topical Index” provided this systematic organization, even though it was not available until the publication of the final volume. This self-reflexive analysis indicates that Stedman and Hutchinson compiled their \textit{Library} with incredible attentiveness. Whether or not the “Topical Index” played a role in the day-to-day selection process, it now informs readers that the editors came to understand the necessity of building an overarching framework for their \textit{Library}.

Stedman and Hutchinson’s policy of inclusivity made their systematic method of organization especially crucial; without it, the 2671 selections would have been nearly

\(^9\) Interestingly, “literature” is listed in the index, where readers are merely advised to “See \textit{Criticism}” \((LAL\ XI, 628)\). The category of “Criticism” is divided into four sub-sections: “Art,” “Dramatic,” “Literary,” and “Musical,” with “Literary” containing by far the most entries (roughly, 70).
impossible to navigate successfully. Of the Library’s “inclusive” nature, Stedman wrote to H. H. Furness:

‘We strive,’ first of all, ‘to please.’ It is very ‘inclusive,’ but the little writers show which way the wind blew, and made a background for the main figures. But I find Volume ix., soon to reach you, still more entertaining. ’Tis pleasant sometimes, to emerge from a conspicuous but venerable chestnut-grove and wander through the nurseries of oaks and tulip-trees still growing. (Stedman and Gould 139).

Stedman’s metaphor employs images of mature groves and immature trees to explain why the editors felt it necessary to include so many authors. He puts the “little writers” in the background to the “main figures,” but he insists that the background they provide is instrumental in understanding the contexts in which those larger figures wrote. Furthermore, he goes on in the second half of the quotation to imagine that readers sometimes needed a break from the “venerable” writers and that the lesser, still-developing figures could serve exactly that purpose. Without organization, however, these authors and their texts would have been a forest in which readers wandered aimlessly, and the argument the editors make in the “Preface, that even selections “possessing slight literary merit” often “have a special and independent value” would have been obscured (vi).

The editors’ aim of inclusiveness was realized, as previous scholarship has noted. Speaking in terms of authors and genres, Bibb records,
Historical, classical, and popular writers are represented. Regional interests are appealed to, and various literary genres are included. Some of the authors’ names—John Smith, Poe, Emerson, Thomas Buchanan Read, Lew Wallace, Joaquin Miller, Eugene Field, and James Whitcomb Riley—give an idea of the range. There are Civil War Songs and Poems as well as Negro Hymns and Songs (244). \(^{10}\)

Bibb notes a range of authorial categories, regions, and genres, as well as races. In the matter of race, Stokes concurs, noting that the Library’s “catholicity is apparent in its highly unusual inclusion of such typically overlooked genres as Negro spirituals” (19). The Library’s inclusiveness proved the range and wealth of American topics and gave some idea of the number of American authors producing (over three hundred years) a body of literature that required culling, shaping, and preserving. Additionally, with its inclusion of African American literature, the Library anticipates, in a very reserved way, Pauline Hopkins’s late nineteenth-century call for inclusion in *Contending Forces*.

Scholars typically do not think that the editors’ selection and preservation of particular texts and authors serves as critical commentary. For example, Scholnick credits Stedman for establishing the existence of American literature while “eschewing theoretical arguments and critical commentary” (139). Similarly, Stokes notes what she calls the “excision of all explicit criticism” (117). Stokes reads this move as reader-friendly, for it “invited readers to read the texts for themselves” (117). However, Stokes at least acknowledges some evidence of indirect commentary in the Library. For

\(^{10}\) Here, Bibb is directly referencing the Publisher’s Sample (housed in the University of Southern California Library), but her comments apply more generally to the Library as well.
example, while commenting on how the international copyright movement influenced the dissemination of American literary history, she writes that the *Library* “included alongside works of short fiction and poetry an essay on copyright by George Putnam, thus tacitly endorsing Putnam’s argument while anointing the movement itself as an important event in American literary history” (83). In other words, Stokes posits that including Putnam’s essay can be read as editorial agreement with the essay’s argument that authorial control of intellectual property should not rest on the geographical location of a text’s material production. Notably, Stedman and Hutchinson actually defend their inclusion of Putnam, “a non-professional writer,” in the “Preface to the Final Volume,” saying that regarding copyright law he had “afforded the clearest statement of an important matter” (LAL 11, vii). Not content to assume that readers will discover the indirect connections, they overtly direct them toward the Putnam text.

Thus, the preface points us to “an important matter” in late nineteenth-century discourse—the issue of international copyright—and then suggests how that issue should be resolved by providing an essay arguing on behalf of authors. Furthermore, the editors justify their inclusion of a “non-professional writer” as an American “author” on the basis of clarity and “importance.” Finally, they support the essay’s call for an international copyright by highlighting their own ethical practices regarding copyrighted material—documenting their efforts to trace down permissions to publish and thanking, in the “Preface to the Final Volume,” the publishers who have unstintingly granted permission to publish the copyrighted material included in the *Library*. As this reading suggests, Stedman and Hutchinson sometimes ignored their claims of neutrality in the Preface,
directly engaging their readers in how to most effectively read the *Library* so that they would understand exactly what the editors wanted them to see—that America had a long literary tradition and that reading that literature was more important than reading about it.

By encouraging America to read its literature, Stedman and Hutchinson guided the “tastes” of their readers. In “Canonicity” (1991), Wendell V. Harris argues the importance of influence when he writes, “What a generation is taught depends on the tastes and interests of the previous generation and on the anthologies and texts created in response to the demands that issue from those tastes and interests” (113). That Stedman and Hutchinson’s *Library* affected the next generation of textbooks, readers, and anthologies has already been noted above. “Commendations of ‘The Library of American Literature,’” a *Library* advertisement, includes words of praise from professors at academic institutions such as Chautauqua University, Cornell, and Yale. These testimonials give some insight into the *Library*’s use at the nation’s colleges and universities, where American literature was slowly gaining a foothold. For instance, the advertisement cites a letter from “Prof. [Maurice Francis] Egan, Department of Literature, University of Notre Dame,” wherein he says that the *Library* “is in almost daily use at the University and St. Mary’s.”

In addition to this direct influence, the *Library* also exerted an indirect effect. According to Bibb, it appeared regularly on supplementary reading lists in “college textbooks published between 1890 and 1930” (257). By making a large number of texts that had languished in the archives or been otherwise lost to the reading public through disuse readily available to their readers,

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Stedman and Hutchinson affected what Wendell V. Harris calls the “principle of academic circulation”:

Academics tend to teach what they have been taught, *what is easily available in print*, what others are writing interestingly about, and what they themselves are writing about; *what is easily available in print tends to be what is being taught and written about*; what is written about tends to be what one is teaching or others are writing about. (114, emphasis mine)

As John Nietz discusses in his *The Evolution of American Secondary School Textbooks* (1966), literature was usually taught through discussion of biographies of “leading authors” and commentary on their “chief literary works” (29). Even John S. Hart’s *A Manual of American Literature* (1872), which Nietz labels as the first textbook “dealing with American literature alone” (39), focused on literary history and authors’ lives rather than providing representative reading selections. In his analysis of 66 American literature textbooks, however, Nietz notes that the amount of space devoted to reading selections doubled (from 22% to 54%) after the turn of the century. Notably, this pattern occurred after the *Library* became readily available.

While noting mentions of the *Library* in handbooks and anthologies and on reading lists marks one important way of determining its influence, information about the sales of the *Library* might give us some idea of how many readers Stedman and Hutchinson impacted. Unfortunately, the *Library’s* complicated publication history obscures its sales record, though some information is clear. In all, three publishers were
associated with the Library. Dibble, the original publisher, gave up on the project in 1886 without publishing a single volume, selling the stereotyped plates for first five volumes to Mark Twain’s publishing firm, the Charles L. Webster & Company. According to the advertisement described at the top of this chapter, Dibble continued to act as a sales agent for the Library. In accordance with Dibble’s original plan to sell the Library by subscription, Webster sold the Library and then waited to be paid in installments.\textsuperscript{12} Many subscribers purchased the cheapest version of the Library at the subscription rate of three dollars a volume, or $33. Both Bibb and Scholnick discuss the effect of the subscription sales plan on the Webster Publishing Company, claiming Library sales either contributed to or caused the company’s 1894 demise. On the one hand, Bibb theorizes that the Library was only partly to blame for the Webster Company’s (and consequently Twain’s) financial reverses: “The tremendous expenses of the Clemens household, the continued financial drain of the Paige typesetting machine, the overhead of the publishing company, and the financial panic of 1893 all contributed to the eventual bankruptcy of the publishing company and of Mark Twain himself in 1894,” though Twain “seems to have projected the blame for his misfortune on Charles Webster and specifically on the Library of American Literature, which he referred to as ‘the fatal book’” (241). On the other hand, Scholnick says that the Library eventually “brought down the entire house”

\textsuperscript{12} In 1882, when Stedman, Hutchinson, and Dibble planned the Library, they anticipated a somewhat different sales scenario. Their plan was to “deliver it to subscribers at the rate of one volume every ten weeks from the appearance of the first issue” or, alternately, to distribute the Library in “forty-eight to fifty semi-monthly parts, at fifty cents each.” “(Substantially Dibble’s Production) A Library of American Literature,” page 5. Handwritten Outline/Description of LAL. ECSP, Box 72. (See also Arthur Stedman’s letter of July 7, [1883], wherein he writes to “Messrs. W.E. Dibble & Co.,” “Perhaps you had better not say in your circular that you will get out a volume every ten weeks. The work grows on us as we proceed, and we fear it will not be possible.” ECSP, Box 72.
Though we do not have definitive sales figures, it is suggestive that enough copies sold (and were not paid for) to result in the company’s financial insolvency.

After Twain’s bankruptcy, the plates were sold to William Evarts Benjamin for $50,000. The Houghton, Mifflin & Company records shed some additional light on this transaction. For, while Stedman and Hutchinson had carefully negotiated copyrights with publishers and authors, the Benjamin Company apparently forgot to do so. As a result, Houghton, Mifflin sent Benjamin a demand letter for royalty payments. After a great deal of correspondence about the matter, Benjamin agreed to pay the royalties due for the stock on hand at the time he bought the Library. According to his letter of April 13, 1894, he paid $173.45 to satisfy the outstanding balance on 14,513 volumes (1319 sets). Subsequently, Benjamin reprinted the Library (1894), reporting that he enjoyed an “enormous sale” (qtd. in Bibb 242). Letters in the Houghton, Mifflin files indicate that he made at least two additional royalty payments at the same rate as before (.1315% per set). His payments—$133.18 on February 1, 1895 and $94.18 on August 1, 1895—reflect the amounts due on 1705 sets.

Many copies of the Library went to public and school libraries at home and abroad, making the number of potential readers inestimable. In the “Preface to the Final Volume,” Stedman and Hutchinson record their wish that “this compilation may soon be found in every school, at every army-post, on board our ships, and frequent throughout the public and private libraries of our Republic” (LAL 11:viii). Typed lists in Columbia

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University archives headed “Libraries” and “Schools” record which institutions across the United States owned the Library. One such document lists sixty-five American libraries as well as the Tokyo library in Japan. The list identifies the libraries by name, city, and state. For instance, the list for Connecticut reads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Name</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drenson Library</td>
<td>Waterbury</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ansonia Public Library</td>
<td>Ansonia</td>
<td>”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otis Library</td>
<td>Norwich</td>
<td>”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Public Library</td>
<td>New Haven</td>
<td>”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Library</td>
<td>Bridgeport</td>
<td>”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plymouth Library</td>
<td>Norwich</td>
<td>”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to public and law libraries, the list identifies town, state, club, college, naval, yacht, and hospital libraries as well as literary societies, government organizations (such as the U.S. Geological Survey) and one Young Men’s Christian Association. Another provides a list of 125 “Schools.” As with the libraries, the schools are organized by city and state. The list includes grammar schools, high schools, normal schools, religious schools, colleges, and universities in twenty-two states. For instance, the list for Iowa says:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iowa College for the Blind</td>
<td>Vinton</td>
<td>Iowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa State Normal School</td>
<td>Cedar Falls</td>
<td>”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Waterloo High School</td>
<td>Waterloo</td>
<td>”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>La Mars</td>
<td>”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 See “Libraries” and “Schools.” Undated lists. WEBP. Box 14.
These lists are helpful in documenting a potentially large Library readership, as are the printed lists of individual readers that appeared in advertising materials printed for distribution in specific cities. For instance, a two-page pamphlet bearing the Library’s title lists 99 Baltimore residents, saying they “have made constant use of the work” and “have commended it in the highest terms.” Some people are identified by name only, such as “Misses G. and J. White,” while others are identified by title or occupation, such as “Prof. Eli M. Lamb,” “Miss Amanda Harker, Principal No. 7 Primary School,” or “E. B. Prettyman, State Superintendent of Education.” These lists demonstrate that many American readers of all ages and from all levels of education had access to the Library.

Andrew Carnegie’s letter of February 9, 1891 shows that the library also circulated abroad. Carnegie ordered twenty copies of the Library, providing a list of recipient libraries in Scotland and England to which they should be shipped “immediately.”\textsuperscript{16}

Thus, the Library, with its portrayal of American literary history, reached wide audiences both at home and abroad.

Interestingly, Hutchinson records her decision to put a copy of the Library into the archives where she spent so much time locating materials for the Library. She writes, “I like that Astor Library, and if I have to pay for it, I mean that they shall have a set of the LAL.”\textsuperscript{17} Hutchinson’s letter reminds me of how, in “Unpacking My Library,” the Benjamin collector-persona disappears into his collection after unpacking his books. The

\textsuperscript{16} From Andrew Carnegie to “Dear Sir.” Edmund Clarence Stedman Papers, Box 77.
\textsuperscript{17} Letter from Hutchinson to Stedman dated April [18]84. Edmund Clarence Stedman Papers, Box 65.
books do not come alive in the collector, writes Benjamin; rather “it is he who lives in them” (67). Hutchinson’s donation motions toward the self-reflexive awareness the co-editors’ inclusion demonstrated by including a sample of literary history within their literary history. With this move, Hutchinson—literary historian and co-editor of the Library—ensured that she lives on in American literary history.

II. Negotiating the Contents of the Library

Hutchinson’s Library correspondence reveals that, ever-remindful and resentful of late nineteenth-century societal expectations regarding the role of women, she used complicated rhetorical strategies to negotiate with her co-editor. Depending on her mood, Hutchinson’s letters range in tone from businesslike professionalism to audacious effrontery. The range of terms that she uses to address her co-editor include “Mr. Stedman,” “E.C.S.,” “Dear but Obstinate E.C.S.,” “Monsieur,” “Dear Friend,” “my lord,” and “P.G.B.”—which, as a letter dated “Mondaye. Ye 28th of Aprille” clarifies, stands for “Praise-God-Barebones.”\(^{18}\) She is variously respectful, flattering, sympathetic, humorous, cajoling, and sarcastic in her communications with Stedman. Two samples suffice to illustrate her typical mode of address. The first, headed “Friday,” reads,

Blessings on thee, E.C.S.! Oh noble man much do I honor thee! The story which McElroy tells me of your interview with the Connecticut man fills me with joy!!!!

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\(^{18}\) For more information about Praise-God Barbon (Barebone or Barebones) (c. 1596-1679), see the Encyclopædia Britannica (“Praise-God Barbon”). Hutchinson’s poem “Praise-God Barebones” can be found in Stedman’s An American Anthology, II, 554-555.
Oh why was I not there to hear you vigorous Saxon!

I’ve made a note of your note and an extract—“perfect stuff”—from Grant. I haven’t seen Vol. X yet. I shall praise it, O Vanquisher of the Connecticut Compiler!

Admiringly,

Priscilla

The signature “Priscilla” reflects a name Hutchinson often used as her signature and that Stedman frequently used in his addresses to her. Here, “Priscilla” responds to news she had heard second-hand through McElroy about Stedman. Though the details of Stedman’s “interview” with the “Connecticut man” remain unknown, Hutchinson’s enthusiasm shines forth, as does her effusive admiration of his actions. Notably, in this one letter she calls Stedman by his initials, addresses him as a “noble man,” and crowns him the “Vanquisher of the Connecticut Compiler.” The second example, headed “For E.C.S.,” opens with a discussion of the selections she has chosen from John Burroughs, whom she describes as “a discontented Thoreau.”¹⁹ Next, she talks about Newell’s “Priscilla,” telling him that it is “the only thing worth quoting in his volume of poems.” She then tells Stedman that she will put headings on the selections the next day once he approves them, referring to their method of jointly evaluating the Library selections. Finally, she turns her attention to Sarah Piatt, writing,

Mrs. Piatt’s “Poetry”! Oh, oh! ’Tis the kind of poetry that makes me feel that I adore prose. I never did like Mrs. Browning’s soul-butter, heretical

¹⁹ “For E.C.S.” No signature. ECSP, Box 64.
as that may seem; and when one comes to Mrs. Piatt’s oleomargarine—well!!
Am in a hurry.
Adios, Señor.

Irreverent, dismissive, and in a hurry, Hutchinson quickly covers a range of topics, interspersing news of her *Library* with dismissive references to the poetry of Browning and Piatt. Like many nineteenth-century readers, Hutchinson appeared to care little for Piatt’s poetry. According to Paula Bernat Bennett, in her introduction to *Palace Burner* (2001), “Piatt’s reviews were typically mixed—when, that is, they were not downright hostile” (xxviii). Yet as Bennett points out, Stedman had included Piatt in his *Poets of America* (1885) even though he recognized that interpretations of her poetry varied widely (xxix). Tempting as it is to diagnose a little professional jealousy on Hutchinson’s part—after all, Piatt had published at least a dozen volumes of poetry by the time the tenth volume of the *Library* appeared, while Hutchinson had published only one—there is another point I wish to address here. For, in this letter Hutchinson feels free to express in no uncertain terms her opinions about Piatt—a poet that Stedman liked and corresponded with. In other words, she confidently asserted her opinions about nineteenth-century poets to the man most regarded as the authority on nineteenth-century poetry. She closes her letter with yet another term of address for Stedman—“Señor,” quite possibly playing on the term “Senior” editor, a misnomer describing Stedman’s editorial role that I will discuss in greater detail below.
Hutchinson located much of the material used in the *Library*, researching extensively in the Astor and Lenox libraries, reading periodicals housed at Yale, consulting the files of the *North American Review*, studying publication lists from the Houghton and Harper companies, and reviewing literary histories and encyclopedias by Belknap, Griswold, Duyckinck, and Allibone (Bibb 247). Yet, as she wrote to Stedman, she could not neglect her work at the paper, which provided her “bread & butter.”

Hutchinson maximized her efficiency by delegating *Tribune* and *Library* work to assistants. Roscoe C. E. Brown assisted her at the *Tribune* (Baehr 221). Stedman’s son Arthur, who described himself as the “sub-editor” of the *Library*, was one of several assistants she employed for the *Library*. In her May 25, 1883 letter to Stedman, she responds to Stedman’s concern that Arthur might not have enough to copy. Writing to “Dear Mr. Stedman,” she says,

> I got up at 6:30 this morning and Nelly took me to Walton in order that I might go up town and mark something to keep Arthur busy. He has enough to fill his day. Tomorrow I shall read and Rose will copy all day.

[...]

As Ever

E.M.H.

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20 “E.M.H.” to “Dear E.C.S.” (“Saturday”) ECSP, Box 64.
21 “Arthur C. Stedman” to “W.E. Dibble & Co.” (January 29, 1883): “I am happy to inform you that, Mr. E. C. Stedman having sent for me from the country newspaper on which I have been engaged, I am now settled at his house and am working hard at my duties as sub-editor of the “Library of American Literature.” ECSP, Box 72.
22 “E.M.H.” to “Dear Mr. Stedman” (May 25, 1883. ECSP, Box 65.
23 Mentions of “Nelly” and “Rose” frequent Hutchinson’s correspondence. Though Hutchinson often signed herself “Nelly,” here she is talking of another person.
Here, Hutchinson reports on getting up early to go mark passages for others to copy and on overseeing the movements of her assistants. The point is that Hutchinson spent her time locating and sorting through the vast amounts of material available and making her initial selections. As often as possible, she left the more routine job of transcription to others.

Hutchinson’s *Library* correspondence records her reactions to particular texts that she considered for inclusion. For instance, she details her justification for minimizing Abigail Adams, disliking Timothy Dwight, and not appreciating Stedman’s suggestions regarding the Philip Freneau selections. Bibb has previously noted these reactions in her dissertation, but I want to extend her discussion of the letters by looking into the *Library*’s pages and seeing the result of Stedman and Hutchinson’s discussion. Her private correspondence with her co-editor reflects little of the reticence Baehr noted about Hutchinson’s personality and more of her “spicy little reporter” side (Ross 222). Regarding Adams, for example, Hutchinson writes, “I did not take much from Abigail Adams Smith (sic), for I did not think her interesting. She had little or no sense of humor and was a conceited, censorious, provincial little prig—wherein she was not unlike others of her family” (qtd. in Bibb 248). Notably, Adams’s texts (selections from four letters from abroad in 1784-1786 and one from Washington, D. C. during her husband’s second presidency) reveal the negative character traits Hutchinson mentions, almost as if Adams’s conceit and priggishness makes them worth reading. Similarly, Hutchinson writes, of Timothy Dwight’s “Greenfield Hill,” (doing so, according to Bibb, “irreverently”): “__oh, oh! It seems dreary trash to me” (qtd. in Bibb 248). Though two
selections (co-authored) by Dwight appear in Volume 3, neither are entitled “Greenfield Hill.” Apparently Hutchinson’s opinion of the poem was respected, as it did not make the final cut. In much the same way, Hutchinson expresses her opinions about Stedman’s choices regarding Freneau’s poetry. She writes that she likes them all except one, which she regards as “uninteresting”—“the Rivington Will” (Bibb 248). Since no selection by that name appears within the pages of the Library, her comments must have resulted in its eventual removal from the list.24

Though Hutchinson claims, in the letter about Freneau, that she will “bow to [Stedman’s] judgment” and that “[she] doesn’t consider [her]self a judge” (qtd. in Bibb 248), Stedman evidently took her opinions into account because the selections included in these three instances reflect that Hutchinson’s judgment was sometimes privileged over his. From these examples we gain insight into their working relationship. They worked together throughout the process, with Hutchinson reading widely and making initial selections. After those initial selections had been made, they consulted often to narrow the list. According to the “Preface to the Final Volume,” approximately one-sixth of the selections initially identified were eventually published in the Library. Since Hutchinson almost always made the first selections, and since her opinions regarding final selections were also regarded, her reading tastes impacted the shape of the finished Library. Had Hutchinson made different initial selections during the time she spent

reading in the archives, a different construction of American literary history would have been presented within the pages of the *Library*.

An undated letter from Hutchinson to Stedman’s son Arthur, who worked in various capacities on the *Library*, typifies her impact on the project by illustrating that, while she remained mindful of the outline the co-editors had projected for the authors and the number of selections to be contained in the *Library*, she also felt free to modify the plan as she saw fit.\(^2^5\) Her note to Arthur about Joseph Story (1779-1845) indicates that she has chosen only about five and a half pages of his writing, even though the schedule allowed for more. In this letter, Hutchinson explains her decision to reduce the number of pages they had previously determined to allow to Story. After first saying that she had consulted Griswold’s book before deciding that they could reduce the number of pages allotted for Story’s prose selections, she then offers her evaluation of his poetry—he writes too much within the “polished brow of hope” style for her liking—and identifies the only poem she thinks worthy of consideration: “Advice to a Young Lawyer.” The *Library*’s fourth volume reflects Hutchinson’s influence in this particular case. Examining the relevant volume reveals that six extracts from Story’s oeuvre fill five and a half pages: five of them are prose, and the sixth, his “Advice to a Young Lawyer,” is the only poem (LAL IV: 421-426)

Sometimes, Hutchinson’s time in the archives resulted in more selections than could fit into the *Library*’s pages. Her correspondence indicates that when she sent her

\(^{2^5}\) “Undated.” Letter from E.M.H. to A.G.S. ECSP, Box 64.
initial selections to Stedman, she knew additional cuts would need to be made, that she knowingly sent him more selections than could be used, and that she trusted his judgment. She writes in one letter: “Pray, pray don’t use up your precious time to tell me what selections you make from my selections. You know I do several that you may take the one you like the best—and I am always content though I may, in fun, lament the slaughter” (qtd. in Bibb 247). Though it might be tempting here to read Hutchinson’s letter as indicative of Stedman having the final veto, that reading would directly contradict the Stedman’s statements elsewhere about their equal veto-powers. Stedman’s September 2, 1899 letter to Constance Fenimore Woolson provides a representative example of how he talks about their balance of editorial power: “Mistress E. Hutchinson and I each have the veto-power as editors. That is the way we get along” (Stedman and Gould 140).

Because Bibb as well as Stedman and Gould misread her rhetorical strategy of deference to Stedman, Hutchinson’s influence as a literary historian has been largely overlooked. Much of this misreading rests on a letter wherein Hutchinson calls Stedman the “senior” editor on the Library. Reprinted in Stedman and Gould’s Life and Letters under the heading “From E.M.H., the Junior Editor” is an extract from this letter, which Hutchinson wrote to Stedman upon the completion of the Library:

And now you may go a-wandering in the Forest of Arden and may wile the loveliest songs off the bushes, and the wisest books from the running brooks, and lectures from everything!26

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26 A reference to Shakespeare’s As You Like It, wherein Duke Senior is banished to the Forest of Arden.
And don’t let me see “E.C.S. the Senior Editor” more;—but the Poet, the man of “Genius,” the kind friend and comrade. Forget the drudgery; and remember the gods have made thee poetical.

I feel sure that you are going to do the most perfect and beautiful work of your life now that the L.A. L. is behind you.

(Stedman and Gould 145)

Hutchinson wishes her “Senior Editor” a fond farewell in this letter in order to greet the “Poet,” the “man of Genius,” and her “kind friend and comrade.” Telling him to put the work of the *Library* behind him and anticipating a life of poetic success for him, Hutchinson uses no less than five different titles for Stedman in her letter. Yet Stedman and Gould concentrate only on the title of “Senior Editor,” highlighting it by the letter’s heading that announces Hutchinson as the “Junior Editor.” Hence, the only Hutchinson letter in Stedman and Gould’s book seems to suggest that she had considered Stedman to be the senior editor on the project. Bibb casually repeats Stedman and Gould’s language of “senior” and “junior” editors, effectively erasing Hutchinson’s co-editorial status. First, Bibb notes, “Ellen Hutchinson made a suggestion to her senior editor for increasing sales of the *Library* by directly approaching the breadwinner of the family” (243). Then, she discusses Stedman as the “Senior Editor of the giant anthology” (237). Next, she talks about Arthur Stedman, “son of the senior poet-editor” (244). Finally, she says that the “junior editor spent much of her time locating materials” (247). Notably, Bibb credits Hutchinson with formulating one possible way of selling more copies of the *Library* as well as with doing the archival research for the *Library*, even though, in this latter
instance, she overlooks the importance inherent in Hutchinson’s process of “locating materials.” Writing to “Priscilla” on May 20, 1884, Stedman apologizes for one G. E. M.’s recent “outrageous misstatement” of her rank, saying that he knew of “a dozen different newspapers in which the whole business is correctly stated—to wit, that we are “joint editors”:

Ergo, my dear and fair friend, I trust you can rely safely upon your coeditor, in the long run, to see that you bear the full credit to which your labor, your taste, your scholarship, and your self-respect entitle you—and which my affection, my faith in your character, and my own honor, will be first and always sure to award you before the world.

As Stedman’s correspondence here and elsewhere suggests, their mutual labor and abilities were the “real factors” in the Library’s successful intervention in American literary history.28
Chapter 2

“The Forty Immortals” and “The Twenty Immortelles”:
The Critic’s and Its Readers’ “Newspaper Academy”

While Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen Mackay Hutchinson’s *Library of American Literature* provided a co-edited narrative of American literature from its conception through the late nineteenth century, siblings Jeanette Leonard Gilder and Joseph Benson Gilder’s jointly edited periodical *The Critic* sought to define an “academy” of living American authors.¹ Unlike Wilstach, the “ingenuous literary geographer” who single-handedly created “A Literary Map of the United States,” *The Critic* asked its readers to choose the authors they thought most representative of American literature. In this chapter, I analyze *The Critic*’s two reader-initiated elections for academicians, “The Forty Immortals” (1884) and “The Twenty Immortelles” (1890) as a scene of negotiation. As we will see in the pages that follow, the negotiations began when the first election announcement—“Have We ‘Forty Immortals?’”—directed readers to vote only for male academicians, or for those of “the sterner sex” (103). Many readers


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ignored *The Critic*’s rule and included women on their ballots, ignoring, as the editors say in their announcement of the election results, the assigned “limitations” (“Our ‘Forty Immortals’” 170). In response, the editors discounted all votes for women, just as they also rejected any votes for African American and Native American men, namely Frederick Douglass and Sitting Bull. Readers wrote letters, protesting the published poll results and contesting the periodical’s editorial policies. *The Critic* never granted Douglass or Sitting Bull academic status, but it did eventually concede to its readers’ demands for women academicians, holding a second election for Immortelles. *The Critic* reported on its academy for nearly another decade, continuing to focus attention on the male and female academicians it had identified as part of the late nineteenth-century literary tradition. Other periodicals also engaged in *The Critic*’s discourse about American authorship; for instance, *The Literary World* and the *Christian Union* both announced that *The Critic* was hosting an election for Forty Immortals, while the *Massachusetts Ploughman* challenged the election parameters, saying, “‘Forty immortals’ of the male sex having been voted for, to stock a proposed American Academy, it is now requested that forty immortals of the sweeter sex be trotted out” (“Editor’s Table” 2). *The Critic* reprinted many of their remarks, promoting the cultural discourse about its academy and American authorship.

In “Three Hundred Years of the French Academy” (1935), C. H. C. Wright posits that the “primary result of a semi-official literary organization such as the Academy is the
establishment of a tradition, good or bad” (4). Ultimately, *The Critic’s* elections assembled a list of male and female authors the periodical considered invaluable to American literature and legitimating within its pages a literary tradition that future generations might build upon.

To understand the significance of *The Critic’s* negotiated view of American authorship, we must compare it to the late nineteenth-century rising academic discourse of an American renaissance that privileged a select group of Anglo-American men as nationally representative authors while relegating women’s writing to a place of lesser significance. As Charlene Avallone persuasively argues in “What American Renaissance? The Gendered Genealogy of a Critical Discourse” (1997), the American renaissance tradition became a means of “forestalling the inclusion of women’s writing in the annals of a cultural field women inhabited so widely and prominently as to provoke the reactionary discourse in the first place” (1103). After Samuel Osgood first used the term in his 1876 lectures at Union College to valorize “Anglo men’s writing and art by affiliation with British, Christian, and Greek traditions,” it spread rapidly through American literary studies as a critical catchphrase, one used by academics such as Charles Richardson, Barrett Wendell, and F. O. Matthiessen in their efforts to promote academic study of American literature (Avallone 1103). *The Critic’s* elections, which occurred outside academia, suggest that the late nineteenth-century renaissance tradition did not rise unimpeded. By perpetuating its idea of an American academy in cultural

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2 Unlike the French Academy, on which the election for forty American “immortals” was based, *The Critic’s* academy never gained official governmental recognition or funding. See Wright for a discussion of the French Academy’s modest beginning; it transformed from a “little group of congenial friends of intellectual and literary ability” to a chartered body under the patronage of Cardinal Richelieu, chief minster of France during the reign of Louis XIV (3).
discourse, *The Critic* responds to the academic narrative of American literature, which resisted notions of inferiority to British literature by privileging male authors. In this chapter, I argue that the readers’ insistence on women academicians demonstrates that they held a more equitable view of women authorship than *The Critic*. I also argue that, by recording its readers’ discussions about women and minority authors, *The Critic* depicted a narrative of American literature that helped provoke the renaissance tradition promoted during the last quarter of the nineteenth century within the academic literary establishment.

Even though their tradition would be silenced for much of the next century, *The Critic* and its readers laid important groundwork for the twentieth-century recovery of women and minority authors. My analysis in this chapter will focus on three specific aspects of the elections: first, on the readers’ letters that argue for women and minority writers in *The Critic*’s “newspaper academy” (Gosse 123); second, on the idea that, while *The Critic* privileged the election for “The Forty Immortals,” scholars of American literature now pay more attention to the women identified as Immortelles than they do to the Immortals; and, third, on the national and international network of periodicals that paid close attention to *The Critic*’s elections, thus promulgating the discourse of *The Critic*’s academy. By recording its disputes with its readers as well as the election results, *The Critic* provides an alternative to the smooth national trajectory of male genius found in late nineteenth-century literary histories published about the same time, like Horace E.
Scudder’s *American Prose* (1885), which examines only eight white male authors.\(^3\)

Recovering the narrative of the elections allows us to distinguish between the increasingly dominant ideology of American authorship that focused on a favored few and the popular longing among *The Critic*’s readers for a more equitable representation of woman and minority authors in the American literary tradition.

I. “The Forty Immortals”

*The Critic* comes forward to supply a need which all educated Americans will acknowledge. Science, the Arts, and the various branches of commerce, have innumerable exponents in the press. Literature has few; in New York it has none. The fecundity of the book-world, which was never so great as now, and the craving for literary news, which is daily increasing, have forced from the newspapers such recognition as the pressure of other matter would allow. But, in *The Critic*, literature will have the first place.\(^4\)

When *The Critic* began publication on January 15, 1881, the paragraph above appeared among the advertisements that occupied the first issue’s final pages. With this announcement, the Gilder siblings identify the void they imagine *The Critic* will fill: it will be the first New York periodical devoted primarily to literature. The same paragraph appears in the second issue, followed by a column entitled “Opinions of the Press,” which includes contemporaneous reviews from the *New York Herald, Harper’s Weekly*, the *Tribune, the Times, the Evening Post*, and the *Hartford Currant*. Most of these reviews note the first issue’s attractive appearance or comment on the quality of its articles; the

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\(^3\) As I discuss in my introduction to this dissertation, Scudder’s volume includes Hawthorne, Irving, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, Thoreau, and Emerson. Foerster includes Benjamin Franklin, James Fenimore Cooper, and Edgar Allan Poe (unlike Scudder, he does not include either Longfellow or Whittier).

Times, however, makes a nuanced prediction regarding the periodical’s function as “critic,” saying, “The Critic is a little fortnightly, of twenty pages, which starts under the best auspices to act as an encouragement of and check upon American literature and art.” In other words, The Critic would both promote (or “encourage”) American literature and restrain (or “check”) it. This description of The Critic’s dual role aptly describes the periodical’s role in the elections for what one critic labels its “newspaper academy”—or the elections by which its readers voted for the authors most representative of American literature (Gosse 123). For, while The Critic encouraged both elections by providing them space within its pages, it also “checked” the shape of American literature by controlling the results.

The Critic’s first election, for “The Forty Immortals,” began on March 1, 1884, at the request of one “H.O.W.” of Boston. France has her Academy—her ‘Forty Immortals,’ about whom The Century has recently told us so much. Why then should not the United States have a similar institution? Have we not forty living men-of-letters whose names would honor such an Academy? I myself am sure we have, and I should like to get the votes of other readers of The Critic and Good

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5 “Opinions of the Press.” The Critic, January 29, 1881; Vol. 1; No. 2:15.
6 When one reader thought that “H. O. W.” might refer to “O. W. H.” (or Oliver Wendell Holmes), the editors emphatically rejected the idea: “It was signed H.O.W., and was written by a person ineligible to membership in the hypothetical Academy” (“Notes” The Critic April 19, 1884:190.) Perhaps this person was not an author; I suspect, however, that that The Critic’s remark about “ineligibility” refers to the letter writer’s gender.
7 For a discussion of France’s academy, see “The Forty Immortals” The Century No. 3 (Jan 1884): 388-407.
Literature on this subject. Will you kindly constitute yourself a ballot box for the election?\(^8\)

Prompted by *The Century*’s review of the prestigious *Académie française*, H.O.W. proposes that America should emulate the French and establish an academy.\(^9\) Anne E. Boyd posits that “critics, authors, and editors had been longing” for such an institution (243). H. O. W. envisions a democratic election process, with *The Critic* merely tallying the votes. For *The Critic*, H.O.W.’s request for an American academy initiated an opportunity to satisfy the “craving for literary news” that justified its existence; not only could it announce the names of the academicians identified through the election, but it could promote reader interest by inviting them to participate in the process.

That month, *The Critic* reprinted H.O.W.’s letter four times, responding as follows:

> We shall be glad to act as a ballot-box in so good a cause. To those who desire to cast their votes, we would say that our correspondent’s idea is, to get from each of them a list of the names of the forty American authors of the sterner sex whom they deem most worthy of a place in a possible American Academy. The representatives of all branches of literature should, of course, be included—historians, poets, playwrights, novelists, scientific writers, theologians, etc.\(^{10}\)

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\(^8\) “Have We ‘Forty Immortals’?” *The Critic*, March 1, 1884:103.

\(^9\) For a discussion of American interest in French culture, authors, and literature, see Mott (*A History of American Magazines: 1856-1885*), 253-255.

\(^{10}\) The notice appeared verbatim in four issues in 1884: on March 1, 15, 22, and 29.
The terms for the election seem fairly straightforward: readers will send in forty votes each, and *The Critic* will count them. Already, however, *The Critic* has silently adjusted H.O.W.’s suggestion. They replace “men-of-letters”\(^{11}\) with “authors of the sterner sex,” a substitution that not only emphasizes that candidates must be male but also assigns a literary quality to their work.\(^{12}\) Furthermore, while they propose a wide range for American “literature,” listing a number of fields, closer inspection shows that they have specified the fields of history, poetry, drama, novels, science, and theology instead of the more general field of American “letters,” though the “all” and “etc.” leave some room for a broader interpretation. As I discuss below, these slight editorial changes significantly impacted the outcome of the periodical’s collaboration with its readers, because they would allow the editors to privilege their editorial viewpoint over reader opinion.

In her study of how sentiment structures joint intellectual endeavors, *Sentimental Collaborations* (2000), Mary Louise Kete defines collaboration to mean “both ‘to join together in a joint intellectual project’ and ‘to cooperate with the enemy’” (3-4).\(^{13}\) As this definition suggests, “collaboration” is an inherently complex term that imagines cooperation and collusion, agreement and disagreement, convergence and divergence. Rereading *The Critic*’s elections through the lens of collaboration allows us to better understand how the joint intellectual endeavor of forming a hypothetical American

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\(^{11}\) The term comes from the French *homme de lettres*, which the OED defines as “a man of learning, a scholar; now usually, a man of the literary profession, an author” (6b). Anne E. Boyd discusses the term’s inherent masculinity and the late nineteenth century view that “no American women were worthy of the designation ‘women of letters’” in *Writing for Immortality*, 244.

\(^{12}\) See Susan S. Williams’s *Reclaiming Authorship: Literary Women in America, 1850-1900* for a discussion of how authorship was defined in the second half of the nineteenth century. Williams examines the false dichotomy that situated nineteenth-century women more naturally as “writers” rather than “authors” (4-11).

\(^{13}\) For a discussion of collaboration as collusion, see Holly Laird, *Women Co-Authors* (6).
academy resulted in a “treasonous cooperation” between The Critic and its readers.¹⁴

Previous scholarly discussions of The Critic’s reader-selected academy have focused either on the academy’s ineffectuality or on the periodical’s motives for hosting the elections. For instance, in his discussions of “The Forty Immortals,” Allen Walker Read dismisses the election as a “straw vote” since it did not result in a funded, functioning academy (“American Projects” 1166). F. DeWolfe Miller refers to “The Forty Immortals” as evidence of The Critic’s “good journalism,” though he also discounts the results, saying, “the impossibility of rounding up forty living Americans who would become immortal must have been obvious” (24). While technically accurate, these evaluations overlook the collaborative relationship illustrated in this American academy that was “not appointed by the editors, but elected by the readers.”¹⁵ The distinction between The Critic’s editors and readers is crucial because it marks the two groups as adversarial. On the one hand, the editors represent the critical viewpoint; on the other hand, the voters represent The Critic’s readers, who, according to one source, “could be expected to render as intelligent an opinion as could be obtained outside of a group confined to eminent critics” (Miller 24, emphasis mine). That these same readers also provided financial support for the periodical, through their paid subscriptions, further complicated the relationship. The loss of too many subscriptions could spell financial

¹⁴ Kete uses the term “treasonous cooperations” in her exploration of how “contradictory aspects of American consciousness” often requires the collaborated subject to betray itself (3-4).
¹⁵ “Our ‘Forty Immortals.’” The Critic, Jan. 8, 1898; 29: 829.
peril for *The Critic*, as its relatively small subscription base of 5,000 resulted in a tight operating budget.\(^{16}\) 

According to *The Critic*, readers responded so enthusiastically that tallying the votes took longer than originally projected. On April 5, 1884 instead of publishing the list of the Forty Immortals, *The Critic* published a note explaining the delay:

> We had hoped to be able to announce in our issue of this date the result of the vote for the ‘Forty Immortals’ to constitute a possible American Academy founded on the same general plan as the famous French Academy. The vote has been so heavy, however, and so many lists of names have been sent in at the last moment, that it is impossible to count them all and announce the result before going to press. Publication of the final list will consequently have to be postponed to next week.\(^{17}\)

Some 130 voters had participated, submitting the names of “at least three hundred candidates” for consideration in the “possible” academy (“Our ‘Forty Immortals’” *The Critic*, April 12, 1884, 169).\(^{18}\) On April 12, 1884, the list of the Forty Immortals appeared, with the names of academicians listed according to the number of votes each received:

\(^{16}\) Leonard Butt’s entry “The Critic,” in *American Literary Magazines*, 121-125. For circulation rates and budget information, see page 121. In comparison, *Scribner’s Monthly* (later titled *The Century Magazine*) had an initial circulation of 40,000 copies; by 1881 the actual number of copies printed exceeded 100,000 (Mott 467).


\(^{18}\) Oliver Wendell Holmes received 130 votes. If his name did not appear on every ballot, then the number of voters might exceed 130. As the baseline of 130 voters represents only 2.6% of the Critic’s 5000 readers (and an even smaller percentage of the American population), I will use the term readers or voters instead of referring to the “popular” vote.
1. Oliver Wendell Holmes  
2. James Russell Lowell  
3. John Greenleaf Whittier  
4. George Bancroft  
5. William Dean Howells  
6. George William Curtis  
7. Thomas Bailey Aldrich  
8. Francis Bret Harte  
9. Edmund Clarence Stedman  
10. Richard Grant White  
11. Edward Everett Hale  
12. George W. Cable  
13. Henry James  
14. S. L. Clemens (Mark Twain)  
15. Charles Dudley Warner  
17. James Freeman Clarke  
18. Richard Henry Stoddard  
19. William Dwight Whitney  
20. Walt Whitman  
21. Asa Gray  
22. Noah Porter  
23. John Fiske  
24. Theodore D. Woolsey  
25. A. Bronson Alcott  
26. Julian Hawthorne  
27. John Burroughs  
28. Mark Hopkins  
29. Thomas Wentworth Higginson  
30. John G. Saxe  
31. Octavius Brooks Frothingham  
32. George P. Fisher  
33. Moses Coit Tyler  
34. Charles A. Dana  
35. Donald G. Mitchell  
36. Alexander Winchell  
37. Edwin P. Whipple  
38. George Parsons Lathrop  
39. W.W. Story  
40. Francis Parkman
Two paragraphs of names followed this list. The first named forty runners-up, also in order of votes received, as possible substitutes “in case any of the above Immortals should find it impossible to serve.” The second paragraph contained a long alphabetical list of 129 candidates “who received from one to ten votes each.”

These lists—the Forty, the alternates, and those receiving at least one vote—include names that are now famous, such as Whittier, Twain, and Whitman, as well lesser-known names, like Heber Newton or B.L. Gildersleeve. As the Nation wrote in 1890, the results “showed a rather miscellaneous and haphazard selection” that reflected the “personal equation” of The Critic. Had the election been hosted by another newspaper, the periodical suggests, the list would have been different, “for of course every such ballot must vary with the personal equation of the newspaper calling for it”:

If the call had proceeded from the New York Independent, for instance, it is quite certain that the Rev. Dr. Storrs, would have found a place among the ‘immortals’; the readers of the Boston Literary World would have been very likely to substitute the present editor of The Atlantic Monthly for the editor of the New York Sun; while the constituency of the Chicago America would have been pretty sure to claim places for Gen. Lew

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20 Heber Newton (1840-1914), advocate of the Social Gospel movement and author of The Right and Wrong Uses of the Bible (1883) and Womanhood: Lectures on a Woman's Work in the World (1881); Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve (1831-1924), professor of Greek, first at the University of Virginia and later at Johns Hopkins, editor of the American Journal of Philology, member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.
Wallace and Maurice Thompson, neither of whom seems to have received a single vote from the electors commissioned by The Critic.\footnote{Our ‘Forty Immortals’’ [The Nation, August 21, 1890], The Critic 14: 348, 107.}

This observation from the Nation suggests at least two reasons why readers from different periodicals might compile different lists of American authors: familiarity and regional bias. While both the Independent and The Critic were housed in New York, readers of the Independent, a religious journal, might be more inclined to nominate Richard S. Storrs, American clergyman and associate editor of the Independent, as an American author than would readers of The Critic.\footnote{In his discussion of the Independent in A History of American Magazines, Mott documents Storrs as minister of Brooklyn’s Church of the Pilgrims, who, with a group of other ministers, established the Independent to provide “out-of-New-England churches” a periodical (368). Mott labels Storrs as an orator, debater, and editor of the Independent (1848-1861), writing, also, that he “was scarcely a journalist” (369).}

Moreover, the article’s suggestion that readers in New York, Boston, or Chicago would produce lists of American authors based, at least in part, on their geographical ties, implies not only sectional differences and biases but also reinforces the absence of a firmly established American literary tradition. The Nation does not suggest, however, that the lists would be entirely different. In fact, a similar vote at Harvard University in March 1884 had “remarkably similar” results to those of The Critic.\footnote{Allen Walker Read, “The Membership in Proposed American Academies” American Literature 7:2 (May 1935), 157.} Nancy Glazener notes in Reading for Realism (1997) that editors trained at one magazine often moved to another, contributors often published in multiple journals, and periodicals often responded to one another (25). This type of cross-pollination might explain the similarities between the lists from Harvard and The Critic. Similar lists might also result from readers subscribing to multiple journals. The Critic’s election results might compare or contrast with those compiled by other periodicals.
matters less than the process involved in the readers’ voting and the periodical’s oversight of the votes. The election for “The Forty Immortals,” purportedly held to reflect the consensus of voting readers, became a contested cultural battleground. The Gilders’ critical understanding of American authorship, which they originally defined as exclusively male, clashed with their readers’ choices of male and female authors who might make up an American academy.

Efforts to identify an American academy can be traced back to the Revolutionary Period, but the idea received serious attention only after the Civil War, when calls for literary nationalism renewed interest in an American academy. Literary nationalism, as Glazener argues, provided the group of periodicals she labels the Atlantic-group, a group that includes The Critic, with a convenient rhetoric for legitimating a northeastern, urban, bourgeoisie cultural authority in post-Civil War American society. According to Glazener, “[T]he early nationalist polemics in the *Atlantic* and its kindred magazines took their force from the North’s victory in the Civil War and the urgent task of providing cultural instruction and reconstruction for the South and West” (44). Though the Atlantic-group had no formal ties, the periodicals “shared contributors with the *Atlantic* and with each other, endorsed each other’s cultural authority, and based that authority in similar understandings of class-inflected cultural trusteeship” (Glazener 257). In other words, the *Atlantic* group acted as a de facto academy whereby a group defined by localized class and regional interests attempted to control the national purview of art.24 Glazener’s study

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24 Glazener’s argument that the *Atlantic* group collectively sought delimited literary control leaves ample room for other readings of the periodicals and their cultural contexts. “The constitution of the *Atlantic* group,” Glazener writes, “is not intended to be rigid nor necessarily suitable for projects other than the one that *Reading for Realism* undertakes” (259).
situates the *Atlantic*-group in an antagonistic relationship with periodicals and readers with different class and regional interests, as they would be among the ones the group was attempting to sway as authoritative purveyors of American culture. Not uncoincidentally, therefore, *The Critic* linked its academy to America’s long-standing attempt to form a national academy.

As Allen Walker Read notes in “American Projects for an Academy to Regulate Speech,” early attempts to form an American academy focused primarily on maintaining the purity of the English language. Arguing that English would soon replace French as the “universal language,” for instance, John Adams (1735-1826) sought, but did not receive, Congressional approval in 1780 for an “American Academy.”25 In 1806, both Joel Barlow’s proposal for a “National Institution” and Pennsylvania Senator George Logan’s call for a “National Academy” stalled for lack of interest. In 1820, William S. Cardell’s efforts on behalf of his “American Academy of Language and Belles Lettres” garnered enough attention that an organizational meeting was held, officers elected, and honorary members appointed, but general disinterest among its members soon resulted in the academy’s demise. “Perhaps the plans were too elaborately laid,” writes Read, “for the Academy appeared to dissipate itself in the mere writing of letters” (“American Projects” 1158). By mid-century calls for an American academy diminished.26 Partly, as

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26 In part, Read attributes the increased demand for an American academy to widespread circulation of Matthew Arnold’s “The Literary Influence of Academies” (1854). Arnold argued that academies, particularly the French Academy, positively influence style and taste while negatively impacting genius and powerful writing. Read posits that Arnold’s text may have contributed to the lessening demand, mid-century, for an American academy. Though Arnold wrote specifically regarding the possibility of an English academy, his works were widely read in America.
Read notes, the impetus to found an academy was “assuaged by the rise of the American dictionaries to a place of authority” (“American Projects” 1165). More significantly, however, national politics affected efforts to establish an American academy. As Read notes, in the years leading up to the Civil War, “the sectional spirit was so much in the ascendancy that a national academy could not be thought of” (“Membership” 153).

As John Updike argues in his “Foreword” to *A Century of Arts and Letters* (1998), “The American grain somewhat resists formal organizations devoted to the arts. Just as religion should be kept separate from the state for the sake of impartial government and individual freedom, so the arts, perhaps, should be unclubbable and ungovernable” (vii). Here Updike identifies an American anti-institutional bias that resists establishing traditional hierarchies and standards, especially those based on European models. Elsewhere he posits that the American colonists quickly departed from British literary aesthetics and that, as the colonies grew toward rebellion, a distinctive American literature emerged. Updike cites Benjamin Franklin as an early exemplar, adding that, by “the 1850s Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau, and Whitman were publishing brilliant departures from British sensibility” (vii).

In the context of American individualism, the idea of an artistic elite seems somewhat counterintuitive. During the mid nineteenth-century, Emerson emphasized self-trust and personal experience over European-based institutionalized systems of

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27 Webster’s dictionary, for instance, was noted as a work that “takes the place, in our language, of the *Dictionnaire Universal de L’Academie* in the French” (qtd. in Read, “American Projects” 1165 n. 78).

28 Fink, Steven S. “Re: Anti-institutionalism.” Message to the author. 27 March 2012. Email. Steven S. Fink notes “an anti-institutionalism and anti-academicism that runs through both American Romanticism and Realism, in favor of the common, immediate experience of the common person. The emphasis on self-trust and first-hand experience is necessarily counter to the institutionalization of taste and taste-makers.”
knowledge in works such as “The American Scholar” (1837). Similarly, Thoreau’s self-imposed sojourn at Walden Pond embodied his valorization of individualism. As Thoreau writes in *Walden* (1854), experience outweighs the institutional inculcation of knowledge (34-35). If a “Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge” is necessary, says Thoreau in “Walking” (1851), then “there is equal need of a Society for the Diffusion of Useful Ignorance,” which privileges a higher sense of knowledge than is contained in books (171). Like Whitman, who left the “learn’d astronomer” in favor of the “mystical moist night air” where he could gaze upon the stars instead of simply hearing about them, Emerson and Thoreau privilege unmediated experience over knowledge learned at the feet of—or through the writings of—other scholars.29 Yet, as R. W. B. Lewis reminds us, in “1898-1907: The Founders’ Story” (1908), the nation’s fascination with documenting its cultural achievement kept the idea of an academy alive in American discourse (2). Even as many American authors seemed resistant to the institutionalization of knowledge and power, this aura of “cultural self-awareness,” as Lewis calls it, underpinned the repeated attempts to establish an American academy (2).30

After the Civil War, when calls for literary nationalism returned attention to a possible American academy, the focus shifted from “fixing” the English language to a broader cultural approach in which literature played an essential role in reunifying the nation. Thus, in 1868, when George Ripley proposed his “National Institute of Letters, Arts, and Sciences,” he envisioned that the institute would dedicate its energies toward

29 See Walt Whitman’s “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer” (1865), 1, 7.
30 Writing about the French Academy, Wright posits that “youthful literary radicals” often exhibit a contemptuous attitude toward institutional approval but that “with the increase of years nearly every radical changes his tone, the Academy exerts on him a growing attraction, and he [is] only too happy if finally he is also admitted to the band of forty ‘Immortals’” (7).
“increasing and perpetuating knowledge, conducting investigations and researches in regard to matters affecting the public welfare, disseminating correct views upon Literature, Art, and Science, and promoting intercourse among those engaged therein” (qtd. in Read, “Membership” 153). Unfortunately, the “National Institute” ceased existence after only two years when it failed to gain sufficient financial support in the turbulent years following the war. Similarly, the “American Union Academy of Literature, Science, and Art,” an institution designed in 1869 by John William Draper as a Washington, D.C.-based alternative to Ripley’s “National Institute,” collapsed after the bill authorizing it was tabled in Congress. According to Simon Newcomb’s Reminiscences (1903), “The academy held meetings for some time after this failure, but soon disappeared from view, and was never heard from again” (Vol. 3, 353). After the failures of the “National Institute” and the “American Union Academy,” more than a decade would pass before The Critic’s 1884 election for “The Forty Immortals” marked the next attempt to found an American academy. Like The Critic’s mission statement that implied literature needed to be “checked,” Ripley’s proposal suggests that a cultural institution is needed to uphold the “correct” view of American literature. Ironically, by

31 According to Read, in “The Membership in Proposed American Academies,” the Institute would consist of between three and ten academies; The first eight were to be “I, Philosophy and Moral Science; II, Political Economy and Law; III, Commerce and Finance, IV, the Natural Sciences; V, the Medical Sciences; VI, Letters; VII, the Fine Arts; and VIII, the Physical, Mathematical, and Mechanical Sciences” (153).
32 The editors of The Critic mention Ripley’s failed “National Institute of Letters, Arts, and Sciences” in their announcement of the Forty Immortals (“Our ‘Forty Immortals.’” The Critic, April 12, 1884:169). Read notes that less than $50,000 of the necessary $250,000 was raised (“Membership” 155).
33 For information on this academy, see Rexmond Canning Cochrane’s The National Academy of Sciences, the First Hundred Years, 1863-1963. 107. Among his sources, Cochrane lists The American Union Academy of Literature, Sciences and Art: Constitution and Bylaws (Washington: 1869). See also Simon Newcomb’s Reminiscences of an Astronomer, Volume 3, 351.
having a democratic vote, *The Critic* at least temporarily concedes its cultural authority to its readers, inadvertently setting up the resulting tug of war.

In their announcement of the election for “The Forty Immortals,” *The Critic*’s editors situate their proposed academy within the historical context outlined above, by referencing the “abortive attempt to found a ‘National Institute of Letters, Arts, and Sciences’” and noting, “[T]he plans of the founders were never realized.”34 Unlike previous attempts to form an American academy, however, *The Critic*’s reader-elected academy did not seek congressional approval or funding. No officers were elected, no constitution written, no duties assigned, no dues collected, and no meetings held. As one reader noted, “All this may seem to the public, as it very likely does to the participants, to be rather in the nature of a joke” (“Our ‘Forty Immortals’” *The Nation*). Yet, while no evidence exists to suggest that any Immortal declined his honorary status in *The Critic*’s academy, in 1904, several men, including William James, Charles W. Eliot, and S. Weir Mitchell, would refuse membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters (Lewis 20-21).35 Despite the academy’s informal makeup, in 1890, six and a half years after the first election for “The Forty Immortals,” the academicians voted to fill the vacancies left by the nine members who had died.36 *The Critic* initiated the balloting, sending “each survivor a paper with nine lines left blank upon it, and begg[ing] him to fill it up with the

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35 In 1904, several men, including William James, Charles W. Eliot, and S. Weir Mitchell, would refuse membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters (Lewis 20-21).
names which he though most fit to succeed the nine who had passed away since 1884.”\textsuperscript{37} According to \textit{The Critic}, “The only three who failed to vote were Mr. Bancroft, whose age incapacitated him for doing so; Mr. Whitman, who disbelieved in ‘close corporations’; and Mr. Henry James.”\textsuperscript{38} Not surprisingly, Whitman, who had set “creeds and schools in abeyance” in “Song of Myself,” abstained from voting (26).\textsuperscript{39} The majority of the academicians, however, participated in this effort to perpetuate the academy. Though this election excluded readers, as only the Immortals voted, it refocused attention on the American academy both at home and abroad. Gosse, for instance, wrote in the London \textit{Speaker} about the continuing American effort to “point out the Forty American Immortals most worth of holding academic chairs in a ‘possible American Academy.” Though he argued that eighteen academicians might have sufficed to fill an American academy, he countered the academy’s naysayers by noting some advantages of an informal institution.\textsuperscript{40} “It is easy to throw cold water on a newspaper Academy,” he wrote, but one thing must in any case be conceded—namely, that this list of Forty American Immortals, even if the claims of some of the members are slight, is not ignoble. […] Now that the body has positively begun to fill up its vacancies, it may be expected to continue to live. Its duties and


\textsuperscript{38} “Our ‘Forty Immortals.’” \textit{The Critic} 29.829 (Jan. 8, 1898): 19.

\textsuperscript{39} I am grateful to Steven S. Fink for calling this Whitman line to my attention.

\textsuperscript{40} “Our Forty ‘Immortals.’” [The \textit{Speaker}, London] \textit{The Critic} 14.349 (September 6, 1890): 123. Gosse says he saw only the reprinted list of the Forty. He singles out 19 names, not 18: Holmes, Lowell, Whittier, Bancroft, Aldrich, Henry James, Parkman, Howells, Bret Harte, George W. Cable, Nelson Page, Stedman, Stoddard, G.W. Curtis, John Burroughs, Mark Twain, Whitney, Noah Porter, Walt Whitman. He discounts Nelson Page because “his name is not among \textit{The Critic}’s forty.” His choice of eighteen names is based on the Svenska Akademi (1786) of Sweden.
emoluments will be shadowy, but it will at least enjoy one advantage over its more solid French and Swedish prototypes: no possible revolution can shut its doors, or rudely tear the palms off the green coats of its members.

(“Our Forty ‘Immortals’” 123).

The academy’s lack of structure, according to Gosse, could work to its advantage, as changes in government would leave it unaffected. While the French Academy had been temporarily “swept away in 1793, along with the ancient nobility and monarchy” during the French Revolution,41 The Critic’s American academy could survive political upheavals because it was a strictly honorary institution.

As this review of these unsuccessful attempts to form an American academy suggests, The Critic’s elections were part of a push to honor authors for their literary achievements. The Critic’s editors may have indeed agreed to host the election because they hoped to increase circulation, as Miller suggests with his remark about “good journalism”; the fact remains that in order for them to project that increase, they needed to think that readers would be interested in the election. To that end, the election had the desired results, generating considerable reader response. In his discussion of the election, R.W.B. Lewis characterizes the voting as “unexpectedly heavy” (2).42 And reader interest continued after the election. As Read notes, “The list attracted wide comment and much dissent” (“Membership” 156). Readers showed as much interest in the names excluded from the list they did in those included. For the published results do not entirely reflect

the ballots cast by readers. The editors had done more than simply count the votes; they
had also disqualified any votes for women and minorities. As Boyd observes, the
published list reflects “the prejudices of the literary establishment” (243). In other words,
their modified list of the Forty Immortals bears the imprint of the hegemonic discourse of
cultural authority. However, unwilling to dismiss their readers’ votes out of hand, The
Critic explains its editorial decisions, leaving behind an invaluable record of the 1890s
discourse about American authors.

First, they restate and clarify their parameters for the election in order to explain
their disallowance of some votes, saying:

> Although we stated distinctly that the only persons eligible to membership
> in the hypothetical Academy were ‘native American authors of the sterner
> sex,’ a number of voters have ignored the limitations thus fixed, and have
> included in their lists the names (1) of authors who are not native, (2) of
> native Americans who are not authors, and (3) of native American authors
> who are not of the sterner sex—unless we were wrong in using that phrase
> to denote the trousered gender.\(^43\)

Next, they provide examples of votes that ignored the criteria: At least some readers had
cast their votes for authors, like Herbert Spencer, born outside the United States and
therefore not “native” Americans. Others had voted for Frederick Douglass and Sitting
Bull, whom the editors deemed unqualified for the academy because their “only claim to
eligibility consisted in the fact that they were born, and have always lived, on American

Furthermore, readers nominated at least a dozen women, including Harriet Beecher Stowe, Helen Jackson, “H.H.,” and Constance Fenimore Woolson, all of whom were automatically eliminated from consideration in the Forty Immortals since they were “not of the sterner sex.” Finally, at least one reader, “evidently taking the word ‘Immortal’ to mean one who has ‘put on immortality’” had listed only two living men; votes for deceased authors were not counted. In all, the editors list some fifty names that they disqualified for not meeting their now-clarified election guidelines. Whether or not the invalidated votes would have impacted the election results is not now determinable. Highly material to this discussion, however, is how the editorial decisions to discount votes—effectively lionizing some authors and marginalizing others—were made without full regard to the voters’ wishes. As Holly Laird notes in her study of black/white, author/editor friction, nineteenth-century “politics of solidarity were themselves structured by racist, classist, and sexist hierarchies” (57). The editors’ manipulation of the ballots models all of these hierarchies.

Scholars have noted that late nineteenth-century attempts to legitimatize an American literary tradition privileged male Anglo-Saxon authors at the expense of African Americans, immigrants and women. The Gilders’ original call for votes merely

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44 The elimination of Frederick Douglass and Sitting Bull prompted one reader, William F. Peck of Rochester, N.Y., to write a letter to the editors; they published and responded to the letter on May 3, 1884. This exchange will be discussed below.
45 “Our ‘Forty Immortals.’” The Critic (April 12, 1884): 169-170. The editors list the following women as the “oftenest mentioned”: “Harriet Beecher Stowe, Helen Jackson, (H. H.), Julia Ward Howe, Constance Fenimore Woolson, Harriet W. Preston, Mary Mapes Dodge, Margaret J. Preston, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Harriet Prescott Spofford, Mary Abigail Dodge (Gail Hamilton), Maria Mitchell, and Edith M. Thomas” (170).
46 “Our ‘Forty Immortals.’” The Critic (April 12, 1884), 169-170.
asked readers to submit “a list of the names of the forty American authors of the sterner sex whom they deem most worthy of a place in a possible American Academy,” but closely reading their clarification of that call illustrates how they privileged white American males. Their insertion, in the first point, of the word “native” suggests that the authors must have been born on American soil to be considered for membership in the academy. Consequently, omitted from consideration as an American author were men like Dr. Philip Schaff (1819-1893), who was born in Switzerland, educated in Germany, and immigrated, in 1844, to Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, where he served as professor of church history in the German Reformed Theological Seminary, and later, in 1863, to New York City, where he was appointed “professor of theological encyclopaedia and Christian symbolism in the Union seminary” in 1870 (Schaff 282). Though the editors admit that Schaff, as well as other long-time residents of America, “crept in quite naturally,” they eliminated him as a possible American immortal because he had not been born in America.\footnote{“Our ‘Forty Immortals.’” The Critic (April 12, 1884): 170.}

The editorial reasons for omitting men, like Cardinal McCloskey, from consideration “for the same reason”—namely, that they were not born on American soil—are less clear. As The Freeman’s Journal, the oldest nationalist daily newspaper of Ireland, subsequently pointed out, McCloskey was born in Brooklyn. In its April 26, 1884 issue, in an instance of international collaborative exchange between periodicals, The Critic acknowledged the information and the Journal’s disapproval of the named Forty: “The Freeman’s Journal informs us that Cardinal McCloskey is a ‘native-born American,’ his birthplace being Brooklyn. It is very much disgusted with our readers’ list.
of ‘Forty Immortals,’ and would head its own, if it should choose one, with the name of John Gilmary Shea. ‘Ex pede Herculem.’”49 The reason for the editorial inaccuracy regarding MCloskey’s birthplace cannot be determined. But the final Latin phrase, in the editors’ response, which indicates that from Hercules’s foot one can measure the man, suggests that the editors held little regard for the Irish newspaper’s comments regarding the inclusion of either McCloskey or Shea in an American canon.50

If the issues of exclusion raised in the editors’ first clarification of the election rules seem tentative, their second point more clearly demarcates their exclusionary principles. Their rule against “native Americans who are not authors” removes African Americans and Native Americans, specifically Frederick Douglass and Sitting Bull, from the list of possible candidates. In explanation, The Critic said, their “only claim to eligibility consisted in the fact that they were born, and have always lived, on American soil” (“Our Forty Immortals” 170). Readers disagreed, insisting that Douglass was an author. After the announcement that votes for these two men had been discounted, one reader, William F. Peck,51 hotly contested the elimination of Douglass, saying he had “written more than half of those who were voted for” and that the quality of his work “certainly was good enough to raise him in a few years, from the time when he ran away


50 For a discussion of “nativism” and the “Irish question,” see Mott. In the mid-nineteenth century, he writes, it “was possible to attack with some effectiveness an American editor for his display of bad judgment of being born in Ireland” (338).

51 Possibly William Farley Peck (1840-1908), lawyer and historian of Rochester, New York and author History of the City of Rochester (1884, also known as Semi-Centennial History of the City of Rochester). In this book, Peck describes himself as the editor of Rochester’s Sunday Times and Sunday Tribune (355). Peck mentions Douglass several times, saying that his North Star enjoyed a national reputation and that some of “Douglass’s best work, as champion of the anti-slavery cause was done on this paper” (357). The University of Rochester’s River Campus Libraries house the Peck Family Papers.
from his master and started his newspaper in this city, from a state of pecuniary
nothingness to one of pecuniary independence, if not of wealth.”52 In his letter, Peck
introduces the possibility that Douglass’s exclusion from the American academy might
be racially motivated: “Before shutting the door of the American Academy in his face on
account of his dark skin, remember that Alexandre Dumas pere, who had as much
African blood as Frederick Douglass has, was an honored member of the French
Academy.”53 Peck’s comments about “dark skin” and “African blood” raise the specter of
late nineteenth-century racial tensions by suggesting that a former slave might merit
consideration in an American academy. The Critic’s response to Peck (below) effectively
dismisses what might be read as Peck’s plea for a reconsideration of Douglass, an
African American (who, like Dumas, had white ancestors as well as black) in the
academy. The discussion itself, however, reflects another instance of tension in the
process of deciding this American academy.

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, Barbara Hochman observes, racial
issues were “widely neglected in literary discourse” even though they “loomed large” in
society” (261). Similarly, Richard Ohmann states, in Selling Culture: Magazines,
Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century: “race was not exactly unmentionable, and
black people not literally invisible; but race—what was elsewhere called ‘the Negro
problem’—made no appearance as a constituted issue” in the magazines marketing mass
culture and only a shadowy presence in the elite magazines (255, 258). Not surprisingly,
then, The Critic’s editors deny that Douglass’s race barred him from their academy:

No one who has read the story of his life can fail to admire the character of Mr. Douglass, and marvel at his career. In reviewing his Autobiography, a little more than two years ago (THE CRITIC, Jan. 28, 1882), we put upon record our high opinion of his character and achievements. But his merits as an author are not such as to entitle him to admission to a literary Academy. It was not his color, but his commanding genius, that gained Dumas admission to the Immortal Forty of France. It is not his color, but his lack of literary ability, that would debar Mr. Douglass from entering a similar institution in this country.  

In their response, the editors’ claim that consideration of race played no part in their decision to nullify ballots cast for Douglass; rather, they state that their decision rested solely on his “lack of literary ability.” Despite saying their terminology of “all” and “etc.” in the call for votes, the editors reject Douglass. They differentiate between Douglass’s activism and his art, crediting him for his “achievements” but not for his authorial merit. Their dismissal of Douglass’s literary ability recalls the editor’s identification of “literature” as history, poetry, drama, novels, science, and theology. Douglass cannot serve as a representative of American authorship because *The Critic*, in its role of cultural authority, judged his literary efforts unworthy.

Moreover, a brief look back at *The Critic*’s 1882 review of Douglass’s third version of his autobiography, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881), calls into question the editors’ statement regarding their “high opinion of his character and

achievements.” Their three-paragraph review opens by discussing the rarity of autobiographies published during an author’s lifetime, saying of Douglass’s book, “Here is reason enough why a man should wait till there is five feet of good solid earth over him before he provokes the world to talk about him.” In the second paragraph, the editors acknowledge the unparalleled nature of Douglass’s career before saying that Douglass was a man over whose life, when manhood was reached, came a marvellous (sic) change; who rose presently to be an orator so gifted that even enemies listened with delight; who came to have his share, neither obscure nor unimportant, in a great social movement which only the greatest civil war the world has ever known could bring to an end; and who came, at length, before he was an old man, to fill offices of dignity and trust in the capital of his country;—the story of the career of such a man as this may be written when and how he pleases, and the world may accept it without carping and without criticism, and be glad to get it. […] Had he been of another complexion, the ages would count him among their heroes.

Perhaps they will yet. (“Frederick Douglass” 21).

Interestingly, the editors ignore the fact that Douglass had published two versions of his autobiography before the war, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave (1845) and My Bondage and My Freedom (1855). Nor do they mention The

56 See Scott E. Casper’s Constructing American Lives: Biography and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America (1999) for a discussion of how nineteenth-century American critics sought to “make biography a branch of the fine arts” (203), According to Casper, “Successful biographical artistry began with literary
Heroic Slave (1852), Douglass’s fictional reinterpretation of the 1841 rebellion aboard the slave ship Creole. The editors acknowledge Douglass’s skills as an orator but refuse to call him an author.57 Furthermore, they say that his race, or his “complexion,” meant that the age he lived in could not classify him as a “hero.” He may have accomplished a lot for a man born a slave, but, for now, the color of his skin disqualified him from hero status. Privileging presentation over content, in the third and final paragraph of the review, the editors point out the volume’s poor “setting,” saying that, while the narrative had some “merit” as it represented “something altogether different from anything in autobiographical literature,” its “scant margins, its press-work, and its illustrations could hardly be worse.” Thus, while the review appreciates Douglass’s personal achievements, it dismisses his literary work. Rereading the review troubles the editors’ claim that race played no part in their decision to eliminate him from consideration as an Immortal. Though at least some readers would have included Douglass in their American academy, the editors shut down the discussion, exercising their editorial power to exclude Douglass from consideration as an Immortal, or a “hero” of the literary world.

The decision to exclude Douglass from the academy mirrored the exclusion of African Americans from nineteenth-century American society. Similarly, the periodical’s treatment of Sitting Bull reflects the times in which The Critic and its readers were

craftsmanship” (211). Casper also notes that, though biographies of and by African American challenged existing narratives of the American past (137), these accounts often relied on eyewitness testimony rather than on historical documentation, and this distinction made the works appear less “scholarly” (157).

57 Elsewhere, The Critic mentions Douglass’s publications. For instance, “Literary Notes” (May 7, 1881) announces that “Frederick A. Douglass will contribute a paper on ‘The Color Line to the June number of the North American” (123); likewise, the February 17, 1894 issue of “The Lounger” notes that Douglass had written the introduction to the American edition of Schoelcher’s Life of Toussaint L’Ouverture (this edition never appeared).
enmeshed. For instance, in its unfavorable review of Warren K. Moorehead’s *Wanneta, the Sioux* (1891), *The Critic* notes the impact of the political on the literary: “In literature as in politics there are two methods of dealing with the ‘Indian question’: the sympathetic and the antipathetic, leading to very different results.”

58 Here, the periodical outlines the positions without stating its preference for either literary method. If we read these methods literally instead of literarily, the reader(s) who nominated Sitting Bull might be considered “sympathetic” toward the Native American, while Peck, who had so passionately defended Douglass, might be considered “antipathetic.” This voter imagines a place within an American academy for the Native American, while Peck does not. In fact, Peck’s letter elevates Douglass at the expense of Sitting Bull. After protesting the editors’ slighting of Douglass, Peck chastises the editors, asking how they could “deliberately class together” Douglass and Sitting Bull, who he categorizes as an “ignorant, brutal savage.”

59 As the moderator of this discussion, *The Critic* takes an antipathetic stance, effectively reinforcing a white male model of American authorship.

As they had with Douglass, the editors couch their rejection of Sitting Bull within a rhetoric of high esteem and racial difference. They praise his military ingenuity even as they remind readers that Sitting Bull is a (conquered) non-white enemy of the state, saying, “Both as warrior and diplomat he proved himself, not many years ago, more than

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58 “Two Indian Romances” *The Critic* 15.377 (March 21, 189): 151. The review notes the novel’s historical attention to Sitting Bull and Sioux tribal traditions but dismisses its “literary execution,” saying that “the style is careless and prosaically commonplace.” In contrast, the reviewer more positively evaluates a second novel, *The Bridge of the Gods*, by F.N. Balch, saying that it has a “more polished style, a more elaborate plot, more careful delineations of character, and other evidences of a literary culture and skill,” though his “incidents” are “improbable” and his characters “intensely disagreeable.”

a match for our military forces in the West. Fortune endowed him, not with a white skin and a West Point education, but with a genius for war which many of our generals might envy him.\textsuperscript{60} Notably, \textit{The Critic}'s editors mention Sitting Bull’s skin color and his lack of education instead of pointing out, as they easily might have, his lack of literary output.\textsuperscript{61} In contrast to African American men, Native Americans were not considered American citizens at the time \textit{The Critic} held its election for an “American” academy. By 1884, when the election for the “Forty Immortals” was held, most non-white and unpropertied men had been accorded the right to vote (in theory, if not in practice), but citizenship was not granted to Native Americans until 1890.\textsuperscript{62} Read in context of their explanation of why Douglass could not be considered as an academician, the editors’ reasoning insinuates that even had Sitting Bull been an author he would not have gained entrance into the American Forty. Once again, the editors use their editorial power to override reader input, and the discussion about Sitting Bull as a possible academician reveals discord between the periodical and its readers.

After explaining their reasons for excluding non-native authors and native Americans who were not authors, the editors identify a third category of authors who would be excluded from their academy: women. They rather humorously repeat the

\textsuperscript{60} “Frederick Douglass and Sitting Bull.” \textit{The Critic} (May 3, 1884): 211.

\textsuperscript{61} Sitting Bull appeared as a subject within \textit{The Critic}'s pages but not as an author. The December 19, 1891 issue contained an “Advertisement” for new publications, one of which was a juvenile book entitled \textit{Little Smoke} by William O. Stoddard that featured “portraits of Sitting Bull, Red Cloud, and other chiefs” (16:416).

\textsuperscript{62} “Voting Rights Timeline.” March 4, 2005. ACLU <http://www.aclu.org/voting-rights/voting-rights-act-timeline>. 25 May 2011. In \textit{Elk v. Wilkins} (1884), the Supreme Court ruled that John Elk, a Native American from Nebraska, did not have the right to vote. In 1887, The Dawes General Allotment Act, designed to open Indian lands for white settlement and to force Native Americans to assimilate into white society, required that Native Americans renounce tribal affiliations in order to vote. In 1890, the Indian Naturalization Act granted citizenship to those Native Americans who successfully completed the application process.
limiting factor of gender by asking if they had incorrectly identified the “sterner sex” as male. As already noted, many readers simply chose to ignore the ballot’s gender limitation. The famed French Academy might be “a drawing room without ladies,” but *The Critic*’s voters show, through their votes, that they envisioned an inclusive American Academy composed of both male and female authors. The periodical acknowledges its readers’ preferences, listing the women writers receiving the highest number of votes: “Of native American authors not of the sterner sex, the following were the oftenest mentioned: Harriet Beecher Stowe, Helen Jackson, (H.H.), Julia Ward Howe, Constance Fenimore Woolson, Harriet W. Preston, Mary Mapes Dodge, Margaret J. Preston, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Harriet Prescott Spofford, Mary Abigail Dodge (Gail Hamilton), Maria Mitchell, and Edith M. Thomas” (*The Critic*, April 12, 1884). Despite women writers’ popularity among readers, none of the votes cast for them counted. No list survives of less-mentioned women authors, but this list of the twelve “oftenest mentioned” suggests that women might have made up at least twenty-five percent of *The Critic*’s academy had they been awarded membership.

*The Critic* may have inadvertently contributed to the readerly confusion about the inclusion of women in the list of notable American authors. Established just three years before the election for “The Forty Immortals,” the New York-based periodical supported women authors by regularly publishing and reviewing their work. In particular, *The Critic* provided outlet for dozens of American women, including “H. H.,” Julia Ward

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64 For a list of both men and women contributors during *The Critic*’s first ten years (1881-91), see “The Critic’s Contributors.” *The Critic* 16.414 (December 5, 1891): viii.
Howe, and Edith M. Thomas, whose names, as already noted, the editors rejected from consideration in “The Forty Immortals” because they weren’t of the “trousered gender.” Ohmann notes that, while by the 1890s women had been “grudgingly accepted as writers” for fifty years, periodicals still maintained a “principle of unvexed social space” that reinforced the “naturalness” of the late nineteenth century’s social order (267). In a separate-sphere society, women working as authors needed, like other women, to maintain their decorum. Therefore, though their work filled the periodical’s pages, their gender prevented them from public recognition, even in The Critic’s “hypothetical” academy. Journals such as the Revolution (1868-1872), the Agitator (1869), the Boston Woman’s Journal (1870-1873), the Woman’s Campaign (1872), and the Women’s Tribune (1883-1909) advocated openly for suffrage and increased rights for women, but The Critic, like the other Atlantic-group periodicals, took a more traditional stance, standing as an arbiter of propriety. While the periodical gave sober consideration to women, women’s issues, and women’s texts, it did not hold a progressive attitude toward women.

The driving force behind The Critic was Jeanette Gilder, who, though she began working at age fifteen after her father died of smallpox, opposed suffrage for women.

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65 See Mott 548-9 for a discussion of the authors featured within the pages of The Critic.
66 See “Women and Their Magazines,” Mott 90-103. According to Glazener, the periodicals in the Atlantic-group “expressed spotty support for women’s suffrage and other gender-based reorganizations of society” (5). In contrast, she writes, “The Arena’s attention to women’s interests and rights was thorough and progressive” (215).
67 W. J. Hug notes The Critic’s conservative stance, as does Mott (Hug 150-151; Mott 549).
Gilder worked first as a Civil War researcher, then as a seamstress in the Philadelphia mint (where she made bags to hold gold), then as an accountant’s clerk before becoming a newspaper reporter. As a reporter, she initially worked for her brother Richard on the Newark Register, then for Whitelaw Reid, as a correspondent on the New York Tribune, writing under the by-line of “J. L. Gilder.” As both Stedman and Hutchinson also worked for the Tribune, Gilder may have known—or at least known of—one or both of them. Their Library of American Literature received regular reviews within the pages of The Critic. According to Hug, she was fired from the Tribune when Reid discovered that “J. L. Gilder” was a woman, because he feared she might not be able to do the job she had been doing for three years (150). James Gordon Bennett then hired her to write book reviews for the New York Herald, where, eventually, she was promoted to the position of “review editor” (Hug 149, 150). After six years at the Herald, she founded The Critic with her brother Joseph, using $750 she had received for editing an 1881 Appleton gift book, The Homes and Haunts of Our Elder Poets. She served as the periodical’s co-editor from 1881-1901 and as sole editor from 1901-1906. In additional, she served “as New York correspondent for the Boston Saturday Evening Gazette and later the Boston Evening Transcript; for both she wrote under the pen name ‘Brunswick’” (Hug 151-152). She also contributed regularly to a number of other newspapers, edited and co-edited books, wrote a novel, two autobiographies, and several plays, dramatized Josiah G. Holland’s 1875 novel Sevenoaks, and established, in 1895, a literary brokerage under the
name of “Miss Gilder’s Syndicate,” which she operated prosperously until her death in 1916.⁶⁹

Despite her considerable literary and business success, Gilder remained opposed to women’s involvement in politics. She says, in “‘Why I Am Opposed to Woman Suffrage’”⁷⁰ [1894?]: “In politics I do not think that women have any place. The life is too public, too wearing, and too unfitted to the nature of women” (2). Explaining how her career had resulted in some misunderstanding of her stance on suffrage, she writes,

> It has been quite a shock to people who do not know me, but who thought they did, to find me opposed to woman’s suffrage. Because I have been for so many years a working-woman, and because the profession I chose is, or was at the time I entered it, supposed to be entirely a man’s profession, they thought I wanted all the privileges of men. But I don’t. (“Why I Am Opposed” 1)

Gilder recognizes that people have misunderstood her. While she regards her early entrance into the male-dominated field of journalism as innovative, she argues emphatically against suffrage. She references the Bible, saying that the first woman, Eve,

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⁶⁹ Gilder wrote *Taken by Siege: A Novel* (1886, in *Lippincott’s Magazine*, then in book form in 1887), *The Autobiography of a Tom-Boy* (1900), and *The Tom-Boy at Work* (1904). In addition to *Homes and Haunts of Our Elder Poets*, she edited *Representative Poems of Living Poets, American and English*, *Selected by the Poets Themselves* (1886), the eight-volume *Masterpieces of the World’s Best Literature* (1905), and *The Heart of Youth: Young People’s Poems, Gay and Grave* (1911). With Joseph Gilder, she co-edited *Essays from “The Critic”* (1882) and *Authors at Home: Personal and Biographical Sketches of Well-Known American Writers* (1888). With Helen Gray Cone, she co-edited *Pen Portraits of Literary Women, by Themselves and Others* (1887). After Philadelphia’s Chestnut Street Theater produced *Quits* (1876), Gilder “had a number of plays produced” (Tutwiler 239).

evidences the need for women keep to their proper “sphere” (3). Women, she insists, cannot be “politicians and women. It is against nature, against reason” (4).  

Ironically, while “Why I Am Opposed to Woman Suffrage” speaks resoundingly against women’s suffrage, it also outlines Gilder’s belief in the “mental equality of the sexes.” In Gilder’s opinion, women may be ill-equipped for politics, but they at least hold the potential to compete with men in their literary or artistic endeavors. She writes:

I believe in putting men’s work and women’s work of the same kind side by side, and judging it not as sex work, but simply as work. To have a “Woman’s Building” at the World’s Fair did not seem to me a compliment to the sex […] I do not believe in sex in literature or art. Every book should be compared with all other books of its kind, and so with every picture, or musical composition. (2)

That Gilder should argue here for literary gender equality might seem inconsistent based on the foregoing analysis of the election for “The Forty Immortals.” Her statement suggests a possible difference of opinion between the Gilder siblings over the nature of their reader-elected American academy. It might also explain why, as will be discussed below, the periodical initiated the second election for “The Twenty Immortelles” six years after the original election. In the years leading up to her brother’s retirement,

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71 She writes, for example, “Cannot a woman find a sufficiently engrossing ‘sphere’ in the very important work of training her children!” […] From the day Adam and Eve were created to the present year of grace men and women have been different in all important respects. They were made to fill different roles” (3).
72 Like Sarah Josepha Buell Hale (1788-1879), literary editor of Godey’s Lady’s Book, opposed forthright political involvement, preferring, instead, indirect influence (over male relatives who voted). Milette Shamir discusses this ideology of “separate spheres” in Inexpressible Privacy (2006).
Jeanette gradually assumed more control of the periodical.\textsuperscript{73} Her essay indicates that she, like many of The Critic’s readers, preferred that literary and artistic judgments be based on merit rather than gender. Notably, though, women were just as segregated from the men in the category of “Immortelles” as they were in the “Woman’s Building” at the Fair.

Although constitutionally barred from participating in political elections in the nineteenth century, women could vote in The Critic’s elections. Though the rules carefully defined those the voters could vote for, they did not exclude women from voting. In addition, in their analysis of the ballots that accompanied the announcement of the Twenty Immortelles, the editors acknowledge that members of both sexes cast their ballots: “Occasionally a voter confessed that he or she had found it no easy matter to name so many as twenty names worth of the proposed distinction” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{74}

Evidence from The Critic also suggests that, in the election for “The Twenty Immortelles,” some ballots submitted by male readers acknowledged traces of a woman’s influence. For example, one “distinguished scholar whose letters are dated from Philadelphia enclosed this modest note in the envelope that bore his list of ladies”:

\begin{quote}
I am so culpably ignorant of the light literature of the day that I did not propose to expose my lack of critical discernment by rushing in where an angel might fear to tread. With the assistance of your thoughtful list, however, and that of a lady more familiar than I with the subject, I have
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{73} See Mott 551; Richard Gilder retired in 1901, but he had “been gradually relinquishing his part of the work for some time”; Also see Edward E. Chielens, “The Critic” in American Literary Magazines. Chielens writes, “Though sister and brother shared credit for editing the Critic, Jeannette Gilder apparently was in charge and continued as sole editor after her brother retired” (122).

\textsuperscript{74} “The Twenty ‘Immortelles.’” The Critic 14:356, 207.
made out the enclosed ballot for your Twenty ‘Immortals.’ (“The Twenty ‘Immortelles’” 207)

This “distinguished scholar,” presumably male, writes that he relied on two resources in compiling his list: the list of women writers provided in the September 27, 1890 issue of *The Critic* and his “lady” acquaintance. The editors reprint his letter matter-of-factly, without disqualifying his votes, so presumably the help the “lady” provided fit within the election guidelines.

Though *The Critic* offers few evidentiary traces of the gendered makeup of its readership, some speculative observations can be made. Scholarly research indicates that it is not too unlikely to suppose a high percentage of women readers. As Nina Baym points out in *Woman’s Fiction*, women dominated the reading public after the Civil War (13). Mott records the “preponderance of female names on the subscription lists” noted by *Appleton’s Journal* in 1869, calling this high percentage of female subscribers the “petticoat rule” (90). If women did constitute a considerable percentage of *The Critic*’s readership, they may have been part of the “well-to-do, native-born, East Coast urbanites” that Glazener identifies as the socio-economic target audience for the *Atlantic*-group (194), or, if not of this elite social group, they may have simply “wanted to sample authorized high culture” (202). *The Critic* acknowledged one woman reader—a “lady [who] wrote from Virginia”—by reprinting an extract from her letter to the editors in the announcement of the Twenty Immortelles (“The Twenty ‘Immortelles’” 207). In an unrelated instance, in the special issue celebrating Oliver Wendell Holmes’s seventy-fifth birthday in 1884, the periodical reprinted letters to the editor and/or poetic remembrances
from a number of literary women readers, including “L. M. Alcott,” Rose Terry Cooke, Mary Mapes Dodge, Julia C. R. Dorr, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Alice Wellington Rollins, “H.B. Stowe,” and Edith M. Thomas.75

Not only were women writers reading the periodicals that contained discussions of literary immortality, but they were also beginning to dream of literary immortality for women. In *Writing for Immortality*, Boyd identifies how “a convergence of cultural factors led some women—primarily white, middle class, and from the Northeast—to envision a place for themselves in the high literary culture” emerging within the pages of the periodicals they read (2). By subscribing to periodicals that modeled women’s writing, readers encouraged the continued publication of women’s texts. Those publications led, in turn, to the promulgation of the idea that American women writers might achieve literary immortality. Not surprisingly, then, at least some ballots included women’s names as possible Immortals even though the election rules specifically prohibited them from consideration.

Readers objected immediately to the exclusion of women authors from membership in “The Forty Immortals” in 1884. Some wrote letters to *The Critic*’s editors, questioning why an American academy should be “comprised exclusively of men.” Two weeks after the results were published, *The Literary World* suggested a second election whereby readers could vote “for ‘Forty Immortals’ of the gentler sex” (“Notes” 202). In response, *The Critic* said, “[T]his would never do. The embarrassment of riches is too great. To hold all the American women worthy of membership in such an

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75 The issue devoted to Holmes is dated August 30, 1884.
institution, the Academy would have to be composed of four hundred, rather than of forty, ladies” (April 26, 1884). In her discussion of “The Forty Immortals,” Boyd assesses The Critic’s statement, saying, “The implication was that ranking women writers was futile” because “none was better or more worthy of lasting recognition than another” (244). Boyd observes that so many post-bellum women achieved fame as authors that the “realm of literature was deemed by many male critics and writers to be dominated by women” (2). Yet, despite the recognition of women’s popularity and success, achievements that are supported by readers’ calls for inclusion of women in the “Forty Immortals,” The Critic mandated a policy that refused to consider women for inclusion in its American academy at that time.

Then, in 1890, upon the announcement that nine replacement Immortals would be chosen by the academicians to fill the vacancies death had left in the academy, readers renewed their requests for female inclusion. On August 2, 1890, the following paragraph appeared in the “Notes” section:

To ‘C.T.W.H.’ of Ellsworth, Maine, it seems ‘ungallant’ to compose our Academy ‘entirely of man-kind’; he accordingly suggests that ‘if none of these “Immortals” will resign their crowns in favor of certain of our American literary sisterhood, ‘we should open the polls again for the election by our readers of “Forty Immortelles.”’ At the same time, one of the nine newly elected ‘Immortals’ writes to us:—‘Your Academy ought to include women, and I will gladly resign my place in it to one of the fair
writers who have a much better claim to it.’ Here is a hint for one of the journals specially devoted to the interests of womankind.76

If readers’ willingness to include minorities in the list of the Forty Immortals (above) can be read as evidence that at least some of them were more open in their attitudes toward American authors than the editors of The Critic, then this letter supports a similar position regarding women. The male reader “C.T.W.H.” makes three suggestions: that women should not be excluded from the Immortals, that some of the elected Immortals should resign to open up seats for women, and that—if his second suggestion is not acted upon—a second election should be held to elect a forty-member female academy. The second letter, from one of the Immortals, indicates a similar attitude toward female inclusion in the academy; amazingly, the letter writer expresses his willingness to resign in order to facilitate women’s entry into the group. The last line contains The Critic’s response—perhaps, the editors suggest, another journal might be interested in electing an academy of women authors. By ignoring their readers’ clamor for women academicians, the editors reject any changes to its male-only academy.

The letter from the newly-elected Immortal provokes the tantalizing question of which one of the replacement Immortals might have written it. The nine new Immortals elected in 1890 are, in order of votes received, Richard Watson Gilder, Phillips Brooks, Charles Eliot Norton, Francis J. Child, Frank R. Stockton, Henry Charles Lea, Andrew D. White, Horace Howard Furness, and Joel Chandler Harris. Though this list of names provides no clue as to which one might have willingly given his seat in the Academy to

76 “Notes.” The Critic, August 2, 1890; 17: 65
“one of the fair writers,” circumstantial evidence suggests that it might have been Richard Watson Gilder. To make this connection, we must look forward to the first enduring American literary academy: the National Institute of Art, Science and Letters (subsequently renamed, and known, since 1993, as The American Academy of Arts and Letters), formed in 1898 in Saratoga, New York under the auspices of The American Social Science Association. Like The Critic’s academy, the National Institute, formed in 1898, excluded women. According to R.W.B. Lewis, Thomas Wentworth Higginson’s repeated refusal to accept membership in the National Institute in 1899 because of the institution’s discriminatory attitude toward women eventually resulted in a change of policy. When invited to join the Institute,

Higginson wrote Hamilton Mabie, the acting secretary, that much as he would like to be a member, there was “one fatal objection, that it comprises one sex only.” He pointed out that other comparable organizations (he cited the Massachusetts Historical Society) admitted women, even if in small numbers, and that in some of these, women served “in high positions.” Given these facts, he concluded, he must respectfully decline membership.

The Institute officials pretended not to notice Higginson’s refusal to join, and he was carried on the books as a founding member. In 1905 they went through the motions of reelecting him; again he declined, but a

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77 For details of how the name evolved from The National Institute of Arts, Science and Letters to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, see John Updike’s discussion of its nomenclature in A Century of Arts of Letters, esp. ix-x. This academy will be discussed in more detail below.
compromise of sorts was reached through a rewording of the Institution’s constitution whereby women were not formally excluded. Higginson accepted what he called replacement, and, in 1906, he nominated Julia Ward Howe for election. Mark Twain seconded the nomination, and Richard Watson Gilder, poet and editor of the *Century*, added his name. Mrs. Howe was duly elected… (Lewis 12).

Here, in the record of Higginson’s advocating on behalf of female inclusion in the National Institute, we find mention of one of the nine replacement Immortals: Richard Watson Gilder. Though Gilder’s support of Howe’s nomination cannot be regarded as proof that he authored the letter to *The Critic* and offered to resign his position as an Immortal if it meant that a woman could be offered the vacant position, his role in the process—combined with his name on the list of the nine replacement Immortals—suggests the possibility. The motion had already been made and seconded, so his backing was not strictly necessary; by adding his voice to the discussion, he records his advocacy of women academicians. However, this male collaborative endeavor on behalf of women authors still lay nearly a decade in the future when *The Critic* suggested that another journal might want to hold an election designed to elect a group of *immortelles*.

But a fascination with its own cultural achievement—identifying a group of male American authors that had taken the first fledgling steps toward self-sustainment—proved too powerful for *The Critic*; quite possibly, it saw a second election as a means of sustaining readerly interest in its academy, for a mere four weeks after stating that “one of the journals specially devoted to the interests of womankind” might be the logical site
for an election of women authors, the periodical opened its pages for election for “The Twenty Immortelles.” The public process of reconsideration began on August 21, 1890, when the Nation published an essay reviewing the “so-called American Academy,” wherein it noted that the selection of replacement academicians gave the academy a certain air of “maturity.” The call for women academicians follows the Nation’s analysis of the “geographical distribution” of the “final list of forty” (in other words, the list that reflected the replacement of nine dead original members) by both “habitat” and “birthplaces.” Without specific reference to The Critic’s earlier-noted emphasis on “American,” the Nation concluded that by habitat, if not by birth, the 1890 list reflected an international membership, as Bret Harte and Henry James lived in England, and W.W. Story lived in Italy. Then, the final sentence of the essay addresses the academy’s continued exclusion of women, saying, “It seems a pity that women as well as men should not be admitted to so much of literary immortality as can be guaranteed by a vote taken through the post-office.” With this pithy observation, the Nation successfully resurrected the call for an academy that included women.

I want to suggest that the letters from “C.T.W.H.” and the unidentified Immortal, the election of nine new Immortals, and the Nation’s analyses of habitats and birthplaces

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78 “Our ‘Forty Immortals.’” [The Nation, August 21, 1890] The Critic 14: 348 (August 30, 1890) 107-8. According to the Nation, fourteen of the forty lived in Massachusetts, nine in New York, seven in Connecticut, two in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and England, one in the District of Columbia, Michigan, Georgia, and Italy. The Nation’s analysis of the forty’s birthplaces yields a New England majority similar to that found in its survey of the habitats: seventeen were born in Massachusetts, six in New York, five in Connecticut, three in Pennsylvania, two in New Hampshire, and one each in Rhode Island, New Jersey, Georgia, Louisiana, Ohio, Missouri, and the Hawaiian Islands. (Interestingly, though George Parsons Lathrop was born in Honolulu more than a century before the Hawaiian Islands were granted statehood, no one raised any objections regarding his American citizenship.)

79 For a discussion of the Nation and its influence, see Mott 331-360. Mott writes, “[T]he power of the Nation came not from the number of its readers, but from their station and influence and from the frequency with which it was quoted. And a power it rapidly became, in both politics and letters” (339).
reflect an on-going interest in the formation and continuance of *The Critic’s* American academy and in female authorship. My analysis of the results for “The Forty Immortals,” which includes both the published list of academicians as well as the discourse surrounding the election, highlights how the periodical and its readers differed in their definitions of American authorship. Their more tolerant attitudes toward women and minority authors align the readers less with *The Critic’s* editors and more with some of the authors on the list who championed the work of marginalized writers, such as William Dean Howells, who encouraged African Americans authors such as Paul Laurence Dunbar and Charles W. Chesnutt.80 *The Critic’s* record of both the process and the results of the election provide an invaluable resource for illustrating how the periodical engaged with its readers on a project that ultimately configured a conservative view of the late nineteenth-century American literary tradition, as *The Critic’s* conservative editorship overrode its readers’ wishes and published a more conservative list than they proposed with their ballots. In particular, in its search for “The Forty Immortals,” the periodical had excluded women from its academy and, simultaneously, their texts from consideration as American literature. Below, I will discuss how the election for “The Twenty Immortelles” reflects growing public support for women’s equitable treatment in the literary arena. In a rare scholarly mention of the second

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80 Howells may have championed African American writers, but he apparently never considered them for inclusion in the American Academy of Arts & Letters, where he served as president from 1908-1920. Despite the visibility of black writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “the whole idea of minority representation—in a cultural context or in any other—was nowhere entertained in turn-of-the-century America, nor would it be for another seventy years or more” (Lewis 14). For a discussion of the problematic dynamics in Howell’s literary friendship with Chesnutt, see William L. Andrews’s “William Dean Howells and Charles W. Chesnutt: Criticism and Race Fiction in the Age of Booker T. Washington,” in *American Literature* 48:3 (1976): 327-339.
election, Miller notes that *The Critic* “reluctantly responded to pressure from the readers to select twenty ‘Immortelles’” (31). On the one hand, the six and a half year gap between readers’ initial insistence on voting for women in “The Forty Immortals” and *The Critic*’s opening of the polls for “The Twenty Immortelles” might be read as the periodical’s reluctance. On the other hand, it could simply suggest (as mentioned above) that an editorial disagreement between the Gilders had been resolved in favor of allowing female academicians. Nonetheless, with this announcement, the uneasy collaboration between the periodical and its readers entered its second stage.

II. “And Now for ‘Twenty Immortelles’”

*The Critic* responded immediately to the *Nation*’s suggestion, reprinting its essay the following week, in the August 30, 1890 issue. Directly below the *Nation*’s closing comment regarding women being granted the same measure of literary immortality as men, the editors placed an announcement entitled “And Now for ‘Twenty Immortelles’”:

> Yielding to an apparently general desire on the part of our readers, which has found expression many times in private letters addressed to the editors, as well as in the printed comments on our Academy composed exclusively of men, we take pleasure in hereby throwing open the polls again, this time for the election of an Academy to be composed of the twenty writers whom our readers deem the truest representatives of what is best in cultivated American womanhood. Voters should be careful not to

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put more than twenty names upon their lists, and to write only on one side of the paper. Every list must contain the writer’s name and address, though these will not be published. If the balloting proceeds as briskly as we expect it to, the result will be announced in *The Critic* of Oct. 25.

(108, emphasis in original)

Though the direct impetus for the election of “The Twenty Immortelles” seems to have been the *Nation*’s comment, the announcement credits readers for instigating the second election. Here, “readers” include both general readers, who wrote the editors of *The Critic* directly, and published readers, like Y.D., whose essay, “Our ‘Forty Immortals,’” the *Nation* published.

While the collective weight of private and public requests for female academicians convinced *The Critic*’s editors to host a second election, this second academy would be smaller than the first. Instead of an academy of “four hundred,” as the editors had earlier suggested would be necessary to honor all the qualified American women writers, readers would select only twenty women as Immortelles. Limiting the number to twenty was, according to the *Inlander*, a literary monthly of the University of Michigan, “an ungallant discrimination” that *The Critic*’s editors left unexplained.82 Moreover, *The Critic*’s opening of the polls for readers to elect an academy of women did not result in a corresponding opening of the doors of the all male academy. This “garland of immortelles,” as the *Inlander* called them, would occupy an academy of their own. Finally, the editors’ call for names that define “what is best in cultivated American

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82 Quotations from the *Inlander* appear in “Where is the Literature of the West?” *The Critic* 15.386 (May 23,1891): 280. A University of Michigan professor had sent a copy of the *Inlander* to *The Critic*.
womanhood” seems strangely removed from the previous election’s insistence on literary excellence. Women were being admitted into an academy, but the editorial rhetoric surrounding the election suggests, first, that they were not being admitted on the basis of their literary merits, and, secondly, that their membership would be marginal.

Like the election for “The Forty Immortals,” “The Twenty Immortelles” illustrates the dynamic interplay between The Critic and its readers. As Laird writes in her study of authorial collaboration, collaborators “reimagin[e] the relations between one rational, civilized, sane, or ordinary world and another” (6). In their role as cultural leaders, the editors exercised control over “The Twenty Immortelles” more directly than they had for “The Forty Immortals” lest the readers reimagine the American academy too drastically. For instance, the call for votes, which appeared in numerous issues, assumed an even more didactic tone than the one in 1884 for “The Forty Immortals.” In the reprinted notice of September 13, 1890, the editors added the following line to steer their voters toward appropriate candidates: “By the merest coincidence, Miss Helen Gray Cone will contribute to the October Century an article on ‘Woman in American Literature,’ from which our readers may derive suggestions that will be of use to them in making up their lists.”83 The timing of Cone’s article may have been coincidental, but The Critic’s not-so-subtle suggestion deliberately steered readers toward its list of “useful” names. Additionally, in case the dozens of names suggested by Cone in her article might not prove sufficient resource for readers to make informed choices, The Critic published a third version of its announcement, on September 27, 1890, adding the following lines:

83 “Twenty ‘Immortelles.’” The Critic 14,352 (September 27, 1890): 156.
For the convenience of voters, we print the names of a large number of writers not unknown to the reading public. It is by no means necessary to confine one’s choices to these 125 ladies; but without some such guide, the voter is in danger of overlooking the very name that he or she would be least willing to omit.

Following this notice was a double-columned alphabetical list of women’s names, from Isabella M. Alden (“Pansy”) to Katharine Prescott Wormeley. Employing the rhetoric of “convenience,” the editors provide their readers with a list of approved candidates. And though the editors say that other names might be acceptable, every name on the resulting list of the Twenty Immortelles appeared on the list of 125.84

Readers responded even more enthusiastically to the election for “The Twenty Immortelles” than they had to “The Forty Immortals.” Whereas approximately 130 voters had cast ballots for “The Forty Immortals,” more than 275 voted in “The Twenty Immortelles,” with votes coming “from every corner of the United States” (“The ‘Twenty Immortelles’” 25 Oct. 1890). The Critic announced the Twenty Immortelles in its issue of September 27, 1890. Listed in order of votes received, the Immortelles were:

1. Harriet Beecher Stowe
2. Frances Hodgson Burnett
3. Mary N. Murfree (*Charles Egbert Craddock*)
4. Julia Ward Howe
11. Adeline Whitney
12. Celia Thaxter
13. Amelia E. Barr
14. Lucy Larcom

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84 Two women on the list of the twenty runners-up were not mentioned in the list of 125 potential candidates: Mary Hallock Foote and Frances Fisher (Christian Reid).
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward</td>
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<td>Sarah Orne Jewett</td>
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<td>Mary Mapes Dodge</td>
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<td>Constance Fenimore Woolson</td>
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<td>Edith M. Thomas</td>
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<td>Margaret Deland</td>
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<td>Rose Terry Cooke</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Harriet Prescott Spofford</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>Louise Chandler Moulton</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Mary E. Wilkins</td>
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<td>Blanche Willis Howard Teufel</td>
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Below the list of the twenty Immortelles, the editors also provided the names of the “twenty ladies who received the next largest number of votes.” Notable names on the list of runners up include Rebecca Harding Davis, Frances E. Willard, and S.M.B. Piatt.85

But, once again, the election results do not accurately reflect the readers’ wishes.

As with “The Forty Immortals,” the editors controlled the results, rejecting votes that did not fit their criteria. They explain, in a paragraph following the election results, that they had “been obliged to exercise a careful supervision of the ballots cast, and in the few instances where a palpable attempt to force an obscure name into the list was detected, the supervisors of the election did not hesitate to cast out the peccant tickets.”86

Interestingly, though the editors do not mention it, two of the twenty were born abroad: Frances Hodgson Burnett and Amelia E. Barr both were born in England. Two more lived abroad: Blanche Willis Howard Teufel and Constance Fenimore Woolson both resided in Europe. Evidently, the “peccant tickets” were not eliminated because of authorial birthplace or residence but because the editors deemed the candidate too

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85 Jeannette Gilder received enough votes to appear in the second list, but “as one of the editors of The Critic she was, of course, out of the competition.” “And Now for the ‘Twenty Immortelles.”’ The Critic 14.348 (August 30, 1890): 108.
“obscure” for consideration. According to the editors,

In one case there was a perfect shower of postal cards, containing practically identical lists, written in the crudest of handwritings, and marred by grammatical and orthographical errors that betrayed the baldest illiteracy. Several of these we have filed away for future reference as curiosities of illiterature. As it stands, we believe the list to represent the candid opinions of the many readers who have engaged in voting for it.

(“The Twenty Immortelles” 207)

Reading between the lines, we can assume that the editors disregarded this “perfect shower” of votes for an “obscure” author. They do not say that the postal cards contained more than twenty names, that they were written on both sides of the paper, or that the voter(s) had forgotten to provide a name and address. Instead, they disregard the votes because of the voter’s poor grammatical skills, spelling abilities, and handwriting. The editors reprint part of one such ballot as an example, which, they say, “[W]e have considered our duty (as well as a pleasure) to discard: —‘Dear Sir: I hereby think that these Young Ladies which I have choose as following.’ The first ‘Young Lady’ on the list was Mrs. Stowe!” As it evidenced both spelling and grammatical inefficiency, the editors offer this letter in contrast to several from the letters that “accompanied an intelligently chosen list.” But the voter’s worst offense, seemingly, is to not recognize that Harriet Beecher Stowe, who tops the list of the Immortelles, no longer qualifies, in 1890, as a
“young” lady. In fact, few of the Immortelles qualified as “young.” At 33, Margaret Deland was the youngest Immortelle, and twelve of the twenty were fifty or older.\footnote{Those fifty or older in 1890: Stowe (79), Howe (69), Whitney (66), Thaxter (55), Barr (59), Larcom (66), Cooke (63), Mary Abigail Dodge (57), Mary Mapes Dodge (59), Woolson (50), Spofford (55), and Moulton (55).}

Once again, the editors have eliminated votes that might have affected the election results (if not for Stowe, then for others), and they have done so not in accordance with their previously published election criteria but according to their own ill-defined editorial principles. The tone of their explanation portrays an attitude of literary classism reminiscent of the earlier discussion of Sitting Bull and Frederick Douglass. While the editors never raise the issues of class or race in their analysis of the discarded votes for the Twenty Immortelles, it is not too difficult to imagine that votes for African American or other minority women might have been discarded as “curiosities of illiterature.” Regardless, the votes were discounted because of the voter’s perceived inequitable position in a group of readers that, to recall Miller’s description, should be expected to render a non-critical but “intelligent” opinion.

Contemporaneous assessments of the election often hinted that the readers had contrived to produce an outcome different from what the editors had intended. For instance, in its November 13, 1890 issue, The Independent noted that readers had reinterpreted The Critic’s call for representatives of American womanhood ballots and voted, instead, for the women authors they judged most worthy of literary recognition: “It seems to have been understood by those who voted that it was literary ability that was asked for rather than ‘what is best in cultivated American womanhood’ among the
In addition to highlighting the list’s reflection of literary talent, this article suggests that, even at the time of the election, observers of The Critic’s elections were cognizant of the tensions between the periodical and its readers as well as between periodicals. The periodical asked for one thing and got another, while the readers suggested one list of names and were given a modified version of that list. In contrast to the Independent’s assessment, other sources posited that voters based their preferences on favoritism rather than literary merit. The Nation identifies the list’s “boarding-school flavor,” while the Inlander suggests that each voter “seems to have had a ‘lady friend’ of a literary turn of mind.” While these periodicals’ assessments differ as to readers’ motives, they each imagine that readers tried to influence the election results.

These comments in other periodicals about the Twenty Immortelles indicate that interest in the election extended beyond The Critic’s pages. Like the list of the Forty Immortals, the Twenty Immortelles prompted a wide range of reactions. Some periodicals, like the Zion’s Herald and the Christian Union simply reported the results. Others analyzed the list with varying approaches. The Independent, for example, speculated that the strength of the list and the relative youth of authors might be attributed to increasing educational opportunities for women in the late nineteenth century. After saying that the list of names was “strong,” the periodical notes, “They are nearly all young, a fact which illustrates the prodigious progress of female education in this country during the last generation.” The Inlander took a regional approach, saying,

88 “Twenty Representative Women.” The Independent 42.2189 (November 13, 1890): 13.
89 See, for instance, “About Women,” Zion’s Herald 68.48 (November 26, 1890): 382; “Literary Notes,” Christian Union 42.19 (November 6, 1890): 609.
90 “Twenty Representative Women,” The Independent 42. 2189 (November 13, 1890) 13.
“No Michigan poetess or authoress seems to have received votes. Like it had done for the Forty Immortals, The Nation listed the Immortelles’ birthplaces and “local habitations.”

The list of the Twenty Immortelles, like the one for the Forty Immortals, continued to circulate in literary circles after the balloting had ended. First, The Critic used its election to draw a direct connection between the election and the topic of authorship in its Index for 1890, as the heading for “American women authors” simply directs readers to consult the entry for the Twenty Immortelles. Next, one Ohio literary club tested its members’ knowledge of “American literary ladies” by using the list “as the basis of an impromptu oral examination of the members on the subject of the literary work and worth of the ladies mentioned.” This instance provides an example of people putting the list to use as a reliable test of judgment. Then, a December 20, 1890 notice about “the Christmas number of the New York Ledger” observes, somewhat tangentially, that “six of The Critic’s Twenty ‘Immortelles’ are contributors to the columns of the Ledger.” These three mentions of the list: in a topical index, as the basis of an “amusing and entertaining, as well as really instructive” club meeting, and of six of the women’s

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91 The Inlander overlooked Frances Fisher (Christian Reid), whom the Nation lists as having been born in Michigan.
92 “Our Twenty ‘Immortelles,‘” [The Nation] The Critic 14.365 (December 27, 1890): 342. For this information the periodical relied heavily on “Mr. Arthur Stedman’s ‘Short Biographies’ in the ‘Library of American Literature, vol. xi., and on W.M. Griswold’s ‘Dictionary of Writers.’” All but one of the Immortelles appear in Stedman and Hutchinson’s Library of American Literature, as well as sixteen of the runners up. Mary Abigail Dodge (Gail Hamilton) is listed as an Immortal, though she is not included in the LAL. (The similarly-named Mary Baker Carter Dodge and Mary Mapes Dodge do appear.) Of the runners up, Margaret Preston, Martha Lamb, Frances Willard, and Kate Field are not included in the LAL. Of the list of 125 names suggested as appropriate, at least 75 appear in the LA.
93 “Other 1 – No Title.” The Critic 14 (December 31, 1890): i.
contributions to a particular periodical may seem disconnected and disparate; collectively, however, they evidence readers’ ongoing interest in the collaboratively-generated list of Twenty Immortelles that they had negotiated to include in *The Critic’s* academy and, thus, in the late nineteenth-century American literary tradition.

The elections for the Forty Immortals and the Twenty Immortelles, occurring within the discourse of the need for a national academy, present a gendered view of American literary history. The actual lists of academicians are interesting, though less relevant to this discussion than the process by which those results were gathered, evaluated, announced, and, subsequently, disputed. My research highlights the extended conversation surrounding the elections in order to tie *The Critic’s* initial search for “The Forty Immortals” to its subsequent identification of “The Twenty Immortelles.” My analysis of the two elections suggests that, while each election is important in its own right, collectively, they demonstrate the contested nature of American literature and American authorship at the end of the nineteenth century. While *The Critic* controlled the election results, readers provided the ballots from which those results were tabulated and protested when they thought their votes were disregarded. To read the discourse of “The Forty Immortals” apart from that of “The Twenty Immortelles” curtails a complete and accurate understanding of the extended engagement between *The Critic* and its readers.

*The Critic’s* posthumous evaluations of some of the names listed among the Forty Immortals and the Twenty Immortals will be addressed in Chapter 4. Here, however, I want to return to the discussion initiated above in order to situate *The Critic’s* academy within the larger cultural effort to form an American academy. Like the fledgling
attempts to form an American academy that preceded it, *The Critic’s* “hypothetical” academy ultimately failed to establish itself as an self-perpetuating organization. The subject of an American academy persisted, however. In 1894, construction of a new building for the Library of Congress resurrected the call for an American academy, but the bill authorizing its organization languished in committee (Read “Membership” 158). Then, in 1897, the American Negro Academy was founded in Washington, DC. As Alfred A. Moss, Jr. documents in *The American Negro Academy: Voice of the Talented Tenth* (1981), a group of black American men—including Alexander Crummell, Francis J. Grimké, W. E. B. Du Bois, William H. Crogman, William S. Scarborough, and John W. Cromwell—founded the academy to foster black intellectualism. Like *The Critic’s* academy, the American Negro Academy excluded women. The constitution limited membership to “men of African descent” (qtd. in Moss 1). Moss documents that no objections were made at the academy’s inaugural meeting when George Grisham argued in favor of admitting black women, but no women were ever admitted (40-41). In August 1898, Crummell invited Maritcha B. Lyons to present a paper at the academy’s second meeting. Unable to attend, Lyons sent her paper to the meeting, where E. D. Barrier, a Washington woman, read it to the academy. According to Moss,

This was the first and the last meeting in which a paper written by a woman was presented to the society. Although the black community produced some outstanding female artists, educators, and civil leaders during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—figures such as Fanny Jackson Coppin, Ida Wells-Barnett, Mary Church Terrell, Lucy
Laney, Nannie Burroughs, Meta Warrick Fuller, and Alice Dunbar-Nelson—nothing was done to draw them into a relationship with the American Negro Academy. (Moss 78)

Drawing on the same gender attitudes that excluded women from the Forty Immortals, the American Negro Academy remained exclusively male. According to Moss, the academy’s perennial small membership base (which resulted in part from the exclusion of women) contributed to its demise in 1928, as it lacked the financial resources to continue its existence.

One year after the establishment of the American Negro Academy, the National Institute of Arts and Letters was formed. The American Negro Academy never received much official attention from the white community. Moss notes that even whites “seriously interested in black Americans” exhibited a lack of interest in the academy, labeling this disinterest as “a direct result of white America’s conscious and unconscious rejections of the American Negro Academy’s validity as a learned society and of its members’ claims to be intellectuals” (290-91). However, given the on-going interest in founding an American literary academy, one can only imagine that the formation of a black literary society emphasized the absence of a corresponding white society.

According to Brander Matthews, at “its annual meeting in 1898, the American Social Science Association elected one hundred representatives of the allied arts—men of letters, painters, sculptors, architects, and composers—to constitute a National Institute of Arts and Letters” (447). In his memoir, Matthews notes that this academy’s beginnings were “modest” and the early meetings “sparsely attended” (447). It slowly gained
momentum, with membership growing to 250 members. In 1904, Matthews writes, the National Institute “felt itself able to undertake what had been a chief purpose of its founders—the creation (inside the Institute) of an Academy which should band together and bring into more intimate association the senior practitioners of the several arts” (448).

Unlike The Critic’s collaboratively-chosen academy, the election of the first seven members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters were chosen by “secret ballot” (R. Johnson 443).

Like its parent institution, this new, internal body called the American Academy of Arts and Letters, was exclusively male. According to Boyd, both the National Institute of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Letters “put into practice the exclusive cultural hierarchy” modeled in “The Forty Immortals.” “Once again,” she concludes, “immortality was reserved exclusively for white males” (Boyd 245). While The Critic had opened its academy, albeit reluctantly, to include female academicians, women could not be elected to the National Institute until 1907, when the “constitution was altered” and Julia Ward Howe admitted (Read, “Membership,” 162, n54). The Critic’s literary academy, elected by its readers, was (eventually) more

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96 According to the website for The American Academy of Arts and Letters, the two institutions existed separately until 1976, when the “National Institute of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Letters voted to merge into one institution with a single board of directors, committee structure, and budget. From 1976 to 1993, the organization was known as the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1993, the members of the Academy and the Institute voted to dissolve the two-tier system of membership and enroll all 250 members into one organization called the American Academy of Arts and Letters.” <http://www.artsandletters.org/about_history.php>. May 22, 2011. See also William M. Sloane’s In Memoriam: A Book of Record Concerning the Former Members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (New York: The Academy of Arts and Letters, 1922). 3-24.

97 Boyd’s analysis of The Critic’s elections stops in 1884, at the point when readers requested and were denied women academicians. She does not address the 1890 election of “The Twenty Immortals.”

98 According to Lewis, Thomas Wentworth Higginson refused his nomination to the academy in 1899 because women were excluded from membership; only after a “rewording” of the constitution to allow
inclusive of women than the National Institute of Arts and Letters that followed it, even though it too held to exclusionary practices. Like The Critic’s academy, the National Institute excluded African Americans. According to Lewis, W.E.B. Du Bois became the first black writer elected, when he was elected, at age seventy-six, in 1944, into the Institute (14). While The Critic’s readers tried and failed to get Douglass and Sitting Bull admitted to its academy, the Institute never “so far as can be discovered, even proposed the nomination of a black person” (Lewis 14). In The Critic’s two elections, “The Forty Immortals” and “The Twenty Immortelles,” readers and editors at least debated the merits of a more inclusive academy.

At the second meeting of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in January 1905, Mark Twain observed that “he thought no man should be elected an Academician except after open debate and with the opposition of a devil’s advocate” (Robert Johnson 444). In a sense, Twain was calling for the type of discussion recorded in the narrative of The Critic’s elections—an intellectual conversation that included an adversarial voice. The Critic’s elections, which began at a reader’s request and thrived due to reader interest, reflect not just a difference of opinion between editors and readers but an ideological divide about the past and future trajectory of American literature. The editors envisioned a narrower and more restrictive academy of American authors than did their readers. But the elections show how a late nineteenth-century generation of readers, a generation that had been introduced to writings by women, immigrants, and non-white women, in 1905, did he become a member. He nominated Julia Ward Howe in 1906; she was elected in 1907, and “elevated to the Academy” in 1908. More than two decades would pass before Edith Wharton (nominated at the same time as Howe) became the second woman academician. See Lewis 12-14.
native Americans through the pages of the periodicals they read, envisioned a wider, more inclusive academy. Ultimately, the Gilders exercised their editorial control over the election results, but they memorialized the adversarial process within the pages of *The Critic*, giving us a speculative look at the academy that might have been had the readers, rather than the critics, been in charge of defining late nineteenth-century American authorship.
In 1899, after nearly a decade of working as a stenographer, Hopkins copyrighted her first novel, *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South*. The novel historicizes American slavery and its social and political aftermath through two intertwined narratives: one that relates how the family of Charles Montfort, a Bermudan slaveholder, gets consigned into American chattel slavery in the early 1800s, and another that details the effects of 1890s racism on three Montfort descendants: Mrs. (Montfort) Smith and her children, Will and Dora. Like many of the non-fiction articles that she would write for the *Colored American Magazine* from 1900 to 1904, *Contending Forces* includes material borrowed from other sources. From the title page, with its epigraph from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “An Address on the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies” (1844), to her concluding lines, taken from Tennyson’s “The Princess” (1847), the novel is replete with literary borrowings. Hopkins gathers, combines, and edits, reframing the borrowed material within her novel in order to argue for improved social, political, and economic conditions for black Americans. She promotes her message of racial uplift by comparing the historical circumstances of American slavery to post-Reconstruction conditions of racial segregation, oppression,
and violence, concluding that few, if any, differences existed between the two. She writes, in her preface, “The atrocity of the acts committed one hundred years ago are duplicated today, when slavery is supposed no longer to exist” (CF 15). To rally her readers to action, Hopkins infuses her text with anti-slavery rhetoric drawn from sources “white and black” (CF 16). As Hopkins incorporates these sources into her text, she transforms them to fit her project of late nineteenth-century racial pride and uplift. This chapter explores how Hopkins’s stenographic training and experience inform Contending Forces’ project of cultural translation and critique. Hopkins’s most recent biographer, Lois Brown, posits that her work as a stenographer for white employers gave her a “solid foundation for the literary race work” she did in the 1890s, largely because it gave her political credibility in Boston’s “vibrant black political milieu” (167). My approach differs in that I draw on the material practices of stenography to show how Hopkins’s writing career in stenography informed her authorial practices writing fiction. As Xiomara Santamarina demonstrates, nineteenth-century African Americans like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Wilson, and Elizabeth Keckley drew upon their work experiences to spread their messages of social reform. Like these women workers, Hopkins wrote about her labor, and the unique language and practice of stenography as a form of writing labor influenced her other writing practices. Contending Forces draws attention to stenography through the character of Sappho Clark, a woman who writes and rewrites the words of others. I argue here that Sappho models Hopkins’s authorial practices, for in Contending Forces Hopkins draws heavily on the words of others, rewriting them to fit her own purposes. I read Hopkins as a “cultural stenographer,” a
phrase I coin to identify how she responds to late nineteenth-century arguments of social and scientific determinism by recreating and rebutting the era’s discourses about issues such as education, segregation, and discrimination. This perspective makes *Contending Forces* more than a “romance,” as the subtitle suggests; it also makes it a scene of negotiation, where Hopkins assembles a list of her literary favorites to support her agenda of social reform, concomitantly negotiating her place in the American literary tradition.

John Ernest coined the term “cultural editor” for the mid-century writer William Wells Brown, a metaphor he employs to illustrate how Brown established himself as a writer and public figure who arranges “materials in a revealing demonstration of contradictoriness and tension” in his fiction to argue for black agency during slavery (Ernest 23). My term “cultural stenographer” also defines Hopkins as an author who presses her readers in *Contending Forces* to rethink post-Reconstruction social and political issues in ways similar to Brown’s Emancipation era techniques. According to Lois Brown, Hopkins admired Brown, whom she knew through her stepfather, William Hopkins, and who had donated the $10 prize she won at age fifteen in a writing contest for her essay “The Evils of Intemperance and Their Remedy” (1874). However, while Hopkins would go on to become the literal editor of the *Colored American Magazine*, Ernest’s term “cultural editor” does not accurately describe her role in *Contending Forces*. My term gets at something distinct, that is, that the combination of shorthand and typing that Hopkins learned as a business stenographer showed her how not only how to record and recreate the words of others but to infuse new meaning into existing texts quickly and efficiently. Like Stedman and Hutchinson and *The Critic* and its readers,
Hopkins evidenced an awareness of the late nineteenth-century cultural discourse about the emergent national narratives of American literature, and she wove this awareness into *Contending Forces* in order to effect social reform.

Today, the connections between stenography and reform are no longer readily apparent. In her analysis of stenography, Carole Srole highlights “stenography’s association with antebellum reform” (88). According to Srole, “Stephen Pearl Andrews, one of the earliest proponents of stenography in the United States, first became acquainted with it at the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention” when someone gave him information on Sir Isaac Pitman’s newly invented modern shorthand system and asked him to introduce it to the American people (88). “Phonography, as shorthand was often called, was viewed as a means of language reform to improve English,” writes Srole, and women like Eliza Boardman Burnz “who participated in the antebellum reform movement” in the arenas of emancipation, woman suffrage, and spelling reform became the leading proponents of the trade (89).¹ The rich historical circumstances of stenography gave Hopkins the means to write reform literature that included texts drawn from both black and white authors. In *Contending Forces* we find her argument that she, a black woman, is just as qualified as anyone else in the late nineteenth century to comment on the state of American literature and to shape its trajectory. Within the pages of the novel, she assembles a list of authors that includes Americans as well as their British forebears, including both black and white authors. Moreover, she strategically

¹ For more about Burnz, the “‘mother’ of women stenographers,” *In Memoriam, Eliza Boardman Burnz, born October 31, 1823, deceased, June 19, 1903*, by Eliza Boardman Burnz and Channing Burnz (New York: Burnz & Company, 1906).
recontextualizes oral and written discourse into a platform of post-Reconstruction social critique, a platform she would continue to use during her editorship at the *Colored American Magazine* and in her subsequent fiction and non-fiction.

Business stenography was a new and exciting field in the 1890s, offering women unprecedented opportunities for employment. Business stenography paired phonography, a form of writing that employed phonetic symbols, with typing. As Burnz records in her autobiography, phonography included “the ignoring of the common spelling, the separating of each word into its elementary sounds and the assigning of a particular geometrical sign, simple in form and made with a single motion of the hand, to represent each elementary sound of the spoken word” (25). Stenographers transcribed notes from shorthand into longhand either by hand or on the even faster “writing machine” known as the typewriter (Davies 31). In the years following the Civil War, business use of typewriters surged, creating a high demand for business stenographers. Because they typically worked for lower wages than men, women increasingly made up the majority of clerical workers. Since learning to type meant practicing on an expensive machine, those seeking to master the skill often enrolled in typing classes such as those offered at the YWCA, public evening schools, or business schools. According to Srole, women preferred typing schools run by phonography promoters, as they taught both stenography and typing and offered certificates of completion to their graduates; employers preferred hiring stenographers who could provide such certificates to authenticate their stenographic training.
Because it exposed Hopkins to the political workings of the Massachusetts state
government, stenography proved to be more than simply a secure means of making a
living.² Dissatisfied with the financial uncertainties of the theatre, where she had worked
for fifteen years as a singer, actor, and playwright, Hopkins became one of a growing
number of Boston stenographers, whose numbers rose, according to Srole, from 113 in
1885 to 2500 in 1900 (90). According to “Pauline E. Hopkins” (1901), an anonymous
biographical sketch in the Colored American Magazine, “She took up the study of
stenography, and in 1892 entered the employ of Hon. Henry Parkman and Hon. Alpheus
Sanford, well-known, wealthy, and influential [white] Republicans. She served them so
well that on their hearty recommendation, after passing the civil service examination, she
was appointed stenographer in the Bureau of Statistics” (219). At the Bureau, Hopkins
worked on the 1895 Massachusetts Decennial Census, which tracked population rates,
social statistics, manufacturers, agriculture, fisheries, and commerce according to the
“distribution of the population by color and race (Census 864). Because the state was
98.85 percent white and only 1.06 percent black, reports generated from the raw data
focused primarily on white achievements.³ As Lois Brown has thoroughly documented,
Hopkins was a dedicated race woman who came of age in Boston’s active and politically
astute black community. There, she witnessed “sharply contrasting realities for African
Americans” (162). Her work at the Bureau, where she participated in the process of
transforming thousands of field notes into pamphlets for the reading public, must have

² As Elizabeth Hewitt documents in “Charles Chesnutt’s Capitalist Conjurings,” Chesnutt supported his
authorial career with money earned in his stenography business.
³ The percentages come from the Census, which enumerates 2,471,418 white citizens and 26,540 black
citizens (I: 864).
been a grim reminder of the continued exclusion of African Americans from late nineteenth-century society.

In the 1890s, the United States enjoyed a period of national expansion and celebrated many economic, scientific, and technological advances. However, as scholars such as Jacqueline Jones Royster and August Meier document, for African Americans this post-Reconstruction period marked an era of decreasing political and social freedoms. The Civil Rights legislation of the mid-1860s was reversed after President Rutherford B. Hayes withdrew federal troops from the South in 1877. First, Southern states began disenfranchising black voters. Then, the Supreme Court sanctioned segregation nationwide, in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). Jim Crow laws soon legislated social, political, and economic boundaries between black and white Americans, essentially relegating African Americans to second-class citizenship. In the South, mobs enforced observance of these laws, using lynching and other acts of violence to intimidate African Americans as well as those who sympathized with them. In *A Red Record* (1895), Ida B. Wells documented that over a thousand lynchings had occurred in the first half of the 1890s. The African American community and its white supporters protested both the lynchings and Northern newspapers’ sensational reportage of them. In Boston, public meetings discussed methods of community action. As a member of the Boston New Era Club, Hopkins attended such anti-lynching meetings. In 1895, she listened as Victoria Earle Matthews (1861-1907), an African American author, essayist, and activist, expounded the value of race literature in the struggle against racial prejudice and social hostilities.
However, it was hearing William J. Northen, the former governor of Georgia and a supporter of white supremacy, speak on “The Present Situation of Colored People in the South” that prompted Hopkins to write *Contending Forces*. As an invited speaker of Boston’s Congregational Club in May 1899, Northen presented “The White Man’s View” of southern hostilities. Lois Brown documents that Hopkins was “outraged by the ex-governor’s brazen disregard for African American rights and his willful manipulation of history” (186). Brown posits that the enthusiastic response of the white Boston audience members to Northen’s speech led Hopkins and other members of the African American community to believe that his remarks might impact “national policies on segregation, disenfranchisement, and oppression” (Lois Brown 186). *Contending Forces* is Hopkins’s fictional response to Northen and his supporters. Hopkins apparently recorded the speeches stenographically, for she includes Northen’s speech in her novel as an adversarial viewpoint. As a cultural stenographer, she weaves his discourse directly into her novel. She states in her preface, “I have used for the address of the Hon. Herbert Clapp the statements and accusations made against the Negro by ex-Governor Northen of Georgia, in his memorable address before the Congregational Club at Tremont Temple, Boston, Mass., May 22, 1899” (CF 16). Within *Contending Forces*, Hopkins rectifies the unbalanced discussion of African American life, which resulted when Northen exceeded his time limit and left his African American respondent, Bishop Benjamin Arnett, Jr. only twenty minutes of his allotted hour (Brown 186-7). As she notes in her preface, Will Smith’s speech in Chapter XV responds directly to Herbert Clapp, her fictional version of Governor Northen (CF 16). Motivated by her desire to counteract the racist rhetoric of
Northen and others, Hopkins wrote quickly. On August 25, just three months after hearing Northen’s speech, she copyrighted *Contending Forces*. That fall, she publicized the novel by giving at least two public readings before it saw publication in early 1900.

According to Brown, Hopkins “routinely received shocking reports in the daily city papers about gruesome racial horrors of Southern mob rule and lynchings and widespread, almost routine instances of African American disenfranchisement, intimidation, and oppression” (162-3). Hopkins’s work on the census, which focused primarily on reporting statistical data for the white population, must have been a daily reminder that such sensationalized accounts negatively overwrote African American accomplishments in areas such as voting, employment, and housing, and she decided to rectify the situation through fiction. As she indicates, in an often-quoted passage from the preface,

> Fiction is of great value to any people as a preserver of manners and customs—religious, political, and social. It is a record of growth and development from generation to generation. *No one will do this for us; we must ourselves develop the men and women who will faithfully portray the inmost thoughts and feelings of the Negro with all the fire and romance which lie dormant in our history*, and, as yet, unrecognized by writers of the Anglo-Saxon race. (CF 13-14, emphasis in original)

Both a lament for the dearth of African American fiction writers and a call to action, Hopkins’s statement underscores her awareness of the necessity of renegotiating the historical record.
Though typically considered clerical labor, stenography, like fiction writing, requires creativity. Basically, the stenographer’s job “consisted of taking dictation” and “then transcribing the notes” (Davies 30). However, because they had to write rapidly, stenographers relied on phonography, or phonetic systems of recording the spoken word. Different schools of stenography taught different phonetic systems in which, according to Gerald S. Giauque, “special symbols represent and recall to the stenographer’s mind the sounds of English” (Giauque 353). Giauque states that these systems are “as incomprehensible as a foreign language” to the uninitiated (Giauque 353). Furthermore, each stenographer further complicates this process by adapting the system she learned to fit her own individual style (Davies 30). Thus, as Giauque posits, the effective stenographer must possess “imagination and the ability to derive meaning from contexts” in order to make “intelligent guesses about the meaning of the written symbols” (353). This suggests that, like the Census data, stenographic notes could support more than one interpretation. For Hopkins, who had attracted national attention for the three plays she wrote between 1877 and 1879 (Aristocracy, Winona, and Peculiar Sam; or The Underground Railroad), stenography proved a particularly fascinating method of production. *Contending Forces* demonstrates decisively that she viewed stenography as creative, for she makes Sappho Clark, her fictional stenographer, the most creative character in the novel.4

In *Contending Forces* Hopkins imbues Sappho, the heroine of the second half of the novel, with transformative powers. A beautiful young black woman with a mysterious

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4 For a discussion of the name Sappho, see Brown (207); see also Elizabeth Ammons’s *Conflicting Stories* (78).
past, Sappho makes her living as a stenographer. Within days of moving into Mrs.
Smith’s Boston boardinghouse, Sappho transforms her room from functional to inviting
by making a few simple changes to the décor. Readers then learn that Sappho has
similarly transformed herself, changing her name from Mabelle Beaubean and concealing
her personal history of rape, incest, prostitution, and unwed teenage motherhood.
Hopkins devotes considerable time to Sappho’s creativity in remaking her room and her
past, thus reiterating the point that her stenographic work also required creative invention.
While scholars often note Sappho’s creativity, not enough has been made of how
stenography involves creativity. For instance, in Conflicting Stories (1992), Elizabeth
Ammons observes Sappho’s “artistic talent,” saying it shows up in “the literary name she
has assumed, the way she beautifies her room, her creation of a gorgeous son, her
employment of writing (although completely drained of creativity) to make a living”
(80). Here, Ammons introduces and then negates Sappho’s writing as a creative act. Not
enough has been made of Sappho’s typewriter, on which she does her stenographic work.
The typewriter stands in the middle of her desk in the center of her redecorated room,
occupying a place of prominence as she tells the invented narrative of her life as Sappho
Clark.

Hopkins positions Dora Smith as an interested observer whose questions about
Sappho’s stenographic work prompt a discussion about the difficulties late nineteenth-
century African American women faced finding employment.5 Sappho and Dora quickly

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5 As Cindy S. Aron notes in “‘To Barter Their Souls for Gold’: Female Clerks in Federal Government
Offices, 1862-1890” (1981), almost all female clerical workers during the years of her study were white,
with only seven percent of applicants identifying as black (837, n4).
become friends after Sappho moves into the Smith home, and Dora asks Sappho how she became a stenographer. Sappho avoids talking about her past and thus never explains how or where she trained. However, she does talk about her job search in Boston. She tells Dora that the first time she applied for a stenographic job the male interviewer had refused to hire her for office work because she was black, instead telling her that “his wife wanted a nurse girl” (CF 128). Chagrined at being turned away, Sappho musters up the courage to try again. Her second attempt also resulted in a racist refusal: “Yes; we want a stenographer, but we’ve no work for your kind,” said the proprietor of the second place she tried (CF 128). Still, Sappho preferred a straightforward denial of employment opportunity to the “insulting familiarity which some men assumed” (CF 128). Sappho’s chagrin at the implied sexual advances made by some prospective employers outweighed her disgust at unfair race-based hiring practices. Eventually, she finds an employer willing to let her work from home, but she tells Dora that the ordeal of finding a job was so painful that she could not imagine going through the process again should it become necessary.

In addition to putting late nineteenth-century racism on display, Hopkins also uses Sappho to talk about the creative demands of stenography. Again, this information is revealed through Sappho’s dialogue with Dora. When Dora asks Sappho if her work is difficult, Sappho replies that she likes her work, even when the speaker “is obtuse, or long-winded, or thinks that the writer ought to do his thinking for him as well as the corrections” (CF 99). Here, Sappho implies that a stenographer must correct unintelligence, reduce wordiness, supply information, correct mistakes, and is “the
writer.” Through Sappho’s answer, Hopkins not only suggests that stenography required far more than simply taking and transcribing dictation. She also models the type of work she is doing in *Contending Forces*, where she weaves source material together in ways that constitute new meaning. As we will see in the pages that follow, in writing *Contending Forces*, Hopkins worked not with words dictated by an employer but with words garnered from her reading of American literature. Drawing on information about the public speakers and writers whose works she had read, she shapes and molds their material to fit her novel and to write herself into the American literary tradition. As Santamarina reminds us, in *Belabored Professions* (2005), narratives of working African American women can “expand our vocabulary and rhetorical strategies for understanding how black working women responded to, refuted, and helped to shape nineteenth-century discourses on racial legitimacy” (27-28). Early Hopkins scholars such as Gwendolyn Brooks read Hopkins’s practice of literary borrowing as evidence of her “assimilationist urges, secret or overt” (409). More recently, scholars have provided a more nuanced view of Hopkins’s complicated literary strategies, recovering her as an outspoken race critic, novelist, and historian. For example, Ira Dworkin argues that Hopkins’ often-unattributed incorporation of other authors’ words into her non-fiction (written after *Contending Forces*) neither made her a plagiarist by nineteenth-century standards nor detracted from her originality. P. Gabrielle Foreman’s exploration of the separate but related concepts of what she calls “simultexuality” and “histotextuality” provide valuable

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6 In her “Afterword” about Hopkins, Brooks states, “Often doth the brainwashed slave revere the modes and idolatries of the master” (404). As exemplar, Brooks cites Hopkins’s description of Sappho, which draws on Tennyson’s “Maud.” According to Alisha K. Knight, other scholars followed this same line of reasoning; she mentions that Mary Helen Washington makes a similar argument in *Invented Lives* (1988), as do the editors of *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism* in “Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins” (1988) (xi).
insight into how Hopkins’ texts can provide readers multiple meanings, giving those with prior knowledge of racial discourse a different level of epistemological engagement than the general reading public. Foreman posits that Hopkins historicizes landmarks and people within her fiction in order to lend “credibility to the fictional and symbolic stories she unfolds” (11). This is important because it highlights some of the many ways Hopkins authenticated the many different levels of discourse that she wove into *Contending Forces*.

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part I provides an overview of the sources Hopkins incorporated into *Contending Forces*. As I will show, these sources include abolitionist essays and poetry by Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Greenleaf Whittier, Frederick Douglass, and Sarah Piatt; proslavery books and speeches by William Grayson, Henry Grady, and William J. Norther; the works of Shakespeare; slave songs and Christian hymns; speeches by late nineteenth-century African American reformers Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, and many others. Hopkins incorporated borrowed material into her chapter epigraphs, where she usually acknowledged her sources, and into her narrative prose, where she typically quoted without attribution. Charting the location and source of Hopkins’s quotations in *Contending Forces* allows us not only to recreate the “library” of sources Hopkins incorporated into her project of racial uplift, but also to see how, in her role of cultural stenographer, she silently adapted not only written texts but oral material into her novel. This section also recovers a long-neglected review of *Contending Forces* from the *Arena* that demonstrates that Hopkins reached both black and white audiences with her novel. Part II provides a focused
analysis of Hopkins’s extended engagement with one of these sources, Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose words appear first on the title page of the novel and then throughout the narrative. At the end of the nineteenth century, Emerson was a familiar writer to most American readers. As I argue below, Hopkins’s goal of “cementing the bond of brotherhood among all classes and complexions” while making the case for African American women writers was a complicated literary undertaking (CF 13). The primary literary technique that she employed to authenticate her call to “the friends of humanity everywhere” to act on behalf of the nation’s African American citizens was her practice of incorporating literary sources familiar to her readers. Emerson was a special case for her, since she uses his mid-century abolitionist rhetoric multiple times in multiple ways throughout Contending Forces. As Len Gougeon demonstrates, Emerson’s reputation as a “great American thinker” had been firmly established by the 1890s (Virtue’s Hero 340). By linking her text to his, Hopkins imagines a trajectory for American literature that moves it from mid-century concerns about slavery to late nineteenth-century concerns regarding racial equality. However, she also made Emerson’s text distinctly her own by silently emending it in ways that significantly altered its meanings, by changing his mid-century abolitionist rhetoric to support late nineteenth-century social equality.

I. Hopkins’s “Library” of Sources in Contending Forces

“Genius borrows nobly.”
—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Quotation and Originality” (1848)

“It is undoubtedly the book of the century.”
—Mrs. Alberta Moore Smith, president of the Colored Women’s Business Club of Chicago

Contending Forces explores how the late nineteenth-century American literary tradition might be renegotiated to include the voice of the African American woman through Sappho, who spends some of her spare time at the Boston public library. Anticipating the scene in which W. E. B. Du Bois famously imagined himself in literary fraternity with both black and white authors in The Souls of Black Folk (1903), Hopkins depicts literature as a colorblind arena. In Souls, Du Bois says,

I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and women glide in gilded halls. From out the caves of evening that swing between the strong-limbed earth and the tracery of stars, I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension. (90).

In Contending Forces, Hopkins similarly pictured Sappho wandering across the color line in halls, specifically the halls of the Boston library, where the “noble piles, which represented the halls of learning, and the massive grandeur of the library, free to all, seemed to invite her to a full participation in their intellectual joys” (CF 116). There, she could claim “kinship with the great minds of the past, whose never-dying works breathed perennial life in the atmosphere of the quiet halls” (CF 116). Contained within a

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8 Hopkins’s novel predates both Souls and “Of the Training of Black Men,” the chapter from which this quotation is taken, which appeared in the Atlantic Monthly 90 (Sept. 1902), 289-97. See David Levering Lewis, W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919, 278 and 642n 31.
discussion of the difference between Northern and Southern social exclusionary practices, this passage from *Contending Forces*, like the one from *Souls*, points toward the on-going exclusion of African Americans from most parts of white society by placing their inclusion within an imagined realm.

Hopkins retained the ability to transform the words of other speakers into a finished product when she left her stenography job in 1899 in order to devote her time to writing. As Margery W. Davies notes in her study of women workers, *Women’s Place Is at the Typewriter* (1982), stenographers could transcribe their notes “into a letter, report, or whatever” (30). The “whatever” suggests the power of the stenographer to shape the words of others to fit the desired form. In *Contending Forces*, Hopkins shapes the words taken from the “never-dying works” in the library and reframes them to suggest that their authors were participants in her fight for racial justice. However, Hopkins realizes that literary kinship did not automatically create social and political equality. For, when Sappho leaves the halls of the library, she must return to the segregated world outside. And while the novel admits that African Americans enjoy more social freedoms in Boston than they do in Louisiana (Hopkins’s figurative representation of the South), it also claims that better is not good enough.

Hopkins models a more inclusive depiction of literary kinship by granting Sappho, a black woman, full access to the on-going intellectual conversation she discovers in the library and by recording that conversation for her readers. The quotations in the novel’s chapter epigraphs and prose provide a record of the type of literary conversation Hopkins imagines Sappho engaging in. Hopkins displays the erudition that
supports her claim that African Americans were capable of cultural refinement and educational accomplishments such as those recorded in the census. Hopkins is the “good reader” Emerson identifies in “Quotation and Originality.” Like the “man” who elevates his own authorial stature by exhibiting his “assimilating power,” Hopkins borrows from and manipulates not only books and proverbs, but [also] arts, sciences, religions, customs, and laws” (Emerson, “Q & O” 144). By consciously engaging her literary precursors, she claims that her novel is part of an established intellectual heritage, while, by adapting their works to suit her purposes, she establishes her literary independence and originality. However, like Sappho, Hopkins lives in a segregated world. As a black woman, her calls for social justice might go unheard. Therefore, she enlists in her fight for social justice some of the most powerful advocates she can find: white authors. Understanding how these Anglo-Saxon sources work in Contending Forces is bound to result in a better understanding of how she crafts her twin calls for social responsibility and social respectability.

The literary device that best exemplifies Hopkins’s engagement with Anglo-Saxon sources in Contending Forces is the chapter epigraph. The novel’s twenty-two chapters are introduced by epigraphs from eleven different sources: Whittier, Bryant, William Grayson, Emerson, Longfellow, Cowper, Goldsmith, Thomas Gray, Shakespeare, Tennyson, and the Bible are quoted (see Table). Hopkins’s incorporation of these voices (except for the Bible, all Anglo-Saxon) is significant. Not only does it suggest the range of her literary repertoire, but it also identifies a canon of sources that she found useful in recasting the narrative of slavery in America in Contending Forces.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author Referenced</th>
<th>Title of Work</th>
<th>Attributed?</th>
<th>Location in Novel</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible</td>
<td>Job</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XXI</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible</td>
<td>Psalm 107:30</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XXII</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryant, William Cullen</td>
<td>The Antiquity of Freedom</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter II</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burns, Robert</td>
<td>&quot;Words o' Cheer&quot;</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter VI</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carey, H.</td>
<td>&quot;Sally in Our Alley&quot;</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter III</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowper, William</td>
<td>The Task</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter IV</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowper, William</td>
<td>&quot;Slavery&quot;</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter XIV</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas, Frederic (sic)</td>
<td>&quot;The Composite Nation&quot; (? paraphrased)</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter XVIII</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
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<td>Emerson, Ralph Waldo</td>
<td>&quot;An Address on the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies&quot;</td>
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<td>17-18, 20, 25</td>
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<td>Chapter VIII</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>&quot;Friendship&quot;</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter VII</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldsmith, Oliver</td>
<td>&quot;The Deserted Village&quot;</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter VIII</td>
<td>141</td>
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<td>&quot;The Deserted Village&quot;</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter XVII</td>
<td>287</td>
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<tr>
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<td>yes</td>
<td>Chapter XV</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
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<td>Gray, Thomas</td>
<td>&quot;Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard&quot;</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter V</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>&quot;The Hireling and the Slave&quot;</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter X</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
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<td>Grayson, William</td>
<td>&quot;The Hireling and the Slave&quot;</td>
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<td>Chapter XI</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>speech?</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter XIV</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longfellow</td>
<td>&quot;Evangeline, A Tale of Acade&quot;</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter XXII</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longfellow</td>
<td>Spanish Student. Act I. Sc. 3. 6</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter XVII</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern, Governor</td>
<td>&quot;Address at Tremont Temple&quot; May 22, 1899</td>
<td>yes, in preface</td>
<td>Chapter XIII</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar II (Oscar Fredrik, King of Sweden)</td>
<td>up then and act! 'Thy courage wake' (lines not title)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XIII</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platt, Sarah</td>
<td>&quot;The Black Princess&quot;</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XI</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
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<td>Slave song</td>
<td>&quot;Turn dat han' spike roun' an roun' (first line)&quot;</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter II</td>
<td>32-33</td>
</tr>
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<td>Shakespeare</td>
<td>Macbeth</td>
<td>text</td>
<td>Chapter VI</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
<td>Merchant of Venice</td>
<td>text</td>
<td>Chapter III</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
<td>Merchant of Venice</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XII</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spencer, Edmund</td>
<td>&quot;Hymn of Honour and Beauty&quot;</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter VIII</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story, William Wetmore</td>
<td>&quot;Ask Me No More&quot;</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XVIII</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennyson</td>
<td>&quot;The Ballad of Oriana&quot;</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter X</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennyson</td>
<td>&quot;Locksley Hall&quot;</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter IX</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennyson</td>
<td>&quot;Maud, A Monodrama&quot;</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XIX</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennyson</td>
<td>&quot;Maud, A Monodrama&quot;</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XXI</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennyson</td>
<td>&quot;The Princess&quot;</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XII</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various public speakers</td>
<td>combination of their best points yes, in preface</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waller, Edmund</td>
<td>Battle for the Summer Islands</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesley, Charles</td>
<td>&quot;Jesus, Lover of My Soul&quot; (words to song)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XV</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whittier, J.G.</td>
<td>&quot;Lines Written on Reading the Message of Governor Ritner, of Pennsylvania, 1836&quot;</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XV</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whittier, J.G.</td>
<td>&quot;We Wait Beneath the Furnace Blast&quot;</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whittier, J.G.</td>
<td>&quot;Snowbound; A Winter Sylph&quot;</td>
<td>author</td>
<td>Chapter VI</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright, William Bull</td>
<td>&quot;April&quot; (in The Brook and Other Poems)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XVIII</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright, William Bull</td>
<td>&quot;April&quot; (in The Brook and Other Poems)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Chapter XVIII</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When Hopkins talks in her novel’s preface about the value of fiction for recording African American growth and development, she maintains that the story of the “Negro” is “as yet, unrecognized by writers of the Anglo-Saxon race” (CF 13-14). It is suggestive, then, that Hopkins establishes the tone of twenty-one of the novel’s twenty-three chapters with a passage taken from an earlier, influential Anglo Saxon source, even though she says that Anglo-Saxon writers have yet to recognize the “fire and romance” of the African American people, because they suggest both direct and indirect links between *Contending Forces* and the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition (CF 14).

Previous scholarship investigates Hopkins’s literary borrowing as tribute. For example, Dworkin posits that Hopkins pays tribute to the abolitionist tradition. Brown argues that Hopkins’s use of William Cullen Bryant’s “The Antiquity of Freedom,” in the epigraph to the second chapter of *Contending Forces*, works as a “literary overture” (239). Yet, as we will see below, Hopkins complicates the idea of literary tribute by incorporating sources unfriendly to her calls for social uplift and equality. In her role as cultural stenographer, she records and responds to competing nineteenth-century discourses regarding African American equality in order to refute literary texts written in support of scientific racism.

Hopkins’s engagement with Anglo-Saxon sources indicates her dissatisfaction with the late nineteenth-century social and economic hierarchies that privileged the white male. As the *Colored American Magazine*’s biographical sketch indicates, Hopkins experienced many difficulties en route to becoming an author, struggling “in the same fashion that all Northern colored women have to struggle—through hardships,
disappointments, and with very little encouragement” (218). As Frances Smith Foster observes, in Written by Herself, black women faced cultural and racial barriers that white women did not (13). One such barrier was education. Though the number of white women achieving a formal education increased significantly during the second half of the nineteenth century, most black women seeking higher education were limited to the type of industrial education promoted by Booker T. Washington at the Tuskegee Institute. In Reconstructing Womanhood, Hazel V. Carby writes that Anna Julia Cooper, Hopkins’s contemporary in the fight for the advancement of black Americans, “concluded that, while there appeared to be an increase in social commitment to the higher education of white women, obstacles were placed in the way of black women who demanded education. Cooper corresponded with a number of universities and found that there were only a total of thirty black women graduates from Fisk, Oberlin, Wilberforce, Ann Arbor, Wellesley, Livingston, and Atlanta” (100). In the face of “little encouragement,” Hopkins turns toward literary associations, assembling these sources for a discussion of the lingering effects of slavery on African Americans and on the nation.

Contending Forces records a fictional critique of the daunting challenges facing African Americans, especially in regard to educational opportunities. In her preface, Hopkins writes that she has “tried to portray” the struggles facing her race in obtaining even “a partial education” (CF 15). The novel includes fictional characters based on W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. The novel’s Arthur Lewis, “head of a large educational institution in the South devoted to the welfare of the Negroes,” stands for Washington (CF 242). Speaking to the American Colored League, Hopkins’s
fictionalized version of the Colored American League, Lewis argues that “industrial education and the exclusion of politics will cure all our race troubles” (CF 124). In contrast, Will Smith represents Du Bois’s position on education. Smith speaks generally about how educational restrictions impacted African Americans’ cultural abilities when he said, in his speech to the American Colored League, “We are told that we can receive education only along certain elementary lines, and in the next breath we are taunted with not producing a genius in science or art” (CF 264). But while Smith, like Du Bois, graduates from Harvard and travels to Germany to study philosophy, the novel’s foremost black female characters hold only a high-school education.

Even as Hopkins displays her literary expertise by incorporating relevant literary extracts as epigraphs, the novel underscores the lack of opportunity for black women to achieve higher education. Three characters—Dora, Sappho, and Mrs. Willis—are described in terms of their schooling. Through Mrs. Smith’s diligence, “Dora was kept at her studies until she was graduated from high school” (CF 84). After she graduates, Dora happily chooses a life of domesticity, first overseeing her mother’s boarding house and then marrying Dr. Lewis and having “her own individuality swallowed up in love for her husband and child” (CF 390). Sappho had studied at the “Colored Sisters’ School in the city of New Orleans” until she was raped at age fourteen by her white uncle during a school holiday. When asked by Dora why she did not become a schoolteacher, Sappho explains that her “education does not include a college course” (CF 127). Finally, Mrs. Willis, the ambitious and outspoken clubwoman who is “well-read and thoroughly conversant with all current topics” may have “impressed one as having been liberally
educated and polished by travel,” but the novel carefully points out that “a high-school course more than covered all her opportunities” (CF 145). Like the women depicted in *Contending Forces*, Hopkins had a high school education. Like Dora, she became caregiver to her aged mother. Like Sappho, Hopkins made her living as a stenographer, and, like Mrs. Willis, she was an active club member. But where Dora, Sappho, and Mrs. Willis are silent participants at meeting of the American Colored League, listening to the male speakers but not having speaking roles themselves, Hopkins enters into the 1890s conversation about educational equity for African Americans through *Contending Forces*.

Scholarship on the *Colored American Magazine* helps us identify the audience Hopkins imagined for *Contending Forces*, as the magazine and the novel were published by the same parent company and shared a target audience. Sharon Harris identifies the *Colored American Magazine*’s readers as primarily middle to upper class African Americans “who were advancing in education or economic status” (xxxii). But as Sigrid Anderson Cordell notes, low literacy rates among African Americans meant that a black subscription base would not generate enough revenue to sustain the magazine. As a result, Cordell argues, the magazine “mediated between its identity as a ‘race magazine’ and a pragmatic editorial policy of appealing to white, middle-class audiences for economic, social, and political support” (53). Moreover, Cordell posits, the magazine needed a “white audience to witness the magazine’s cultural impact and be converted by it” in order to accomplish its goal of racial advancement (58). As editor, Hopkins marketed the *Colored American Magazine* to a mixed readership, following the pattern
she established in Contending Forces. Yet, as she wrote in her letter to Cornelia A. Condict, a white reader who had criticized the periodical’s habit of publishing stories about miscegenation, pleasing both white and black audiences was nearly impossible: “If you please the author of this letter and your white clientele, you will lose your Negro patronage. If you cater to the demands of the Negro trade, away goes Mrs.—” (543, emphasis in original). In Contending Forces, Hopkins adopted a rhetorical stance that was designed to attract rather than alienate readers. Thus, she dedicates her novel to the “friends of humanity everywhere,” includes an epigraph from Emerson on the title page, and weaves references from Anglo-Saxon sources throughout the novel. She weaves in quotations from Frederick Douglass, the African American excluded from The Critic’s “Forty Immortals,” although readers had nominated him. And, like the editors of the Library of American Literature, she incorporates African American slave songs. As Robert H. Cataliotti reminds us in The Music in African American Fiction (1995), these slave songs draw together the “African and American past” (36, emphasis in original).

Though Contending Forces was reviewed most heavily within the pages of the Colored American Magazine, at least some attempt was made to market the novel to white audiences. In February 1901, B.O. Flowers’s The Arena lists Contending Forces in its “Books Received” column.1 The Arena, according to Glazener, provided “reflective book reviews” that supported its agenda of social protest and reform (190).2 In the April

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2 Glazener does not include The Arena in the Atlantic group periodicals addressed in her study; instead she offers it as one example of a periodical offering “the possibility of a reading formation for fiction that not only differed from the formation constructed by the Atlantic group but also challenged its adequacy” (189).
edition, *The Arena* published a fairly lengthy review under the heading of *Contending Forces.* As I have found no previous mention of this review in Hopkins scholarship, it bears detailed description. The review’s first three paragraphs rehearse the advances made by African Americans since slavery, noting Booker T. Washington’s work at Tuskegee and his recently published *The Future of the American Negro* (1899). The review then praises the “literary undertaking” of the *Colored American Magazine* before addressing Hopkins’s novel. It identifies *Contending Forces* as one of the “more important recent works” demonstrating the “literary advancement of the colored race,” saying:

Mrs. Hopkins has written a surprisingly good story. It is a novel of considerable strength. The plot is well worked out, and is calculated to hold the reader’s interest to the end. As the title indicates, it deals in a serious way with the race problem. The treatment is somewhat similar to the method applied by Judge Albion Tourgee in his novels of the reconstruction period. The book is essentially a romance of love, in which the leading actors belong to the African race. Several tragic phases of life in the South since the close of the war are presented. The book, however, is frequently lighted up by delightful glimpses of the more joyous side of negro life. It is a highly credible novel. (“Review 3” 461)

She also specifies that “*Contending Forces* was not reviewed in the *Atlantic* group, and undoubtedly Hopkins did not expect it to be” (11).

This review favorably compares Hopkins to Tourgee, an outspoken advocate of African Americans known for his denunciations of lynching, segregation, and white supremacy. Tourgee had served as the lead attorney for Homer Plessy in his case against New Orleans’s “separate but equal” policies and had written two novels about his experiences as a political appointee to the South (pejoratively known as a carpetbagger) during Reconstruction. Though the review does not guarantee that Hopkins had many white readers, it certainly suggests that she attracted some. Like the magazine, Hopkins may have more specifically targeted to African American women, an audience she specifically calls upon in “Some Literary Workers” (1902), saying that it is the “duty of the true race-woman to study and discuss all phases of the race question” (142). From the title of Hopkins’s article, which construes writing literature as a form of literary work, to its contents, which weave together orations, prose, dialogue, biographical sketches, and newspaper reviews, “Some Literary Workers” and its sequel, “Literary Workers (Concluded),” exhibit that Hopkins continued to work as a cultural stenographer during her editorship at the Colored American Magazine.

Both black and white audiences would have recognized the epigraph to the first chapter, which Hopkins extracted from John Greenleaf Whittier’s “The Furnace Blast”:

We wait beneath the furnace-blast
The pangs of transformation;
Not painlessly does God recast
And mould anew the nation.

Hot burns the fire
Where wrongs expire;
Nor spares the hand
That from the land
Uproots the ancient evil. (“The Furnace Blast” 1-9; CF 17)

The “we” of the first line are the citizens of a nation divided, the “fire” is the Civil War, and the “evil” feeding the fire is slavery, a topic that Whittier often explored in his poetry. Best known as a New England poet, Whittier was a founding member of the American Anti-Slavery Society, an institution that advocated for the immediate abolition of slavery. Born in 1807 to Quaker parents, he became, in his early twenties, a close friend to William Lloyd Garrison, whose weekly paper the *Liberator* was formed with the objective of “the extermination of chattel slavery” (Garrison 206). Charles A. Jarvis writes, “Whittier contributed many of his talents as a poet, editor, and politician to the antislavery cause. Whatever form the movement took—short of advocating violence—he was an active figure in it” (175). The poem, written “to be sung to the tune of Luther’s great hymn” “Ein’ Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott” (“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”), was published in 1861, just after the beginning of the Civil War (Marius 99). The poem answers the questions: “What gives the wheat-fields blades of steel? / What points the rebel cannon?” (19-20), with a single word: “Slavery!” (27). Deriving her stenographic voice from Whittier’s words, Hopkins uses his poem to establish the atmosphere of civil strife that existed in the nation pre-War. Through her incorporation of his words, Hopkins invokes what Brown terms “the collective Northern familiarity” with Whittier (313).

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4 According to Mott, the *Liberator* (1831-1865) was “the most eloquent and effective of all anti-slavery papers” (206). He notes the periodical’s “outstanding” commitment to abolition (322).
With this reference, which allows her to speak to her readers through him, she effectively creates a literary partnership with one of the nineteenth century’s most ardent abolitionists.

Two years after writing *Contending Forces*, Hopkins wrote a biography of the poet entitled “Whittier, The Friend of the Negro” for the *Colored American Magazine*. That biography discusses “the effect of [Whittier’s] poems on the public mind” (256). Speaking of Whittier, Hopkins says, “No poet has spoken with tenderness for humanity, or waged war more constantly and more defiantly with error and oppression. His intense hatred of wrong, and inexhaustible sympathy for struggling manhood, are expressed with remarkable force and beauty in all his work” (254). “A Retrospect of the Past,” the chapter from *Contending Forces* that is introduced by Whittier’s epigraph and driven, especially in the opening section, by quotations from Emerson’s “An Address on the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies,” documents Charles Montfort’s decision to do “wrong.” In order to keep his slaves, he decides to immigrate to “the United States, where the institution [of slavery] flourished” (CF 24). As Whittier’s words suggest, the move would place Montfort and his family directly “beneath the furnace-blast” where they, along with the rest of the nation, would suffer the “pangs of transformation.” Through Whittier’s poem about the evils of slavery, Hopkins suggests that the nation still suffers from its legacy. Her late nineteenth-century readers, like Whittier’s mid-century, needed to awake to their combined call for “justice” (“The Furnace Blast” 16). As Hopkins said in a speech given at the William Lloyd Garrison Centennial Celebration in 1905, “Great indeed was the battle for the abolition of slavery
but greater far will be the battle for manhood rights” (“Colored Woman Makes Chief Address” 538). In that same speech she urged her audience to continue the fight for “universal liberty in the Republic for all races and classes, by every legitimate means, petitions to individuals, to associations, to foreign governments, to legislatures, to congress, print and circulate literature, and let the voice of the agent and lecturer be constantly heard” (538-9). Like Whittier’s poem, which provides no resolution to the war that was ongoing as he wrote the poem, Hopkins’s novel, like her speech, pictures the fight against racism as ongoing. To provide an ending that sidesteps resolution, the final scene in Contending Forces takes place on board a ship “bound for Europe” (CF 401). Readers last see the surviving Montfort descendants in a liminal space—on the ocean that simultaneously separates and connects the United States and its oppressive conditions with England, the novel’s land of imagined liberty.

As this final scene suggests, one of the tensions that emerges in Hopkins’s novel is her pattern of outlining both sides of a difficult issue without providing clear resolution, not because she wanted her reader to decide the outcome but because the issue remained unresolved in American society. In other words, in her role as cultural stenographer, she uses the existing cultural discourse to replicate the situation as it existed. And she does so without originating a firm solution. As Thomas Cassidy writes, in “Contending Contexts,” because Hopkins “understood her black and white audiences to be far apart on racial issues (and depicted them as such in her preface and in the novel), she developed a self-contradictory narrator—omniscient but unreliable—whose moral judgments are shaded according to the complexion of the audience Hopkins is
trying to reach” (661). However, the narrator’s unreliability should not be read as indicative of Hopkins’s moral uncertainty, but rather as literary strategy that allows her to incorporate multiple viewpoints into the novel’s discussion of social and political justice. In other words, here Hopkins’s pattern of literary borrowing works to destabilize fixed assumptions by setting conflicting ideas in conversation. For example, her discussion of the inequitable system of education for black women and black men is never resolved in the novel. Another instance can be found in her epigraphs, which draw from both pro- and anti-slavery sources. As a reform text, Contending Forces puts societal conflict on display, reminding her readers that Sappho and Will’s story—which is also Grace and Charles Montfort’s story—takes place within a larger cultural context of racial inequities.

Hopkins’s inclusion of William Grayson’s “The Hireling and the Slave” (1854) in her epigraphs for chapters X and XI works to acknowledge the other side of the literary debate about slavery. Unlike Bryant and Whittier, poets who offered unwavering indictments against slavery’s evils, or even Emerson, who gradually became more outspoken in his denunciations of slavery, Grayson remained, until his death in 1863, an advocate of what he saw as the beneficial effects of slavery upon the African American.5

The first epigraph from “The Hireling and the Slave,” which Hopkins situates as epigraph to the chapter entitled “The Fair,” reads:

Boisterous jest and humor unrefined,
That leave, though rough, no painful sting behind;

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5 For a more thorough discussion of proslavery thought, see Finkleman’s Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South (2003). Slavery Defended: The Views of the Old South (1963), edited by Eric L. McKitrick, offers a selection of pro-slavery essays and speeches.
Warm social joys surround the Negro’s cot.

No ennui clouds, no coming cares annoy,

Nor wants nor sorrows checks the Negro’s joy.

(“Hireling” 49, 50-51, 111-12; CF 183)

Thus, it is first through the words of Grayson, a South Carolinian defender of slavery, that Hopkins considers the economic success of the fair organized by Ma Smith to pay off the church mortgage. Grayson’s poem provides an ironic overlay for the joyful scene of the women’s economic endeavor that belies his insistence that the slave was better off than the “hireling” of the North.

“The Hireling and the Slave,” a neoclassical epic poem that offers a pastoral defense of the South’s slave-based agrarian way of life, contrasts with the novel’s depiction of northern African American industry and independence. Remembered today as “an example of the insensitivity of the Southern slaveholder,” the work “achieved instant local success in the Charleston area” when it was published in 1855 (Calhoun 8-9). Grayson, a slaveholder, offers this description of slavery in his preface to the poem:

Slavery is that system of labour which exchanges subsistence for work, which secures a life-maintenance from the master to the slave, and gives a life-labour from the slave to the master. The slave is an apprentice for life, and owes his labour to his master; the master owes support, during life, to the slave. Slavery is the negro system of labour. He is lazy and improvident. Slavery makes all work, and it ensures homes, food, and
clothing for all. It permits no idleness, and it provides for sickness, infancy and old age. It allows no tramping or skulking, and it knows no pauperism.

(“Hireling” vii)

Grayson explains in his “Notes” on the poem that he viewed the practice of capturing slaves and transporting them to America simply as an aid to African immigration: “The transportation of the Negro to America” was “only a rude mode of emigration—the only mode practical for him” (note 18). The poem’s narrator echoes these sentiments, speaking of how slavery “transmutes to lasting good the transient ill” of the African enslaved by the “Whiteman” (31). Within the world of the poem, slaves are “free from care and strife,” they live in cabins “not comfortless, though rude” and have “[l]ight daily labour, and abundant food” (53). Yet, even as he romanticizes the conditions of slavery, Grayson derides what he sees as Harriet Beecher Stowe’s efforts to romanticize the slave, in Uncle Tom’s Cabin. According to the poem,

Stowe, with prostituted pen assails
One-half her country, in malignant tales;
Careless, like Trollope, whether truth she tells,
And anxious only how the libel sells,
To slander’s mart, she furnishes supplies,
And feeds its morbid appetite for lies,
On fictions fashioned with malicious art,
The venal pencil, and malignant heart,
With fact distorted, inference unsound,
Creatures, in fancy, not in nature found—
Chaste quadroon virgins, saints of sable hue,
Martyrs, than sainted Paul, more tried and true,
Demoniac masters, sentimental slaves,
Mulatto cavaliers, and Creole knaves—
Monsters each portrait drawn, each story told! (“Hireling” 581-595).

In his poetic critique of Stowe’s novel, Grayson questions both Stowe’s depictions of
slaves as moral and her motives for writing the book, implying that her morally upright
fictional slaves have no corresponding counterparts in the real world.

Hopkins’s incorporation of Grayson’s words aligns her not with Grayson but with
Stowe, the author of the most famous anti-slavery novel ever written, though neither
Uncle Tom’s Cabin nor Stowe is mentioned in Contending Forces. Hopkins often
mentioned Stowe in her non-fiction, and Addie Hamilton Jewell’s 1899 review of
Contending Forces, suggests that readers made favorable comparisons between the two
novels. Jewell recalls hearing Hopkins read portions of her novel, saying: “I listened with
interest to the words of the authoress, and to the words of a lady who told us that the
Book ‘Contending Forces’ was written in the hope of aiding in putting down lynch law;
and that the book would be to the Anti Lynching cause what Harriet Beecher Stowe’s
‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ had been to the Anti Slavery Cause” (558). Though Jewell
criticizes Hopkins’s “so called ‘Humorous’ chapter,” we should note that this chapter—
which can be identified as Chapter X “The Fair” from Jewell’s description of “the four
hundred” visitors to the fair—“the colored 400” in Contending Forces (183)—is the

160
chapter that opens with Grayson’s epigraph. Read in this light, Jewell’s review suggests that early readers saw the connection between Hopkins and Stowe, another of the major players in the mid-century fight against slavery, even though Hopkins engaged with her only obliquely in *Contending Forces*.

Hopkins’s ironic invocation of Grayson is not limited to the five-line epigraph in Chapter X. She also incorporates a couplet from “The Hireling and the Slave” at the head of the next chapter:

In feasts maturing busy hands appear
And jest and laugh assail the ready ear. (“Hireling” 85-86; CF 197)

These lines, like those incorporated in the novel’s previous chapter, present an idealistic portrait of slaves living a carefree life. In Grayson’s account, slaves benefitted from the protection and care of a benevolent master, while the “hireling” of the north—“Free but in name”—are the “slaves of endless toil” (20). According to Eugene D. Genovese, Grayson’s poem “is not merely a defense of black slavery; it is a damning attack on free labor as a system” (xiii). Yet Hopkins’s post-slavery characters engage in a system of free labor—the fair was “most successful from a business point of view”—wherein they raise more than the eight thousand dollars necessary to pay off the church’s mortgage (CF 211). Unlike the “hireling” of Grayson’s poem, whose “Labour, with hunger, wages ceaseless strife, / And want and suffering only end with life” (24), the middle class women in “The Fair” work together to achieve a mutual economic goal. Hopkins’s astute readers may well have recognized the irony of opening these two chapters about economic independence and success with lines that subverted Grayson’s intended
message about the miserable conditions of hirelings as opposed to the carefree existence of slaves. Her forthright rebuttal of his argument is evident not only in “The Fair” but also in the successful outcome of the Smith family’s transformation from slavery to freedom and in their continued upwardly mobile path within the novel. Her repositioning of Grayson’s text is one of the clearest indications of her strategic juxtapositions of epigraphic and chapter material in *Contending Forces*, and it is one of the most important justifications for her claim of belonging to the American literary tradition.

In addition to using quotations in her chapter epigraphs, Hopkins frequently incorporates words from other authors into the body of her narrative. While the majority of her epigraphs attributes either the author or the text from which the quotation is taken, the material inserted into her prose is typically distinguished only by quotation marks and/or indentation. Henry Carey, Emerson, Goldsmith, Patrick Henry, Oscar II (King of Norway), Sarah Piatt, slave songs, Shakespeare, Edmund Spencer, William Wetmore Story, Tennyson, Edmund Waller, Charles Wesley, William Bull Wright, and “various public speakers” are quoted within the chapters, with only a few, like Patrick Henry and Frederick Douglass, receiving direct attribution. While I argue that this material works to establish her as a careful recorder of American society and a close reader of American literature, not every scholar view Hopkins’s literary strategies in a positive light. In his disparaging assessment of the novel, in “The Daughter’s Departure: Theory, History, and Late-Nineteenth-Century Black Women’s Writing,” Baker observes,

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6 While various scholars mention Hopkins’s sources, no annotated version of the novel exists. My identification of the in-text citations in the Table thus makes a useful intervention in Hopkins scholarship by documenting the source of each quotation as well as its location in *Contending Forces*. I have yet to identify all of her sources.
There is a narrative energy and topical comprehensiveness in Contending Forces that make the novel a virtual curiosity cabinet of its era. Phrenology, racial politics, Klondike gold discoveries, British manumission, feminism, occultism, and myriad other topics make the page bristle. It is as though the narrative mind of the text wishes to sound its repleteness, its comprehensive intelligence…. (26)

This passage appears directly below the paragraph in which Baker charges Hopkins with “moralizing” through a “discursively subservient disguise” (26). Like Brooks, Baker reads Contending Forces fairly superficially. Here, he gives no consideration to “repleteness” as a deliberate and effective rhetorical strategy. However, his larger point—that the narrative mind exhibits an astonishing cultural awareness—is correct. And, though he does not mention literature as an item within this “curiosity cabinet,” Hopkins’s careful interweaving of other texts makes it a suitable item of inclusion, as it, too, demonstrates her comprehensive awareness of American literary culture. Reading Contending Forces as a stenographic recording of late nineteenth-century society emphasizes Hopkins’s “repleteness” as evidence of her authorial power.

In her role as cultural stenographer, Hopkins is arguing for African Americans’ full inclusion in American culture through her characters’ knowledge and sharing of literary texts. As Baker notes about the years following the Civil War, “An unprecedented cultural interaction took place with the northward migration of blacks and the influx of Northerners intent on educating and improving the lot of the freed black men and women” (27). Contending Forces suggests that literature was one such site of
“cultural interaction.” A shared appreciation of literary culture draws the community together at Ma Smith’s lodging house. The Smiths host regular Sunday gatherings in their parlor. In Chapter VI, for instance, during the “literary and musical programme,” Dora played “a medley of Moody and Sankey hymns” on the piano; Will sang “Palm Branches”; “John contributed a poem; his two young friends gave the duet from “IL Trovatore”; “Sappho rendered the ‘Chariot Race’ from ‘Ben Hur’ in true dramatic style”; and Mrs. Davis sang “Suwannee River” (CF 108). In presenting this pastiche of musical, poetic, and dramatic traditions, Hopkins gestures toward a pattern of cultural influence. As Susan S. Williams reminds us in Reclaiming Authorship, some late nineteenth-century women writers utilized what she calls “parlor authorship,” which records “private parlor performance[s],” to legitimize their status as authors (3, 13). In Dora’s case, her medley is in itself a pastiche of Moody and Sankey hymns, while, in the group’s case, the individual performances combine into a collective pastiche, as the individual presentations borrow from existing traditions to contribute to the literary program. The sewing circle, another event hosted at the Smith’s home, provides another instance of literary sharing. In this instance, in which Dora and Mrs. Willis discuss how the “marks of servitude and oppression are slowly dropping from us,” Dora quotes from Edmund Spencer’s “Hymn in Honour of Beauty” (153). These parlor scenes indicate, I believe, Hopkins’s formula for racial uplift. As John Langley, a visitor in the Smith parlor, observes, “I must admit that our people are improving in their dress, in their looks and in their manners” (110). In this parlor scene, Hopkins legitimizes not just her status as an
American author but the type of social respectability that she viewed as foundational to African Americans’ access to full, unrestricted American citizenship.

II. Calling for Civility: Hopkins’s Recontextualization of Emerson

“The civility of no race can be perfect whilst another race is degraded.”
--Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1844

Hopkins’s skills as a cultural stenographer are nowhere more evident than in her skillful handling of the material she incorporates into Contending Forces from Ralph Waldo Emerson. She employs the epigraph above three times within the novel: as an epigraph on the title page, as part of the narrator’s historical commentary in the opening chapter, and as means of counteracting the dominant narrative pertaining to the oft-supposed sexual misconduct of African American women in Chapter VIII, “The Sewing Circle.” Additionally, Hopkins seems to have formed her fictional account of the events leading up to the Emancipation of the West Indies in the first chapter of Contending Forces directly from Emerson’s published lecture. She also silently assigns his ideology to her characters at several points within the novel, using Emerson to link nineteenth-century racism and sexism to chattel slavery and to urge her readers to action. As Ivy G. Wilson illustrates in Specters of Democracy (2011), because they lived shadowy lives as second-class citizens, African Americans had to be “strategic about developing the means to engage with the political sphere” (5). Hopkins’s rhetorical strategy of quoting (and misquoting) Emerson situates him as a posthumous collaborator in the fight against racial
injustice. By making small but significant changes to the contexts and content of his words, Hopkins appropriates Emersonian ideals about ending slavery to further her own fin de siècle argument for black Americans’ rights to full citizenship and social equality.

Identifying the multiple purposes to which she reframes Emerson’s words in *Contending Forces* is important, for she would continue to use Emerson in similar ways in the non-fiction she wrote for the *Colored American Magazine*. For instance, she quotes him in both her *Famous Men of the Negro Race* series (“Edwin Garrison Walker,” 1901) and her *Famous Women of the Negro Race* series (“Some Literary Workers,” 1902), in “Heroes and Heroines in Black” (1903), and on multiple other occasions. In “Some Literary Workers” (1902), she repeats Emerson’s words about civility from the epigraph above in her call for black female civic action, saying “We know that it is not ‘popular’ for a woman to speak or write in plain terms against political brutalities, that a woman should confine her efforts to woman’s work in the home and church” (142). Then, after quoting Emerson, she says, “Let the women then, without adverse criticism, continue to help raise the race by every means in their power, and at the same time raise the race by every means in their power, and at the same time raise our common country from the mire of barbarism” (143). Following the pattern she first models in *Contending Forces*, Hopkins recirculates Emerson’s texts, adding his voice to her calls for political activism.

Hopkins took the epigraph from Emerson’s “An Address on the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies” (1844), which he had delivered to the Women’s Anti-Slavery Society of Concord on the tenth anniversary of Parliament’s ratification of the bill that abolished slavery in all British colonies. Emerson’s speech would have been
readily available to Hopkins as she wrote *Contending Forces*, as it was published in pamphlet form shortly after he delivered it and republished twice in 1884 (posthumously, in the Riverside Edition of *Miscellanies* and the Little Classic Edition of *Miscellanies*). The “Address” highlights and condemns the physical brutalities of chattel slavery, praises the British government for its bold stance against slavery, and argues that similar legislation needs to be enacted in America. Gougeon posits that the “Address” marks Emerson’s “transition from philosophical antislavery to active abolitionism” (“Historical Background” xxx). This distinction would have meant little to Hopkins, who had yet to be born when Emerson made the speech that marked him as a member of the abolitionist community. From her vantage point, Emerson was a dedicated abolitionist of national renown whose ideals supported her agenda of social and political reform. The ready availability of Emerson’s text, its concise summary of the British Empire’s freeing of its slaves, its appeal to American sensibilities, and Emerson’s reputation as an abolitionist made it an easily adaptable source for her fictional purposes.

Using Emerson’s abolitionist rhetoric connects Hopkins to a widely known and highly respected New England tradition of social reform. Though separated by constraints of time, race, and gender, Hopkins shared with Emerson a New England heritage and an awareness of social injustice. As she frames her novel with his words, she shrewdly assumes the mantle of Emerson idealism to “raise the stigma of degradation from [her] race” (CF 13). Notably, Hopkins provides an explanation for quoting from others’ texts within her work, indicating that she had a clear purpose for doing so. Her preface states that because of her feelings of authorial inadequacy to what she saw as a
moment of “crisis in the history of the Negro in the United States,” she had, in Chapter XV, made “Will Smith’s argument in answer to the Hon. Herbert Clapp a combination of the best points made by well-known public speakers in the United States—white and black—in defense of the Negro” (CF 16). Her use of the term “combination” gives some indication of the types of changes she made as a stenographer, combining the words of several orators to make them more effective much like a stenographer wrote in somebody else’s words while using her own symbols. Though she does not mention Emerson here by name, his incorporation into her text marks him as one of the white “well-known public speakers.”

Hopkins’s claim of authorial ineptness recalls similar posturing in slave narratives. For example, in her “Preface” to *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs (writing as Linda Brent) expresses her wish that she was “more competent to the task” of writing her narrative and trusts her readers will “excuse deficiencies in consideration of circumstances” (xviii). For Jacobs, these circumstances include being born into slavery, a lack of educational opportunities, and taking time away from writing in order to provide for herself and her children. The title page to Jacobs’s text contains an epigraph from Angelina Grimke, a white abolitionist, as well as a line indicating that Lydia Maria Child, a well-known white abolitionist and women’s rights activist, edited the volume. Jacobs’s claim, Grimke’s epigraph, and Child’s validation are standard devices of the slave narrative, which “carried a black message inside a white envelope” (Gates and McKay 158). Of course, Hopkins was never enslaved, nor was she poorly
educated. But, by drawing on the generic conventions of the slave narrative, she validates her project in ways familiar to late nineteenth-century readers.

Because she lived in an era that restricted the agency of black women, Hopkins called upon Emerson’s reputation as social reformer to promote her arguments for social justice. As she appears to have been reading his speeches, and not biographies of Emerson, she remains unaffected by the changes made to Emerson’s reputation by his late nineteenth-century biographers, who, according to Gougeon, changed his image to one “quite the opposite of the liberal, activist reformer and moralist that he truly was” (Virtue’s Hero 340). Though Hopkins’s skillful handling of Emerson actually works to prove her proficiency as an author, she remains ever aware that as a black woman author she is doubly removed from the dominant conception of American authorship. As I discussed in Chapter 2, the American Negro Academy (1897-1924), the organization designed to promote black intellectualism and to “secure equality and destroy racism,” extended membership only to African American males, excluding women (“American Negro Academy”). Hopkins mimics the dynamics between an employer and a stenographer, rhetorically situating Emerson as the voice of dictation within her text. Thus, she incorporates quotations from Emerson to authenticate herself as a new authorial voice, specifically a black female voice, within the American literary tradition.

As Gérard Genette concludes, in Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation (1997), the “epigraph in itself is a signal (intended as a sign) of culture, a password of intellectuality. While the author awaits hypothetical newspaper reviews, literary prizes, and other official recognitions, the epigraph is already, a bit, his consecration. With it, he chooses
his peers and thus his place in the pantheon” (160). Excluded from honorary literary associations, Hopkins chooses her own literary peers, elevating Emerson to the foremost rank in her hypothetical American academy. By linking her text to his, she imagines a trajectory for American literature that moves it from mid-century concerns about slavery to late nineteenth-century issues regarding racial equality. Her references to his text provide a layer of authentication to her fictional narrative: a factual and familiar historical framework.

If Hopkins provides one explanation for drawing from literary sources with her rhetorical posture of authorial “deficiencies,” then the speed with which she wrote suggests another reason: efficiency. Copyrighted within three months of Northen’s speech and published within a year, Hopkins must have written at lightning speed, finding it easier to compress and adapt existing sources than to “attempt original composition” (CF 16). She seems to have combed Emerson’s “Address” for extracts that refuted Northen’s racist rhetoric. By employing the words of Emerson, one of most influential men of the nineteenth century, Hopkins quickly establishes the stakes of her argument. Emerson’s epigraph on the title page reminds the reader of his participation in the fight for abolition. Just as slavery threatened the “civility” of the nation, so did the system of legislated oppression towards African Americans. Royster argues that the sociopolitical environment in late nineteenth-century America supported two “master narratives”: “One said that lynching and mob violence were isolated incidents of passion

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7 As Christopher Keep documents in “Blinded by the Type: Gender and Information Technology at the Turn of the Century” (2001), speed attributed highly to stenography’s appeal. Keep notes that stenographers “could take two hundred words a minute from dictation” (153).
and not evidence of a systematic ‘race’ problem; the other maintained that the United States championed truth, justice, and equality in the world and protected all of its citizens at home” (34). Contending Forces counteracts both of these narratives by showing that the violence of the late nineteenth century could be traced to the days of slavery, and by insisting that African Americans, who had been granted citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment (1868), were still the victims of on-going racial “incivility.” Propelled by the increasingly negative northern rhetoric regarding black participation in society, Hopkins does what her stenographic training had taught her to do: work quickly and efficiently to get the finished product into circulation.

Opposite the title page that features Emerson’s words about civility first appear, Contending Forces offers a visual reminder of slavery’s incivility and degradation. This illustration, by R. Emmett Owen, depicts a brutal scene of two men near a whipping post with whips in hand. The bound and bloody body of a woman lies at their feet, her bare back striped by the lash. Here we find what Richard Brodhead calls, in Cultures of Letters (1993), a “scene of initiation into slavery” (14). For Grace Montfort, the unconscious woman, is not a slave but a free woman at the beginning of Contending Forces. Independently wealthy, educated abroad, highly cultured, and racially indeterminate, Grace inadvertently sets off a tragic sequence of events when she refuses the sexual advances of Anson Pollock, the villain in the first half of the novel. Thwarted, Pollock uses “Bill Sampson’s suggestion of black blood in Mrs. Montfort, to further his scheme for possessing the beautiful woman” (CF 70-71). As Wallinger notes, only the rumor matters, “not the real drop of black blood” (156). The system of slavery gives
Pollock the power he needs to consign Grace to slavery. Inventing the rumor of a slave insurrection, he organizes a “committee on public safety,” and attacks the Montfort plantation (CF 70). The mob kills Charles Montfort and ransacks his plantation. In the ensuing chaos, Pollock’s henchmen, Bill Sampson and Hank Davis, tie Grace to the whipping post and lash her repeatedly. Writing about the opening illustration in *Contending Forces*, Wallinger posits that Hopkins “was clearly aware of the power such images had in the popular mind” (155). The illustration’s placement at the beginning of the novel forces readers to recall the uncivil practices that accompanied chattel slavery before they have read a word of the book. Moreover, by showing that Grace, a woman with unverified black blood, is subject to the incivilities of slavery, Hopkins underscores her point that the civility of both races is connected.

Fifty years earlier, Emerson had studied a number of books and legal sources concerning slavery in preparation for his “Address.” According to Gougeon, “Emerson garnered firsthand accounts of the actual horrors of slavery—accounts of the dungeons that were attached to every plantation house” ("Historical Background" xxviii). Like Owen’s illustration, Emerson’s speech recalls graphic instances of abuse to slaves. Anticipating the instances of abused slave bodies in *Contending Forces*, Emerson’s “Address” continually emphasizes slave bodies: old bodies, tender bodies, pregnant bodies, tortured bodies, and the pursued bodies of runaway slaves. Those bodies are whipped, forced onto treadmills, flayed and then tortured by having irritants rubbed into

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Gougeon’s “Emerson’s Abolition Conversion” (*The Emerson Dilemma*, ed. By T. Gregory Garvey) provides a thorough exploration of the sources Emerson consulted while writing his “Address,” many of which Hopkins quotes through Emerson.
the resulting wounds, pursued, and boiled alive. Though Emerson ostensibly speaks of the indignities to British slaves, the implications for his mid nineteenth-century audience are obvious, for the bodies of American slaves suffered similar physical torments and abuses. In the first few pages of Hopkins’s novel, the physical indignities suffered by all slaves are telescoped onto the racially indeterminate body of Grace Montfort, the woman who appears bound and beaten in the opening illustration. Situated at the beginning of the novel, the opening illustration evokes the “contending forces” explored at length in the novel, wherein depictions of the continued brutalization of African Americans competes with the narrative of the U.S. as a “civilized” nation. With her juxtaposition of image and text, Hopkins offers her first challenge to those members of society who have condoned the on-going brutality of the 1890s.

The second challenge comes in Chapter I, “A Retrospect of the Past.” This time, Hopkins questions whether Emancipation had had a civilizing effect on the nation since African Americans were still mistreated, murdered, and abused. To answer this question, Hopkins turns again to the words from Emerson’s “Address.” In fact, Hopkins seems to have formed her fictional account of the events leading up to the Emancipation of the West Indies in this chapter directly from Emerson’s published lecture. Her “Retrospect” opens in 1790, with a historical overview of the role of English humanitarians in abolishing slavery in the British Isles. The narrator recalls the efforts of British reformers that preceded emancipation, mentioning many of the same people and events Emerson cited in his speech. Like Emerson, the narrator mentions the efforts of the Quakers to alleviate the horrific conditions of slavery in the West Indies and to discourage the slave
trade on the African coast. Both Emerson and the narrator detail Thomas Clarkson’s confirmation of the immorality of slavery after he wrote an essay on the topic while a student at Cambridge; both mention the efforts of Mr. Pitt, Mr. Fox, Mr. Wilberforce, Granville Sharpe, and Lord Stanley; and both detail the conditions of the bill advocating gradual emancipation and mention the bill’s ten defeats over a sixteen-year span. In addition to relating the same names and general details as Emerson, Hopkins quotes directly from his text at least three times, writing, “the air of England is too pure for any slave to breathe” (Contending Forces 17, Emerson 11); “providence had never made that to be wise that was immoral; and that the slave trade was as impolitic as it was unjust” (Contending Forces 18, Emerson 12); and “These conditions were that prædials should owe three-fourths of the profits to their masters for six years, and the non-prædials for four years. The other fourth of the apprentice’s time as to be his own, which he might sell to his master or to other persons; and at the end of the term of years fixed, he should be free” (Contending Forces 20, Emerson 14). Here, Hopkins repeats the words from the epigraph for the first time, saying that Great Britain’s emancipation of its slaves demonstrates the civility spoken of by Emerson.

Using Emerson’s abolitionist rhetoric also connects Hopkins to a widely known and highly respected New England tradition of social reform. Though separated by constraints of time, race, and gender, Hopkins shared with Emerson a New England heritage and an awareness of social injustice. As she frames her novel with Emerson’s words, she shrewdly assumes the mantle of Emersonian idealism to “raise the stigma of degradation from [her] race” (CF 13). However, while she uses Emerson’s words to
authenticate her novel, this use should not be read as indicative of her Eurocentricism.\(^9\)

Despite her adaptation of the slave narrative’s strategy of the “white envelope,” Hopkins definitely has an agenda of her own. As the early focus on Grace Montfort suggests, the African American woman has a story to tell about slavery and its repercussions, though that story has long gone untold. By situating Emerson’s words to authenticate her female-authored project, she challenges ideas of white male primacy to socially conscious rhetoric. Using his tenets as her starting point, she reformulates his words regarding slavery in order to authenticate her novel’s message regarding late nineteenth-century oppression and violence. Hopkins insists that any nation that allowed such atrocities to occur could not be regarded as a civilized nation. The answer to the nation’s current problems must come from the past: “In these days of mob violence, when lynching law is raising its head like a venomous monster, more particularly in the southern portion of the great American republic, the retrospective mind will dwell upon the history of the past, seeking there a solution” (CF 14).

But before she addresses late nineteenth-century conditions, Hopkins reiterates her message of slavery’s legacy of oppression and brutality. Though Montfort hears the rumors circulating about Grace—that she might be of “African descent”—he fails to act quickly enough to save her (CF 52). His inaction—which can be related to Hopkins’s charge of inactivity on the part of white sympathizers—allows Grace and his sons to be sold into slavery. While Grace drowns herself after the brutal whipping depicted in the opening illustration to avoid further indignities at the hands of her new master, the

\(^9\) For a discussion of how Hopkins’s appeals to her white readers have been read as her belief in the superiority of white society, see Wallinger’s *Literary Biography*, 144-149.
Montfort sons are afford no such relief. Pollock eventually sells Charles, the oldest Montfort son, to an Englishman who takes him abroad. Jesse, the younger son, remains enslaved for several years, suffering physical abuse at Pollock’s hands. Eventually, he escapes at age sixteen while on a trip to the North. There, though he looks like a “white man,” Jesse “cast his lot with the colored people” and was “absorbed into that unfortunate race, of whom it is said that a man had better be born dead than to come into the world as part and parcel of it” (CF 78-79). In the first half of the novel, Hopkins uses the destruction of the Montfort family, who immigrated to the United States as free people only to be enslaved, to suggest that the Anglo-Saxon and African American literary histories are just as inseparably intertwined as the races. More than fifty years of narrative silence will pass between Jesse’s escape at the end of Chapter IV, and opening of Chapter V, wherein Sappho arrives at the boardinghouse.

Hopkins’s interweaving of the Anglo-American and African American traditions in her novel suggests that, just as the past cannot be undone, the African American presence cannot be erased from either the nation’s history or its literature. Moreover, by situating the wealthy, land-owning, “white” Montfort family as powerless before the lawless mob of white supremacists, Hopkins illustrates a point from her preface, that the nation as a whole is victimized when violence rules. Her framework of Emersonian ideals in “A Retrospect of the Past” reflects her concern that white efforts on behalf of blacks had effectively ended with Abolition. As she later wrote in A Primer of Facts (1905):

It is now several years since the first signs of cold indifference on the part of former white friends, toward the social and political condition of the
black man, manifested itself openly and aggressively. Nothing is heard from the pulpit, press and platform but the growing charity and sympathy on the part of southern whites towards the blacks of their section. (345)

Indifference, Hopkins suggests, can be an aggressive stance, and silence supports that aggression. By their silence, the church, press, and would-be humanitarians indicate that they have withdrawn their support from the struggle. Meier suggests that this indifference was politically motivated, writing, “The majority of Northerners had never had any exalted notions of racial equality, and once memories of the war had begun to fade, and the political and economic exigencies of keeping a solid Republican South (on the basis of an enfranchised Negro population) had passed, reconciliation and nationalism quite naturally became the order of the day” (21). Hopkins posits that, just as in the days of slavery, late nineteenth-century national prosperity is connected to the political and social well-being of the African American community. As Will Smith states, in his conversation with the Southerner at the Canterbury Club dinner, “The peace, dignity and honor of this nation rises or falls with the Negro” (CF 300).

In *A Primer of Facts*, Hopkins challenges her readers to stick to their principles, to continue agitating against injustice, and to never surrender the ballot. Likewise, in *Contending Forces*, two men, Luke Sawyer and Will Smith, promote these same ideologies. Sawyer’s speech to the American Colored League, in Chapter XIV, immediately follows that of Dr. Arthur Lewis, the novel’s fictional characterization of Booker T. Washington. Dr. Lewis proposes that African Americans should be “patient, docile, [and] harmless” if they wish to achieve prosperity. In rebuttal, Sawyer charges
that Dr. Lewis’s “conservatism, lack of brotherly affiliation, [and] lack of energy for the right” are “the forces which are ruining the Negro in this country” (256). After Sawyer sits down, Will Smith takes the podium and advocates a policy of agitation, saying, “We must agitate. As the anti-slavery apostles went everywhere, preaching the word fifty years before emancipation, so must we do to-day” (272, emphasis in original). The audience reacts positively to Will’s speech, though they remain divided as to how to best achieve social, economic, and educational progress. Then, in “Chapter XVII: The Canterbury Club Dinner,” Will argues with an unnamed character known simply as the Southerner about the extent of racial progress. The Southerner proposes that individual progress does not result in change for “the race as a whole” (CF 295). In response, Will says,

If men are rude and foolish, down they must go. When at last in any race a new principle appears, an idea, that conserves it. Ideas only save races. If the black man is feeble and impotent, unimportant to the existing races—not on a parity with the best races, the black man must serve and be exterminated. But, if he carries within his bosom the element of a new and coming civilization, he will survive and play his part. (CF 295)

Will’s words regarding racial parity have been adapted from Emerson’s “Address.” To understand the significance of Will’s response, we must compare his statement to the original passage by Emerson. The changes, though slight, have a decided impact on the passage. Emerson writes:
If they are rude and foolish, down they must go. When at last in a race, a new principle appears, an idea—*that* conserves it; ideas only save races. If the black man is feeble, and not important to the existing races not on a parity with the best race, the black man must serve and be exterminated. But if the black man carries in his bosom an indispensable element of a new and coming civilization, for the sake of that element, no wrong, nor strength, nor circumstance, can hurt him: he will survive and play his part.

(“Address” 31)

Hopkins changes Emerson’s “they” to “men,” making an important intervention in the nineteenth-century debates that questioned African Americans’ status as “human” and removing the third-person pronoun that allows Emerson to rhetorically distance himself from black men. Additionally, “a race” becomes “any race,” the dash is omitted, punctuation changed to separate one sentence into two, words are altered and additional words inserted. The words “feeble, and not important” become “feeble and impotent, unimportant.” Emphasis is placed on the “but,” and the words “for the sake…hurt him” are silently omitted. Hopkins also adds an “s” to the word race,” which changes the implication of the sentence from the suggestion of there being one “best race” to multiple “best races.” This change effectively erases the notion of white supremacy from Emerson’s “Address,” an ideological construction that Hopkins’s novel is resisting. Through her revision of Emersonian ideals, Hopkins restores the white voice to the fight for African Americans’ rights. Not only does she situate Emerson as the abolitionist he
was during his lifetime but she also configures him as a posthumous collaborator in the fight against the incivility of late nineteenth-century racism.

As Edward Jones Kilduff observed in 1924, stenographers often worked without instruction from their employers: “these stenographers soon picked up many bits of information concerning their employers’ business, their methods and policies, and their activities…. The more information they secured, the better able they became to decide upon matters that came up when the chiefs were busy or were away” (qtd. in Davies 130). In Emerson’s “absence,” Hopkins transforms the meaning of his words by making slight but significant changes. Like Sappho, whom Knight calls “self-employed stenographer” since “she cannot work in her employer’s office,” Hopkins works under her own direction (85). Nor does she stop here. As we will see, she makes an even more significant change when she uses the same Emerson epigraph to criticize white rapists and defend their victims as non-culpable participants in what she describes as the late nineteenth-century parallel to slavery’s system of “concubinage.”

The third instance of Emerson’s quotation about civility occurs in Chapter VIII, “The Sewing Circle,” where a group of black women discuss the importance of race and the implications of miscegenation. The women meet in the home of Mrs. Smith whose identity—as the granddaughter of the ill-fated Charles and Grace Montfort and the daughter of Jesse Montfort—is withheld until the novel’s penultimate chapter. The post-Reconstruction section opens in 1896, the year of Plessy v. Ferguson. In addition to being the site of Sappho’s intertwined transformations, the lodging house provides the stage for much of the characters’ cultural interaction. The Smith’s friends and neighbors come to
the their house for “literary and musical” occasions and stay to discuss issues of race: menial labor, poor wages, the lack of educational opportunities, and means of racial uplift. Here, Hopkins records representations of black community members as engaged, concerned citizens. These same issues are subsequently discussed, in later chapters, in larger, communal venues—at a church fair, at a women’s club meeting, and at a “gigantic public meeting” of the American Colored League (CF 421). Mrs. Smith’s ties to the community connect her to various social events where the affairs of the African American community are discussed and debated. For instance, in her capacity as chairman of her church’s “board of stewardesses,” Mrs. Smith “inaugurat[ed] a fair” and held sewing circles and “parlor entertainments” in order to pay off the $8000 balance on the church mortgage (141). One of these sewing events, held in Mrs. Smith’s parlor, provides the instance for the novel’s third repetition of Emerson’s words regarding civility.

As they sew, the women listen to Mrs. Willis, a widow who supports herself by lecturing on “the advancement of the colored woman” (CF 147). On this occasion Mrs. Willis has chosen the topic of the “place which the virtuous woman occupies in upbuilding a race” (148). She urges the women to “refute the charges brought against us as to our moral irresponsibility” (148). Sappho asks Mrs. Willis if she thinks “Negro women” can refute charges of sexual “irresponsibility” (149). Will they, Sappho questions, be held “responsible for the illegitimacy with which our race has been obliged, as it were, to flood the world?” (149, emphasis in original). Sappho’s question speaks directly to the late nineteenth-century discourse that situated African American women as
unchaste and hypersexual. As Brown notes in her discussion of the novel, “myriad problematic and racially intolerant nineteenth-century anthropological reports about the supposed lack, not abundance, of chastity and sexual interest in African women” persisted at the turn of the century, despite the end of American slavery and its often-accompanying system of concubinage (205). By this point in the novel, readers know Sappho’s history as a rape victim and as the mother of a child born out of that rape, though Mrs. Willis remains unaware on both counts. In her answer to Sappho, Mrs. Willis soundly refutes the idea of African American women’s inherent “moral irresponsibility,” arguing, “[W]e shall not be held responsible for wrongs which we have unconsciously committed, or which we have committed under compulsion” (CF 149, emphasis in original). She charges responsibility for sexual misconduct not to African American women but to their sexual oppressors, citing as support for her argument Emerson’s “truism that ‘the civility of no race is perfect whilst another is degraded’” (CF 150).

In “The Sewing Circle,” Hopkins pushes far beyond mere repetition to revoice Emerson’s words though the character of Mrs. Willis, an outspoken African American woman who denounces nineteenth-century society’s definition of virtue. With this move, she uses Emerson’s words to offer a counternarrative to the often-postulated myth of the sexual misconduct of African American women. Whether Emerson would have endorsed this argument is immaterial, though doubtful. As Anne E. Boyd notes, in Writing for Immortality (2004), questions about Emerson’s support of the woman’s movement have existed since the nineteenth century, both before and after his 1855 lecture to the
Women’s Rights Convention.\(^{10}\) However, as she concludes, women writers tailored their view of Emerson ideals to suit their own purposes: “Certainly, Emerson’s thinking about women’s rights is important to any discussion of his influence on women writers,” writes Boyd, “but if we take our cues from the writers themselves, we see little concern with Emerson’s position on the issue” (20). In “Publishing the Cause of Suffrage,” Todd H. Richardson concludes much the same thing in his examination of how the *Woman’s Journal* read Emerson to be more supportive of women’s suffrage than he actually was. According to Richardson, “Eager to win converts and to increase the cultural legitimacy of their campaign, the suffragists pressed the Concord Sage into service. But […] the icon they fashioned was refracted through their own progressive reform agenda” (580). Just as the *Journal* identified Emerson as a suffragist, Hopkins employs him as a spokesman on behalf of African American women charged with a lack of virtue for acts “committed under *compulsion*” (CF 149, emphasis in original). By using Emerson’s words as the “truism” that establishes that black women are not responsible for forced sexual relationships with white men, Hopkins effectively misrepresents Emersonian ideals to rewrite contemporary social constructions that say otherwise.

In her role as cultural stenographer, Hopkins goes far beyond simply promoting a white authorial presence in her novel with her thrice-repeated incorporation of Emerson’s words regarding civility. She calls on Emerson to rebuke the attenuating humanitarian efforts on the part of white activists, and challenges her late nineteenth-

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\(^{10}\) Despite his speech to the convention, Emerson’s commitment to the cause remains a matter of debate. According to Richardson, Len Gougeon and other scholars argue that Emerson was “engaged in the cause of woman suffrage” while Phillis Cole and others maintain that “Emerson remained aloof and ethereal on the ‘woman question’” (579).
century readers to agitate just as fiercely for social, political, and economic justice as the mid-century abolitionists. Finally, she recontextualizes Emerson’s words about civility to resist dominant social mores concerning black female sexuality, turning the stereotype of women on its head in much the same way Wells had rewritten the narrative of lynching in *A Red Record*. By reshaping the circumstances in which we read the words Emerson spoke against slavery to argue, instead, for social equality and full citizenship, Hopkins resists the “contending forces” that threaten to doom African Americans to be endlessly trapped in an oppressive social system. Moreover, she makes a bold move when she recontextualizes Emerson’s words about the evils of slavery to intervene in conversations regarding miscegenation resulting from the rape of African American women. By situating Emerson’s text as an authenticating document, she validates the black female author’s project as part of the American literary tradition. Hopkins inserts herself into the late nineteenth-century discourse about the shape and status of American literature. She has assumed the mantle of Emersonian idealism, leaving her intellectual and conscientious readers no choice but to act with “civility”—to conduct themselves in such a way as to propel the black race and, with them, the country to their highest potential.

If Hopkins explored the role of cultural stenographer in *Contending Forces*, she perfected it during her editorship at the *Colored American Magazine*, where she worked on a larger scale, writing under her own name as well as pseudonyms (Sarah A. Allen and J. Shirley Shadrach) to conceal just how much her voice informed the periodical.11 As

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11 In *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, Brown suggests that Hopkins posits that Hopkins may have also written as Gardner Goldsby and J. I. Morehead. Brown posits that the work of Goldsby (known to be a pen-name) and Morehead closely resembles Hopkins’s in style and content (469-70, 513).
editor, she continued her practice of literary borrowing, treating editing and authorship much like stenography inasmuch as it meant taking the words of others and turning them into texts arguing for social justice. Between 1900 and 1904, Hopkins published prodigiously. Her work on behalf of black Americans led R. S. Elliott, a white supporter of the *Colored American Magazine*, to call for “a few more Pauline Hopkins to help forward the brighter and better day for the race” (Elliott 47). Writing *Contending Forces* not only gave her access into a literary community that had long denied African American women social and political access, it also provided her with a platform for her continued project of social critique and racial uplift. Working for herself and on behalf of her race, she dedicated herself to collating, combining, and editing existing sources, framing them within original frameworks and suggesting new interpretations. Ultimately, her recapitulation, or active rereading of past literary tradition, demonstrates that African Americans are both consumers and creators of American literature.

Yet despite her success at the magazine, Hopkins was “forced to resign” after Booker T. Washington orchestrated a hostile takeover. She slowly slipped from public view after the failure of the *New Era*, a short-lived periodical she that co-founded with Walter Wallace after leaving the *Colored American Magazine*. As Lois Brown documents, after 1916, “Hopkins began to live a version of the itinerant life she had created for Sappho Clark” (527). Her dreams of literary and social equality dashed, Hopkins lived in rented rooms. Once again, she turned to stenography, but only as a

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12 Letter from Hopkins to W.M. Trotter (April 16, 1905). Reprinted in Lois Brown’s *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, 546-554. 552. According to W.E.B. Du Bois, Hopkins was asked to resign because “her attitude was not conciliatory enough.” See [W.E.B. Du Bois], “The Colored Magazine in America,” *Crisis* 5 (November 1912):33. For an alternate explanation of Hopkins's resignation, see Jill Bergman’s “Everything we hoped she’d be”: Contending Forces in Hopkins Scholarship.”
means of making a living. By the time of her tragic death in 1930, from burns suffered in
a fire she accidentally caused, her role as cultural stenographer had been lost. It would be
more than fifty years before she was rediscovered in the twentieth century, and even then
she was misread, ironically, as a supporter of Washington by some scholars, and
dismissed as a writer of sentimental fiction by others. Ever since the full-scale recovery
of Hopkins began in the 1980s, scholars have been trying to define her place in late
nineteenth-century American literature. While Hopkins filled many roles—dramatist,
actress, novelist, editor, historian, biographer, and critic—only the term cultural
stenographer seems inclusive enough to adequately describe her. Within the pages of
Contending Forces, her transcription of late nineteenth-century American literature still
stands, though like her fictional counterpart Sappho, Hopkins ultimately found herself
shut out from “full participation” in the intellectual association she had imagined within
the pages of her novel.
Chapter 4

The Critic’s Obituary Literature and the Construction of American Literary History

[W]e are back again, before we know it, in the atmosphere of the Sunday-
school obituary literature of our childhood. It [Samuel Irenaeus Prime:  
Autobiography and Memorials] is largely made up of eulogy and  
reminiscence, with remarks on his literary labors and the account of his  
death and the proceedings of his funeral…”
—“A Genial Presbyterian,” The Critic, 1889

Not least among his objections, Walt Whitman dislikes obituary literature. He has taken occasion in one of his poems to express the small esteem in which he holds that form of literature that has been said to ‘add new terrors to death.’ He says:—

When I read the book, the biography famous,  
And is this then (said I) what the author calls a man’s life?  
And so will some one when I am dead and gone write my life?  
As if any man really knew aught of my life,  
Why even I myself I often think know little or nothing of my real life,  
Only a few hints, a few diffused faint clews and indirections  
I seek for my own use to trace out here.
—“Walt Whitman’s Biography,” New York Herald, 1892

As the epigraph above indicate with their casual use of the term, obituary literature was a genre familiar to late nineteenth-century readers. The first epigraph suggests that obituary literature not only combined “eulogy and reminiscence” with deathbed descriptions and accounts of funeral proceedings but also that it provided a forum for remarking on the deceased’s “literary labors” (“Genial” 154). Edited by George Wendell Prime, Samuel Irenaeus Prime: Autobiography and Memorials (1888) remembers Samuel Irenaeus Prime as an American clergyman, editor, and author.
Critic’s review identifies what readers might expect in the book’s final section, “Death and Commemoration”: the “obituary literature of our childhood” (“Genial” 154). However, as the second epigraph indicates, not everyone regarded obituary literature favorably. Quoting Whitman’s poem about the impossibility of one man knowing another well enough to write his “life,” the reviewer of Autobiographia; or, The Story of a Life, by Walt Whitman (1892), says that Whitman held the genre in “small esteem” because of its potential to “add new terrors to death” (“Walt” 7). Ironically, when Whitman died two months later, efforts to write his life and assess his contributions to American literature began almost immediately. Mourners sent poems, addresses, and letters to be read at Whitman’s funeral. Within a year, these texts were collected in At the Graveside of Walt Whitman (1892). Individually and collectively the texts in this book comment on Whitman’s life and his work as a poet. Whether or not the writers contributing to At the Graveside of Walt Whitman “really knew aught” about him, the words they wrote to memorialize Whitman now inform the historical record and influence the nation’s cultural memory regarding the poet.

This chapter examines obituary literature published in The Critic between 1890 and 1900 about the Forty Immortals and the Twenty Immortelles in order to understand how the genre aided in the periodical’s development of an American literary tradition. I explore how The Critic’s obituaries, death notices, eulogies, poems, and reminiscences became a forum where American authorship was discussed. My recovery of this genre highlights The Critic’s obituaries as scenes of negotiation in the development of an American literary tradition, wherein obituarists recorded and intervened in the late
nineteenth-century critical discourse about American literature. Though not part of The Critic’s obituary literature, At the Graveside of Walt Whitman illustrates how obituary literature functions as literary history. The book not only records who Whitman’s immediate mourners were and the words they chose to celebrate his life, but it also comments on Whitman’s reception at home and abroad. Edited by Horace L. Traubel, Whitman’s biographer, the volume includes a section entitled “Sprigs of Lilac,” which contains extracts from letters sent by people who had known Whitman. One contributor, “T. W. Rollston (London),” writes that “the German reception of Walt has shown more insight and comprehension” than his American readers had given him, and that Whitman was becoming a “classic” in London (27). Thus, At the Graveside of Walt Whitman not only memorialized Whitman but also recovered him as an author worthy of renewed attention from late nineteenth-century American readers, in this instance, by emphasizing his reputation abroad.

Concentrating on The Critic’s obituary literature for the Forty Immortals and the Twenty Immortelles allows us to see how The Critic represented its reader-elected academicians after their deaths. This concentration reveals how, in a time when women were more than two decades away from political enfranchisement, The Critic sent mixed signals to its readers in its obituary literature about gender values and about the value of female authorship through its uneven practices of inclusion and exclusion of female authors. As Janice Hume notes in Obituaries in American Culture (2000), an obituary is

13 The Critic published a great deal about Whitman’s death, a long-time contributor to the periodical. At least one text appeared in The Critic that would later be included in At the Graveside: E.C. Stedman’s “Good-bye Walt!” [“The Funeral.” The Critic 17:529 (1892), 215-16.]
never “an indifferent chronicle” (14). According to Hume, “An obituary distills, publishes, and thus legitimizes something more abstract than mere facts. It also reveals values, highlighted in the attributes of the deceased” (14). From this passage we can infer that obituary literature intervenes in public discourse by promoting ideological viewpoints, such as on matters like nationalism and gender. As Mott observes, The Critic demonstrated a “national bias” in its book reviews, arguing that American poets and novelists were equal in fame and merit to English authors (549). While The Critic’s obituary literature reflects this national bias, concentrating mainly on American authors, the periodical’s standpoint on gender issues is less clear.\textsuperscript{14}

*The Critic* published two types of obituary literature: the first type addresses an individual’s death, evaluating the life and work of one particular author, while the second type groups authors together to talk collectively about their respective literary contributions. For example, “Death of Mr. Lowell,” an obituary for James Russell Lowell (1819-1891), reflects solely on Lowell’s life and death. Readers are informed that Lowell, “the foremost[.] of living American authors,” had died after an extended illness (82). This two-page review of Lowell’s literary career mentions him as an advocate of the mid-century anti-slavery movement, as a “professor of modern languages and literature in Harvard College,” and as a poet whose poems were known “by heart” by many of The Critic’s readers (83). In contrast, “Literary Necrology, 1891” assesses Lowell among a group of authors who died in 1891. After positing that Lowell’s death represents the “greatest loss” to American authorship, “Literary Necrology” lists forty other American

\textsuperscript{14} Some consideration of the deaths of English authors can be located, such as when the periodical printed a special number to commemorate Tennyson’s death in 1892.
authors who died that same year (52). “Literary Necrology” organizes authors according to the genre they wrote—biography, history, criticism, novels, stories, poetry, and “political and social questions”—suggesting a hierarchy of authors within each category (53). Both the individual and collective obituaries negotiate the list of American authors identified in *The Critic’s* elections for academicians in order to decide their places in the American literary tradition. As John Guillory reminds us, in *Cultural Capital* (1993), the question is not how “individual acts of reevaluation” affect canon formation but rather how institutional “reevaluation of particular authors” alters the “terms by which literature as a whole” is “represented to its constituency, to literary culture, at a particular historical moment” (135).

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I analyze two collective obituaries for the Forty Immortals that appeared in *The Critic* in the 1890s. This analysis investigates issues of gender and nationalism in *The Critic’s* posthumous lists of American male authors. I argue that in the collective obituaries for the Forty Immortals, *The Critic* reclaims its academy as a male-only institution, promoting a highly elite and gendered view of American authorship that effectively overwrites the reader-initiated election of female academicians. In the second part, I look at *The Critic’s* individual obituary literature about six of the Immortelles. Despite omitting them from the collective obituaries, *The Critic* memorializes the six Immortelles as successful models of female authorship. Hence, I argue that individual obituary literature for the six Immortelles responds to and complicates the narrative of the collective obituaries about the Forty Immortals by validating female authorship. My discussion of *The Critic’s* collective and
individual obituaries highlights the nineteenth century’s complex and often-competing portrayals of American authorship.

As many of the authors addressed in The Critic’s obituary literature were subsequently “lost” in the canonical construction of American literature in the early twentieth century, obituary literature promotes their recovery. It also provides a historical snapshot of the late nineteenth century. While it cannot answer the question of why some authors continued to be read while others slipped into obscurity, obituary literature evidences the 1890s as a time when definitions of the American literary tradition were still in flux. For example, two of the forty authors mentioned in “Literary Necrology” are Herman Melville (1819-1891) and George Cupples (1822-1891), both novelists noted for writing about life at sea. “Literary Necrology” remembers Melville for writing Typee (1846) and Omoo (1847), saying his “fame is of the past rather than the present or future” (53). In other words, it focuses on Melville’s first two novels, the ones William Charvat identifies as his most popular texts (209-211), and ignores all of his subsequent literary work. However, it praises George Cupples, an author now largely forgotten, saying that his The Green Hand (1850) stands as “one of the half-dozen best sea stories” (53). From our historical vantage point, this preference for Cupples over Melville appears outdated and uninformative. Yet, the author of “Literary Necrology” could not foresee in 1891 that new editions of four Melville novels (Typee, Omoo, White-Jacket, and Moby-Dick) would appear within a year (Charvat 192). Nor could he or she anticipate the enormous revival Melville would experience in the twentieth century. In other words, The Critic’s obituary literature recorded contemporary articulations of an author’s status, based on past esteem.
As literary history, these contemporary judgments are interesting in their own right, whether or not the authors “survived” the mapping of American literature, because they illustrate the ever-changing dynamics of canon formation.

Before turning to The Critic, I want to note a recent resurgence in interest in obituary literature in single-author studies. For example, in her recent study of Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), *Stowe in Her Own Time* (2009), Susan Belasco includes eulogies, remembrances, sketches, and poems as examples of historical artifacts written after Stowe’s death that provide scholars today with relevant information about the author. Similarly, Joel Myerson’s *Whitman in His Own Time* (2000) contains reminiscences, recollections, and an account of Whitman’s final illness in order document the evolution of Whitman’s public persona. These artifacts can all be regarded as obituary literature, though neither Belasco nor Myerson identify them as such. The ubiquity and popularity of obituary literature during the 1890s and its continuing impact on scholarship today requires that we consider how late nineteenth-century discussions of death and dying impacted the field of American literature as a whole.

By reading author-focused obituary literature as literary history, my study intersects with previous critical interest in obituaries, funeral sermons, and consolation literature. In 1984, Fredric F. Endres’ “Frontier Obituaries as Cultural Reflectors” demonstrated that even short, succinct obituaries have the capacity to reflect societal values. Endres studied hundreds of obituaries published in four Ohio newspapers between 1811 and 1850, determining patterns in form, content, length, and placement. While we should avoid generalizing his findings to hypothesize about obituaries published
elsewhere, his study demonstrates, in particular, how the Ohioan antebellum press “stereotyped women into certain roles” by valorizing “womanly” behavior and attributes (59). Building on Endres’ study of frontier obituaries, I demonstrate how the The Critic’s commitment to its gender-based ideology of American authorship brought the periodical into conflict with its readers. As Cornelia Niekus Moore showed, in “The Quest for Consolation and Amusement” (1994), historiographers have long overlooked funeral sermons (and their accompanying biographies) as sources, particularly in regard to the reading practices of seventeenth-century German women. Moore’s article illustrates the value of locating and rereading long-forgotten death-occasioned texts, even if those sources are inherently biased in favor of the deceased. The genre of consolation literature has continued to receive scholarly attention since the publication of Ann Douglas’s “Heaven Our Home: Consolation Literature in the Northern United States, 1830-1880” (1974). Douglas defines consolation literature as texts (such as mourner’s manuals, prayer manuals, poetry, hymns, fiction, and biographies) written for consolatory purposes, or writing designed to comfort the bereaved (496 n. 2). Subsequent studies include Norma Johnsen’s “Our Children Who Are in Heaven,” (1986), and Michael J. Steiner’s A Study of the Intellectual and Material Culture of Death in Nineteenth-Century America (2003). All of these studies remind us that consolation literature addressed what Johnsen identifies as “a near obsession in the nineteenth century with death and dying” (78). They also illustrate a national impulse to celebrate, in Steiner’s words, the “spiritual and cultural immortality of the individual” (47). My reading of obituary literature
overlaps with these studies by looking at the same types of source material, but differs from these in its focus on obituary literature about American authors.

I. Death and the Forty Immortals

Collective obituaries for the Forty Immortals privileged a male-focused vision of American authorship. Obituary literature that talked collectively about the Forty Immortals emerged when it became necessary to announce the new male academicians who had been elected to replace those who had died. _The Critic_ published two collective obituaries about the male branch of its academy.\(^\text{15}\) The first, “Nine New ‘Immortals’” (July 19, 1890), acknowledged the toll death had taken on the Forty Immortals, saying, “During the six years that have since slipped away, nine of these ‘Immortals’ have ‘put on immortality’ in a sense different from that in which it was ‘thrust upon them’ by the readers of _The Critic_” (33). The obituary summarizes each deceased Immortal’s area(s) of expertise:

Richard Grant White, the Shakespearian scholar, philologist and musical critic; Henry Ward Beecher, the most famous of American pulpit-orators; Dr. James Freeman Clarke, the distinguished Unitarian divine; Prof. Asa Gray, a botanist of world-wide reputation; ex-President Theodore D. Woolsey of Yale; A. Bronson Alcott, the Transcendentalist and founder of the Concord Summer School of Philosophy; ex-President Mark Hopkins

\(^{15}\) In Chapter 2, I read these texts as part of the historical background on _The Critic_’s academy.
of Williams College; John G. Saxe, the humorous poet; and the noted literary critic Edwin P. Whipple. (“Nine” 33)

The range of these men’s scholarship, from Shakespearian studies to Transcendentalism, and the diversity of their respective foci, from oratory to academics to literary criticism, builds the picture of nineteenth-century America as a place teeming with literary activity. The announcement also provides each deceased Immortal’s birth date, death date, and rank in the academy (according to number of votes received). Published before the election for the Twenty Immortelles, this obituary’s focus on male academicians cannot be read as evidence of their exclusion, aside from the fact that it inherently perpetuates the election’s notion of authorship as exclusively male. However, when the second collective obituary, “Our ‘Forty Immortals,” appeared on January 8, 1898, the election for the Immortelles lay eight years in the past. Not only had fifteen additional Immortals died,16 but seven Immortelles had died as well. Yet “Our ‘Forty Immortals’” concentrates exclusively on male authorship, totally ignoring female authorship except for one parenthetical aside, which will be discussed below.17 As Hume suggests, omissions in obituaries can provide telling information about “who held the power in society and what that power meant for others” (133). In “Our ‘Forty Immortals,”” The Critic offers what it terms a “death-list,” saying, “The record of deaths for the past seven and a half years is really appalling” (19). While the “death-list” for American women authors was also

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17 Admittedly, the title of this second collective obituary—“Our ‘Forty Immortals””— signals The Critic’s intended focus.
“appalling,” their deaths receive no attention here. Instead, the obituary uses the occasion provided by the male academicians’ deaths to review the election for the Forty Immortals.

Collective obituaries about American authors are a genre unto themselves. Most obviously, they treat a group of authors as a category rather than as individuals. Such categorizations can be broad and democratic, as evidenced in my earlier discussion of “Literary Necrology,” which included forty American authors who died in 1891. Or they can be narrow and exclusive, as evinced in the male-centered “Nine New ‘Immortals’” and “Our ‘Forty Immortals.’” Often, scholars of obituaries must first gather a number of separately written obituaries and group them together in order to examine trends and patterns (much as I will do below in my analysis of obituary literature written about the Immortelles). This approach aids in identifying the markers used to discuss professionalization, as can be seen in Gary L. Long’s “Organizations and Identity: Obituaries 1856-1973.” While Long notes that organizational markers became more prominent as obituaries grew increasingly impersonal during the course of the hundred-plus years his study covers, he implies that nineteenth-century obituaries are valuable precisely because they provide more extensive details about the deceased’s involvement with various professional organizations and networks. “The Portrayal of Librarians in Obituaries at the End of the Twentieth Century,” by Juris Dilevko and Lisa Gottlieb, offers a case study of a specific profession. Dilevko and Gottlieb use obituaries to resist the “stereotypical portrait of librarians as shy, dour, dowdy, and sheltered individuals,” constructing a picture of late twentieth-century librarianship as glamorous and
adventurous (152). Their study suggests that obituary literature often records professionalization in ways that offer current scholars fresh insights into existing topics. These studies inform my reading of collective obituaries such as “Literary Necrology,” “Nine New ‘Immortals,'” and “Our Forty ‘Immortals,’” even though collective obituaries preclude the gathering stage because they have already assessed a group of American authors en masse.

Like most obituaries, “Nine New ‘Immortals’” and “Our ‘Forty Immortals’” were written anonymously. However, the obituaries’ use of the first person plural pronouns “we” and “our” indicates that the author was most likely one of The Critic’s regular contributors, if not one of the editors. “We” occurs thrice in “Our ‘Forty Immortals’”: first, to say that “We print herewith the names of the original Forty”; second, in the parenthetical aside about the Immortelles (quoted above); and, third, in the reminder that “we” had provided the average age of the deceased immortals in 1892 (19). Similarly, “Nine ‘New Immortals” uses “we” to talk in past tense about the selection of the Forty Immortals and “our” to discuss the need to “gratify the curiosity our readers may feel as to the forty-nine nominees voted for but not selected” (34). The use of the first person highlights the obituarist’s (and/or obituarists’) involvement with the periodical and its elections, perhaps in the hopes of promoting reader confidence in the claims the obituaries makes about American authors.

When reading collective obituaries, then, one must remember that the groups identified therein have been artificially constructed to proffer a particular image of American authorship. The collective obituaries about the Forty Immortals, for instance,
record only the “male lineage” of American authorship. By linking the older generation of male authors (i.e. the original Forty) to the rising generation (the replacements), The Critic portrays male American literary activity as alive and well. Though readers most likely would have recognized the names of the replacements announced in 1890, The Critic justifies their election by recapping their notable achievements to date:

Mr. [Richard Watson] Gilder is the editor of The Century and author of several volumes of verse; Dr. [Phillips] Brooks is the distinguished rector of Trinity Church, Boston; Prof. [Charles Eliot] Norton, Harvard’s Professor of the History of Art, is known to all lovers of Ruskin and Carlyle; Prof. [Francis J.] Child is Professor of English at Harvard, and editor of the monumental collection of ‘English and Scottish Ballads’; Mr. [Frank R.] Stockton is the inventor of the peculiarly delightful form of short story with which his name was identified long before ‘The Lady, or the Tiger?’ had become a question of intercontinental consequence; Dr. [Andrew D.] White is Cornell’s ex-President; Mr. [Henry Charles] Lea is the Philidelphian whose utterances on Church history and Civil Service reform have made his name known in widely different directions; Dr. [Horace Howard] Furness—another Philadelphian—by his Variorum Shakespeare has won renown abroad as well as at home; while Mr. [Joel Chandler] Harris, as the creator of ‘Uncle Remus,’ may fairly be called the Aesop of the West.  

(“Nine” 34-5)
Like the list of the dead Immortals’ contributions, this list suggests a thriving American literary community. Any reader anxieties about the future of American literature are quelled by the list of successors, who represent a depth and range of talents roughly equivalent to those lost to death. Chosen by the surviving members of *The Critic*’s academy, the replacements authenticate a pattern of male succession, which the election for the Twenty Immortelles disrupts.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the publication of the first death-list had precipitated the election for the Twenty Immortelles, when *The Critic*’s announcement of the nine male replacements prompted *The Nation* to resurrect readers’ calls for women academicians. Yet, the Twenty Immortelles receive scant attention in “Our ‘Forty Immortals.’” The Immortelles are mentioned only in what amounts to a parenthetical aside: “(On 25 Oct. 1890, we announced the result of a vote of our readers for ‘Twenty Immortelles,’ Mrs. Stowe’s name heading the list)” (19). This brief reference represents what I read as reluctance on the part of *The Critic*’s obituarist to speak about women academicians in this reassessment of its academy. Despite the fact that individual obituary literature for six of the Immortelles (including Stowe) had been published in *The Critic* by this time, their deaths are not mentioned with those of the male academicians.¹⁸ Moreover, even in this brief mention, all of the Immortelles are seemingly represented by the mention of one woman, Harriet Beecher Stowe. The exclusion of full and adequate

¹⁸ The six Immortelles whose deaths were covered in *The Critic*: Rose Terry Cooke (1827-1892), Lucy Larcom (1824-1893), Constance Fenimore Woolson (1840-1894), Celia Thaxter (1836-1894), Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), and Mary Abigail Dodge (Gail Hamilton) (1833-1896). I can find no mention in *The Critic* of the death of a seventh Immortelle who died in the 1890s, Blanche Willis Howard von Teufel (1847-1898). I do not discuss them in the order of their deaths, but according to the point I am making about the purpose of obituary literature.
treatment of the dead Immortelles should make us question why the obituarist would seemingly preference male academicians over female, despite readers’ insistence on their inclusion in the academy.

I believe that at least part of the answer has to do with nineteenth-century patterns of citizen commemoration, which generally privileged men. Hume notes that women’s lives were treated as considerably less “newsworthy” than men’s, especially before the Civil War (59). Even after the turn of the twentieth century, Hume writes, women’s obituaries contributed less than twenty percent of the total in newspapers such as the Chicago Tribune and the San Francisco Chronicle (103). As The Critic generally acknowledged the deaths of its Immortelles, as evidenced by the wealth of obituary literature about them discussed below, then women’s near exclusion from this historical account of the academy can be read as indicative of the mixed signals the periodical sent about female authorship.

A consideration of the cultural circumstances that prompted the publication of “Our ‘Forty Immortals’” suggests that The Critic might have downplayed its election of women academicians in order to emphasize the necessity of a permanent American academy. “Our ‘Forty Immortals’” states that efforts to establish an English Academy had “directed attention anew” to an American academy (19). Indeed, the National Institute of Arts and Letters was formed in 1898, shortly after the publication of this obituary. Though readers had successfully advocated for an election of women academicians within the pages of The Critic, women would not be granted membership in the National Institute until 1907. Sadly, the virtual exclusion of the Immortelles from
commemoration as American authors in this collective obituary foreshadowed living women authors’ disqualification as members in the National Institute during the first decade of its existence. Following its habit of conservatism, as noted by Mott in his comments on *The Critic’s* book reviews, the periodical does not here challenge stereotypical understandings of gender roles. Both “Nine New ‘Immortals’” and “Our ‘Forty Immortals’” recall *The Critic’s* role in hosting the election that initiated the academy. They emphasize the periodical’s role as cultural critic by reminding readers that the academy remains in existence and in reporting that the academy has become self-sustaining, with current academicians balloting to choose “successors to their deceased companions” (“Nine New ‘Immortals,’” 33).

Like the subjects of the typical obituary, the authors in *The Critic’s* collective obituaries are, in the words of Stephen Moore, “seen and judged through an ideological lens, and then framed through an ideological determined construction” (“Disinterring Ideology from a Corpus of Obituaries: A Critical Postmortem” 496). Obituary literature manifests other nineteenth-century biases than gender bias, as can be seen in the collective obituary’s representations of nationalism. *The Critic’s* strong American bias is evidenced in “Our ‘Forty Immortals,’” which replicates the transatlantic conversation about *The Critic’s* election. The author incorporates comments from English critics such as Edmund Gosse and Sir Walter Besant in order to show that British readers hold American authors in high regard and that they follow the developments in American literature with interest. Moreover, a quote from *The Nation* suggests a regional bias as well. Much like Wilstach’s “Literary Map of the United States,” which depicted the
northeast as the most densely populated literary area, *The Nation* indicates that New England and New York “still furnish the bulk of the recognized authors of the nation” (19).

Identifying *The Critic*’s ideological lens gives us a sense of how readers of the periodical were presented with information about American authors. Using the collective obituary as the vehicle in which to announce new academy members allowed *The Critic* multiple opportunities to review American authorship at the end of the nineteenth century. Rereading these collective obituaries helps us understand how, in their role as literary historians, the obituarists formulated their understanding of the American literary tradition, particularly when they wrote—or did not write—about certain authors. While reaffirming American literature as the equivalent of British literature, *The Critic* promotes a multi-generational chain of American authors to its readers that privileges male authors, primarily from the northeast region of the country. Thus *The Critic*’s fledgling academy can appear as a male-only institution in 1898, irrespective of the 1890 election for the Twenty Immortelles and despite the periodical’s validation of both male and female authorship during “the golden age of American literature” in “Literary Necrology” (52). But if collective obituary literature about the Forty Immortals offered a space for reclaiming a male-dominated American literary tradition, then we need to ask ourselves how tracing American literature through its “female lineage” might complicate the scene of negotiation between *The Critic* and its readers.
II. Death and the Twenty Immortelles

In the study of heredity, the female line is often, as here, a mine of wealth. 
—The Critic (October 10, 1891)

Individual obituary literature published in The Critic about the Immortelles offers a more inclusive narrative of female authorship than the one recorded in the collective obituaries for the Forty Immortals. Missing from the pages of The Critic, however, are collective obituaries for the Twenty Immortals. The periodical practices a self-contradictory pattern of behavior, validating female authors individually but never collectively, as it did for the Forty Immortals. Thus, The Critic lets the female branch of its academy expire by simply not instituting a system of replacement even as it publicly validates the profession of female authorship.

Of the seven Immortelles who died in the 1890s, only the death of Blanche Willis Howard Teufel (1847-1898) received no mention. Listed in order of their deaths, the six The Critic memorialized are Rose Terry Cooke (1827-1892), Lucy Larcom (1824-1893), Constance Fenimore Woolson (1840-1894), Celia Thaxter (1836-1894), Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), and Mary Abigail Dodge (Gail Hamilton) (1833-1896). The Critic published multiple pieces of obituary literature about each of these authors except Cooke.

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19 In Joseph Foster’s, “Mr. Lowell’s Maternal Ancestors Again.” This letter to the editors of The Critic corrects some misinformation about James Russell Lowell’s relationship to Robert T.S. Lowell by tracing his maternal ancestry.

20 To be sure, each of these women has received scholarly attention. And, as Arthur Sherbo so aptly proved in “John Greenleaf Whittier in The Critic, 1881-1892,” The Critic contains a trove of information about American authors. However, parsing out what material in the Immortelles’ obituaries might be “new” or “old” to scholars of American women writers remains beyond the scope of this study. Since I seek to analyze obituary literature as a neglected genre as it pertains to the category of American female authorship, I will provide a footnote of representative sources about each Immortelle and concentrate my analysis on material at hand.
whose death received only one mention. Individual obituary literature for the Twenty Immortals often took different forms; at times it appeared under a subheading in one of The Critic’s regular columns, such as Jeanette Gilder’s “The Lounger” and Charles L. Wingate’s “Boston Letter,” while at other times it surfaced in posthumous book reviews and poetic memorials. As Dilevko and Gottlieb observe, a “set of obituaries contains valuable information about how societal groups and professions are constructed in the popular mind” (153). By recovering the obituary literature written about these six Immortelles, I not only analyze how each author was remembered at the time of her death but I also reconstruct The Critic’s competing late nineteenth-century narratives about female authorship, showing how the periodical implicitly normalized the category of female authorship for its readers in obituary literature for the Twenty Immortelles even though it overtly privileged male authorship in the collective obituaries for the Forty Immortals.

By focusing on obituary literature written about the six Immortelles, I demonstrate the genre’s importance in the on-going recovery of nineteenth-century women. As Susan S. Williams demonstrates in Reclaiming Authorship, the historical construction of female authorship often rests on “an oppositional mode of criticism that pits competing modes of authorship against each other” (4). According to Williams, in the nineteenth century, distinctions in status were embedded in the terms “women writer” and “female author” (5). Yet, as Williams concludes, “authorship as a professional category assumed a wide variety of meanings” for nineteenth-century women (196). In this chapter, I make no distinction between the terms “writer” and “author” in my
discussion of female authorship. My purpose is not to investigate whether the obituarists identified the Immortelles as “writers” or “authors,” to argue that they fall into one category or the other, or to suggest that female authors received the same amount of press as male authors when they died. Rather, building on Williams’ premise that the category of female authorship covers a wide array of authorial practices and career trajectories, I note how the attention that the Twenty Immortelles received in print at the times of their deaths promoted a positive picture of female authorship that competed with the narrative of exclusion seen in *The Critic*’s first election and in the collective obituaries.

One of the first things to notice about *The Critic*’s obituary literature on the Immortelles is that it treated their deaths as newsworthy events. As Endres notes in his study of nineteenth-century frontier obituaries, “The presence of a longer news article on some persons seems to indicate that the editor, and perhaps society, placed more emphasis on that individual” (54). According to Endres, the length of “routine” obituaries about local citizens in nineteenth-century newspapers “were short, averaging 21 to 32 words” (57). Though Endres omitted “news stories” from his analysis, his findings give us a starting point for our analysis by letting us see that one way obituary literature in *The Critic* emphasized female authorship was through the amount of space it devoted to discussing the deaths of the six Immortelles. Even the shortest example I have found in *The Critic*, Walter Storrs Bigelow’s brief poetic tribute “Celia Thaxter: In Memoriam,” contains 42 words:

> She suffered seemingly apart

> From this we call the wider shore,—
But seas could not contain that heart
On lonely Appledore.

She welcomed there the sun and showers,
Till, lo, a miracle was seen:
Her island bloomed with natural flowers
And amaranths between.\(^{21}\)

Though it may seem like an unprepossessing example of obituary literature, this poem remembers Thaxter and identifies two of the primary subjects in her literature: Appledore Island,\(^{22}\) where she lived, and the island’s flora.

When examined in light of two of The Critic’s longer pieces of obituary literature about Thaxter, the poem’s tribute to the poet’s literary accomplishments becomes more evident.\(^{23}\) In addition to “In Memoriam,” two prose pieces appeared, both entitled “Celia Thaxter.” The first was published anonymously, and Gerald Stanley Lee wrote the second one. The anonymously-authored “Celia Thaxter” is a lengthy paragraph published a week after Thaxter’s death in 1894. Like most nineteenth-century obituaries, “Celia Thaxter” offers a favorable portrayal of the dead (Long 988). It provides many of what Endres calls the “standard” obituary variables, such as sex, place and date of death, duration of

\(^{21}\) “Celia Thaxter: In Memoriam.” The Critic 26: 767 (1896), 255.
\(^{22}\) One of the Isles of Shoals, located approximately six miles off the eastern coast of the United States, on the border between Maine and New Hampshire.
illness, marital status, occupation, and miscellaneous or background information. Readers learn that Thaxter died at Appledore House in the Isles of Shoals on August 26, 1894. Her death was sudden, she was widowed, and her published works included Poems (1872), Among the Isles of Shoals (1873), Drift-Weed (1879), Poems for Children (1884), The Cruise of the “Mystery” and Other Poems (1886), and An Island Garden (1894). Additionally, this obituary includes a sketch of Thaxter, a black and white profile that shows Thaxter as a matronly figure facing left and dressed in a high-necked outfit.

Lee’s “Celia Thaxter” seems to have been occasioned by the publication of The Letters of Celia Thaxter (1895), by Annie Fields and Rose Lamb. Lee laments the fact that Fields and Lamb have published Thaxter’s correspondence, as it has revealed the “more commonplace aspects” of Thaxter’s nature. He pays only perfunctory attention to The Letters, focusing, instead, on reviewing Thaxter’s life. Omitting the standard variables, Lee remembers the author in poetic terms that anchor Thaxter to her island home. Thaxter is a “lighthouse lass” with a “sea-child’s soul” who “lived the island into her life” (Lee 209). Appledore is both her poetic muse and her text, according to Lee, as he writes that Thaxter “became a poet—a voice of winds and waters and flowers. Appledore is her masterpiece. The island with all its neighborhood of cloud will always belong to her. It is literature now, it is copyrighted” (Lee 209). The image Lee presents of Thaxter is of an author who had benefitted from her life away from the mainland by becoming intimately acquainted with the island whereon she resided and who then made American literature her beneficiary by writing Appledore into eternal existence. A footnote directs the reader to Thaxter’s 1855 portrait, which appears separately from the
article. Taken before Thaxter turned twenty, the portrait shows her in profile, highlighting the dark coils of hair on her head and her lace-trimmed gown.

Read in conjunction with the two prose remembrances, Bigelow’s poem is memorable for its poetic distillation of Thaxter’s life. Her life on “lonely Appledore,” with its abundance of “natural flowers” is what inspired her “amaranth,” or the imaginary, eternal flowers of her poetry (“In Memoriam” 4, 7, 8). Confined to her island, Thaxter “seemingly” suffered, but her isolation and any associated suffering inspired her poetic muse (“In Memoriam” 1). Bigelow has memorialized Thaxter as a poet, one whose life and works inspired his own poetic muse. Like the poems written to commemorate Whitman’s death, his memorial tribute to Thaxter adds to what Hume calls the “national collective memory” (91). Bigelow’s poem complements the information available in the anonymously-authored “Celia Thaxter” and in Lee’s “Celia Thaxter” with its poetic rendition of Thaxter’s life and influence.

In these three post-mortem pieces, The Critic identifies Thaxter as a valuable member of American literary society. The repeated reviews of her literary labor locate her within the American literary tradition, reconstructing her life around her work. Moreover, they link her to a network of American literary activity, recalling not only Fields and Lamb’s publication of her letters but also her husband, Levi Lincoln Thaxter, as “the interpreter of Browning’s poetry” (“Celia Thaxter” 147). Unlike obituaries about women in the general public, however, The Critic’s obituary literature for Thaxter does not seize the occasion of her death in order to provide a lengthy description of her
husband’s career.\textsuperscript{24} He receives only a brief mention, as does Thaxter’s father, who “tended the lighthouse” on Appledore Island. By treating Thaxter’s death as newsworthy and by listing her own literary output and not that of her husband, \textit{The Critic} uses obituary literature to memorialize Thaxter as an American “genius” who made a unique intervention in American literature with her faithful portrayals of island life.

In connection with Thaxter’s husband being mentioned in her obituary, there is another important observation to be made. Within \textit{The Critic}’s obituary literature, the pattern of defining women by their relationships to men is sometimes reversed, with male authors identified by their connections to female members of the literary community.\textsuperscript{25} For instance, both Oliver Wendell Holmes and George William Curtis are connected to the outspoken intellectual and feminist Margaret Fuller (1810-1850). Helen Gray Cone’s “Oliver Wendell Holmes” records that Holmes “received his early education at a school in Cambridgeport, where Margaret Fuller and Richard Henry Dana were his schoolmates” (241). Fuller also received mention in “George William Curtis,” which provides the following review of the “pioneer stage” of American literature, from which I quote at length to retain the spirit of the passage:

\begin{quote}
It was the period of rough slashing in the wilderness. No music, no song, no art but that which went to Europe for encouragement and came home to perish; no literature to criticize, no critics to establish a standard for every form of literature. There were omniverous [sic] readers in every farm-
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} Hume suggests that women’s obituaries often “gave lengthy descriptions not of their accomplishments or character but of their husbands’ careers” (103).

\textsuperscript{25} Hume notes that women were “usually identified by their relationships to husbands or fathers” (88).
house, and dreamers of dreams on every log-wagon; and there were sons of clergymen in all the hamlets of New England prepared to live out those dreams in phalansteries. It is in one of those moral incubators that we first come upon Mr. Curtis—not yet a reformer himself, but, like Hawthorne, a near observer. Ripley was holding the goad to the most unruly ox-team that was ever set to drag the unhewn timber of this world; Margaret Fuller was rhapsodizing from the top of the ox-cart; Emerson was not far away—a good-natured and perhaps somewhat anxious watcher. Thoreau was in the woods chasing aboriginal ideas; Lowell in a corner of Concord, about that time, laughing. All were at bottom poets, or of the poetizing temperament, not then set apart as a class by themselves but straining to finish the job of clearing the wilderness in time for the evening song; and that song has echoes of an amusing and exhilarating variety. (“GWC” 135)

This fascinating passage about the state of American literature in Curtis’s time connects Curtis not only to Margaret Fuller but to a number of male authors as well. The passage bears out the unformed nature of the American literary tradition in the mid-nineteenth century, employing the metaphor of an ox-drawn cart being pulled over rough terrain. As a “near observer,” Curtis watches as Margaret Fuller “rhapsodizes” from her perch atop the cart. Admittedly, the fact that Fuller receives two mentions in obituary literature about men, first in Holmes’s obituary and then in Curtis’s, does not mean that either “Oliver Wendell Holmes” or “George William Curtis” were about her anymore than the mention of Richard Henry Dana (in Cone’s “Oliver Wendell Holmes”) or the mentions of
Ripley, Emerson, Thoreau, and Lowell (in “George William Curtis”) mean that those passages were about them. But it does signal how obituarists seized upon obituary literature not only as a means of setting American authors in context with one another but also as a forum for privileging an account of female accomplishment that contradicted the image of male domination presented in the collective obituaries. The reviews of Thaxter’s life focus on her accomplishments, not her husband’s, cementing her place, not his, in this version of *The Critic*’s American literary tradition.

*The Critic*’s obituary literature about another of the Twenty Immortelles emphasizes Rose Terry Cooke’s ties to late nineteenth-century periodical culture.

Cooke’s obituary mentioned *The Critic* as well as the *Tribune*, the *Times*, *Putnam’s Magazine*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper’s Magazine*, *Our Young Folks*, and *Scribner’s Monthly.* Long posits that one way obituaries locate social identity is through noting the deceased’s connections to various “influential organizations” (990). In late nineteenth-century obituary literature, some of the most “influential organizations” were the leading periodicals of the day. Thus, when obituary literature about female authors mentions the titles of the periodicals that they published in (or that they edited), that information marks them as having a professional life worthy of public mention. This same pattern can be noted in obituary literature for male authors. For example, “William Dwight Whitney” names eight journals to which he contributed, saying that they had “carried the fame of

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27 In the American Periodicals database, this obituary is included as part of Jeanette Gilder’s July 23, 1892 column, “The Lounger,” though it has its own heading (“Rose Terry Cooke”).
his name and his learning to the four corners of the earth” (411). “Rose Terry Cooke”
traces the Cooke’s life through her periodical affiliations. In her teens, “she wrote poetry
for the Tribune,” and “before she had reached the age of twenty” she had done her “first
magazine work” for Putnam’s (47). Eventually, “her name became known to the readers”
of the periodicals listed in the obituary, a list that represented “nearly all the leading
periodicals of the day” (46). By emphasizing Cooke’s professional ties to the periodicals
The Critic ties her social worth to her authorship, dignifying her life by portraying her
work as prestigious. In addition to talking about Cooke’s publication history, the obituary
quotes a passage from the Times that gives “an account of her life” (47). As nineteenth-
century periodicals regularly borrowed material from each other, The Critic’s quotation
from the Times is not unusual in and of itself. But the appearance of her obituary in the
Times—a newspaper rather than a literary magazine—reinforces The Critic’s image of
her as a renowned literary figure. Again, we see that an individual obituary renegotiates
female exclusion from The Critic’s collective obituaries for its academicians.

Recovering Cooke’s obituary also allows us to see that she was remembered as an
Immortelle, or as part of The Critic’s academy, at the time of her death. The opening
sentence of her obituary reads, “Mrs. Rose Terry Cooke, who died at her home in
Pittsfield, Mass., on Monday, July 18, is the first to pass away of the ‘Twenty
Immortelles’ elected by the readers of The Critic in October, 1890” (46). By noticing
Cooke as the first to die among the Twenty Immortals, The Critic recalls its reader-
initiated election of women to its academy. Like the collective obituaries for the Forty
Immortals, this reference to the Immortelles recalls The Critic’s sustained attempts to
define and promote an American academy. Similar references can be found in individual obituaries for the Immortals. For instance, “George Bancroft” says, “Mr. Bancroft’s name stood fourth upon the list of ‘Forty Immortals’ elected by the readers of The Critic” (59). Also, as “William Dwight Whitney” records, “Before his health failed, Prof. Whitney was a frequent contributor to the columns of The Critic, by whose readers he was elected as one of the Forty Immortals” (411). In each case, The Critic recalls these authors as academicians. By recalling the elections for the Immortelles and the Immortals, The Critic perpetuates a sense of reader interaction with the periodical, as readers did, after all, ask for and vote in the elections even if they disagreed with the editorial manipulation of the votes. Reminding readers of an author’s standing as an Immortelle or an Immortal also reiterates that The Critic’s readers had recognized these authors as valuable contributors to American literature. However, while “new” Immortals were selected to replace the “old,” The Critic never moves to replace the Immortelles who died. As the initial balloting list contained 125 names, the nonavailability of likely candidates cannot be the reason replacement Immortelles were not named. Simply put, The Critic was not invested in maintaining the female branch of its academy, even as it paradoxically reminded readers of its existence.

Unlike the obituary for Thaxter, “Rose Terry Cooke” does not include a visual representation of the author. Instead, the obituarist describes what she looked like: “In personal appearance Mrs. Cooke was slightly above the middle height, of slender figure, and had dark, brilliant eyes, a broad forehead, regular features, and dark hair, sprinkled with gray” (47). This description fulfills the readers’ desire to “see” Cooke, though they
must form their own mental images from the details. Much like an illustration, the
description gives readers a sense of Cooke’s appearance and identity. The most notable
thing about her appearance, from this description, is the brilliance of her eyes. What set
Cooke apart from other women was not her physical appearance but her literary activity,
or as the obituarist puts it, “her taste for books and pens” (“Rose Terry Cooke” 47). Other
details from the obituary include a description of how her health had steadily declined for
three years prior to her final illness, her birthplace (Wethersfield, Connecticut), and her
educational background (she had first been taught by her mother before entering the
Hartford Female Seminary at age ten). Additionally, the obituary names the various
genres that Cooke wrote (poetry, sketches, short stories, and one novel) and lists the titles
of her best-known works. Like her physical description, Cooke’s authorial “portrait”
allows readers to form some sense of her identity. Her educational background helps
explain how she was able to capitalize on her “natural gift” for writing. Cooke’s
authorship is pictured as a logical outgrowth of her educational opportunities and her
natural talents.

Sometimes, like in the case of Constance Fenimore Woolson, the circumstances
of an author’s death presented particular challenges to obituarists. When Woolson died in
Venice in 1894 after falling from a window, it was reported in a Venetian newspaper and
in The Times that she had committed suicide (Edel 390-391). Hume notes a social taboo

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28 For more about Woolson, see Clare Benedict’s Constance Fenimore Woolson (London: Ellis, 1932);
Annamaria Eilsen’s Roman Fever: Domesticity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American
Women’s Writing (Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 2004); Cheryl Tournsey’s Critical Essays on Constance
Fenimore Woolson (New York: G. K. Hall, 1992); Tournsey’s Constance Fenimore Woolson: The Grief of
Artistry (Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1989). For the most comprehensive list of available secondary
sources about Woolson, see the Constance Fenimore Woolson Society webpage at
blogs.bgsu.edu/cfwoolson/.
against reporting suicides in obituaries, because suicide was regarded as an act of social 
injustice that deprived society of the deceased’s productivity. Therefore, suicide was 
rarely mentioned in obituaries as a cause of death before 1910, when, according to Hume, 
societal restrictions against acknowledging it were relaxed (112). However, as Long 
reminds us, “Obituary writers deal in death and biography. Like priests, doctors, 
undertakers, coroners, and others, they seem to be in the business of repairing pasts, 
faces, and meanings” (988). The Critic’s obituary literature for Woolson evidences this 
type of repair. Because Woolson had lived abroad for more than a decade, The Critic 
might have easily avoided mentioning her death. Instead, the periodical directly 
addressed the issue, repairing Woolson’s image and reclaiming her as an American 
author.

Two pieces of obituary literature about Woolson appeared in The Critic, and both 
treat the news of Woolson’s death sympathetically. The first, “Constance Fenimore 
Woolson,” combines editorial commentary with extracts from telegrams and letters from 
friends, relatives, and acquaintances. The second, a paragraph in Arthur Waugh’s 
“London Letter” (dated February 2, 1894; published February 24, 1894), concentrates on 
Woolson’s literary friendship with Henry James, “one of her most intimate friends in 
England” (134). Waugh mentions Woolson’s long association with Wolcott Balestier, an 
American editor who had facilitated the publication of Woolon’s Anne (1880) and Jupiter 
Lights (1889) in the English Library collection before his death in 1891. By focusing on 
Woolson’s literary connections and productions, Waugh intimates that this discussion of 
her work is more important than the details of her death, which, he supposes, “will have
long since reached American readers” (134). Waugh uses Woolson’s friendship with James and her publication history with Balestier to reaffirm her connections to the American literary community.

As indicated above, “Constance Fenimore Woolson” also speaks to Woolson’s literary acquaintances. Her expertise as an author is conveyed through reminiscences provided by Henry Mills Alden, E. C. Stedman, and Margaret E. Sangster. Alden, who had published her first short story, “Happy Valley” (1870) in Harper’s Magazine, notes the “rare quality of her genius” (73). Stedman calls her “an artist” and “one of the leading women in the American literature of the century” (74). Sangster writes about Woolson’s “art,” recalling how she addressed “human foibles, human sorrows, [and] human passion” (74). Woolson’s success “was sure and far-reaching,” her stories were “eagerly read,” she was a “realist” who, unlike other realists of the day, “preferred to look for noble, entrancing characters” (74). Within this one text, multiple personal recollections of Woolson work to show her involvement in the literary community and to reclaim her as part of the American literary tradition.

This is not to say that the circumstances of Woolson’s death were ignored but rather that they were reported in ways that minimized rather than sensationalized them. According to the author of “Constance Fenimore Woolson,” the “immediate cause of her death may be attributed to an attack of the influenza, which enfeebled her body and unsettled her mind” (73). A reprinted telegram provides the “particulars”:

Aunt Constance had severe influenza (grip), which had resulted, as it often does, in high fever. The night nurse left her for a moment for something
which was needed. During her short absence, in a sudden access of delirium, she arose from her bed and, while apparently wandering about the room, fell through the open window to the street below. She was picked up immediately, and lived a short time, but never regained consciousness. She had no apparent pain, and her face looked very peaceful. (“CFW” 73)

This telegram, which had been sent to her nephew by “Miss Grace Carter,” who was with her in Venice, supports the implication that Woolson had died of influenza, even though her fall had been the most immediate cause of death. Her fall from the window resulted from illness not from deliberate intent, as evidenced here from the description of her peaceful features. Within a framework of compassion and concern, readers are provided with a palliative explanation that casts Woolson’s death as a delirium-induced accident. Much as they could draw their own mental images of Cooke from the description of her appearance, readers can favorably imagine Woolson after reading this telegram. By providing a feasible explanation of an accidental fall, the obituarist directs readers to consider Woolson’s final actions sympathetically.

As Hume has argued, obituaries can legitimate a current social order by stressing attributes and actions of the deceased as socially acceptable (14). Written for benefit of the living, obituary literature can influence the public through what it chooses to commemorate about an individual. As we have just seen, commemoration can rewrite the negative, such as when The Critic cast Woolson’s death as accidental. Commemoration can also emphasize the positive, in order to promote social change. For example, late
nineteenth-century commemorations of female authors often supported an ideal of working women that disrupted traditional notions about gender roles. This disruption can be seen even in texts that vacillate between valorizing women for their literary labors and noting their devotion to the domestic.

_The Critic’s_ obituary literature for Lucy Larcom,²⁹ who died in 1893, depicts her both as a hardworking literary woman and as a homebody. “Lucy Larcom” remembers her as a “New England poet” who had worked in the Lowell Mills, where she contributed “prose and verse to the columns of the Lowell _Offering_” (258). Larcom would not be rediscovered until 1977, when Benita Eisler published her groundbreaking work _The Lowell Offering: Writings by New England Mill Women_. Another decade would pass before Shirley Marchalonis recovered her, in _The Worlds of Lucy Larcom_ (1989), as an editor and poet in her own right. _The Critic’s_ reminiscence lists the titles of nine books by Larcom along with their respective dates of publication. Two samples of her poetics are included: selected stanzas from “Hand in Hand with Angels” and “Hints.” Larcom’s eight-year editorship of _Our Young Folks_, “the popular periodical for readers,” receives mention, as does her experience as an Illinois schoolteacher (“Lucy Larcom” 258). By providing these details, the obituarist reminds readers that Larcom had worked as an author and editor for over forty years. Then, in the penultimate paragraph of the text, the obituarist turns away from Larcom’s literary record and discusses her home life: “Miss Larcom lived a quiet life at Beverly, very rarely going away from home. She was simple

and unpretentious in her life, and cared more for the influence for good exerted by her poems than for any fame they might bring her” (“Lucy Larcom” 258). These sentences inform readers that “Miss Larcom” had remained unmarried, that she had died in her hometown of Beverly, Massachusetts, and that she eschewed fame.

This mention of Larcom’s virtuous home life situates her as a valuable community member, one who, despite her fame, lived modestly and served as a productive member of society. Larcom was “quiet,” “unpretentious,” and focused on doing “good”—nineteenth-century markers of value that often appeared in obituaries. We might read the list of Larcom’s virtues as conventions of the obituary. As Hume notes, “Nineteenth-century obits spelled out those virtues by name, with deceased men described as honest or courageous and women as pious and kind” (131, emphasis in original). But they also work to legitimize the profession of female authorship. By listing her virtues, The Critic suggests that Larcom’s public work as an author and editor had increased her value to the community. With this move, The Critic directs readers to view Larcom, and thus all women authors, as worthy citizens and productive members of society. Both Larcom’s Massachusetts community and The Critic recognized her as a model citizen whose literary activities did not detract from her social virtues. Implicitly, the obituarist makes an ideological statement here, one that says societal order remains stable even when women choose to remain single and devote their lives to intellectual labor. Far from devaluing female authorship, as in the collective obituaries, The Critic promotes a positive, non-threatening account of Larcom’s successful management of her literary career and her social responsibilities.
Instead of leaving readers with this depiction of Larcom as woman with ordinary concerns, the obituarist returns to authorial matters. The final paragraph of “Lucy Larcom” consists of an extract from a letter from Larcom to the editors of The Critic. Written about six months before Larcom’s death, the letter first thanks the editors for reviewing As It Is In Heaven (1891) and then anticipates sending them another “little collection of verse”: At The Beautiful Gate (1891). In “Lucy Larcom,” readers last “see” Larcom not as contained within the domestic but as an author engaged in promoting her work to the editors of a particular publication. By uncritically reprinting her letter, The Critic validates not only Thaxter’s self-promotional practices but also her status as an American author.

An account of Larcom’s funeral appears in The Critic the following week, in Charles L. Wingate’s “Boston Letter.” Wingate observes that her funeral services were held in Boston’s Trinity Church, in the “same grand church where last the remains of Phillips Brooks were viewed” and with a similar selection of hymns (278). Those sending flowers included her publishers, Sarah Orne Jewett, and “members of the Wheaton Seminary Club,” where Larcom had taught for six years (Wingate 278). Like “Lucy Larcom,” Wingate’s letter pictures the author as busily engaged in literary work. He identifies the beginning of her poetic life by relating an anecdote told by Larcom’s brother Jonathan. According to Jonathan, Larcom wrote her first “verse” at age six or seven. Wingate also mentions Larcom’s final poetic endeavors, which he says were her final corrections on the proofs of her poem “Dreaming and Waking” (The Independent, 13 April 1893). On another occasion, Wingate reported on Thaxter’s funeral, on the Isles
of Shoals. Her mourners included Annie Fields, Sarah Orne Jewett’s sisters (“Miss Jewett herself no being able to attend”), and Childe Hassam, the illustrator of Thaxter’s *Island Garden* (“Boston Letter” 161). Wingate incorporates a letter from Thaxter into his reminiscence. In that letter, she talks about Whittier as “New England’s lyric poet” and praises his genius. By comparing Wingate’s accounts of the funeral proceedings for Larcom and Thaxter, we see that he pictures them as active members of the literary community, who had much in common with their male counterparts. In this way, his letters normalize female authorship and editorship for his late nineteenth-century readers.

Once accustomed to reading about the deaths of female authors, readers of obituary literature sometimes expected more information than was published. For instance, when Mary Abigail Dodge (Gail Hamilton) died in 1896, readers protested what they regarded as inadequate coverage of her life in *The Critic*. Three weeks after Dodge’s obituary appeared, Jeanette Gilder wrote about and responded to their criticism in her column, “The Lounger.” Gilder notes that a “great many people noted with surprise the small amount of biographical matter printed about ‘Gail Hamilton’ at the time of her death” (165). Gilder then answers those readers, saying that relatively little information about Dodge had been available. Quoting a letter from Dodge, Gilder explains that Dodge so protected her privacy that the newspapers had little information on hand when she died.

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The obituary that readers thought contained too little information reads as follows:

Miss Mary Abigail Dodge, who won more than national fame under the pen-name of ‘Gail Hamilton,’ died in her birthplace, Hamilton, Mass., on Aug. 17. She was born in 1830, and at the age of twenty-one began teaching in the High School at Hartford, Conn. She then became governess in the family of Dr. Gamaliel Bailey of Washington, through whose paper, *The National Era*, she first came before the public as a writer. In 1865-67, she was one of the editors of *Our Young Folks*, published in Boston. The marriage of her cousin to Mr. James G. Blaine brought her into close relations with Mr. Blaine himself, and, according to common report, she was for many years his chief advisor in matters political and literary. Her advocacy of Mrs. Maybrick’s cause, too, brought her prominently before the English-speaking world. In 1877 she wrote a series of vigorous articles against civil-service reform for the *Tribune*. (“Gail Hamilton” 122-23)

A second paragraph lists Dodge’s published works and mentions her work on Blaine’s biography, “written with the authorization of his widow.”

To readers versed in obituary literature, this paragraph provides a great deal of information. First, the obituary identifies the person behind the pseudonym of “Gail
Hamilton” as Mary Abigail Dodge. Information about Dodge’s place and date of death, occupation, and career follows. The obituary remembers Dodge as an internationally acclaimed author who had worked as a teacher and a governess. It notes that she began her authorial career by publishing in The National Era. Her editorship at Our Young Folks, which overlapped with Larcom’s, merits attention, as does her connection to James G. Blaine, her cousin Harriet Stanwood’s husband. And it says that at the time of her death, Dodge was writing the Biography of James G. Blaine (1895), aided by “all his private letters and papers,” which he had bequeathed to her in his will (“Gail Hamilton” 123). Moreover, in addition to being Blaine’s biographer, Dodge was, according to The Critic, commonly known as his “chief advisor in matters political and literary.” The obituary also recalls Dodge’s “advocacy” on behalf of American Florence Elizabeth Maybrick (1862-1941), who had been convicted of poisoning her English husband. After Maybrick’s conviction, Dodge had written “An Open Letter to the Queen,” in which she asked Queen Victoria to pardon Maybrick (North American Review, September 1893). According to an 1893 article in The Review of Reviews, Dodge’s letter laid “before her Majesty what may be regarded as the most powerful pleas for Mrs. Maybrick that has as

31 Dodge had been similarly identified in the election for the Twenty Immortelles. Williams writes that Dodge’s real identity was “an open secret in her local community” (139). Also, in The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, Louise L. Stevenson identifies “’Cunctare” as another of Dodge’s pseudonyms (162).
32 According to Shirley Marchelonis, James T. Fields began Our Young Folks in 1865; as one of his wife’s “intimate friends,” Dodge became one of the magazine’s editors (151).
33 As Williams notes, “Blaine was a pro-Lincoln Republican who had entered the U.S. Congress in 1863” (124).
34 “The Late Gail Hamilton” (Current Literature) says, “Miss Dodge’s characteristics left their impress upon the career of James G. Blaine. It is one of the traditions of life in the capital that Mr. Blaine always leaned heavily upon her judgment. When in doubt as to matters political, literary, or diplomatic, it was with her that he wished to consult before anyone else” (296). However, the author of “The Late Gail Hamilton” acknowledges and then discards the “popular belief” that Dodge wrote Blaine’s speeches, reviews, and diplomatic dispatches for him.
yet been penned” (“Ought Mrs. Maybrick to Be Tortured to Death?” 423). The paragraph concludes by recalling Dodge’s series of articles on civil service reform, in the New-York Daily Tribune, a hotly debated topic in the late 1870s.35

The image of Dodge in this obituary follows the pattern of obituaries for female authors that we have seen thus far. Dodge is described as a successful author who contributed in meaningful ways to her social and literary communities. Yet, as Gilder noted in her column, readers wanted more. In response, Gilder said that “very few newspapers had any extended obituary on file, and it was difficult to obtain the necessary material” (“The Lounger” 165). Instead of adding to the already-published information, Gilder printed the following extract from one of Dodge’s letters:

In declining to furnish you with material for a sketch of my life for publication, I act not from caprice, but on unvarying principle. Every person has a right to his own privacy. What he himself puts before the public in book or periodical belongs to the public, which has full right to read, reject, criticize. But his personality belongs to himself. To violate this law of private right is an outrage. I deprecate no severity of literary criticism. I resent, as so far as possible, repel every interference with private right. There are many persons, perhaps, who feel differently. If any such choose to be biographized during life, their taste may be questioned,

35 Louise L. Stevenson offers an insightful discussion of the civil service reform movement, a project of the American Social Science Association, which privileged intellectuals over “the people” (171-181). Stevenson says, about Dodge’s resistance to civil service reform, that Dodge “thought that participation in political parties and government service was a vital part of civic education. The reforms proposed by liberal intellectuals would end this benefit to the American people and change the nature of American democracy by trammeling ‘the feet of an intelligent people’” (179).
but the biographer is guiltless. I object to it utterly. (qtd. in “The Lounger” 165)

This letter, Dodge’s response to a “newspaper correspondent” who had requested “a brief history of her life,” differentiates between an author’s private “personality” and her public, or “published” persona (“The Lounger 165). *The Critic* seeks to deflect its readers’ criticism by using her words about resenting intrusions into her personal privacy.36 Though *The Critic* conflates Dodge’s public and private personas in her obituary (linking her legal name to her pseudonym), Gilder here uses Dodge’s statements about maintaining her privacy to explain *The Critic*’s relatively brief obituary coverage of her.37

The larger issue here is the readers’ perception that they had not been told enough about Dodge. They wanted to read more. And though *The Critic* never published more, other periodicals did. For instance, in October 1896, *Current Literature* published “The Late Gail Hamilton,” a lengthy account of the author’s life. While this text repeats much of the information that readers had learned from *The Critic*, it also presents additional information. For example, it provides the following explanation for her pseudonym: “Miss Dodge’s name was Mary Abigail. She took for a pen name the last syllable of Abigail, and, with the name of her birthplace, formed the pseudonym ‘Gail Hamilton,” by which she is better known” (296). Overall, however, *Current Literature* treats Dodge less

36 For further discussion of Dodge’s views on personal privacy, see Susan S. Williams’s *Reclaiming Authorship* (139-40) and Susan Coultrap-McQuin’s *Gail Hamilton* (xvi-xvii).

37 *The Critic* sometimes anticipated publication of certain details about Dodge’s private life. Charles E.L. Wingate’s September 28, 1895 “Boston Letter,” for instance, informed readers that a letter from Dodge to the pastor of her church had been read to the congregation and that it would be republished later as an “article, or essay, or sermon” entitled “In the Valley of the Shadow of Death.” Though Dodge and the pastor both “refused to give it to the public,” *The Critic* provided an account of its “purport” (202).
favorably than *The Critic*, recalling that she had lost a great deal of money in bad investments, refuting the idea that anyone “familiar with Mr. Blaine and his methods of work” could ever believe that Dodge overly influenced Blaine, and speaking critically of her personal appearance and her spinsterhood. Though Dodge “had a wonderfully intellectual countenance,” she “was not a good-looking woman, for she had too much care and hard work to preserve the features of countenance that compose good looks” (296). And while Dodge is credited for working “as one of the trustees of the state workhouse at Bridgewater,” she is labeled as a “spinster of the most pronounced type” who “wrote and published in Harper’s Bazar (sic) a disquisition upon the art of rearing children” (296). More critical in tone than *The Critic*, these comments from her obituary have little to do with Dodge’s literary abilities, though the one about her spinster status calls into question her authority to write about childrearing. As Susan Coultrap-McQuin reminds us in *Gail Hamilton*, Dodge “was not uniformly admired by her contemporaries” (xi). *Current Literature*’s obituary literature about Dodge suggests that a more nuanced picture of the author might be gained if all the obituary literature written about her could be assembled and read together. *The Critic* found it more effective to say too little, as Gilder was accused of doing, than to pad obituary literature with uncomplimentary material. Gilder’s treatment of Dodge underscores *The Critic*’s commitment to providing positive depictions of individual female authorship. The periodical’s coverage of the deaths of these female authors seems at odds with its disinterest in sustaining the Twenty Immortelles as a viable part of its hypothetical American academy, a disinterest evident in its failure to initiate a ballot system to replace those whose were dying.
While Dodge achieved pseudonymous fame, the most famous American female author to die in the 1890s was Harriet Beecher Stowe,\textsuperscript{38} whose death merited first-page attention in the July 4, 1896 issue of \textit{The Critic}. Ultimately, \textit{The Critic} would review Stowe’s life on at least four separate occasions, including two separate pieces in this issue: James Herbert Morse’s “Harriet Beecher Stowe,” which begins on the first page, and “Obituary 1,” published directly below the longer news story. A third item appeared a week later, also entitled “Harriet Beecher Stowe” [hereafter, “Harriet Beecher Stowe” (2)]. Then, in April 1897, the publication of the New Riverside edition of \textit{The Works of Harriet Beecher Stowe} occasioned a fourth piece, by Gerald Stanley Lee (1862-1944, also entitled “Harriet Beecher Stowe.”\textsuperscript{39}

Not surprisingly, the woman who had written the nineteenth century’s most controversial novel sparked, in death, competing assessments of her place in American literary history. In his two-page “Harriet Beecher Stowe,” Morse writes at length about Stowe’s family members before turning his attention to her texts. Stowe’s parents, especially her father, and her brothers all figure into Morse’s recap of her childhood and her education. In order to give some sense of Stowe’s “democracy of birth and breeding,” Morse spends considerable time talking about Stowe’s father, Lyman Beecher. Readers learn that his father had been a blacksmith, that he “hammered out an education for


\textsuperscript{39} An asterisk in the title refers readers to a note about the publication of a sixteen-volume collection, \textit{The Works of Harriet Beecher Stowe}, though Lee never mentions this collection.
himself,” and that he was eccentric, and that he passed his shrewd sense of humor to
Stowe. Morse includes a personal anecdote about Lyman accidentally overturning the
family carriage as well as an example of his prayers. He pictures Stowe as surrounded by
male influence, mentioning, in addition to her father, her seven brothers, “all of the heroic
mould” (“HBS” 1). As a result, “her life was thrown among men, and she learned to
know them as few women have the opportunity to know the other sex” (“HBS” 1). Here,
Morse “masculinizes” Stowe in order to explain the power of her writing, saying that
having six brothers who became clergymen allowed her to incorporate the “clerical
standpoint” into her books. “Harriet Beecher Stowe” (2) echoes this sentiment, describing
Stowe’s “breadth of humor” as “almost masculine” (28).

In her introduction to She Wields a Pen, Janet Gray discusses the privileging of
what she calls “masculine toughness” in women’s poetry (xxxi). Though Gray writes
specifically about the reasons for Emily Dickinson’s early twentieth-century canonization
at the expense of other female poets, her works provides some helpful insights into how
to read Morse’s sustained focus on Stowe’s close association with her father and brothers.
“Masculine toughness,” according to Gray, referred to women authors whose writing
entered the male-dominated public sphere rather than focusing on female-centered
concerns. Because Dickinson’s writing exhibited this type of poetics, her writings were
canonized while many other female authors “disappeared” from the literary canon. While
“Harriet Beecher Stowe” seems to be subsuming Stowe’s astounding literary
achievement with Uncle Tom’s Cabin under a rhetoric of male influence, Gray’s ideas
give us a fresh way of reinterpreting this. Rather than seeing Morse’s comments as an
erasure of Stowe’s femininity—a topic which receives attention elsewhere in his article—we should read them as evidence that he found her writing as strong in literary form and value as that produced by successful male writers. While this may seem a dubious compliment today, for late nineteenth-century readers accustomed to separate male and female traditions of writing, it may have seemed high praise indeed. The only Immortelle to receive the masculine rhetoric from *The Critic*, Stowe also received its strongest praise. By omitting this rhetoric of masculinity from its discussion of the other Immortelles, *The Critic* devalues female authorship even as it promotes its female academicians.

In his discussion of her male relatives, Morse imagines Stowe as an active participant in family discussions about a range of social issues. Speaking about “these Beechers,” Morse writes, “They had thoughts on every vital question—religion, education, temperance, slavery and the reforms. They carried on the polemic in both directions—against the conservatives behind them and the radicals ahead” (1). In other words, as one of “these Beechers” Stowe grew up considering every question from multiple angles, and she would have been comfortable opposing the viewpoints of others. This background gave Stowe the ability to investigate the institution of slavery from multiple angles, according to Morse, so that even her Southern critics had to concede that she had correctly portrayed the facts of slavery even when they objected to “the Puritan interpretation put on the facts” (1). To remind readers of the “noble reception” of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Morse quotes from Longellow’s journal wherein he describes the family’s reading of the text in installments:
9 May, 1852: —“Began ‘Uncle Tom’—a pathetic and droll book on slavery;” and May 23, again: —“Every evening we read ourselves into despair in that tragic book, ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin.’ It is too melancholy, and make’s one’s blood boil too hotly.” Once more, a year later: —“How she is shaking the world with her ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’! At one step she has reached the top of the staircase up which the rest of us climb on our knees year after year. Never was there such a literary coup de-main as this. A million copies of a book within the first year of its publication.” (qtd. in Morse 2)

By quoting Longfellow, Morse affirms Stowe’s authorship by linking her to another well-known nineteenth-century literary figure, using Longfellow’s account of reading Uncle Tom’s Cabin to recall the national fervor that greeted the novel and its astounding publication record. The three quotes Morse extracts from Longfellow’s journal move from observational to emotional involvement to authorial envy, as Longfellow records his reactions over the course of the year. In the closing paragraphs of “Harriet Beecher Stowe,” Morse talks about Stowe’s work once she had completed the “national task” of writing Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Her “best arrows were already sped,” writes Morse, though she continued to please audiences with her character sketches.

In contrast to Morse’s article, the two-paragraph length of “Obituary 1” seems quite short. However, even this short obituary provides details omitted by Morse. For instance, it states the cause of death (paralysis) and the place of death (Hartford, Connecticut). It also supplies Stowe’s education at the Female Seminary in Hartford as
well as her marriage, in 1836 to “Prof. Calvin E. Stowe.” Like Morse, this obituarist remembers Harriet as a member of the Beecher family, mentioning her father, one of her brothers, and her sister Catherine before commenting that “of all her notable family she and her brother Henry Ward carried its name to the farthest corners of the civilized world” (2). While it lacks the fervor of Morse’s reminiscence, the obituary remembers Stowe for *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and for the many other books she published during her long and prolific career as an author. It mentions the titles of her works without commentary, other than to say that the time she “spent in Ohio, between the free and slave-holding states, furnished Mrs. Stowe with the greater part of the material for *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*” (2). Because it follows Morse’s article, this obituary leaves readers focused not on her familial connections, but on her long list of literary productions.

The third piece, “Harriet Beecher Stowe” (2), begins by correcting some misinformation in circulation about Stowe. The opening sentence states that Stowe was born in 1811, not in 1812, as had been commonly reported. So common was this error that her publishers, Houghton, Mifflin & Company, inaccurately timed their celebration of her seventieth birthday, writes the obituarist, before recapping the details of that day and quoting from the Oliver Wendell Holmes’s poem that praised Stowe’s fame on that occasion. Like the obituary literature for the other Immortelles, “Harriet Beecher Stowe” (2) links the author to a network of literary notables. Poems by “Whittier, Holmes, Trowbridge, Mrs. Whitney, Miss Phelps and others were read,” and speeches given by H.O. Houghton, Henry Ward Beecher, Edward Beecher, and Judge Tourgee. The obituarist quotes from its own account of the occasion, linking her therein to “well-
known” authors of her day, such as Charles Brockden Brown, J. K. Pauling, John Neal, Fenimore Cooper, Catherine Sedwick, R.P. Smith, W. Gilmore Simms, James Hall, T.S. Fay. “Most of these are now but names, conveying no significance to the ear,” the writer concludes, “while Harriet Beecher Stowe is a name known in every language which expresses civilized thought” (27). “Harriet Beecher Stowe” (2) contains three portraits of Stowe, sketches of two of her homes, and one of her husband. In conjunction with these sketches, some of Stowe’s neighbors in Hartford are mentioned, namely “Mark Twain, Mssrs. Charles Dudley Warner, Wm. Gilette and Richard Burton, the literary critic of the Hartford Courant” (28). It also includes a sample of her handwriting under one of the portraits, as well as extracts from her letters to Holmes and Lowell, which she had written for in honor of their birthdays and which had previously been published in The Critic. Finally, Stowe’s funeral proceeding are described and a list of funeral attendees provided.

More famous than any of the other Immortelles, Stowe receives the greatest attention in print. Her long literary career inextricably linked to national history, her death occasions a review of her life before and after Uncle Tom’s Cabin. However, while her novel’s impact on the mid-century national debate about slavery receives a great deal of attention, none of her obituarists even hint that it might have any bearing on late nineteenth-century racial issues like segregation, Jim Crow laws, and lynching. That said, “Harriet Beecher Stowe” (2) differs from any of the obituary literature discussed thus far in that it mentions African Americans. As African Americans were largely excluded from nineteenth-century obituaries in the mainstream, white-edited press, their presence here deserves some attention, even if they are not the subjects of the obituary. Listed among
the mourners present at Stowe’s funeral are a “number of colored people” (29). Unlike the white mourners specified above, no African American mourners are identified by name. Instead, they remain on the periphery, faceless and unidentifiable. Stowe’s death would not be used as a rallying call for social justice. Unlike Hopkins, who, as I discussed in Chapter 3, used the cultural memory regarding Emerson’s abolitionist rhetoric to rally her late nineteenth-century readers to social awareness, this obituarist does much the opposite. For, in the discussion about Stowe’s seventieth birthday celebration, the writer mentions that “Mrs. Stowe, in the course of a few remarks on the condition of the colored freedman in the South, said:—‘Let us never doubt. Everything that ought to happen is going to happen” (27). Read in context of the rest of the obituary, which, in the words of Lowell’s poem, says that Stowe “moved the earth” with her novel, her comment on the present condition of African Americans seems an equivocation that leaves her uninvolved in the issues of racial uplift in the years preceding her death. While her statement that something “is going to happen” implies change, it fails to presage that change as either positive or negative. From the historical standpoint of the obituary, what had happened was the 1883 Supreme Court decision to overturn the Civil Rights Act (1875).

Stowe’s obituary considers how American literary history should address, record, and promote the relationship between American literature and social reform in prominent causes such as abolitionism, civil rights, and racial equality. By mentioning that Stowe addressed slavery, the obituary acknowledges race as a theme in her work without yet recognizing late nineteenth-century racial inequality as a pressing concern for The
Critic’s readers. Hume notes that obituaries memorialized African Americans “only when they were associated with the white culture and provided examples of subjection” (50). Engaged in social conventions honoring Stowe at the time of her death, her African American mourners remain sidelined and silent. Thus, matters of race became distanced, contained by the literature and possibly literary history, but not considered immediately relevant for readers in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{40}

While “Harriet Beecher Stowe” (2) fails to recover Stowe as a participant in the late nineteenth-century struggle for civil rights, Gerald Stanley Lee’s “Harriet Beecher Stowe” threatens to mar her reputation as an artist. Published nine months after Stowe died, Lee’s text offers the type of remarks about a female author that might discourage undiscerning readers from marking her as an female author worthy of inclusion in an American literary tradition. In his opening paragraph, Lee writes,

Mrs. Stowe commenced her career where the life of the artist ends. […] had she approached her greatest theme with the self-knowledge and the world-knowledge and the criticism that came with her smaller ones, \textit{Uncle Tom’s Cabin} might have been as great an event on Olympus as it has proved to be in the United States. (Lee 281)

Here Lee argues that Stowe’s career happened in reverse and that, following the publication of her best-known work, \textit{Uncle Tom’s Cabin}, she never achieved her full potential as an artist. Markedly different in tone from the other reminiscences about Stowe, this text requires careful attention. While Lee correctly identifies that Stowe

\textsuperscript{40} This paragraph reflects my debt to Andrea Williams, whose comments on an earlier draft have informed my thinking in this paragraph.
reached the height of her fame early in her career, he provides *The Critic*’s least positive depiction of Stowe by qualifying nearly every statement he makes with phrases like “at best,” “in the abstract,” and “might have been.” He continues this pattern elsewhere, saying *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* “has some of the ways of a masterpiece” though it is “inferior in many respects” to Stowe’s other work (Lee 281). Lee admits Stowe’s success with her first novel, though he does not think it the strongest example of her literary abilities.

A regular contributor to *The Critic*, Lee had been a Congregational clergyman before resigning from the ministry in 1896. He would go on to write *Crowds* (1913), a non-fiction bestseller that investigated the “crowd,” or the reading public, as a “metaphor of great scope and subtle power” (Bush 302). In order to correctly interpret Lee’s words above, we must understand his admiration of Stowe’s power to make the “crowd” into a reading public for women authors. For in “Harriet Beecher Stowe,” he goes on to say that her success—or “the house that Harriet Beecher Stowe built”—not only inspired other women, such as Mary Wilkins, Kate Douglass Wiggin, and Sarah Orne Jewett, to write, but it formed the audience for their works as well. Bush provides the most thorough exploration of Lee’s crowd metaphor to date in *Lord of Attention: Gerald Stanley Lee and the Crowd Metaphor in Industrializing America* (1991), wherein he posits that Lee thought late nineteenth-century Americans pursued crowd consciousness rather than individuality, and that heroes were needed to lift the crowd. According to Bush, “Lee’s  

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41 In “Business Evangelism and the Search for Social Harmony: 1891-1916,” Bush provides a rare account of Lee’s social and business evangelism. Bush reads Lee as an ineffective clergyman whose inability to “dominate his congregations” led to his resignation. He quotes from Lee’s *About and Old New England Church* (Sharon, CT, 1891), wherein Lee says, “[N]owadays a minister enters practically into competition with all literature, with the telegraph and newspaper, and people cannot keep him as a pastor but just about so long, for fear of finding out how little he knows” (Lee 29). Rather than competing, Lee quit the ministry and joined forces with “literature.”
vision led him on a desperate search for modern heroes; his was a religious quest to redefine and lead the public as its modern prophet” (8). Not inconsequentially, then, Lee marks Stowe as an influential force in crowd creation: “The Beecher experience was the one that waked us—some of us to be ‘the public,’ to make a market, to buy Mary Wilkins’s books—others to be Mary Wilkinses and Sarah Orne Jewetts, and write them” (Lee 282). “Any criticism that ignores this creative element in Mrs. Stowe’s career,” continues Lee, “does her signal injustice” (282). Though he regards the success of Uncle Tom’s Cabin a literary fluke, Lee credits Stowe with making possible the literary marketplace of the late nineteenth century. His qualification of her literary abilities in the early paragraphs of his text works to highlight his enthusiasm for his particular point of interest—her unmitigated sway over her “crowd” of readers.

Lee’s text hints at how women authors could be “disappeared” from the American literary tradition. For readers looking for excuses to omit Stowe from a literary canon would find, especially in Lee’s opening paragraphs, plenty of justification for doing so. If, as Karen Kilcup argues in Soft Canons: American Women Writers and Masculine Tradition, the division of male and female poets into separate anthologies such as Rufus Griswold’s (1849) facilitated the disappearance of many women writers from the canon, then obituary literature such as Lee’s could have aided in that disappearance, especially if readers failed to understand Lee’s technique of dismissing Stowe’s literary abilities in favor of her power over her literary audiences.

Reading Lee’s text about Stowe, I am reminded of Zenobia’s death in The Blithedale Romance (1852), Hawthorne’s fictionalized account of the Brook Farm
experiment. When Zenobia dies, Westervelt offers an impromptu graveside eulogy in which he says that Zenobia has wasted her genius. The narrator, Miles Coverdale, objects to this unflattering characterization saying that Westervelt left out her “noblest” attributes and tarnished her image: “Who are you,” [he] exclaimed, “that dare to speak thus of the dead? You seem to intend a eulogy, yet leave out whatever was noblest in her, and blacken, while you mean to praise” (Hawthorne 241). Here, Coverdale recognizes Westervelt’s rhetorical power over the dead. Yet, as Coverdale later decides, despite the eulogy’s deficiencies, Westervelt’s “reflections possessed their share of truth” (Hawthorne 241). Like the fictional eulogy of Zenobia, an outspoken intellectual and feminist whose real-world model may have been Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), The Critic’s obituary literature about female authors possesses its share of “truth.” Like Lee, the writers of obituary literature did not write unbiased accounts, but shaped their recollections and reminiscences of these American authors and their personas to fit their own purposes while still providing, for their readers, positive representations of the profession of female American authorship. These representations contrasted with The Critic’s emphasis elsewhere on its male academicians, creating unresolved conflicts in its depictions of male and female authorship that suggest that late nineteenth-century definitions of American authorship were still being negotiated.

Conclusion

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, obituary literature in The Critic promoted American authorship as a field where some of the societal tensions about
equity for women intruded. Unlike the elections for the Forty Immortals and the Twenty Immortelles, that included only living authors, obituary literature offered a space where the lives of American authors could be constructed around their literary work as they were remembered for their respective and collective contributions to American literature. *The Critic’s* scenes of negotiation demonstrate the struggle concerning how best to represent female authorship in the American literary tradition. Though it maintained a strong preference for male authorship, *The Critic* promoted a more positive image of female authorship than was adopted by academics in the early years of the twentieth century by including female academicians—albeit grudgingly—and remembering them in death as American authors. The obituaries for female authors reflect that inclusion even though the collective obituaries for the Forty Immortals paradoxically work against it. The readers’ successful negotiations on behalf of female authorship suggest that the reading public held more progressive views than the periodical, but also that, much like *The Bookman*, *The Critic* viewed itself as culturally superior to its readers.

As their individual obituaries demonstrate, the Twenty Immortelles worked throughout the nineteenth century, contributing to periodicals, publishing books, editing journals, and establishing literary networks with male and female authors. By reviewing their literary activities as worthwhile contributions to American society, *The Critic* and other literary periodicals normalized the category of professional female authorship. Readers not only wanted to hear about these authors’ deaths, but they expected to hear about them. In sum, the female authors memorialized in *The Critic* were players on a national scale, with connections to many prominent people and bringing many salient
social issues to the attention of the reading public. At the same time, they worked in a
gendered literary world. Male and female authors were remembered separately in death
because they were largely considered separate in life. African Americans and other
minorities suffered an even worse fate, by being totally excluded from The Critic’s
obituary literature. Pauline Hopkins’s efforts to record her own version of the American
literary tradition remind us that other periodicals, such as the Colored American
Magazine, might offer a substantially different account of late nineteenth-century
authorship. Yet, as Lois Brown’s discussion of Du Bois’s 1930 obituary for Hopkins
illustrates, even African American periodicals struggled with how to represent female
authorship. Printed in The Crisis, the obituary “was striking for its seemingly deliberate
dismissal or suppression of Hopkins’s accomplishments” and “contained glaring
inaccuracies” (Brown 532). Brown posits that the obituary served as the harbinger of the
obscurity that would obscure Hopkins’s authorial accomplishments for more than fifty
years.

By redefining the category of “literary historians” to include the interested parties
in the nineteenth-century scenes of negotiation recovered herein, this study recovers what
we might think of as a lost generation of literary historians from the 1890s. All of the
literary historians identified in the preceding chapters saw abundance rather than dearth
in the extant body of American literature. More concerned with identifying, collecting,
and preserving an American literary tradition than “the field of critical review,” as
Stedman and Hutchinson said in their Library of American Literature, these literary
historians give us a more capacious way to understand the writing of American literary
history. Stedman and Hutchinson eschewed “critical review” in order to let readers read American literature for themselves. Similarly, the scenes of negotiation represented here remind us that, in order to understand the omissions in American literary history, we must reread the historical record rather than simply reading about it.

But what happened in the early years of the twentieth century that led to the restrictive American literary canon? Various forces contributed: the rise of critical literary studies, changes to the literary magazines, and the academic appropriation of American literature. As Naomi Sofer demonstrates, in Making the America of Art (2005), “The struggle to transform the United States from a nation of ‘toil’ to a nation of ‘art’” demanded a critical approach that could identify “the most valuable” works of literature (5). Thus, even as Stedman and Hutchinson focused their attention on presenting American readers with some of the primary sources of an American tradition, the field of critical literary studies was on the rise. Both critics in their own rights, Stedman and Hutchinson would be pushed aside in favor of new critical voices, and their Library would be mined for the “best” of three generations’ worth of American literature. As Stokes notes, Howells read Stedman and Hutchinson’s uncritical approach to literature as “critical negligence,” insisting that “writers need to use their special expertise in evaluating literary quality” (116).

Like Stedman and Hutchinson, The Critic would not survive the transition to the twentieth century. Never having become financially solvent, The Critic became an affiliate of Putnam’s Monthly by 1899 before being subsumed by Putnam’s in 1906. Eventually, Putnam’s folded into the Atlantic, which had a less democratic vision for
American literature than *The Critic*. Thus ended Jeanette and Joseph Gilder’s editorship of the periodical that had demonstrated such remarkable engagement with its readers’ interest in American authorship. The early twentieth century witnessed the rise of the “little” magazines, which, unlike more “traditional” periodicals such as *The Critic*, existed primarily to promote new writers or new schools of writing. “[T]he most significant fact about the little magazines was that many of them were associated with the culture of the universities,” Glazener speculates, adding that little magazines offered “what might appear to be a guerilla enterprise on the part of outsider intellectuals” that contributed significantly to the *Atlantic*-group’s demise as a cultural authority (237).

After slowly gaining ascendancy in academia in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, American literature became a more accepted field of academic study in the twentieth century, as evidenced by scholars such as Paul Lauter, in *Canons and Contexts* (1991) and Elizabeth Renker, in *The Origins of American Literature Studies* (2007). Yet, while the battle to legitimize American literature had been won, the casualties were heavy. Most women and minorities were discarded in favor of a canon that privileged white male writers. Though some minority voices would continue to be heard, Pauline Hopkins’s was not one of them. Having been forced out of her editorship at the *Colored American Magazine* by Booker T. Washington, she struggled to remain a member of her literary community but eventually faded into obscurity. Even once the recovery of nineteenth-century black women writers began, scholars paid little attention to Hopkins. As Gwendolyn Brooks said in 1978, Hopkins was “not indignant enough” to be thought of as effecting social change (Brooks 403).
In recent years, the rise of feminism, periodical studies, and multiculturalism have made us more cognizant of the gaps not only in the narrowly-defined canons of the twentieth century but also of the gaps in literary histories written about the nineteenth century, a time of extraordinary literary activity. By highlighting some of the participants in these scenes of literary negotiation, I reconstruct some of the complex discourse surrounding the definition of an American literary tradition and show that the more inclusive canon of today builds on the very foundations they laid in the 1890s.
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250


251


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265


