UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

# Seduction, Sporting Culture and Sensational Literature: White Manhood and Male Fraternity in the Antebellum United States

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Katherine Anne Merit Thompson

Committee in charge:

Professor John D. Blanco, Co-Chair
Professor Shelley Streeby, Co-Chair
Professor Dennis Childs
Professor Sara Johnson
Professor Rachel Klein

2018

The Dissertation of Katherine Anne Merit Thompson is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

_____

_____

_____

_____
Co- Chair

_____
Co- Chair

University of California San Diego

2018

# DEDICATION

To my Mom and Dad, and Dave.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many thanks to give to the individuals and institutions that helped make this dissertation possible.

I want to start by thanking professors and mentors who helped me along my path at critical points early on in my educational career. At Palomar College, Martin Japtok and Carlton Smith offered support and encouragement that bolstered my confidence and excitement about literature. At UC Santa Cruz, Christine Hong was instrumental in guiding me on my path to graduate school. She spent hours of her personal time and energy on helping me to edit and hone my research proposal, offering an unshakable and assured belief in my abilities.

My research and writing was supported in part by generous grants and fellowships. Thanks to a dissertation writing fellowship from the UCSD Literature Department I was able to take a break from teaching and focus on my research, which was crucial to finishing this project. I want to also thank the UC Humanities Research Institute, which awarded me a Dissertation Support Grant that greatly aided my research. I would not have been able to write Chapter Two or so fully explore the world of sporting men if it were not for the American Antiquarian Society, which loaned me their microfilm copies of the magazines. Thank you to Marie E. Lamoureux for coordinating these loans on a few occasions. I also want to thank the Interlibrary Loan staff at UCSD for acquiring the many difficult-to-find texts for my research. A Short-Term Research Fellowship from the Library Company of Philadelphia allowed me conduct extensive research into the work of George Lippard, his Brotherhood of the Union, reform societies and much more. Thank you to James Green of the Library Company for talking with me

about Lippard and for pointing me to all the relevant source material. A special thank you to Cornelia King for her exhaustive knowledge of the archives, nineteenth-century U.S. history and popular culture - she pointed me to many fascinating materials and connections I could not have found on my own.

My committee was my instrumental in my success. Commentary and critique from Dennis Childs and Rachel Klein helped me to identify and strengthen the strongest aspects of my project and argument. Sara Johnson read early drafts of chapters and made insightful comments that helped me find my focus. Meetings with Sara always left me feeling energized and excited about my work. I would not have produced the dissertation I am so proud of were it not for Shelley Streeby, whose suggestions, guidance, and editing helped me to sharpen my project and broadened my considerations. Shelley's work has been, and will continue to be, a major inspiration in my own research. It is not an exaggeration to say that if it were not for Jody Blanco, I would not have been able to complete this project. Jody took me under his wing at a time when I was struggling to define my research and find my place. Jody's enthusiastic support, encouragement and understanding carried me through many difficult times. Our myriad academic discussions were always illuminating and importantly, quite fun.

Friends and family have provided love, support, laughter, and levity throughout my time in graduate school. Much thanks to Seis Dedos and Lafitte, two rascally distractions that provided more comfort over these years than I'd like to admit. Adventures with Dave and Foster Chamberlain around San Diego and beyond brought so much fun and hilarity to my every day, and always chased away my worries. I am so grateful to the friendship of Jessica Weant; one of the best things to happen to me in

graduate school was our friendship. Courtney Larson's strength and resilience in the face of incredible difficulty has been, and continues to be, an inspiration in overcoming my own hurdles. Her wit, keen social insights, and impeccable taste in date days provided relief from the work. Joey Ramelli was always more sure than I was that this project would be finished. Joey's pride in my work and my efforts always shined bright, especially when he would inform strangers that I was "A Professor!" I am so grateful that he's been there to see me through Santa Cruz, San Diego, and beyond. I wouldn't be where I am today were it not for Thure Stedt. He seemed to have anticipated this PhD about 15 years ago. Thure's encouragement, support and love buoyed me through community college, undergrad, and into graduate school. Thank you Thure. I still miss you, every day.

A big thank you to my brother, Kerry Thompson—I am endlessly thankful that one of my favorite people that I've ever met is also my brother. Kerry's hilarious jokes, observations, and asides always brought me comfort in difficulty. We will always get through the hard times together. Thank you to Dave Henderson, your intellectual rigor and altogether impressive editing skills were fundamental to completing this dissertation. Thank you for the long hours, and helping me even when I was on the brink. Our auspicious meeting at UCSD was the most unexpected part of my graduate career. I am truly, inexpressibly, grateful that I found you—everything else is just extra.

Finally, thank you to my parents, Mark and Karen Thompson. Their love and enduring belief in me has pulled me through this experience, and many others. Over the years we have spent many dinners talking about the latest iteration of my research project. Their excitement, praise and unflagging interest in my dissertation—their

unflagging belief in me, inspired me to push through difficulty and stay true to myself. No matter what stage I was at, their enthusiasm and support made me feel 7 feet tall, and gave me the strength to move forward. Thank you Mom and Dad, for being both my rock and my light.

# VITAE

| | |
|---|---|
| 2010 | Bachelor of Arts, University of California Santa Cruz |
| 2015 | Master of Arts, University of California San Diego |
| 2016 | Instructor, University of California San Diego |
| 2011-2018 | Teaching Assistant, Revelle College Humanities Program, University of California San Diego |
| 2018 | Doctor of Philosophy, University of California San Diego |

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Seduction, Sporting Culture and Sensational Literature: White Manhood and Modernity in the Antebellum United States

by

Katherine Anne Merit Thompson

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California San Diego, 2018

Professor John D. Blanco, Co-Chair
Professor Shelley Streeby, Co-Chair

This dissertation examines the relationship between sporting male culture and popular culture during the antebellum period. Sporting culture emerged in major northeastern cities in the 1830s and was mostly comprised of young, single white men. Often disconnected from families or apprentice systems, these men reveled in drinking,

brothel-going, gambling and other urban exploits, and had an indelible impact on antebellum literature, print culture, reform work, and law. With their seemingly amoral attitude, individualist rhetoric, and excessive indulgence, sporting men were a source of fascination to the general public and incited marked consternation and concern from authors, reformers and politicians. By examining sporting culture I expand our understanding of the cultural responses to the intense social, political, and economic changes of the antebellum period. In this dissertation I examine popular sensational novels, newspapers, trial reports, reform work, seduction law, and the development of George Lippard's secret society, the Brotherhood of the Union, to show how the concern over sporting culture reflected fears and anxiety that modernization might not simply breed inequality—but could potentially corrupt the moral and patriotic sensibility of young white men across the nation.

This dissertation considers why sporting culture, prostitution, the libertine, and seduction became sources of preoccupation in the northeastern city. I argue that all of these phenomena were connected: the fascination with illicit activity and the strength of the backlash against it came from the fear that capitalism and modernization might turn a class of potentially productive young white men into self-interested libertines, fracturing the potential for white male unity and cohesion.

# Introduction

The Sunday Morning News, of last week, came out with an article, in a portion of which, [they] ask: "how those men live who are to be seen day and night in 'Park Row,' dressed in the height of fashion[?"] … most of these men are Sportsmen, who, although times are dull, have their tens and twenties about them, and who are enjoying life like fighting cocks, standing ready for any game... –August 1843, *The Whip*.

His taste for frolic led him into all the extravagancies of city life, and caused him to become a frequent visiter [sic] to all billiard saloons and bowling alleys of the town. What else could be expected of him! What else can be expected of the majority of youths similarly situated, and who, like him, are brought from the quiet routine of country life, to be plunged into the midst of all the intoxicating pleasures and dazzling temptations of this great Babel of enjoyment ... – George Wilkes and H. R. Howard, *The Lives of Helen Jewett and Richard P. Robinson* (1849)

The above epigraphs illustrate well the competing concerns over sporting culture in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century. The first two quotes are taken from *The Whip*, one of a collection of magazines that sprang up in the 1840s claiming to represent the interests and ethos of sporting culture.[1] Sporting men—young single white men who fully embraced urban vice and entertainments in cities across the United States[2]—styled themselves as "fighting cocks," commanding their environment despite "dull" times. Their bawdy misbehavior did not go without rebuke. Police, reformers, political elites, writers and concerned critics all sought to curb sporting male behavior—a "moral war" according to one author.[3] The description of Richard Robinson

[1] The collection of sporting magazines that I read here are from the American Antiquarian Society.
[2] While sporting culture is most often associated with major northern cities like New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, sporting culture was a national phenomenon. See: Patricia Cline, Timothy J. Gilfoyle, and Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz. *The Flash Press: Sporting Male Weeklies in 1840s New York*. University of Chicago Press, 2008; Cook, James W. "Dancing across the Color Line." *Common-Place* 4.1 (2003); Stott, Richard. *Jolly fellows: Male milieus in nineteenth-century America*. JHU Press, 2009.
[3] The December 1842 issue of *The Whip* reports, "the sporting men of Philadelphia appear to be in trouble. The Mayor and Police of that staid and sober city are 'down on them' strong—for what particular reason we cannot see … This moral war, which is being waged on sporting men remind us of the 'tempest in the tea-pot;' only that it is a smaller business."

from *The Lives of Helen Jewett and Richard P. Robinson,* a fictionalized account of Robinson's alleged murder of prostitute Helen Jewett in 1836, highlights a central concern of sporting culture's critics: that the allure of the sporting lifestyle was irresistible. Critics worried that young men, poised between poverty and middle-class respectability, might inevitably turn to the "dazzling" and "intoxicating pleasures" of the city to vent their frustrations and desires. As a result, a potentially politically, socially and economically valuable class of young white men would become unproductive, immoral, and, as the case of Robinson illustrated above, dangerous to society.

My dissertation spans the early decades of the nineteenth century, from the 1820s until 1860.[4] Sporting culture was a unique phenomenon centered in major cities throughout the United States, emerging out of the unprecedented changes of this period. During the 1830s through the 1850s, urban centers across the U.S. saw population booms that helped to unseat traditional modes of work and living. Industrialization caused the movement of many laborers and families from the country into major cities—coupled with massive immigration during the period, urban populations exploded.[5] In the early decades of the century, universal suffrage was extended to virtually all white men, breaking down an older political order dominated by upper-class merchants and other wealthy elites.[6] These changes attended a fundamental shift in labor and workplace

[4] There are a few factors for ending my study in this general time period, which I discuss in depth in the Conclusion. However, a central reason for ending my study right before the Civil War is because with this project I aim to explore why sporting culture developed, and why it garnered such marked criticism in the antebellum period, particularly as it relates to questions of seduction, prostitution, and modernization.
[5] As Brian P. Luskey explains in *On the Make: Clerks and Quest for Capital in Nineteenth-Century America*, population growth caused New York's population to swell from 200,000 in 1830 to over half a million in 1850 (5). See: Luskey, Brian P. *On the Make: Clerks and the Quest for Capital in Nineteenth-Century America*. NYU Press, 2010.
[6] See: Dennis, Donna. *Licentious Gotham: Erotic Publishing and Its Prosecution in Nineteenth-Century New York*. Harvard University Press, 2009. Page 43. See also: Saxton, Alexander. *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-century America*. Verso, 2003.

relations. Industrial capitalism and the market revolution replaced older modes of apprenticeship and workshop community with wage labor and factory work. Women also entered the workforce in new ways and in greater numbers, creating apprehension about prostitution and women's innocence, as I will discuss in Chapter Two. These changes were coupled with major advances in technology, transportation, and print technology. National-scale political changes, imperial wars, and expansionism also contributed to this period of flux. The U.S.-Mexico War (1846-1848) expanded national borders and deepened already divisive tensions over the status of slavery in the nation. While political and social elites debated imperial war with Spain for slave interests in Cuba,[7] abolition activism throughout the U.S. saw both increasing support and violent backlash. It was at this moment of political, social and cultural flux that sporting culture emerged as an outlet for young, unattached white men to attempt to gain a sense of power and belonging amid the exceptional changes in everyday life.

I argue that sporting culture, although relatively unexamined in scholarship, had a far-reaching effect on antebellum law, literature and culture. Sporting men—also referred to as sports—were portrayed by authors, reformers, and even themselves as unregulated youths who had been morally corrupted by capitalism, left untethered by new economic and social arrangements. It is important to examine the impact of sporting culture during this period as it widens our understanding of the social and cultural responses to modernization: antebellum reactions to sporting culture show critical concern that modernization might not simply signal the increase in unequal economic and social relations but could warp the moral sense and social standing of an entire group of young white men. As predominantly white-collar workers, and potential members of the middle

[7] A point I expand on further in Chapter Three.

class,[8] sports' seductive lifestyle and defiance of middle-class norms were perceived to threaten the security of the ascendant middle and upper classes. Sports also stoked the indignation of working-class critics and authors who similarly understood sporting men as socially corrupt and capable of spreading their influence to other 'good' men. Ultimately, I argue that critical concern over sporting culture demonstrates that sporting men were seen as representative of the kind of man that the confluence of market capitalism, liberalism, and republican ideology might create: not a self-regulating and disciplined male, but one who rejects civic, economic and social responsibilities—fracturing white masculine unity, and in the process, disabling young white women from 'proper' patriarchal circulation.

While scholars have discussed the seducer as a metaphor for capitalism, with the libertine as a stand-in for rapacious capitalist exploitation,[9] I argue that the libertine seducer of city-mysteries fiction actually presents an anxiety over sporting men—their

[8] The rise of clerking and other white-collar work was directly related to industrialization, which, as Nikil Saval explains in *Cubed: A Secret History of the Workplace* (2014), "produced more administrative work" like copying and book keeping (13). Many considered clerking more 'lowly' work, as Luskey explains in *On The* Make "many commentators associated clerking with dependent and even servile assistantship" (57). However, what was unique about this labor position was that most clerks expected to move up in their industries, treating clerkships as apprentice-like positions where they would eventually be granted access into middle and upper class society. As Saval explains, "unlike their brothers in the factory, who had begun to see organizing on the shop floors as a way to counter the foul moods and arbitrary whims of their bosses, clerks saw themselves as potential bosses" (23). However, upward mobility was quite difficult, as Luskey explains, "many clerks found that economic and cultural capital slipped through their fingers, despite their efforts to cultivate at least the appearance of good character and refined sensibilities" (3).

[9] The libertine in sentimental U.S. fiction has been discussed extensively, particularly in the work of Elizabeth Barnes, Cathy Davidson, and Leslie Fiedler. The seducer in sensational literature has received less attention. However, authors who have discussed this figure often focus on the seducer as an ur-metaphor for the greed and corruption of capitalism—which I argue does not totally capture the dynamics of this figure. Michael Denning explains in *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-class Culture in America* (1987) that the seduction plot had "class conflict at its heart" (95) and, focusing on George Lippard, explains that seducer figures are bourgeois men, "'merchant princes'" (97). Jennifer Rae Greeson more recently argues in "The 'Mysteries and Miseries' of North Carolina: New York City, Urban Gothic Fiction, and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl" (2001) that sensational urban-gothic fiction showed intense preoccupation with the fallen woman, with the seducer standing in for "the superhuman forces of corrupt urban capitalism," an "exposé of the dimly perceived, yet hugely powerful, forces of modernization besetting [] individual autonomy" (281). While stated in brief here, I address the breadth of scholarship on seduction in U.S. literature in depth in Chapter Two.

real cultural counterparts. The seducer of city-mysteries fiction can be seen as presenting a vastly different image of what happens to men under capitalism. Rather than powerful and well-connected exploiters, the sporting seducer was seen by many as degenerate, downwardly mobile, and immoral—seducing women sexually and men socially to vent their boredom and frustration and assert a vision of themselves as manly and empowered. Thus, the seducer does not necessarily represent fears of the overtly powerfully and all-controlling capitalist.[10] Instead, these works stage an imaginative exploration of the deleterious effects that urbanization had on young, potentially productive men.

Outside the print sphere, critical concern over sporting culture inspired the development of reform societies, seduction law, and even the formation of a secret society. Historians have examined how prostitution reform societies, often organized and run by middle-class white women, emerged in the early decades of the nineteenth century with the goal of socially and morally 'saving' sex workers, who were seen as the victims of seduction.[11] However, I show that reformers, attributing the seduction of women to sporting men, actually sought to reform *men* in their efforts to criminalize seduction and curb prostitution. Furthermore, what was seen as the pernicious and seductive lure of the sporting lifestyle helped inspire George Lippard, prolific bestselling author and labor organizer, to form a secret society, the Brotherhood of the Union, as a way to offer a new vision of male comportment, which he believed could change the nation.

---

[10] This is not to say that the seducer was always, exclusively, shown as a sporting man. However, as I will show in detail in Chapter Two, this is a characterization that was quite popular in antebellum city-mysteries fiction, and has been overlooked in scholarship thus far.

[11] See: Hobson, Barbara Meil. *Uneasy virtue: The politics of prostitution and the American reform tradition*. University of Chicago Press, 1990; Hessinger, Rodney. *Seduced, Abandoned, and Reborn: Visions of Youth in Middle-Class America, 1780-1850*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013; Kann, Mark E. *Taming Passion for the Public Good: Policing Sex in the Early Republic*. NYU Press, 2013; Severson, Nicolette. ""Devils Would Blush to Look": Brothel Visits of the New York Female Moral Reform Society, 1835 and 1836." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 23.2 (2014): 226-246.

I claim that it is in large part due to the fact that many sporting men were also members of the clerk class of white-collar workers, potential members of the middle class, which caused such critical and urgent rebuke from critics. The growth of white-collar work was a phenomenon of the early nineteenth century.[12] Socially and economically clerks were poised on the threshold of middle-class 'respectability,' upwardly mobile but at the same time enmeshed in low-paying, arduous and "mindless" clerical work.[13] Nikil Saval argues that "the struggle for economic and social status in a competitive marketplace was the primary way in which ordinary young men sought social standing."[14] However, many young men in urban centers found attaining social mobility and economic success quite difficult. As James W. Cook so aptly describes, sports were

> at once within the white-collar professions and gleefully defiant of their moral strictures. Pious and licentious, sunshine and shadow, innocent and vulgar, high and low–antebellum sporting culture took root between and across the binary distinctions represented by middle-class conduct manuals as natural and fixed[15]

As I argue, for some sporting men, economic insecurity and a precarious class position, combined with yearning for wealth and class status, underlie the cocky masculine bravado put forward in the sporting male ethos. While sports asserted a vision of themselves as especially adept at navigating the dizzying changes of the modern world, my readings reveal instead that some men felt a deeply insecure ambivalence and anxiety about their unstable social and economic position within a changing society.

---

[12] I discuss the history of white-collar work and the clerk class in general in-depth in Chapter One.
[13] As Saval explains in *Cubed*, clerks would work long hours in poorly lit rooms and, while they possessed little actual power, "there was little doubt that clerks saw themselves, and were seen by their bosses, as apprentice managers—businessmen in training" (26). The work of the clerk could be tedious and frustrating—as Saval relates from one clerk's diary, "'Words! Words! Clerks never think.'"
[14] Ibid., 26.
[15] James W. Cook. "Dancing Across the Colorline': A Story of Markets and Mixtures from New York's Five Points."

It is important to note that I am not claiming that all clerks were sporting men, or that all clerks were dissatisfied and frustrated in their lives. On the contrary, many clerks were satisfied in their work and found success. However, I concentrate on men who did turn to sporting culture. While scholars who have examined sporting culture have focused on sporting men as defiant, confident and full of swagger, in my research I found another element of the sporting ethos that has gone unrecognized—a distinct expression of ennui, anxiety, and fear over potential social and economic downward mobility. Sporting men came from a variety of classes and backgrounds, but it was consistently a majority white male subculture. As Amy Srebnick explains, "sporting culture, though principally the domain of young clerks, was marked by its fluidity, by the ways in which it cut across class lines and incorporated a wide range of urban men who frequented the city's centers of entertainment and public culture."[16] While historians agree that sporting culture was

[16] Srebnick, Amy Gilman. *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers: Sex and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York*. Studies in the History of Sexu, 1997, page 54. Srebnick explains that sporting culture had "several dimensions," the "rowdy and often violent behavior of working-class youths and neighborhood b'hoys," "the stylish culture" of "young rakes, clerks, and young men on the make," and "sleazy fringe culture" (53). In *The Flash Press*, Gilfoyle, Cohen and Horowitz similarly describe the composition of sporting culture as young men from "artisan and working-class famil[y]" backgrounds (6), as well as white-collar workers and those from saloon culture, athletic life, and generally "fast young men" (20). However, it is important to note that historians agree that sporting culture was principally the domain of clerks. As Cook explains in his article, "'Dancing Across the Colorline': A Story of Markets and Mixtures from New York's Five Points," sports were "at once within the white-collar professions and gleefully defiant of their moral strictures. Pious and licentious, sunshine and shadow, innocent and vulgar, high and low–antebellum sporting culture took root between and across the binary distinctions represented by middle-class conduct manuals as natural and fixed. In this way, sporting men put themselves in close proximity to the 'rougher' social worlds of the emerging urban proletariat, and even identified with some of its causes. But the milieux were never simply equivalent." See also: Andrews, Steve. "Gothic Baseball: The Death ofMary Rogers and the 'Birth' of Baseball History." *Baseball and Social Class: Essays on the Democratic Game That Isn't* (2012); Anthony, David. *Paper Money Men: Commerce, Manhood, and the Sensational Public Sphere in Antebellum America*. The Ohio State University Press, 2009; Gilfoyle, Timothy J. *City of Eros: New York City, prostitution, and the commercialization of sex, 1790-1920*. WW Norton & Company, 1994; Cohen, Patricia Cline. "Unregulated youth: masculinity and murder in the 1830s city." *Radical history review* 1992.52 (1992): 33-52 and, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The life and death of a prostitute in nineteenth-century New York*. Vintage, 1999; Horowitz, Helen Lefkowitz. *Rereading sex: Battles over sexual knowledge and suppression in nineteenth-century America*. Vol. 251. New York: Knopf, 2002. The notable exception to the general consensus that sporting culture was primarily the domain of white-collar clerks is Richard Stott in *Jolly Fellows*. Stott aligns sporting culture more with the working class Bowery B'hoy

primarily the terrain of white-collar workers, this was a subculture marked by its fluidity; some men would have been from the artisan and working classes, while others were wealthy. I do not bring to light the anxieties and fears of some sporting men in order to evaluate whether or not these anxieties and fears were well founded or "true." I do not claim here that all sporting men were "downtrodden" or necessarily reacting to inner turmoil when participating in sporting culture. Rather, I contend that by understanding that some men engaged in sporting culture felt this way about their prospects helps us to better understand how and why sporting masculinity might have drawn some men in. In my research I uncovered places where a distinct thread of frustration, aggravation and fear underlay sporting discourse. Indeed, historians of white-collar work have also documented the presence of these feelings and attitudes among clerks.[17] By investigating this aspect of sporting masculinity, I capture how sporting men's racist and misogynistic attitudes, which have often been left unexamined in scholarship,[18] were deployed to deflect or obscure their own anxieties and fears.[19] I contend that for some men sporting culture, with its excessive drinking, sexual indulgence, fun and frolic, acted as an outlet for men who felt deeply insecure and ambivalent about their social positions and circumstances.

---

culture and blood sports, particularly focusing on famous pugilists who participated in sporting culture. I will discuss his work and arguments more in the Conclusion.

[17] For more on how the clerk classes expressed distinct anxieties, boredom and fears of downward mobility see: Brain P. Luskey *On the Make*, in particular pages 55-64. See also: Augst, Thomas. *The Clerk's Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-century America*. University of Chicago Press, 2003. In particular "Chapter Five: The Melancholy of White-Collar Work."

[18] I detail the work done on racism in sporting culture in more depth beginning on page 21 of this Introduction.

[19] I am indebted to Dana D. Nelson's work in *National Manhood* in understanding racist and misogynistic discourse as projections of anxiety. I discuss this work further beginning on page 15 of this Introduction. See: Nelson, Dana D. *National manhood: Capitalist citizenship and the imagined fraternity of white men*. Duke University Press, 1998.

While sporting men put forward an image of themselves as uniquely adept at embracing the city's dizzying changes, I found that some sporting men expressed anger, apathy and anxiety about their lives, portraying themselves as adersely affected by the changes surrounding modernization. Historians of sporting culture have focused on the way in which sporting men defied middle-class values and espoused a unique "libertine republicanism" that evoked republican tenets of liberty and freedom as justification for unfettered sexual and social indulgence. However, I contend that historians have thus far taken sporting rhetoric too much at face value. While sports openly engaged in bawdy defiance of moral strictures and flouted imperatives of self-regulation in their magazines and actions, I demonstrate that, for some men, this bravado was actually a guise for ambivalence and anxiety about their unstable economic and social position in society. Sporting male masculinity was thus built on shaky ground. Sports' overstated masculine rhetoric—with its deeply racist and misogynistic discourse—was used by some men to "manage" feelings of inadequacy and frustration that they might be modernizing society's "losers."[20] Critical commentators on sporting culture worried that the virulent indulgence advocated by sporting culture was seen by some men as an alluring vent for frustration, boredom, or anxiety. Historians of sporting culture have detailed the consternation that sporting culture drew from members of the political elite, reformers, civil servants, newspaper editors and cultural critics.[21] I argue that this is because sports

[20] Dana D. Nelson makes a similar claim about how "national manhood" functioned in the U.S., where the anxiety of the professional male is often projected onto figures of Otherness. David Anthony also discusses this in *Paper Money Men*, where he argues that "sensational figures of financial anxiety such as the Jew and the speculator…embody the putative 'theft' of masculine wholeness and enjoyment, even as they represent the disavowed desires of the emerging professional male." (5)

[21] See: Patricia Cline Cohen, Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz and Timothy Gilfoyle *The Flash Press*. Rodney Hessinger, *Seduced, Abandoned and Reborn: Visions of Youth in Middle-Class America, 1780-1850.* Mark E. Kann, *Taming Passion for the Public Good: Policing Sex in the Early Republic*. In his article "'Dancing Across the Color Line': A Story of Markets and Mixtures from New York's Five Points," Cook explains

were seen as seductive to both men and women, they were portrayed as inducing men into their profligate ways and 'ruining' women—effectively turning 'good' individuals into disreputable and damaged members of society. The sport's brash disavowal of propriety and the enticing nature of his attitudes were seen as a pernicious force capable of corrupting the social body, a masculine expression that needed to be controlled and redirected for the good of society at large.

## Sensationalism, Gender, and Race: Methods for Understanding Sporting Culture

To properly consider sporting culture and its critical responses, I draw on scholarship in American and Gender Studies. Below, I detail the three major fields of study that my project intersects with: the study of nineteenth century sensational literature, as well as race and masculinity in the nineteenth century. Because the focus of my dissertation is on sporting culture, in the following discussion I give a historiographical overview of the given field, and then proceed to outline how I see my project and the consideration of sporting culture contributing to each of these fields.

### Sensational Literature and Sporting Culture

#### Scholarship on Sensationalism and Sporting Literature in U.S. Scholarship

The overall study of sensational literature has been somewhat divided. An initial interest in classifying sensational literature as a tripartite system of taste—with

---

that African American elites and writers for the *Freedmen's Journal* also openly rebuked sporting male behavior, seeking to counter racist and unfounded claims that the free black population was responsible for urban vice. There was also critique and rebuke of sporting culture from the working classes. In Joshua R. Greenberg's *Advocating the Man: Masculinity, Organized Labor, and the Household in New York, 1800-1840* (2008) he discusses how craftsmen and artisans would ridicule sporting male types in their localized stage performances and in discourse about how to be a 'proper' man.

sensationalism being decidedly "low"—began with Richard Brodhead in *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America*. Examining sensational literature within this dichotomy of high/low was carried on by David S. Reynolds, who argued that sensational texts, including seduction narratives, urban gothic fiction, and reform tracts, were refined and translated into "highbrow" literature by the now-canonical authors of the American Renaissance.[22] The work of Michael Denning in *Mechanic Accents* (1987) shifted the conversation surrounding popular literature by challenging assumptions of sensational and popular literature as an "opiate of the masses" and suggesting that popular literature was often laced with "mechanic accents"—thereby offering critiques of capitalism and labor exploitation. Scholars since then have maintained that sensational literature staged working-class protest but have complicated Marxist readings to give more nuanced understandings of the conflicting and often contradictory political concerns put forward in these texts. Importantly, and most recently, scholars like Shelley Streeby,[23] Jesse Alemán,[24] and Jamie Javier Rodríguez[25] have shown that an examination of sensational literature must include an exploration of its constructions of race, gender, and nation-building projects.

Technological advances and rapidly shifting cultural and social conditions in urban centers allowed sporting literature to flourish. The development of stereotyping, rapid printing and streamlined paper making all contributed to the emergence of mass circulated daily newspapers, also known as "the penny press." Furthermore, improvement

[22] See: David S. Reynolds. *Beneath the American Renaissance: The subversive imagination in the age of Emerson and Melville*. Oxford University Press, 1988.
[23] See: Shelley S. Streeby. *American sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture*. Vol. 9. Univ of California Press, 2002.
[24] See: Alemán, Jesse, and Shelley Streeby, editors. *Empire and The Literature of Sensation: An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Popular Fiction*. Rutgers University Press, 2007.
[25] See: Rodríguez, Jaime Javier. *The Literatures of the US-Mexican War: Narrative, Time, and Identity*. University of Texas Press, 2010.

in transportation technology allowed for these publications to reach a wider audience than ever before. The advent of the mass daily penny papers paved the way for sporting magazines. The penny press "made a sharp break with its staid commercial competitors…enlivening the conventional business and political news with urban stories of sexual titillation, erotic scandal, and sexual violence culled from legal cases."[26] Sporting magazines "covered theater life, sports, balls and politics while detailing brothel life and activities of well-known prostitutes about town."[27] These publications were highly visible; they could be acquired in saloons, steamboats, on the streets, outside hotels and in public promenades.[28] Sporting magazines were part of a larger subset of erotic publishing flourishing in New York, which included pornographic memoirs, obscene books with graphic lithographs, brothel guides,[29] and other erotic or sexually graphic print materials.[30] Sporting magazines had a lasting effect on U.S. law and print culture. The myriad obscenity trials the editors of the flash press underwent was responsible for the development of modern obscenity law,[31] and, as I show in Chapter Two, sporting culture can be seen as precipitating the development of seduction law.

Sporting culture had further material effects on antebellum society. When the dead body of a beautiful and well-known cigar salesgirl, Mary Rogers, was found in the Hudson River in 1841, the city's growing population of sporting men were widely

[26] Donna Dennis, *Licentious Gotham,* 47. As Dennis explains, New York's previous dailies "mainly represented the interests of an elite group of merchants and professionals who had dominated both commerce and politics in the early decades of the nineteenth century" (47). At around ten dollars for a subscription, the only way to readily read the papers, it would have been difficult for many readers to afford to read these papers.
[27] Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz, *The Flash Press*, 2.
[28] Ibid.,1.
[29] I include brothel guides in my discussion of sporting literature in Chapter One.
[30] See: Gassan, Richard H. "Fear, Commercialism, Reform, and Antebellum Tourism to New York City." *Journal of Urban History* 41.6 (2015): 1077-1090. Gassan discusses guides and pamphlets that offered information on New York's seamy underworld to eager 'tourists,' which proliferated in the 1840s.
[31] For more on this history see Donna Dennis *Licentious Gotham*, in particular the chapter "Flash Weeklies."

condemned and blamed for her death in the newspaper media.[32] The cigar shop where Rogers worked was a known haunt of sporting men,[33] and the media outpouring surrounding her death precipitated "the Police Act, which modernized New York City's policing system" and "Abortion Law, which criminalized [the] increasingly widespread practice."[34] Edgar Allen Poe and Charles Dickens both depicted sporting culture in their writing during this period. Poe did so in *The Mystery* of *Marie Rogêt*, his sequel to *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, which was inspired by Rogers' death and its surrounding media frenzy. Dickens wrote about New York's Five Points district and, incidentally, the sporting culture that flourished there, in his travelogue about his time travelling in the U.S., *American Notes*.[35] Indeed, one sporting paper took issue with Dickens' disparaging view of sporting haunts, stating that Dickens "'fell far short of the people's expectations…He compares the Five Points to the Seven Dials. This we don't like–we can't bear to hear our favorite retreat abused.'"[36] Sporting men thus constructed "their own youth culture, one greatly at variance with moralistic employers' and parents' expectations,"[37] with the rise of sporting literature reflecting a "deep cultural conflict over the meaning of manhood, especially young manhood, in a rapidly expanding capitalist economy."[38]

City-Mysteries, the Seducer and Sporting Culture

[32] Amy Gilamn Srebnick, *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers: Sex and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York*. See also, Steve Andrews "Gothic Baseball: The Death of Mary Rogers and the 'Birth' of Baseball History."
[33] Srebnick, *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers*, 33-58.
[34] Ibid., 85.
[35] Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842). See in particular "Chapter VI: New York" pages 67-81.
[36] From *The Weekly Rake*, as quoted in James W. Cook's article, "Dancing across the Color Line."
[37] Patricia Cline Cohen, "Unregulated Youth: Masculinity and Murder in the 1830s City," 46.
[38] *Licentious Gotham*, 54.

This project is based largely on original archival research.[39] Because my project examines responses to sporting culture across a wide field of cultural and social phenomenon, I have drawn on a breadth of literary and cultural materials. This project began when I was reading antebellum sensational city-mysteries novels, thrilling and scintillating tales styled as true exposés of the seedy underworld of the urban metropolis. Despite reading a large array of texts from various authors, there was a central character I saw emerging again and again: the libertine seducer. Plots involving libertine seducers riddled sensational novels from the period, and I quickly began to see that these seducers were often described and characterized in a similar manner—young, white, wearing slick clothing, and often surrounded by friends while out on the town. Why was this representation so popular? This question led me to a central claim of this dissertation, that the popularity of the seducer was linked to the prominence of the sporting man in northeastern cities. This dissertation explores sporting culture, both its historical constructions and fictional representations. Examining sensational novels, sporting male magazines, reform tracts, newspaper writing, a murder trial, seduction laws, and the development of a secret society, I track the incredibly diverse and pervasive influence that sporting culture, and sporting masculinity, had on the antebellum cultural landscape.

My project contributes to the scholarship on sensationalism by identifying that the myriad depictions of the libertine seducer in sensational literature were directly modeled on, and inspired by, sporting men—the 'real-life' libertine seducer's counterpart. A central focus of this paper is sensational literature, a popular nineteenth-century literary style that "emphasizes thrills, shock, and horror," and often "swerves away from

[39] My work is based on research completed during a research fellowship at The Library Company of Philadelphia, a research grant from the UC Humanities Research Institute and in participation with The American Antiquarian Society.

sentimental didacticism to linger on bodies and explore intense emotions rather than regulating, refining, or transcending them."[40] In particular, I focus on city-mysteries and urban-gothic fiction, which centered on the 'secret' underworlds of U.S. cities. City-mysteries fiction commented heavily on sporting culture; indeed, the sport's ubiquitous presence in cities, and his association with all manner of vice made sporting culture a fitting subject for sensational authors. However, I show that the discussion of sporting culture in sensational urban fiction was more than coincidental. The nature of sensationalism, with its shocks, violence, and refusal to give emotive 'closure' and resolution to readers, was an ideal platform with which to launch a critique of sporting culture, aiming to rouse the indignation and ire of readers. As keen observers of urban life and its unique social problems, authors of sensational texts focused on the sporting man as a seductive figure (to both men and women), portraying him as a nefarious byproduct of urbanization, a ubiquitous cultural force capable of corrupting families, society, and even the nation.

## Sporting Masculinity and Gender: Towards Broadening Our Considerations

### Scholarship on White Masculinity in U.S. Scholarship

Scholarly work on masculinity has taken up the tools of feminist theory and gender studies and applied them to the construction and formation of masculinity. Early histories of white masculinity, like that of Michael Kimmel[41] and David Leverenz,[42] established that "manhood" must be critically examined as fundamentally contingent on historical, cultural and social conditions. However, this work has left out critical

[40] Alemán and Streeby, *Empire and the Literature of Sensation*, xvii.
[41] Kimmel, Michael. *Manhood in America*. New York: Free Press, 1995.
[42] Leverenz, David. *Manhood and the American renaissance*. Cornell University Press, 1989.

discussions of how femininity, race, and sexuality fundamentally inform and shape the construction of masculinity. This early work tended to treat masculinity in isolation from these "outside" factors. Scholars have since then shown how the consideration of femininity, race, and sexuality is never actually "outside" the construction of masculinity. In her seminal work *Between Men*, Eve Sedgwick explores how women function within male "homosocial" relations, arguing that women are often cast as the mediating middle ground on which men play out their emotional, social and economic desires and competitions. As Gail Bederman explains, "to study the history of manhood…is to unmask this process of gender construction and study the historical ways different ideologies about manhood develop, change, are combined, amended, contested—and gain the status of 'truth.'"[43] Thus historians of masculinity deconstruct the manner in which manhood was determined and shaped by competing and often conflicting social, cultural and economic forces.

The study of masculinity in the nineteenth century has examined how white masculinity affects ideal of citizenship, nation and selfhood. In *National Manhood*, Dana D. Nelson argues that in the post revolution United States a national need to cultivate sameness led to the consolidation of "national manhood," a construction of white male identity that "trains men, as part of their civic, fraternal grant, to internalize national imperatives for 'unity' and 'sameness,' recodifying national politics as individual psychology and/or responsibility."[44] Nelson thus puts forward a reading of the cultural and political power of masculinity. Nelson shows that this masculine ideal is defined by self-regulation, hard work, and discipline—which she understands as affecting men of the

[43] Bederman, Gail. *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. University of Chicago Press, 2008. Page 7.
[44] Nelson, 15.

working and middling classes. In *Paper Money Men*, David Anthony argues that these manly imperatives to be competitive and economically successful, coupled with the deeply unstable economy, created "widespread economic insecurity and failure," produced a "failure-anxious" and "fiscally imperiled professional manhood" in the nineteenth century.[45] Indeed, as Bryce Traister, Scott Derrick[46] and David Pugh[47] have argued, anxiety can be understood as a defining feature of many expressions of masculinity. Traister argues that "anxiety [is] a defining aspect of manhood, men who are insecure and unsure, whose male identity is always under threat and whose tenets of male behavior produce endless anxiety and concern."[48] Indeed anxiety was a defining feature of sporting masculinity, with men worrying over their economic and social place in the world. Conversely, critics of sporting culture also expressed a distinct anxiety over the "proper" status and expression of male comportment.

Scholars of nineteenth-century masculinity have also examined the unique masculine expressions of men of the working classes. Formative work, like that of Sean Wilentz, explored how ideologies of republicanism and labor concerns inflected working class men's ideas of themselves as men.[49] Building on this, Alexander Saxton, David Roediger and Eric Lott have shown how race and class underwrote the formation of a

---

[45] Anthony, 4. Anthony identifies 'professional manhood' to include: "clerks, merchants, financiers, confidence men, lawyers, bachelors, libertines, doctors, politicians, philosophers, investors, speculators, dandies" and "other figures of male professionalism" (6).

[46] Derrick, Scott S. *Monumental Anxieties: Homoerotic Desire and Feminine Influence in 19th-century US Literature*. Rutgers University Press, 1997.

[47] Pugh, David. *Songs of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America*. Westport: Greenwood, 1983.

[48] Traister, Bryce. "Academic Viagra: the Rise of American Masculinity Studies," *American Quarterly*, vol. 52 no. 2, 2000.Traister goes on to argue that men, as "gendered selves" "remain subject to the incoherent, incomplete, and stunted embodiments of masculinity that they must perform as gendered subjects." Although he importantly qualifies that although "[men] may all be equally anxious," "they are not historical equals" (297).

[49] Wilentz, Sean. *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850*. New York: Oxford University (1984). Wilentz also discusses the more rowdy working class cultures of firemen's companies and the Bowery B'hoys.

specifically white working class masculinity.[50] Other historians have importantly investigated the 'rougher' social and cultural worlds of working-class men. Elliott J. Gorn argues that the extralegal and violent world of prize fighting "inverted bourgeois and evangelical assumptions about such fundamental phenomena as money, gender, and violence."[51] Richard Stott offers a sweeping look at the world of "jolly fellows," men who, fought, drank, gambled and generally defied the "moral revolution[s]" brought on by popular temperance movements, religious revivals, and the more "sober and temperate middle-class lifestyle."[52] Importantly, however, historians have maintained that the worlds of working-class men were not all necessarily rowdy and bombastic. In *Advocating The Man*, Joshua Greenberg discusses how for many working-class men ethics of hard work and responsibility sprung from a deeply felt desire and sense of responsibility towards their family's security and well-being.[53] Masculinity in the nineteenth century was clearly not a stable or hegemonic process. Sporting masculinity presented an entirely different reaction to the social, cultural and economic demands on men in the antebellum United States.

Sporting Culture and Masculinity

In arguing that sporting men were seen as the product of capitalism and urbanization, I am indebted to work on masculinity that investigates the relationship between economics and class to masculine identity. The examination of nineteenth-century U.S. masculinity has made clear that there was an array of potential masculine

[50] I discuss these works further starting on page 21.
[51] Gorn, Elliott J. *The Manly Art: Bare-knuckle Prize Fighting in America*. Cornell University Press, 2012. Page 146.
[52] Stott, *Jolly Fellows*, 3.
[53] More recent work has also begun to examine northern male masculinity outside of cities. See: Opal, Jason M. *Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

expressions that men could ascribe to, which were inflected by men's race, class, religion and other differences. Scholars have continually pointed to the market revolution as creating an essential shift in masculine expression. Dana D. Nelson's work on the consolidation of a "national manhood" in the antebellum period has greatly informed my understanding of this masculine hegemony. Nelson argues that an ethic of industriousness and self-control permeated "artisan and working classes as well as the emergent middle classes" and included an "extreme orientation toward work, maximum productivity and material accumulation."[54] A range of work on 'self-made manhood' has shown how the market revolution and growth of the middle class encouraged this ideal masculine type that demanded that men channel their "passion—their ambition and aggression, even their quest for dominance—into their material interests and into competition in the marketplace" and achieving "economic success."[55] I argue here that, poised between poverty and middle class respectability, men who turned toward sporting culture channeled "ambition and aggression" into indulgent vices and heterosexual celebration rather than economic productivity. While market changes inspired *some* men to work harder and devote themselves to patriotic self-betterment, some sporting men, frustrated with their economic and social possibilities, turned to sporting culture, self-indulgence, and immoral behavior to vent their economic and social anxieties.

---

[54] Nelson, 137.

[55] Kann, *Taming the Passion for the Public Good*, 56. Joshua Greenberg argues that working-class men were privy to the same manly imperatives of self-sacrifice and productivity in *Advocating the Man: Masculinity, Organized Labor, and the Household in New York, 1800-1840*. See also: David Anthony *Paper Money Men: Commerce, Manhood, and the Sensational Sphere in Antebellum America*; Chapter 5 from Rodney Dessinger's *Seduced, Abandoned, and Reborn: Visions of Youth in Middle-Class America, 1780-1850*; Michael S. Kimmel *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*; Richard Stott *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America*. For the effect of middle-class ideals on heterosexuality see: Patricia Cline Cohen "Unregulated Youth: Masculinity and Murder in the 1830s City"; Clare Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender & Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830*; Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz *Rereading Sex: Battles over Sexual Knowledge and Suppression in Nineteenth-Century America*.

I understand masculinity as referring to a set of ideas, beliefs, feelings, and ideologies that are both socially and culturally constructed and practiced.[56] I argue that in scholarship to date, discussion of sporting masculinity has focused on a discussion of gender expression, not how this gender expression is constructed. While scholarship on sporting men has emphasized that their masculine expression "defiantly flouted middle-class standards of respectability, temperance, and discipline, by promoting instead a libertine ethic of sensual pleasure,"[57] I maintain that sporting masculinity, as a specifically misogynistic and racist gender construction, has not been fully considered. Scholars who work on sporting culture have commented extensively on the important but atypical role women were cast in within sporting ideology.[58] Unlike in middle- and working-class rhetoric where women were seen as "moral authorities" or in need of protection, women in sporting culture were cast as "barmaids, cigar girls, or prostitutes."[59] Indeed, sporting magazines obsessively profiled sex workers, brothels, and related gossip about local women. Open adoration of prostitution and particular sex workers was mingled with aggressive mockery and rebuke of other women whom they deemed untouchable, which was almost always related directly to class and racial concerns. While scholars have characterized these attitudes as simply part of sports' general "libertine ethic of sexual pleasure"[60] and "promiscuous heterosexuality,"[61] we must not dismiss or pass off a serious examination of sporting attitudes towards women. To understand sporting culture and sporting masculinity, it is important to take seriously

[56] The critical study of masculinity emerged within feminist scholarship, and is indebted to Judith Butler's groundbreaking work on gender as a construction, socially and culturally performative.
[57] Dennis, *Licentious Gotham*, 44.
[58] The extent to which sporting culture was preoccupied with brothel-going and prostitution has escaped no one's notice.
[59] Dennis, 44.
[60] Ibid., 44.
[61] Cohen, Gilfoyle, and Horowitz. *The Flash Press*, 57.

their misogynistic and racist sentiments as essential to the development, practice, and expression of this masculine subculture. By taking sports' portrayals of, and attitudes toward, women and nonwhites seriously as elemental to the construction of their masculinity, we get at the foundations of the sporting man's masculinity—and the cracks in this façade.

## Sporting Masculinity and Race: Towards Critical Critique

### Scholarship on White Racial Formation in U.S. Scholarship

Scholarship on whiteness in the nineteenth century began as an inquiry into the development and stratification of class, labor and economics in the United States. In *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic*, Saxton argues that "white racism was generated and regenerated as part of the process of class conflict and compromise,"[62] working to solidify stratified class categories in the beginning decades of the nineteenth century. For Saxton, white racism was a 'tool' used to appeal to the working class, functioning to unite men and women across classes in imagined white racial identification. He explains that racism "could be made to work for the perceived interests of lower classes or segments of lower classes as well as for the ruling classes."[63] In *The Wages of Whiteness*, David Roediger continued the interrogation of whiteness along the lines of labor and class formation. Roediger explains that the social and political benefits of whiteness could "could be used to make up for alienating and explorative class relationships,"[64] whereby men, whose "dependency on wage labor and to the necessities of capitalist work

[62] Saxton, 385.
[63] Ibid., 387.
[64] Roediger, David. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. London, Verso, 1991. Page 13.

discipline," fashioned their identity as "'not slaves' and as 'not Blacks'"[65] to cement a sense of community around whiteness. Notably, Roediger examines the racial construction of the Irish in the early U.S. to illustrate how whiteness is a fundamentally constructed racial category, while showing the social, cultural, and political "wages" that ascribing to white supremacy could offer men.[66] In his seminal work, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, Eric Lott explores the immense popularity of blackface minstrel entertainment for white audiences.[67] Lott argues that blackface negotiated "contradictions in the culture of the antebellum American popular classes" and provided "'imaginary' resolutions to intractable social conflicts."[68] Thus early work on white racial formation has established whiteness as an identity defined in relation to economics, class, political power and racial and ethnic 'Others.'

National empire building projects, immigration, and transnational politics impacted white racial formation in the nineteenth century United States. Matthew Frye Jacobson explores how European immigrants in the U.S. came to be incorporated under the banner of 'whiteness' throughout the nineteenth, and into the twentieth, century.[69] For Shelley Streeby, the U.S. Mexico War, and other nineteenth-century nation building imperial projects helped to consolidate a white working-class Protestant identity.[70] Dana D. Nelson argues that white racial formation has worked to deny others full access and

---

[65] Ibid., 13.
[66] Noel Ignatiev takes this as his primary subject in his book *How the Irish Became White* (2008).
[67] Lott, Eric. *Love and Theft: American Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
[68] Lott, 17. There has since been an outpouring of work on blackface and minstrel performance in the U.S. and circum-Atlantic culture. I discuss blackface minstrelsy, and its relation to sporting culture, in detail in Chapter One.
[69] Frye, Jacobson Matthew. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Harvard, Cambridge, Mass (1998).
[70] Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture*. For more on empire and white racial formation in the United States see: Amy S. Greenberg *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (2005) and Amy Kaplan *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (2005).

recognition as a national citizen, suggesting that "'white' manhood's identification with national unity has worked historically to restrict others from achieving full entitlement in the United States. At the same time, it has worked powerfully to naturalize 'white' men as essentially unified subjects."[71] Gregory D. Smithers has discussed how the historical construction of "the right kind of white people"[72] must be understood within the context of the U.S. as a settler colonial state. Smithers offers a transnational examination of the Western construction of white identity, arguing that "white settler colonial identities became entwined in the same transnational racial discourses that defined and redefined 'blackness,' 'redness,' and myriad other racial designations after the eighteenth-century Enlightenment."[73] All of these authors have proven that the study of white racial formation is not complete without a consideration of historically specific economic, cultural, and political conditions.

Race and Sporting Culture

There has been lack of serious consideration given to the racist discourse within sporting culture, and how this racism was foundational to sporting men's own understanding of themselves as men *and* white. Scholars' attitudes towards sporting men's sexist ideology are similar to their attitudes toward sporting male racism—that it was a matter of course. Sporting racism, particularly as seen within sporting magazines, has often been described as a result of men's spats with fellow white men. Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz describe racist characterizations in sporting magazines as "libertine republican attacks on [class] privilege" which were "wrapped in unabashed

[71] Nelson, 27.
[72] Smithers, Gregory D. "The 'Right Kind of White People': Reproducing Whiteness in the United States and Australia, 1780s-1930s" from *Racism in the Modern World* ed. Manfred Berg and Simon Wendt. Page 303.
[73] Ibid., 303.

racism," explaining that "interracial sex" was a "metaphor" used to insult "enemies."[74] However, the sheer volume of racist cartoons, anecdotes, and jokes that appeared in sporting magazines up to the 1850s, as well as the fact that readers who wrote in the magazines also expressed racist fears and anxieties, demonstrates that sporting culture's racism also functioned in other ways. Furthermore, scholars who have discussed sporting culture have yet to consider this group's conscious and self-conscious understanding of themselves as white. I consider how sporting men constructed themselves as not just men, but white men. I show that sporting men often engaged in racist discourse and practices in order to cohere a sense of themselves as superior and empowered, by virtue of being white.

In making this argument, I draw on work that critically examines whiteness. Race profoundly affected the lives of sporting men. Sports, and many other young white men like them, routinely turned to racial entertainments and mockery in an attempt to foment a sense of mastery and community that was centered around masculine whiteness. Historians have established that in the period after the Revolution "racial consciousness, and specifically whiteness, became more generally important as an identity category."[75] Scholars have discussed the ways in which whiteness became an incredibly valuable social, economic and political tool that effectively cohered regional, ethnic, religious and political differences under the banner of whiteness.[76] White manhood also functioned to cohere a sense of national identity, working "symbolically and legally to bring men

[74] Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz, 68. Donna Dennis agrees with this assessment in her discussion of the flash press in *Licentious Gotham*. While Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz fail to adequately address racism in sporting male discourse, they do recognize and address the anti-Semitism of the flash press more readily in *The Flash Press*.
[75] Nelson, 6.
[76] See: Eric Lott *Love and Theft*, David Roedgier *The Wages of Whiteness*, and Alexander Saxton *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic*.

together in an abstract but increasingly functional community that diverted their attention from differences between them—differences which had come alarmingly into focus in the post-Revolutionary era."[77] The sporting men of my study clung to and underscored their whiteness in their magazines, sexual attitudes, and rhetoric. The attitudes of the men involved in this racist discourse can be read, in part, as emerging "from the fundamental insecurity of their positions in modern society."[78] Sporting men, by virtue of their participation in the vice industry, came into contact with places where mixed race mingling and sex occurred. While there are some examples of this being openly advocated in the magazines, most articles and reports attempted to deride men and women whom they suspected of mixed race contact—very explicitly policing the boundaries of whiteness. Sports also took in minstrel shows and racial entertainments. These performances are portrayed as escapist and even arousing, acting to affirm a sense of the viewer's whiteness and manliness, as I discuss in Chapter One. It is important to note that I do not attempt to describe the function that racism had for some sporting men in order to say that they were "forced" to turn to racism or that this was a natural outgrowth of insecurity. In understanding how racist discourse was utilized and espoused by some men, I aim to understand how the pernicious and destructive discourses of racism can root themselves to expressions of gender and function as a deeply problematic aspect of white identity. As Nelson argues, "if national manhood 'hailed' white men into an impossible discipline of self-division, the altero-referentiality of that standpoint provided a safety valve: they could reach for a sense of self-sameness through fraternal

[77] Nelson, 6.
[78] Bjelopera, Jerome P. *City of clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920*. Vol. 265. University of Illinois Press, 2005. Page 141.

and managerial projections of self-division/fragmentation onto democracy's Others."[79] Racial attitudes expressed by some sporting men worked in a similar manner.

Critics who sought to curb sporting male behaviors were in large part motivated by a desire to protect white men and women. Reformers who sought to "save" the wayward women who were victims of the seducers' lust focused their attention and efforts on white women, specifically women whom they associated with middling and more 'respectable' backgrounds. Indeed, many critics concerned about the growth of sporting culture worried because sports, many of whom were seen as ascendant members of the middle class, were seen as potentially socially valuable. Clerks occupied a social position that allowed them to come into close contact with many spheres of antebellum society. The cultural conversation around seduction shows that sports were often seen as dangerously capable of moving in more refined spaces, easily affecting middle- and upper-class manners and dress, which they used to seduce innocent women, destroy white patriarchal authority, while inducing potentially responsible, 'proper' men into their ranks. As those critical of sporting culture battled over the question of how young men should behave, they ultimately sought to define, protect, and direct, an ideal masculine whiteness.

## Dissertation Overview and Chapter Summaries

As a general overview, my dissertation is broken into three chapters, which I see as representing different viewpoints on sporting masculinity and its effect on society. Chapter One focuses on sporting culture as it was experienced by the men who participated in it. While individual men's actions and thoughts cannot be entirely known,

[79] Nelson, 18.

sporting magazines were a self-styled mouthpiece for sporting culture—representing sports' interests and activities, and reporting on local gossip and scandals from across the nation. Readers also frequently wrote in to these magazines, giving voice to the particular concerns, anxieties, and attitudes of those engaged with sporting culture from various regions and localities. Chapter Two focuses on how sporting culture was perceived by some of its most determined critics—exploring how sporting culture was represented in popular culture. Chapter Three moves beyond sporting culture, exploring one prominent "answer" to the problem presented by sporting masculinity. I argue that George Lippard, best-selling author and labor activist, created his own secret society, the Brotherhood of the Union, in part as a response to sporting culture.

Chapter One examines sporting culture through the lens of sporting magazines and brothel guides. Sporting magazines and brothel guides put forward an image of sports as savvy denizens of the city, traipsing through the city, enjoying all the metropolis has to offer—particularly the beautiful and distinguished sex workers that they dedicatedly profiled in their magazines. However, I argue that, for some men, this performance of bawdy braggadocio can be read as a defensive guise meant to obscure feelings of anxiety and ambivalence about their station in society. In a series of close readings, I show that some writers and readers expressed frustration with their economic and social positions—bored by monotonous work, and discontented with their lack of financial success, some sporting men advocated a showy embrace of indulgence as a means to ward off feelings that they might be capitalism's losers. I demonstrate how these men relied on sex workers, both revered and reviled, as well as racial caricature and performance, to try and shore up this sense of manly bravado. In examining writers' and readers' attitudes

towards sex workers and racial 'others,' I show that the wealth, independence, and freedoms exhibited by these actors could threaten sports' desire for manly supremacy.

In Chapter Two, I connect sporting culture to the pervasive representation and fear of the libertine seducer by looking at a variety of sensational novels, reform society documents, newspapers, and speeches before state assemblies. I explore how the seducer's arts were not limited to 'destroying' young women—the libertine was also shown as socially seducing young men into sporting ways, spreading immorality. I argue that for critics of sporting culture, these men—self-indulgent and morally corrupt—were seen as the contemptible products of the period's intense social and economic changes. The work of prostitution reform societies is important to my discussion of seduction. Reformers imagined prostitution as a product of seduction, and while male and female reformers professed that they sought to re-socialize and 'save' wayward prostitutes. I show that reformers ultimately sought to reform and restrain improper male behavior. In this chapter I argue that this reform process was also deeply classed and racially exclusive, for critics sought to control and direct sporting masculinity as a way to save the white middle-class men and women that they thought it was destroying.

In Chapter Three, I turn to the work of George Lippard, prolific author, journalist, and labor organizer. In this chapter I read Lippard's novel, *The Killers*, a fictionalized account of Philadelphia's racial charged California Street riot of 1849 alongside *The Legends of the Revolution*, a series of historical romances about the Revolutionary War. In *The Killers*, Lippard puts forward an image of men whom he reviles, violent and destructive sporting men who are portrayed as the products of capitalist greed and self-interest. *The Legends*, conversely, offers a vision of ideal manhood defined by honorable

virtuosity and self-sacrifice—a vision that he carries over into the development of his secret society, the Brotherhood of the Union. I demonstrate that while Lippard advocated for radical racial and gender equality in his writings and the Brotherhood, he ultimately distanced himself from potentially polarizing labor and abolitionist positions while portraying women as vulnerable victims in need of male protection. Instead of truly "universal" brotherhood, Lippard focused his energy and attention on uniting white men, suggesting that only these men were capable of enacting political, social change. Lippard asserted his own vision of ideal manhood that he thought could shape and change the world.

The examination of Lippard's work underscores the overarching claim of this dissertation—that prescription to a "proper" expression of manhood was seen as essential to the proper maintenance of the nation in the face of modernization. At a critical historical moment, with the Revolutionary War in the recent past, and amid the confluence of incredible political, economic and social change, writers, readers, white-collar workers, and reformers emphasized that a 'proper' masculinity was an essential link to an ideal future. The works gathered here suggests that actors in the antebellum period believed that the expression of masculinity could change their daily lives, society, and even the world.

# Chapter One – Sporting Male Magazines: Urban Ennui, Class Fantasy, and Sporting Masculinity

"When we happen to see an elegant female promenading Broadway or any other way, we shall, if she pleases our fancy, endeavor to describe her figure and gay dress with all the power of love itself…. not satisfied with this, we intend visiting all the first rate seraglios, and with the pen of truth speak of things as we find them… In fact, all shall find that we of the Whip publish things as we find them, not garbled, on account of the terrors of the law. Who and what I am you shall not know until I am ready to tell you, when you will find me a h-ll of a fellow; and what's the use of being a fellow unless you are a h-ll of a one? In a word, I hold in my hand the WHIP; the world is my plantation—mankind my slaves, and if they do not toll their hides shall feel my lash"

--Letter from the Editor. *The Whip*, October 15, 1842

## 1.1. Introduction: Sporting Men and Modernization

I quote the opening of the sporting magazine, *The Whip*, at length because it captures the central concerns of sporting magazines and their promotion of sporting masculinity. Sporting magazines, also known as the flash press, were a series of scandalous papers that trafficked in gossip primarily between 1840-1843. Promising to report on the activities of prostitutes and cities' local denizens, the magazines provided a space for bawdy heterosexual male camaraderie and competition. The magazines caused scandal and outrage in the general public, and especially garnered condemnation from moral reform societies. Claiming to represent the interests and ethos of sporting culture, the magazines were a mouthpiece for the growing population of sporting men in cities across the United States. On the surface, sporting magazines put forward a cocky image of sports as men uniquely empowered by their urban surroundings—commanding the

novel opportunities that the city had to offer. I argue, however, that upon closer examination of the magazines' poems, editorials, articles, images and letters from the readers, we can see that a number of writers and readers express distinct fears and insecurity about their potential downward mobility and economic insecurity. The magazine's obsessive focus on brothel-going and racist sentiments captures sports' deeply felt anxieties about autonomy, class distinction and social mobility.

Sporting culture was dominated by white men, and as the opening quote indicates, sports claimed a special knowledge of urban life and its novel opportunities—brothel-going, gambling, oyster cellars, seraglios, and dance halls. As the epigraph suggests, sporting men, also known as "sports," sought to become masters of their world, using the novel spaces and opportunities of the city to assert an image of themselves as elite, manly and powerful. As I will show, while sports tried to construct their masculinity through the celebration of prostitution[80] and racist discourse, this masculine vision was at odds with itself. While the bawdy rhetoric and ideology of sporting culture relied on using desire and disgust to foment a sense of sophistication and urbanity, it also exposed some sports' deep insecurities about their social and economic positions in society.

[80] In this text I use the terms "sex worker," "prostitute" and "prostitution." In our contemporary period there has been an on-going and important debate on the role, designation, and implications of sex work. Sex workers and advocates for the rights of sex workers have rightfully argued that sex work is simply another kind of labor, which deserves equal respect, protection and consideration as other kinds of work. Considering these contemporary positions in tandem with the historical data about sex work in antebellum cities, I have decided to use both terms, where appropriate. "Prostitute" has a derogatory meaning that often evokes a series of harmful stereotypical images and negates the individual humanity of the women it refers to. Therefore, I use the term "sex worker" when I, as the writer, discuss historical actors participating in the sex trade. However, it is important to note that sex work is a contemporary term meant to evoke the agency and empowered choice of those who choose sex work. The historical reality is that in the antebellum United States, the majority of women would have turned to sex work out of deep need. As Marilynn Wood Hill explains in *Their Sisters Keepers: Prostitution in New York City, 1830-1870* (1993), women were most often driven by "economic need, a desire to be independent of familial constraint, and lack of comparatively well-paying and comfortable alternatives" (64). I use the term "prostitution" because it refers to a systematic practice and institution, rather than individuals. Finally, I use the term "prostitute" when referring to fictional representations of women designated so by the author, and when referring to a writer's own characterization.

In the opening epigraph, the editor of *The Whip*[81] draws on the ur-figure of white male power—the plantation owner—to claim an indelible power over his environment. The editor suggests that the way to enact this power is by visiting, describing, and reporting on brothels ("seraglios"), and prostitutes—a mission shared by the editors and writers of the flash press as a whole. My research for this chapter comes from the American Antiquarian Society's holdings of flash magazines,[82] as well as antebellum brothel guides from Philadelphia[83] and New York. I explore how sporting magazines often utilized misogynistic, classist and racist language to build an image of sporting men as free, empowered young white men uniquely positioned to embrace what the modernizing world had to offer them. However, through close reading of the magazines it is clear that for some sports, this masculine vision is built on shaky ground. Beneath the surface of these flashy writings we can see the anxieties and alienation that some sports felt over their position in U.S. society.

Historians of sporting culture have suggested that the bawdy and misogynistic language of sporting culture represented an entirely new take on what democratic freedom and republican discourse could look like.[84] Sporting men flouted propriety and

[81] The *Whip*: July 9, 1842, to January 21, 1843 (Wooldridge, Colburn, Renshaw).
[82] As Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz detail in *The Flash Press*, the American Antiquarian Society houses the only known copies of the flash periodicals. Their collection represents 73% of the implied full set of the weeklies, calculated to be 142 issues (5).
[83] *Guide to the Stranger*. (Philadelphia, 1848), located at Library Company of Philadelphia.
[84] The work of Patricia Cline Cohen, Timothy Gilfoyle, and Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz are foundational to the study of sporting culture. According to their co-authored book, *The Flash Press*, Cohen appears to be the first historian to see the Antiquarian Society's set of flash papers in 1985. Gilfoyle's 1992 book, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution and the Commericalization of Sex, 1790-1920* was the first text to cite sporting magazines in print, and offered an extended discussion of sporting men in his chapter "Sporting Men." Patricia Clien Cohen's article, "Unregulated Youth: Masculinity and Murder in the 1830s City" offers insight into sporting men's private lives, in particular their romantic relationships with sex workers. She extends this discussion in her book *The Murder of Helen Jewett*. In *Rereading Sex*, Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz argues against antiquated ideas of the Victorian-era U.S. as sexually chaste and "puritan." She explores how sporting magazines presented a bawdy and sexually explicit alternative to mainstream

reveled in urban exploits all in the name of liberty, much to the chagrin of politicians, writers, reformers and other concerned onlookers. However, while much of the work on sporting magazines recognizes the paper's obsessive preoccupation with prostitution, there has yet been a critical examination of this preoccupation and the discourse surrounding sporting men's favored activities. Furthermore, while historians have recognized the racist overtones of the magazines, few have critically examined these representations or their relationship to sporting male masculinity. Three fundamental questions that inspired this chapter are: why was prostitution such an intent focus of these magazines? How does the representation of race function to bolster, or negate, the tenets of sporting manliness? What did these representations 'do' for the men reading these magazines? Thus, in this chapter I begin by considering the material conditions of the men comprising the sporting class. I examine how men's experiences in their everyday lives, glimpsed through magazine articles and letters from readers, in many ways shaped the racist and misogynistic discourse of the magazines. I also critically examine the magazine's bawdy discourse to show how this rhetoric functioned to simultaneously assert a particular brand of bawdy and irreverent masculinity.

The rise of sporting culture was a unique phenomenon directly related to the well-documented changes in the U.S. economy during the 1830s and 40s. Urbanization, immigration, unprecedented population growth, and the revolution in transportation technology, which created the major expansion of commercial markets in the United States, "resulted in the dissolution of traditional, 'organic' forms of social organization

---

narratives about sex. Donna Dennis examines the flash press in her book *Licentious Gotham*, uncovering the magazine's and their editor's relationship to the development of libel and obscenity law.

represented by the ideal of the covenanted community."[85] Thus, a large influx of young, unmarried men entered major metropolitan centers.[86] The phenomenon of sporting culture was in many ways a result of this influx of bachelors in cities across the U.S., with many sporting men coming from the new and expanding clerk-class of workers in cities.[87]

I argue that many of these young men, frustrated and bored with their work and the anonymity of urban life, turned to sporting culture in an attempt to alleviate their frustrations and assert a sense of manly mastery over changes in everyday life. The unique historical and social position that clerks occupied contributed to the rise of sporting culture. Detached from traditional modes of workplace mentorship and socialization, many sporting men occupied an emergent labor position as "white collar" workers. Nikil Saval connects the rise of clerking to industrialization, which "produced more administrative work," including bookkeeping, copying, and "managing accounts, bills and ledgers."[88] Clerks were poised on the threshold of middle-class respectability,

[85] Augst, *The Clerk's Tale*, 3.
[86] Focusing on this phenomenon in his book, *The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture* (1999), Howard P. Chudacoff explains that "from Boston to San Francisco, it was common for 40 to 50 percent of men in the age range of twenty-five to thirty-five to be single and for close to one-third of adult men of all ages to be unmarried" (29), citing available frontier lands, new and shifting labor opportunities under capitalism, and changing social-familial life as responsible for the rise in the population of bachelors (28).
[87] Other authors that identify sporting culture as developing out of this class of young clerks include: David Anthony *Paper Money Men*, Patricia Cline Cohen "Unregulated Youth: Masculinity and Murder in the 1830s City" and *The Murder of Helen Jewett*, James W. Cook "'Dancing across the color line': a Story of Markets and Mixtures from New York's Five Points," Timothy Gilfoyle *City of Eros*, and Amy Gilman Srebnick *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers*. Historians agree that there was overlap in the interests of sporting men and the rougher, working-class milieus like the Bowery B'hoys and firemen's companies. However, historians of sporting culture generally agree that sporting men were primarily a part of the emerging white-collar class. As Cook puts it, sports were "at once within the white-collar professions and gleefully defiant of their moral strictures. Pious and licentious, sunshine and shadow, innocent and vulgar, high and low–antebellum sporting culture took root between and across the binary distinctions represented by middle-class conduct manuals as natural and fixed. In this way, sporting men put themselves in close proximity to the 'rougher' social worlds of the emerging urban proletariat, and even identified with some of its causes. But the milieus were never simply equivalent."
[88] Saval, *Cubed*. 13.

upwardly mobile but at the same time enmeshed in low-paying, arduous and "mindless" clerical work. Clerks would work long hours in "poorly lit, smoky single rooms," with "bad eyes," and "backs cramped from poor posture."[89] The work of the clerk could be tedious and frustrating—as Saval reprints from one clerk's diary, "Words! Words! Clerks never think."[90] Working in small offices often directly alongside their bosses, clerks had a uniquely intimate yet subordinate position within their workplaces. Saval explains, "unlike their brothers in the factory, who had begun to see organizing on the shop floors as a way to counter the foul moods and arbitrary whims of their bosses, clerks saw themselves as potential bosses."[91] A deep desire for independence underlies much of the discourse in the flash press.[92] Although clerks had the potential for promotion and subsequently better pay, clerks themselves did not make much money.[93] The reality for clerks was that social mobility was difficult, although this was the primary goal for clerks, as Saval notes,

> No other profession was so status conscious and anxiety-driven and yet also so straightforward seeming. No matter how dull their work might be at any given moment, there was little doubt that clerks saw themselves, and were seen by their bosses, as apprentice managers—businessmen in training. Few people thought they would languish as clerks…[94]

[89] Ibid., 9.
[90] Ibid., 9.
[91] Ibid., 23.
[92] Thomas Augst in *A Clerk's Tale* and Chudacoff in *The Age of the Bachelor* both emphasize, the desire for independence, a remnant of the Revolutionary War, as a defining desire of this population of young men. Augst, *A Clerk's Tale*, page 2. Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor*, page 27.
[93] As Patricia Cohen explains in *The Murder of Helen Jewett*, an entry-level position at a mercantile house would earn, at most, four dollars (99). By contrast, a skilled journeyman could earn ten to twelve a week (99).
[94] Saval, *Cubed*, 26.

It was precisely this liminal professional position that caused so many clerks to toe the line of autonomous middle-class comfort and lower class poverty.[95] While there was upward mobility, clerks did not command much social status, since "many commentators associated clerking with dependent and even servile assistantship."[96] I examine the sporting phenomenon with these material facts about clerking life in mind. I argue that the young men I discuss here expressed disillusionment about their careers and city life. For them, sporting culture was seen as a means to empower themselves—turning to brothel-going, and racist, misogynistic discourse in an attempt to assert a sense of mastery over changes in everyday life.

While I connect clerking and sporting culture, it is important to note that not all sporting men were clerks. Men of all classes participated in sporting culture, and the culture was marked by its fluidity, although many sports were involved in northern city's emerging white-collar industries. In this chapter I connect the ambivalence and anxiety of sporting men specifically to the problems experienced by many men in white-collar industry.[97] I do not mean to suggest that all sports were dissatisfied with their lives, or that racism and sexism are always simply responses to insecurity. Sporting men ascribed to sporting ideology for various reasons—the racist and misogynistic sentiments expressed by sports could be motivated by white male supremacist beliefs which transcended material circumstances. However, as I will show, the racist and misogynistic

[95] In this chapter I discuss how this liminal position affected the men who experienced it. In Chapter Two I discuss how reformers, writers and other critics of sporting culture perceived this potentially problematic social and economic position.
[96] Luskey, *On The Make*, 57.
[97] However, this does not necessarily mean that men from other classes and careers would not have felt a similar ennui about their social and economic positions. Indeed, as authors like Dana D. Nelson and David Anthony have shown—economic anxiety and concern over one's social station was shared by an overwhelming amount of men. Thus, many men could have found the sexual gregariousness and bawdy libertine ethos of sporting culture an appealing way to ameliorate their frustrations.

discourse that I explore here is often connected to feelings of anxiety, fear and urban malaise.

Sporting magazines put forward a contradictory image of sex work. While men sought comfort and class fantasy in the brothel, this very escape into luxury brothels with glamorous and financially successful sex workers caused them to be confronted with their own vulnerability under capitalism. The cocky bravado displayed by the editor in the epigraph is a consistent feature of sporting magazines. Writers attempted to build an image of men totally in control of themselves and their world. I argue that some sporting men saw brothel-going as a means to alleviate the powerlessness they felt amid tumultuous social change—the luxury brothel offered an elegant space where they could feel in command. However, magazine writers incessant focus on the prostitute's fine clothing, jewelry, furniture, and general life of luxury belied an undercurrent of guarded jealousy and displeasure that, in their perception, sex workers were able to achieve a level of wealth and luxury that would have been extremely difficult for many young men to achieve. I argue that for some sporting men, sex worker's finery and wealth distressingly showed prostitutes to be some of capitalism's 'winners.' Able to support themselves by their own manipulations of desire, commodification and capital, they appear more adept at navigating the changes of modernization than the beleaguered sporting men who so thoroughly obsess over them. Writers' representations of sex workers whom they despised, which get almost as much attention as those they admired, expose sporting men's feelings of insecurity and ineffectualness. These women are described as poor, uneducated, dirty, and unattractive—insults often attended by the assertion that they had slept with black men. Sporting magazines and their readers expressed fears over the

possibility of lower class and racial "contagion" within sporting culture, showing concern over their potential of downward mobility. While luxury brothels supported a fantasy of rising in social status, low-class brothels and prostitutes presented the possibility of social decline—prostitution and brothel-going thus acted as a potential measure of success as well as a signifier of the anxiety and insecurity attending modernization.

Racist discourse was a central feature of flash magazines. Sporting magazines did not necessarily advocate xenophobic or white supremacist views as a political platform; but, the magazines did put forward racist sentiments and a clear defense of whiteness through racial cartoons, mockery, and press coverage of places where mixed race mingling—sexual and social—occurred. These representations exposed how whiteness could possess a distinct social value for young men who felt their work, wealth, and social status was tenuous.

During this period, definitions and categorizations of whiteness were in flux. However, the same dramatic shifts in the labor economy that gave rise to white-collar clerkships and working-class labor organizing also helped to consolidate and root whiteness as a violently protected social capital for workers. As Noel Ignatiev explains, "the spread of wage labor made white laborers anxious about losing the precarious independence they had gained from the Revolution. In response, they sought refuge in whiteness."[98] This kind of class-driven racism was present within white-collar

[98] Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 96. Historians have argued that "white" was a racial category that was in flux and unstable in the beginning decades of the nineteenth century. Alexander Saxton discusses this in *The Rise and Fall of the While Republic* as does David Roediger in the *Wages of Whiteness*. Roediger argues that post revolutionary republican rhetoric of liberty and freedom helped solidify categories of "white," which was framed against "black." He explains, "republicanism also suggests that long acceptance of slavery betokened weakness, degradation and an unfitness for freedom. The Black population symbolized that degradation. Racism, slavery and republicanism thus … allowed white workers to distance themselves from Blacks even as comparisons were being made" (66). In *City of Clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920* Jerome P. Bjelopera discusses how racism and whiteness

workplaces as well; clerks drew boundaries between white and black, as well as class-based distinctions between working-class labor and white-collar work. Luskey explains that "unlike journeymen who earned the 'wages' of whiteness, clerks and proprietors tried to hoard whiteness as cultural capital, at once announcing their citizenship in the republic and their genteel superiority over working people, black and white."[99] Many men engaging in sporting male culture perceived whiteness to be a significant political and social benefit that needed to be guarded from 'contamination' by blacks and the whites that associated with them. Sporting men invested in the idea of whiteness in an attempt to foment a sense personal and social empowerment. This is not to say that sporting men were simply hapless victims 'forced' to turn to racism to alleviate their problems. Depictions in the flash press register aggressive, arrogant, and violent attitudes toward those of different races and ethnicities, often demonstrating racial contempt and espousing white supremacist discourse. As the epigraph to this chapter suggests, young men might imagine themselves as plantation "masters," whipping those they saw as beneath them, from a place of violent superiority as much as from a place of insecurity and doubt.

In line with the content of popular working-class entertainment of the time, sporting magazines included comics, cartoons, anecdotes, and stories that involved the mockery and denigration of homosexual behavior and racial 'others,' in particular non-European foreigners, blacks and Jews.[100] Like the mixture of desire and repulsion

---

acted as a connective tissue amongst white-collar clerks in the decades after the civil war. These authors also discuss how blackface minstrelsy contributed to the consolidation of white identification, which I also discuss in this chapter beginning on page 52.

[99] Luskey, 57.

[100] In order to maintain the focus of the chapter, I examine the papers' presentations of black men and women and it relates to sex, prostitution and popular entertainment. I do not discuss the papers' presentation of homosexual activity, foreigners or Jews, although these are important aspects of the

attending their descriptions of different prostitutes, the magazines included stories about taking in minstrel shows and black entertainments with a similar mix of denigration and awe. These descriptions included racist caricature that aimed to affirm a sense of whiteness and superiority. Embedded in these descriptions is evidence of a significant reliance on representations of blackness as a means to "soothe" sporting male insecurities. As I discuss in this chapter, men's stories of their enjoyment of racialized entertainment shows that blackness was seized on as a source of release and even sexual arousal for eager white audiences. In the scenes that I examine here, blackface made authors feel superior through mockery; however, the author's enjoyment simultaneously exposed their feelings of stifled alienation and ineffectual impotency.

### 1.1.1. Sporting Men & Magazines

The rise of the clerk class was a product of modernization and the changing social and economic world. While many clerks were new to the city, native-born men would have also been incorporated into the ranks of clerks populating the city. New York's 1855 census reports that "more than a quarter" of clerks in New York were from Manhattan, while another quarter were from upstate New York and surrounding New England states.[101] There were also a significant number of clerks who were foreign-born. The same 1855 census found that forty-three percent of clerks had reportedly been born

---

magazines. For more on the representation of Jews in the flash press see Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz's *The Flash Press*. For more on the flash press' deeply homophobic rhetoric see in particular Chapter 7 from *The Flash Press*. For a discussion of anti-Semitism in sporting culture see David Anthony's *Paper Money Men*, particularly the chapter "Shylock on Wall Street: the Jessica Complex in Antebellum Sensationalism."

[101] Luskey, *On The Make*, 8. Specifically; Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, or Pennsylvania.

outside of the United States, with the vast majority from Western Europe.[102] The importance of this emergent white-collar group should not be overlooked, since clerks were "the third largest occupational group in the metropolis."[103] The clerk class was comprised of predominantly young men, with between 60 and 70 percent under the age of twenty-five, and "an overwhelming number were unmarried men."[104] While men certainly kept up familial attachments or lived with their families, many were relatively unattached in the city—roughly sixty percent of clerks "classified themselves as boarders in privately run boardinghouses and residences."[105] Clerks desired autonomy; indeed, clerks "embarked on a quest for economic and cultural capital that would earn them power and prestige, and they identified clerkships and independent living in cities as the means to achieve these ends."[106] Historians have explored how many young clerks persistently sought self-betterment by joining reading groups, libraries, and social clubs, writing diaries and attending lectures all in the pursuit of self-improvement and success.[107] On the other hand, I focus on the subset of young men who were not necessarily bent on virtuous self-improvement and were attracted to sporting culture. While some men turned to lectures, reading clubs and rigorous practice of self-improvement to gain the independence and self-determination they desired, I argue that sporting culture was an alluring and potentially aggrandizing subculture that some men turned to in order to bolster a sense of their manly command of the world around them.

---

[102] Specifically; Ireland, Germany, England, Wales, and Scotland. Luskey, 9.
[103] Ibid., 6.
[104] Ibid., 5-6.
[105] Ibid., 6.
[106] Ibid., 3.
[107] Authors include: Thomas Augst *The Clerk's Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-Century America*, Jerome P. Bjelopera, *City of Clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870*-1920, and Brian P. Luskey *Clerks and the Quest for Capital in Nineteenth-Century America*

Sporting culture identified itself by a "libertine republican" ethos, advocating sexual freedom and license, rejecting expectations of marriage, and promoting liberty and autonomy among men. Cohen, Horowitz and Gilfoyle define libertine republicanism as "an emotional critique of privilege and hierarchy with language more often associated with an expressive, promiscuous, male-centered sexuality" that promoted "heterosexual indulgence," at the same time it "espoused a radical, democratic critique of privilege and hierarchy," calling out supposedly corrupt bankers, merchants, lawyers and politicians.[108] In pursuing drink, gambling, betting, and brothel-going, sporting men routed their sense of independence and masculinity through their urban exploits. Often described as well dressed with a "moustache and imperial," sports had distinct looks that authors, newspaper writers and reformers alike easily identified on the streets. They were ubiquitous cultural figures. Figure 1.1, below, puts forward an ideal image of sporting culture. The men are well dressed, with the sport's typical facial hair and trim waistcoat. Many finely dressed women surround the men—they all drink, laugh and flirt. A couple in the back appears to be departing the picnic for more privacy. In their comfort and ease the men have discarded their hats, the women wear low-cut dresses and drink along with the men. One man looks out at the reader somewhat haughtily, projecting the sports' confident ease. As I will elaborate on later, even this happy scene evokes melancholy. The caption states "Let's drink and be merry nor let sorrow interfere with our sport." Sporting culture struck the ire of many, as Mark E. Kann explains, "elites were not surprised that American youths would abuse liberty and engage in sexual experimentation… However, youths' post-Revolutionary tendency to use liberty as a justification (or excuse) for their bad behavior was relatively new and mostly

[108] Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz, 56.

intolerable."[109] Indeed, the magazines' "republican" emphasis on supreme white (male) autonomy, liberty and (sexual) freedom led to the promotion of prostitution and brothel-going. However, while the magazines appeared to critique "privilege and hierarchy," they put forward demeaning and aggressive rebukes of men and women whom they deemed low-class and non-white, and expressed a distinct longing for elite class status.


**Figure 1.1**: "Grand Pic-Nic At Hoboken: Let's drink and be merry nor let sorrow interfere with our sport." *The Whip*. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

[109] Kann, *Taming the Passion for Public Good*, 7-8.

The content of sporting magazines was varied, with comics, jokes, ribald depictions of sex, and substantial sections dedicated to reader's own letters and inquiries. The magazines illustrate well the jocular and unique sporting male perspective that markedly flouted propriety. Edited by a group of men in close competition and cahoots, the editors mocked one another in their papers, helped write for each other, and even took over the role of editor when fellow editors were jailed for libel.[110] Sporting papers, and sporting culture more generally, circulated nationwide: "The *Flash*, the *Whip*, the *Rake*, and to a lesser extent the *Libertine*, achieved an extensive distribution."[111] Readers wrote in from as far as Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Alabama, Louisiana, and California.[112] Given the popularity and reach of these papers, I focus primarily on these titles, along with *The New York Sporting Whip*, *True Flash*, *Sunday Flash* and *The Pick*—sporting papers that published in the 1850s.[113] Readers shared an interest in sporting activities like pugilism, boxing, dog fighting, and horseracing as well as theater performances, minstrel shows, drinking, and prostitution. The magazines offered profiles and "biographies" of local prostitutes under titles such as "The Lives of Nymphs." In Figure 1.2, we see an accompanying image to a "Lives of Nymphs" profile of Amanda

[110] The history of the flash press editors and libel law is quite interesting. Most of the editors were at some point sued or on trial for libel, and many served jail time for the content of their papers. George Washington Dixon was tried for a story in his paper that allegedly caused the suicide of a local merchant. However, this history is beyond the scope of this chapter, which focuses on the papers' content and not the specific writers or editors of the paper. For more information on the editors and the flash press' storied relationship to libel law, see Dennis' *Licentious Gotham* and Cohen, Horowitz and Gilfoyle's chapter "Trails and Tribulations" in *The Flash Press*, which explores this history in detail.
[111] Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz, *The Flash Press*, 53-54.
[112] Cook also corroborates this in his article, "'Dancing Across the Colorline': a story of markets and mixtures from New York's Five Points."
[113] *Sunday Flash*: Augst 8, 1841, to October 24, 1841 (Snelling, Wilkes, Wooldridge). The *Flash*: Oct 31, 1841, to January 29, 1842 (Snelling). The *Flash*: June 10, 1842, to January 14, 1843 (Snelling, Scott, Vanderwater). The *New York Sporting Whip*: January 28, 1843, to March 4, 1843 (Wooldridge). The collection of sporting magazines that I read comes from the American Antiquarian Society's holding of flash magazines. Where possible I site the title and date of the magazine I am referencing, however, not all pages included dates. When this is the case, I have cited just the magazine title.

Thompson, which includes a biographical 'backstory' on Thompson, as well as graphic details about her looks and physical appearance. Thompson is portrayed as glamorous and wealthy, with fine clothing and an extravagant headpiece, her eager "attaché" close behind her. The man is dressed in an elegant and sophisticated style as well, with a top had and wide-collared overcoat.

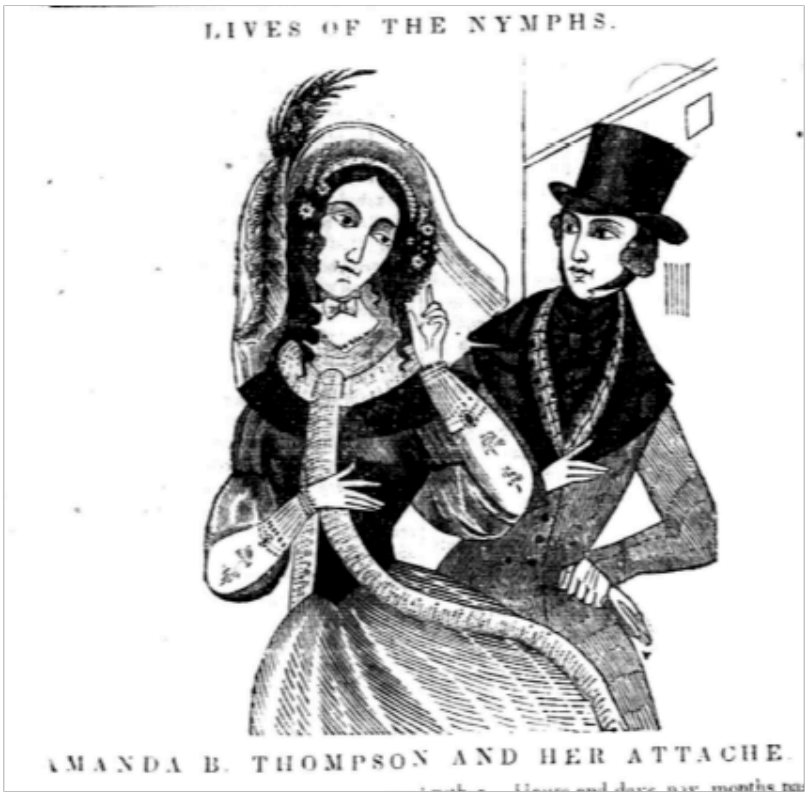


**Figure 1.2**: "Live of Nymphs: Amanda B. Thompson and her Attache" from *True Flash*. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

The magazines also printed descriptions and guides to brothels in New York and other cities and states in the United States. A prominent feature of the magazines was the inclusion of letters from readers relating gossip and important information from their particular locales. The magazines also had "wants to know" sections, paid insertions

contributed by readers that directed gossipy inquiries and suggestions to local people.[114] In Figure 1.3, below, an image from *True Flash* that accompanies their "Wants To Know" section makes clear the salacious and gossipy nature of the feature with a comic illustrating a man peeping on a couple in amorous embrace. As this excerpt makes clear, the ads are often quite ambiguous, clearly meant for a particular reader or audience. Thus the magazine promises the give the reader a 'peep' onto the scandalous and salacious goings on in the city. It exemplifies the voyeuristic bent of the magazines; readers are offered an insider's view on the city, with the promise of 'real' gossip written by fellow readers. In this sense, as readers from around the nation eagerly wrote in to the magazines, they became contributors and writers for sporting magazines. The magazines provided an alternative lifestyle to that of mainstream sensibility: "The flash press thus provided something relatively unique … an alternative public sphere for white-collar men who rejected the values, tastes, and lifestyles of middle-class moralists."[115] As articles, poems, cartoons, and humorous anecdotes in sporting magazines suggest, channeling energy into work was fruitless— sexual gratification, gregarious socializing, and the fantasy of economic prosperity and luxury offered by brothels and prostitutes was a more rewarding and fulfilling way to focus their passion.

[114] Cohen, Gilfoyle, and Horowitz, 25.
[115] Cook, "'Dancing Across the Color Line: A Story of Markets and Mixtures from New York's Five Points."

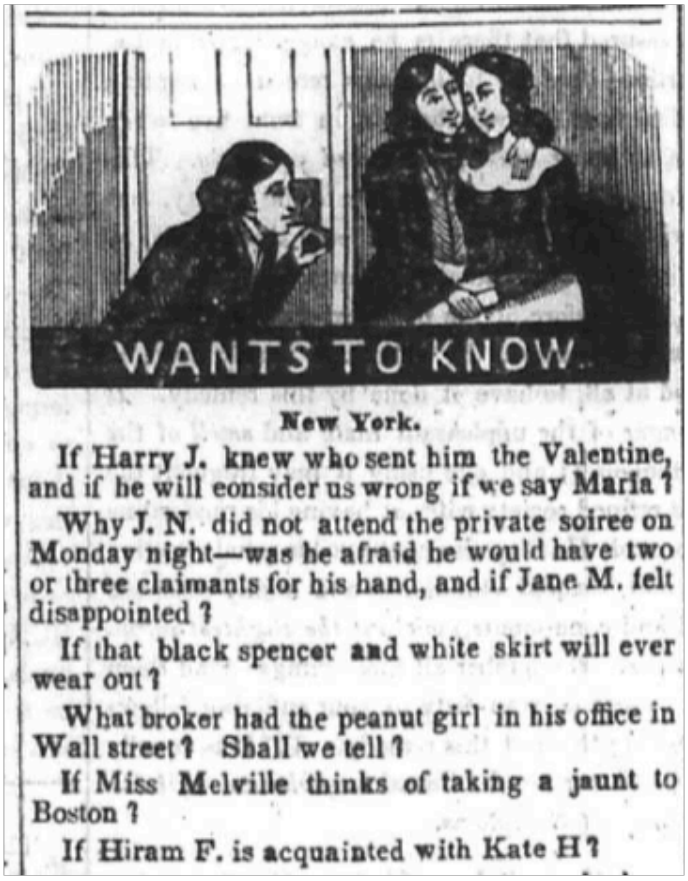


**Figure 1.3**: "Wants to Know." *True Flash*. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

## 1.2. Sporting Ennui: Meaninglessness, Boredom and Apathy

Sporting magazines put forward a vision of masculinity defined by enjoyment and indulgence in the novel offerings of the city. Sporting men were often understood and defined by their urban prowess. Novel spaces of entertainment like theaters, brothels, drinking places, oyster cellars, and dance halls gave sporting men a feeling of control and fitness for urban life while brothel guides and the flash press further cemented this view with their detailed descriptions of urban haunts. While many people feared and disparaged these additions to urban life, sporting magazines advocated fully embracing the entertainment, pleasure and indulgence that the city offered—indeed, indulgence was seen as a manly imperative. The generic form and style of the magazines themselves

helped to bolster readers' sense of themselves as masters of the world around them. Sporting magazines promised to 'de-code' and socially map the city for their readers, including theater reviews, the location of dance halls, allusions to places of gambling, as well as addresses, reviews, and guides to brothels both local and in surrounding states. *The Rake's* masthead demonstrates this point well, stating, "this folio of four pages, happy work! What is it! But a map of busy life. Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns!" Many readers pick up on this attitude as well, writing in to the paper to thank the publication for keeping its eye on the comings and goings in their city, or writing in to relate their own local gossip. As one reader writes in to *The Whip*, many "fear and crouch from beneath the upraised Whip, that is so ready at any moment to lash the vicious unsparingly and without remorse." While portraying themselves as particularly adept at navigating modern life, poems, jokes and articles included in the magazine show that some sporting men actually felt alienated and disillusioned about their lives and their future.

Work is depicted as tiresome and numbing, with various articles and letters describing sporting men as trapped by their circumstances with little possibility of financial or social success in their lives. An issue of *The Rake* sympathizes with financial struggle when it defends shopkeepers, saying, "every person who has not had the good luck to be blessed with an independent fortune, is struggling to realize one by his own exertion." A February 1852 issue of *The Pick* includes a poem entitled "the Song of the Desk" which attests to the boredom of a clerk's work,

> Write. Write. Write. / Day book, and ledger. And cash; / write. write. write. / 'Tis worse than slavery's lash … / no vary or change—not a dash…figures and dollars, and cents, / and scarcely time to think. / no thought apart from the page.

Mindlessness in particular is of focus here, with the popular refrain of wage labor under capitalism as "white slavery."[116] Labor is described as mechanizing and automatic, dehumanizing the worker who has "scarcely time to think" with no change from day to day. Another issue of *The Pick* from July 1852 includes a poem from a reader about how the magazine brings amusement and joy to the reader amid the drudgery of life, "While age is lone and sick; / But all can merry be, / Whene'er they read *The* Pick," claiming that "Grief's solace" is "*The Pick*." Here life is described as "lone and sick" and run through with grief, with *The Pick* providing comical solace to the reader. An issue of *The Flash* includes a poem on the pleasures of smoking cigars,

> When I'm in trouble or distress,/ And wish to be at ease,/ I buy segars of Ellison… There's nothing in this mundane sphere/ Such pleasure can afford…/ For all Life's ills and pains and pricks/It is a certain bar/ In Center Street at number six/ To smoke a good cigar

Smoking offers men a break from their "mundane sphere," providing escape from boredom and everyday "pain and pricks." Indeed, "mundane" and "dull" are often used by writers of the flash press to describe life and work. While couched in clever rhymes and jokey comics, these excerpts show a distinct undercurrent of dissatisfaction and frustration.[117]

The magazines also bemoan the poor living conditions and mental well-being of young men in urban centers. An issue of *The New York Sporting Whip* refers to the most common abode of the clerk-class, the boarding house, as "respectable purgatories" and

---

[116] As Roediger explains in *Wages of Whiteness*, "white slavery" was a term that displaced the abject violence and exploitation of black men and women under slavery. He explains, "a term like *white slavery* was not an act of solidarity with the slave but rather a call to arms to en the inappropriate oppression of whites" (68).

[117] Historians who have focused on the lives of antebellum clerks have also noted substantial expressions of apathy, boredom, frustration and anxiety in clerk's journals, letters, and writing. See: Brian P Luskey, *On the Make* in particular page 55-64 where he details workers' frustrations and boredom. See also "Chapter Five: The Melancholy of White-Collar Work" from Thomas Augst's *The Clerk's Tale*.

mere "*holes*" where men and women try to trick and deceive one another in the pursuit of money. *The Pick* also sarcastically disparages boarding houses, describing a young man returning home to "the mansion where he enjoys the sterotype [sic] 'comforts of home,' for $3.50 a week, in an up-four-story attic room." A comic in *The Pick* depicts a dinner scene at a local boarding house (see Figure 1.4) where men dash in from off the streets and fight for a place in line. One man is so desperate to get in line that he collides with the black woman who calls the men in; her features are exaggerated caricatures and their run-in is meant to lend humor to the scene. However, there is an air of desperation shown. The men jostle and fight for their dinner, with one man looking out angrily as he tries to pull another man from line. Another man gazes at the reader with a strange look of surprise and shock. The comic makes clear what the depictions also suggest: boarding houses are not comfortable, congenial, home-like spaces where men can find comfort. Rather, the magazines portray boarding houses as "purgatories" where men have to fight each other for basic comforts. In another issue of *The Pick*, a poem entitled "Be Firm" encourages readers to look past their difficulties, but ultimately gives a discouraging message. The poem encourages the reader to persevere through "life's rough, dark, and stormy maze" and to "Be firm: what though dame fortune frowns,/Never let the many ups and downs/ Of life dismay;/ But struggle upward, preserve," echoing advice manuals of the period that encouraged young men to soldier on in their pursuit of self-improvement and betterment. The hopeful message is somewhat negated when the poem offers death as a final consolation, "the day / Of rest will dawn, and cares will cease, / And heart and mind repose in peace."


**Figure 1.4**: "Dinnertime at Mrs. Toughsteakandhases Boarding-House." The drudgery of the desperate dash and competition for a meal is emphasized by the joke that the food made by the woman is mere "tough steak and hashes." *The Pick*. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

Peppered throughout the papers are articles and editorials that suggest that some men were affected with a sense of powerlessness and ambivalence about their place in the world. An article written by the editor in an October 1842 issue of *The Rake* titled "The Malediction. From a manuscript found in a madhouse," asks, "why are we born? Why are we enjoined to listen to the preachers' exhortations—to learn, study, work, toil, and endeavor to do good or evil? … Can a man shape his own course when it is already laid out for him. [sic]" The writer expresses feelings of disempowerment, questioning the supposed utility of "study, work" and "toil" while doubting people's ability to control

their own lives. These are not men optimistically inspired by their independence and belief in self-determination. In the epigraph that opened my introduction, boredom is alluded to and the writer writes admiringly of sporting men who, "although times are dull," are "enjoying life like fighting cocks, standing ready for any game." A poem entitled "The Weeklies" from *The Rake* also emphasizes the "dull" times, "I'm getting hypsocondrical [sic]/ By ennui and the blues./ And surely I should hang myself/ If t'wasn't for the news!"

The sense of futility is repeated in *The Pick*, where the editor ruminates about city life in a narrative editorial. His tale begins with disillusionment, explaining that "as we walked up Broadway, we met thousands of human live stock like ourselves." He then wonders,

> why a few moments out of the years allotted to human life, were of any consequence, whether spent at a crossing, or in trade, or at the domestic hearth? Life in the city is a grand crossing. Everybody is anxious about some tride? [*sic*] Another, as though his very existence depended on it; and yet, in it the daily loss of one or a hundred of its citizens is not felt, and in the great census of the world the dropping of New York itself, with its eight hundred thousand population, its commerce, its store, its merchandize [*sic*] and noise, would excite but little emotion

The tone is one of urban ennui, a listless passivity in the face of the overwhelming thousands. Here, the city subsumes identities and individuals into an undifferentiated, and unimportant, mass of "livestock." The narrator is not empowered by capitalism or the opportunities offered by commerce and "trade;" but rather, the narrator perceives himself as unimportant and altogether apart from the rushing social and commercial world. While others might be frantic about the changing conditions of the city, the sport takes it in with a feeling of apathy and detachment. Ultimately, the narrator concludes, "we, or a dozen more poor devils like us, are not of much account in this world, whatever we may be in

another…" The narrator is thus ambivalent and nihilistic in his perceptions of human life, overwhelmed by urban life and modern society. Indeed, men in the clerk class often expressed malaise about their lives and work.[118] In contrast, sporting culture offered men an exciting and fast paces alternative to "dull care."

Sporting magazines, brothel guides, and sporting life appeared to offer men a place to "vent" the frustrations on display in these passages. Oyster cellars, gambling clubs, dance halls, saloons, and in particular, brothels, offered sports places to play out fantasies of elitism and to see themselves as empowered and in-control. Where editorials, poems and articles captured an undercurrent of dissatisfaction and disillusionment in their lives, the fun and frolic advocated in sporting magazines offered young men arenas where they could indulge, feel in control of their worlds, and even purchase momentary glimpses of highly privileged living. As Cook aptly puts it, "sporting culture offered a kind of counteraction against the disciplines of market capitalism, a network of illicit spaces in which unfettered sexuality, physical prowess, and homosocial camaraderie could be pursued away from the drudgery of office work."[119] And indeed, sports often portrayed prostitution as a means to escape this drudgery and disillusionment.

## 1.3. Sporting Men, Prostitution and Masculine Class Fantasy

Sporting men understood themselves through the women they purported to revere and those they reviled and denigrated. Sporting men's sense of themselves *as men* was symbolically and physically routed through women, in particular sex workers, but also

[118] In *On The Make* Luskey relates an excerpt from one clerk's journal: "'I am out of concert with myself to day…I take no interest in anything present or future, but feel like a useless apathetic lump, with an indolent heaviness about my stomach, in love with nothing, but without spirit to quarrel with anything, a nonentity.'" 11-12.
[119] Cook, "'Dancing Across the Colorline': a Story of Markets and Mixtures from New York's Five Points."

through wives, shop-girls, women they wished to court, and other visible and less-visible women who populated their social worlds. In particular, their sense of themselves as refined, democratic, autonomous and powerful men was often played out in and depended on their relationships with high-class sex workers. The magazines had many features on prostitutes detailing their comings-and-goings and their personal histories under headings such as "Lives of Nymphs," "The view from our window" (where they describe sex workers they see promenading past their window), and "Memories of Celebrated Females." Brothel guides, part of the proliferation of bawdy publications, gave detailed information on where to find available sex. The guides included details on the prostitutes themselves, their dispositions, the madams, the décor of brothels, and the refined entertainment that the women inside offered. The magazines divided prostitution into binary categories of "revered" and "reviled." The category of "revered" was exclusively reserved for high-class brothels and sex workers. In this section, I argue that sex workers, often referred to as "the frail fair," who worked out of high-class brothels, were portrayed as servile yet highly sophisticated, with the brothels out of which they worked offering young men an atmosphere and experience usually reserved for elites. These characterizations thus expose that the brothel and 'respectable' sex workers were a means by which sporting men attempted to bolster a sense of control and self-assurance in their insecure worlds. The overwhelming emphasis on brothels as elite and exclusive places of socializing demonstrates that for some sporting men, there was a significant desire for class status and class fantasy as part and parcel of their interest in brothel-going.

### 1.3.1. Background: Prostitution in the Antebellum Metropolis

During the antebellum period, prostitution in urban centers was also on the rise due to changes in population and industrialization. In part due to New York's population boom, where New York's population quadrupled between 1830 and 1860, prostitution began to increase in the antebellum period as "young white women arrived to find wages insufficient to meet their basic needs," these women were often those from poorer families who had "endured the 'most deleterious effects of industrial capitalism.'"[120] Demand for prostitution increased along with the population influx. Additionally, the "growing number of white males working and living outside of traditional family supervision" who married later "increased both the number of young women seeking support and the demand for their sexual labor."[121] While prostitution did grow during this period due to the effects of modernization, this growth was often greatly exaggerated by social reformers, concerned citizens, and reform societies. Reliable information about the actual number of prostitutes working during this time is difficult to obtain.[122] John McDowall's famous 1831 Magdalen Society report on prostitution,[123] which caused quite a stir in New York, stated there were 10,000 prostitutes living in the city, or one-tenth of the female population.[124] A grand jury that was quickly convened to produce an independent estimate came up with 1,438, or one in seventy women—which some papers complained was still excessive.[125] Historian Marilynn Wood Hill estimates that between

[120] Nicolette Steverson "'Devils Would Blush to Look': Brothel Visits of the New York Female Reform Society, 1835 and 1836." Page 231.
[121] Ibid., 231-232.
[122] As Marilynn Wood Hill explains in *Their Sisters' Keepers: Prostitution in New York City, 1830-1870*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
[123] I discuss this document and prostitution reform societies in-depth in Chapter 2.
[124] Ibid., 27.
[125] Ibid., 27. Hill notes that the grand jury counted every "suspicious female in the city" as a prostitute, a dubious if not utterly unreliable categorization.

1830-1850 there were anywhere between 2,000 to 5,413 prostitutes working in New York each year.[126]

The transient, illegal, and intermittent nature of sex work ultimately make it a difficult profession to track; however, during this period prostitution was seen as a serious and alarming social problem. It is clear that prostitution did increase along with the population boom, economic insecurity, and the changing role of women as wage earners—although estimates were often exaggerated. Importantly, citizens of major cities throughout the Northeastern U.S. perceived that prostitution was a major social problem. Hill explains that while McDowall's estimate of 10,000 prostitutes was "initially considered so outrageous" it was "nonetheless invoked frequently throughout the 1830s and into the 1840s." Indeed, an October 1, 1842 issue of *The Whip* includes correspondence from Philadelphia wherein the writer claims his city has 237 "houses of ill-fame," and conjectures that the city has seen a "*permanent* increase" of 3.5% in brothels until 1838, but has since "nearly doubled" and remarks that the phenomenon in "neighbouring [*sic*] states of Delaware and New Jersey… is nearly the same." As these examples suggest, prostitution was very much seen as a symptom of modernization. Sporting men relied on prostitution to flout propriety and assert their particular vision of how to be a man.

### 1.3.2. The Luxury Brothel and Sporting Class Fantasy

A major focus in the descriptions of revered places of pleasure is the luxury of the brothels themselves, with articles emphasizing that these brothels are exclusively the purview of refined and elite men. The brothel represented a significant class fantasy to

[126] Ibid., 32.

many sporting men, who were able to envision themselves as wealthy and elite by patronizing luxury brothels. A Philadelphia brothel guide entitled "A guide to the stranger, or pocket companion for the fancy, containing a list of the gay houses and ladies of pleasure in the city of brotherly love and sisterly affection" from 1849 consistently uses designations of class to describe the brothels, with the best always being well-appointed and "first class." The guide reports that Catharine Lapsley of Lombard Street "keeps a bed house of the first class" and is "well furnished….cosy [*sic*], quiet and retired." Mary Blessington of No. 3 Wood Street is also described as "keep[ing] a bed house of the first class" while Mary Fisher runs a "house of the very first class, many years established." These houses thus presented men with the opportunity to imaginatively experience class mobility. The desire for luxurious brothels with specifically elite clientele is further reiterated in the guide and sporting magazines which place brothels *in* elite neighborhoods. *Guide to the stranger* reports that Sara Turner's brothel, on No 2. Wood Street is "situated in one of the most respectable parts of the city." They describe the Madame as a "Queen" and emphasize that "at this house you will hear no disgusting language to annoy your ear," meaning the rough language associated with the lower classes. Indeed, the elite brothel is crafted to enhance male heterosexual pleasure and vanity. The "establishment is calculated to make a man happy" where "melodious voices" effectively "drive dull care away," echoing the language of boredom and apathy that the flash press often used to describe daily life. The descriptions suggest that the city is not always a hospitable place to young men, assaulting language and "dull care" lurk outside the carefully crafted pleasures promised inside. Another description explains of one sex worker that "in her society he finds repose from action and care,"

emphasizing the brothel as a place of escape from work and worry. These brothels allowed sporting men who were poorer but upwardly mobile, to feel and purchase pleasure but also participate in an imaginative transgression of their class status—cavorting in elite neighborhoods and glimpsing elite refinement in a way unavailable to them in their everyday lives.

The writers emphasize not only the fine surroundings of these brothels, but also the refined background and manners of the women therein—these women therefore provided men not just sex, but a slice of society life. Indeed, the magazines and brothel guides focused on much more than the physical 'charms' of the prostitutes. An issue of the *Whip* discusses Liza Le Roy, who "is decidedly something *recherche*," her charms are not just in her "voluptuousness" but also her "manners and disposition." The madame of Le Roy's brothel is also "distinguished alike for her urbanity, and a disposition peculiarly adapted to feciliate [sic] the enjoyment of her society." The *Libertine* describes Clara Burke, whose "correct deportment soon brought her many admirers." Another issue of the *Libertine* describes prostitute Rosealtha St. Clair as "possess[ing] great amiability of mind." *Guide to the stranger* also repeats this emphasis, Josephine Somers is "an accomplished lady" and her "young ladies are all beautiful, accomplished and bewitching" while Emma Jacobs is "a lady in manners and conversations." These women are all deemed exceptional for their ability to be affable, entertaining, and well-versed in the manners of society life. These descriptions suggest that these women offer men more than just sex, but refined entertainments and company that is directly connected to the woman's ability to embody an air of dignity and class—to be a 'lady' in the conventional sense while also being available for sex. Figure 1.5, below, illustrates the vision of high-

class sex worker put forward in the magazines. A well-dressed man stands above a young woman, presumably a sex worker. He has a similar look to the men at the picnic in Hoboken, a trim overcoat, top hat and bushy whiskers. It's a highly sexualized image, the woman's breasts spill out of her dress as she suggestively asks the man to have a "taste" of the "cream" she has in her glass. She is elegantly dressed in a ruffled trimmed dress and ornate hat. The man stands above her, in partial shade, focusing attention on the woman and suggesting men's covert and secretive relationships with sex workers. This image of prostitution is one where women are submissive, lustful, and readily available.


**Figure 1.5**: "The Frail Fair. 'This Cream is rich—Pray, sir, will you have a taste?'" *The Whip*. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

What's more, the erudite prostitutes with comely manners profiled in the magazines are consistently described as from "elite," "respectable," or "distinguished" backgrounds, further building the fantasy of cavorting with women above, or equal, to sporting men's own station. In the *True Flash*, Amanda B. Thompson is described as "born a ------ of respectable parents in respectable circumstances." Clara Burke, profiled

in *The Libertine*, is also described as having "respectable parents," her father a British officer. In the same issue of the *Libertine*, they explain that prostitute Rosealtha St. Clair "is of respectable parents, and to a certain extent, an accomplished girl." Miss Emma Lee is reported as "the daughter of highly respectable parents" (*The Libertine*). Not merely a place for sex, the brothel provided opportunities for socializing and being socialized—for acting the part of a gentleman and being treated as such. The descriptions suggest that in the refined brothel men have the opportunity to have sex with their social "equals," if not their social "betters." Thus writers of the flash press tried to add a dimension of class to brothel-going, framing it a sophisticated activity that, if visiting the right place, underscores one's gentlemanly respectability.

An illustration of one of the many "prostitutes' balls" that are reported on in the papers demonstrates the magazines distinct attempts to portray brothel-going as a sophisticated and even respectable enterprise (see Figure 1.6). A fragment remaining from the January 1843 issue of *The Flash* depicts Julia Brown's ball, Brown being a well-known sex worker and madam that the magazines frequently discussed. The image shows a typical genteel ballroom scene, men and women dressed in their best mingle, a chandelier hangs from the ceiling, and a large mirror with sconces hangs on the wall. The illustrator clearly sought to emphasize the finery of the scene; over a third of the image is used to depict the walls and ceilings, allowing the artist to place the expensive items in the frame, drawing the viewer's attention to these objects. Large curtains frame a young woman, perhaps Brown, conversing with a young man. Both are dressed elegantly, with the man wearing a trim waistcoat, his clothing recalls that of the men depicted in the previous images. The woman is wearing a ball gown with a veiled headpiece and is

seated in a large carved chair. The man and the woman appear as wealthy elites, emphasizing that brothel-going and prostitutes' balls are refined and elegant activities. The scene bespeaks gentility, but also projects the sexual nature of the event. The woman's breasts are large and well defined; the man with whom she converses gazes directly at her body. He is the focus of the image, and the focus of other women's attentions as well; a woman to his left looks over her shoulder at the couple with interest. The scene is notably populated with women, only two men appear in the fragment, suggesting that this is a man's paradise, peopled by beautiful and interested women. The scene also reveals the elements of socializing and entertainment that were part of brothel-going; here it appears that men are getting more than just sex, but also conversation, dancing, and socializing. Images like this contrast sharply with popular rhetoric of the period that portrayed brothels as cheap, dirty and chaotic spaces where only low men would go. Thus the writers and readers of the flash press tried to position brothel-going as a sophisticated and urbane activity—purchasing sex and desire bolstered their sense of their own prowess, as did brothel-going itself.


**Figure 1.6**: "A grand ball given by Julia Brown, at her mansion, 55 Leonard St." *The Flash*. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

Brothel guides make clear that the quality of the other male clientele was important in attracting men to certain establishments, allowing patrons to imagine themselves as on par with a powerful and sophisticated class of men. *Guide to the stranger* ends its glowing review of Sara Turner's brothel by promising that "there is one thing certain—none but gentlemen visit this Paradise of Love." Mrs. Davis' is "a very private place, visited by none but gentlemen of rank, education and good conduct," while Miss Davis' is similarly visited by "none but gentlemen." The men with whom one might come into contact while at the brothel were also an alluring aspect of brothel-going,

providing possible social connections and business opportunities. This process recalls Eve Sedgwick's discussion of the 'homosocial' in her book *Between Men*, in which Sedgwick argues that male bonding is symbolically routed through a mutual relation with a woman. She argues that "in the presence of a woman who can be seen as pitiable or contemptible, men are able to exchange power and to confirm each other's value even in the context of the remaining inequalities in their power."[127] Brothel-going presented an opportunity for men to bond with other men vis-á-vis the admirable but "pitiable" prostitute who entertains them. The luxury brothel was a place where young men could bond by imaginatively donning privilege and status. Furthermore, it is also a place where men of different social stations could bond and forge connections over the experience of brothel-going. These descriptions reveal that some men did not simply want the aggrandizing company of beautiful and respectable sex workers; they also desired to be among respectable men and to forge male bonds with them. Thus, there is another dimension to brothel-going as class fantasy.

### 1.3.3. Glaring Differences: Sex Worker's Wealth and the Fantasy Disrupted

Sex worker's wealth and refinement could also suggest men's own lack of affluence. While the refinement, manners, and importantly, wealth, of women in the sex trade was a point of excitement, this same affluence could suggest the woman's superior wealth and success. Sporting magazines' emphasis on the wealth and luxury of prostitutes belies fear and anxiety that the prostitute is better able to manipulate and adapt to modernization than sports themselves are. Beneath sporting reverence for prostitutes' wealth and material sophistication, there appears an anxiety about their affluence and

[127] Sedgwick, 160.

class mobility. Indeed, the magazines' focus on prostitutes' wealth, fashion, and jewelry can be described as nothing less than an obsession—with detailed accounts of their dress trumping even description of their physical features and beauty. A June 1842 article in *The Libertine* describes sex workers at a ball with a mixture of jealousy and disdain. The writer explains of one woman, "her *tout ensemble* would have impressed a stranger with the idea that she was born and reared in the lap of elegance and luxury," associating the sex worker with her purchasing power and the status that she commands through her trade.

However, the writer refuses to attribute this wealth to the woman's labor alone. He describes the woman thusly:

> [a] sudden flash of jewels from amid the rich softness of the down betrayed that simplicity alone could not satisfy the taste of the wearer, while in her, it unfortunately shew [*sic*] that she had become the dupe of some vile wretch, who had measured his *success*, and now, his *power* over her by rich and costly presents, and therefore showered them upon her.

The writer sees the sex worker's wealth as a material manifestation of men's power and affluence, divorcing the woman and her labor from the wealth that she displays. The writer displaces the woman's power onto the man, with the woman acting as mere commodity and display-piece, thus circumventing anxiety over the prostitute's ability to independently command wealth. The narrator displays a certain jealousy about the man who accompanies the woman. He imagines the woman's client and jealously calls him a "vile wretch," yet at the same time admires the man's "*success*" and "*power*" as embodied in the prostitute and her "rich and costly presents." The obvious wealth that sex workers are able to attain is again denied in an article that reminds readers that the sex worker's trade is dependent on men and market fluctuations. An issue of *The Whip*

explains that successful prostitutes wear "black satin and rouge…and a profusion of jewellery [*sic*] when in luck," but "when out of luck the trinkets leave them one by one, until finally they all disappear," suggesting that they must sell their finery and are privy to the vicissitudes of their customers' financial successes and failures. Thus, while obsessing over sex worker's supposed wealth with descriptions of plush living spaces and luxury goods, these descriptions often attempt to also undercut the possibility of sex worker's independent wealth by associating their capital with their wealthy male customers, not their own efforts and labor.

Writings in sporting magazines show awareness of the cosmopolitan connections that sex workers were able to make in their trade, and that in this manner, sex workers commanded wealth and networks of power in a way that the novice white-collar worker decidedly could not. A September 1842 issue of *The Whip* features a letter from a reader lamenting how prostitution and sexual indulgence corrupt young men and women; citing "young B-----d, whom gossip says carpeted her suit of rooms with the rich and costly fabrics of Turkey and Brussels." The writer alludes to the international and cosmopolitan nature of prostitution, evidenced by the woman's ability to afford and participate in global commerce and trade networks. According to the writer, while the exotic items denote her success, they also expose her corruption, as cosmopolitan goods are associated with denigration.[128] Frequently throughout the magazines, prostitutes' exotic goods are described in detail, suggesting that they are active participants in luxury trade markets and capitalist exchange. A June 1842 issue of *The Libertine* details the life of Clara

[128] See: Rosenthal, Laura J. *Infamous Commerce: Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture.* London: Cornell University Press. 2015. Rosenthal argues that prostitutes "commonly evoked the global commercial economy," wearing foreign fashion, buying exotic delicacies, and becoming ubiquitous figures in coffee shops and theaters (11).

Burke, who began her career in Halifax, Novia Scotia, but whose "correct deportment soon brought her many admirers; one of whom, a gentleman of wealth, brought her to New York, where he kept her for a time as his mistress, but his profession soon called him to the West Indies." The description thus suggests that Burke herself embodies inter-continental travel and exchange, while her trade is supported by, and perpetuates, international trade—in particular slavery. Here prostitution fuels business, economics, and human exploitation—Burke herself becomes part of global human commodity exchange, her commodification and support linked with overseas slavery and global trade.

As these examples show, the sex worker's proximity to exotic goods, trade, and cosmopolitan wealth was a source of excitement, but also anxiety and unease for sporting men. While sex workers' wealth helped to sustain sports' own fantasies about being a part of the upper class, it also suggested their distance from it; thus writers also sought to undercut and deny sex workers' wealth and success. One letter from a reader published in *The Whip* explains that after women lose their "virtue," and become prostitutes, "the progressive steps to ruin" "inevitably follow." Another issue of *The Libertine* from June 1842 bemoans that one prostitute's "extreme beauty commanded my admiration" but that ultimately readers should "pity her fallen condition, for her appearance and costly ornaments bespoke her ruin." These descriptions undermine the potential independence of sex workers and attempt to instill in readers the idea that sex workers are morally bankrupt, privy to disease and bound for an early death or permanent social ostracization—shuttering the high-class sex worker's glamor and potential power. The fantasy of wealth and luxury described by the magazines would have contrasted sharply

with the boarding houses and cramped offices where many clerks worked. Indeed, elite sex workers would have made considerably more money than a typical clerk, who would have to save amply to afford a night with them.[129] These contradictory descriptions show writers and readers struggling to manage their desire for women whose superior wealth and success would have contrasted sharply with their own, their own poverty or failures highlighted by contrast with the prostitutes' success and wealth. Thus magazines took pains to repeatedly emphasize sex worker's "inner" failure, spiritual denigration and inevitable doom as compensation for the fact of her superior wealth.

### 1.3.4. "It is a third rate house, and third rate people go there": Disreputable Prostitutes and the Fear of Being Declassed

While some brothels offered a fantasy of upward mobility, others represented a nightmare of these men's potential downward mobility. Sex workers whom the magazines disparaged are consistently described as poor, unattractive, uneducated, and brash, conducting their business in run-down brothels, side rooms of bars, even in the streets, and often in mixed-race company. The December 1842 issue of *The Whip* explains that the women at Mrs. Miller's brothel are "old, worn out, and diseased prostitutes…they look and act…like so many half-starved wild beasts of the forest." *Guide to the stranger* warns readers away from Anne Carson's brothel, which is "not frequented by those having pretensions to respectability." Sal Boyer's brothel is deemed "the lowest house in the city…no gentleman ever visits this Sodom." The guide reports

[129] As Cohen explains in *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-century New York* (1999), sex workers serving a high-end clientele could make a considerable amount of money, anywhere between $3 to $5 for sex, which was more than a week's wage for a young clerk. To spend the night, it cost $12—six times the amount for staying a week at a typical boardinghouse (99).

that Mrs. Hubbard's place "is a third rate house, and third rate people go there." An issue of *The Whip* warns readers, "Upon the whole Sarah is below par and decidedly a low bred vulgar woman. Her house is nightly crowded with all colors, from snowy white to sooty black. Never being particular she does not at any time want a partner for the night." A recurring column in *The Whip,* "The Brothel Expose," reports that Mrs. Bowen, an "abominable creature…of a most repulsive aspect," runs a brothel that makes the writer wonder, "[who could be] so base as to be a visitor of this den? Surely not he who had a single feeling of self-respect." *The Rake* reports on a disreputable brothel that "is nightly filled with ruffians; and bawds of the lowest grade." An anxious disgust is seen here as guides and magazines attempt to map and police improper brothels and the men who visit them. While luxury brothels offered a place to enact their class fantasies, 'low-class' brothels frequented by the poor and uneducated represented the sport's downward mobility. Therefore, guides and magazines promise to warn young men from 'low' brothels that might hurt their pretensions to respectability and gentlemanly behavior.

The publications take pains to add a significant class dimension to brothel-going—writers actively try to assert that they would never visit a working class or poor brothel, but rather are "gentlemen" and worthy of the luxury of high-class brothels. Yet by including these rebukes, the writers recognize the potential allure of these places and attempt to prevent readers from visiting them. One issue of *The Whip* expresses disgust at discovering a dance hall where "the men were of a still more degraded and mixed character" than the "filthy strumpet[s]" and "harlot[s]" present. In particular, the writer is offended at seeing men of their sporting fraternity there, "but what shall we say to the more respectable, and to the world would appear the more gentlemanly clerks, who were

there in dozens. In publishing of names and appearances this time nothing. But in the second offense nothing shall avail you." Thus the writer attempts to police the sporting class—fearing the men's association with the lower classes. Their presence suggests that clerks *did* enjoy mingling in places of a 'lower' order, perhaps because of preference, perhaps because of need—many men would not have able to afford the luxury establishments continually exulted in the magazines. The men's presence thus suggests the realities of the clerk class, whose downward mobility was just as possible as the upward mobility they sought in their careers and brothels. The 'low' and 'unsafe' houses are synonymous with working-class clientele and neighborhoods, and sports who would visit these places would not be behaving as manly 'gentlemanly' men. Indeed, *The Strangers guide* claims that its central purpose is to prevent men from being "involuntarily induced to visit a low pest house," which would damage their reputations, social status, and health. The threat of disease and also the threat to one's class standing that 'low' places of prostitution present is clear as *The strangers guide* further worries over "our gay city larks" who might be "deluded into houses of bad repute without being aware of the impending danger." Reputation is a concern, and anxiety is shown over 'accidentally' visiting low or undignified places of prostitution and mixing socially and physically with the lower classes. Indeed, the lower classes are seen as a disease themselves, and poverty and low social standing as a kind of contagion with which one must not come into contact. The existence of these "low" brothels challenges the magazine's significant efforts to make brothel-going a cosmopolitan and gentlemanly activity—the association upon which sports depended to define their 'libertine' masculinity.

The unsavory attitudes of 'low' sex workers are a central concern, particularly women who talk back and act out; these are women who demonstrate too well their self-possession and power. *The Whip* accuses prostitute French Lize of being "as brazen and filthy as ever." An October 1842 issue of the *Whip* describes "Old Moll Baker," "one of the lowest wanton's our city is cursed with" as possessed of a "filthy appearance and indecent behavior." A reader writes in to *The Whip* to warn others away from Liza Fuller, a "mass of corruption and filth" who drinks and "hurls abuse" at men. When the writer passed her on the street she "commenced a tirade of abuse." Women such as these pose the threat of exposure, which would result in significant damage to their reputations and social standing. An issue of *The Rake* indignantly remarks that sex workers also possessed superior emotional power over men. The writer warns readers that although some prostitutes might appear to be "beautiful, fascinating women," their "hearts are filled with guile; they are deceitful, treacherous" and explain that they "debauch our youth, ruin families, rob, lie and murder" and abscond with men's money only "to waste it in drunken profligacy, chuckling at your credulity and infatuation." A certain amount of resentment is clearly shown here, with the writer expressing frustration that "beautiful, fascinating women" have the power and cunning to supposedly fracture families and seduce young men—manipulating men's feelings, and their purported naïve infatuations, in order to exact their own monetary gains and support their independence. These sex worker's brash attitudes, hard drinking, and cursing contradicts the image of the docile, charming and sophisticated prostitutes who earn their regard and make men feel empowered and in-control. Unlike revered sex workers, who entertain their clients and affect a genteel manner, these women openly recognize and manipulate their power over

their clients, dispelling the fantasy of control. The women they portray as disreputable show a crack in sporting men's projection of swagger and confidence and expose how deeply sporting men depended on the notion of women as available and, in particular, governed by the desires of men and their satisfaction.

While 'good' prostitutes are described as well-mannered and from respectable, even elite, backgrounds, prostitutes whom sports admonish and degrade are usually from poor backgrounds and are consistently described as ill-mannered and uneducated. Sexual relations with these women are thus seen as below their station, despite the fact that many men of the clerk class would have come from similar circumstances. *The Whip* disparages, for instance, Mary Simpson, owner of "the lowest house of the kind in this city" who is described as a woman "of low parentage" who "never had any education." A December 1842 issue of the *Whip* remarks that the prostitutes at Mrs. Miller's brothel at 132 Duane Street "have tounges [*sic*] and can talk, like the rest of their kind. They have minds, but are uncultivated; and we do not wonder at their depravity and degradation." *The Flash* profiles Caroline Colstone in its "Lives of Nymphs" series explaining that "she was perfect incarnation of all that is vile and vicious in nature" and that her father was a poor farmer. Indeed, unlike elite sex workers, who come from more affluent sections of society, sex workers for whom sporting men reserve their disdain are from low-class backgrounds and this follows them into their professional lives, where they are uneducated and disgraceful. For some sporting men, class disdain thus becomes the means by which they maintain a narrative of themselves as affluent, upwardly mobile gentleman—despite, or because of, the reality of their dubious social and economic position. The magazines portray and evaluate sex workers based on their alleged class.

## 1.4. Racial Mixing, Minstrelsy and the Limits of Desire

Significantly, while sporting magazines target poor, outspoken, and older prostitutes for rebuke, prostitutes who sleep with black men garner some of the most marked disgust. The magazines aim to "warn" readers about sleeping with these women, suggesting that the white women's proximity to blackness can have the power to 'transfer' and taint the whiteness of potential customers. An article in one issue of *The Whip* titled "A Mobile Plague" aims to "expose to the authorities of Mobile [Alabama] a monster in the shape of a woman" a "poor miserable wretch" who is "horred [*sic*] to look at and her habits filthy and disgusting" with "snags of teeth protrude[ing] from her thick lips" she will "lie in wait until the dark hour of the night and drag some drunken negro to her den." A September 1842 letter to *The Whip* gives a disdainful account of a prostitute, Ann Curry or "'Old Curry,'" who is described as a "miserable specimen of depraved and loathsome humanity" that was "once set adrift in a dug out for one of her black or mild and molasses transactions" some years back, although the writer worries that some have forgotten this fact. The writer thus includes a warning to white men not "to have any intercourse with such a disgusting and filthy creature, or that any white man could go within reach of her contaminating influence, for the very atmosphere around her room must be pregnant with foul contagion." Her intercourse with black men has made her a "contagion" to white men and, for the writer, the lowest kind of prostitute on the spectrum. Indeed, the writer suggests that Curry's relation to black men has effectively 'blackened' her, and the sexual contamination of racial mixing can be spread to unsuspecting white men who might visit her. An issue of *The Whip* claims that Eliza

Simpson is "despised by every man, woman and child, and any one else who may be so unfortunate as to have the least acquaintance with her. I have been told she was seduced by a negro, having paid her mother twenty or thirty dollars to permit him to accomplish his hellish purpose. She became a common prostitute immediately after…". The description suggests that prostitution also presented a problematic kind of democratic equality to men, that *any* man with enough money could buy sex, and thus puts men at 'risk' of associating with 'low' men through their mutual sex partner. In a particularly grotesque profile, *The Flash* describes local sex worker Fanny Perry as "uneducated" with "grey hairs and false teeth." While she was seduced by a white man, "there was a piece of flesh in her master's house that she infinitely preferred," the "bright mulatto coachman." She is described as having "a strong partiality, for the African race" and they explain that the last man she slept with, who was black, "utterly disabled her from all further service." Thus the writer expresses racist fears of black men's sexual potency and aggressiveness, while demeaning Perry in particular for preferring to sleep with black men.

While sports raucously advocated for unfettered sexual indulgence and the supremacy of desire in governing one's life, the limit of this sexual ideology is apparent where sexual relations with black men and women are concerned. Sporting ideology of male heterosexual indulgence was challenged by black sexuality, which was portrayed as out-of-control. The white men who 'indulged' their desires for black women were portrayed as debased and humiliated. According to some writers' and readers' logic, this kind of sexual desire doesn't empower men, but exposes the individual as confused and entirely governed by their sexual predilections. In this sense, interracial sex presents the

'limit' of sporting men's sexual ideology. The papers cast this kind of sexual indulgence as socially degrading, portraying interracial sex as stripping men of their class status and barring them from being considered a gentleman. However, as I will show, amid images and language that mock black men and women, there are also depictions of white men expressing surreptitious desire for blackness. While some articles and letters to the editor express disdain for African Americans, there are also presentations that celebrate racial entertainments as liberating, even necessary for psychological and erotic relief from the travails of urban life. These depictions are nonetheless laced with denigrating sentiments that demonstrate the white consumer of 'black' entertainment as anxious about his feelings of attraction.

White men who have "mistress" relationships with black women are a target for rebuke and disgust in sporting magazines as well, for these men represent the boundaries of male sexual indulgence—according to the writers, their relations with black women threaten a breakdown of social structure and the inappropriate spread of capital. Unlike white women who sleep with black men, white men who just have sex with black women are rarely mentioned—instead, concern is focused on men who treat black women like a romantic lover or a wife. From an economic standpoint, the magazines express anger at white men who allegedly 'treat' their black lovers to extravagant gifts, namely property, which then allows these women wealth and the command of capital. From a social standpoint, the magazines perceive, and express outrage, that places where black women are treated like white women bring black women into social power and standing—insulting white ascendancy and displacing lower class whites.

I turn focus now to a series of letters from a reader in Charleston, South Carolina published in various issues of the *Whip* and signed "A.B.C.", who reports to the magazine with the distress over the racial mixing he observes in his community. The problem, according to the writer is that, as he puts it, "West Street is almost entirely inhabited by a middle color of vile females." The writer expresses three central concerns: that the men who court these women are respectable political elites, that their relations with these black women are quite affectionate and appear more like traditional romance, and that as a consequence, the women are able to command wealth and status within the community—displacing the writer and other poorer whites.

The writer identifies the men who are engaging in romantic relations as titled military men and wealthy aristocrats. According to A.B.C., these men dishonor their station by treating black women not as sexual objects, but like wives and intimate partners—attitudes he implies should only be reserved for white women. One man, identified as "a Militia Captain, now a prominent candidate for Major of the 2nd Battalion S.C. Militia" lives in a "sanctuary of amalgamation" where one can find him and "Mrs. Captain" "living in the utmost harmony and the most sincere love," explaining that "their hearts are entwined together in a bond of sweet affection…" The writer emphasizes the romantic, and not merely sexual, nature of their relationship—calling his black lover "Mrs. Captain" to emphasize the marital nature of their connection and affection. However, the treatment of these women as equals is a point that the writer continually mocks. He goes on to allege that the man in the "mansion" next door "spends his days and nights basking in the smiles of pollution congregated around him…the pledges of his dishonored love…two or three mulatto children." Furthermore, the man "seems to be

proud o the mar[k] that he keeps a colored girl," the writer implores the *Whip* to intervene, "I say his pride ought to be cut down by the Whip." It is clear that A.B.C.'s indignation stems from the "pride" and "sweet affection" these men feel for their black lovers, appearing to have more traditional romantic relationships with black instead of white women. The men are therefore seen as backward; their sexual desire has wrongfully moved beyond sex to love and affection. For the writer, these men present a horrific image of sporting sexual license gone awry, as sex ceases to be just sex and men willingly lose the sense of superiority that is held in their whiteness by putting black women in respectable romantic and social positions. Indeed, the editors respond to the letter, asking "does not this present a sad picture of the crime and lawdnoss [*sic*] that is carried on in Charleston" scoffing at the idea that "white men should become so base and degrade themselves so as to allow a negro to claim them is horrid." Indeed, allowing "a negro to claim them" is the principle problem, failing to maintain their autonomy, protect their whiteness and guard their desire.

According to A.B.C., the men who engage in these romantic-sexual relationships with black women are not merely isolated examples of ill-behaved men; rather, their "amalgamation" threatens to pollute Charleston's broader elite society—specifically young white women. A.B.C. goes on to complain, "a mulatto is the best quaiificaion [sic] for them [aristocratic men] to enter society, and how many of them make their toilets in [a] negroes chamber to attend an evening party graced by the beauteous smiles and virtue of the daughters of our city." Here the writer suggests that elite men "stop by" their kept women's houses before attending balls in white society. The writer goes on to imagine with horror, "how often has the ciss of the kiss from the mulatte's lip ceen impressed

upon the cheek os the virtuous and the fair [sic].” The writer thus imagines a kind of three-fold amalgamation: the black woman’s kiss is mixed with the innocent white woman’s through the white man’s collusion. In this sense, white men’s sexual involvement with black women threatens the purity and sanctity of the city’s population of virtuous white women. As with white prostitutes sleeping with black men, the idea of racial contagion is suggested. Therefore, according to A.B.C., the sexual potency of black women affects not only white men, but also white women and the larger white community as a whole.

There is a distinct economic and social element of concern for the writer—the social and economic ascendency granted the black women supposedly displaces white working-class men, such as himself. A.B.C. explains that he “was sent for” by Mr. and Mrs. Captain to bring them a fish dinner—revealing himself to be in some kind of servile or subordinate position—he was so “disgusted” by their situation that he suggests that “a little WHIPPING would do them good,” playing off the title of the magazine (as the editors and writers often did) by imploring the editors to ‘look into’ the matter. Furthermore, the suggestion of whipping brings to mind the image of master-slave relations and the use of violent punishment against others to affirm mastery and superiority. Thus, it appears that the writer has been insulted by having to serve the Captain and his black paramour as his social betters. A.B.C. continues, “these mulatoes [sic] are kdpt [sic] in a splendid style…the best two story houses are occupied by them; they keep rents for those classes of houses so high that actually a hard working mechanic is compelled either to live in a hovel or spend the most of his hard earning in paying a high rent.” At issue is the way in which A.B.C. perceives that black women—and white

male desire for black women—displace and subordinate white working class men from social standing. According to A.B.C.'s logic, black upward mobility by consequence subordinates white workingmen economically and socially. He bemoans that "these things are tolerated by the would-be aristocrats of our city." Black women commanding wealth and social status incenses the writer as well, using sexual power in the same manner as the sex workers discussed previously, and in particular noting how they are able to enmesh themselves into society. A.B.C. complains that it is not just sexual and emotional labor that is granting black women some monetary success in his community. He mentions "Mrs. O," a fortuneteller who is "well patronized by the surrounding neighborhood" and "picks up a good deal of change that way." This is in line with the overall concern in sporting magazines about the insecure place they find themselves in socially, while demonstrating deep animosity for those who navigate the novel opportunities of the world better than themselves.

### 1.4.1. Minstrelsy and Black Entertainment: Eroticism and Escape

Racial mockery and caricature were featured predominantly in the flash press, and racial entertainments were an important aspect of sporting culture. While the magazines put forward degrading and deeply disparaging sentiments about African Americans, there are also depictions of pleasure involved in watching blackface minstrel shows and black performances.[130] In this section I show that the young men writing in to the flash press

[130] The dynamics here call to mind a central debate among scholars of blackface minstrel entertainment as to what extent there was, to borrow Eric Lott's dichotomy, white "love" and "theft" of black culture in blackface performances. Authors like Lott, David Roediger, and W.T. Lhamon Jr. have discussed in depth the attraction and repulsion dualities within blackface performance. In *The Wages of Whiteness* Roediger established that "white workers could, and did, define and accept their class positions by fashioning identities as 'not slaves' and as 'not Blacks'" (13), a process that was brought out and mediated by blackface performance. However, Lhamon argues in *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow*

demonstrate the ways in which whites sought out black performance for emotional release and sexual titillation. While writers lobbed accusations of miscegenation at sex workers whom they reviled, effecting tones of disgust and loathing for racial mixing, the magazine's coverage of minstrel shows and black performances portrays a different set of racist sentiments. In this section, I will examine descriptions of blackface and black performance to demonstrate that while tones of mockery and racial denigration are still very much present, these depictions also show a significant enjoyment of black culture and investment in blackness as a means to solidify and secure men's whiteness, sexual arousal and emotional release. Thus, for some sports, black performance was another means of escape, and while they attempted to denigrate African Americans to bolster their sense of social capital in whiteness, these performances show that some men used these performances to experience emotionally fulfilling intensity amid the "dullness" of everyday life.

Returning to the March 20, 1853 issues of *The Pick* discussed earlier, we can see the way in which racial entertainments and racist enjoyments are portrayed as creating comfort and cohering a sense of community in whiteness amid the disaffecting changes attending industrialization. In the story, the "editor" and narrator Mr. Pick (who refers to himself in the third person throughout the story) walks along the streets, "feeling

---

*to Hip Hop* (2000) that blackface performance could also be interpreted as "work[ing] [for] and simultaneously against racial stereotyping," with minstrelsy having the potential to "sap[] racism from within" (6). While I do not seek to make a theoretical intervention into this debate, I want to point out that in my readings of the flash press, the latter conclusion cannot be easily supported. Rather, I tend to agree with Saidiya V. Hartman in *Scenes of Subjection* that "the seeming transgression of the color line and the identification forged with the blackface mask through aversion and/or desire ultimately served only to reinforce relations of mastery and servitude," (29)—a conclusion echoed by Marvin McAllister in *Whiting Up: Whiteface Minstrels and Stage Europeans in African American Performance* (2011), Douglas A. Jones Jr. in "Black Politics but Not Black People: Rethinking the Social and 'Racial' History of Early Minstrelsy" (2013), and *Racechanges: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture* (1997) by Susan Gubar, to name a few.

somewhat feverish…after the fatigue and annoyance of a day of hard work at his published office." He ruminates that people are simply "human livestock," lamenting that he and others are an undifferentiated and inconsequential mass that "are not of much account in this world." He joints the "current" of people until he arrives at "Wood Minstrels"[131] and pays to see a show. He comments on the sheer volume of people there and wonders "*why* we did go?" He quickly answers this question as he describes the ameliorating effect the performance has on him, and how he feels it effectively re-bonds him with his fellow white men and women after the discord and alienating experience on the street and at work. He states,

> the band warbled so sweetly and feelingly their touching melodies, pleasant thoughts—memories of other days, home and happier hours, faces loved but gone, scenes and companions with whom we had listened to such music in by gone years, stole gently and pleasantly across him, refining and softening the better feelings of his nature, shutting out the world and its full cares and anxieties, and flashes of hope would shoot across him, all the while that one of these airs was being sung, and when it closed, there was a soft moisture about the heart, if not the eye.

Pick's sentiments reinforce David Roediger's assertion in *Wages of Whiteness* that minstrel performances staged "preindustrial joys"[132] for audiences, and that the performances assuaged "the tension between a longing for a rural past and the need to adapt to the urban present."[133] The configuration of imaginative enjoyment and urban escape is echoed in Pick's retreat from the disorienting streets, and his own ambivalence, into the "memories of other days, home and happier hours." Saidiya V. Hartman contends that scenes of black enjoyment "provide an opportunity for white self-reflection, or, more

[131] Wood's was a popular New York minstrel troop put together by Edwin P. Christy. See: *A History of the New York Stage from the First Performance in 1732 to 1901 Vol. 1*. by Thomas Brown and *The Negro on the Stage* by Laurence Hutton, pages 141-145. Exonumist Aaron Packard also has a short and interesting online article on Wood's Minstrels and the stamped admittance coins they produced: <http://www.novanumismatics.com/numismatic-sketches/woods-minstrel-theatre-tokens-of-new-york/>
[132] Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 104.
[133] Ibid., 119.

broadly speaking, the elasticity of blackness enables its deployment as a vehicle for exploring the human condition,"[134] Pick's imaginative flight back to simpler times causes him to "refine" his "better feelings" and put aside his "cares and anxieties." White performances of blackness created a "mythically rendered black body,"[135] a fantasy of blackness that put forward a faux image of African Americans and black culture that white audiences could consume. We see this process at work in Pick's description, and reaction, to the show. Initially "feeling feverish" the performance takes him away from the urban confusion and his frustrating job, causing him to feel sentimentality and emotion so strong as to bring "soft moisture" to his eye. A distinct contrast from the ambivalence and discouragement he feels on the streets, the "mythically rendered black body" and minstrel performance facilitates his ability to feel deeper and more meaningfully than in his everyday life.

The performance has a similar effect on the crowd, who are rendered human in his eyes as he imagines himself and the audience bonding together through the affective sympathies brought out by the performance. As Pick becomes overwhelmed with emotion, he achieves a feeling of common humanity and a universal bond with the white audience through false nostalgia and white superiority. He explains,

> Pick raised his head and looks about him, upon the earnest hard featured men, and lovely women, and wondered if a chord had been touched in their bosoms too, and judging by the subdued looks, he came to the conclusion, that they too were human, and like causes produced like effect, and that they, as well as Mr Pick were satisfied with their twenty-five cents worth, and would go again

[134] Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America* New York: Oxford UP, 1997. Page 34.
[135] Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910*. Duke University Press, 2006. Page 5.

In sharp contrast to his experience on the city streets, where "cares and anxiety" dominate, the artificial sentimentality and nostalgia of the minstrel show creates a touching and "subdued" mood—the audience's similar reaction allows Pick to register that "they too were human," and not the faceless mass he perceived earlier. Thus, the performance confirms a shared sense of belonging through whiteness; the fellow feeling brought on through racial mockery causes Pick feel his (white) humanity and a sense of (white) community. As in descriptions of brothels, the narrator attempts to add an element of class and sophistication to taking in the performances. He speaks with gentle sentiment about the show, and remarks that he is "surrounded by a respectable intelligent American audience." Indeed, the presence of the editor at the minstrel show illustrates that taking in blackface minstrel performances was an important component of sporting culture; clerks enjoyed and actively attended blackface performances, with frequent ads for shows appearing in the flash press.[136] As Pick's sentiments here illustrate, minstrel performance offered an opportunity for like-minded men to bond over the mockery of others.[137] As Jermone P. Bjelopera explains, "at its heart, blackface allowed a variety of clerical workers … to at least temporarily minimize their differences and develop a shared sense of racial identity."[138] As the passage illustrates, we see the narrator drawing

[136] Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz recognize sporting men's involvement in minstrel performance in their book, *The Flash Press*, as does James W. Cook in his article "Dancing Across the Color Line.'" Jerome P. Bjelopera also discusses the popularity of blackface performance in *City of Clerks*; Bjelopera focuses on the clerk class from 1860 until the early twentieth century, demonstrating the enduring popularity of minstrel performances for the clerk class.

[137] The works of David Roediger (*The Wages of Whiteness*), Eric Lott (*Love and Theft*), Alexander Saxon (*The Rise and Fall of the White Republic*) and Sean Wilentz (*Chants Democratic)*, established the popularity of blackface minstrel performances for white working class men in the antebellum period, showing how these performances helped the white working class foment their identification *as* white and as a coherent class.

[138] Bjelopera, *City of Clerks*, 130. Bjelopera argues that while "scholars have linked blackface minstrelsy most often to white, working-class, male audiences, especially in the antebellum period" (130), minstrel performance was also quite popular among white-collar classes during the post-civil war period into the early twentieth century. I would add to this assertion that, as examination of flash press periodicals show,

racial identification and "humanity" from the nostalgic narratives of the stage, but also in the caricature and mockery of African Americans.

The narrator becomes distressed over the blackness of the performers and disavows the racialized aspects of the performance as denigrating for white audiences—attempting to distance himself from enjoying the performance of blackness. He ponders, "*There is a charm about those kind of entertainments.* In what does it consist? In the fact that there are a parcel of imitation negroes on a platform? Decidedly not. It lessens the effect." The narrator then makes the commonly held racist claim that "negroes are a second class race," the "connecting link between the higher order of man, and the higher order of monkeys." Thus the narrator experiences a moment of white identification, claiming black peoples originated from "monkeys," identifying as white by identifying as "not Black." He muses whether the entertainment is so captivating precisely because the performers "throw off their real character while performing, and take that of the Negros charm." This possibility makes him deeply uncomfortable, he ultimately posits that "no, this fact should disgust, rather than please a refined audience, for it is degrading." His expression of disgust, a complicated emotional mixture of excess, desire and repulsion, exposes the deeply affecting nature of the performance. According to William Ian Miller in *The Anatomy of Disgust*,

> Disgust evaluates negatively what it touches, proclaims the meanness and inferiority of its object. And by doing so it presents a nervous claim of right to be free of the dangers imposed by the proximity of the inferior. It is thus an assertion of a claim to superiority that at the same time recognized the vulnerability of that superiority to the defiling powers of the low[139]

---

the white-collar clerk classes of the antebellum period were indeed very much active in minstrel entertainment.

[139] William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*. Harvard University Press, 1998. Page 9.

Kyla Wazana Tompkins connects disgust to an excess of emotionality, explaining of racial caricature on trading cards, "disgust here is married not only to the disavowal of big affect—joy, pain, desire, pleasure—away from the white, Protestant, middle-class body and onto black, Asian, and ethnic white bodies; it also, seemingly inversely, married to envy and desire."[140] Pick attempts to disavow that the "big affect," like the kind shown on the minstrel stage that so profoundly affects him, has any relation to the fact that the performers are "playing black." Indeed, he tries to account for this distressing pleasure and group bonding over blackness by redirecting his pleasure and admiration back to white culture.

Pick goes further in trying to disassociate the show, and in particular the audience's enjoyment of the show, from blackness. He claims that "the negroes never originated any such music or any thing like it" and posits that the "negro melodies" were "introduced at the mansion by the ladies of the family of the proprietor, caught up by the household servants" and then disseminated to the other slaves, attempting to route the performance and his pleasure back to whites. He then asserts that the performers should perform "in their usual dress, and without blackening their faces" and asks, if it would not be "equally attractive and profitable if not more so?" Thus, in a self-conscious way, the narrator affects an embarrassed tone of disgust at their 'blacking up' to elide any sense of desire or enjoyment in blackness, attempting to connect the songs to an originary, ur-whiteness of the south. The narrator makes an effort to disavow that his enjoyment signaled a "joyous" celebration or admiration for black culture. However, while the narrator tries to dismiss blackness as unimportant to his enjoyment, the desire

[140] Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century*. NYU Press, 2012. Page 150.

and titillation that is brought on in watching the performance supports the argument that there was significant yearning, "envy and desire" present in black caricaturing.[141]

While the narrator explains at length that his enjoyment of the spectacle is completely unrelated to blackness, his reported experience of the performance contradicts this claim—the show momentarily 'cures' his feelings of disaffected impotency brought on by urban life and inspires him to think about sex. During the performance he "noticed several demonstrations of eyes in the room" and he explains that if "he should ever fall in love" his "very first effort at love making will be to induce the aforesaid young maid's mamma or guardian to permit Mr [sic] Pick to take her to Wood's Minstrels." He then references the nostalgic, preindustrial scenes he's just heard in the songs, which "talk about 'shady groves,' 'murmuring rivers,' 'cool retreats,' 'cascades,' and other generally recognized concomitants for love making" further reiterating that "there is not one spot so well suited to love making as under the influence of that music, which, until Wood washes his band, we are forced to designate as negro music." So while the narrator claims that the blackness of the performers is "disgusting," his identification of the performance as an ideal aphrodisiac suggests that the performance of black "joy, pain, desire, pleasure" and "preindustrial joys" arouses him. He speaks to the seductive quality of the music, explaining,

> Under its quiet soul inspiring and soothing influence, one could do wonders. Words are useless. The eyes speak love's own language, and are eloquent. The—; bah! –Mr Pick has worked his imagination into sentiment; but one thought o the realities of life—libel suits or Hutchings Bitters—cools him down in an instant, and he quits this high falutin [sic] talk and namby pambyism [sic]

[141] The dynamic of desire and repulsion within blackface minstrel performance is discussed in depth by Eric Lott in *Love and Theft*.

Pick's thoughts turn back to the "realities of life," lawsuits and bodily discomfort (Hutching Bitters was supposed to cure indigestion). Pick is "cooled in an instant" and teleported back to the urban reality of which he briefly escaped, and is thus rendered impotent. Returning to Tompkins' term, it is perhaps the "big affect" associated with the presentation of blackness that releases Pick, the white audience, and his imaginary date, from the routinization and constrictions of everyday life and which encourages his arousal.

In a feature article in the November 1842 issues of *The Flash*, entitled "Dancing For Eels," the author goes into detail about his fascination with public dance performances put on by African Americans, with the shows providing escape and deep excitement. The article, with included illustration (see Figure 1.7) appears on the publication's front page, and admiringly describes the performances at Manhattan's Catherine Market. Douglas A. Jones explains that Catherine Market acted as a "stage where blacks displayed their mercantile and performative goods for black and white consumption."[142] Jones describes how slaves, on their days off, would go down to the dock and sell their wares or perform for money. He explains that black men and women at the markets "were ever ready, by their 'negro sayings or goings,' to make a few shillings"—primarily through dancing and musical performance. The best dancer was awarded money, or if there was no money, "he received fish or eels."[143] We indeed see these dynamics depicted in the illustration, where black men dance and fight in front of a large group of mixed-race spectators. One man holds an eel, egging on the dancers in

[142] Jones Jr, Douglas A. "Black politics but not black people: Rethinking the social and "racial" history of early minstrelsy." *TDR/The Drama Review* 57.2 (2013): 21-37. Page 24. W.T. Lhamon, Jr. also discusses Catherine Street market performances and blackface minstrelsy in *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop*.
[143] Ibid., 24.

their competition.[144] Jones argues that "what most attracted the white participants" to the performances "was what black rivermen called 'rascality.' This unofficial code among black men … [that] stressed unabashed expressions of individuality" which was "an important part of their black masculine identity that prized not only the more common working-class virtues of toughness and strength but also cleverness, dexterity, and flamboyance."[145] Indeed the exuberance and "rascality" of the performers is a source of fascination and focus for the narrator.

[144] While Lhamon and Jones discuss the Catherine Market performances as a occurring before slavery was prohibited in New York in 1827, the 1842 publication of the story demonstrates that this popular entertainment endured.
[145] Jones, 24.

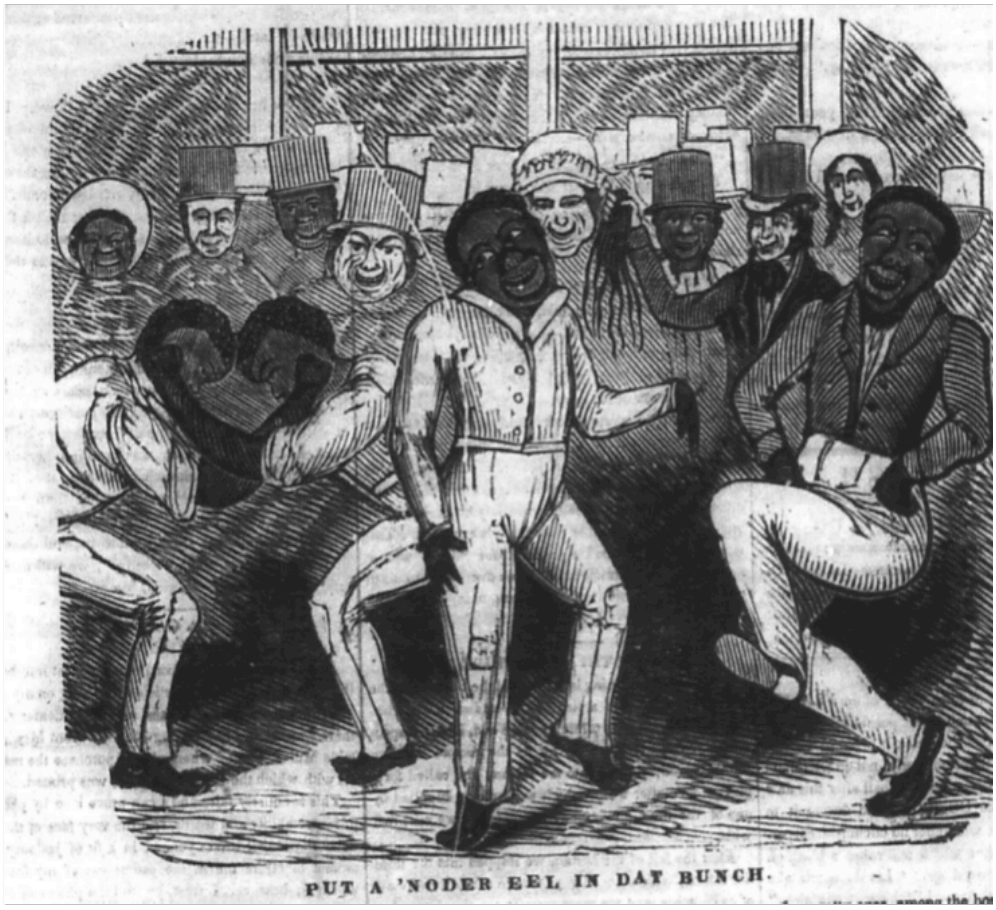


**Figure 1.7**: "Put a 'noder eel in dat bunch." *The Flash*. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

The narrator describes in detail the performances he sees and the effects they have on him and his friends, displaying a convoluted mix of admiration, mockery, titillation and perhaps also sexual arousal. The narrator describes how the African American men "save up their change thro' the week," "purchase the largest bunch [of eels] they can" and then "challenge the first darkey they see" to dance. They appoint judges and large crowds gather to watch, with the writer commenting that he was "amused for an hour" pleased "as much with their conversation as their dancing." The narrator here shows clear enjoyment of African American dance and song. However, there are overtones of

mockery mixed in with the narrator's enjoyment. The narrator continually refers to the African American participants as "darkies" and affects a mocking and dehumanizing anthropological tone to describe the rules surrounding their competitions. The writer 'quotes' one of the performers, Sam, challenging another, Dick, on who deserves the eel prize. He 'quotes' Sam using the standard faux black vernacular, "why nigger, you didn't cum de lamper-eel step, nor de side shuffle, and ob course you don't win de eels." The men begin to bicker and eventually "Sam went at him like a ram at a gate post." Dick tries to remove the "wool" from Sam's head as they fight, which is depicted in the image above. This imagery portrays black men as petty and silly, while the narrator makes light of, and takes pleasure in, the violence between the two men. Scenes like this of violence toward black bodies work as a "denial of black sentience and the obscurity of suffering."[146] The two men's fight is turned into comical farce, becoming part of the audience's entertainment and amusement. There is a possessive white paternalism in the descriptions as well; the author describes a competition in Philadelphia he witnesses that was similar except that "they have different styles of dance from our darkies." Nonetheless, the narrator's discussion of the Philadelphia performance suggests how thoroughly the narrator enjoys and sought out this kind of entertainment, seeking out shows in New York and as well as in his travels.

The enjoyment of the narrator and his friends, similar to Pick's reactions to Wood's Minstrels, is intense and affecting. The author continues on, describing a visit to Philadelphia where the narrator watches a troop competing in dance and song with a group from across the river in New Jersey. The narrator reports that while watching the performance "our friend on this occasion was so excited by witnessing the dancing, as

[146] Hartman, 19.

scarcely to be manageable, and he was actually forced away." He eventually "became cooled" by having a "smasher" (a strong drink) at a local bar and taking a walk. In a description that mirrors that of Pick, the friend becomes so overwhelmed by the affective reverberations of the performance that he becomes "scarcely manageable" and must be "cooled." Here the jubilant dancers, their bartering and competition, causes the narrator's friend to become overwhelmed by his own excitement to the point of needing to be "forced away," unable to contain the spectacle and the emotional excesses it inspires in him. The narrator's friend does, however, return in time for himself and the narrator to catch two "stout wenches" get into a fight, "after a doal [sic] of jabbering on both sides, they fell to work at the hair… there was quite enough of that distributed to make twenty crowsnests [sic]." The narrator again turns a mocking but fetishized focus on black hair while taking pleasure in watching the spectacle of the fighters' pain. The descriptions of the black men and women fighting effectively "den[ies] the import" of black "pain by containing it within comic spectacle."[147] This excess of pleasure, emotion, and pain deeply affects the narrator and his friend. They "went home, and then to church, but our minds occupied, I am sorry to say, with the eels more than the more worthy divine." The men thus become so excited by the dance performances and sexualized violence of the two women that they are unable to focus—drawing their attentions away from the moralizing lessons of church to the stimulating street performances.[148] The narrator describes throughout the story rapt fascination and titillation, with his enjoyment of black

[147] Tompkins, 171.
[148] These sentiments are similar to those recorded in Eric Lott's *Love and Theft*. As Lott relates, one man explains that after a blackface minstrel show came to his town he "thought of nothing else for weeks," while another man reports after seeing his first performance that he "found [himself] dreaming of minstrels." (55)

performance and "rascality" taking on dimensions of obsession and fantasy as we glimpse white desire for interracial contact.

A story and accompanying comic (see Figure 1.8) appears in an article in *The Libertine* that similarly shows how black entertainment facilitated white social release and sexual arousal. The story, entitled "Dance on Long Wharf—Boston" describes a pair of white sex workers, Nance Holmes and Suse Bryant, dancing outside a local brothel for the purposes of entertainment, competition and advertisement for the brothel. The image mirrors that of the above Catherine Market image from *The Libertine.* A large group of spectators, including one African American man, watch the two women dance while a black man plays the violin, demonstrating that this scene is very much borrowed from black performance culture. Compared with the illustration from *The Libertine*, the women appear to be dancing in the same style as the African American performers are, with legs raised at a sharp angle and hands placed on their hips. The depiction of a caricatured black fiddler with distended white lips, recalling blackface costume, asserts mockery of African Americans at the same time that the black fiddler's presence facilitates the functioning and 'fun' of the competition itself. The narrator describes a man "of the 'sable hue'" passing around programs while a "half white negro barber, whose services had been hired for the occasion" played on the violin. He describes Bryant dancing, "every move was grace, her limbs moved as if guided by machinery. She now came the hell and toe business—and done it to a nail, with which she wound up the hornpipe." The narrator continues to detail the competition between the two women, with the women trying to copy each other's steps and best each other, echoing the type of competitive dancing performed by African Americans on the docks in northeastern cities.


**Figure 1.8**: "Grand Trial Dance between Nance Holmes and Suse Bryant on Long Wharf, Boston." *The Libertine*. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

In a pattern similar to that of Pick's reaction to the minstrel performance or the young men's reactions to the dancing in Philadelphia, white arousal is made possible by the labor and display of 'black culture,' musicians, and dance. As the black musicians play minstrel-like tunes such as "where did you come from, knock a nigger down," and "Jenny get your hoe cake done my lady," the women dance more and more vigorously. The women's breasts are depicted spilling out of their dresses and "sweat run[s] down their faces, as if all within was on fire." The women dance, displaying their bodies and bawdy bodily movements for their own enjoyment perhaps, but also to attract and arouse potential customers—dancing itself being a metanarrative on sex and sexual contact. The

competitive entertainment and exuberance of the women is thus facilitated by black minstrel-styled performance. If we were to push the reading further, we can see a kind of displacement of sexualized desire for black bodies, movement and performance, onto the more socially acceptable bodies of white female sex workers, who mimic and borrow the dances of black performers for visual and physical consumption by white customers. These images and descriptions thus show how black culture, performance, and presence facilitate white enjoyment and sexual arousal, and allow for white audiences to reach affective depths that they are normally unable to.

These descriptions and images all suggest that sporting culture was deeply invested in black entertainment, both more authentic versions as with the Catherine Market performances, as well as blackface minstrel performance. As with writers' attempts to add a sense of honor around brothel-going, so too do the narrators posit minstrel performance as sophisticated entertainment. The common assertion among scholars that minstrelsy involved complicated dynamics of attraction and repulsion is on display in these portrayals. Narrators clearly enjoy, and often become sexually aroused, while watching black performers or faux-blackness being performed, but they continually included demeaning, degrading and racist admonishments and descriptions to undercut the power and viscerality of these experiences. In these depictions, white audiences are not necessarily coming to identify with black individuals or community, but rather, they are released from "dull care," as Mr Pick defines it, by the 'black' performances and the display of black "cleverness, dexterity, and flamboyance."[149] In other words, in these scenes we glimpse white consumption and in some cases, reliance on, black bodies, performance and culture for escape, erotic pleasure and emotional release. If sporting

[149] Jones, 25.

men desired a sense of autonomy, sophistication and mastery, black performances appear as a means to experience the freedoms, the "rascality," that they saw performed on the stage and in the street.

## 1.5. Conclusion

Sporting culture was in many ways a product of the dizzying social, cultural and economic changes of the early nineteenth century. While men were attracted to sporting culture for various reasons, I have shown here that some turned to sporting culture as a means to vent frustrations in their lives, to play the part of a gentleman, and experience unfettered enjoyment that may not have been readily available to them in their day to day lives. Within sporting magazines writers and readers express feelings of frustration with work, living conditions and their own feelings of dissatisfaction. Sporting magazines often advertised that they offered readers escape from "dull care," and in their pages they profiled and previewed the many places of 'escape' within the city.

Prostitution was a central and obsessive focus of sporting magazines. Writers profiled sex workers and brothels, offering detailed descriptions not just of women's appearances, but also the finery of the women's clothing and sumptuous details of the inside of the brothels where they worked. For some, the brothel offered a significant class fantasy, where men could be treated like "gentlemen" and play the part of a wealthy urban denizen. At the same time, the wealth that sex workers could allegedly attain disturbed some readers and writers, who repeatedly try to suggest these women's "inner" denigration and failure. For some, the 'low' brothel presented a disturbing image of poverty and destitution, representing a kind of nightmare of one's own downward

mobility. Sporting men were obsessively class-conscious. Magazine editors kept an eye on citizen's comings and goings, policing their own ranks and chastising certain sports when they were seen in 'low class' places. Minstrel shows and racial mockery were a defining element of sporting culture. Articles and stories appearing in the flash press show men enjoying minstrelsy as a means of emotional release. These men express that they are able to reach emotive, affective depths not afforded to them in their day-to-day lives. Ultimately, sporting masculinity was a fraught and often anxiety-ridden enterprise. A close examination of sporting publications suggests that below the bravado of the racy magazines, readers and editors alike expressed feelings of apathy and anxiety about city life and their uncertain social and economic positions

Chapter Two – "The Beast in the Shape of Man": Libertinism, Sporting Culture, and Seduction in U.S. Popular Culture

## 2.1. Introduction: The Phenomenon of Seduction in the Antebellum U.S.

On February 6, 1843, Sarah Mercer, a young girl and daughter of a respectable Philadelphia family, was lured into a brothel by local libertine Mahlon Heberton and raped at gunpoint. Afterward, according to court testimony by Sarah, Heberton threatened to "tell his friends that I had taken him to the house after picking him up in the street" and promised they would elope in New Orleans. After returning home several days later, Sarah confessed the ordeal to her family. Upon hearing what happened, Sarah's brother, Singleton, in a fit of rage over her disgrace, tried to kill his sister. After Heberton refused to marry Sarah, Singleton shot Heberton instead. The murder trial of Singleton Mercer became a nationally watched sensation, with newspapers and writers offering detailed accounts of the events and trial. The story inspired myriad sensational novels, including George Lippard's *The Quaker City, or; The Monks of Monk Hall*, the most popular novel published in the U.S. until *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in 1852. It ignited newspaper coverage from across the nation, inspiring a petition campaign that successfully criminalized seduction[150] in Philadelphia just two days after the trial was

[150] Until seduction began to be criminalized in some states, seduction was legally defined as "a violation of the father/master's 'private' right to [the daughter or servants'] labor and services" (Pamela Haag, *Consent*, 3). Seduction was essentially understood as a violation of property and labor rights between men, often understood as the loss of labor resulting from a daughter's pregnancy. Legally, seduction was applied to sexual acts both consensual and forced. As Lea VanderVelde explains in "The Legal Ways of Seduction," "'seduction' sounded in euphemism to describe occurrences for which there were few other publicly acceptable words. It sounded in indirection for violations which, in fact, may have been very direct, brutish, and assaultive" (884). Courts, where seduction was officially defined by judges and juries, "rarely differentiated between the victims of rape and women abandoned by their lovers when pregnant" (884). The extremely complicated politics of naming and differentiating between "seduction" and "rape" in court are not discussed in depth here. For more information on this see: Block, Sharon. *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America*. UNC Press Books, 2006; Haag, Pamela. *Consent: Sexual rights and the transformation of American Liberalism*. Cornell University Press, 1999; Freedman, Estelle B. *Redefining Rape: Sexual*

over.[151] Michigan, New York, and Massachusetts passed similar laws shortly thereafter. Before its revision, seduction was a civic crime understood as "a violation of the father/master's 'private' right to [the daughter or servants'] labor and services," while only male guardians could bring suit for monetary rewards.[152] By 1900, almost twenty states had passed laws establishing criminal liability for seduction, which allowed women to bring suit against men and established more severe punishments, including harsher fines and jail time.[153] In this chapter, I examine why seduction and the male seducer were such a source of fixation and fear in antebellum culture. I examine sensational novels, reform society documents, legislation, newspaper stories, and magazine editorials to investigate the antebellum preoccupation with seduction from both a literary and cultural standpoint. I argue that commentators who deplored seduction feared the influence that the libertine ethos of sporting culture would have on the young, impressionable, male populations of the metropolis. Critics, authors, and reformers struggled to define and control male behavior and values to shape an ideal, middle-class citizen.

A preoccupation with seduction was not a phenomenon confined to literature—it was a national obsession. I use the term "seduction" to denote acts that were historically and legally labeled as such. In the fictional and historical examples that I examine "seduction" often describes sexual encounters that resulted from some level of initial familiarity or acquaintance between a man and a woman, which then led to verbal and physical coercion or force. As with the Mercer seduction, shocking events throughout the early nineteenth century brought national attention to the problem of seduction and

---

*Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation*. Harvard University Press, 2013; VanderVelde, Lea. "The Legal Ways of Seduction." *Stanford Law Review* (1996): 817-901.

[151] Hessinger, *Seduced, Abandoned, and Reborn*, 63.

[152] M. B.W. Sinclair, "Seduction and the Myth of the Ideal Woman." *Law & Ineq.* 5, 1987. Page 3.

[153] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*. 45.

sporting culture.[154] At the same time, fear and panic grew over what was perceived as the rapid expansion of prostitution in urban centers, understood as a direct result of seduction. Seduction plots, often associated with early U.S. sentimental literature, thrived in the 1830s and 1840s as sensational authors wove seduction tales into their incredibly popular "city mysteries" tales.[155] Furthermore, during the nineteenth century there were almost 300 cases of seduction tried in court.[156] The marked preoccupation with seduction during this period inspired my inquiry for this chapter as, reading through sensational novels and archival documents, I often asked myself why audiences became so preoccupied with seduction. After putting these works into their historical and cultural context, it became clear that these narratives were part of a larger conversation taking place over the changing meanings of race, class and gender in modernizing society and, in particular, in the expanding urban metropolis.

In order to understand the phenomenon of seduction, the connection between sporting culture and seduction must be understood. The figure of the libertine that pervades city mysteries fiction—dressed fashionably, drinking profusely with his cronies, seducing young women, unattached and unfettered—was a direct commentary on sporting men and the fear of seduction. In this chapter, I argue that the libertine seducer so often portrayed in sensational city-mysteries fiction was a direct commentary on

[154] Sporting culture emphasized male camaraderie and self-indulgence, most often in the myriad entertainments that the city had to offer. Sports enjoyed gambling, betting, watching horseracing, pugilism, excessive drinking, visiting dance halls, oyster cellars, and brothel going. Predominately young, white men participated in sporting culture. See Chapter One for a more in depth analysis of sporting culture and sporting men. Flash points where sporting culture entered into the public view include the murder of high-class sex worker, Helen Jewett in 1836. Her suspected murderer, Richard P. Robinson, was a known sport, and evidence that came out around the trial put sporting life in the national spotlight. The mysterious death of Mary Rogers in 1841, a beautiful and well-known cigar salesclerk in New York, was at first thought to be murder but was later determined to be the result of a failed abortion. Reporters speculated that a local libertine had seduced her, as sporting men regularly visited the shop where she worked.

[155] City mysteries and urban gothic literature, incredible popular in the nineteenth century, are a subset of sensational literature, and focus on cities lewd and seamy underworlds.

[156] See: Lea VanderVelde. "The Legal Ways of Seduction." *Stanford Law Review* (1996): 817-901.

sporting men. As trial reports, media coverage, and reform documents collectively show, the seducer of the popular imagination was seen as an outgrowth of sporting culture. Young, single, dressed fashionably and out on drinking sprees with his friends, the sporting man embodied national anxieties over the proper place of young, white men in the changing nation. Thus, in this chapter I use the terms "seducer," "libertine," "sport," and "libertine-sport" interchangeably in order to emphasize that these figures were one and the same. Concern over seduction was both literal and figurative. Men did, however much the occurrences were distorted, seduce women who were relatively unprotected by the law. The seducer was also a powerfully evocative figure that reformers and authors drew on rhetorically to make claims about male sexual license, female victimization, and the proper direction of manhood in the new nation.

Sporting culture was an object of focus for authors and reformers precisely because of the way in which sporting masculinity subverted middle-class masculine ideals. Concomitant with the rise of the middle class in the beginning decades of the nineteenth century, new patterns of idealized male comportment emerged in the United States.[157] Dana D. Nelson's work on the consolidation of a "national manhood" in the antebellum period has informed my understanding of this masculine hegemony. Nelson argues that an ethic of industriousness and self-control permeated "artisan and working classes as well as the emergent middle classes" and included an "extreme orientation

[157] Scholarship on the rise of the middle class in the nineteenth century has established that the middle class began to take shape in the antebellum period and was in a process of consolidation until the Civil War period. In the classic work, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American city, 1760-1900* (1989) Stuart M. Blumin suggests that "the middle class was *not* fully formed before the [Civil] war," arguing that in the post Civil War period "the widening differences between the worlds of nonmanual and manual work, the expansion of middle-class suburbanization" and increasingly class-inflected social and economic conflicts created a fully articulated middle class. See also: Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (1986)*;* Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (1981).

toward work, maximum productivity and material accumulation."[158] Restraint, self-control and industriousness were a popularly held expression of masculinity.[159] Sporting men distinctly defied this ideal, their "attitudes towards sexuality, work, and leisure" were "totally at odds with the middle-class culture's validation of industry, delayed gratification, and sexual virtue."[160] Indeed, sports' "licentious, antidomestic lifestyle has begun to pose a troubling challenge to the city's middle class" in the antebellum period.[161] Critics of sporting culture portray sports as nefarious seducers—they 'ruin' young women, destroy families, and induce potentially upstanding young men into their ranks—breaking apart the sanctity of the home and the larger social body.

Critical commentary from different spheres of antebellum life echoed similar concerns over the expansion of sporting culture. Specifically, I examine prostitution reform societies, city-mysteries fiction, and the responses to Sarah Mercer's seduction and her brother's subsequent murder trial. My argument in this chapter is broken down into two parts. In the first section, I explore how the seducer was portrayed in the media, city mysteries fiction and reform societies. I demonstrate that the seducer was consistently framed as a sporting man. Sporting men, so often defined by their questionable places of enjoyment, were in many ways seen as a byproduct of urbanization—uniquely shaped by their environment. City mysteries narratives often included a male seduction plot, where sporting men socially seduce young and impressionable men into their devious ways. This further illuminates the way in which sporting culture was perceived by many as a pernicious, potentially pervasive,

[158] Nelson, 137.
[159] See: Bruce Dorsey. *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City*. Cornell University Press, 2002.
[160] Cohen, "Unregulated Youth," 34.
[161] Anthony, David. "The Helen Jewett panic: Tabloids, men, and the sensational public sphere in antebellum New York." *American Literature* 69.3 (1997): 487-514.

phenomenon. In the second section, I examine how the seduced woman is portrayed in these same narratives. I show that concerns about the victimization of women often masked the question of how to properly control and reform men. In media, reform societies, and the development of seduction law, seduction is framed as a social, public wrong, often ignoring or bypassing the female victim's individual, traumatic experience. In the case of both the seduced and the seducer there is often an undercurrent of concern about the protection and preservation of the middling classes. Reformers, media output, and city mysteries texts portray how the seducer and the seduced woman both weaken the moral strength of the 'respectable' classes, albeit for different reasons.

These sections all point to a crisis in masculine comportment during the antebellum period. Far from finding stability in the post-Revolutionary era, the nation struggled with the conflicting ideologies of liberalism and republicanism that had fueled national ideology. The documents and events scrutinized in this chapter point to a heightened concern that sporting culture signaled an unrestrained new brand of male behavior. Sports were not disciplined and self-sacrificing, but self-indulgent and independent of seemingly all responsibility—to family, labor, and the state. I see these various phenomena—city mysteries novels, reform work, newspaper coverage and seduction trials—as feeding off one another and stoking public concern over morality, virtue and the nation's future. I argue that the conversation surrounding seduction was fundamentally concerned with men—figuring women's pain as harming patriarchy and the public. Women's personal and, at times, traumatic experience of sexual violation was marginalized as ancillary to larger concerns over immoral, passion-driven men who threatened public security.

### 2.1.1. Historical Meanings of Seduction

Seduction in the antebellum United States was a term that was applied to a large swatch of sexual activity. In considering the historical meaning of seduction, it's important to note that the concept is fundamentally shaped by the society that names it. Discussing the definition of rape, Estelle Freedman argues that "at its core, rape is a legal term that encompasses a malleable and culturally determined perception of an act" and that "the history of rape consists in large part in tracking the changing narratives that define which women may charge which men with the crime of forceful, unwanted sex, and whose accounts will be believed."[162] The typical plotting in the narratives I discuss here involves a woman's romantic idealism and naïve innocence being seized upon by a manipulative seducer who convinces her to have sex with him on the promise of marriage. However, not all depictions of seduction occur this way. As with the real seduction of Sarah Mercer by Malhon Heberton, rape could result from, or be a part of, a larger interaction that was labeled seduction.

In the antebellum United States, "seduction" and "seducer" were terms that applied almost exclusively to white men and women. The definition of seduction is fundamentally determined by ideologies about sex, race, and class, which effectively "shaped whose words were taken down and preserved for posterity."[163] With little to no legal protections under the law, even in northern states, black women or their guardians were not able to bring seduction suits to court. As Freedman points out, "African Americans rarely appeared in press reports or court cases concerning seduction."[164] The deeply racist structure of U.S. law and legal systems made it so that black women were

[162] *Freedman,* 3.
[163] Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America*, 2.
[164] *Freedman,* 47.

excluded from legal protection and social concern. An example of this can be seen in a tract from the New York Magdalen Society, where reformers explain their desire to aid "abandoned white females," explicitly stating what most organizations only assumed their reader would understand—that they were 'saving' white women.[165] The concern for seduction brought lasting and violent implications for black men as well. "Criminal seduction" was deployed in courts to describe and soften what were essentially sexually violent acts of assault or rape by white men. In contrast, "the crime of coercive, violent sex was increasingly associated with black men, who faced long prison terms, execution, and, by the late nineteenth century, the threat of lynching."[166] Thus racist associations that white men were misguided seducers while black men were violent rapists began to take shape.[167]

### 2.1.2. The Seduction Plot in U.S. Literature

The libertine has been an enduring figure of European literature since the 1500s;[168] however, the sociopolitical implications of seduction took on new meaning in U.S. literature.[169] Early interpretations of seduction in U.S. literature by Leslie Fielder and Michael Denning focused on how seduction plots staged class protest, with the seducer often playing a domineering and exploitative capitalist bent on manipulating the

[165] *The First Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the New York Magdalen Society*.
[166] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, 48.
[167] For more on this see: Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America*; Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; Ida B. Wells *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* and *The Red Record*.
[168] According to Deborah Lutz's *The Dangerous Lover: Gothic Villains, Byronism, and the Nineteenth-Century Seduction Narrative* (2006).
[169] The seduction plot is foundational to U.S. literature, as Leslie Fiedler proclaims: "the novel proper could not be launched until some author imagined a prose narrative in which the Seducer and the Pure Maiden were brought face to face in a ritual combat destined to end in marriage or death" (26) However, the seducer of U.S. fiction differed from that of its European aristocratic ancestors, which Fiedler attributes to the fact that the United States was "possessed of no hereditary aristocracy" (61).

innocent female victim.[170] Cathy Davidson argues that the seduction plot was a metaphor for "a range of problems…that arise when moral value and social responsibility are outweighed by the particular desires…of privileged individuals or classes."[171] Authors such as Elizabeth Barnes[172] and Sari Edelstein[173] show that seduction motifs staged national dramas over democratic citizenship and national cohesion, with the seducer acting as a stand-in for social, political and ideological threats to the nation—imagined as the seduced woman's vulnerable body. Scholars of city mysteries fiction have analyzed the seducer as a metaphor for corrupt capitalists, the "'merchant princes'"[174] and "superhuman forces of corrupt urban capitalism."[175] What this idea misses is that the seducer in sensational city-mysteries fiction is often modeled on his real-life counterpart, the sporting man. Furthermore, this seducer is not necessarily an all-powerful capitalist exploiter; rather, in the texts I read here, he is often shown as a downwardly mobile and immoral product of modernization. Authors and reformers alike portrayed the seducer as a product of the failure of capitalism to support and empower all white men.

[170] Leslie Fiedler sees the seduction plot playing out tensions between social elites and the emerging bourgeoisie. In *Mechanic Accents*, Michael Denning explores sensational and urban gothic fiction, showing that popular seduction narratives often critiqued bourgeois authority and staged working class protest (96). The working class protest in city mysteries and seduction has now been well established by authors such as David Reynolds *Beneath the American Renaissanc*e (1988), Jennifer Rae Greeson, "'The Mysteries and Miseries of North Carolina" (2001), and David Anthony, *Paper Money Men* (2009), among others.
[171] *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, 182-183.
[172] In *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel*, Elizabeth Barnes argues that in rejecting the reproductive bonds of marriage "seduction constitutes a breach of republican union and the subversion of national identity" (11) and identifies the importance of considering the affective work of sentiment in "reinforce[ing] a familial model of politics that subordinates difference to sameness" (17).
[173] Edelstein's book, *Between the Novel and the News,* argues that women writers of sentimental fiction in the early U.S. period drew on seduction as a metaphor for the emergence of politicized newspaper writing, which "they represent as a seducer that threatens to disrupt the peace of the nation" (18).
[174] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 97.
[175] Greeson, "The 'Mysteries and Miseries' of North Carolina: New York City, Urban Gothic Fiction, and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*," 281.

The prevalence and popularity of the seduction plot in sensational novels has, overall, received less attention than in its sentimental counterparts.[176] While the seduced woman in sentimental literature is often redeemed,[177] in the sensational seduction plot the young woman's manner of survival is distinctly dismal. Often, the male seducer achieves his ends and moves on, while the woman is left with no other choice but to turn to prostitution—a result that mirrors the period's intense preoccupation with prostitution and the welfare of young women in the newly expanding metropolis. The libertine of the sensational city-mysteries novels that I read here are most often of domestic stock.[178] Sometimes from a 'good family,' sometimes a wayward clerk, the libertine is an active participant in sporting culture who distorts the central tenets of masculine responsibility, and rarely marries his victim or "resolves" the destruction he creates.[179]

Scholars agree that the libertine presents a fraught vision of individualism. Bryce Traister posits that the libertine of sentimental seduction fiction "bind[s] his onlookers together in fluent if ineffectual outrage" and "represented a cultural fantasy in which Americans witnessed the contradictory constructions of individualism operative in the

[176] There has been a large breadth of work on seduction in sentimental literature, including: Jane Tompkins *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (1985); Cathy Davidson *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (1986); Elizabeth Barnes *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (1997); Shirley Samuels *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (1992); and Cindy Weinstein *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2000), to name just a few.

[177] As Lea Jacobs points out in *The Decline of Sentiment*, "the American sentimental novel was frequently resolved more optimistically" and offered readers "pragmatic edification in the story of a young heroine finding a way to survive in the world rather than the pious spectacle of a slow and moving death" (180). See: Jacobs, Lea. *The Decline of Sentiment: American Film in the 1920s*. Univ of California Press, 2008.

[178] The libertine of sentimental literature was "a man of the world," as Winfried Fluck explains in "Novels of Transitions: From Sentimental Novel to Domestic Novel," and, as Fiedler points out, is older, aristocratic and moneyed—often hailing from English stock and bloodline. See: Fiedler, Leslie A., and L. A. Fiedler. *Love and death in the American novel*. Dalkey Archive Press, 1960; and Fluck, Winfried. "Novels of Transition: From Sentimental Novel to Domestic Novel." *The Construction and Contestation of American Cultures and Identities in the Early National Period* 78 (1999).

[179] Indeed, of the novels I read, only one libertine seducer reforms and marries his victim—Byrnewood Arlington in George Lippard's *The Quaker City*.

postrevolutionary and early republic periods."[180] During this period, however, the threat of the libertine was made all-too-real by the growing popularity of sporting culture. Traister contends that early American novels and stories "whose focus on a dissipated libertine renouncing his evil ways" was "something close to a literary fantasy of the period."[181] Interestingly, the city-mysteries libertine rarely renounces his "evil ways," and, as I will show, often haunts the narrative and its characters who are irrevocably changed and damaged by his nefarious activities. Thus, the libertine seducer is portrayed as having an irreconcilable hold on the characters he encounters, and an irrepressible effect on the white, middle-class social world he is able to move within.

Seduction plots feature female victimhood and innocence as the primary concern precisely because seduction staged social relations between white men, making the seduction plot an important point for examining the construction of masculinity. Denning notes "ambivalence toward the seducer" present in George Lippard's immensely popular fiction, focusing not on the 'fallen woman,' but rather, "the struggle between the good and evil men over that woman."[182] Taking the recurring literary motif of two men locked in competition for one woman, Eve Sedgwick argues in *Between Men* that male bonding is often symbolically routed through a mutual relation with a woman.[183] Reformers and authors often evoked female innocence and victimization as the central concern and fundamental problem with seduction; however, I show that it is often actually the protection and reformation of men that critics of seduction are concerned with.

---

[180] Traister, "Libertinism and Authorship in America's Early Republic," 7.
[181] Ibid., 5.
[182] Denning, 98.
[183] Sedgwick, 160. Sedgwick argues that the homosocial bond between men is forged over and against this female figure who acts as a "solvent that not only facilitates the relative democratization that grows up with capitalism and cash exchange, but goes a long way—for the men whom she leaves bonded together—toward palliating its gaps and failures" (160).

The libertine became representative of the kind of man that market capitalism, liberalism and republican ideology might create, not a self-regulating and disciplined male, but one who rejects civic and economic responsibilities—fracturing white masculine unity and, in the process, preventing young white women from proper circulation. At a moment of great social and cultural change, the emergence of sporting culture was, for many onlookers, a vision of the new 'American' man. The seducer of city-mysteries fiction acted as an imaginative exploration of what happens to women, families and societies at large when men are not properly controlled. Their masculine ethos—irresponsible, self-indulgent and entirely self-interested—wholly contradicted emerging middle-class and republican ideals of hard work, self-regulation and self-control.[184] Seduction texts emphasized "political anxieties about the decay of virtuous self-restraint into self-interested rapacity."[185] Sporting men represented the dangerous limit of liberal personhood, and threatened not just to ideologically contradict republican values, but also to induce men into his profligate ways and propagate a new vision of the U.S. man. Indeed, "radical individualism presented the greatest threat the new nation had yet faced, though both Federalists and Republicans subscribed to and promoted a nascent mythology of (properly regulated) American individualism."[186] Thus the libertine represented the outer limit of liberal individualism—which was promoted by thinkers as an essential aspect of American character, particularly in the aftermath of the Revolutionary rhetoric of supposed triumph over despotism and tyrannical, paternal

[184] Changes in social relations between men and women also contributed to the popularity of the seduction plot, and to constructions of men as self-controlled and disciplined. Changes in marriage, courtship and the breakup of community oversight due to urbanization demanded that men be more disciplined and women more chaste at the same time that they were both more open to choosing and courting their own partners. As Rodney Hessinger explains in *Seduced, Abandoned, and Reformed*, "with the purity of women less certain, some measure of sexual control had to be assumed by male youth" (148).
[185] Traister, "Libertinism and Authorship in America's Early Republic," 3.
[186] Ibid., 7.

authority. Nonetheless, this individualism needed to ultimately be subordinated to social, political and economic self-sacrifice and national interests.

## 2.2. "All these were of that class called sporting gentlemen": Seduction, The Libertine and Sporting Men

The seducer of city mysteries fiction can be understood as based on sporting men in part because of the way he is portrayed as congruous with the city's vice and entertainment industries. Authors and reformers show the seducer as deeply integrated into the city's sporting subculture—gambling, going on drinking sprees, visiting brothels, and seducing young women. A central aspect of the sporting libertine's threat to antebellum society was his unparalleled ability to navigate and command urban spaces. Where the urban environment and the dizzying changes in social mores disoriented or stoked fear in some, the sporting man was seen as deviously and expertly able to manipulate the environmental and social changes of the urban metropolis to exact his pleasures and commit his crimes. Thus, the libertine was seen as a natural byproduct of the city itself—reinforcing the idea that the sport was the immoral and self-interested consequence of modernization and capitalist influx.

### 2.2.1. Sporting Life and the Command of Urban Space

The trial of Singleton Mercer for the murder of Mahlon Heberton gripped national attention and brought questions of seduction and the expansion of sporting culture to the public at large. The Mercer seduction produced anxious responses about the pervasiveness of sporting culture. Commentators posited that sporting types were

powerful forces within the urban environment, rejecting masculine norms of industriousness and civic engagement, with power to corrupt the social world around them.

Before entering into the details of the courtroom proceedings, the preface to John B. Perry's *A Full and Complete Account of the Heberton Tragedy*[187] pauses to emphasize that Sarah's seduction by Heberton was not a mere singular tragedy, but a pervasive occurrence throughout the city—warning readers that there were many more men like Heberton that threaten to unravel the security of the society around them. The concern over the growing presence of sporting men and their nefarious activities demonstrates a fear of the immense cultural power of sporting attitudes. Perry opens the text by claiming that it is meant to serve as a "warning [to] youth to shun evil," explaining that the tragedy "is a rebuke to vice and passion, and that the moral truth which it enforces may have an abiding and wholesome influence upon society."[188] The narrative models itself as a didactic text, hoping to steer the reader away from the "vice and passion" that abound in city life. Perry quotes a newspaper article which reported that "Philadelphia has been unhappily noted for the extent, secrecy, and safety of crimes such as that which led to the murder of Mr. Heberton," explaining that the streets "have been thronged with idlers, irresistible in the magic power of the moustache and imperial, whose glory it has been to boast the number of their crimes."[189] Described with the typical "mustache and imperial" that is consistently used in descriptions of sporting men, the men "throng" the streets, but also move in "secrecy and safety," protected by their environment and fitness for urban

[187] There is not readily available biographical information on Perry, although he appeared to have written a few texts based on dramatic and sensationalized violence. See: *Tragedies on the Land, Containing An Authentic Account of the Most Awful Murders* (1841) and *The Confession of Jereboam O. Beauchamp* (1826).
[188] Perry, 4.
[189] Ibid., 5.

life. The narrator describes the sporting man's presence and allure as "irresistible," even "magic." He thus describes the libertine as possessed of an ineffable power that has an undeniable allure.

Like many sporting men, Heberton, Sarah's seducer, is portrayed as a product of his urban environment: he is uniquely positioned to manipulate the city to his advantage, and the disadvantage of others. Furthermore, his ability to behave and appear respectable, despite his inner corruption is a point of the seducer's power. In Perry's account of the trial, Singleton's lawyer emphasizes Heberton's true nature by describing the places and people he spent time with. Perry explains that he was an "intimate associate of several notorious roués about town" who "spent their time in billiard-playing, champagne drinking, and pursuits of even more vicious character than these."[190] The references to Heberton's places of amusement demonstrate how space becomes convoluted with character and power. Heberton, who "dressed invariable in the highest style of fashion," is able to play the part of a respectable gentleman and manipulate the confidences of innocent (middle class) women like Sarah. Indeed, he first meets Sarah on the streets of Philadelphia when she mistakes him for a family friend. He took advantage of this mistake and they met several more times when Heberton arranged "accidental" run-ins with Sarah. The narrative concerns itself with the ability of the sporting man to hide and obscure his 'true' self with the trapping of class and respectability, taking advantage of the era's shifting codes of class to manipulate and seduce.

In contrast to the characterization of Heberton, the Mercers were framed as proper members of the social world—paragons of the middle class. Sarah's brother and Heberton's murderer, Singleton Mercer, is described as follows: he "was never at a ball,

[190] Ibid., 6.

play, or any other public place of amusement," and all the people in his family "were members of the Fourth Presbyterian Church."[191] The Mercers are juxtaposed to Heberton by their spaces of conduct, directly connected to emerging middle-class spaces and habits that signal a set of moral values aligned with faith, virtue, and respectability. In this manner, the trial of Singleton Mercer signified larger cultural preoccupations that saw sporting male culture as oppositional to an emerging middle class. As the seduction of Sarah Mercer and its framing in the trial demonstrates, sporting men could be a very real threat to emerging middle-class domesticity and proper familial responsibility. After her rape, Sarah Mercer was held by Heberton for a few days at various brothels, while the family is described as frantically looking for their daughter, who is hidden from them in their own city.[192] The account incidentally shows that in the contest over supremacy in the city, the emerging middle class, feminized through the figure of the vulnerable woman, is helpless in comparison to the libertine's urban, masculine prowess.

Just as Heberton is portrayed as a sporting man, using the city to seduce innocent women, so too the city-mysteries novel continually frames the seducer as a sporting type, showing sports as the pernicious byproducts of modernization. The sport is defined by his engagement in urban entertainments, profligate attitude toward women, his fine clothing and propensity for drink.[193] In *New York by Gas-Light* George Foster warns the reader

[191] Ibid., 24.
[192] Ibid., 36.
[193] The various portrayals of the seducer's class background is mixed, and ultimately reflects the historical reality, that sporting life drew in a large swathe of young men—from the poorer clerks to the profligate offspring of the city's wealthy denizens. In *New-York By Gas Light* (1850) George Foster describes seducers as "fancy coves, who spend hundreds nightly at the oyster-cellars" and whose "prudent papas have laboriously earned and scraped together by wielding the goose and press-board, or by carefully watching the fluctuations in the pork-market" (105), suggesting sports are the profligate offspring of the lower to middle classes. Richard P. Robinson, a character from *The Lives of Helen Jewett and Richard P. Robinson* (1849), is a struggling clerk who faces low wages and a little prospects of moving up in society. Charles Meadows from Buntline's *Mysteries and Miseries of New York* (1851), is a clerk at a dry goods store attempting to support his mother and sister. Ned Buntline's Harry Whitmore is "a descendant of one

"let society heed this one simple truth" that it should "exclude from its presence all men who are guilty of seduction or libertinism."[194] This advice is followed by a detailed description of such men in the chapter "A Night Ramble." Here Foster observes that "lads of spirit, young men about town" visit hidden drinking clubs, oyster cellars, bars, theaters, brothels and "would consider it altogether too 'slow' for their use to spend an evening decently at home among virtuous and accomplished women."[195] George Thompson's *Venus in Boston* depicts bands of sporting men roaming the streets at night, harassing young working-class girls. The "well dressed libertines" violate the girls from afar, "gaz[ing] with eyes of lustful desire," "ever ready to take advantage of a female."[196] Later Thompson describes a group of sports out on a spree,

> a crowd of well-dressed but dissipated young men enter the cellar, their wild looks and disordered attire plainly indicating that they were on a regular 'time.' Those young men have been imbibing freely at some fashionable saloon in Court or Hanover street, and have come to consummate the evening's 'fun' by having a dance with the fallen goddesses of Ann Street[197]

Scenes such as this are repeated in other city-mysteries novels,[198] depicting men who are fashionable, among their like-minded friends, drinking, and visiting oyster cellars, city mysteries novels show concern over the pervasive popularity of sporting culture in U.S.

---

of the first families" though "he is not rich; for the patrimony which he inherited…is now run through." In George Thompson's *The Gay Girls of New York* (1850), Frank Rattleton is described as "nearly broke" and waiting on an impending inheritance (81). In another vein, George Thompson's Mr. Tickels is a con man from the South. Ultimately, while they might use the seducer's class background to add additional class critique, these authors were fundamentally concerned with men's participation in sporting culture.

[194] George Foster, *New York by Gas-Light*, 103.

[195] Ibid.,106.

[196] George Thompson, *Venus in Boston*, 8.

[197] Ibid., 23.

[198] We find a similar scene in Buntline's *Mysteries and Miseries of New York*, where the text opens on a young girl hurrying home at night from work among "miserable street walkers taking their nightly round" where "groups of young men come reeling and laughing along, young men who had just got up from their wine dinners" who "rudely stare at her" (11). One of these "fashionable young gentlemen," Harry Whitmore proves to the downfall of multiple characters in the text.

cities.[199] These men distinctly reject spheres of white middle-class domestic sanctity.[200] Sporting men are shown as an extension of the city itself—visiting saloons, oyster cellars, and pervading the streets "ready to take advantage of females," they are described as a natural outgrowth of the bewildering urban environment.

### 2.2.2. The Sensational Seduction Plot: Men's Social Seduction and The Lure of Sporting Culture

A crucial but often overlooked aspect of the city-mysteries seduction plot is the male-male seduction plot. While women are usually the focus in discussions of seduction, honorable, young white men were also featured as victims of a kind of social seduction: their values and virtue destroyed by the seductive influence of the sporting man. This illustrates how sporting culture was seen as a pervasive and alluring subculture that was able to easily draw in young and inexperienced men. I examine two male-male seduction plots that are a central feature in Lippard's *Quaker City* and Buntline's *Mysteries and Miseries of New York*. Both texts express concern over the lure of the libertine's lifestyle and his ability to corrupt young, potentially upstanding young men. While women's bodies were often used as metaphors for a properly functioning republic, men in Lippard and Buntline's text are shown as in danger of being corrupted into being improper democratic citizens. This denaturalizes the reading that women are always the victims of

[199] This is in part due to the very promise of the genre, which pledges to show "the romance of reality—the details of common, every day life—the secret history of things hidden from public gaze," as the narrator of George Thompson's city mysteries novel, *Venus in Boston* (1849), relates. Sporting men, seen as a unique product of the urban environment, were a natural subject for sensational authors.

[200] As Foster explains in *New York by Gas-Light*, sporting types consider "an evening decently at home among virtuous and accomplished women" as "slow" and boring. The sports in George Lippard's *The Quaker City* (1853) express a similar debate between domestic comforts and the exploits of the night. The text opens with a group of young men stumbling through the streets of Philadelphia on a spree: one man asks the group if they should "subside quietly to our homes? … brandy and oysters, or quilts and feather-beds?" (5). They choose the oyster cellar.

seduction and considers that men are also shown as seduced into improper and 'dangerous' behavior like gambling, licentiousness, and brothel-going. In the antebellum United States, when there was a "deep cultural conflict over the meaning of manhood, especially young manhood,"[201] men were shown as victims of seduction to express concern that they might rupture proper masculine attitudes and behaviors that were thought to strengthen and support the nation. Thus, the male-male seduction plot displays the anxieties that commentators had over the influence and popularity of sporting culture. Sporting culture was seen as alluring, a masculine vision that young men might be quite attracted to. Authors took pains to show the denigration and corruption of men who allow themselves to be induced into sporting ways.

2.2.2.1. Lorrimer and Byrnewood: George Lippard's The Quaker City

In *The Quaker City*, Byrnewood Arlington starts out as a seducing libertine himself, but by realizing key 'correct' ways of being a proper man, he is able to redeem himself. The sporting seducer of Lippard's text, Gustavus Lorrimer, takes Byrnewood to Monk hall, a dilapidated former monastery now dedicated to the elicit exploits of the city's most corrupt denizens. On the way, Byrnewood remembers a letter from Emily, a poor servant girl that he seduced and impregnated, begging him to meet her. The letter is imbued with her emotional state; Lorrimer reads it and exclaims, "That 'f*or God's sake*' is rather cramped—and egad! there's the stain of a tear…"[202] The letter evokes no sympathy from Lorrimer, who explains "these things are quite customary. These letter and these tears. The dear little women can only use these arguments when they yield too

[201] Donna Dennis, *Licentious Gotham*, 44.
[202] Lippard, 24.

much to our persuasions."[203] The utter evil of Lorrimer is emphasized here by his inability to properly "read" and register sympathy for Annie, as her desperation fails to call up feelings of responsibility or guilt. However, Byrnewood recognizes "how unfortunate for the girl my acquaintance has proved!,"[204] offering a properly empathetic feeling that suggests he recognizes his culpability. He says he "should have liked to see her tonight" as he explains that her family is "very poor" and that she lost her job with his family because her "*circumstance*" became too obvious.[205] Byrnewood experiences glimpses of recognition of his proper male duty and an awareness that classed inequalities create dire circumstances for poor families and women, which he took advantage of. However, Lorrimer immediately talks Byrnewood out of his planned meeting with Annie, offering to instead introduce him to the sinful delights of Monk hall. Byrnewood's reformation is only fully realized once he experiences his own seduction in Monk hall.

Shadowing that of his sister Mary, it is this experience of seduction that becomes the turning point in his reformation to a redeemed sporting man. After Byrnewood enters the hall and discovers that the intended victim of Lorrimer's seduction is actually his own sister, he is drugged and tortured as he listens to the screams of his sister being raped. Byrnewood's experiences in Monk hall have been read as "imaginatively experienc[ing] the threat of [female] violation."[206] Byrnewood's transformation is two-fold: he experiences his sister's seduction and rape, but also his own. Lorrimer tantalizes

---

[203] Ibid., 24
[204] Ibid., 24.
[205] Ibid., 24.
[206] Streeby, Shelley. "Opening Up the Story Paper," 202. See: Streeby, Shelley. "Opening Up the Story Paper: George Lippard and the Construction of Class." *boundary 2* 24.1 (1997): 177-203. In *Paper Money Men* David Anthony reads this scene as Byrnewood's movement "from gothic villain to gothic maiden" (114).

Byrnewood with descriptions of Monk hall's "luxuriantly-furnished chambers," where "wine and women mingle their attractions,"[207] and then traps him inside the hall where he endures a hallucinatory poisoning and torture. This turning point occurs when he listens to his sister's screams and dwells on his failures as her brother and masculine protector. He laments,

> Mary! Was I placing your honor in the dice-box, when I made that wager with yonder—*man*? ...was it for this…that I loved you as brother never loved sister? …was it for this, that I pictured, again and again, every hour in the day, every moment of the night, the unclouded prospects of your future life?[208]

Byrnewood perceives that his libertine ways have caused him to disregard his role as protector and destroyed his sister's future. For Lippard, Byrnewood's rakish attitude leads to his seduction, leaving him humiliated and physically and emotionally tortured. Vicariously experiencing his sister's rape, he recognizes 'proper' male relations toward women as protectors and realizes that his life of excess has put his life and his masculine identity out of his control. Thus, Mary's rape is decentered as the focal point of physical violence and betrayal and her brother Byrnewood's vicarious experience *of* her rape is offered as the essential violation.

Byrnewood's redemption is also achieved when he realizes the other familial responsibilities he must honor, and when he realizes how wealth disparity and social inequality leaves lower-class women and families disproportionately open to violation. Indeed, he escapes the hall only to hear rumor that Annie, the servant he had seduced, has killed herself. At this point, Byrnewood confesses his guilt and culpability, accepting the responsibility that he had rejected earlier when he ignored her letter. "'I am her

[207] Lippard, 22.
[208] Ibid., 100.

Murderer! …Her babe will live to curse my name. In her last hour she called on me—she shrieked my name with her last breath!'"[209] Here, Byrnewood recognizes the damage that his mismanaged masculinity has done; his own child will curse his name in a gothic vision of family ruin. He also shows himself as becoming a proper man by recognizing the classed dimensions of seduction and exploitation. He muses to himself:

> Seduce a rich maiden? Wrong the daughter of a good family? Oh, this is horrible; it is a crime only paralleled in enormity by the blasphemy of God's name. But a poor girl, a servant, a domestic? Oh, no! These are fair game for the gentlemen of fashionable society; upon the wrongs of such as these the fine lady looks with a light laugh and supercilious smile. Now it was that the better soul of Byrnewood awoke within him[210]

Here, Byrnewood's consciousness of class disparity and the traumatic effects that wealth disparity and social inequality have on women, families, and men is what wakes the "better soul" within. Byrnewood becomes a proper man by recognizing the importance of his role as a patriarchal male protector and socially conscious man. Thus, the text gives the reader some redemptive hope, libertines *can* be reformed, but they must realize their "proper" role as a man first.

On the other hand, Lorrimer is an unchangeable libertine, self-obsessed, wealthy, and single-minded in his pursuit and desire for women. He ponders life with his friends in the oyster cellar, "'Life? What is it? As brilliant and as brief as a champagne bubble! To day a jolly carouse in an oyster cellar to-morrow a nice little pic NIC in a grave-yard… Every thing fleeting and nothing stable, everything shifting and changing, and nothing substantial!'"[211] Here Lorrimer describes himself as a solitary individual, a peddler wandering about aimlessly. Similar in sentiment to the sporting magazines outlined in

[209] Ibid., 416.
[210] Ibid., 417.
[211] Ibid., 24.

Chapter One, Lorrimer has an ambivalent attitude toward life, coupled with a lack of responsibilities, and cares only for his places of leisure and entertainment. He exclaims, "'ENJOY! Enjoy till the last never loses its delicacy of sense; enjoy till the last sinew is unstrung.'"[212] Like sporting men who are portrayed as reveling in drink, theater-going, oyster cellars, and brothels, Lorrimer's main prerogative is consumptive excesses—only finding enjoyment in the expenditure of time and money.

Lorrimer also emphasizes that women are his sole concern, but his desires lack any familial attachments or responsibilities and are merely consumptive, showing the libertine as socially unproductive. He explains to his friends his true nature,

> Know me as I am! Not the mere man-about-town, not the wine drinking companion, not the fashionable addle-head you think me, but the *Man of Pleasure!* … You have talents—these talents have been from childhood, devoted to books, or mercantile pursuits. I have some talent—I flatter myself—and that talent, aided and strengthened in all its efforts, by wealth, from very boyhood, has been devoted to Pleasure, which, in plain English, means?—Woman[213]

Lorrimer is not a man of business, concerned with "mercantile pursuits," but is instead possessed only of a single-minded devotion to sex and pleasure. This is further emphasized when he explains, "Woman—…compassing her ruin, of enjoying her beauty, has been my book, my study, my science, nay my *profession* from boyhood."[214] The concerning issue with Lorrimer is his nonproductive feelings toward women; he "loves them" but in a morally reprehensible way, seeing women as sources of pleasure and not as wives or emotional anchors. His attitude toward women is organized by sexual desire and conquest, rather than responsibility, self-control, reproduction and domestic-patriarchal authority. If the seduced woman is a metaphor for the republic, then the

[212] Ibid., 23.
[213] Ibid., 101.
[214] Ibid., 101.

libertine only 'uses' the republic for his own benefit and does not contribute to a strong and more unified national body or help to reproduce it.

While Byrnewood reforms and eventually escapes Monk hall, the presence of Lorrimer still haunts him and his sister Mary. At the close of the novel, we find Byrnewood and his sister living on the Wyoming frontier. They seem to have achieved domestic security and bliss at last. Byrnewood has been properly transformed into father and husband, placing him back into proper patterns of male behavior. Mary is portrayed as child-like, "in robes of white,"[215] and she seems to have recovered from her love affair turned rape by Lorrimer. However, Mary and Byrnewood are both still bitterly haunted by the depraved Lorrimer. Byrnewood's reformation and his middle-class life could not resolve the tensions of the libertine's destruction. At the novel's end Byrnewood enters a room off their parlor, which he retreats to daily, although his wife begs him not to as it makes him "dark and gloomy." He does anyway, to gaze at a painting of Lorrimer. The portrait of Lorrimer, wearing "the same laughing face of manly beauty," gives Byrnewood "an awful pleasure" when "contemplating the portrait of the Libertine."[216] In fact, the thought of him was "never absent from his soul."[217] Mary finds her way into the room and gasps "the sigh of a broken heart," screaming his name.[218] Ultimately, despite the promise of freedom in this frontier space, far away from the industrial city, the characters are still haunted: "The memories of the scenes he has witnessed in Monk-Hall, in the parlor of his father's house, in the streets of the Quaker City, or on the broad river,

[215] Ibid., 570.
[216] Ibid., 574.
[217] Ibid., 574.
[218] Ibid., 575.

dwelt like a shadow on his soul."[219] Indeed, the corruptions and displacements of sporting culture act as a mobile threat not reserved only for the Quaker City, but also for the nation. The libertine, who bears no feelings of responsibility and consumes and spends himself in excess, embodies a brash immorality that is nonetheless seductive, alluring, and potentially transformative for the men and women he comes into contact with. His ability to haunt the characters, who are unable to truly shake off his influence, shows libertine values prevailing over virtue and the supposedly heroic characters. The tension-filled close of the novel thus aims to incite readers to consider the implications of the libertine, here embodying the sporting man, for the moral and social fabric of the nation.

### 2.2.2.2. Harry, Isabella and Charles: Ned Buntline's *The Mysteries and Miseries of New York*

In another brother/sister seduction scheme, the seducer of Ned Buntline's *The Mysteries and Miseries of New York*, Harry Whitmore, prevails over the more virtuous and honest characters, Charles and Isabella, despite being a "heartless villain." After befriending Charles—a different kind of seduction which I discuss below—Harry sets out to seduce Charles' sister, Isabella, who knows "little of the ways of the world." Harry's seduction is a complicated scheme that includes extorting her brother and arranging a sham wedding ceremony. His plans go awry when two prostitutes, Maria and Emma, remembering their own seductions, help Isabella to escape from various brothels where Harry imprisons her. It seems that Isabella will eventually prevail; she bravely resists Harry and his friend Gus's verbal and physical attempts to have intercourse with her, and she conceives of multiple clever ways to escape. At the end of Chapter I Part Five, the

[219] Ibid., 575.

narrative leaves Isabella trapped in a local brothel but hopeful an S.O.S note will reach someone to help. It does not. In the conclusion of the narrative we find Isabella "pale and thin," living as a kept woman with Harry. The narrator emphasizes that she is a "lost and ruined girl," anticipating the "dark and dreadful fate which awaited her:" a life of prostitution. Despite the narrative's sympathy for her entrapment—she is not portrayed as acquiescing at any point—she is nevertheless punished and left ruined. There is no redemption for seduced women; they suffer at the hands of the seducer who is successfully able to transform the people around him and triumph over virtue. After Isabella finds an invitation to a party hosted by the wealthy father of an eligible young woman, it becomes clear that Harry will continue his seductive ways, infiltrating the upper classes and 'ruining' more women. Buntline's narrative, like Lippard's, suggests that Harry's infiltration into the middle class is assured—making his pernicious influence all encompassing, destroying poorer girls and "infecting" the middle classes with his immoral character. Just as Heberton is portrayed in Sarah Mercer's seduction, Harry's ability to transgress class boundaries makes him all the more dangerous to society. Portrayed as a sporting man, this characterization further emphasizes the power of sporting culture to affect others.

Harry also seduces Isabella's brother, Charles, into the sporting lifestyle. The reader is first introduced to sports Harrry and his crony Gus on a spree, where they drink excessively while harassing poor girls walking home from work. They go to a gambling hall and meet Charles—a misguided "confidential clerk" who has begun gambling his boss's money in a desperate attempt to take better care of his mother and sister, for whom he is the sole provider. Harry and Gus immediately realize that Charles is gullible and

inexperienced—he's gambling profusely and losing what is clearly a set game. Harry and Gus seize on Charles' vulnerability, and, within the night they take him into their confidences, get drunk, and visit a brothel—Charles is thus introduced to sporting life. In his distraught state, desperately trying to earn money by stealing and gambling, the excesses of sporting culture easily take Charles in. On their first night out Charles is tricked by a sex worker into giving her all his remaining money from the night—distraught and guilt ridden the next day, he exclaims, "this is the first time I ever spent such a night, and in such a place. God grant it may be the last."[220] However, the next time he sees his friends he desires to do it all again, exclaiming "'let us go on a spree Let's h[a]ve a regular bender—I've three hundred left … To Jule's, or to hell! I don't care where, so there's plenty of liquor to be had!"[221] As Charles' situation at work grows more desperate, the distractions of the sporting life lure him in all the more. Sporting culture is a waiting trap, easily enticing downtrodden or frustrated men like Charles into a carefree world of indulgence. Like the seduced woman whose seduction is predicated on her ignorance of urban realities, so too Charles is taken advantage of by sports and sex workers who are wise to the ways of manipulation. Harry constantly refers to Charles as "green," with Charles openly professing that he "always" spends his "evenings at home with my mother and Isabella" and is "not acquainted" with local bars and brothels "or their mysteries." The men convince him to steal more money from his employer and eventually extort him into committing murder while Harry uses his new intimacy with Charles to seduce Charles' sister, Isabella—driving his mother insane and Charles to becoming a debauched and homeless alcoholic.

[220] Buntline, 54.
[221] Ibid.,101.

In the portrayal of the dangerous allure of sporting culture, there is an aspect of economic concern, where young clerks are shown as particularly vulnerable to the grandiosity of sporting life. Charles' failures are shown as a result of his awkward social and economic position. Charles is the sole supporter of his mother and sister, and, with his pay too meager, he has turned to gambling his boss's money. His mother bemoans how hard he works for so little, stating, "poor boy, you have to work so hard; Mr. S surely will raise your salary this winter. We have hard work to get on and educate Isabella on eight hundred a year."[222] Yet, Charles' boss, a dry good merchant called Mr. S, is portrayed as upstanding and honest. Charles deeply regrets that he has, "stolen from one who has he[lp]ed me with kindnesses," and, even after Mr. S receives an anonymous letter alerting him to Charles' stealing he dismisses the allegation, thinking, "I've had him so long, and treated him so well, that he could not rob me. I'll not believe it."[223] Indeed, he actually gives Charles a raise, to an annual salary of twelve hundred dollars. Thus the narrative sympathizes with the middle-class merchant, Mr. S, while offering a rebuke of young clerks like Charles who do not properly wait their turn for better pay and positions within their work places. This point is made quite strongly with his raise, twelve hundred dollars for a clerk of any position would have registered as an astronomical sum to readers, at midcentury the average salary for a clerk ranged between $250 and $600 a year.[224] We can read Charles' desperation for more money as a kind of nightmare vision of aspirational living. At the gambling table, the narrator describes Charles' hesitation, "he looked for a moment at the pile of five hundred in his hand—paused, sighed, and hesitated—perchance he thought then of his mother and sister, who, for his sake, denied

[222] Ibid., 22.
[223] Ibid., 169.
[224] Luskey, *On the Make*. 44.

themselves so many little comforts."[225] Charles' desires to solely provide for his sister and mother, aiming to provide "little comforts" and a paid education for his sister as well. Charles' desire for more money is not necessarily for subsistence living—he desires a more bourgeois lifestyle than his clerk salary and social position can afford. His ambition and strivings are shown as out of control; Charles doesn't understand his place or have the patience necessary for ambitious white-collar workers. This inattention to his home while gambling away money results in his sister's rape and his mother's insanity, as men's unchecked patriarchal and financial desires create ruin. This can be read as a commentary on the economic and social problems arising from white-collar clerk labor. Charles is shown as a desperate clerk with aspirations that cannot be readily met by his circumstances; his economic desires are thus portrayed as potentially dangerous. As the narrative suggests, men who are frustrated with their economic and social circumstances are particularly vulnerable to the allure of sporting culture.

2.2.2.3. The Problems of the Clerk Class and Sporting Culture

As shown thus far, sporting men are often shown as profligate over-spenders, wasting their money in mindless consumption in unproductive avenues: the vice trade, drinking, gambling and other activities that take their money out of the productive avenues of commerce. In George Wilkes' and H.R. Howard's novel, *The Lives of Helen Jewett and Richard P. Robinson*, there is a distinct concern that clerks' desires for upward mobility might lead to their moral corruption.[226] *The Lives of Helen Jewett and*

[225] Buntline, 26.
[226] In *Paper Money Men* David Anthony also sees economic insecurity affecting the portrayal of antebellum masculinity. He argues that the "failure-anxious" and "fiscally imperiled" professional class was stultified by their precarious economic positions, made voluble by the economic insecurity brought on

*Richard P. Robinson* fictionalizes the life of Helen Jewett, a notorious New York sex worker whose murder in 1836 caused a national sensation. The prime suspect was Richard Robinson, a young clerk and frequent client of Jewett's, who visited Jewett the night of the crime and was seen by multiple witnesses fleeing the crime scene.[227] Robinson was a known sporting man; local sports of New York showed their support for Robinson during the trial by wearing "Robinson hats," causing anger and dismay in the community. In the novel, Robinson is similarly portrayed as a raucous sport; his status as a poorer clerk is a particular point of focus as the narrative expresses concern that the clerk class possess too much desire to surpass their class limitations, and that sporting culture in particular was alluring to men who might be frustrated with these limitations.

Like Charles Meadows, Robinson's meager salary as a clerk in a dry goods store 'forces' him into extralegal means of supporting himself. His position "was circumscribed by a salary too small for his subsistence," so he resorts to "the usual alternatives of deriving the necessary deficit from home, or making it up after his own fashion, from the proceeds of the shelves or drawer."[228] The ample opportunities for entertainment, combined with the diminished possibilities of social mobility, cause Robinson to turn to sporting culture for belonging and social compensation. Robinson's "taste for frolic led him into the extravagancies of city life, and caused him to become a frequent visiter [sic] to all billiard saloons and bowling alleys of the town."[229] The narrator expresses sympathy for Robinson's position, imploring the reader, "what else

---

by the transformation of the market economy, the extension of overseas credit, and the switch to paper currency.

[227] Despite convincing evidence and multiple testimonies attesting to Robinson's aggressive and jealous nature, Robinson was still acquitted, likely because the judge ordered the jury to disregard the testimony of the sex workers that testified. For a very detailed and interesting history of Helen Jewett's life and her eventual murder at the hands of Robinson, see Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett*.

[228] Wilkes and Howard, 60.

[229] Ibid., 60.

could be expected of him! What else can be expected of the majority of youths similarly situated, and who, like him, are brought from the quiet routine of country life, to be plunged into the midst of all the intoxicating pleasures and dazzling temptation of this great babel of enjoyment."[230] Thus, the novel opportunities and conditions of urban life seduce young and impressionable men into profligacy. This suggests the larger narrative attached to sporting culture by critics: that the overwhelming "dazzling temptation" of the city, coupled with economic and social "deficits" draws men to "intoxicating pleasures" and the sporting fraternity. This sporting life effectively ruins men, as with Robinson, Charles, Byrnewood and Heberton—sporting life causes men to become nefarious seducers, criminals, and murderers.

The narrator portrays sporting culture as a product of young men's vulnerable economic positions. The narrator ruminates on the particular problems of the clerk class:

> if a clerk is but on trial, or receives an annual compensation of some fifty dollars, which is about the same thing as nothing, he is expected to dress like a gentleman, and to behave like a gentleman. This naturally stimulates him to an ambition which is above his business, and inspires him with a desire to keep up the character bespoken by his fine clothes and smith address, after he leaves the shop[231]

The narrator goes on to explain that these young men then become "stimulated" with grandiose ideas about their social possibilities: "having the appearances of a gentleman; being evidently taken for a gentleman; knowing what a gentleman should be, he of course resolves to behave as much like a gentleman as possible; and liberality being necessary to the assumed character, he is tempted to sustain it, by light loans from the till…"[232] Thus, as the narrator contends, the young male clerk class is in too close of a proximity to

[230] Ibid., 60.
[231] Ibid., 60.
[232] Ibid., 60.

refinement and wealth, close enough to put on airs and the trappings of "gentlemanly" dress and comportment. The text suggests that to the clerk class, promises of upward mobility and social betterment were rarely delivered on. The manly ideal of being professionally competitive and driven toward economic success, which was supposed to "lead to the health (and wealth)…of the nation,"[233] is shown to actually create unrealistic and dangerous expectations in young men. Robinson's descent into the sporting life is the first step in his eventual utter moral corruption, which culminates with his murder of the sex worker Helen Jewett. In *The Mysteries and Miseries of New York* and *The Lives of Helen Jewett and Richard P. Robinson*, white collar workers' relatively low wages and social standing, coupled with their grand social desires and the glamour of city life creates an immoral and uncontrollable yearning which causes men to steal, gamble, drink and ultimately corrupt the system they are supposed to be paying into.

Reform societies also worried over the economic impropriety of the clerk class and sporting male types. While purporting to save women from abuse and destitution, which I discuss further below, they reveal a preoccupation that prostitution actually breaks down the sanctity of business and economic relations among men. In prostitution reformers' discussion of the deeds of the immoral men that visited brothels, they focus on their economic waste rather than their mistreatment of women or support of the sex trade. In the New York Magdalen Society's (NYMS) widely read *First Annual Report* the organization puts forward myriad evangelical-inflected arguments for why saving sex workers from their lives of sin is a public moral imperative. Although reform texts generally lavish marked attention on their mission of saving women's corrupted souls, the texts sometimes stray from their moral arguments against seduction and vice,

[233] Nelson, 15.

focusing on the great monetary waste created by prostitution. In the NYMS's *Annual Report* they claim that "that *six millions* [sic] *of dollars* is annually expended in this city by prostitutes… paid to them by the guilty companions of their iniquity."[234] The NYMS reformers lament:

> what an awful waste of property, apart from any higher consideration, and what proportion of this immense annual amount is honestly acquired by those who thus expend it, who can say? or rather what proportion is robbed from parents, masters, and guardians by the young men, clerks, apprentices, &c, who infest these sinks of abomination, who can estimate? More than half is doubtless paid them by silly and inexperienced youth who have no means of supporting their extravagance, but by embezzling or stealing the property of other, and who are made the easy dupes of the arts of these infatuating furies, whose syren [sic] song lulls conscience to sleep, and thus prepares for any and every crime[235]

The writers worry over the way in which the emerging class of young white-collar workers expend their cash not in proper, productive markets, but waste their money on sex—even being corrupted so far as to steal from their employers. Like in *The Lives of Helen Jewett and Richard P. Robinson*, prostitution is connected to young men restless in their class positions and restless in their urban stagnation. Here, the men are failures not because of their treatment of women or even their immorality, but because of their reckless spending and improper sense of their economic responsibilities and productivity. Indeed, fear that men who visit prostitutes might steal from their social betters, their bosses, is a reoccurring theme. As with Robinson and Charles, the "silly and inexperienced" men are motivated by dangerous aspirations to "extravagance" that they cannot support. The text continues, reporting that men spend an average of "at least *fifty cents* for liquors, porter, &c, besides the sum paid to the companions of their guilt" when visiting brothels, which means "*five millions of dollars* are expended in addition to the

[234] *First Annual Report*, 22.
[235] Ibid., 22.

items included in the above estimate."[236] They estimate that eleven million dollars was being spent yearly in the sex trade, which would have been a shocking sum in the 1830s. In *Uneasy Virtue*, Hobson notes similar concerns in Boston's Society for the Moral and Religious Instruction of the Poor. In one report the society estimated that "if two thousand prostituted were each paid $1,25 a day, then wage earners were spending $912,500 a year for licentiousness"; they thus "reasoned that to pay for moral depravity, individuals would be tempted to defraud their employers, creditors, and families."[237] The reformers anticipate the very problems that are depicted in Charles and Robinson's plights. From these examples we can see that for some reform societies, to reform prostitution was really to prevent the possible economic ruin of young men on which the economy and larger national body depended.

## 2.3. Between Men: The Seduced Woman, Prostitution Reform and 'Saving' Women to Save Men.

The antebellum discourse surrounding the seduced women shows that while women are often portrayed as the central concern in issues of seduction, it is often the negative social effects that seduction creates that are of primary concern. City mysteries authors consistently criticize the failure of the law, and the unfair social double standard,[238] that ostracizes women from society for sexual transgressions not of their making. However, they simultaneously show the seduced women as irrevocably mentally and physically changed by their seduction—portraying them as animalistic, insane, or

[236] Ibid., 23.
[237] *First Annual Report*, 20-21.
[238] In the opening pages of Thompson's *Gay Girls of New York*, the narrator suggests that "it is a firmly established law of our social system, that a woman who once loses her virtue, can never recover her position in society—while a man who sins a thousand times, is a thousand times applauded, and pronounced a capital fellow."

dangerous. The authors reinforce notions of fallen women as incompatible with society and reinforce the idea that "all she ha[s] in the world" is her honor,[239] while suggesting that the central concern might not be the innocent woman's seduction, but what she becomes as a result of it. Women's seductions are frequently shown as social crimes, transgressions committed against public morality, or, frequently, women's seductions are framed a crime against men.

### 2.3.1. The Victim of Seduction: The Seduced Woman and Seduction as Social Crime

According to authors and reformers alike, the seducer literally produces the city's population of prostitutes, an effect of their dehumanization due to seduction. In George Thompson's *Gay Girls*, Frank Rattleton seduces Mary Sourby by orchestrating a sham marriage. After he refuses to right the wrong through real marriage, she is driven insane. "The heartless words of the man who had deceived her, aroused her soul to fury. She sprang upon him, even as the tigress springs upon her prey; and drawing a dagger from her bosom, she plunged it into the heart of Frank Rattleton, who fell to the floor a lifeless corpse." Afterward, she is "for a long time a well-known Broadway courtezan" but eventually dies of disease. In the same novel Mr. Cheekey tricks Alice Vernon into entering a brothel with him. The narrator explains that "partly by persuasions, partly by promises, and partly by force, was the sacrifice of Alice Vernon's virtue accomplished." Afterward, "a lost and ruined creature," she immediately enters "a fashionable brothel, and became a woman of the town." She later dies "in obscurity and misery, in a low brothel." In the climactic final scene of Buntline's *Mysteries and Miseries of New Orleans*, after successfully enacting a complicated revenge plot, Fanny Gardner tortures

[239] Ned Buntline, *The Mysteries and Miseries of New Orleans*, 102.

her estranged husband for killing her seducer turned lover. As Fanny tortures and ultimately kills her husband, the narrator goes on a long digression about seduction. He explains that women "in giving her love to man, she gives it not for a day…but—for ever… with her, the love he has promised her, is her all. She recognises [sic] no other property as her own, but that!"[240] When a man "ruthlessly violate[s] his pledge" "the angel of her nature departs, and the evil enters in" and she "learns to hate with an intensity equally by her earlier passion, love!"[241] As she tortures and ultimately kills her husband, Fanny is portrayed as a vengeful fiend, irrevocably changed by her seduction. She then flees to "the Empire State, and there throws herself into the great whirlpool of society, which contains thousands of women of her stamp."[242] These women, diminished to a life of prostitution, emphasize that the seducer's influence had lasting effects. He corrupts women who in turn become "fiends," murderers, and prostitutes, spreading more immorality and vice in the wake of their 'fall' from their proper place in society—they fuel the city's vice trade, joining the "thousands of women of her stamp."

The discourse surrounding Sarah Mercer's seduction is also framed in a similar way; her personal experience and trauma are ultimately framed as less important than the disgrace it causes for her family and the men who are shown as the real 'victims' of her seduction. In Perry's *Account*, Sarah Mercer is discussed in contradictory ways. She is framed as both virtuous in her perfect innocence, yet at the same time victimized by it—revealing the incompatibility of traditional feminine ideals of innocence, virtue and trustfulness with the confluence of changes brought about by urbanization. During the antebellum period women's sexual desire was seen in conflicting ways. Women were

[240] Ibid., 102.
[241] Ibid., 102.
[242] Ibid., 104.

framed as sexual victims at the same time that they were held responsible for their own violation. The descriptions of Sarah's encounters with Heberton follow this pattern. While Sarah's experience was designated as "seduction," Sarah's testimony, as printed in newspapers and Perry's *Account*, reveals a complicated and painful experience, which included coercion, verbal and physical threats, and rape. The details of the story, often left out of the broader narrative of manly revenge for the seduction of a young man's sister, reveal a woman's traumatic experience treated as incidental to the larger wrong—her family's disgrace, which was largely predicated on the implicit assumption of her consent to the seduction.

While the innocence of women is often emphasized, it is this very innocence that actually makes them responsible for their violation. Heberton "used all the arts of which he was a perfect master, to ensnare her. In this way they met three times, They walked—they talked—he flattered—he made honourable love; *she listened and was undone*."[243] Sarah Mercer is described as an innocent and ignorant victim of not just Heberton, but the city as well, expressing anxiety that wealthy women were vulnerable to the libertine because of their urban ignorance. Sarah did not realize that her unfamiliarity had been seized on and used to affect her own "ruin." Mercer's lawyer explained that Sarah's only acquaintances were "*virtuous* girls, and they were limited to two families, or at most three,"[244] positioning her as part of a sanctioned and appropriate domestic, virtuous space. Furthermore, "she was never at a ball, play, or any other public place of amusement."[245] No doubt her virtuous innocence and domestic world incidentally

[243] Perry, 26.
[244] Ibid., 24.
[245] Ibid., 24.

fostered the "inexperience"[246] that contributed to her inability to navigate the urban landscape and its predators. Sarah Mercer, described as "not possessed of much strength of mind" and "having no guile… too confiding in others,"[247] is portrayed as a helpless victim of this new urban man. Sarah's relative vulnerability, away from her parents' home, and her lack of understanding about the potentially devious intentions of young men made her a tragic victim of her own ignorance about urban realities. The lawyers frame Sarah as both virtuous in her perfect innocence, yet at the same time victimized by it—revealing the incompatibility of traditional feminine ideals of innocence, virtue and trustfulness with the confluence of changes brought about by urbanization. Authors like Lippard also constructed female innocence this way, demonstrating a marked contradiction between feminine ideal and lived reality as the innocence and virtue that women are revered for actually lead to their violation. In Lippard's *The Quaker City*, the narrator explains that "the wronged woman" is "holy because trusting, innocent because loving with a pure love,"[248] thereby sympathizing with the seduced women but also making them a victim of their loving nature and naïveté. By naturalizing women's groundless trust in men who proclaim their love, women are still in part responsible for their seductions, or, as with Sarah and her fictionalized counterpart, Mary, rape.

Sarah's violation is consistently portrayed as not a personal crime, but a social, familial one. During the court proceedings it was revealed that Singleton's initial rage was aimed at his sister, whom he actually attempted to kill first for what she had done to their family. After Sarah returned home and explained what happened,

[246] Ibid., 28.
[247] Ibid., 23.
[248] Lippard, 417.

> [He] attempted several times to go upstairs and kill his sister…his disordered mind conjured up the delusion that the whole family were disgraced and ruined forever; father, mother and the other sisters all consigned to infamy and disgrace! It was under the effects of this *dominant* and *delusive* idea, that he conceived that it was his *duty* to kill his sister[249]

Sarah is thus blamed for her brutal and violent treatment. In losing her chastity, the Mercer's lose their social property in reputation as Sarah's wrong is seamlessly figured as Singleton's. It is only after Singleton is told that "Heberton had insultingly refused to make the only reparation in his power"—marriage—that he decides to kill Heberton.[250] In this sense, the responsibility for the sexual encounter lies with Sarah, while the responsibility for moving the transgression to normalcy through marriage is held by Heberton. The interaction here illustrates how seduction and rape were figured as a social, not personal, crime. The *Philadelphia Evening Journal* highlights that "the anguish of the family at the knowledge of the dishonor that has fallen upon the daughter of their house, no tongue can tell nor pen describe." Indeed, no newspaper that I could find reported that Sarah was raped or assaulted—in fact, the papers tended to stress her complicity. The discourse surrounding the Mercer case suggests that the 'wrong' committed by Heberton was the disgrace of a 'respectable' family, with little to no recognition of Sarah's traumatic experience. Newspapers, novels and reformers focus on the wrong committed against men and society when women are sexually assaulted—making crimes against women public, social crimes, rather than intimate and deeply personal, ultimately pushing women to the margins of their own experience.

In discussions about seduction, it is often the woman's consent that bolstered the overall wrong of the transgression, with commentators framing it as a crime worse than

[249] Perry, 31.
[250] Ibid., 31.

rape *because* women are implicated in the transgression. The rumors surrounding the seduction show Sarah being cast as more willing in her seduction than she actually was. The *Philadelphia Evening Journal* reports that "her absence as well as her return, we believe, was voluntary" and that the couple had been "in the habit" of meeting at a local brothel. This belies the fact that, while Heberton and Sarah met on the streets to talk a few times, she was tricked into entering the brothel and then raped at gunpoint. The *Milwuakie Sentinel* reports that Sarah had "been in the habit of visiting" with Heberton, and had "formed an intimacy with her at one of those evening parties," wrongly claiming that she attended parties, talked with men she didn't know, and met men "not at the residence of her father." In speeches before state assemblies of both Ohio and New York advocating the passage of criminal seduction laws, which I discuss further below, the speakers suggested that rape was preferable to seduction. In a March 23, 1843 speech before the New York legislature the speaker asks,

> ask the prostrated father; as the broken-hearted mother, whether it would enhance their misery to know that their daughter had been the victim of violence; ask them whether it would not alleviate their distress to know that she had yielded only to superior strength. Where is the parent who, if but one alternative were left, would not rather yield a daughter to the force of a ruffian than to the triumph of the seducer?

The "prostrated father," "broken-hearted mothers," and brothers are construed as the real victims of seduction. The speakers suggest that rape would be preferable to the possibility that a woman (or here, a daughter) would willingly have sex. This is part of a larger pattern surrounding the discussion of seduction during this period, where in conversations and concern over women's victimization and vulnerability, the stability and sanctity of male relationships and patriarchal authority are actually at stake. While reformers and authors often underscore the innocent naiveté of the seduced woman, it is the ambiguous

possibilities of her potential complicity in the events that becomes a vexing point of familial, patriarchal humiliation, and which threatens the reputations and social fitness of (middle-class) families.

Heberton's rape of Sarah Mercer is treated less as a violation of her own person, but rather, as a transgression of masculine propriety and patriarchal rights. Newspapers emphasized the political and legal implications that Sarah's seduction posed for the public, namely, the importance of men's right to take extralegal action when defending their manly honor. The *Philadelphia Evening Journal* stressed that the murder of Heberton was merely an instance of "summary retribution" for a crime "too black and damning…for us to express regret or sympathy for his untimely end." Interestingly, while Singleton's lawyer defended his actions on the basis of an insanity plea, newspapers cast Singleton's actions as the only *sane* thing Singleton could have done in his situation. The *Vermont Chronicle* evokes God's authority on earth as an ultimate justification for Singleton's actions: "Every [] mind feels that law is *essential* to the wellbeing of community… if the law is maintained, its penalty must be inflicted upon the guilty," and even if the state's official law does not punish transgression, "the feeling—the innate, the instinctive feeling—that the guilty *ought* to be punished, is not extinguished in the human bosom." For the *Chronicle* writer, Singleton's actions were natural, suggesting that "the abrogation of law" "*naturally*" and "*necessarily*" leads to justified extralegal violence. The *Mississippi Free Trader* called Singleton's actions "a most righteous act." His acquittal "should form a respectable precedent," stating that "these dogs" who "ruin the prospects of females and bring misery of their families" should be "treated to a shooting in every case." Thus, the Mercer case brings out the problem of personal rights to

violence, with papers openly advocating for the undermining of law in favor of patriarchal extralegal violence. White male prerogative is held up as a masculine bastion against the ineffectual nature of the state. Considering these responses, we might then consider the state's investment in criminalizing seduction as a means to maintain its authority and stave off the public's notion of right-to-violence. Seduction was criminalized in Pennsylvania just three days after the trial ends, suggesting that a large part of the problem with seduction was the way in which it destabilized patriarchal relationships among and between men.

### 2.3.2. Prostitution Reform: "Saving Women" to Save Men and the Middle Classes

Reform societies that sought to reform wayward prostitutes often prioritized saving women they thought were from middling or 'respectable' backgrounds and, in many ways, sought to reform prostitution as a means to reform men. Women's reform societies that targeted prostitution were part of a larger emergence of white, middle-class women into the political and public sphere. "Voluntary associations organized and operated exclusively by women grew exponentially in the early republic."[251] While some men criticized and mocked their work, others joined their ranks and supported their efforts.[252] Women focused their charity efforts on various causes, including education for the impoverished, temperance, poverty, abolition, and, prostitution. In the beginning decades of the nineteenth century, concomitant with the rise of public concern over prostitution and the expansion of sporting culture, women reformers sought to redeem women in the sex trade and eradicate prostitution by organizing relief and reform

[251] Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women*, 12.
[252] Ibid., 12.

societies. I focus here on organizations from northeastern cities, primarily Philadelphia, Boston, and New York. Reform societies geared toward the elimination of prostitution and vice were extremely popular during this period. These prostitution reform societies had overlapping operational periods, with the greatest activity between the 1830s and 1850s. I discuss reform organizations including the Magdalen Society of Philadelphia,[253] the Ladies Penitent Refuge in Boston, the New York Magdalen Society, and New York Female Moral Reform Society.[254] These organizations had similar goals, to reform women who had turned to prostitution, and eventually, some took up the cause of outlawing seduction. The societies published yearly, quarterly, and even weekly updates on their mission and their work. These documents could be quite popular—the paper of New York Female Moral Reform Society (FMRS), the *Advocate of Moral Reform*, had 16,500 subscribers by 1838, making it "one of the most widely read evangelical papers in the country."[255] These organizations were remarkable for their attempts to both legally and socially limit men's sexual license, successfully petitioning to have seduction criminalized in many states.

Reformers of prostitution attributed the expansion of prostitution directly to the libertine's seduction of innocent young women. Prostitution reformers were the center of the movement to criminalize seduction—which can be read as direct attempts by women to legally limit men's sexual license and behavior. Examining reform discourse, the

[253] Negley K. Teeters explains in his historical manifest on the Magdalen Society of Philadelphia (MSP), "The Early Days of the Magdalen Society of Philadelphia," the MSP aimed to reform sex workers through reeducation and work placement. Founded in 1800 the society was in operation until 1900 (161). See: Teeters, Negley K. "The early days of the Magdalen society of Philadelphia." *Social Service Review* 30.2 (1956): 158-167.
[254] The NYFMRS, founded in 1834, garnered critical attention for their unorthodox methods, entering brothels and attempting to minister to the women while shaming and ridiculing the unsuspecting men that might be inside.
[255] Severson, "'Devils Would Blush to Look': Brothel Visits of the New York Female Moral Reform Society, 1835-1836," 227.

problem with prostitution was the way in which it 'ruined' good men and supported men's unfettered sexual license. Reformers perceived that women carried the social stigma and burden of sexual transgression more than men. They argued that changing seduction law from a personal, economic crime against patriarchal protectors,[256] to a crime against public morality, which would include possible jail time and fines, would make the genders more equal by punishing men for using their "arts" to ensnare unsuspecting girls. The constitution of the Magdalen Society of Philadelphia (MSP) states that the organization's intent was to "aid in restoring the path of virtue, —to be instrumental in recovering to honest rank in life those unhappy Females, who, in an unguarded hour, have been robbed of their innocence."[257] The FMRS also directly connected prostitution to seduction, stating that the Society "shall have for its object the prevention of licentiousness" by "showing its fearfully immoral and soul-destroying influence" and "by pointing out the numberless lures and arts practiced by the unprincipled destroyer, to seduce and ruin the unsuspecting." The connection between prostitution and seduction was useful for reformers in two ways. On the one hand, it allowed reformers to sidestep the question of sex work as a lucrative form of employment for women. On the other, given the immense popularity of seduction novels, the connection between prostitution and seduction put prostitution into terms that its audiences would be familiar with, while allowing women make claims against men's sexual profligacy.

[256] Seduction law in the U.S. was derived from English law, where seduction was viewed, legally, as a loss of labor or service. As M.B.W. Sinclair explains in "Seduction and the Myth of the Ideal Woman," in these cases "the cause of action," or legal ability to bring suite, for seduction "belonged to the father and was an action for loss of services, usually caused by pregnancy" (33).
[257] *MSP Constitution*, 3.

### 2.3.3. What Women Should Be Saved: Class and Prostitution Reform

Reformers, usually of the evangelical middle-class, expressed particular concern over the possibility of middle-class women 'falling,' while expressing condemnation and disdain for the lower classes—showing that in the conversations surrounding seduction and prostitution, the protection and fitness of the middling classes was often a central concern. While reformers sought to help women of all backgrounds, they were often unable to understand the reasons why women would turn to prostitution. As Barbara Meil Hoboson notes, "middle-class reformers could not grasp the motivations, moral codes, and survival strategies of poor women—that prostitution could appear as a viable alternative to low wages and lack of employment options."[258] Women engaging in sex work during the antebellum period were predominantly poorer women and unsupported by family, most often driven by "economic need, a desire to be independent of familial constraint, and lack of comparatively well-paying and comfortable alternatives."[259] Reformers distinctly divided sex workers into two groups. Women whom they thought were from "respectable backgrounds" were understood as victims of treacherous male seducers—only turning to prostitution because of desperate need. Poorer women, however, were viewed as naturally inclined toward the trade and privy to disease. Just as sporting magazines emphasized the middle-class backgrounds of revered prostitutes, so too did reformers, suggesting that some reformers sought to save specifically white middle-class girls and women from prostitution.

Reformers often reserved special condemnation for women they perceive as from the lower classes, showing a distinctly classed reform motivation. In one of their annual

[258] Hobson, 5.
[259] Freedman, *Their Sisters Keepers*, 64.

reports the Ladies Penitent Refuge in Boston explains that its account of women who have "eloped" from their asylum "does not refer to a family of well educated children" where "sudden gusts of passion or by occasional departure from rectitude, is soon restored by parental reproof," but instead pertains to "a class who have grown up in ignorance; who know no distinction between right and wrong."[260] In the NYMS's *First Annual Report* John Robert McDowall explains of their charges, "a large proportion of these wretched females still had youth and health on their side, and many of them had but recently forsaken the paths of virtue; and had respectable and pious parents who mourned over their daughters with anguish indescribable."[261] Virtue was associated with the middle classes, while denigration and a 'natural' inclination for licentiousness is associated with the lower classes. While reformers sought to reach both groups, there is a special sympathy reserved for women whom they perceive as of the upper and middle classes. In the *First Annual Report* the NYMS explains that of the estimated 10,000 prostitutes in New York, "many of them are the daughters of the wealthy, respectable and pious citizens of our own and other states, seduced from their homes by the villains who infest the community, preying upon female innocence, and succeeding in their diabolical purpose."[262] By contrast, the writer concedes that

> we will not affect to conceal that hundreds, perhaps thousands of them, are the daughters of the ignorant, depraved, and vicious part of our population, trained up without culture of any kind, amidst the contagion of evil example, and enter upon a life of prostitution for the gratification of their unbridled passions, and become harlots altogether by choice.[263]

[260] *Ninth Annual Report of the Directors of the Penitent Female's Refuge*.
[261] *First Annual Report*, 4.
[262] *Ibid.,*10.
[263] Ibid., 11.

The author thus associates poorer women with "natural" licentiousness, and contends that wealthier women would never turn to prostitution by choice or give in to sexual desire.

Reformers sought to help those that were closer to themselves in class status as a means to 'rescue' middle class women from circulating in improper circles. In another NYMS publication the author writes, "many of the inmates of those houses [brothels] are the daughters of our most pious and respectable, and of our most wealthy citizens too. In their mental and personal accomplishments, many of them are not inferior to the first ladies in our city."[264] The Philadelphia Magdalen Society similarly tried to help members of more affluent social backgrounds. In the early days of the Philadelphia Magdalen Society, reformers seemed only able to induce the very financially desperate to commit themselves to the asylum, they attempted to change this.[265] In the 1850s, the Society began to search for "women 'whose early opportunities for improvement were superior to those who preceded them'" and began to recruit women who were "younger, better educated, less corrupt, and of a higher social class."[266] In a speech before the New York assembly arguing for the passing of a criminal seduction law, an unidentified reformer,[267] also claims that he and fellow reformers aimed to protect the middle class from the 'ruin' of loss of reputation,

> but let a hardened villain with the smile and affability of a demon find his way into that social circle where all is innocence and love, and with that smile and fondness and flattery which the artful seducer knows so well how to practice on the unsuspecting innocence of your daughter or sister, let him urge his suit, not with the view to make her his wife, but with the

[264] *Magdalen Facts*, 60. Library Company of Philadelphia.
[265] Steven Riggles, "Fallen Women: The Inmates of the Magdalen Society Asylum of Philadelphia, 1836-1908," 66.
[266] Ibid., 66.
[267] In the speech, taken from *Documents of the Assembly of the State of New York, Volume 5*, the speaker is not identified by name. However, because women could not speak before legislators as political agents, it would have been a man associated with the cause of prostitution reform and the criminalization of seduction. Here I refer to them as "the speaker."

> deep laid devilish plan to make her the victim of his lust and when his nefarious plans have resulted in the betrayal and prostitution of injured innocence, can you say he is a better man or deserves a better fate than those your laws have branded with infamy and disgrace? [268]

The seducer thus "ruins" not just women, but families, and the "social circle" which certain women belong and circulate within. As the speaker evokes the "innocence of your daughter or sister," he suggests that the law must intervene to "disgrace" men who destroy *other men's* "domestic comforts and peace."[269] These texts suggest that in many ways reformers sought to protect a middle-class sensibility and way of life that the seducer threatened. The works attempt to stoke the sympathies of middle-class readers for monetary and ideological support, but also present a paranoid concern that seduction is weakening the ranks of the middle class and taking young, marriage women out of proper circulation. Furthermore, seduction is as a problem for the way in which it damages men's reputations destroys the sanctity of their "social circle."

### 2.3.4. Prostitution Reform: Saving Women to Save Men

Prostitution reform societies professed a deep desire to aid in the reformation of fallen women. However, reading society documents, it becomes clear that reformers were concerned for the socio-economic irresponsibility of young men who they saw being 'victimized' *by* prostitutes. The NYMS was a male-run organization, with women helping at the asylum in the direct ministrations to the Society's charges. The Society infamously claimed that there were 10,000 working prostitutes in New York[270]—with

[268] Ibid., 4.
[269] Ibid., 3.
[270] The Report was written by Reverend McDowall and published in 1831. McDowall who had a leading role in the organization and penned most of its documents.

additional "hundreds of private harlots and kept mistresses."[271] As one critical pamphlet responded, this would mean "*one out of every three* of the marriageable females of New York at this moment received the wages of prostitution…"[272] The report provoked a backlash of derision from critics and the general public, but successfully tapped into a general fervor and concern over the growth of prostitution and sporting male culture. While the society sought to reform "abandoned white females" in order to "stay the plague which assails the very vitals of society,"[273] upon close reading of NYMS texts it becomes clear that in staving off prostitution, they actually desired to save and reform men from improper behavior.

The NYMS's *Annual Report* uses similar language as other writers, reformers, and newspaper editors, bemoaning the seducer as the destroyer of female innocence; however, the seduction narrative actually becomes inverted to emphasize the innocence of men at the hands of corrupting women. The *First Annual Report* explains that innocent girls are "seduced from their homes by the villains who infest the community, preying upon female innocence, and succeeding in their diabolical purpose" and that the libertine is a "monster in human shape,"[274] reserving strong condemnation for men who take advantage of women. However, it becomes clear that the "plague which assails the very vitals of society"[275] are actually sex workers and the economic and social effects that prostitution has on men. The writer states,

> but it is clearly ascertained that bad women multiply the seduction of heedless youth, more rapidly than bad men seduced modest women. A few of these courtesans suffice to corrupt whole cities, and there can be no

[271] *First Annual Report*, 9.
[272] *Orthodox Bubbles*. Library Company of Philadelphia.
[273] *First Annual Report*, 3.
[274] Ibid., 10.
[275] Ibid., 12.

> doubt that some insinuating prostitutes have initiated more young men into these destructive ways, than the most abandoned rakes have debauched virgins during their whole lives[276]

Seducers "deserve execration and great severity" but "the grand effort" needs to be "directed to arresting, and if possible, reclaiming, those wretched females, who are the pest and nuisance of society."[277] He inverts the seduction narrative to argue that women are actually responsible for ruining men, and, in fact, are capable of "corrupt[ing] whole cities." Thus the NYMS's *Annual Report* begins by expressing support for women victimized by seduction, and condemnation for the seducer, but quickly moves to place blame on sex workers, advocating for a softer punishment of the seducer, but the expulsion of female sex workers from society into prison. The reform of prostitutes should occur only "if possible." They give a vague description of the seducers' punishment, "execration" and "great severity," but claim "bad women," who actually "multiply the seduction of heedless" and innocent men, need to be sent to prison.

While these societies claim to focus on reforming and re-socializing the prostitute, there was an underlying emphasis on the fact that her reformation would fix and restore a population of men, the libertines, back into proper behavior. This can be seen in arguments made before the state assemblies of both Ohio and New York for the criminalization of seduction. In the speeches, the speakers put forward arguments that prioritize saving young, socially valuable men, rather than women. The speaker in front of the Ohio legislature, identified as Mr. Carpenter,[278] explains that "the means of seduction are well taught in these schools of hell" and that "a system of education thus grows up in the country, which any counteractive system, with all the patronage of

[276] Ibid., 12.
[277] Ibid., 12.
[278] From: *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Ohio, Volume 40, Part 2*.

legislative munificence may be impotent to check,"[279] suggesting that seducers are turned out like students in school, "educated" in cities and towns and, presumably, by more seasoned libertines. He explains that the arts of the libertine are being "taught" to young men who use their "arts" to ensnare "every class of victims."[280] In a similar manner as the sensational novels, the speaker concerns himself over men's social seduction by libertine men. In front of the New York Assembly, the speaker insists that persecuting seduction is necessary for the proper functioning of the state: "what will save us from internal commotion, anarchy and ruin, but our attachment to the eternal principles of justice and virtue?"[281] The speakers paint a gravely endangered image of U.S. society: "anarchy and ruin" might break out if the law does not intervene to more thoroughly punish seducers who break down the fabric of society and, importantly, induce other men into doing the same. The reformers speaking before the state assembly's use the same discourse of masculine contagion that reformers, newspaper writers and authors use to describe sporting culture and its malevolent effect on men, women and society in general. The New York speaker claims that "to treat these offenders as criminals, is the only way to arrest the spreading evil."[282] Unless men's sexual desire and uninhibited autonomy are better controlled, the republic itself is threatened, with "evil" spreading to other impressionable young men who might be lured into the libertine's lifestyle.

Women reformers played a large role in the criminalization of seduction, arguing that seduction should be criminalized in order to benefit and protect men: their sons, brothers and husbands. In the Ohio speech before the Assembly, Carpenter reports that

[279] Ibid., 330.
[280] Ibid., 330.
[281] From: *Documents of the Assembly of the State of New York, Volume 5*, 2.
[282] Ibid., 11.

> the petitioners … are among the most intelligent, polished, and respectable women of our state. They ask the intervention of the legislative power to suppress crime and its contaminating influences; they are mothers and sisters; they intercede in behalf of sons about to go beyond the reach of a mother's vigilance, but not of a mother's solicitude; of brothers already gone within the sphere of contamination, but not beyond the sphere of a sister's love; they beseech the power which has made laws for punishing these sons and brothers, if they commit murder, or theft, or rape, or perjury; to make laws, also, that shall punish the designing pander of all these crimes, and suppress the influence that begets them[283]

Women's moral authority as mothers is evoked, as the speaker asks that the law take on the role of "a mother's vigilance" and help the "brothers and sons" by using the law to "suppress the influence that begets them," namely, *other men* who instruct in the ways of the seducer. Carpenter goes on to say that "the primary and most heartfelt motive of the petitioners—to preserve the purity of the other sex—to turn away from the imbruting haunts of debauchery, those whom business or courtesy must make the daily companions of their sons and their brothers."[284] In this section of his speech, the violations committed against seduced women are passed over and the argument that men are really in need a saving is emphasized. The "imbruting" effects actually make prostitutes, the seduced women in much reform rhetoric, into the moral transgressors who ruin innocent *men*. Just as in critical rebuke of sporting men, "haunts of debauchery" are evoked suggesting that urban vices, and the men who indulge in them, need to be stopped from spreading their influence to other men. Interestingly, the act of seduction falls away, as tacit emphasis is placed on punishing misbehaving and immoral men. Thus, arguments for the criminalization of seduction are couched in terms of *saving* men, rather than curbing them.

[283] Ibid., 324.
[284] Ibid., 329.

## 2.4. Coda: Seduction Law

In many states, the efforts of reformers to criminalize seduction worked. Throughout the 1840s and onward, seduction was made into a criminal act, allegations of "loss of services" on the part of the father was no longer required, and men could face fines and jail time. Pennsylvania enacted criminal seduction laws in 1844, resulting from a successful petition campaign and public outrage over Sarah Mercer's seduction and her brother Singleton's trial. Michigan passed seduction laws that year as well, with New York quickly followed suit, and by 1900, almost twenty states would adopt similar seduction laws.[285] In many ways the passing of seduction law can be read as a powerful act by women reformers—they directly targeted men's sexual license and unequal power over women and sought to balance these inequities using the law, at a time when they had no power to vote. Indeed, women found other ways to intervene in the political arena over this issue, including signature-gathering campaigns,[286] publishing reform newspapers, and some groups even threatened legislators with retaliation.[287] However, reformer's work had many problems. As I have shown here, reformers put forward distinctly classed and racially biased views about the seduced women and sex workers whom they sought to protect. Reformers focused their energies on white women and expressed disparaging views of the very poor and destitute as beyond help, while

[285]Freedman, *Redefining Rape.* 45.

[286] As Larry Whiteaker explains in *Seduction, Prostitution, and Moral Reform in New York, 1830-1860*, the FMRS "forwarded 'some 40,000 petitions' to the legislature" to advocate for an ant-seduction measure (142). See: Whiteaker, Larry Howard. *Seduction, prostitution, and moral reform in New York, 1830-1860*. Taylor & Francis, 1997.

[287] Carpenter relates to the committee: "No question about the propriety of the interference of women in these affairs will justify the slightest levity towards the petitioners; and any effort to sneer at the subject may provoke a retaliatory sneer from the petitioners, with fearful odds on their side. Your committee never knew women yield a question of propriety to ridicule. They are irresistible sneeerers [sic] when they undertake it. Your committee advises, therefore, that there be no quarrel between the Senate of Ohio and one thousand and forty four women of this state, on the propriety of their petitions" (325).

underestimating women's capacity to choose sex work as an economically productive vocation. Incidentally, these actions would come to shape what seduction, assault and seduced meant for decades to come. Namely, much of this work began to codify ideas like "victim," "seducer" and "seduced" as applying to white men and women. When committing sexual transgressions, white men were overwhelmingly "seducers" who could face fines or time in prison, while black men came to be predominately defined as "rapists" by the law, and as a result faced devastating legal and extralegal violence into the twentieth century. While the earnestness and "virtue" of the seduced woman was often questioned and derided in cases involving seduction,[288] white women still had the option to legal recourse, which, unprotected by the law, black women did not. Deeply racist stereotypes about black women's "licentiousness" further distanced them from being seen as victims in society and by the law.

## 2.5. Conclusion

Reformers and writers, in their condemnation of seduction, were not simply concerned with saving women from harm and unequal treatment. Seduction was often framed as a social, moral and public offense—reflecting what others thought was wrong with society rather than the experience of the individuals involved. Reformers and writers often put concerns for men before those of women when dealing with women's sexual assault. For some reformers, seduction law was about men as much as it was about women. They sought to punish men who behaved immorally, and, importantly, spread that immoral influence to other potentially upstanding young men.

[288] See: Pamela Haag, *Sexual Rights and the Transformation of American Liberalism*.

Concern over the popularity and spread of sporting culture undergirded much of the conversation and concern over seduction in the antebellum United States. Critics feared that sporting culture presented an alluring lifestyle for young men, especially young men who were frustrated with their economic and social prospects. In a sense, men's ambitions presented a problem for some writers and reformers—their desire for wealth and a cosmopolitan lifestyle inspired by the glamour of the city could drive men to gamble, steal, and even commit murder. Many saw sporting culture as a threat to the emerging middle-class values that were beginning to permeate U.S. culture. Sporting men were portrayed as seducing naïve girls from the middling classes, destroying the honor of their families, and especially the men who were supposed to be their protectors. Flouting propriety in their attitudes and behavior, sports defied tenets of middle-class masculinity. But the sport's ability to put on airs and 'secretly' move among the middle classes caused fears that the sport could corrupt respectable citizens and elites. Indeed, the sporting lifestyle was seen as so alluring as to draw in men, also from the middling and respectable classes, into his pernicious lifestyle, creating more sports who seduce, trick, and manipulate. Ultimately, sporting men embodied masculinity gone awry. In sporting men, national ideals of independence, freedom and liberty were reflected back to public in a distorted vision of U.S. values.

# Chapter Three – The Question of Male Unity: George Lippard's Brotherhood of the Union, *The Killers*, and *Washington and His Men*

## 3.1. Introduction: George Lippard, The Killers, and Washington and His Men

Within a few short months of each other George Lippard published two very popular, very different works of fiction. One, *The Killers* (1849), offers a fictionalized account of the real Philadelphia gang the Killers and the explosive race riot, dubbed the California Street riot, which occurred in Philadelphia on October 9, 1849. The narrative features a motley cast of corrupt and vile men, from gang members and sporting men to corrupt bankers and wealthy merchants. Shortly thereafter, Lippard published *Washington and His Men: A New Series of Legends of the Revolution* (1850), a follow-up to his extremely popular *Washington and His Generals; or, Legends of the Revolution* (1847). The *Legends* series is a collection of idealized, patriotic stories that dramatize both real and imagined events and people of the American Revolution. It captured readers' attention and imagination to the point that Lippard's patriotic romances were even recorded and incorporated into schoolbooks as U.S. history.[289] Quite different from *The Killers*' harrowing and violent look at the corrupt underworld of men in urban cities, *Washington* paints an idealized portrait of the founding fathers and the nation's glory-filled early history. *The Killers* presents a haunting version of urban dissolution wrought by capitalism and the sporting male types it creates, while *Legends* presents an idealized image of the founding fathers meant to instruct readers in proper male comportment. In

[289] As David S Reynold explains in *Prophet of Protest*, the Liberty Bell legend—that the bell was rung on the day Independence was declared—was taught "until the early twentieth century to generations of school children" (32). In fact, it was rung days later on July 8. See: Reynolds, David S. *George Lippard, Prophet of Protest: Writings of an American Radical, 1822–1854*. New York: Peter Lang (1986).

league with other reformers, writers, commentators and politicians engaged in the fierce debate over the meaning of masculinity during this period, Lippard's work registers deep fears over the proper expression of masculinity. In Lippard's writing and Brotherhood, he imagines a masculine ideal that resists the pernicious influence of urban vice and capitalism and is instead aligned with national pride, sacrifice and an allegiance to men's 'higher' purpose.

At the same time that Lippard was writing and publishing these works, he was pouring the bulk of his energy, time and money into the development of his secret society, the Brotherhood of the Union. The Brotherhood focused on issues of labor, emphasized republican responsibilities, and attempted to set up a nation-wide system of cooperatives among members. It was Lippard's central focus towards the end of his life, from 1847 until his death in 1854. The Brotherhood became an outlet for him to actualize some of the political aims that he had continually expressed throughout his writing career. Indeed, *Washington* and *The Killers*, both written and published as Brotherhood activity was underway, engage with the central concerns over the status and meaning of white manhood that the Brotherhood of the Union did as well. This chapter is based largely on original archival research into Lippard's Brotherhood and his fictional writing. I examine Brotherhood record books, personal correspondence, his writing in *The Quaker City* newspaper, as well as secondary materials on the Brotherhood and his fiction to explore how white masculinity was seen as a potential source for global political change that emanated from the United States.

Examining Brotherhood documents in conjunction with *The Killers* and *Legends* illuminates how central the shaping of white masculinity and male virtue was to the

perceived vitality of the United States.[290] Scholars like Dana D. Nelson, David Anthony, and Thomas Augst have corroborated that antebellum white masculinity—influenced by the market revolution, capitalism, and the developing middle class—was defined by competition, self-restraint, and a patriarchal economic, social and political responsibility. These authors emphasize that competition, which was a product of capitalist drives and imperial expansion, was central to masculine comportment. However, Lippard's masculine ideal definitively worked against the valorization of competition. For Lippard, competition among men not only extended the pernicious influence of capitalism in the United States, but also made white men into enemies—unable and unwilling to join together to "complete the freedom of the world," which for Lippard was only possible through white male unity.[291] Furthermore, competition caused men to turn toward global projects of empire and expansion—rather than focusing on the supremely important domestic space of the U.S. and the continuation of settler colonialism into the West. While Lippard *expressed* that his brotherhood should "include all nations and races,"[292] his fiction's focus on white men, his late political activity, and brotherhood rosters make

[290] Alexander Saxton's work, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic* is notable for taking this idea as a central premise. His work explores the ways that white working class men were politically valuable to political elites and working class organizers. He argues that racism was a fundamental tool used to appeal to the white working class, explaining that racism "could be made to work for the perceived interests of lower classes or segments of lower classes as well as for the ruling classes" (387). Gail Bederman also discusses this idea in terms of middle-class white masculinity in *Manliness & Civilization*. She argues that in the 1890s, the expression of nineteenth century white manhood shifted from concern for control, self-restraint and responsibility to one defined by "aggressiveness, physical force, and male sexuality" which connected white male power intimately to white supremacy (11-19).

[291] Lippard did not explicitly state that he only spoke for "white men" in his work; however, as I show in this chapter, his interests were clearly aligned with whites. It is important to note that his perception of whiteness was not nativist, for his vision of brotherhood included Europe and European immigrants. Indeed, Lippard desired for the Brotherhood to reach out to immigrant workers. In one of the Brotherhood's annual meetings the group resolved to have official Brotherhood documents immediately translated to German, "for the purpose [of] forming circles to work in the German language." Furthermore, the Brotherhood eventually had support from chapters in England and Germany (Reynolds, *Prophet of Protest*, 2).

[292] *The Initiating Degree of the Grand Circle*. Brotherhood of the Union Collection (MSS), Historical Society of Philadelphia.

clear that white male membership and white male imperatives were his central concern—that only white American men could "hasten the Day, when Humanity shall arise from its Grave"[293] and complete the freedom of the world. At a moment when there were other competing versions of masculinity available to men, including pernicious sporting masculinity and market-driven self-disciplined manliness, this chapter explores how Lippard's work and Brotherhood offer a modified vision of how white male comportment could shape and change the nation.

Ultimately, Lippard's fiction and the Brotherhood support the idea that, when unified and behaving as "proper" men, white men are uniquely positioned to "make this Continent, the Homestead of Free Men."[294] At a moment when the U.S. was in a state of political, social and cultural flux, I argue that Lippard saw the Brotherhood and the directing of masculinity as key points through which the "American Continent" could be directed to "complete the freedom of the world."[295] While Lippard emphasized that he supported the inclusion of all races as well as women in his messianic hopes for the nation, he ultimately saw white (working-class) men as possessing the power, ability, and imperative to do so. In *The Killers*, slavery is decried not necessarily as a crime against the individuals who suffer under slavery, but rather, as a threat to white male unity because it is a product of capitalist logics of competition and global trade concerns, which detract from the domestic sanctity of the nation. *Legends* further emphasizes white male superiority at the expense of Native peoples in fictional depictions that show Indigenous peoples as a barbaric and disappearing presence within the nation. Women

[293] Brotherhood of the Union Collection (MSS), Historical Society of Philadelphia.
[294] Ibid.
[295] *The Initiating Degree of the Grand Circle*. Brotherhood of the Union Collection (MSS), Historical Society of Philadelphia.

are portrayed as ancillary extensions of men's rights and responsibilities—signposts that help register men's relative merits or evils. The Brotherhood also put women's participation secondary to the central organization of men.

I do not discuss the racism and sexism in Lippard's work simply to create a catalogue of his ideological failures. Rather, faced with the incredibly divisive issues of his time, Lippard seemed to deemphasize politically polarizing positions and concerns that might detract from the possibility of supreme (white) male fraternity in his Brotherhood.[296] Indeed, during Lippard's time there were a host of issues that saw men divided. National tensions over the status of slavery in the country was heightened after the U.S.-Mexico War saw borders expand, with the subsequent Compromise of 1850 further straining national divides. Women's increasing (and disconcerting) presence in the workforce was ushered in by unprecedented change in labor practices and the expansion of capitalism. The formation of Lippard's Brotherhood also coincided with the California gold rush and domestic expansion into the western frontier. Essentially, finding common political ground to unite men was at once more difficult, and for Lippard, more pressing than ever before. Deeply concerned about the implications of Europe's failed democratic revolutions of 1848,[297] I argue that Lippard saw recently politically enfranchised laboring white men as the central hope for the future, the prime possibility for creating, and sustaining, political and social change.[298] Very much in line

[296] This point builds off Saxton's *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic* wherein he argues that labor organizing and labor parities drew on and promoted racist attitudes in order to garner support from the white working class.

[297] In a letter to Brotherhood member Lippard writes, "In the old World, liberty is dead; in the New, a recreant Senate had in the face of God and Man, denied the right of every man to a home; in the old world, the scaffold and the bayonet have choked the utterance of liberty." Brotherhood of the Union Collection (MSS), Historical Society of Philadelphia.

[298] As Saxton notes, "suffrage, already widely extended by 1830, had appeared the shortest route to economic and social reforms since producers comprised, potentially, a national majority" (300).

with widespread religious fervor at the time, Lippard saw the Brotherhood as a sacralization of male unity and the potential for global change it promised.

In these works and in the construction of his Brotherhood Lippard focused on an interconnected nexus of concerns and attitudes by which a man should be 'measured.' On the one hand, according to Lippard, ideal men, seen in *Legends* and in his Brotherhood writing, understand the national responsibility that they have, *as* men, to carry out the divine purpose that the nation-space necessitates. Part of this commitment came from fully recognizing and revering the nation's Revolutionary past; emphasizes Lippard frequently the notion that history is 'alive,' and the project that began with the founding fathers is yet to be completed by men like himself and his fellow Brothers. Because of this emphasis, Lippard frequently rewrote U.S. history in his *Legends*, emphasizing strong, valiant but humble men who deeply respect their fellow man and the higher principles of democracy. Unity among men was a strong central feature of manhood for Lippard, because it led to the preservation of sacred male-governed spaces like the home, the battlefield and politics.[299] For Lippard, ideal men resisted the competitive drives of capitalism for patriarchal unity and mutual respect among men. Without white male unity, the world threatens to fall into dissolution.

[299] Nineteenth century studies of gender have often discussed women as the "governors" of the home and the private sphere (with this paradigm also receiving its own critique) by scholars such as Barbara Welter, Linda Kerber, Nancy Cott, Amy Kaplan, Lauren Berlant and many others. Conversely, work on nineteenth century masculinity has often focused on public life, and has neglected how "men were part of 'managing' the bourgeois home" as well, and that managerial manhood extended to "the professional management of the 'private' sphere" as Dana D. Nelson puts it in *National Manhood* (15). In *Family Men: Middle-class Fatherhood in Early Industrializing America* (2001) Shawn Johansen argues that many historians have tended to see the "retreat of the family away from the public arena" as contributing "to a divergence of the masculine from the domestic" (18) and focused on men's "competitive relation with the larger world outside, where their identity is formed and established" (18). However, she argues that work "linked men to their families" (19) with "the provider role link[ing] men not only economically but also emotionally to their families. There is no doubt that men felt keenly the responsibility to provide" (23). With Lippard's work, it is clear that the ideal man was deeply concerned with his ability, desire and 'right' to protect as well as promote the welfare of, their families.

This chapter is concerned with how, during the onset of industrial capitalism, commentators like Lippard turned their attention to the power of white men to resolve the tensions and ambiguities of their time. Saxton explains that white racism was a powerful "legitimating" force that "validat[ed] a positive defense of slavery as well as removal or extermination of Indians, the racist component served to define the boundaries of a white republic from which class gradations would presumably be forever barred."[300] Racism was not just promoted by political and social elites, but rather, "lower-class organizations and individuals contributed substantially to the continuance of white racism."[301] However, I do not mean to assert that Lippard promoted an aggressively racist program in order to attract white men to his project. Rather, I argue that he often downplayed or overlooked the political and social interests of people of color and women in order to focus on politically powerful and enfranchised white men. Lippard focuses his energy and critique on white men, putting forward strong condemnations of men whose sense of their responsibilities as men are dictated by capitalist influence. Indeed, I argue that Lippard's portrayals of disreputable men in *The Killers* are a direct indictment of sporting men and sporting culture. In his account, self-interest, exploitation as well as the pernicious influences of slavery, overseas trade and imperial glory are negative precisely because they create utter domestic discord, rending the national body and social unity. I argue that Lippard marries the past with the present in his Brotherhood in order to direct male virtue toward self-sacrifice and a commitment to the nation and history as men. Men, and specifically white American men, are portrayed as uniquely fit to bring forth change to a corrupt world.

[300] Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic*. 386.
[301] Ibid., 387.

Washington is crafted as Lippard's ideal man in *Washington and His Men: A New Series of Legends of the Revolution* (1850). Washington is aligned with a humble, impoverished background, described as the "descendant of [a] peasant child"[302] despite his actual wealthy upbringing in a landed slave-holding family. As I will detail further in this chapter, in Lippard's story Washington strives to maintain male unity and realizes the futility of a masculinity that reveres pride and sees other men as potential threats. Washington is rational where lesser men are heated, and respects his own and others' male responsibilities to family and the nation. Raised in the country's wilderness, he has an intuitive understanding of the exceptional nature of the U.S. and his part in actualizing its grand destiny—a point that Lippard emphasized in his Brotherhood as an inheritance that men still had a responsibility to fulfill. Consistently referencing Washington and incorporating symbols of his strength, like his sword, in Brotherhood ritual—Lippard crafts the memory of Washington to give weight and valor to his construction of masculinity.

*The Killers*, published just a few months before *Legends*, contrasts strongly with the concerns of *Legends*, instead focusing on a masculine identity that threatens the imperatives of brotherhood and the democratic sanctity of the nation. I argue here that the out of control men portrayed in *The Killers* are modeled after sporting men. Just as sporting men are portrayed in novels and reform literature, Lippard depicts men influenced by the vice and degradation of Philadelphia, and let 'loose' from labor systems that instill a sense of morality and mutual respect among men. The men populating *The Killers* represent a new brand of sporting masculinity that is increasingly seductive to the young men of the nation. Instead of preserving male unity and realizing the special

[302] Lippard, *Washington and his Men*, 7.

responsibility that men have to continuing the work of liberty begun with the Revolution, these men embody the logics of capitalist gain and self-interest, manipulating one another and spreading chaos in their pursuit of it. As sports are so often portrayed, the vile men of *The Killers* are very much a product of their environment, with the pressures of urban life—poverty, poor living conditions, and ever-increasing places of vice—influencing their profligate attitudes toward work, leisure, and women. By placing *Legends* in conversation with *The Killers* I argue that while *Legends* presents an idealized vision of manhood, it is one that threatens to be superseded by the increasingly popular attitudes of the so-called degenerate, sporting men that are represented in *The Killers*. Lippard's insistence on remembering the Revolution in his Brotherhood rituals, and his emphasis on the still-uncertain future of the national goals of the revolution, attempt to assert a nostalgic myth of U. S. manhood that can be accessed and 'used' in the present.

One important question that guides this chapter is this: why focus on brotherhood? Lippard, politically active throughout his entire mature life, ended up focusing most of his energy—financial, personal, and professional—on the formation of his secret male fraternity.[303] I contend, and demonstrate through close examination of texts, that Lippard founded his Brotherhood with the conviction that only through male congeniality, and by focusing male power, could social change occur. The recent extension of male suffrage to all white males in the 1830s meant that working- and lower-class men had political and social power like never before—a power that Lippard

[303] In one letter to a fellow Brother he writes, "I only live for the Order now. My only child was buried to day. My wife is in the last stage of consumption. The fact that the Brotherhood, demands that I should live, alone keeps me alive. So you see, Brother, that while I speak words of hope to you, I much need some one to help and console me." Brotherhood of the Union Collection (MSS), The Library Company of Philadelphia.

sought to harness.[304] Connecting this idea with the overarching ideas of my dissertation, I see a line of continuity between Lippard's insistence on male unity in the Brotherhood and his fictional representations of men corrupted by competition and singular individualism. Ideal men, like those that appear in *Legends*, such as George Washington and other men of the Revolution, are valorized as ideal because of their commitment to democracy, natural affinity for and understanding of the land, their maintenance of male bonds at all costs, and their protective attitude toward home and the women that are tied to it. In contrast, *The Killers* focuses on the exploits and deviltry of a group of sporting-men cum gang members, the Killers. While legends presents idealized masculinity embodied in the forefathers, *The Killers* frets over a new, and seductive, brand of masculine comportment influenced by the self-interest and excesses of capitalism and other institutions, like the prison and slavery, that rot and corrupt young men.

## 3.2. Lippard's Politics

Scholarship on Lippard has established the remarkable and often radical ideological aims of Lippard's politics. While Lippard and his work dropped into relative obscurity after his death, scholars have recovered the life and writings of one of the most popular and politically active writers of the nineteenth-century United States. Work focused on Lippard has examined his impact of popular culture, literature, and politics. Early work on Lippard helped us to understand his labor politics as radical, supporting

[304] Again, this is a central aspect of Alexander Saxton's work in *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic*, where he focuses on how Whigs, Republicans, Democrats and other political and labor parties sought to harness this power as well—often using white supremacy as a rallying concept.

the abolition of slavery, a universal coalition of labor, and the equality of women.[305] However, as authors like David S. Reynolds, Michael Denning, Shelley Streeby, Dana D. Nelson, Thomas Louse and others have shown, his political ideology also had deep contradictions concerning race and gender equality, expansion and U.S. empire. By reading *Legends of the Revolution* and *The Killers* in tandem, it becomes clear that, while Lippard rejected racist attitudes and the mistreatment of women, he envisioned white male masculinity as the means by which to eradicate and correct these social evils. White men, performing the responsibilities of their gender, are tasked with saving the nation, and even the world, from despotism and greed—as Lippard states in a letter to the Brotherhood, men's "allegiance to the Brotherhood [is] the last hope of human progress." In a sense, despite wanting to empower the downtrodden, Lippard's Brotherhood and writing on ideal masculinity involve vesting men with an understanding of the power and responsibilities of their gender.

Lippard aligned his Brotherhood of the Union with other infamous secret societies but held that his Brotherhood did something none of the others did, unite individuals under their most basic common cause—labor. David S. Reynolds explains that the majority of "American fraternal orders, as typified by the Masons and Odd Fellows, have been socially conservative," and while Lippard adapted features of these "'mainstream' societies, he instilled into his Brotherhood a subversive character."[306] Announcing the formation of his Brotherhood, Lippard wrote in his newspaper, the *Quaker City Weekly*

[305] Roger Butterfield "George Lippard and His Secret Brotherhood" (1955), J.B. Bouton *The Life and Choice Writings of George Lippard* (1855), Joseph Jackson "George Lippard; Misunderstood Man of Letters" (1935).
[306] Reynolds, *George Lippard Prophet of Protest*, 203.

(QCW)[307] that the Brotherhood "vows to protect the Man who Toils from the exactions of the Man who is too indolent or too criminal to Work," postulating that "men, thoroughly organized…can put to flight an army of a thousand who have no principle of unity to bind them together."[308] Lippard saw the cause of labor as a concrete way to ensure equality and prosperity among men while overcoming the exploitative and hegemonic social, cultural and economic effects of capitalism. For Lippard, brotherhood and the concerns of labor were intrinsically linked, protecting the "Man who Toils" by organizing men in mutual self-interest. By examining Lippard's Brotherhood of the Union writings, it becomes clear that while labor has been rightly highlighted as a central concern of Lippard's, this emphasis on labor was often also in service of his lofty goal of supreme male unity—which would ultimately move the world toward socialist utopia. The concerns of universal brotherhood for Lippard also depended on the availability of land and the security of home. As we will see, land reform and the conception of 'home' were closely tied to Lippard's utopian vision of the Brotherhood and a united nation.

A consistent point of concern in Lippard's development of the Brotherhood, as well as his fiction and political writings, was his belief that land was essential to guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of Americans. As Shelley Streeby explains, "his investment in land was in favor of his utopian dreams, annexing new lands and populating them was Lippard's key to the ideal America."[309] Land was seen as akin to an inalienable right for Lippard, ultimately securing white men's liberal autonomy. In a speech at the Third Annual Convocation of the Supreme Circle, Lippard addressed members of his Brotherhood, explaining the "eternal truth" that the Brotherhood worked

[307] *Quaker City Weekly* will be referred to as *QCW* throughout the rest of the chapter.
[308] Ibid., 205.
[309] Streeby, *American Sensations*, 51.

for was that "every human creature hath a right to Life, Liberty, Land and Home; to the means and circumstances of temporal, moral and spiritual development."[310] Land was intimately connected to autonomy and moral betterment. Lippard's focus on homesteading and land reform helped make his Brotherhood, according to Jamie Bronstein, "the primer nonpolitical land-reform organization of the 1850s."[311] As I will explore in detail later in this chapter, Lippard's emphasis on home and land was intimately linked with what he saw as the patriarchal rights and responsibilities of (white) men. For Lippard, labor, land, and home are indelibly linked; yet, Lippard's idealist hopes for universal "Life, Liberty, Land and Home" led to his support of U.S. projects of continental imperialism which perpetuated myths of racial inequality and depended on the stripping of land and freedom from others.

Lippard's insistent vision of land as the means to equality and unity meant that, despite his more radical ideas about gender, race and national equality, he often ended up supporting violent wars of U.S. expansion and empire building that were predicated on ideas of the "natural" inferiority of Latin American people and nations.[312] Lippard saw the United States as a spiritual place of universal "regeneration" for the downtrodden, granted by God. He writes in one issue of *QCW* that "God has blessed the New World with abundant harvests, with a great expanse of land, and with the germ of complete Social Regeneration,"[313] proclaiming in another issue "that God has given the American Continent as the Homestead of the Workers of the Human Race."[314] As Louse explains, in Lippard's thinking: "being conquered by the republic-empire of the 'New Rome'

[310] Brotherhood of the Union Collection (MSS), The Library Company of Philadelphia.
[311] Streeby, 42.
[312] Shelley Streeby examines this topic in-depth in her book *American Sensations*.
[313] Reynolds, 211.
[314] Ibid., 201.

brought order, modernization, and the 'human progress' that the [Brotherhood of the Union] advocated, with industrial soldiers transforming Mexico's land for the US."[315] Despite speaking out against atrocities toward Native American communities,[316] Lippard still frequently envisioned the United States as a mostly empty, God-given land. American men, like Washington, are meant to complete its democratic destiny while Native communities are shown as disappearing and outmoded by superior white settlers. I will show how the ritual and symbolism incorporated into the Brotherhood's ceremonies attempted to stage members as having a personal relationship and responsibility to American land, its past and future, cementing white men as a natural and essential part of the U.S. landscape.

### 3.3. The Killers: Slavery, Corruption and Broken Masculinity

*The Killers*, originally published in serialized form in the *QCW*, involves complicated plot lines and a motley crew of characters that move from Philadelphia, New York, Cuba, the prison, a printing shop and the California House riot of 1849. The text focuses on Cromwell Hicks, the ne'er-do-well son of a corrupt banker, Jacob D.Z. Hicks, who has made himself rich in the illegal slave trade. After Cromwell is disinherited by his father, who has discovered that he is actually another man's son, Cromwell and his side-kick Don Jorge Martin enter into the slave-trade through their connections in Cuba. We discover that D.Z. Hick's actual son, Elijah, has been raised in poverty by an evil old woman and another orphan, Kate, ignorant of who his real father or mother are. During

[315] Mark A. Louse, *A Secret Society History of the Civil War*, 29. See: Lause, Mark A. *A Secret Society History of the Civil War*. University of Illinois Press, 2011.
[316] In one issue of *QCW* he decries how religion was used as an excuse to murder Native Americans, "In this fair land of the New World, the children of the forest were hunted and butchered in the name of God!" (Reynolds, 129).

Elijah's imprisonment for cashing a bad check from Hicks, Elijah discovers the true identity of his father and vows revenge. Meanwhile, Cromwell and Don Jorge return from their exploits overseas and have formed a gang, the Killers. They plan on kidnapping Kate in order to steal money from Hicks to fund their adventures and excessive lifestyles. To achieve this end, they orchestrate the California House riot as a cover for their nefarious operations.

The California House riot actually occurred in Philadelphia in 1849 when the Killers gang and other white men, drunk from election day festivities, decided to attack the home of a black man and white women who were rumored to be married. The Killers were an infamous Irish Catholic street gang in Philadelphia, allied with the Moyamensing Hose Company, a firemen's company. On October 9, 1849, "provoked by rumors that the mulatto proprietor was living there with a white wife," they attacked the California House and "instigated a two-day riot."[317] The gang drove a wagon "full of blazing tar" into the four-story California House after which fights broke out between the gang and African Americans living in the area.[318] Lippard re-casts the riot as caused by the Killers, who manipulate racist tensions to enact their own imperial schemes. While Lippard's ideal vision of manhood is asserted throughout the stories comprising *Legends, The Killers* focuses on sporting male masculinity, and again shows concern that capitalism and the contemporary metropolis is creating, and popularizing, a mode of male comportment

[317] Matt Cohen and Edlie L. Wong, "Introduction" *The Killers*, 15. See: *The Killers: A Narrative of Real Life in Philadelphia*. Edited by Matt Cohen and Edlie L. Wong, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.
[318] Ibid.,16. As the editors site, in *Philadelphia Stories* Samuel Otter identifies the California Street riot as inspiring the move to finally consolidate the original city of Philadelphia with its new suburbs, "with the goals of strengthening law enforcement and fire protection and extending the tax base to provide services for the expanded industrial urban center to provide services for the expanded industrial urban center" (137). See: Otter, Samuel. *Philadelphia Stories: America's Literature of Race and Freedom*. OUP USA, 2010.

defined by self-interest, greed, and competition with other men.[319] In this work, slavery is decried for the divisive effects it has on white male solidarity and imperial projects that distract men from more important 'domestic' expansion.

Like Lippard's novel *The Quaker City or, The Monks Of Monk Hall*, *The Killers* features libertine men as primary villains, again portraying the libertine-sport as a beguiling new male type created by capitalism. The text opens with Cromwell, "son of Philadelphia merchant," and his accomplice, Don Jorge, son of a Cuban exiled for "political offences,"[320] which we later come to understand involved the illegal slave trade with the United States. The two men are clearly sporting men: Cromwell is dressed "in a fancy wrapper" and they are surrounded by the trappings of sporting culture, including "pipes, cigars, bottles."[321] They discuss their recent expulsion from Yale for "abduct[ing] the daughter of one of the Professors."[322] Incensed over their recent fall from grace, the men plot how to extract money from their wealthy fathers; they are clearly unproductive members of society. Both men prove willing to do anything to obtain wealth, becoming slave traders and planning a filibustering mission to Cuba—the men, and sporting men more generally, are thus aligned with the other nefarious elements of U.S. economic and political dealings. As is immediately indicated, industry, dedication, and self-control are *not* the principles by which these men organize their lives and their values, but rather, self-interest and excess.

The plot of *The Killers* is complicated, with Lippard critiquing many modern capitalist institutions that corrupt and rot men. These institutions are seen as bolstering

[319] As discussed in Chapter Two, Lippard's bestseller *The Quaker City, or, The Monks of Monk Hall* similarly focuses on the corrupting and pervasive influence of sporting culture through the figure of Gustavous Lorrimer and his "seduction" of Byrnewood Arlington.
[320] *The Killers*, 47.
[321] Ibid., 47.
[322] Ibid., 48.

the power of corrupt men and denigrating the noble but desperate poor. Disinherited by their fathers and cut off from their fortunes (with Cromwell discovering he is actually another man's son), we find that Cromwell and Don Jorge turned to working in the slave trade as slave ship overseers. Now leaders of the notorious Philadelphia gang, the Killers, Cromwell and Don Jorge have become even more cruel and vicious because of their exploits—they now plan to lead a filibustering mission to conquer Cuba, extend slavery and line their pockets. Cromwell, operating under the alias Bob Blazes, relates his life story to his gang: "it was a stirring narrative. It spoke much of life in Havana—of life on the coast of Africa—of slave ships stored thick and foul with their miserable cargo—and the manner in which certain mercantile houses, in the north, made hoards of money, even at the present day, by means of the Slave Trade."[323] Slavery and human exploitation, fostered by capitalist drives of commerce and greed, are portrayed as a dredge of human activity. Monetary gain is shown as further rotting Cromwell, who now corrupts other men through his nefarious plots and exploits. The text suggests that the dehumanizing effects of modern capitalist institutions are to blame for Cromwell's vile ways. Focusing in on Cromwell, the narrator explains, "there was a kind of ferocious beauty about that countenance. It was the face of a man of twenty-three, who had seen and suffered much, and known life on land and sea, in brothel and bar-room, and, perhaps, in the—Jail."[324] Here it is suggested that Cromwell's ambivalence resulted from his exploits overseas, the cruelty he witnessed, and key sites of sporting culture—the brothel and bar rooms contribute to the denigration of his character and it is suggested that prison has also played a central role in his corruption—a suggestion that is echoed again in the story of

[323] Ibid., 124.
[324] Ibid., 119.

Elijah. In this sense, Cromwell's evil is not necessarily an innate quality; rather, it is fostered by the pernicious influence of capitalism and the vice of the city—pointing to structural rather than individual causes for the corruption of young men and cause them to take up the sporting lifestyle.

Just as sporting men are so often portrayed by critical commentators, the impressionable young men that follow Cromwell are cast as forgotten elements of society that are no longer cared for socially and morally because of the breakdown of old labor structures under capitalism. When we meet the Killers, they are described as "beardless apprentice boys who, after a hard day's work, had been turned loose upon the street, at night, by their Masters or 'Bosses'—young men of nineteen and twenty who, fond of excitement, had assumed their name and joined the gang for the mere fun of the thing."[325] Concern for what happens to young men turned loosed in the city is also echoed by other contemporary critics of sporting culture. One moral reform article from the period bemoaned irresponsible merchants and bosses that socially neglected their young clerks, allowing them to "venture out into the throngs of the evening streets and [fall] in with more experienced boys who introduced them to theaters and 'genteel brothels.'"[326] Similarly, the scene in the Killers' den suggests that potentially productive men are 'seduced' by sporting culture, which rises up to replace older labor structures of socialization. Instead of being made into proper men, sporting culture, capitalist greed and the urban environment 'trains' them and turns them into greedy, amoral men. In a similar manner as Cromwell and Don Jorge, these men are shown as trained by the

[325] Ibid., 118.
[326] Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett*, 100.

dictates of capitalist society rather than traditional modes of labor relationships.[327] They are "turned loose" and find excitement in the urban environment, rather than remaining inside the structure and discipline system of work and labor.

In Lippard's narrative, the California Street Riot on October 9, 1849 is portrayed as a cunning manipulation of racial tensions in service of extending the influence of slavery in the southern hemisphere. The "Old Woman," who has been paid off to raise Elijah and Kate, makes a deal to sell Kate for $20,0000 to Jacob D.Z. Hicks, who arranges to have Kate kidnapped by "Black Andy," a local saloon owner, on election night. Cromwell and the Killers catch wind of the plot and orchestrate the riot, firing a shot into a rowdy crowd and alleging that a white man was killed by a black man in order to raise the ire of the white men gathered in the poor and racially mixed neighborhood. In the chaos, the Killers are able to wrest Kate from "Black Andy" and demand the ransom from Hicks themselves in order to fund their filibustering mission to Cuba.

The Killers manipulate racial tensions of the city in order to exact their own financial gain from urban strife—as the narrative makes clear, sporting male types exacerbate and manipulate urban vice for their own personal gain, creating chaos and the disintegration of brotherhood. The narrator explains that the "district has for two years been the scene of perpetual outrage…huddled in rooms thick with foul air, and drunk on poison that can be purchased for a penny a glass, you may see white and black, young and old, man and woman, cramped together in crows that fester with wretchedness."[328] The Killers are able to take advantage of novel urban space and strife, tapping into the

[327] Historian Thomas Augst discusses this phenomenon in *The Clerk's Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-Century America*, "with urbanization and industrialization, homes were separated from workplaces, and families were dispersed among a variety of jobs and economic roles. The master artisan's paternal regard for and intimacy with his apprentices gave way to wage relations and polarized class interests" (3).
[328] Lippard, *The Killers,* 126.

racial tensions of the city that are exacerbated by poverty and misery. As the conflict escalates outside, the bar where "Black Andy" is keeping Kate is set aflame. Lippard paints a hellish scene, a kind of urban nightmare, "the faces of the mob reddened by the glare, the houses whirling in flames, the streets slippery with blood, and a roar like the yells of a thousand tigers let loose upon their prey, all combined, gave the appearance of a sacked and ravaged town."[329] The urban environment is turned into a hellscape, individuals become undifferentiated "red faces," devoid of character and specificity. As the poor part of town burns, Lippard emphasizes the way in which racist fears and paranoia creates unthinking violence and division among men.

Underpinning the reasons for the riot in the narrative is ultimately the maintenance and expansion of slave interests and the imperial expansion of the United States into the Southern hemisphere. Cromwell, the "slave pirate,"[330] and Don Jorge plan to continue manipulating their fathers' slave trade connections to gain power in Cuba. Amid cheers of "'Cuba, gold and Spanish women!'"[331] we discover that the gang has orchestrated the riot in order to cause a chaotic distraction that will allow them to blackmail Hicks for money to fund their filibustering mission to Cuba.[332] Lippard 're-

[329] Ibid., 126.
[330] Ibid., 139.
[331] Ibid., 119.
[332] Filibustering, the practice of raising private armies to invade foreign territories in unauthorized military action, saw a resurgence in the United States after the US-Mexico War as financiers, bankers, slave holders and regular men saw opportunity in continued imperial expansion. As Streeby explains in *American Sensations*, in the wake of U.S.-Mexico War "many U.S. expansionists increasingly turned to Cuba as the next imperial project of interest," with Southerners anticipating Cuba as a new slave territory (152). Published in 1849, *The Killers* lies squarely in the middle of this increased interest in filibustering and Cuban expansion. Indeed, as Denning explains, the actual existence of the Killers in Philadelphia grew out of "street-corner cliques, militia units returning from the Mexican War, and work groups" (115). Perhaps this is why Cromwell refers to his gang members as "lieutenants" throughout the narrative. The details of Cromwell and Done Jorge's plan recalls the repeated Cuba filibustering efforts of Narciso Lopez and his New York group, the Junta Cubano. Lopez led missions from New York, and mobilized support in New York, Washington, and New Orleans (Streeby, 152). Filibustering and Cuban expansion saw support from

writes' the history of the California House riots and positions slave investments and the expansion of slavery—ultimately the expansion of the logics of capitalism—as responsible for the events and the discord, chaos and destruction among men and the city that it causes. *The Killers* thus represents the diversity of interest in imperial projects, representing the many layers of society involved in the support of slave interests. Furthermore, these projects undermine brotherly unity in favor of competition while turning men away from the more important concerns of the domestic nation. Thus Lippard bemoans the power of capitalist gain to unite men on the uncertain ground of competition and liberalism, rather than democratic responsibility and republican values.

Lippard's insistent focus on the success of the Brotherhood and its mission caused him at times to de-radicalize his politics, making ideological concessions that subordinated the interests of the enslaved and black laborers in the interest of currying more influence with the white male working class. In his Brotherhood and writing career, Lippard advocated for race and gender equality and inclusion. However, while Lippard opposed slavery he often focused on the interests of white laborers in the north, focusing more on decrying the "white slavery" created by capitalism rather than chattel slavery in the southern United States. As David Roediger explains, the evocations of "white slavery" in reference to Northern labor effectively prioritized the struggles of whites.[333] Lippard ultimately "insists that class identifications are primary and he promotes a definition of class that subsumes those other subaltern positions."[334] Lippard writes in an issue of *QCW*, "among the many forms of Slavery which curse the earth, none is half so

---

men across region, political and class lines. As Streeby puts it, "filibustering facilitated the sort of cross-class coalitions that the major political parties were also trying to consolidate" (152).

[333] Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 68.

[334] Streeby, "Opening Up the Story Paper," 183.

frightful, half so appalling as the Wage Slavery… in the large cities of the North."[335] In a letter to a fellow Brother he writes, "that is the way to fight these White Slaveholders. Combination!" Lippard's desire for the Brotherhood's growth caused him to eventually shrug off some of his abolitionist ideals. In a letter dated October 18, 1852 to a member of the Brotherhood Lippard addresses this issue,

> let me advise you and all good Brothers to have nothing to do with so-called industrial Congresses and Legislatures! The last one at Washington was a farce. Such efforts at best, are fragmentary: they feed the masses milk sawdust. The Brotherhood is a permanent, living, although unobtrusive, Order, pursuing its way for the great Future, regardless of factions, parties, Presidential elections, or spasmotic [sic] Reform societies. And the worst enemies, mankind and the Brotherhood, have, are those brawling negative Reformers (!) who pull down, but never attempt to create or build up

Lippard characterized the efforts of labor organizations, striking, elections and other "factions" as distracting and false, feeding society "milk sawdust." He instead advocates for the Brotherhood's "unobtrusive" methods of trading in local cooperatives, going so far as to claim "brawling negative" reformers make the potential for unity and equality *worse*. Lippard thus advised his members to avoid the divisive issue of slavery, as well as labor organizations like the Industrial Congress and Legislatures, at the moment that these groups took up antislavery politics and began public associations with black workers.[336] At the dinner party in Virginia, Lippard downplayed his abolitionist stance, explaining that the "'revolving pistol'" is the "best antidote to a Northern scoundrel who meddles with the opinions of a Southern gentleman upon slavery," trying to downplay his abolitionist politics for the white pro-slavery audience. [337] Thus Lippard downplays and

[335]Reynolds, 213-214.
[336] As Lause relates in *A Secret History of the Civil War*, the 1852 National Industrial Congress meeting in Washington was lead by abolitionist congressman Charles Durkee (31).
[337] Ibid., 30.

even denies his abolitionist leanings and actively discourages members from direct public action in favor of "brotherhood," which he seems to see as unable to function unless polarizing political "opinions" are downplayed for the "greater good" of male unity.

While Lippard's text is populated by a host of vile and disreputable men ranging from the corrupt banker to the sporting men-styled Killers gang, Elijah is shown as the only redeeming male character, ultimately for his maintenance of man's patriarchal responsibility toward family and the protection of (white) female virtue. Elijah's status as a redeeming and proper man is established by his attitudes toward his responsibilities as a man, particularly in terms of his relation to familial responsibility, which is betrayed by his time in the penitentiary. Mid-way through the novel we find Elijah working in a printing house, operating under a false name to avoid the stigma of his time served in prison. Similarly to Washington in *Legends*, Elijah shows manly restraint when he is humiliated in a confrontation with his boss about his true identity. His boss asks, "now, what do you think of your brass, to come and pass yourself off as an honest man?"[338] Elijah "chok[es] down some violent burst of passion" and leaves after enduring the men's insults. He reveals that he has been cast out from three separate work houses for a similar discovery, and resolves to find his father, who he suspects is responsible for his earlier imprisonment. Demanding to know the identity of his father, we are shown the taxing emotional burden that Elijah experiences when he's not able to provide through work, like a proper man, "apparently overwhelmed by the violence of his emotion, he sank into a chair, and buried his face in his hands. The old woman could hear him murmur in tones that were alternately deep with rage, or tremulous with almost unmanly feeling," he thinks to himself, "and now when I come out o' jail, the word 'Convict' follers me

[338] Lippard, *The Killers*. 98.

everywhere, and shuts me out from every hope of ever gettin' an honest livelihood"[339] and his aims to "put [Kate] out of want for life. For though she aint my sister by blood, she is my sister in fact."[340] In this scene, Elijah is overwhelmed by feeling as to be almost 'unmanned' by his own effusive misery, emphasizing the social and emotional toll that modern institutions like the prison have on men, and disproportionately poor men. Here we are given a strong sense of the centrality of work, and specifically work that supports female dependents and family members, to one of Lippard's heroes. In this sense, Lippard advocates for a kind of domestic masculinity that finds its purpose in serving the nation and securing domestic spaces, much like the young Washington who will be depicted repeatedly as a man fixed on preserving, respecting and honoring the home, family and men's responsibility and maintenance of it.

While expansion into the southern hemisphere is denounced by Lippard as an improper way to build male identity, *The Killers*' conclusion, with Kate and Elijah escaping to San Francisco, demonstrates that "domestic" expansion is still 'necessary' to ameliorate urban strife and resuscitate damaged masculinities. Kate and Elijah blackmail the Northern merchants using papers that "implicated some four or five respectable houses in the profitable transactions of the African Slave Trade."[341] The narrative closes with a letter from Kate to "our Merchant and his confederates—all Respectable Killers,"[342] which explains that Elijah and herself are headed to San Francisco, "where some day or other we may be heard from by other names, and under better circumstances

[339] Ibid., 114.
[340] Ibid., 115.
[341] Ibid., 163.
[342] Ibid., 164.

than those which surrounded us in Philadelphia."[343] This ending, as in many of Lippard's texts, ends with an evacuation of the city for more promising lands to the west. Indeed, as Kate's letter suggests, the west provides an opportunity for individuals broken by the urban environment to reimagine themselves, take on new names, and find "better circumstances" than the poverty and vice of the Eastern city. In a familiar image of westward expansion and redemption as a manifest destiny, the good characters are 'saved' by western land and possibility. Much like the young Washington armed with the surveyor's tools in the Eastern wilderness of early America, Elijah also sets forth to settle into domestic territory, expanding national space and finding a place to truly be able to be a man.

While supporting abolition and promoting equality, Lippard's exceptionalist views caused him to see the United States as the democratic center of the globe, and history, at times putting forward racist, nativist claims about the United States—making his political views and fictional representations often contradictory. As Lause explains, Lippard's political aims caused him to conceptualize Western land and expansion as an "expansion generously made more peoples beneficiaries of American standards."[344] In his support of extending "American standards," Lippard at times asserts nativist, misogynist and racist depictions in his fiction and political writings. In fact, Lippard's exceptionalist vision and "messianic nationalism" attracted some nativist members to his Brotherhood. [345] Although Lippard did not fully subscribe to nativist attitudes, his Brotherhood would later advocate for an "immigrant head tax and 'nonsectarian' public

[343] Ibid., 165.
[344] Lause, 29.
[345] Ibid., 29.

schools."[346] Indeed, while Lippard wrote in one issue of *QCW* that a "true American (whether native or adopted,) can never build up himself, by raising a prejudice, against a particular race,"[347] he still supported U.S. projects of westward expansion "based on the premises that 'free' Western lands might serve as a safety valve" for "domestic social and economic antagonisms" and imagined that "U.S. expansion would mean the extension of the area of freedom rather than the violent conquest of other nations."[348] Ultimately, Lippard's belief that, in his words, "the American Continent is destined to complete the freedom of the whole world," underscores that citizens of the United States and the land itself is meant to lead the "whole world" in freedom and liberty, at times excluding other nations and spaces as powerless or 'ruined' by their own histories. Global unity is an important feature of the Brotherhood's mission; however, this unity is imagined as being actualized by the U.S. alone. While Lippard envisioned a democratic U.S. empire, his pro-expansionist positions shifted when expansion meant competition and exploitation among men, to the detriment of the domestic United States.

While Lippard generally portrayed the U.S.-Mexico War as one that might bring freedom and democracy to other parts of the New World,[349] in *The Killers* he portrays U.S. interests in expansion as denigrating national unity and strength—appealing to the worst in men who are caught within the changing urban-labor landscape. For Lippard, slavery, and slave interests, destroy men's morality and basic democratic principles because they follow capitalist dictates—perpetuating the social, bodily and spiritual

[346] According to Dale T. Knobel in *America for the Americans*: The Nativist Movement in the United States, 86. Harriet McBride also sites the Brotherhood of the Union along with Order of United American Mechanics and the Star Spangled Banner as "nativism formed organizations styled as fraternal orders" (92) in her dissertation *Fraternal Regalia in America, 1865 to 1918: Dressing the Lodges; Clothing the Brotherhood*.
[347] Reynolds, 50.
[348] Streeby, *American Sensations*, 51-52.
[349] Ibid., 42

denigration of white men and society at large. *The Killers* frets over an increasingly prominent vision of male behavior that is led by the imperatives of capitalist gain and self-interest. Gangs like the Killers, and the greater sporting culture they operated within, demonstrate that male fraternity based on capitalist competition, consumption and personal gain might unite men in more compelling and alluring, but dangerous, ways than labor or democratic responsibility. Expansion that is motivated by these aims splinters the nation into riotous breakdown, while "domestic" expansion can soothe the corruption of the Eastern United States. Ultimately the text frets over the ability of filibustering, gang activity, and sporting culture to facilitate male bonds based not on republican virtue, but capitalist inflected values and self-gain, over dedication to the nation, unity and self-sacrifice to ideal of democracy.

Furthermore, the narrative doesn't resolve the violence and corruption witnessed throughout the novel. The "Respectable Killers" are blackmailed only so that Kate and Elijah can escape, as she sends the incriminating papers *back* after their blackmail money is received, effectively 'releasing' the merchants from rebuke and leaving them to their nefarious activities. In this sense, the "Respectable Killers," and those engaged in their trade, persevere. As noted in Chapter Two, ambiguous or unsettled endings are a strong feature of Lippard's, and other sensational novelists', work. Here, total elimination of the nefarious, illegal and society-corrupting slave trade is not offered, and furthermore, the merchants, bankers and investors involved are not brought to justice. While there is hope vested in the idea of westward expansion, in line with Lippard's own land reform politics, the narrative leaves the chaos and disintegration of the city unresolved. The California Street riots end in similarly unjustified manner, after the riot there is not reconciliation,

but "ruins," the landscape strewn with the dead bodies of Don Jorge, Cromwell and innocent bystanders. The senseless mob successfully wreaks havoc and irrational, splintering discord. The underlying filibustering plot and the Killers' successful manipulation of racist sentiment suggest that racial hatred is so damaging because it is a form of 'distraction' for white men, a point of manipulation for cunning elites and young men who are able to manipulate the tensions of U.S. society.

### 3.4. Washington and His Men: Ideal Masculinity and the Memory of the Revolution

In writing his *Legends*, Lippard weaves in elements of historical fact to his narrative, incorporating battles, particular individuals, and events in order to lend a sense of 'truth' to his tales. Lippard's fictionalization of the drama of the Revolution has given us the enduring image of the liberty bell in Philadelphia being rung on the day the Second Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence—although this in fact never happened. The *Legends* "freely blended fact, folklore, and fantasy in order to heighten the magnanimity and courage of America's Founding Fathers" in order to impart to readers that the promises and sacrifices of the Revolution and America's most sacred principles are yet unsecured.[350] The narrator writes,

> let us, my friends, write the unwritten history of Washington, Not the dim outline which History sketched, but a picture of the Man—with color, shape, life and voice. Yes, life; for as we go on, among the shrines of the Past, the dead will live with us; and voice, too; for as we question the hosts of other days, they will answer us, although the shadows of a hundred years brood over their graves[351]

The text proclaims to resist the dulling effects of traditional history and evokes the idea of painting a living image of the past that can be drawn on and learned from, "for as we

[350] Reynolds, 29.
[351] Lippard, *Legends*. 19.

go on, among the shrines of the Past, the dead will live with us" and that their "answers" await us. The texts thus suggests that readers are actively responsible for 'answering' the forefathers and the imperatives of the project of American independence.

In *Legend Fifth: The Challenge*, which involves a duel between Washington and another man, Mr. Payne, Lippard dramatizes a code of respect between men, suggesting that the preservation of male unity and fellow men's patriarchal rights and responsibilities is more important than individual pride. After being hit by Payne in front of a large group of men, Washington contemplates the duel they are to participate in the next day to settle the wrong. Washington, rather than being "mad with excitement" with "hot blood in his veins," is calm and collected; his manner "combined all the grace and warmth of youth."[352] He explains his reservations about the duel to a group of British officers, and suggests that one day he might meet Payne's wife, mother or sister in the street and have to bear their accusations and rebukes. He further admits his own responsibility in the dispute, confessing that he humiliated Payne, asking the gathered men, "am I to shoot Mr. Payne because I insulted him? ... or, am I to shoot him because he was too brave to bear my insult?"[353] Washington is rational and seeks to maintain the stability of men's relations toward one another by recognizing the taboo he broke in harming another's pride while understanding that men's responsibilities toward their female charges must be respected. In contrast, the unrefined men around Washington exclaim that they would rather "blow [their] brains out" or "be tied to a tree, among the Indians, with their scalping knives" than step down from the duel.[354] The officers ascribe to an antiquated brand of masculinity, defined by passion and a single-minded concern for reputation. In

[352] Ibid., 26.
[353] Ibid., 28.
[354] Ibid., 28.

contrast, Washington is rational and thinks of the greater rends in the social fabric that his move might create—sacrificing possible disgrace and a "*dishonored* name"[355] for male friendship and resolution.

At the scene of the duel, Washington behaves as the 'bigger man,' patient and measured rather than effusive and impassioned. Lippard thereby critiques male competition, and in particular the violent recourse that attends disagreements and hurt pride among men. The gathering crowd comments:

> One spoke of the sad and fatal necessity of Murder involved in the Code of Honor—another of the windows and orphans who had been made by that blessed code—a third of the efficacy of a sword thrust, in healing broken hearts, or of the short and easy method of patching up 'self-respect' by a—pistol shot[356]

As he emphasizes throughout his Brotherhood writings, the maintenance of patriarchal-familial responsibility and the destructiveness of self-interest are central concerns of this passage. Lippard's vision of proper male comportment is aimed toward male congeniality and respect toward one another's patriarchal responsibilities. The passage suggests that society only functions when there is congeniality among men; when it breaks down, "orphans and widows" are left behind. In the moment of confrontation Washington disarms the situation by asking Payne,

> is it Christian, to attempt to justify a wrong by murder? Or, is it more generous, more just, to confess a wrong with frankness, and solicit forgiveness from the injured? Yesterday I applied an unjust and ungentlemanly epithet to you—you prompt avenged yourself—are you satisfied? Here's my hand—let us be friends![357]

Payne, with tears in his eyes, accepts and the men share a drink. Washington has the "courage enough to wear the name of coward" and accepts responsibility for his

[355] Ibid., 28.
[356] Ibid., 31.
[357] Ibid., 35.

wrongdoing, preserving and strengthening male bonds through reason and respect for the social demands on men. Lippard makes it clear that the story is meant to instruct: Washington addresses the crowd and implores them, "and now, gentlemen, allow me to hope, that when, in after time, you recall the various personal combats which you have witnessed, you will remember with something like admiration the Duel of Mr. Payne and his enemy, George Washington!"[358] Here, Lippard critiques contemporary male attitudes and directs them toward a male identity based on mutual respect and realization of their greater social responsibilities.

The duel scene serves as a metaphor for the maintenance of social bonds between men that strengthen the power of the whole nation. *Legend Fifth: The Challenge* suggests a larger metaphor for national unity through rationality and male unity—arguing that the consideration of fellow man, and mutual roles and responsibilities that men have, can effectively strengthen society and the nation. As the crowd looks on, speechless after Washington concedes, the narrative asks, "was there one man in that assemblage who could have called young Washington, COWARD?"[359] The narrative attempts to 'flip' the meanings of coward and courage with the repeated refrain that Washington had "courage to bear the name of coward," suggesting that real men are not intimidated or influenced by dictates of masculinity that emphasize competition, violence and manliness through aggression. The text closes by explaining, "and it was because he had 'courage enough to bear the name of Coward,' that he became the man of counsel and of Battle—the Deliverer of a Country—the President of a free People—his name the watchword of all

[358] Ibid., 35.
[359] Ibid., 35.

time."[360] The text thus suggests that national heroes are those who can "bear the name of coward," and, furthermore, ascribe to a brand of masculinity based on mutual respect and unity that strengthens the nation.

The maintenance and respect for patriarchal power also figures largely throughout the *Legends*, in particular the importance of male unity and congeniality to ensure the continuance of a properly functioning home and nation. Multiple *Legends* include a love triangle-drama involving two young male suitors vying for the affections, or just virginity, of an innocent young girl and her enfeebled older male protector, usually her father. The stories follow a similar pattern: the narrative focuses in on a lonely cabin perched amid open wilderness wherein we find an aged, but honorable, father figure and his daughter, "trembling into virgin ripeness."[361] Inevitably, their peace is broken by a nefarious male figure who attempts to rape or kidnap the young girl, only to be saved by her proper suitor who is motivated by his desire to care for and protect the innocent nature of the girl, much like her father. In these tales, the importance of mutual respect among men for the maintenance of the home, social order, and the continuation of proper national ideals is dramatized, as the proper man must 'win' the girl from foreign and sometimes domestic male threat.

A characteristic example of this trope appears in *Legend Twelfth: Washington's Christmas*. The story opens on a modest cabin, possessed of "no paint or plaster" yet possessed of a "joyous look, full of the word home" wherein we find an older man, "heart at peace with God and man," with his daughter kneeling at his feet as they read the Bible. The daughter is described as "a very loveable girl, with a soft, innocent face—almost as

[360] Ibid., 35.
[361] Ibid., 73.

soft as infancy" yet possessed of "rounded outlines" that "remind you very much of a flower that quivers on the stem, the red bloom just peeling from the green leaves."[362] The pair, young virginal daughter and aged but honorable father, is repeated throughout the *Legends*, and serves as a metaphor for the future and progression of the nation. *Legend Twelfth* takes place during the Revolutionary War, the girl, described as both "infant" and "flower on the verge of bloom," embodies the nation itself, young yet on the verge of independence and maturity. The protracted metaphor continues, as their Bible study is interrupted by a deserter, whom we soon find out a traitor of the revolutionary cause and attempted assassin of Washington. Her brother returns from battle in time to rescue his sister from marriage to the wrong-headed tory, and she is successfully 'secured' by her patriotic and democracy-inspired brother—rather than 'plundered' and ruined by the traitorous, aristocratic tory.

The importance of patriarchal responsibility and inheritance is underlined throughout the story, suggesting that men are beholden to one another in patriarchal succession, which guarantees the strength of the nation and continuation of republican values. *Legend Ninth: Washington in Love* offers the story of Washington's first true love–not Mary, but a young Native woman, Marion, who has been raised by her white grandfather, a frontier settler. In this tale, Washington's fatherly desire to protect the young woman borders on incestuous. Meeting Marion in the cabin of his now quite aged acquaintance, Washington is immediately captivated by Marion's "beautiful form" and "angel face, linked with an angel soul!"[363] Lippard again fixates on a young woman who is on the verge of womanhood yet instilled with child-like innocence. Desperately

[362] Ibid., 73.
[363] Ibid., 56.

worried for his granddaughter's future, and in particular the threat of the rouge vigilante Red Wolf who threatens to kidnap Marion, the men decide that upon the old man's death, Marion will be passed into Washington's charge. Washington marvels at his new responsibility, "when the old man is dead, she will be left alone in the world. Can I leave her alone in the wilderness—can I desert purity and tenderness, like hers, in the hour of its loneliness?'"[364] The narrative observes the shifting of power taking place; "these young forms, the one embodying all that is pure in maidenhood—the other, the courage and thought of young manhood—while the old man, with withered frame and white hairs, looked like an image of old Time, gazing upon Youth and Hope."[365] The three present a kind of triangular formulation of the past and the future; "pure maidenhood" married with "courage and thought" guarantee the preservation of "old Time" traditions—the promise of sexual and national reproduction by an ideal man, Washington, which guarantees that the fundamental values of the Revolution will live on and not be destroyed by the threat of improper men like the Red Wolf.

While the other tales generally end with the proper man getting the girl, or the evildoer being vanquished, *Washington in Love* in particular departs from this model by ending in the disappearance and uncertain death of Marion. Indeed, the rather taboo possibility of racial mixing—Washington marrying a Native woman—is suggested but ultimately disavowed by the pillaging of the cabin and Marion's kidnapping while Washington is at war. Returning to claim Marion, having resolved to "bear her from this forest dell and show the gay world what beautiful flowers are reared by God,"[366] he finds

[364] Ibid., 56.
[365] Ibid., 54.
[366] Ibid., 59.

the cabin "only a pile of sightless and smoking embers!"[367] The transgressive nature of Marion's status as Native and her romance with Washington are mitigated by her relative whitening in the narrative and, ultimately, by her literal disappearance from the text, which alludes to the larger 'disappearance' or unfitness of Native peoples to the changing physical, social and political landscape of the country. The portrayal does, however, place Washington himself again as close to a 'natural' part and product of the country—claiming a kind of originary belonging like that of Native peoples—a feature of the Legends that recall Washington's boyhood spent in nature. Unlike *Legend Eight: The Battle of Monongahela*, where Native people are shown as an uncivilized violent threat, in *Washington in Love* Native people, are shown sympathy when attempting to assimilate into white settler life. However, even this possibility is denied as Marion literally disappears from the text as does the possibility of a romantic connection with Washington—in the end, Native people are shown as unable to join the nation and 'normal' society.

*Legends* marries exceptionalist views with American masculinity. In *Legend Third: The Youth of Washington*, Washington's childhood is recounted where "he grew to manhood amid the glorious images of unpolluted nature."[368] Washington's formative years in nature are repeatedly emphasized, the wilderness is where "the heart of the boy [Washington] will ripen into virtuous manhood."[369] In fact, formal education is portrayed as wasteful, where five years of his life were "loung[ed] away" until with a "knapsack strapped to his shoulders, surveyor's instruments in his hand, he goes forth, a pilgrim

[367] Ibid., 56.
[368] Ibid., 6.
[369] Ibid., 12.

among the mountains."[370] Washington wields the tools of the surveyor to make sense of and claim the wilderness. He sits down "with the red men by their council fire, and learned from this strange race the traditions of the lost nations of America."[371] Again, Indigenous civilizations are invoked to align Washington as a "native" to America, and particularly a more sophisticated and 'civilized' hybrid of endemic native knowledge and European civilization. As it is put later in the text, "those rugged pioneers of the white race, who combine the craft of civilization, with the costume and manners of the red men."[372] In comparison to *The Killers*, where a debased manhood is forged in the urban metropolis under the pressures of capitalism, a disintegrating labor system and extreme poverty, Washington is raised on the pure wilderness where 'real' men are informed by the most 'natural,' originary principles of America.

The way in which the U.S. landscape itself conditions a new, particularly 'American,' attitude and value system is emphasized in *Legend Eight: The Battle of Monongahela* through scenes of battle. The narrative takes us back to Washington fighting next to the British in the French-Indian War, where Washington, just a young solider, is reprimanded by his British commander, Braddock, for suggesting that they fight using the natural cover of their surroundings. Braddock, not attuned to the unique differences presented by the country, refuses saying the men "shall fight as Englishmen or not at all!"[373] Washington, raised on the American soil, is portrayed as free of the antiquated traditions and honor system of the British. In one bloody scene the consequences of European attitudes being grafted onto the uniqueness of the American is

[370] Ibid., 15.
[371] Ibid., 15.
[372] Ibid., 37.
[373] Ibid., 42.

dramatized. Braddock and Washington gaze onto a horrifying scene, their own men being killed by friendly fire, "—they are cut down, hewn into fragments, crushed into one mangled heap of living men, entangled among dead and dying. Crushed not by a fire from their front, but by a fire from the rear, mangled not by bullets of the foe, but by the rifled of their comrades."[374] Failure to respect the unique conditions and sacrifices necessary to promote the prosperity of the country results in the disintegration of the national body, represented by men "crushed into one mangled heap," living and dead unrecognizable, wrought by the confusion and cretinism of underestimating the uniqueness of the new world, and in failing to listen to one's fellow man. Proper men like Washington recognize, respect and act on the unique imperatives that the nation necessitates, while men like Braddock who do not have "courage to wear the name of coward" create ruin.

*Legends* consistently claims that men's dedication to unity with one another leads to unity of the environment and furthermore, the proper functioning of the United States as a democratic unit. When male unity is disavowed, destruction of the nation body results. Men are able to find and maintain unity through nationalistic dedication to the land, understanding the country's unique, exceptional nature. The *Legends* emphasize how important the memory of the past is to shaping and bolstering action now, that there is a unique democratic promise that the United States offers men and are in turn responsible for realizing. Wrong-headed men, in both *Legends* and *The Killers* are portrayed as those who do not recognize the unique nature of the United States or manipulate their environment for their own benefit—failing to recognize that men have an exceptional responsibility to carry out the mission that the Revolution started. This is

[374] Ibid., 43.

also carried over and emphasized in Brotherhood ritual, as Lippard creates rites that mimic and symbolically enact this process.

## 3.5. The Brotherhood of the Union: Crafting Ideal Men and an Ideal Nation

Using archival record books from the Brotherhood, Lippard's personal correspondence, and other documents related to the Brotherhood, I show how many of the rites of the Brotherhood incorporated images, 'memories' and rituals related to the founding of the nation as Lippard attempted, at a pivotal moment of historical change, to shape the meaning of the U.S.'s history and legacy through male identification. I argue that Lippard's concerns about degrading male relations and responsibilities contributed to his development of his secret society, the Brotherhood of the Union, with the purpose of uniting and protecting men from the dangers of social denigration and capitalist influx.[375] In a sense, the deep desire for the secrets of society to be revealed which propelled *The Quaker City, or the Monks of Monk Hall* to such success was manifested also in his Brotherhood, promising members an opportunity to participate in the secret societies

[375] Male secret societies in the United States have a long history and have had a large part in influencing male community and masculine belonging. Harriet Wain McBride explains in her dissertation, *Fraternal Regalia in America, 1865 to 1918: Dressing the Lodges; Clothing the Brotherhood*, that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, "fraternalism was a small but respected element of elite American male society" but eventually popularity ballooned and by 1825, "Americans of all social and economic levels were fully acquainted with the system of secret fraternal societies" (89) with 1 in 5 men participating in at least one fraternal order by the beginning of the twentieth century (ii). Indeed, male fraternities were particularly popular in the United States in part because of "historic ties to the founding of th[e] nation" (76). The perceived 'deep history' of fraternities was a selling point for many men, and one Lippard was clearly drawn to as well, often citing his Brotherhood as dating back to "Abraham and Melchizidek," and boasting that Jesus Christ and George Washington were once members (Reynolds, 203). These links to historic times and revered men gave members a feeling of being aligned with a sacred male history and power. As Oscar Handlin and Mary Handlin state in *The Dimensions of Liberty*, fraternities were "an essential factor in the development of American liberty" (111). Lippard tapped into this sentiment repeatedly in his Brotherhood, aiming to draw on the popularity of male fraternities in the U.S. while using the history and lore surrounding them to give his Brotherhood authority. See: McBride, Harriet. "Fraternal Regalia in America, 1865 to 1918: Dressing the Lodges; Clothing the Brotherhood." Electronic Dissertation. Ohio State University, 2000; and Handlin, Oscar, and Mary Flug Handlin. *The Dimensions of Liberty*. Vol. 84. Atheneum, 1966.

whose political and social power shaped the cities around them.[376] Lippard formed the Brotherhood of the Union in the late 1840s, incorporating the most important tenets of his political philosophy in his secret society, ultimately aiming to shape and direct the meaning of male virtue in the United States. Made incredibly popular and well known by his early sensational novels and later patriotic historical romances like *Legends*, Lippard used his influence, and personal funds, to start the Brotherhood—the first meeting took place in 1847. The Brotherhood of the Union "would be one of the oldest orders of its kind in America."[377] Within four years of its founding, "almost 150 circles had been formed in twenty-four states,"[378] lasting until 1994 with a highpoint in 1917 at 30,000 members.[379] Lippard's Brotherhood "offered both 'solidarity and practicality' that previous organizations lacked" and even gained an international following, receiving support in England and Germany.[380] Lippard's Brotherhood was influential in the development of other fraternities as well. Historians have identified the Brotherhood as the "unsung parent of the Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor, which conducted the epoch-making railroad strikes of 1877 and attained great power in the nation."[381] Indeed, the influence and popularity of the Brotherhood was wide and

[376] Scholarship on male fraternities in the U.S. has explored the motivations that men had for joining fraternities in such numbers. In *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840* Steven Bullock suggests that men sought an affective, private sphere into which men could retreat. McBride suggests that men's attraction to ritual was both a means of escape and entertainment, explaining fraternal orders in the United States were an early and effective model for social organization, "a vehicle for the promotion and support of collective interests based on class, gender, race, ethnicity and labor" (McBride 89), replacing antiquated social relations amid chaotic changes in traditional social, familial, and economic relations. See: Bullock, Steven C. *Revolutionary brotherhood: Freemasonry and the transformation of the American social order, 1730-1840*. UNC Press Books, 2011.
[377] Reynolds, 2.
[378] Ibid., 37.
[379] Ibid., 11.
[380] Ibid., 38.
[381] Roger Butterfield, "George Lippard and His Secret Brotherhood" (298). David S. Reynolds echoes this sentiment in *George Lippard: Prophet of Protest*, siting that "founding member of the Knight, the tailor Robert C. Macauley, had joined the Brotherhood in the 1860s" (39) and sees Lippard as "anticipat[ing]

enduring, attesting to the popularity of Lippard's ethos and vision. In this way, examining Lippard's Brotherhood is a fruitful source for understanding the shifting ideals of male behavior and power in the antebellum period.

Lippard's Brotherhood borrowed heavily from the ritual and style of popular male fraternal orders of his day,[382] and he saw the Brotherhood as a way to shape and direct the attitudes of men which, according to Lippard, were shifting toward self-interest and personal gain rather than self-sacrifice and national allegiance. Lippard developed a complicated and intricate series of rites, rituals and initiation processes—complete with regalia, symbols, and special robes. Lippard's enthusiasm for the Order's rituals and meaning was such that he devoted months to writing them out, boasting that they were "the most copious…of any secret society in the world," the final product was a 200-page book costing twenty dollars.[383] Lippard, and other fraternal organization heads, understood the power of symbol and ritual to binding individuals together through mutual experience, and the excitement of mystery. As Ronald F. E. Weissman explains, "rituals are commentaries about the way society organizes, categorizes, and links its persons, actions, and things. Rituals take form within human society; they even offer the possibility of transforming the society that performs them."[384] Indeed, as I will detail, the intricate rituals and rites that Lippard developed for the Brotherhood often incorporated key 'symbols of the nation' which aimed at constructing imagined ties to land, history

---

many other subsequent developments in organized labor and radical thought" (40). See: Butterfield, Roger. "George Lippard and His Secret Brotherhood." *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 79.3 (1955): 285-309.

[382] In his essay "George Lippard and His Secret Brotherhood," Butterfield explains that Lippard began developing the concept of his Order in 1849, "delving in the lore of the Masons, Odd Fellows, Illuminati, Rosicrucians and other mystic orders" (298).

[383] Ibid., 299.

[384] Hammel, E. A. *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, Sant Louis: Elservier Science, 2014. Page x.

and the future. In so doing, Lippard hoped that his fraternity could embody the abstract ideals of liberty and democracy.

Like the *Legends*, the focus on the past and the legacy of the Revolution was a definitive aspect of Lippard's Brotherhood. The past, particularly the Revolutionary past, is mentioned frequently, reminding Brothers of their proximity to the sites, history and memory of the Revolution in order to inspire their allegiance, and to tie members to a feeling of living history and great continuation of Revolutionary legacy. At the opening of the third annual convocation on October 4, 1952 Lippard proclaims to the group gathered there,

> Our cause is the same for which in this Hall, seventy six years ago, the fifty six periled life and honor, on the good old cause which has had its martyrs and its witnesses for eighteen hundred years,--and which will move around and love and grow, when our bones are dust. Surrounded by the memories of this place, breathing its sacred atmosphere, let us all vow, to work while we live for the perfect fulfillment of this eternal truth, Every human creature hath a night to Life, Liberty, Land and Home; to the means and circumstances of temporal, moral and spiritual development[385]

The address emphasizes that the past is now alive, imparting a sense of the Brothers' responsibility to complete the work of the Revolution, and the urgency of Brotherhood work. Connecting the Brotherhood as part of the "old cause" that's gone on for "eighteen hundred years," Lippard positions the Brotherhood as completing the destiny of the nation—suggesting that being "surrounded by the memories of the past" will give energy to Brotherhood goals.

The idea that "proper" men recognize and act on the unique demands of the nation is played out in Brotherhood rites, where Brothers enacted a commitment and personal relationship to the land. Maps featured prominently in Brotherhood ritual in order to

[385] Brotherhood of the Union Collection (MSS), Historical Society of Philadelphia.

underscore the connection between men and the continent. In an initiation ceremony, inductees move around a darkened room, styled like "solomon's temple," confronting different altars poised in the north, south, east and west sides of the room. One map is described as depicting "the American Continent belted by a galaxy of stars. Every star an emblem of a People, governed by just and equal laws: the entire galaxy the emblem of the People of an entire continent, blessed by the fruits of Labor and knit into one People, by the hold land of Brotherhood."[386] Here the nation is portrayed as a redeemer of the world, gathering together the various nations of the world under the "fruits of Labor" and Brotherhood. The 'New World' is seen as possessed of the unique ability to bring this kind of freedom into the world. Land figures predominately in Lippard's Brotherhood and fictional writings as a way to marry national responsibility to individual men; this nationalistic belonging asserts immediacy to men's responsibilities and their sense of national belonging. During the ritual a member recites, "the American Continent, sacred forever from the footstep of the tyrant is the Refuge of the oppressed, -- the Palestine of Redeemed Labor,--- the Golden City of Brotherhood, --- the Homestead of the Free."[387] The popular and enduring idea of America as a refuge is espoused here, while men and male unity in particular are seen as completing this vision. Through oaths, ritual and rhetoric, the Brotherhood emphasizes that the nation demands participation and allegiance to make good on the promises of the revolution.

Lippard's belief in the United States as an exceptional land from which democracy and beneficence would emanate is invoked to justify or bolster the cause of male virtue and add a sense of urgency to his calls to brotherly unity. He writes in

[386] Ibid.
[387] Ibid.

Brotherhood rites, "the American Continent is the Temple. The man who aspires to make this Continent, the Homestead of Free Men, is the Master."[388] Men become 'masters' if they shape the continent into a 'homestead,' the continent is transformed into a temple of freedom from which men will sow freedom for the rest of the world. Lippard sought to draw out affective and spiritual connections to the nation and the Brotherhood's project of freedom and universal Brotherhood. Indeed, the living memory of the past becomes central in Lippard's writing and speeches about and to the Brotherhood. In a speech written for the annual meeting he states, "here, in the old Hall, rendered sacred by its connection with the cause of Human Progress, in the name of the Brotherhood do I, George Lippard, S.W. solemnly open, the 4th Annual and 1st Triennial Convocation of the Supreme Circle."[389] The meeting is thus ushered in on the hyper democratic principles of allegiance and connects the Brotherhood to the founding of the nation and basic rights of man. Again, Lippard tasks the men of the nation as responsible for the "cause of Human Progress," in rhetoric reminiscent of Rudyard Kipling's "white man's burden."

The power of the past, and again the holding up of Washington as an ideal figure, is evoked. During initiation inductees are led to another map, "of the Continent of America, with the Sword of Washington, resting thereon. The hilt rests upon the snow-regions of the North; the center upon the Islands of the Sea; the point upon the extreme Southern point of the Continent. It is indeed a significant emblem: endeavour [sic] to take its meaning to heart."[390] The sword of Washington overlays the entire nation, symbolically dominating the continent as the "significant emblem" of freedom and democracy. Again, inductees are to associate the continent of America with the

[388] Ibid.
[389] Ibid.
[390] Ibid.

democratic project begun with men like Washington, and to be completed by the Brotherhood and men like them. Washington's sword also figures prominently in *Legends* as a symbol of freedom and the great national responsibility that men have. It is certainly an image of empire, with the United States as a powerful force that touches every part of the map, from the Southern tip of the continent to the "island of the sea," making the nation out to be a guarantor of right for the world.

For Lippard, male unity is the only means by which the promises of democracy can be realized. Talking to the grand convocation of the Brotherhood, Lippard explains, "when it [the Declaration] has done its complete work, every human creature will be the owner of a free home, and in the enjoyment of all, the means and circumstances of moral, physical and spiritual development. This work, Brothers, is our work! Let us never forget it!"[391] This is enacted in his development of the Brotherhood of the Union as a cooperative among men across the nation. In a letter to a Brotherhood member he writes, "that is the way to fight these White Slaveholders. Combination! Buy and sell and work for yourselves. Strikes avail not. So on in the practice of the idea."[392] The sentiment recalls Lippard's earlier letter to a Brotherhood member that discouraged strikes and political action in favor of the Brotherhood's "unobtrusive" methods. In this sense, Lippard encourages men and Brotherhood members to depoliticize, avoid direct action, and instead rely on one another—the supreme brotherhood Lippard constantly alludes to. Thus, in developing his Brotherhood Lippard retreats from supporting public action and organizing, creating a "secret" society where men will seemingly create political, national change by refusing to engage in it. According to Lippard, male unity is the primary

[391] Ibid.
[392] Ibid.

means through which capitalism and business, i.e. "White Slaveholders," can be resisted through "buying and selling work" amongst each other—going so far to discourage labor strikes and reform activity—likely because of 'sectarian' discord they can cause. Lippard tried to practice his goal of cooperatives. In two separate letters Lippard writes to Brotherhood members alerting them to other members in their area that they can turn to for fabrics and coal. Thus, for Lippard, the way to free oneself from capital is through cooperation and coordination between men looking out for one another's interests in mutual aid. Lippard's vision of brotherhood involved a kind of good-willed community of white men holding up and supporting other men, where mutual aid could offer deliverance from "White Slavery." Oddly, Lippard's vision for political change involved attempting to *de*politicize the notion of change and progress. Lippard's rhetoric suggests that by somehow denying or ignoring opinions, creeds, and nationality men could achieve the inalienable and supremely universal goal of Republican-inflected freedom and liberty.

While Lippard's brotherhood "appeal[s] not to the selfish, but to the noblest sentiments of man," his Brotherhood was not without allusion to the nefarious men that so often populate his fiction. Lippard frequently refers to "True men" in Brotherhood documents, those who are willing to sacrifice, honor the Brotherhood, and work tirelessly for its mission—these men are "the Masters," those who "aspire[] to make this Continent, the Homestead of Free Men." Those who do not, the "Men who seek to obtain the Master's Word, without doing the Master's Work are the Murderers. These Men are the haders [sic] in Land, Law and Labor. These Men usurp the Land, defraud Labor, and corrupt the law."[393] Lippard alludes to detractors that shirk the work that good men, 'the Masters,' are so committed to—effectively undermining their work and the nation's

[393] Ibid.

democratic foundations—land, labor and law. Improper men, profligate men who don't labor for the nation and the benefit of others, are tantamount to "Murderers." Indeed, there is frequent complaint about men who attempt to undermine the work of the Brotherhood. In his Brotherhood journal Lippard writes, "the bitterest drop in the cup, in the treachery of a few good men, whom he has honored. There is no word in language to express the mental anguish which is caused, by the treachery of those, whom in a good cause, we have trusted."[394] Lippard consistently reserves his strongest condemnation for men who undermine the 'work' of good men of the Brotherhood and chip away at the success of fraternity and the power of men gathered in collectives. Antebellum 'national manhood' supported the idea that aggressive competition between men "will lead to the health (and wealth), rather than the fragmentation of nation."[395] For Lippard, this capitalist-inflected vision of manhood was seen as a scourge to human progress. Men who fracture, interfere, or detract from male unity threaten the goals of brotherhood and weaken the collective political strength that men can possess only as a unified whole. While capitalism is an abstracted force that works against the interests of humankind, men who fail to understand and exalt the principles of the Brotherhood, self sacrifice, allegiance to their democratic mission and reverence for the glorified past, is the gravest transgression.

Brotherhood ritual emphasized the unity of men in supreme Brotherhood, underscoring the perceived ideological, political and economic power that men, when organized, might possess. In order to join the Brotherhood, inductees had to sign an oath that stated, "I _____ do solemnly swear, to use my most earnest efforts, to

[394] Ibid.
[395] Nelson, *National Manhood*, 15.

hasten the Day, when Humanity shall arise from its grave, and all nations and races, learn by word, the Lost Word, Brotherhood."[396] "Brotherhood" is the principle that will save humanity from "its grave" in a vision of multinational and multiracial brotherhood that might redeem the world in the future. Candidates must "promise on my word of honour as a Man, and by all the previous Obligations of this Gender" to preserve the secrets "trusted to my core." Manhood and obligation are directly linked, as men must answer to the responsibilities their very gender demands. Lippard emphasizes self-sacrifice and American exceptionalist responsibility for progress and history, "this Book is the code of discipline and organization, which discipline and organization, the Army of Brotherhood for an attack upon the Evil which now infests the world---." Male unity is symbolized as an army, evoking the violent potential and power of men in perfect unity. This puts forward the idea of a monolithic army of men changing the face of the world and righting its wrongs. The Brotherhood's emphasis on manhood gives a strong vision of idealized maleness that can create order and right in the world, suggesting American exceptionalist attitudes invested in men themselves, as men are portrayed as raw material to be shaped and directed.

Lippard also advocated for increased gender equality and inclusivity in his Brotherhood; however, the Brotherhood often excluded women and held their interests as secondary to larger issues that pertained to and were resolvable by men's efforts alone. Beside the more obvious gender exclusion inherent in the very idea of "Brotherhood," ledgers kept by Lippard record that the Brotherhood's circles and their annual convocations were comprised entirely of men. Furthermore, during his tenure Lippard sought to keep men and women in his Brotherhood separate. Writing in the *QCW*,

[396] Brotherhood of the Union Collection (MSS), The Library Company of Philadelphia.

Lippard explains to his readers that he looked "forward to the day when men and women shall meet together in its Circles, working with one heart and head, for the elevation of the workers. But for the present it is necessary that a separate organization for the work-women should be established."[397] He goes on to explain that women need to form their own cooperative stores and workshops and warns women away from working with relief or reform societies, insisting that "women and men *must act[] for themselves*."[398] Lippard again discourages work with reform societies in favor of interdependent but autonomous collectivization around labor. In another issue of QCW, Lippard admonishes the efforts toward women's suffrage, "reformers have claimed for her, as well as for her rich and favored cities, the right to vote. But as the case stands now, she had not even the right to virtue and bread…"[399] In this sense, Lippard's unwavering focus on what he saw as the material conditions of the white laborer—horrible living conditions, starvation—trumped more "ideological" goals like women's right to vote or, even more implausibly, the abolition of slavery. However, Lippard did have clear concern for white working women, and particularly the victimization of white women under capitalism, often rallying working-class men around their shared responsibility to protect the livelihood, and innocence, of working women.

Lippard portrayed women as particularly vulnerable in capitalist society, and while attuned to the particularly acute disadvantages that women faced, he often portrayed women as victims in need a saving by "proper" men—seeing women's struggles as an extension of male disenfranchisement under capitalism. In one issue of *QCW*, Lippard calls on the wealthy and religious elites to "sacrifice a portion of your

[397] Reynolds, *George Lippard Prophet of Protest*, 216.
[398] Ibid., 216.
[399] Ibid., 214.

superfluities for [working-class] Women, not in the way of Charity, but to enable them to act and work for themselves."[400] Here, Lippard advocates for women's personal and economic independence through employment. He explains that Northern "Wage Slavery" has "crushed woman into a life of shame—of hopeless want—or into an untimely grave."[401] Lippard alludes to fears of mass prostitution and the sexual violation of women that was rampant during the period, while also underscoring male responsibilities to guard and protect women's chastity and innocence from improper men. Men are the unnamed recipient of this message about female vulnerability, seizing on popular ideas of men as saviors and protectors of female virtue. The extent of Lippard's patriarchal attitudes towards women's "victimization" under capitalism comes out as he directly implores readers to save white women. He continues,

> Placed in a condition far different from the Male Worker—for any villain's sneer can taint her honor—she has no prospect but a life of toil, embittered by extreme want and by the insults of her task master, and ending only at the last retreat of crushed Humanity—the Grave. It is well to exhaust your sympathies upon the African slave, lashed or sold on a southern slave block; but here in your midst, before your eyes, at your doors, behold your WHITE SISTERS…forced to work for just enough to keep body and soul together

Lippard directly implores readers to avert their eyes and concern from the "southern slave block" toward white women in the north. Lippard emphasizes specifically white working women in order to appeal to his white readership, asserting that white racial solidarity should override concern for the black enslaved population, again suggesting that reform work, like abolitionism, is divisionary and unproductive. Ultimately, while the concern for people of "all nations" and women laborers is very much present in Lippard's rhetoric, Brotherhood documents kept by Lippard make clear that white men and male

[400] Ibid., 214.
[401] Ibid., 213-214.

congeniality were his central concern for shaping the memory of the nation's democratic beginning—and its future.

## 3.6. Conclusion

Lippard's intense focus on the Brotherhood and his lofty goals of national popularity, caused him to minimize some potentially polarizing political views that made his ideas of universal brotherhood and equality radical to begin with. In the name of popular appeal, Lippard tempered his politically radical ideas and focused on the interests of the more politically empowered, white working-class men, causing him to eschew or minimize contradictions in U.S. imperial wars, deemphasize the abolition of slavery, and exclude women from direct participation in the order. Lippard had intensely-felt utopian hopes for the Brotherhood, seeing male equanimity and the proliferation of a disciplined male attitude as the key to 'redeeming' the possibilities presented by what he saw as the *tabula rasa* that was the United States. Lippard's hopes for a supremely unified male brotherhood involved the coexistence of more radical ideals that were often contradicted by or compromised in the face of contemporaneous events and realities. Lippard's intent focus on the Brotherhood embodying a unified national character ultimately caused him to de-radicalize his politics in favor of perpetuating a more conceptual messianic nationalism that could appeal to a broad base of potentially politically powerful white men, in hopes of shaping the meaning of the revolution and the nation's future by appealing to the nation's enfranchised members.

The contradictions of Lippard's philosophy have not been laid out here in order to tally the 'failures' of his ideology, or to claim that he failed in his principles. Rather, the

contradictions in Lippard's philosophy are important to understanding the purpose and utility Lippard saw for the Brotherhood. Lippard's insistence on brotherhood and male congeniality caused him to at times downplay the more radical strain of his ideas in order to garner broader support and membership from a wider group of men, whose interests threatened to clash or disagree with one another. Lippard's rhetoric suggests that for him, male unity and male virtue was, above all, the primary means by which national, global change can be enacted. According to Lippard brotherhood, and specifically "American" brotherhood, was seen as having the unique ability to guarantee and spread the particularly American cause of liberty and democracy throughout the world. In this sense, change was seen and understood to emanate specifically from men and appealing to this group became a central focus. Conversely, 'bad' and 'improper' men are rallied against by Lippard in his Brotherhood writing and fiction as having the potential to utterly destroy the democratic mission of the nation and lay to ruin all that depended on men's honor.

# Conclusion

## The Legacy of Sporting Culture

Sporting culture persisted through the end of the nineteenth century. According to historians Timothy Gilfoyle and Richard Stott, sporting culture actually become more popular and nationally prevalent after the Civil War. Stott contends that "sporting men by the 1870s were found in all major cities and throughout the American West."[402] Gilfoyle claims that there was "a subtle but persistent expansion of sporting-male subculture"[403] due to "a combination of social patterns—uneven gender ratios, the postponement of marriage, even marital dissatisfaction," which effectively "fed the growth of this sporting-male world."[404] Many sporting men participated in the Mexican-American War,[405] joined imperial filibustering missions in Mexico and Nicaragua,[406] and were drafted or volunteered for Civil War service.[407] After the Civil War, Stott charts how many sporting men took their propensity for independence, drink, and gambling to the western frontier. Indeed, Stott speculates that sports possessed a "fatalism" which perhaps attracted them to exploits like war, gambling and excessive drinking.[408] While sporting culture moved away from its epicenter of the urban metropolis, sporting men continued their exploits and sprees overseas, west and southward.

---

[402] Stott, *Jolly Fellows*, 246.
[403] Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 236.
[404] Ibid., 239.
[405] Stott, *Jolly Fellows*, 217. Some men claimed that there were "entire regiments made up of gambling men and rowdies" (217). As I discussed in Chapter Three, Lippard picked up on this in his own presentation of sporting types in *The Killers*.
[406] Ibid., 217-223. As I noted in Chapter Three, Lippard's sports in *The Killers* were also portrayed as filibusterers.
[407] Ibid., 223.
[408] Ibid., 246.

By the beginning of the twentieth century sporting culture had diminished. In the late nineteenth century, politicians, reformers, and businesses utilized building and zoning regulations to push places of vice out of major cities. As many antebellum brothel guides and sporting magazines noted, brothels were often situated in elite neighborhoods, a fact that reformers and local citizens tolerated less as the century went on. In the 1870s concerted efforts of police and reformers to 'clean up' the city, along with growing calls for censorship of sexual matters, effectively broke up many of the haunts and establishments that so thoroughly defined sporting culture.[409] Culturally, Gilfoyle suggests that a stronger cultural orientation towards family, monogamy and reproduction caused "tolerance for sporting-male behavior and commercialized forms of sexuality [to] declin[e]."[410] He contends that the "'resacralization' of sexuality" caused "the promiscuous paradigm that defined sporting-male sexuality waned as a defining characteristic of urban social life."[411] Stott suggests that the 'closing' of the western frontier contributed to the decline of sporting culture, along with increasingly strict moral paradigms in the general populace. He explains,

> gradually, the sporting subculture ebbed. Once-booming western mining towns disappeared into oblivion. Uproarious cattle towns became staid farm centers. Wide-open cities saw reform campaigns that closed gambling halls. By the end of the century, there were still sports to be found, but it was clear they were on the losing side, their days numbered[412]

While men who enjoyed drinking, prostitution, gambling and other such 'sport' certainly continued, the feeling of mutual fraternity and identity that characterized sporting men declined as these activities were forced more underground or outside of the city.

---

[409] Gilfoyle, 181-196.
[410] Ibid., 314.
[411] Ibid., 313.
[412] Stott, 246-247.

Looking back to an 1842 issue of *The Whip*, we can see one writer expressing frustration with the dominant cultural forces that pushed against sporting culture from its very beginning. The writer reports to *The Whip*,

> the sporting men of Philadelphia appear to be in trouble. The Mayor and Police of that staid and sober city are 'down on them' strong—for what particular reason we cannot see … This moral war, which is being waged on sporting men remind us of the 'tempest in the tea-pot;' only that it is a smaller business

For many sporting culture was much more than a mere "tempest in the tea-pot." As I have shown, sporting men were seen as upsetting the nation's social and moral fabric. Indeed, it seems that the "moral war" being waged against sporting culture eventually won.

The original run of sporting magazines ended in 1843 when the near constant obscenity and libel trials that the flash press editors were embroiled in finally caused the papers to be shut down.[413] These early trials effectively opened "the floodgates of moral censorship,"[414] leading to the Comstock Act of 1873.[415] While the original progenitors of flash magazines stopped publishing their magazines in 1843,[416] sporting magazines continued to be published, albeit in different locations and with slightly different concerns and emphases. I have discussed papers that ran through the late 1850s to give a broader view of how sporting culture functioned for the men participating in it.

---

[413] Dennis, *Licentious Gotham*. 55-56. See Dennis' chapter "Flash Weeklies" in *Licentious Gotham* for more information of the obscenity and libel trials, and imprisonments, that flash press editors were involved in.

[414] Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowtiz, *The Flash Press*, 57.

[415] It is colloquially known as The Comstock Act, but it was officially the "Act of the Suppression of Trade in, and Circulation of, Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use." The federal statue "gave the U.S. Postal Service broad and vague powers," criminalizing and establishing fines and imprisonment for "sending through the mail sex kinds of material" including: "erotica; contraceptive medications or devices; contraceptive information; abortifacients; sexual implements" (*The Flash Press*, 123). While many have marked obscenity law as beginning at this period, the storied history of the flash press reveals that it began much sooner.

[416] These included: *The Flash, the Whip, the Rake*, and the *Libertine*.

Magazines like *The Arena* and *The Pick* emerged in the 1850s with the original flash press' brand of ribald sexual content and taunting humor. Indeed, throughout the 1850s different iterations of flash-style papers emerged. Papers such as *Sportsman* (1843), focused more on humor while papers such as *Life in Boston* (1849-57), *New York Scorpion* (1849), *Weekly Whip* (1855) and *Broadway Bell* (1855-58) included sexualized writings but lacked the "outrageous, sensational tone" of the original magazines.[417] In many ways the *National Police Gazette*, with its inclusion of gossip columns and reportage on violence and sexual scandal, carried on the flash press' tradition of salacious reporting.[418]

By the beginning of the 1860s, publications with a clear sporting dialect seemed to have faded out. While there is no one reason for this, it is likely that the increasing moral reforms had an affect. The bawdy and highly sexualized content of the magazines made them easy targets for law enforcement officials and politicians bent on eradicating vice. As the early history of the magazines show—they were often shut down due to legal interference. With the Comstock Law regulations of 1873, publishing erotic and sexualized content became even more difficult.[419]

## Conclusion

[417] Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz, 119. There are many more titles that can be seen as protégés of the flash press. According to Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz Boston's *Blade* was very similar to the New York flash papers and published, on and off, until 1848. Other titles include: *Monthly Cosmopolite* (1849-50), *Broadway Dandy* (1855), *Broadway Omnibus* (1858), *Venus' Miscellany* (1856-57), and the *Subterranean*.
[418] According to Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz, *National Police Gazette* editor George Wilkes resented comparisons to the flash press, saying these types of publications were for "'sensualitists'" while he claimed his paper aimed to "expose vice and depravity in order to cure it" (*The Flash Press*, 117). George Thompson, whom I discuss in Chapter Two, edited two flash-style magazines for a while, the *Weekly Whip* and *Broadway Bell* and these publications would sometime publish Thompson's writings.
[419] The end of sporting magazines can also be attributed to changes in taste. In *The Flash Press* Cohen, Gilfoyle and Horowitz contend that there was a shift in taste from the bawdy, gossipy and regional, to publications with overtly erotic overtones (122).

Helping to inspire myriad sensational novels, the criminalization of seduction and the development of George Lippard's secret society, sporting culture had a marked impact on antebellum society. The sporting man's expression of masculinity—epitomizing liberal autonomy by embracing consumptive excess and by rejecting male civic and economic responsibilities—ran counter to dominant ideals of male propriety that emphasized order and self-management. The central objective that has guided this project was to investigate why seduction and the libertine seducer were a distinct point of focus in sensational and city mysteries novels. In answering this question, I connected the presentation of the seducing libertine to the growth of sporting culture in the antebellum United States. I have shown that the expansion of sporting culture was seen as an outgrowth of the deleterious changes brought on by modernization. The libertine's brash disavowal of propriety and the enticing nature of his attitudes was seen by critics as an inimical force capable of corrupting the social body. For many young men, sporting culture offered an outlet for their frustration with personal, social and economic problems. Instead of channeling ambition or aggression into work or self-improvement, some men turned to what was seen as deeply immoral activity: brothel going, drinking sprees, and excessive spending. In many ways, sporting culture was understood as a result of the frustration and anxiety that young men felt about their social and economic positions. Critics worried that problems caused by capitalism, both economic and emotional, might corrupt young men—causing them to steal, visit prostitutes, seduce young women and lure innocent men into their ranks. While the seducer in popular seduction plots has often been cast as a powerful capitalist exploiter and read as a metaphor for wealth inequality, I have argued that seduction in many antebellum texts

functioned as a metaphor for how capitalism might morally and economically bankrupt young men.

Examining critical responses to sporting masculinity illuminates the ways in which the proper expression of manhood was often framed as imperative to the proper development of the nation. Prostitution reform sought to rehabilitate sex workers, and in so doing, many reformers imagined they would subsequently save men from the dangerous influence of prostitution. City mysteries authors used their narratives and the powerful affective qualities of sensationalism to foment a sense of anxiety surrounding libertine seducers. The many portrayals of the libertine sport, who callously and purposefully seduces women for amusement and gets away with it, imparted to readers a sense of urgency around the problem of sporting culture. George Lippard took the critique of masculinity much further than the written word, developing a counter-masculine movement with his Brotherhood of the Union.

Principally, this project was concerned with the beginnings of sporting culture, and the social panic surrounding it. While sporting culture continued into the end of the nineteenth century, I have chosen to end my study in the late 1850s, right before the outbreak of the Civil War. In this project I wanted to examine sporting culture from its origins, and to explore how specific social, cultural and economic conditions can be understood as bringing about the emergence of this culture. I focus here on how the residual effects of the American Revolution and the onset of industrialization specifically impacted the development of sporting culture. The unique circumstances of this historical moment—including women entering the workforce in large numbers, the rise of the urban metropolis, and contests over slavery and national borders—contributed to social

concerns over prostitution, seduction and how to mold the 'proper' behavior of men. The marked critical attention that sporting culture received in the antebellum period was unique even though sporting culture lasted through the end of the nineteenth century.

As I have suggested, the rise of white-collar work and the ubiquitous young, unattached, single males populating cities in greater numbers caused critics to fear that economic immobility combined with the cosmopolitanism of the city would create dangerous desires in men. Furthermore, many critics saw sports as threatening to the middle classes in particular, 'ruining' good men and women and infiltrating the middle classes to commit their seduction and crimes. The perception that prostitution was on the rise also contributed to the focused concern over sporting men. Often, rather than recognize the economic problems facing poorer women, reformers and commentators claimed prostitution was a result of seduction, with seduced women having no choice but to turn to sex work after being cast from society for their transgressions. Sporting men, highly public figures seen roaming from bar to brothel with seemingly little responsibility or care, embodied the ne'er-do-well logics of the seducer. Additionally, as I have shown particularly in Chapter Three, the "promises" of the American Revolution were seen by some as still in flux and unassured in the antebellum period. With questions of what U.S. values of freedom and liberty would look like in the United States, men like sports who took democratic tenets of liberal independence and turned them into immoral profligacy appeared as a dire threat to U.S. values.

Why did the critical preoccupation with sporting culture wane? The antebellum period saw sensational novels, reform work, the creation of seduction law, and nationally-watched sensational media stories all surrounding the sporting man and

sporting culture. This concerted critical focus seems to have diminished in the second half of the nineteenth century. We might consider a few historical and cultural reasons for this. In the literary sphere, seduction and seducers continued to populate literature. However, the nature of the seducer shifted with historical and social circumstances. As Sabine Sielke argues, in the Reconstruction period "the ultimate manifestation of equality, miscegenation or amalgamation became a central taboo" which, she suggests, began to appear in novels and literary texts with increasing frequency after the Civil War,[420] perhaps contributing to the decline of the libertine sport as a central figure of concern for authors. Stott contends that society kept up its fascination with sporting men, but it did not have the same tinge of anxiety and fear as it did in the antebellum period. By 1880, sporting men "had come to share a sense of their separateness from ordinary society and of solidarity with each other."[421] According to Stott, this more defined fraternity contributed to an "extra ordinary curiosity about sports and their lives" evidenced by "many fictional representations of sports." He attributes this fascination with sports to "the perception that they were one of the last groups of men left who ostentatiously embraced … [the] unfettered male comportment or earlier days."[422] Thus, according to Stott, sporting men went from being nefarious and threatening seducers to being seen as benign holdovers from earlier days. Finally, Michael Denning and Nina Baym argue that the growth and popularity of women writers contributed to the waning of the seduction narrative in general, with women writers less interested in portraying "fallen women."[423]

---

[420] Sieklke, *Reading Rape*, 27.
[421] Stott, 215.
[422] Ibid., 216.
[423] Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 94-95.

Changes in labor and white-collar work might have also contributed to the shift in focus from sporting men in the later decades of the century. Luskey suggests that as economic uncertainty continued into the century, clerks might have found more security in their insecurity. He explains, "as the economy's uncertainties only grew in the 1850s, many clerks made peace with capitalism's inequalities and helped recast economic structures and what it meant to be successful, respectable, and manly. From the wreck of many clerks' fondest hopes, the postbellum middle class began to take shape."[424] The frustrations and strivings of young men that critics, and indeed sports themselves, identified might have lessened as men grew more accustomed to their social and economic place in the world. Indeed, hegemonic masculine imperatives of hard work, discipline, financial success and independence shifted as men "recast" what it meant to be "successful, respectable, and manly" and "reassessed the values at the core of the striver's ethic."[425] The masculine imperatives and insecurities that inspired some men to turn to sporting culture for empowerment waned as men reassessed what it meant to be successful and manly. The consolidation of a strong middle class might have also contributed to the lessening of fear over sporting culture. Men who participated in sporting culture in the later nineteenth century were seen more as part of a well-defined rough subculture apart from society, and were seen less as defecting members of the middling classes.

By examining sporting culture, we can better understand the cultural contests over gender in the antebellum period. Scholars have identified that there were various brands of masculinity that men could ascribe to during this period. As I have shown, sporting

[424] Luskey, *On The Make*, 205.
[425] Ibid., 209.

masculinity is a significant, and often overlooked, expression that illustrates well how the economic and social pressures of the period could produce incredibly different responses. Sporting men's celebration of heterosexual indulgence, in particular their penchant for both celebrating and deriding sex workers, shows how aggressive male heterosexual prerogative can foment around the ridicule of individuals who threaten men's perceived power. Sporting men's racist discourse shows the way in which racial 'play,' like minstrel performances and racialized comics and jokes, can work to mask or obscure white hostility and desire. Sporting men also help us to understand a different aspect of modernization. In the antebellum period many individuals worried that industrialization would create irreparable economic inequality and unprecedented social changes. For some onlookers, and many sports themselves, sporting culture presented the possibility that the modernizing nation could offer young men an entirely new masculine paradigm, where morality, independence, and freedom are synonymous with self-indulgence, sex and autonomy.

# Works Cited


Alemán, Jesse, and Shelley Streeby, editors. *Empire and The Literature of Sensation: An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Popular Fiction*. Rutgers University Press, 2007.

Anthony, David. *Paper Money Men: Commerce, Manhood, and the Sensational Public Sphere in Antebellum America*. The Ohio State University Press, 2009.

---. "The Helen Jewett Panic: Tabloids, Men, and the Sensational Public Sphere in Antebellum New York." *American Literature*, vol. 69, no. 3, 1997

Augst, Thomas. *The clerk's tale: young men and moral life in nineteenth-century America*. University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Barnes, Elizabeth. *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel*. Columbia University Press, 1997.

Bederman, Gail. *Manliness and civilization: A cultural history of gender and race in the United States, 1880-1917*. University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Bjelopera, Jerome P. *City of clerks: office and sales workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920*. Vol. 265. University of Illinois Press, 2005.

Block, Sharon. *Rape and sexual power in early America*. UNC Press Books, 2006.

Blumin, Stuart M. *The emergence of the middle class: Social experience in the American city, 1760-1900*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Bouton, John Bell. "The Life and Choice Writings of George Lippard." *New York: HH Randall* (1855).

Bullock, Steven C. *Revolutionary brotherhood: Freemasonry and the transformation of the American social order, 1730-1840*. UNC Press Books, 2011

Brooks, Daphne. *Bodies in dissent: Spectacular performances of race and freedom, 1850-1910*. Duke University Press, 2006.

Bruce, Laurie. "Land Reform and the Working-Class Experience in Britain and the United States, 1800-1862." *The Journal of American History* 87.4 (2001).

Brodhead, Richard H. *Cultures of letters: Scenes of reading and writing in nineteenth-century America*. University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Brown, Thomas Allston. *A History of the New York Stage from the First Performance in 1732 to 1901*. Vol. 1. Dodd, Mead, 1902.

Buntline, Ned. *The Mysteries and Miseries of New Orleans*. 1851.

---. *The mysteries and miseries of New York: A story of real life*. 1849.

Butterfield, Roger. "George Lippard and His Secret Brotherhood." *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 79.3 (1955).

Cohen, Patricia Cline, Timothy J. Gilfoyle, and Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz. *The Flash Press: Sporting Male Weeklies in 1840s New York*. University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Cohen, Patricia Cline. "Unregulated youth: masculinity and murder in the 1830s city." *Radical history review* 1992.52 (1992).

---. *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century New York*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

Cook, James W. "Dancing across the Color Line: A Story of Mixtures and Markets in New York's Five Points." *Common-place* 4.1 (2003).

Davidson, Cathy N. *Revolution and the word: The rise of the novel in America*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

Denning, Michael. *Mechanic Accents: Dime novels and working-class culture in America*. Verso Books, 1998.

Dennis, Donna. *Licentious Gotham: Erotic Publishing and Its Prosecution in Nineteenth-Century New York*. Harvard University Press, 2009.

*Documents of the Assembly of the State of New York, Volume 5*. Carroll and Cook, Albany, 1843.

Dorsey, Bruce. *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City*. Cornell University Press, 2002.

Edelstein, Sari. *Between the Novel and the News: The Emergence of American Women's Writing*. University of Virginia Press, 2014.

Fiedler, Leslie A., and L. A. Fiedler. *Love and death in the American novel*. Dalkey Archive Press, 1960.

Fluck, Winfried. "Novels of Transition: From Sentimental Novel to Domestic Novel." *The Construction and Contestation of American Cultures and Identities in the Early National Period* 78 (1999).

Foster, George G. *New York by gas-light and other urban sketches*. Univ of California Press, 1990.

Freedman, Estelle B. *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation*. Harvard University Press, 2013.

---. *Their sisters' keepers: Women's prison reform in America, 1830-1930*. University of Michigan Press, 1984.

Fuchs, Lawrence H. "Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 19.4 (2000).

Gassan, Richard H. "Fear, Commercialism, Reform, and Antebellum Tourism to New York City." *Journal of Urban History* 41.6 (2015).

Gilfoyle, Timothy J. *City of Eros: New York City, prostitution, and the commercialization of sex, 1790-1920*. WW Norton & Company, 1994.

Gorn, Elliott J. *The Manly Art: Bare-knuckle prize fighting in America*. Cornell University Press, 2012.

Greenberg, Amy S. *Manifest manhood and the antebellum American empire*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Greenberg, Joshua R. *Advocating the Man: Masculinity, Organized labor, and the Household in New York, 1800-1840*. Columbia University Press, 2008.

Greeson, Jennifer Rae. “The ‘Mysteries and Miseries’ of North Carolina: New York City, Urban Gothic Fiction, and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.” *American Literature* 73.2 (2001).

Gubar, Susan. *Racechanges: White skin, black face in American culture*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 2000.

Haag, Pamela. *Consent: Sexual rights and the transformation of American liberalism*. Cornell University Press, 1999.

Halttunen, Karen. *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870*. Yale University Press, 1982.

Hammel, E. A., ed. *Ritual brotherhood in renaissance Florence*. Academic Press, 2013.

Handlin, Oscar, and Mary Flug Handlin. *The Dimensions of Liberty*. Vol. 84. Atheneum, 1966.

Hartman, Saidiya V. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 1997.

Hessinger, Rodney. *Seduced, Abandoned, and Reborn: Visions of Youth in Middle-Class America, 1780-1850*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

Hobson, Barbara Meil. *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition*. University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Horowitz, Helen Lefkowitz. *Rereading sex: Battles over sexual knowledge and suppression in nineteenth-century America*. Vol. 251. New York: Knopf, 2002.

Hutton, Laurence. *The Negro on the Stage*. 1889.

Ignatiev, Noel. *How The Irish Became White*. Routledge, 2012.

Jackson, Joseph. "George Lippard: Misunderstood Man of Letters." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 59.4 (1935).

Jacobs, Lea. *The Decline of Sentiment: American Film in the 1920s*. Univ of California Press, 2008.

Johansen, Shawn. *Family Men: Middle-class fatherhood in Early Industrializing America*. Psychology Press, 2001.

Jones Jr, Douglas A. "Black politics but not black people: Rethinking the social and "racial" history of early minstrelsy." *TDR/The Drama Review* 57.2 (2013).

*Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Ohio, Volume 40, Part 2*. Samuel Medary, State Printer. 1842.

Kaplan, Amy. *The anarchy of empire in the making of US culture*. Vol. 32. Harvard University Press, 2005.

Kann, Mark E. *Taming Passion for the Public Good: Policing Sex in the Early Republic*. NYU Press, 2013.

Kimmel, Michael. *Manhood in America*. New York: Free Press, 1995.

Knobel, Dale T. *America for the Americans: The Nativist Movement in the United States*. MacMillan Publishing Company, 1996.

Leverenz, David. *Manhood and the American Renaissance*. Cornell University Press, 1989.

Lhamon, William T. *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop*. Harvard University Press, 1998.

Lippard, George. Ed. Cohen, Matt & Wong, Edlie L. *The Killers: A Narrative of Real Life in Philadelphia.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

---. *The Quaker City, or, The monks of Monk-Hall: a romance of Philadelphia life, mystery, and crime*. Author, 1845.

---. *Washington and His Generals: or, Legends of the Revolution.* Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson. 1847.

---. *Washington And His Men: Being the "second Series" of the Legends of the American Revolution of "1776"*. Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson, 1876.

Lott, Eric. *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Luskey, Brian P. *On the Make: Clerks and the Quest for Capital in Nineteenth-Century America*. NYU Press, 2010.

Lutz, Deborah. *The dangerous lover: Gothic villains, Byronism, and the nineteenth-century seduction narrative*. Ohio State University Press, 2006.

McAllister, Marvin Edward. *Whiting Up: Whiteface Minstrels and Stage Europeans in African American Performance*. Univ of North Carolina Press, 2011.

McBride, Harriet Wain. *Fraternal regalia in America, 1865 to 1918: dressing the lodges; clothing the brotherhood*. Diss. The Ohio State University, 2000.

Miller,William I. *The Anatomy of Disgust*. Harvard University Press, 1998.

Nelson, Dana D. *National manhood: Capitalist citizenship and the imagined fraternity of white men*. Duke University Press, 1998.

Otter, Samuel. *Philadelphia Stories: America's Literature of Race and Freedom*. OUP USA, 2010.

Perry, John B. A Full and Complete Account of the Heberton Tragedy, to which is added Beauchamp, or the Kentuck Tragedy. (New York, NY: 1849).

Reynolds, David S. *Beneath the American Renaissance: The subversive imagination in the age of Emerson and Melville*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

---. *George Lippard, Prophet of Protest: Writings of an American Radical, 1822–1854*. *New York: Peter Lang* (1986).

Roediger, David R. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. Verso, 1999.

Rosenthal, Laura J. *Infamous commerce: prostitution in eighteenth-century British literature and culture*. Cornell University Press, 2015.

Ruggles, Steven. "Fallen Women: The Inmates of the Magdalen Society Asylum of Philadelphia, 1836-1908." *Journal of Social History* 16.4 (1983).

Samuels, Shirley. *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 1992.

Saval, Nikil. *Cubed: A secret history of the workplace*. Doubleday, 2014.

Saxton, Alexander. *The rise and fall of the white republic: Class politics and mass culture in nineteenth-century America*. Verso, 2003.

Sedgwick, Eve K. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Severson, Nicolette. "“Devils Would Blush to Look”: Brothel Visits of the New York Female Moral Reform Society, 1835 and 1836." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 23.2 (2014).

Sinclair, M.B.W. “Seduction and the Myth of the Ideal Woman.” *Law & Ineq.* 5, 1987.

Smithers, Gregory D. “The ‘Right Kind of White People’: Reproducing Whiteness in the United States and Australia, 1780s-1930s.” in *Racism in the Modern World: Historical Perspectives on Cultural Transfer and Adaptation*, eds. Manfred Berg & Simon Wendt (New York, Berghahn Books, 2011), 303-28.

Srebnick, Amy Gilman. *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers: Sex and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York*. Studies in the History of Sexu, 1997.

Stott, Richard. *Jolly fellows: Male milieus in nineteenth-century America*. JHU Press, 2009.

Streeby, Shelley. *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture*. Vol. 9. Univ of California Press, 2002.

---. “Opening Up the Story Paper: George Lippard and the Construction of Class.” *boundary 2* 24.1 (1997).

Thompson, George. *The Gay Girls of New-York: Or, Life on Broadway: Being a Mirror of the Fashions, Follies and Crimes of a Great City*. 1853.

---. *Venus in Boston: and Other Tales of Nineteenth-century City Life*. Univ of Massachusetts Press, 2002.

Tompkins, Jane P. *Sensational designs: The cultural work of American fiction, 1790-1860*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 1986.

Tompkins, Kyla Wazana. *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century*. NYU Press, 2012.

Traister, Bryce. "Academic Viagra: The rise of American masculinity studies." *American Quarterly* 52.2 (2000).

---. "Libertinism and authorship in America's early republic." *American Literature* 72.1 (2000).

VanderVelde, Lea. "The Legal Ways of Seduction." *Stanford Law Review* (1996).

Walsh, John, and Edgar Allan Poe. *Poe the detective: the curious circumstances behind The mystery of Marie Roget*. Rutgers University Press, 1968.

Weinstein, Cindy. *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Vol. 147. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Wells, Ida B. *Southern horrors: Lynch law in all its phases*. The Floating Press, 2014.

---. *A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States, 1892-1893-1894*. Chicago: Donohue & Henneberry, 1895.

Wilentz, Sean. *Chants democratic: New York City and the rise of the American working class, 1788-1850*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

Wilkes, George, 1817-1885. *The Lives of Helen Jewett And Richard P.Robinson*. New York, 1849.